

Figurative Thought and Language

Modeling Irony

Inés Lozano-Palacio and
Francisco José
Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez

12

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Modeling Irony

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Volume 12

Modeling Irony. A cognitive-pragmatic account
by Inés Lozano-Palacio and Francisco José Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez

Modeling Irony

A cognitive-pragmatic account

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CHAPTER 1

In search of a unified framework

Although not completely on a par with metaphor, irony has received a large amount of multidisciplinary attention over the centuries, much more than other figures of speech, such as metonymy, hyperbole, litotes, paradox, and oxymoron, which have been dealt with mainly within rhetoric, literary theory, and linguistic studies.

One possible reason for the interest in irony is the fact that, unlike other figures of speech, irony can be shaped into a comparatively broader range of forms and uses. In ordinary speech, irony is used to show skepticism on (i.e., speaker's dissociation from) other people's opinions. This can be done in either a humorous or a challenging way, or even in both ways combined. Imagine John, who is generally a pessimistic person, despite promising weather reports, expresses his misgivings that foul weather may ruin a close friend's open-air wedding celebration. On the day of the wedding the weather is perfect. Tongue in cheek, the speaker, one of John's friends, remarks: *Sure, John. Today's weather could be no worse!* This remark is both humorous and challenging in the sense that it is intended to make John understand that his excessive pessimism can be ungrounded. Because of this twofold nature of ironic skepticism, irony has a prominent role in other communicative environments involving either humor or criticism. Thus, irony has been used by philosophers like Socrates to make his pretentious disciples realize that their assumptions are misled, but it has also been used as a rhetorical tool to challenge others on their views of a ruler, or to mock a presidential candidate's electoral strategies, to give just two other examples. Irony has served as a subversive tool used to attack government policies and specific social and cultural practices. Irony can be detected in everyday situations. For example, we can think it is ironical for a former combat pilot to be afraid of flying a regular airline. We may also consider ironical a situation in which a fire station goes down in flames, since a fire station is the place where one would least expect an uncontrollable fire to break out. It may also be found ironical to watch a burglar breaking into the home of the new deputy sheriff in the middle of the night. Situational irony can be narrated in the form of stories (e.g., a tale, a news report, a narrated joke) or acted out (e.g., a skit). In the world of drama, it was used in Ancient Greece to imbue spectators with a sense of awareness of the inescapability of fate by constantly challenging and finally fully wrecking their hopes for a positive denouement.

Ideally, successful irony requires the active participation of the hearer, who needs to determine the nature of the ironic remarks and thus detect the ironist's target. However, there can be exceptions to this general requirement. In some situations, an ironist may not want the audience (or part of it) to discover that they are the ironic target. Irony can thus become a private game whose interpretation is based on special clues that may not be equally accessible to all parties involved. This situation can be compared to receiving a key to a treasure chest. We may fail to notice that the key we have received belongs to a chest inside which we may find a treasure. It is only when we decide to use the key to open the chest that we can find out what is inside. Irony requires the hearer's involvement to unlock the figurative meaning (i.e., the treasure) inside the literal meaning (i.e., the treasure chest). Ironic clues are like the key we can use to open the chest.

Understanding all the facets of ironic meaning production and interpretation is not an easy task. This complexity has fascinated academics over the centuries. Unluckily, the different studies offer an excessively heterogenous picture of perspectives which are often difficult to reconcile. A case in point is the accounts of irony provided within Relevance Theory and Pretense Theory. Proponents and defenders of these two approaches have traditionally posited them as opposed to each other. On a superficial level, it might seem so. While Relevance Theory postulates that irony consists in echoing a thought or a belief and expressing an attitude towards it, Pretense Theory claims that, in being ironic, the speaker adopts a pose and pretends to embody a character who believes what he or she says but is eventually not expected to be taken seriously. It is easy to see how these two perspectives can be combined if we go back to our previous example, where John is challenged about his constant pessimistic thoughts, including those on the weather. In this example the speaker produces an echo of John's thoughts precisely to feign agreement with him. The analytical situation is, of course, more complex, and we shall come back to it. In the meantime, note that our approach is not by any means the first one to attempt a conciliation of positions. Previous work in this direction has been carried out by Kumon-Nakamura et al. (1995), Camp (2012), and Popa-Wyatt (2014). The discussion in Popa-Wyatt (2014), which takes into account elements of the others, is the most developed proposal. She defends the necessity of an "integrated strong hybrid theory" which reconciles the treatment of irony in Relevance Theory and Pretense Theory. However, she only offers a set of conditions for such a task, but not the theory itself. We will take into account her discussion, but our proposal will go well beyond determining conciliation conditions into producing a unified account. This account should productively bring together converging and/or complementary insights from other frameworks and it should produce its own range of analytical tools. We furthermore argue that the interpreter of irony should

be considered on a par with the ironist, and that an integrated approach to irony should examine both and provide a complete picture of how they interact. The interpreter-oriented perspective of irony should be seriously taken into account and added to previous similar efforts with other tropes (cf. Herrero, 2009).

Our study not only brings together those two traditionally contending theories on verbal irony but further argues for the inclusion of situational irony within the unified framework. We contend that accounting for the identification of either an utterance or a situation as ironic is grounded in the same cognitive process, i.e., a clash between two conceptual scenarios, one of which is constructed on the basis of what the perceiver of irony believes to be the case and another built on the basis of new evidence that overrides the information in the other scenario. Hence, the present study draws from previous work in the various disciplines and accounts mentioned above, although it pays special attention to the linguistic and literary perspectives. The goal is to produce *a unified account of irony*. This account is both comprehensive and inclusive. It is capable of (a) accommodating data from both verbal and situational irony, while (b) integrating analytical insights from a broad range of disciplines and explanatory frameworks, and (c) developing its own analytical categories and explanatory tools. So far there is no such unified account of verbal irony, much less a comprehensive approach capable of dealing with the multiple manifestations of both verbal and situational irony. The groundwork for this integrative effort requires bringing together selected aspects of Relevance Theory (e.g., Wilson and Sperber, 2012), Pretense Theory (e.g., Clark and Gerrig, 1984), and the principles of cognitive modeling as laid out in Ruiz de Mendoza and Galera (2014). As will become evident in the course of our explanation, it is these principles that provide the framework for the integration of different views into a unified account of irony.

1.1 Contextualizing the research

It is in this peculiar theoretical context that the present study aims to make its main contribution, which is intended to be not only a highly integrative effort, but also a productive one capable of accounting for as many aspects as possible of the phenomenon. Within this context, our aim is to address the following questions:

- a. Is irony to be defined in terms of a set of core conditions that hold for both the so-called verbal and situational types? If so, in the case of verbal irony, can those conditions account for the diversity of language uses that bear similarities to one another that one could consider ironical?

- b. Given the wide and often discrepant theoretical coverage of irony, can this phenomenon be ultimately accounted for by means of a unified theoretical framework? What are the requirements of such a framework and what shape does it take?
- c. If both verbal and situational irony, despite their sharp differences, can be explained with reference to this unified framework, which analytical categories do they have in common?
- d. Since the range of situations where ironic meaning can be studied is broad, can they be systematized? If so, how? How do text and context correlate to produce ironic meaning effects?
- e. Since irony is a pragmatic phenomenon, is it sensitive to an analysis in terms of felicity conditions, i.e., requirements for communicative success? If so, how can felicity in irony be explained?

1.1.1 Core conditions

The examination of our data strongly points to the existence of a set of core conditions that characterize irony while determining how such central conditions can be exploited with different purposes thereby giving rise to a whole range of ironic uses. We propose the following core conditions for verbal irony:

1. *The pretended agreement condition*: the speaker pretends to agree with (real of attributed) beliefs of thoughts.
2. *The observable scenario condition*: at least from the speaker's perspective, there is an observable situation which manifestly contrasts with the pretended agreement.
3. *The ironic inference condition*: the speaker expresses (selected elements) of either (1) or (2), or of both (1) and (2), in such a way that the hearer can make an inference on the specific nature of the speaker's dissociation from the pretended agreement.

In the case of situational irony, the pretended agreement condition is replaced by what we shall term the *epistemic condition*, which is based on knowledge considered to hold generally true of a given state of affairs. This condition can be formulated as follows:

- 1'. *The epistemic condition*: the perceiver of irony holds a belief of thought to be generally true of a given state of affairs.

It should be noted that the epistemic condition is in fact an overarching one, which subsumes the pretended agreement condition. It stipulates the existence of a set of

beliefs that either the perceiver (for situational irony) or the interpreter (i.e., the hearer of verbal irony) takes for granted until evidence is provided to the contrary.

These conditions should be able to stand the test of any use of irony, not only verbal or situational, but also literary or non-literary. The compilation of examples of irony in our database (see Section 1.2.1), as well as close examination of the sources for those examples, reveals its extremely versatile nature, which has enabled its use for different purposes across history in different cultural and communicative contexts. In literary work, situational irony has been exploited in narrated and dramaturgical formats, as is the case of satire and dramatic irony. However, irony is by no means limited to literary activity. It has a broad range of other uses. We can think of Cicero and Lord Byron. Their interests differed because of the historical and socio-cultural contexts. Cicero's goal was to persuade the political audience in Ancient Rome, while Lord Byron used irony as a self-reflective device against the tenets of Enlightenment. Irony is also a highly productive aspect of everyday language. For example, speakers may want to use irony to produce a humorous effect at a friend's birthday party or pass an ironic remark on siblings or on friends on their behavior or on their beliefs. Therefore, the question is whether these and other *ironic uses* share enough characteristics to be made part of one single account. Our contention is that they do have such characteristics in common, but they vary in complexity and adaptation to different communicative purposes and contexts, which have to be scrutinized for similarities and differences. This means that the resulting explanatory framework should arise from a careful analysis of the components of the ironic act, for verbal irony, or of the ironic occurrence, whether communicated or not, for situational irony. This analysis has to be based on an analytically productive range of examples from varied sources.

1.1.2 A unified framework

We are at a stage in the development of theoretical work on irony where it is necessary to produce a unified approach to the phenomenon. The present study intends to be a major step in this integration process. It requires a qualitative analysis of irony carried out by examining a large number of examples from varied sources. The analysis has the twofold goal of formulating high-level, broad-ranging linguistic generalizations and fined-grained descriptions that can eventually be accommodated into the framework of principles supplied by the generalizations after putting them to a test. There is no way in which the required analysis can proceed without constant mutual feedback from these two aspects of the methodology. The strength of this assertion will become evident all along this book. Nevertheless, a word of caution is necessary. The analytical framework provided here is not intended to be

a final one, but only a strong one, that is, one that is capable of supplying highly reliable analytical tools to face further evidence as it accrues, whether the evidence is obtained from qualitative or quantitative studies.

In addition, although our research commitments are geared in the direction of pairing cognitive processes and the communicative potential of linguistic expressions, the present book is not constrained to cognitive and pragmatic adequacy standards. Rather, it makes formulations that are intended to be sensitive to existing or future research in any field of linguistic and literary enquiry. Finally, this book makes emphasis on the division between culture-oriented approaches to irony and more analytical studies. The former approach is typical of literary theory and the latter of linguistic pragmatics, psycholinguistics, and philosophy. But this division is a convenient simplification, which does not preclude the unified approach from being applicable to sociological, anthropological, and neurolinguistic considerations. It does not presuppose either that literary theory has no analytical concerns or that linguists, psycholinguists, and philosophers ignore the cultural context. The only claim is that there is a greater emphasis on the context and culture in some fields and disciplines and a lesser one in others. This point is evidenced in the discussion of previous work on irony in connection with the state of the art and theoretical framework sections.

1.1.3 On common analytical categories for verbal and situational irony

The literature on irony has generally addressed either verbal irony (e.g., Clark and Gerrig, 1984; Wilson, 2006; Wilson and Sperber, 2012) or situational irony (e.g., Elleström, 2002; Lucariello, 1994; Lucariello and Mindolovich, 1995) as if the two phenomena were independent of each other. Indeed, in appearance, verbal and situational irony seem to be very different from each other. The former, which is constructed linguistically, is fully intentional; the latter is simply attested by a perceiver on the basis of haphazard occurrence. However, verbal and situational irony have relevant elements in common. In both a discrepancy between what someone would expect and what is attested reality gives rise to an ironic attitude. These common elements are in fact analytical categories whose exact nature and relevance for a unified account of irony will be discussed in Section 2.3.

1.1.4 On systematization

The collection of examples that we have gathered from different sources (television shows, films, literature, visual art, everyday speech, etc.) has made us realize that the verbal vs. situational dichotomy falls short of explaining the complex variety of

contexts underlying ironic meaning. Situational irony can be reported (e.g., tales, jokes) or even performed (e.g., drama, skits). Thus, we have subsumed the verbal/situational distinction into a broader one where irony is seen as either *communicated* or *non-communicated* (see Section 2.4). In this view, verbal irony is a subcategory of communicated irony, which may also be conveyed visually or multimodally. On the other hand, non-communicated (i.e., situational) irony may or may not be framed within a communicative context.

Nevertheless, as was briefly noted above, the historical and socio-cultural context of irony is also to be taken into account. In this connection (Lozano, 2019) has noted that literary studies on irony are notably context-oriented, where by context is meant socio-cultural and historical tradition. This study describes and classifies ironic uses according to how they fit an author's aesthetic purposes as described by such literary theorists as Muecke (1969, 1970) and Colebrook (2004). Literary studies have particularly shed light on the cultural aspect of the ironic context (cf. Hutcheon, 1994), and their conclusions float in the rather blurry dividing line between literary theory and philosophy (e.g., Booth, 1974; De Man, 1996). The nature of this perspective is not at all surprising, given the similar approach of literary studies to other figures of speech (cf. Dupriez, 1991; Baldick, 1996). In line with the evolution of literary studies themselves, from a more philological trend to the current cultural focus of the discipline, studies on irony as a phenomenon are scarcer, and applied studies of previous theoretical studies on irony to literary works are more abundant and context-oriented in the sense of the notion of context expounded above. Linguistics presents a very different situation. Unlike literary theory, linguistics has taken a less cultural, more analytical point of view. Largely drawing from everyday examples of language use, linguists are more interested in the principles that operate when producing and interpreting irony rather than in the cultural circumstances underlying its production and interpretation. However, from among the linguistic traditions, Cognitive Linguistics makes greater emphasis on the socio-cultural context as central to understanding linguistic phenomena of various kinds, especially metaphor (e.g., Kövecses, 2005, 2015; Baicchi, 2015; Soares da Silva, 2016; see also the papers in Musolff et al., 2014). The same emphasis on culture is found in different areas of pragmatics (e.g., Wierzbicka, 1990, 2003; Spencer-Oatey and Jiang, 2003; Alexander, 2004). We believe that both the analytical and the cultural perspectives are complementary and should be brought together in an integrated account of irony where pragmatics and cognition can play an important role.

1.1.5 On the felicity of irony

Setting our eyes on the interpreter's end in the ironic context has led us to produce a classification of ironist and interpreter types, and their possible combinations. Ironists can be more or less solidary, depending on whether they wish their interpreters to have an easier access to the irony; interpreters can be more or less naïve depending their previous knowledge about the thought echoed by the ironist and their ability to access the observable scenario. These categories are gradable and can be combined, yielding a wide array of communicative situations where the outcome of irony is more or less felicitous. Thus, at one end of the spectrum, a situation featuring a highly non-solidary ironist and a naïve interpreter will most likely be communicatively infelicitous. At the other end, a non-naïve interpreter may find an extremely solidary ironist's communicative efforts useless.

1.2 A note on methodology

As noted above, a large number of disciplines have shown interest in irony and have produced studies that address different aspects of the phenomenon. However, there is a lack of dialogue between some of them. This is a problematic situation that should be fixed, which can be done by creating a broad theoretical framework where inconsistencies can be discussed and at least some of them can be leveled out on the basis of an extensive analysis of the data. For discrepancies that cannot be reconciled, the theoretical framework should at least provide the analyst with mechanisms to produce motivated explanations and the integration of insights when and to the extent that progress in the different disciplines makes it possible. One of our aims is to produce such a framework and provide possible exploratory pathways for further incorporation of analytical insights as they arise. Such an aim is generally consistent with present-day standards for methodological reliability (Maxwell, 2017, p. 14).

In broad outline, the disciplines that have looked at irony can be divided into two groups. The first group includes those with a strong focus on language structure and use, such as pragmatics, the philosophy of language, psycholinguistics, and artificial intelligence. The second includes disciplines linked to artistic pursuits and cultural factors, such as philosophy or literary theory. The traditional lack of dialogue between these two groups, as acknowledged by Hussein (2015), has been detrimental to the understanding of irony. What is more, this is this a problem that has affected work on figurative language in general including metaphor, metonymy, and hyperbole. As far as the irony is concerned, this situation has resulted in incomplete, although largely complementary, studies that must be taken into

consideration when building an integrated account of this phenomenon. Ideally, such an account should be accommodated into a more comprehensive approach to figurative language and, if possible, to meaning construction in general. Some steps have already been taken in this direction, initially in Ruiz de Mendoza and Galera (2014) and later on in Ruiz de Mendoza (2021). These studies, in fact, provide a framework for the present proposal by offering a broad account of figurative language in terms of cognitive modeling (the activity of cognitive operations on cognitive models). However, the breadth of these proposals has only made provision for the most basic aspects of each figure of speech and the only interdisciplinary insights in them are limited to the first group of approaches identified above. A more detailed account of each figure is needed and one that integrates insights from both groups. The present study intends to be a major step in this direction, which, of course, poses some challenges.

First, there are important analytical differences between the language-oriented and the socio-cultural groups. With only occasional exceptions (e.g., Athanasiadou, 2017a), while language-oriented studies of irony have generally relied on fine-grained analytical procedures, often with an experimental component, culture-oriented disciplines have focused on factors that are not easy to systematize due to their generally more subjective nature. To give an example of such challenges, think of the problem of accounting for the philosophical ideas that cause irony to be less present in the Age of Enlightenment than in the Postmodern era. There is no trivial answer to this issue, because of the multifarious nature of the cultural factors that characterize literary periods. Some are historical, others have to do with scientific assumptions, still others with in-group styles and countercultural currents. On the other hand, some linguistic studies on irony have worked in conjunction with psycholinguistics, which provides interesting empirical data that sheds light on some of the claims made by linguists on this phenomenon (see Section 2.2.6). Thus, linguists make use of linguistic evidence and argumentation to build a plausible scenario for the understanding of the phenomenon. But explanations change dramatically depending on their theoretical orientation and the explanatory mechanisms put forward are not necessarily psychologically real nor is psychological reality a *sine qua non* condition for a linguistic account to attain legitimacy. Psycholinguists and linguists are often aware that it is not always possible to test every linguistic claim empirically. This is the well-known *falsifiability* issue, popularized in the philosophy of science by Popper (1959, 1962) (see also Maxwell, 2017). A theoretical claim may not be falsifiable, i.e., the object of an attempt to be proved wrong through replicable empirical testing, if it has been formulated in a way that prevents any such empirical testing. Usually, a linguistic postulate will be falsifiable if it can take the *if-then* form thus specifying the input conditions and the expected outcome of linguistic mechanisms. However, sometimes, even postulates of this sort can be hard to falsify

if the processes which they involve cannot be tapped into by means of the standard tests (e.g., priming, reaction times, eye tracking, recall tasks, among others). Also, it may be the case that experimental falsification is to be disregarded since the nature of a given phenomenon can only be established through the systematic observation of attested cases of language use. Thus, there is no vital need for experimental evidence to prove the existence of metonymic substitution since there is massive linguistic evidence in support of this thesis (Ruiz de Mendoza, 2014a). For example, the interpretation of the sentence *He drank the whole cup* requires the substitution of the container (the cup) for its content (e.g., coffee, tea, milk), which is a case of metonymy. At the non-lexical level, the sentence *I waved down a taxi*, in the context of a question to the speaker about how he went to the airport, substitutes for a more complex thought: “I hailed a taxi, had it stop and pick me up, and then I had it take me to the airport” (Gibbs, 1999, p. 67). Also, the statement, *You’re making too much noise*, in a default context, is easily taken to substitute for a request to stop making noise (see Panther, 2005 for similar examples). Furthermore, substitution can be found not only in metonymy but in other figures of speech. Two straightforward cases are referential metaphor and euphemism (Ruiz de Mendoza and Galera, 2014; Ruiz de Mendoza, 2017b). An example of referential metaphor is *My sweet beautiful rose has left me*, where the subject noun phrase (*my sweet beautiful rose*) is a definite description which refers to, and thus substitutes for, the person who has abandoned the speaker. This noun phrase captures a whole range of relevant features, understood metaphorically, about the type of beauty of the person referred to and its impact on the speaker. This enhances its referential value. In the case of euphemism, the source expression substitutes for an ill-sounding target through a partial or implied representation of the latter. For example, *the departed* substitutes for those that have died by virtue of the metaphor whereby the process of dying is seen in terms of motion (much like other processes) away from those who stay alive.

However, the convergence of psycholinguistic and linguistic evidence strengthens the explanatory adequacy of the account. What is more, experimental psycholinguistic evidence can lead to the reformulation of linguistic postulates. A recent example of how this can happen can be derived from the study of simile in linguistics. A long-standing assumption about the relationship between simile and metaphor is that these two phenomena are simply alternative ways of expressing the same figurative meaning (e.g., Miller, 1993). However, this assumption is only a superficial one, based on the examination of fragmentary data, and, as a consequence, has been unable to stand the test of experimental confirmation. In the early 2000s, Glucksberg and his collaborators published work showing that experimental subjects have a strong tendency to interpret mutually convertible metaphors and *like*-similes rather differently. It turned out that *like*-similes were found to be open-ended, while metaphor had a more restrained interpretation (cf. Glucksberg,

2001; Glucksberg and Haught, 2006). For example, in *My lawyer is (like) a shark*, the metaphor classifies the lawyer as belonging to the category of predators in terms of such attributes as their aggressiveness, determinacy, and ruthlessness, while the *like*-simile adds strength, speed, and other physical abilities. This finding evidently requires a modification of the initial assumption. Relevance theorists have only recently done so (e.g., Walaszewska, 2013) and the same holds for cognitive linguists (Romano, 2015; Ruiz de Mendoza, 2020a, b) despite the emphasis of both frameworks, especially the latter, on consistency with experimental findings.

As is the rule with studies accepting the so-called cognitive commitment, which will be discussed in Section 1.3 below, the present study intends to be sensitive to experimental findings on irony. However, this will still give us a very partial view of this phenomenon. The cultural approach to irony provides another interesting perspective, which should be compatible with psycholinguistic and linguistic accounts. While the latter make emphasis on the cognitive and linguistic mechanisms behind irony, and on their impact on meaning, culture-oriented approaches (e.g., in literary theory) focus on the connection between the socio-cultural context and the production and interpretation of irony. Disciplines related to culture have produced scholarly work that treats irony as part of a context where the prevalent ideas, artistic trends, or historic circumstances may or may not be grounds for an ironic-prone cultural context, with consequences for the greater or lesser use of irony in literary production, as discussed by Colebrook (2004), Hutcheon (1994) and Muecke (1970), among others (see Section 2.2.2). Because of this general orientation, despite some (rather isolated) attempts to explain how irony works (e.g., Muecke, 1969; Booth, 1974), literary criticism has done little to explain ironic mechanisms. More recently, Cognitive Poetics has attempted to explain literary language by bringing together insights from literary theory and Cognitive Linguistics (cf. Freeman, 2003; Gavins and Steen, 2003; Semino and Culpeper, 2002; Tsur, 2008; Stockwell, 2002). According to Stockwell (2002), Cognitive Poetics has the potential to offer a unified explanation of both individual and non-individual interpretations, i.e., those which are shared by a group, community, or culture. According to this author, the purpose of a cognitive-poetic analysis is to rationalize and explain how a reader can reach a given understanding of a text. Nevertheless, these promising claims remain underdeveloped for research on figures other than metaphor, irony included. As far as philosophy is concerned, the points of convergence with linguistic studies on irony are rather scarce. Unlike literary criticism, which draws conclusions from the exhaustive examination of literary texts, philosophy largely deals with irony with independence of its role in the texts by placing emphasis on its relation to the development of ideas. Philosophers such as Kierkegaard (1841) and De Man (1996) have emphasized the relationship between irony and the ideological evolution of society but have left aside the study of irony as a linguistic phenomenon.

In sum, the methodology used in the present study brings together analytical categories from an array of disciplines and approaches when useful to account for different aspects of the ironic phenomenon. The points of convergence are used to produce a unified and analytically productive framework for the analysis of irony which is consistent with the data which we have collected. This framework should provide an explicit account of irony, based on well-defined analytical categories which allow for:

1. A clear delineation of the boundaries of the phenomenon.
2. The construction of a descriptively and explanatorily adequate classification of ironic types.
3. The study of the levels of complexity of ironic uses.

In connection to interdisciplinary pursuits, the proposed framework should also allow for:

4. The identification of further convergences across theoretical disciplines and approaches.
5. The incorporation of such convergences into the general explanatory layout of the framework without doing violence to its most central features.

The following section spells out the conditions for this ambitious kind of framework to be workable.

1.2.1 Adequacy criteria

The present study is not experimental, but it follows the basic assumptions of Lakoff's (1990) well-known *cognitive commitment*. Lakoff (1990) offered a programmatic outline of a cognitive linguist's main methodological concerns. He argued that cognitive linguists are, like others, committed to formulating generalizations on the basis of linguistic evidence, i.e., finding usage patterns that shed light on linguistic structure at different levels of organization. More recently, Goldberg (2002, 2006) has discussed in detail the issue of linguistic generalization from a perspective that is fully compatible with this original assumption. But cognitive linguists are also committed to motivating linguistic structure in terms of empirical findings in the cognitive sciences. As we have noted in the previous section, this can be very productive since such findings allow linguists to revise their descriptions and explanations. But they are also productive to the extent that this way of addressing phenomena creates convergences across experimentally-oriented disciplines, like cognitive psychology and psycholinguistics. This is an important point in view of the growing body of evidence, whether linguistic (cf. Peña, 2008, 2016; Ruiz de Mendoza and Galera,

2014; Pérez, 2016, 2019) or experimental (e.g., Gibbs, 2006, 2014), which makes explicit connections between language, experience, and thought. It is also important in relation to identifying areas of convergence across various accounts of language (Butler and González, 2014; González and Butler, 2018).

Ruiz de Mendoza and Galera (2014) have related the cognitive and generalization commitments to the traditional standards of adequacy of linguistic accounts. They suggest that the generalization commitment comes very close in the basic aspects of its formulation to the old Chomskyan criterion of explanatory adequacy (Chomsky, 1964). In generative linguistics, the search for explanatory adequacy is posited as the ultimate goal of a scientific account of language. It consists in formulating fully explicit rules and principles that account for linguistic form. This standard is beyond observational and descriptive adequacy, which are pre-requisites to attain explanatory adequacy. Observational adequacy simply involves making adequate initial observations about the nature of a phenomenon, while descriptive adequacy gathers such observations into significant patterns that still require explanatory adequacy. The difference between this approach to adequacy standards and the cognitive-linguistic approach is that Chomsky is strongly convinced that to motivate syntactic phenomena the linguist needs to resort to syntactic principles. This idea was strongly contested by functional linguistics, who sought to motivate syntax on the basis of external factors. Halliday (1970, 1978) posited social semiotics as the central factor. Dik (1997) discussed other factors and suggested psychological, pragmatic, discourse, and typological adequacy as complementary to explanatory adequacy. Butler (2009) has listed a whole range of standards postulated by different schools of thought, which includes sociological, cultural, and discourse issues (see also Butler and González, 2014, p. 134–138). The question is that language is at the crossroads between a whole array of disciplines and it is possible to produce standards that prepare linguistic description for further scientific pursuits, both theoretical and applied. But at the basis of any account of standards, the special prominence of communication and cognition should be taken into account. Thus, sociological, pragmatic, and discourse adequacy are but dependencies of the view of language as an instrument of coherent communication in certain social and cultural contexts, while psychological adequacy is dependent on cognition.

In this respect, one could ask about the adequacy standards for the investigation of irony. Evidently, there are psychological, social, cultural, pragmatic, and discourse aspects, but the analysis of our data reveals conceptual and communicative patterns of organization as central, with socio-cultural aspects depending on them. Thus, the account of irony provided in the present work is first grounded in the concept of conceptual scenario, which is a knowledge construct originating in socio-cultural conventions and in our analysis of the context of situation in terms of such conventions. Second, our account deals with the communicative impact of

irony from the perspective of the inferential activity associated with how the mind works on those scenarios. This is cognitive activity paired with communicative effect. Lastly, there are formal aspects to irony, but, as will be evident in the analysis of our data, these are motivated by the cognitive and communicative aspects mentioned before.

Finally, our account needs to comply with the traditional criterion of *explanatory adequacy*, which requires combining descriptive simplicity in the formulation of the governing principles of the phenomenon in question, with breadth of scope or comprehensiveness, and the ability to produce fine-grained analyses. We have strived to make our account fully compliant with this standard in three ways: first, by postulating the core conditions specified in 1.1.1, and integrating around them a host of theoretical insights coming from different disciplines and frameworks; second, by aiming at a broad coverage of phenomena, which includes many recognized uses of irony in a variety of communicative contexts; third, by specifying the relevant analytical categories and making their relations fully explicit. Of course, we are aware that full explanatory adequacy is an ideal goal that will take further explorations and modification. We feel satisfied if our contribution at least lays the foundation for potential increments in explanatory adequacy.

1.2.2 The qualitative approach

The type of study presented here cuts across research frameworks and disciplines. Subsidiary to this aim is the provision for the scholarly community of new analytical insights that can be the object of further studies, whether experimental, quantitative, or qualitative. This twofold (and ambitious) aim is analytical since it is intended to dissect and relate to one another as many aspects of irony as is possible. At the same time, it is synthetic. The observation of usage patterns in examples of irony drawn from a variety of sources is to be complemented with plausible explanations about their nature.

Producing adequate explanations requires putting to a test previous postulates on the different aspects of the phenomenon. For some aspects, no account may have been offered yet, while for others there may be competing accounts (whether internal or external to a given discipline) whose explanatory power can be affected by limitations on scope and/or erroneous assumptions. In order to examine the strength of the various accounts, it is first necessary to have a detailed and exhaustive picture of the components of irony in their interaction. This is a measure of descriptive adequacy. Second, it is necessary to apply the various analytical frameworks to find which of them provide more elegant explanations, which are to be understood as those that account for a broader range of phenomena with the simplest explanatory mechanisms. This provides a measure of explanatory adequacy.

Since, as noted before, this level of adequacy cannot be independent of cognitive and communicative factors, the best account of irony is the one that formulates the broadest-ranging highest-level (or more elegant) generalizations of irony resulting from an analysis of its structural components, together with how they interrelate, their cognitive motivation, and their communicative potential.

In the view defended here, studying irony along the lines described above is a necessary step forward in preparing the grounds for a new generation of empirical studies on irony (whether quantitative or experimental) to be added to the existing ones. As noted by Katz (2017), the standard experimental approach to irony rarely goes beyond taking a statement (e.g., *You are a true friend*) and embedding it in a verbal context that supports either a literal interpretation or a counterfactual one, which is ironic. Katz argues for certain minor changes in experimental designs. These changes concern the improvement of observational techniques, of the assessment of the genuineness of experimental items, and of rating techniques. It goes without saying that any refinement in an experimental protocol calls for a comparable refinement in the preliminary qualitative analysis that supports such protocols. A solid theoretical framework can supply the experimenter with:

1. Clear-cut analytical categories. A crucial part of the reliability of experimental results hinges on the reliability of the analytical categories. Unluckily, experimental work trusts the experimenter's own decision as to what counts as a possible ironic utterance or an irony-triggering context. Irony theorists should ideally be able to break down the phenomenon into constituents in a non-controversial manner and, if this were impossible, they should at least be able to identify the analytical domains where enough agreement among theorists provides the experimenter with a safe analytical environment. An experiment that is based on questionable categories or demarcation lines is not reliable. This issue affects not only the components of irony but also the external demarcation of the phenomenon (e.g., irony versus banter, sarcasm, prolepsis, etc.).
2. A clear specification of potential relations or forms of interaction and mutual influence between categories. For example, if the notion of ironic echo is accepted and its correct place (or role) within the unified theoretical framework is determined, it follows that this notion will acquire the status of a reliable analytical category. It also follows that the ironic echoes will interact with other categories in the system, including observable contextual parameters and retrievable cultural conventions. Presumably, an indicator of the safety of postulating the existence of such an interaction is the derivability of an implicit echo from making explicit such other parameters and conventions. Our analysis in Sections 3.2 and 3.4 bears out this point.

3. A theory-driven fine-grained analysis of constituents of the phenomenon. Analytical refinement is not at odds with the production of broad-ranging high-level generalizations. On the contrary, a fine-grained analysis will benefit from being carried out from the perspective of high-level explanatory breadth, while providing important feedback on the adequacy of the theoretical framework. For example, in the case of irony, the observation of usage patterns has revealed the existence of complex forms of echo. This is a refinement in the study of the notion of echo, which stems from Relevance Theory in pragmatics (Sperber and Wilson, 1995; Wilson and Sperber, 2012). The echoic account of irony has been presented by its proponents as incompatible with the competing pretense approach to irony. In principle, the identification of complex forms of ironic echo should tip the scales in favor of the echoic account. However, the present research will show that both accounts can be integrated into a broader view of verbal irony (see Section 2.3) where ironic echoes play a very specific role which is subservient to other higher-level analytical categories. This means that the existence of complex echoes only introduces one more variable within a broader framework.

The observations made above are intended to clarify the role of a qualitative methodology in the study of language, in general, and of irony, in particular. It is relevant in itself, but it can additionally play an important supportive role for experimental studies and for any sort of statistical analysis where a good definition of interlocking variables is needed. Furthermore, the qualitative study of irony benefits from previous findings in the experimental and statistical domains while providing new insights that can serve to improve their procedures.

1.2.3 Data collection and analysis

Collecting data for irony is a complex and often controversial task. Irony heavily relies on interpretation. As noted above (1.1.3), there is no ironic meaning until an interpreter, or a perceiver, detects a discrepancy between two scenarios. For such a detection to be possible, the interpreter needs to share enough information with the ironist. Hence, the success of irony is largely subjective. What is more, socio-cultural changes may affect the perception of a given text as ironic or not. For example, Jane Austen often ironized about family relations in Victorian England. However, a present-day reader from Thailand might not have the necessary background knowledge to identify Austen's ironic uses. The socio-cultural side of ironic interpretation is another constraining factor when collecting data.

In addressing the problem of data collection, we were aware that, despite the large number of studies on irony in a wide range of disciplines, researchers have

tended to focus on a reduced number of examples and concentrate on particular genres and communicative setting. This has caused these studies to be fragmented and incomplete. We observe this both in linguistics and in literary studies. For instance, as should be expected, literary theorists have focused almost exclusively on literary works when addressing irony. This is the case of Booth (1974), who mainly takes examples from different literary periods, and Colebrook (2004), who sets similar limits to her corpus. Even though some literary scholars have taken examples from rhetoric (e.g., Muecke, 1970), literary criticism remains largely literature-focused. This results in an incomplete picture of how irony operates for a number of reasons, especially the aesthetic purpose and greater sophistication of literary texts which is not present in other uses of language. In the case of philosophy, it is very often the case that very few or no examples are provided, since their explorations of the phenomenon are rooted in generic-level considerations such as the place of man in the world (e.g., Kierkegaard, 1841). On the other hand, linguistic studies have worked with an even smaller quantity of instances of irony, often oversimplified for analytical purposes. Linguists, especially those working on pragmatics, rarely look at more sophisticated instances of irony beyond the prototypical examples provided by Jonathan Swift or Sophocles, as is the case, among other authors, of Clark and Gerrig (1984), and Wilson and Sperber (2012). By necessity, this situation is specially the case in psycholinguistic work, given its highly controlled nature. The consequence is that the understanding of irony is more limited than it should be. The reduced set of examples handled by scholars falls short of giving us a complete picture of this phenomenon even at the observational level.

To overcome these problems, we needed a rich collection of examples from a variety of sources. However, to the best of our knowledge there is no analytical database collecting examples of irony in a systematic fashion. A likely reason is the difficulty to identify and extract irony from standard corpus searches. This is not true of other figures of speech, such as metaphor or metonymy, which can be more easily identified through keywords in major linguistic repositories such as the well-known *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA) or the *British National Corpus* (BNC), and for which we have compilations such as the *Master Metaphor List* (Lakoff et al., 1991), the *Master Metonymy List* (Leite, 1994), or the massive *VU Amsterdam Metaphor Corpus Online*.¹ For this reason, our data has been manually extracted and included in our own database by detecting and analyzing cases of irony from the literature on the topic, TV series and sitcoms, literary works, ordinary speech, periodicals, political speeches, movies, theatrical plays, and spontaneous conversation as witnessed by the authors. Thus, we started by looking

1. <http://www.vismet.org/metcor/documentation/home.html>

at the sources where we believed irony could be found. We extracted multiple examples, dissected them into constituent parts from several analytical perspectives, and found common patterns for which we have produced motivated generalizations. Once the theoretical principles were extracted, we further tested them with more examples, which has allowed us to give shape to our conclusions.

In this process, diversity has been one of our priorities, since it is key to producing more reliable generalizations. We have drawn our data from three types of sources. The first type is audiovisual sources, such as movies, sitcoms or theatrical plays, where the audience is not part of the situation and cannot intervene or be seen, but it can interpret or perceive ironies. The second type is exclusively textual sources, such as literary texts and periodicals, where the paratextual features typical of audiovisual materials are absent owing to the restrictions of the medium. In both of these types, the interpreter or perceiver of the irony is unknown to the creator of the text. Finally, the third type is everyday language use, where the interpreter is present at the moment of production of irony.

Each example was annotated in terms of its component parts, its mode of activation, and the nature of the ironic outcome. It is important to note that we made no pre-theoretical distinctions among the examples collected. We developed the analytical categories at stages while accumulating and making provisional annotations of the data. The final annotation was developed as more elements proved relevant to account for the phenomenon. Annotation has been especially useful for those examples extracted from sources that are not exclusively textual. Such features as bodily or facial gestures and prosodic markers (e.g., accentual prominence, vowel lengthening, rising or falling intonation, etc.) were included whenever possible, together with information about the socio-cultural context for the ironic use and its potential degree of felicity. The felicity of irony is a subjective value that depends highly on the interpreter or perceiver's knowledge, as well as on how elitist the ironist wants to be. For instance, parents may build ironies that pass unnoticed to their small children, due to the lack of information of the latter as a consequence of their age. On the other hand, ironists may only want a small audience to understand their ironic remarks and purposely draw on very specific knowledge the interpreter or the perceiver is expected to have. This degree of specification has allowed us to determine the potential target meaning of the different cases of irony, the cognitive and pragmatic tasks involved in their production, and other factors like the type of ironist, the type of interpreter, and the ironic target.

1.3 The structure of the book

The structure of the rest of this book will be adapted to the research goals outlined above. Chapter 2 will provide an overview of the main assumptions put forward in various disciplines, like rhetoric, literary theory, philosophy, linguistics, psycholinguistics, and artificial intelligence. It will also discuss the essential aspects of a unified approach to irony. It will discuss in some detail the conditions for such an approach to be possible and the analytical categories which make it productively applicable to the data. On the basis of linguistic data, it will explore the nature of the conceptual scenarios that play a central role in the production and interpretation of irony. It will do so in full consistency with previous empirical findings and with well-argued assumptions from different disciplines and frameworks. From a consideration of the core aspects of irony, the chapter will put forward a new typology of irony, which goes beyond the traditional distinction between verbal and situational irony, while avoiding the overlaps and circularities of other attempts at classification. Chapter 3 provides an in-depth analysis of formation strategies for the different kinds of scenarios involved in irony, with special emphasis on complexity issues. This part of the study examines in some detail the thorny issue of interaction between irony and other figures of speech. Finally, this chapter provides an explicit account of how ironic meaning is produced, in the form of inferences, as a result of the clash between epistemic and observable scenarios. Chapter 4 is complementary to Chapter 3. It studies the different structural components of the ironic act and the ironic situation. It also examines the roles of each component, and how they interact, with a view to predicting the potential of an ironic utterance and of an ironic situation to be interpreted as such. Finally, this chapter uses the core features of irony, as dealt with in Chapter 3, and the components of the ironic act, to draw the boundary line between irony and banter, on the one hand, and to specify the connections between irony and sarcasm, satire, antiphrasis, and prolepsis, on the other hand. Chapter 5 treats irony from a socio-cultural perspective. It makes a division between basic and readapted ironic uses and sets up relevant connections between them thanks to the analytical categories developed in the present book. The result is a re-exploration of traditional ironic types like Socratic, rhetorical, satirical, tragic, dramatic, and metafictional irony. Chapter 6 provides a summary of the main findings of this work and an assessment of their implications for the understanding of irony in terms of the relationship between communication and cognition.

Theoretical pre-requisites

2.1 Introduction

Across the centuries, irony has sparked the interest of scholars in a wide variety of disciplines, with studies of verbal irony outnumbering those of situational irony. Of course, irony has not received the same amount of attention in all historical periods as evidenced by the ups and downs both in scholarly attention and in the use of irony in artistic or literary works. The 18th century in England, for instance, was a period deeply marked by political convulsion, which resulted in an enhanced use of satire, as illustrated by the work of writers like Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift. By contrast, the extreme emphasis on reason in the Enlightenment called for a non-ironic reaction to life.

The complex nature of the phenomenon benefits from a multidisciplinary conglomerate of approaches, where it may be argued, linguistics can play an important conciliatory role. Thus, different disciplines (e.g., rhetoric, literary theory, philosophy, psycholinguistics, artificial intelligence, linguistics) have looked at irony from different angles (social, psychological, inferential, etc.), sometimes in connection to historical periods characterized by specific socio-cultural factors. Nevertheless, linguistics can help create meeting points for the various perspectives, however divergent. To give an example of potential cooperation mediated by linguistics, consider rhetoric and artificial intelligence, whose interests are, in principle, largely unconnected. Rhetoricians know how to produce and use irony in sophisticated ways with persuasive purposes, but they have no control over what makes irony be detected and how. Artificial intelligence tries to emulate human thinking, which it often does through probabilistic methods. For example, on the basis of a large input of texts, an artificial intelligence program should be able to correlate expressions that are metalinguistically classified as ironic by speakers. This could allow the program to identify expressions in their textual contexts that can be ironic, that is, it could create a correlation between any input text and an estimate of irony in probabilistic terms. This is the point where a linguist could come into the picture and, on the basis of manual work, dissect sampled utterances in connection to contextual parameters to find possible text-context patterns of ironic production and detection. This kind of analysis would provide research variables for psycholinguistic experimenting. With an enhanced understanding on irony detection, this

kind of coordinated work would provide feedback for the rhetorician and also for any other scholar interested in irony in context (e.g., experts in pragmatics, literary theory, cultural studies, etc.). Of course, work in the field is far from reaching this level of coordination of efforts. The preliminary stage, which is our focus in the present book, requires finding convergences and divergences with a view to setting the stage for future coordinated efforts. With this understanding in mind, the aim of the present chapter is to provide a brief multidisciplinary overview of approaches that makes relevant connections among developments of the major disciplines that have dealt with irony to then develop our own theoretical framework in 2.3.

2.2 Perspectives on irony

2.2.1 Irony in rhetoric

Classical rhetoric is at the root of the study of irony. Nevertheless, the number of sources is rather limited. Some might have been lost and the remaining ones are often inaccurately dated and difficult to access. Fortunately, there has been work carried out in this field (see Swearingen, 1991; Kaufer, 1977), although at all times marked by the restrictions mentioned above. As we shall see in Section 2.2.2, the rhetorical potential of irony has also been addressed by literary theorists, who have observed this use in literary works focused on social criticism.

In *Nicomachean Ethics* 4.7., Aristotle argues that the truthful man exists between his two opposites, the *alazon* and the *iron*. It is this latter term underlies the concept of irony. Aristotle identified virtue with truthfulness and both playing up the truth (*alazoneia*) and playing it down (*eironeia*), which were forms of deception, were vices attached to the notion of pretense. The *alazon* pretends to be more, and the *iron* pretends to be less, and both move away from the virtue of truth. Interestingly, we find here the notion of pretense, which we shall later address in more detail (Section 2.2.4). In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle further states that *eironeia* makes us angry because it shows disdain, thus pointing at the now well-recognized attitudinal element of irony (cf. Wilson and Sperber, 2012). As for the deceptive element of irony, this was often applied by Plato and Aristotle to the sophists, those that concealed *aletheia* ('truth', 'disclosure'). Irony was initially envisaged as a deceptive linguistic device, which could be made part of a witty strategy to persuade without fully telling the truth.

Nevertheless, this understanding of irony was not totally embraced by later rhetoricians, especially in Ancient Rome. Although rhetoricians such as Demosthenes or Theophrastus did indeed take irony as a self-depreciation device, it was taken more as a vicious dissimulation of one's political and social powers with the aim of

escaping responsibility. This converges with Aristotle's view of irony as a political weapon, stemming from Anaximenes of Lampsacus's treaty *Rhetoric to Alexander* (cf. Knox, 1961). Irony was popularized in the 2nd century B.C. as a common term both in written and spoken language. According to Cicero, irony could be either a mere figure of speech or a pervasive discourse habit. Quintilian took up the task of providing a more exact definition of irony. This author defined irony as the trope whereby one was to understand the opposite of what was said ("contrarium quod dicitur intelligendum est"; *Institutio oratoria* VIII, 6.54; cf. Morrison, 2011). Quintilian also made a distinction between *tropes* and *schemas* in irony. As a trope, irony was a figure of speech embedded in a straightforward context; but as a schema, it referred to an entire speech or case presented in a language and tone which conflicts with the true situation. This latter interpretation of irony is what we could call ironic discourse (cf. Benwell, 2004; Shilikhina, 2013). As a schema, the term irony could also apply to a man's whole life, as is the case of Socrates's "ironic attitude" of constant feigned ignorance (cf. Knox, 1961). This rhetorical definition of irony as saying one thing and meaning the contrary was taken by later rhetoricians (e.g., Alexander Numenius, Aquila Romanus, Julius Rufianus, Phoebammon, Tiberius Rhetor, etc.). Quintilian's distinction is interesting to the extent that this author already believes irony is not a unified phenomenon, and distinguishes between irony as a linguistic strategy and broader, more structural cases of irony. This distinction has been kept under different labels until the present day. More recently, Swearingen (1991) has shown that the understanding of irony as a rhetorical device has experienced little evolution since Ancient Rome. It certainly gives rise to other types of irony that will be discussed in sections to follow, but the purely persuasive side of irony remains essentially the same. Even today, rhetoric irony is a widespread rhetorical device in political speeches, as acknowledged by the numerous studies on this topic (Herzfeld, 2001; Musolff, 2017; Seery, 2019, to name but a few). This rhetorical view of irony has been carried over into literary theory and made part of standard descriptions and classifications of so-called literary tropes, together with other figures of speech such as metaphor, metonymy, and hyperbole (Leech, 1969; Perrin, 1996).

2.2.2 Irony in literary theory

Any text is to some extent the product of its socio-cultural and historical context. This holds true even in the absence of explicit social, cultural, or historical references. Among all texts, literary works stand out as particularly context-bound texts. This has an effect on literary theory, which is largely influenced by the evolution of philosophical trends. A clear example is the connection between Derrida's notion of *deconstruction* (i.e., finding hidden alternative meanings that run counter to the

purported meaning and consistency of the text) and Heidegger's *destruction* in philosophy, understood as the dismantling, or overcoming, of representational thinking and Platonism and moving onto a modern theory of being (cf. Botha, 2008).

Literary theory has explored the nature and purpose of literary texts. It has also investigated the analytical methods to carry out such an exploration from both a philological and a socio-historical perspective. In other words, it has dealt with the literary text as a linguistic product, and with how this product results from social and historical circumstances. New Criticism and Russian Formalism, often considered the beginning of literary theory as a discipline, flourished at the time when Ferdinand de Saussure's ideas were becoming increasingly influential in European linguistics in the 1950s. Neither New Criticism nor Russian Formalism examined the context in which literary works were framed, but rather focused on inner narrative structures so as to determine the points of convergence and divergence, and where they overlapped. Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928) is an excellent illustration of the concern of literary theory (back then more closely connected to linguistics than now) with form rather than content (cf. Propp, 1968). It does not seem striking then that, as a strongly context-bound figure of speech, irony is nowhere to be found in the works produced by these theorists. Nevertheless, the later emergence of scholarly literary trends that looked at the text from the point of view of its interaction with the context (mainly Reception Theory and cultural studies, among them feminism, post-colonialism and Marxism) has given rise to a great number of studies of literature that occasionally dive into the notion of irony. We shall discuss this further in the paragraphs to follow.

The 20th century is a witness to the most extensive studies on irony produced by literary theorists (e.g., Thomson, 1948; Muecke, 1969, 1970; Myers, 1977; Booth, 1974; Hutcheon, 1994). However, rather than work on theoretical paradigms, literary theorists has been focused on studying the manifestation of irony in literary works. As a result, their studies tend to offer partial analytical insights into this phenomenon, particularly geared to making distinctions between types of irony and their impact in terms of the relationship between the text and the reader.

Literary theorists such as Muecke (1969, 1970) and Dane (1991) have pointed to the lack of a clear definition of irony in literary theory. Muecke (1970, p. 7) complains about the heterogenous and often unsystematic nature of the literary study of irony:

The semantic evolution of the word has been haphazard; historically, our concept of irony is the cumulative result of our having, from time to time over the centuries, applied the term sometimes intuitively, sometimes heedlessly, sometimes deliberately, to such phenomena as seemed, perhaps mistakenly, to bear a sufficient resemblance to certain other phenomena to which we had already been applying the term.

To sort out these problems, Muecke (1970) attempts to account for irony in terms of the communicative principles that regulate it. Irony is thus treated as a process of coding and decoding framed in a context and a co-text that provide the interpreter with the necessary interpretive clues. Muecke (1970) takes Chevalier (1932) as a starting point to define irony as a contrast between reality and appearance. However, hypocrisy, equivocations, or white lies can be defined along similar lines. To Muecke (1970), what distinguishes irony from these other forms of linguistic deception is that in irony the speaker wants the intended message to be retrieved by the hearer. This claim can be considered an antecedent of the direction taken much later to inferential pragmatics accounts like Relevance Theory (e.g., Wilson and Sperber, 1981). However, Muecke thinks of irony in terms of coding and decoding, following the standard accounts of communication theory of his time. Inferential pragmatics regards the interpretation of ironic meaning (and any other figure of speech) as a matter of inference.

Muecke (1970) also distinguishes between *instrumental* and *observable* irony. The former type consists in the realization of a purpose by using language ironically, while the latter type is unintentional and representable in art. These two labels do not distinguish between verbal and situational irony, but rather between intentional and non-intentional irony. The fact that, according to this author, observable irony is representable in art is of particular interest since it points out at the elaboration of irony in literary works. Muecke (1970) notes that the 18th and 19th centuries have produced a larger amount of artistic works containing *observable irony* (events being presented as ironic) as a manifestation of certain ways of understanding the world. On the other hand, *instrumental irony* (someone being ironic) is more likely to be found in rhetoric, where it is used as a linguistic device to persuade an audience. These remarks point at the relevance of the socio-cultural and historical context when analyzing sophisticated ironies. Lastly, Muecke puts forward two principles that regulate all kinds of irony: the *principle of economy*, and the *principle of high contrast*. The former consists in speakers providing their audiences with as few signs as they can. According to the principle of high contrast, there is a contradiction of expectations based on standards of likelihood: the greater the contrast, the more effective the irony. These two principles are consistent with our own framework where ironic meaning is seen as the result of clash between an observable and an echoed scenario (see Section 2.2.5) and the felicity of an ironic act is gradable depending on the intensity of such a clash, although other factors will be discussed (Section 4.5). What is more, the distinction between instrumental and observable irony hints at a typology of irony that no longer uses the traditional verbal vs. situational irony dichotomy. This classificatory criterion relies more on whether irony is constructed intentionally rather than on whether it is conveyed

verbally or not. One major gap in this approach, however, is that the attitudinal element is nowhere to be found. We will come back to this issue in 2.2.5.

Booth (1974), who focuses on the reader rather than on the writer, takes a different classificatory criterion based on the distinction between *stable* and *unstable* ironies. Stable ironies reject the literal meaning of the utterance and provide a straightforward answer (or interpretive solution). They are deliberately created by humans with the aim of being understood by humans. They are intended to be reconstructed by creating a new meaning different from that of the surface. They are fixed, since once the meaning has been reconstructed, the reader assumes that the task is finished. Finally, they are finite in application, since the field of discourse is narrowly circumscribed (Booth, 1974, p. 6). By contrast, unstable ironies involve the rejection of the literal meaning but provide no clear “answer” or interpretation. They are more likely to be used to make the interpreter question assumptions, rather than produce an undisputable interpretation. This distinction, which seems to run parallel to the one between coded and inferred meaning in linguistics (cf. Givón, 2002; Panther and Thornburg, 2014, 2017, 2018), is only useful to some extent. It can be used to find convergences and divergences between examples of ironies in different historical periods. However, it does not reveal much in terms of the nature of irony. Indeed, some instances of irony may be more complex than others (especially literary examples of irony). Noting that irony is stable or unstable only acknowledges that fact that the interpretation of some outcomes may be more or less complex.

The contextual nature of literary texts has given rise to various studies on the notion of the context (Groupe Mu, 1970; Chiaro, 1992; Knox, 1989; Eco, 1976; Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1980). The focus of literary theory on the ironic context and on the receiver has been studied in depth by Hutcheon (1994), who focuses on the relations between the communicative and the socio-historical contexts. Hutcheon (1994) claims that, essentially, the understanding of irony depends on the *discursive community* within which it is interpreted. Each individual belongs to more than one discursive community, among them, his or her family, national culture, or age group, with which he or she shares certain values, norms, and beliefs (cf. Swales, 1988). Contrary to Muecke (1970), whose focus was on the coding of ironic meaning, Hutcheon argues that irony is a semantically complex process of combining and relating said and unsaid meanings, and their evaluation. This last remark is of particular interest, since it points to the evaluative nature of irony.

Colebrook (2004), like Knox (1961, 1989), rather than focus on the operations involved in irony production and interpretation, undertakes the task of collecting and comparing examples of irony extracted from literary works and literary criticism from different historical periods. More specifically, Knox (1961) catalogues irony-creation techniques from Ancient Greece until the middle of the 18th century

in England with the aim to define it according to what it has meant to critics across the centuries. In his view, irony is based on either “praise-by-blame” or “blame-by-praise” strategies, thus acknowledging that irony can be both positive and negative. But what is interesting to note is that, long before modern theorists Knox treats irony as an act where the ironist “pretends” to not know but aims at being understood. This element of pretense is common to all stages of literary history, whichever the purpose of irony (teaching, persuading, criticizing, etc.). Later on, Colebrook (2004) extended the descriptive task initiated by Knox until the present day, including late Romantic irony, postmodern irony, and the relationship between irony and deconstruction. This addition is of particular interest, especially since the label ‘Romantic irony’ has been somewhat confusing. Authors like Knox (1989), Sedgewick (1935), and Worcester (1940), had pointed out that Romantic irony differed from other kinds of irony because it only involved detachment. Then, the use of irony made in postmodernism often mixes satire, and the detachment characteristic of romantic irony, with bitter, often metafictional, criticism.

The existence of variations in the use of irony across history has given rise to several classifications of ironic types (e.g., Knox, 1961; Muecke, 1969), which acknowledge these variations. It is this diversification that has all too often led to the belief that irony is a heterogeneous phenomenon that can have no unified account. However, it is indeed possible to make such variations part of such an account. Chapter 5 herein is devoted to this issue. At any rate, in spite of the largely descriptive and heterogeneous nature of these and other literary studies of irony, they still provide invaluable data for analysis, mostly based on a broader exploration of the connection between the socio-historical context and the use of irony than that provided by scholars outside literary theory. For this reason, we will make our account sensitive to relevant aspects of all this work.

2.2.3 Irony in philosophy

The reflective nature of philosophy has often led to the exploration of irony as either a situational issue or an attitude towards life. In this view, *situational irony* arises when the focus is on events and their surrounding circumstances, while *verbal irony* is the linguistic materialization of a belief-oriented attitude, as exemplified by the romantic use of irony to protest against the ideas of the Enlightenment. In rhetoric, by contrast, the main concern is on the linguistic form of irony as a tool to persuade. Socrates was the first known philosopher to have used irony in this function as an essential part of his well-known maieutic method. The philosopher feigns his own ignorance to make his pupils realize that he has superior wisdom. Let us take a dialogue where Socrates discusses the concept of justice with sophists Polemarchus and Thrasymachus. The philosopher praises the two sophists’ knowledge:

Nay, it is more reasonable that you should be the speaker. For you do affirm that you know and are able to tell. Don't be obstinate but do me a favour to reply and don't be chary of your wisdom, and instruct Glaucon here and the rest of us.

(Plato in Hamilton and Huntington, 2005, 587–8 [337e–338a])

Socratic irony is largely used as an instrument of enlightenment, which the pupil should attain by following the philosopher's guidance. This involves the pupil's realization that his assumptions are misled. Socratic irony falls under the category of what Quintilian called a schema rather than a trope (cf. Knox, 1961). This is important to note since it sheds light on the often-unclear common ground between Socratic irony and other types of verbal irony. Socratic irony has a strong attitudinal load which stems from the philosopher's pose rather than, as in common rhetoric, from the nature of any particular utterance.

Socratic irony has given rise to a large number of studies in philosophy (e.g., Kierkegaard, 1841; Dubs, 1927; Vlastos, 1991; Roochnik, 1995; Lane, 2006, 2011; Wolfsdorf, 2007; Ferrari, 2008; Lear, 2011; Warren, 2013), to be added to those in literary theory (e.g., Muecke, 1970; Hutcheon, 1994; and Colebrook, 2004, mentioned above). Muecke (1970) points out that, as with Socrates, irony could be envisaged as a matter of permanent self-conscious commitment. The focus on irony as a general attitude (or pose) rather than as a linguistic expression broadens the view proposed by rhetoricians.

Dramatic irony is key in order to understand the view on irony that emerged in Germany as an intellectual leader of Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries. Philosophers such as the Schlegel brothers, Ludwig Tieck, and Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand Solger focused on the human being as a victim of the irony of life, hence shifting from an active to a passive explanation of the phenomenon. A person was not ironic; the world was. Schubert saw irony as a naturally occurring incongruity such as the juxtaposition between man and the absurd ape, or the noble horse and the ridiculous ass. The so-called Romantic irony was nothing but the basic metaphysically ironic situation of man when he realizes that he is a finite being striving to comprehend an infinite and hence incomprehensible reality. In Romantic irony, the man is the victim of forces that escape his control, mainly nature, an infinite chaotic process of creation and destruction. According to Schlegel (cf. Firchow, 1971),

Irony is the only involuntary and yet completely deliberate dissimulation... everything should be playful and serious, guilelessly open and deeply hidden. It originates in the union of *savoir vivre* and scientific spirit, in the conjunction of a perfectly instinctive and perfectly conscious philosophy. It contains and arouses a feeling of indissoluble antagonism between the absolute and the relative, between the impossibility and the necessity of complete communication.

The Romantic philosophers did not seem to be interested in unveiling the principles that regulated irony, but rather on how irony related to the role of man on Earth. Hence, their studies are not particularly relevant in terms of what Muecke (1970) calls “the anatomy of irony”. However, they are indeed a valuable source to understand the connection between irony and its socio-cultural and historical context. For example, Romantic irony cannot be explained independently of Enlightenment and rationalism. This view of irony has not escaped the attention of semioticians. For instance, Finlay (1988) claims that the discourse of ironic consciousness is a self-reflexive engagement with the world rather than any unilateral objective representation of it. Romantic irony is tightly connected to subjectivity. Not surprisingly most of the interdisciplinary work related to Romantic irony arises from the fields of music and the arts (e.g., Dill, 1989; Longyear, 1970), poetry (e.g., Bisztray, 1988; Dimic, 1988; Szegedy-Maszak, 1988), and theatre (e.g., Gillespie, 1988).

In 1841, Kierkegaard’s work *The Concept of Irony with Continual Reference to Socrates* marks a turning point in the systematization of the concept of irony in philosophy, while tracing the roots of the concept of irony back to Socrates. Kierkegaard (1841) distinguishes between irony and *dialectical thought*, where the former is the linguistic form of the latter. The dialectic in Socrates’s irony can be found in his physical behavior, which is a mirror of his maieutic method. In addition, Kierkegaard (1841) (in Hong, 1989, p. 262) explains that irony is “the infinite absolute negativity”:

[...] it is absolute because that by virtue of which it negates is a higher something that still is not. The irony established nothing, because that which is to be established lies behind it [...].

Irony is also “qualification of subjectivity”. In irony, the subject is negatively free since the actuality that is supposed to give the subject content is not there. Kierkegaard (1841) further makes reference to the German Romantic philosophers and argues that their concept of irony is rooted in Socrates and is nothing new but acknowledges the role of their contributions in connection with Enlightenment. It is evident that Kierkegaard’s reflections on irony see some of its essential elements, such as contrast (negating what is thought to be the case) and independent observable reality (whatever it is that lies behind the ironic use). Of course, Kierkegaard’s concerns as a philosopher bias his approach, which emphasizes the power of irony to undo texts and interpreters. But this power of irony is also recognized by more modern approaches within other fields, especially linguistics and literary theory: the ironist subjectively questions a state of affairs held to be true by someone else.

In spite of the contributions of philosophy to the study of irony, their view of this phenomenon as an attitude, rather than as a matter of language has created a wide gap between these contributions and those from other disciplines. It is worth

noting, however, that there is a benefit in their focus on the detection of the ironic aspects of life, since situational irony has often been neglected by scholars. Besides, narrated situational ironies are pervasive not only in literary and visual artistic texts, but also in daily-life speech (e.g., in narrated jokes). We shall see this in the sections to follow.

2.2.4 Irony in inferential pragmatics

Formal accounts of language following the wake of Chomskian linguistics have not paid any attention to figures of speech since these were not considered a part of the I-language (internal language) or our intrinsic faculty of language (Chomsky, 1986). Figurative speech would be seen as a behavioral manifestation, a part of E-language (external), which is to be studied outside linguistics. Unfortunately, functional linguistics accounts, despite their semantic orientation, have not dealt with figures of speech either. The reason is that they are considered a matter of inference and also outside the scope of grammar. This is essentially correct and, of course, it applies to irony, although there are indicators of irony based on certain stable grammatical and intonational features that could be used to argue for the treatment of at least some aspects of this figure in a functional account of language. An antecedent of this position is found in Leech (1969), who pointed to the need to return to the linguistic roots of literary texts as an essential resource to understand a part of literary criticism that is often left aside in favor of more socio-historically oriented literary studies. In his analysis, Leech (1969) labels irony, metaphor, hyperbole, and litotes as ‘honest deceptions’, since they involve saying something that is untrue while aiming to tell the truth. He furthermore claims that the classifications of types of irony carried out by literary critics (irony of fate, Socratic irony, dramatic irony, etc.) were irrelevant to a linguistic study of the phenomenon. Behind this claim there lies the assumption that perhaps those irony types might not be more than scattered subcategories of the same phenomenon that should be analyzed within a unified theoretical framework. To Leech (1969) irony involves an ‘ironic mask’ that the ironist uses to conceal a meaning that is meant to be found out, and an underlying will to criticize or disparage under the guise of praise or neutrality. This can be exemplified by the following quote from Fielding’s *Tom Jones* cited in Leech (1969, p. 172): “His designs were strictly honourable, as the saying is; that is to rob a lady of her fortune by way of marriage.” (Fielding, 1991, p. 4). Here we find a contrast between what is meant by ‘honourable’ and the dishonorable nature of depriving a lady of her fortune upon marriage with her. The author uses this contrast, of course, to criticize the speaker. Another example used by Leech is Swift’s claim in his satirical pamphlet *A Modest Proposal* that Irish children be served as food to the English upper class, which has been widely discussed by literary critics

(see the analysis in 3.2.2.1 later on). According to Leech, the ironist adopts a *tone* which is at variance with his true point of view and *adopts the air* of a rational man able to foresee criticism but oblivious to the moral implications of his statement. We will return to this example later.

In any event, because of its heavily inferential nature, irony has received much attention in inferential pragmatics, which, as is well known, has its roots in the philosophy of language. Grice (1975) made brief mention of irony in his seminal paper on the Cooperative Principle, claiming that this phenomenon is essentially an act of pretense. In Grice's words the speaker "must be trying to get across some other proposition than the one he purports to be putting forward" (Grice, 1975, p. 53). To Grice irony was a flouting (i.e., an ostentatious breach) of the first maxim of Quality (the so-called Maxim of Truthfulness) of the Cooperative Principle ('do not say what you believe to be false'), resulting in the speaker implicating the opposite of what is literally said. This explanation has several important weaknesses. First, the breach of the Maxim of Truthfulness cannot a defining characteristic of irony since, as Grice himself seemed to realize, other figures of speech (e.g., metaphor, hyperbole) break the same maxim in the same manner (i.e., they are ostentatiously untruthful). Second, simply noting the breach of that maxim does not explain why irony implicates the opposite of what is said. It only explains why irony involves implicit (or implicated) meaning. Third, Grice failed to recognize the attitudinal element of irony, which was already present in some accounts including the description made by Leech (1969). Fourth, as noted by Garmendia (2018), a speaker can be ironic without flouting the Maxim of Truthfulness, as exemplified by the utterance *You sure know a lot*, addressed to pedantic friend who makes a show of his knowledge (Kumon-Nakamura et al., 1995, p. 7). Fifth, Grice does not account for ironic questions (Garmendia, 2018, p. 28). Consider the question *Do you think we should fuel up the car?*, asked to a neurotically cautious driver obsessed with running out of fuel by his copilot (Wilson, 2006, p. 1726). A non-presuppositional question cannot be true or false, but it can be ironic.

Post-Gricean pragmatics has addressed irony in much more depth. The label post-Gricean makes reference to both developments and reactions to Grice's (1957) seminal proposals on what he called *non-natural meaning*, i.e., what is said plus implicatures. The developments fall under the label *neo-Gricean pragmatics*, which, in the field of implicature, covers proposals by scholars like Horn (1984, 1988, 2007) and Levinson (1983, 1987, 1995, 2000) (cf. Jaszczolt, 2010). However, there are also serious departures from Grice's proposals, as is the case of *Relevance Theory* (Sperber and Wilson, 1995), which provides an altogether alternative framework to most aspects of the Gricean approach, including figurative language and the treatment of irony. We will now briefly address some neo-Gricean developments on irony.

Pretense Theory is the first neo-Gricean development which we want to discuss. Their initial proponents, Clark and Gerrig (1984), claimed that irony consisted in adopting a pose, which the hearer should interpret as false, and then unveil the actual meaning of the utterance. The speaker behaves like an actor, who pretends to be an injudicious person speaking to an uninitiated audience, but at the same time expects the intended meaning to be uncovered. Hence, in talking to H (the hearer) ironically, S (the speaker) pretends to be S' speaking to H' seriously, while H is supposed to understand the elements of the ironic event. For example, in exclaiming *There will only be light rain mostly falling at night* in a situation in which it has poured with heavy rain the whole day, the speaker pretends to be a weather forecaster failing to warn the audience about the true weather conditions. However, the speaker also expects hearers to see through the pretense and to ridicule the sort of forecaster that would make such a poor predication. What is more, hearers take 'delight' in the 'secret intimacy' they share with the speaker when they recognize that ignorance.

Clark and Gerrig (1984) further point out that irony shows asymmetry of affect, involves a victim, and requires a specific tone of voice. They claim that, since people tend to view the world in terms of the rules of excellence and success, irony is very often a positive remark intended to be critical of a negative state of affairs (cf. Jorgensen et al., 1984). Nevertheless, this claim does not explain ironies that are not intended to criticize a state of affairs, or those negative ironies where what is uttered replicates or echoes a previous negative thought while the target meaning is positive, as is the case of some understatements. For example, imagine Dave's compliment to his friend Jeannette on her cello performance at school. From Dave's perspective she has been outstanding, but Jeannette is too shy to take a compliment. Then, Dave ironizes: *Yeah, you're definitely right. You messed up the whole piece.* No matter how Jeannette takes the remark, Dave's intention is not to criticize his friend's performance but her inability to realize she did well. In fact, the ironic statement *You messed up the whole piece* is intended to make Jeannette aware that she performed well.

Clark and Gerrig (1984) claim that irony can be aimed at a target, a 'victim' of the ironic remark. These victims can be either S' (the person the speaker pretends to be) or A' (an uncomprehending audience that is not in the inner circle). However, no mention is made of ironies where the accomplice hearer from the inner circle who is to interpret the irony is at the same time target, as in the case of Dave's remark to Jeannette from the example above.

Finally, spoken irony involves an ironic tone of voice. The ironist may mimic or even caricaturize the voice and gestural expression of the character he performs. This serves as signal of the ironic nature of the remark. However, this is not always the case. Imagine someone passing an ironic remark on an erroneous weather

prediction. We cannot expect the ironist to mimic the tone of an actual weather forecaster, although doing so would certainly enhance the ironic impact of the message. In fact, the ironist may choose to adopt an apathetic tone of voice to show his acceptance of the situation. In any event, it is possible to talk about the existence of a range of ironic tones, each conveying the speaker's dissociation from what was said combined with complementary attitudes like wryness, skepticism, apathy, despondency, and contempt. Ironic tones have indeed been posited as one of the various ironic indicators that may facilitate interpretation thereby boosting the degree of felicity of an ironic remark (cf. Attardo, 2000a; Barbe, 1993; Attardo et al., 2003). Nevertheless, not all ironies involve an ironic tone of voice, and they may or may not involve other equally relevant indicators such as echoic mention (cf. Sperber and Wilson, 1995) or adverbial expressions (cf. Muecke, 1969).

The postulates of Pretense Theory have been further developed by other scholars, among them Kumon-Nakamura et al. (1995), Currie (2006), Récanati (2007), Garmendia (2018), and Barnden (2017). A well-known development is the *allusional pretense theory* proposed by Kumon-Nakamura et al. (1995), who claim that the ironic effects arise when the speaker alludes to a failed expectation by violating the rules of discourse, mainly the Maxim of Truthfulness mentioned above (Wilson, 1995, 2002). This violation attracts the speaker's attention to the failed expectation thus making the hearer grasp the attitudinal element in the ironic remark.

Currie (2006), on the other hand, points out that Pretense Theory succeeds in explaining not only verbal, but also situational irony, and argues that irony lies in a contrast between the intended ironic effects and those effects intended if one were speaking seriously. In an attempt to cover some gaps in Clark and Gerrig's (1984) initial claims, Currie (2006) explains that irony does not necessarily involve a victim of irony, but an audience is needed, even if this audience may not grasp the ironic meaning. Currie (2006) also notes that the pretense element of irony is intended to draw the hearer's attention to a situation that we consider ridiculous. However, ridicule is only one among many ironic meaning effects. It is definitely present in some examples, like Jonathan Swift's satire on English policies on the Irish. But people may throw an ironic remark at someone whose behavior they consider inappropriate or even distasteful. If we take a situation where a child tries to push another child off his bicycle, people may ironically exclaim *What an adorable little guy!*, but the situation they ironize about is by no means absurd.

Taking Recanati's (1989) contextualist perspective, Kapogianni (2009) argues that ironic meaning is not, contrary to Gricean and post-Gricean assumptions, a case of pragmatic implicature. It is obtained inferentially through a different process. Kapogianni borrows the train-ride example from Weiner (2006). A physically abled woman in a train is sprawled across two seats. Another woman tells the sprawling lady the following: *I wonder whether it would be physically possible for*

you to make room for someone else to sit down. The implicature is: ‘You should make room.’ By contrast, a follow-up remark like *Not that you should make room, I am just curious* would be ironic. For Weiner (2006) the implicature is not cancelled by this ironic follow-up; i.e., the woman that complains still thinks that the sprawling lady should make room. However, Kapogianni objects that the real point is that ‘You should make room’ is not derived from a literal interpretation of the complaining woman’s remark, but from an ironic interpretation, which cannot be cancelled out. If it is not cancellable, it follows that ironic meaning is not necessarily a case of implicature derivation. There is an important problem in Kapogianni’s analysis, however. The sentence *I wonder whether it would be physically possible for you to make room for someone else to sit down* would stop being ironic if followed up by a clarifying remark of this kind: *If it were, I would ask you not to do it. Women have a right to spread across two seats, just like men.* This means that the potential ironic interpretation of the first sentence could be cancelled out by the second. Irony is cancellable, just like implicature. In a later Section (5.4), we propose a chained reasoning procedure for ironic meaning derivation as a development of the reasoning schemas put forward by Sperber and Wilson (1995) for pragmatic implicature. Since irony is cancellable, this procedure, which assumes the implicature-oriented nature of ironic meaning derivation, is not affected by the analysis made by Kapogianni.

A second neo-Gricean development of irony is provided by Alba-Juez and Attardo (2014), who draw on their own earlier work on the topic (e.g., Alba-Juez, 1995, 2001; Attardo 2000a, b, 2001, 2002). They point out that irony is a matter of *inferred contradiction*. Irony also has an evaluative component, which is gradable, and is not necessarily negative or critical but can be positive (in this respect, see also Anolli et al., 2000; Haverkate, 1990; Dews and Winner, 1995; Hidalgo-Downing and Iglesias-Recuero, 2009; Holdcroft, 1983). The attitude in irony is not necessarily critical or negative, since its nature has to do mainly with a contradiction of expectations, which is consonant with Attardo’s view (2000a) of irony as “relevant inappropriateness”. According to Attardo (2000a), the Maxim of Relation in Grice’s Cooperative Principle lacks the social component that irony requires to be interpreted as such. However, the injunction to “be relevant” does not only have a material dimension but a social one as well. Hence, this maxim does include Attardo’s notion of appropriateness. Alba-Juez and Attardo (2014) distinguish between the evaluative attitude directed towards an object of discourse, and the evaluative attitude directed towards the participants of the discourse exchange. The attitudinal element has also been studied by Bertuccelli (2018), who argues that irony is the interpretation that emerges from a cluster of attitudes, which may take different forms and interpretations (from those that are gentler and more jocular to those that are more sarcastic and bitter). To this author, irony combines propositional

and non-propositional attitudes that cumulate up to the macrolevels of text and discourse to generate more sophisticated and elusive interpretations.

In another development within the context of her research on humor, Dynel (2013) argues that irony rests on overt untruthfulness resulting from flouting the first maxim of Quality of the Cooperative Principle, and that it generates conversational implicature invariably carrying negative evaluation. To Dynel (2014), there are several humorous phenomena which appear to meet at least one of the two conditions that, she argues, determine the presence of humorous irony: overt untruthfulness (i.e., pretense arising from the flouting mentioned above), and evaluative implicature. Other pragmatic studies have further explored the connection between irony and humor (e.g., Thomson, 2003; Lippitt, 2000; Ryan, 1999; Ritchie, 2005; Ruiz-Gurillo and Alvarado-Ortega, 2013), as well as irony and gesture (Pexman et al., 2009), and irony and banter (Jobert and Sorlin, 2018). In our own account, ironic humor is explained as the parameterization of the attitudinal element of irony, which is obtained inferentially, but not through the breach of conversational maxims (see Section 3.5).

More recently, Garmendia (2018) has put forward the *asif theory*. This hypothesis, which Garmendia herself classifies as neo-Gricean, adopts Grice's stance on irony as essentially negative. In irony there is a mismatch between the literal meaning of the utterance and the speaker's motivating belief. It is when that mismatch happens that the speaker "makes as if to say" the literal meaning. This is an act that is free of commitments, since the speaker does not take any responsibility for the truthfulness of the content of the utterance. This account is supposed to solve a major problem inherent in Grice's explanation of irony as a flouting of the Maxim of Truthfulness, which is the fact that in some ironic uses the speaker does believe the literal meaning to be true, as in *You sure know a lot*, examined above. In the *asif* account, the speaker takes no commitment on the truthfulness of the assertion (i.e., that the hearer is knowledgeable), while communicating a different belief (i.e., that the hearer is being pedantic). Despite this stronger position, the *asif* account still suffers from one of the weaknesses of Grice's initial proposal: "making as if" is a feature of other figurative uses of language and also of what Sperber and Wilson (1985/86) called *loose* uses. An example of loose use is provided by the tendency we have to round up figures in some communicative contexts. Imagine we are asked about the time and we round up e.g., from 6.58 pm to 7 pm by saying *It's 7*. What we are doing is in fact "making as if" we believed that it is 7 pm rather than 6.58. Figurative uses of language are loose uses. For example, consider understatement. When people try to deny the seriousness of a bad wound by calling it a scratch, what they are in fact doing is "making as if" they believed that they only have a scratch, which is nothing to worry about. The real communicative intention could well be

captured by the following paraphrase: ‘What you see looks like a bad wound, and it probably is, but I don’t want anyone to be worried about it’.

We now turn our attention to Relevance Theory. Starting off from the initial insights into irony put forward by Wilson and Sperber (1981), within the framework of the *use-mention* distinction, according to which irony mentions an expression echoically, but does not use it referentially, relevance theorists have produced multiple studies on irony (e.g., Sperber, 1984; Wilson, 2006, 2009, 2013; Sperber and Wilson, 1998; Wilson and Sperber, 1992, 2012; Carston and Wearing, 2015). In response to observations by Hamamoto (1998), Seto (1998), and Yamanashi (1998) on potential problems with the notions of echo and speaker’s dissociation, Sperber and Wilson (1998) sustained that irony invariably echoes an utterance, a thought, a belief or a norm-based expectation while expressing an attitude of dissociation towards this thought (see also Wilson and Sperber, 2012, p. 125). However, the notion of echo was no longer taken to be an exact mention of a previous utterance. The notion of echoic mention had already been replaced by Sperber and Wilson (1995) with that of *interpretive resemblance*. This meant that echoic utterances were to be better analyzed as echoic interpretations of attributed thoughts or utterances. This broadened the initial account in such a way that irony could be identified in expressions which do not repeat what someone had said. For example, the utterance *You look perfect in your new hairstyle* (Sperber and Wilson, 1998, p. 285) can be ironic without anyone having made the same remark provided that the utterance can be taken to echo the hearer’s own belief on the beauty of her new hairstyle. The speaker, at the same time, expresses his or her personal dissociation from the echoed thought. Wilson and Sperber (2012, p. 130) describe ironic dissociation as follows:

Dissociative attitudes themselves vary quite widely, falling anywhere on a spectrum from amused tolerance through various shades of resignation of disappointment to contempt, disgust, outrage or scorn. The attitudes prototypical of verbal irony are generally seen as coming from the milder, or more controlled, part of the range. However, there is no cut-off point between dissociative attitudes that are prototypically ironical and those that are not.

In relation to the erroneous claim that irony is always negative, Wilson and Sperber (2012) note that there are cases of positive irony, although irony is very often used to criticize, so that negative irony is more abundant than positive irony. Pretense Theory fails to account for the latter. One straightforward example of positive irony is the expression *How clumsy!* used as a remark on a performance that has been excellent.

With regard to the “ironic tone of voice”, deemed essential to irony within Pretense Theory, Wilson and Sperber (2012) claim that speakers do not necessarily

imitate the voice of the person being echoed, but rather they use a parodic tone based on a specific ironic intonation. And in fact, since an echo is not necessarily a remark actually uttered by someone, but it can be a shared belief, or a norm-based expectation, an imitation of a character's voice does not have a place in Relevance Theory.

Some authors have pointed out some weaknesses in the approach developed by Relevance Theory. Garmendia (2018) and Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano (2019a) point out that not all ironies are echoic. Garmendia claims that we do always not have access to the utterance that is echoed in the explicit context, so it is difficult to imagine that such utterance or thought may have existed. However, as Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano (2019a) have noted, what is echoed does not need to be a particular utterance. Echoes may be total or partial (Ruiz de Mendoza, 2017a; Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano, 2019b), and, as mentioned above, they are not necessarily utterances that one can repeat word by word but they may be thoughts shared by a particular community of speakers (Wilson and Sperber, 2012). Evidently, thoughts which have not even been verbalized, but are only allegedly shared assumptions among speakers, cannot be replicated with words. Garmendia (2018) also explains that in examples such as the *You sure know a lot* (Kumon-Nakamura et al., 1995), mentioned above, the echoic approach does not completely account for the ironic meaning. To this author, these cases of uncertain proper attribution are problematic because it is not easy to explain why speakers should be assumed to be dissociating themselves from the echoed utterances. However, against Garmendia (2018), it should be noted that *You sure know a lot* can indeed be argued to be the echo of the hearer's attributed presumptuous belief on his own knowledge skills.

Clark and Gerrig (1984) have also drawn attention to a potential weakness in the relevance-theoretic account of irony. They argue that Sperber and Wilson misinterpreted Grice's notes on irony. In the example where the speaker ironizes about the weather (*See what lovely weather it is*), Relevance Theory assumes, they claim, that Grice meant that the speaker would be literally saying that the weather was lovely in order to implicate the opposite. This analysis, however, is wrong, since it is not the speaker's intention for the hearer to believe that the speaker thinks that the weather is lovely. In any case, even if Sperber and Wilson had entertained such an assumption, it does not follow that the Gricean analysis in terms of flouting the Maxim of Truthfulness does not account for cases of irony where the speaker is apparently telling the truth. This is the case of the irony in Coulson's (2005) example *I love people who signal*, in which the speaker complains about a driver who has not signaled. As we will see later on, there is a better explanation for examples of this kind (see 2.2.5).

There have been some developments of Relevance Theory intended to level out potential weaknesses in its initial proposals. One such attempt is the *echoic reminder theory*, propounded by Kreuz and Glucksberg (1989). This account takes the

single-stage point of view on irony adopted by both Relevance Theory and Pretense Theory, rather than the double-stage Gricean point of view involving literal and implicated meaning. According to Kreuz and Glucksberg (1989), ironic utterances are echoic interpretations, as postulated in Relevance Theory, but the key point is to remind the hearer that there is an existing expectation based on shared attitudes and values. As Garmendia (2018) points out, one advantage of this view is that it can explain certain ironic utterances that could be problematic for the echoic account. For example, *A fine friend you are!* conveys irony easily (Gibbs, 1993, p. 265) because it does not need any antecedent to echo, but simply makes reference to social norms and expectations which the hearer is reminded of (friends are expected to be nice). In this connection, Curcó (2000, p. 278) has noted that a view of irony where the echo reflects the opinion directly represented by the proposition expressed by the utterance is too narrow. The claim made by relevance theorists is not that the target of the echo (i.e., that from which speakers dissociate themselves) is the proposition expressed. What they argue is that, for irony to exist, such a target should interpretively resemble a thought of someone other than the speaker at the time of utterance. This means that the attitude of dissociation expressed by the utterance affects any of the possible assumptions communicated (or made manifest) by the utterance. It is evident that the social norms and expectations mentioned by Gibbs (1993) fall within the range of assumptions that the utterance points to. The only problem with this view of ironic echoes is the explicit constraint that the echoed assumption is held by someone other than the speaker. An ironic attitude can also arise from speakers becoming aware that a previous thought, which *only* they entertained, is inconsistent with new evidence. For example, the speaker might have strongly believed that his friend was a good one, but then realize that he is wrong and, even in the absence of his friend, say to himself with self-deprecatory skepticism on his previous belief: *A fine friend you are!*

In our view, Coulson's (2005) example mentioned above can also be explained along similar lines. In *I love people who signal* the speaker reminds the hearer of the expectation that drivers should signal when required by driving conditions (e.g., when changing lanes, leaving a roundabout, turning left or right) and that we are supposed to like their obedience to traffic regulations. Neither this example or *A fine friend you are!* are echoic in the strict sense. However, since they are echoic, in a loose sense, of social norms and expectations, talking about "echoic reminders" involves an unnecessary redundancy: by making echoic allusion to an utterance or a thought, whichever its source, we remind the hearer of its existence. What is more, we can have situations in which an echo does not remind anything but simply makes the hearer aware of the possibility that there is a thought or belief which contrasts with the state of affairs at hand. Imagine that the hearer is not aware that the speaker dislikes classical music and they are in a context in which a neighbor is

playing a classical music record noticeably loud. The utterance: *I just love classical music!* is ironic by virtue of making the hearer aware that the speaker might not like it and the loud music is bothering him. In a broad sense, this utterance is echoic of the idea that the speaker may like classical music, like many others. To process it as ironic, the hearer will have to use contextual variables which hint to the possibility that what the speaker says may not be the case.

Curcó (2000) notes that her views on echoic mention require a small modification of the standard relevance-theoretic view to make this notion include not only the opinions represented by the content of what the speaker says, but also any relevant number of the implicatures derived from it, and even the propositional content of any other assumption that is strongly manifest by the utterance (as is the case of the social norms and expectations mentioned above). This represents an explicit development of an important aspect of the approach to irony taken by Relevance Theory. There are other developments. An interesting one, which sidesteps any controversy involving ironic echoes, is found in the work of Yus (2000, 2009, 2015, 2016a, b, c), which is focused on contextual sources, mutually manifest assumptions, and the concept of epistemic vigilance, initially developed by Wilson (2009) and Sperber et al. (2010). According to Yus (2016b, c) the process of irony identification is linked to meta-representations. These are representations of representations, which can be divided into three types (Wilson, 2009): the mindreading ability (to think about thoughts); the pragmatic ability (to think about what communicative acts); and the argumentative ability (to think about potential mistakes or deceptions in what is communicated), which is a matter of epistemic vigilance. Yus (2016b, c) argues that irony interpretation involves the parallel adjustment of pragmatic ability and argumentative ability within the general framework of mindreading. It requires the activation of contextual information, identified as non-appropriate, which is obtained from one of the “contextual sources”, that is, general encyclopedic knowledge, specific speaker’s encyclopedic knowledge, knowledge of recent actions or events stored in the speaker’s short-term memory, previously produced utterances, the speaker’s non-verbal communication, the speaker’s lexical or grammatical choices that work as ironic cues, or information coming from the communicative setting. We will return to the role of epistemic vigilance in irony in 2.3.3.

2.2.5 Irony in Cognitive Linguistics

Since the publication of Lakoff’s *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) Cognitive Linguistics has shown particular interest in figurative language. The initial analyses focused exclusively on metaphor, and to some extent on metonymy (e.g., Goossens, 1990; Croft, 1993; Dirven, 1993). It has only been more recently that other figures of

speech such as simile, hyperbole, or irony have begun to receive some attention (cf. Ruiz de Mendoza 2020a, b for an overview). Within Cognitive Linguistics, irony first awakened the interest of scholars working within the framework of Fauconnier and Turner's (2002) Blending Theory (e.g., Coulson, 2005; Dancygier and Sweetser, 2014). Blending is a pervasive cognitive process that results in the integration into a network of relations of partial conceptual structure provided by so-called *input mental spaces* (i.e., temporary knowledge constructs that gather selected conceptual structure from conceptual domains). This theory has received broad acceptance to account for an array of metaphor-related processes, but its descriptive and explanatory power is intended to go beyond metaphor (see, however, Ruiz de Mendoza, 1998; Ruiz de Mendoza and Díez, 2002; Ruiz de Mendoza and Peña, 2005, for an alternative account to the standard blending approach). As briefly mentioned in the previous section, Coulson (2005) bases discusses the remark *I love people who signal*, made by a driver who has been cut off while driving (cf. Gibbs, 1986). The ironic load of this example is derived from the fact that what looks like a compliment to the driver's actions is actually a piece of criticism. Coulson (2005) argues that the hearer is confronted with a blend which has to be "unpacked" into two input spaces: an *expected reaction space* and a *counterfactual trigger space*. In the former, the speaker reacts to the situation in the expected fashion (i.e., by complaining about the driver who neglects to signal). In the latter, we find a world which we wish had existed (i.e., one where the driver actually follows traffic regulations to the letter). Irony arises when we make an utterance consistent with the counterfactual trigger space, in a situation where the hearer would have predicted an utterance appropriate for the expected reaction space. Hence, in the sentence *I love people who signal*, the blend can be found between the scenario in the expected reaction space and the speech act in the counterfactual trigger space. This kind of analysis, however, is not clearly sensitive to negative cases of irony in which the speaker directly produces an utterance which questions someone's belief, as in *Yeah, sure, your husband will always tell you the truth*. Here, following the line of reasoning of the previous analysis, the expected reaction space would contain a situation in which the hearer believes her husband is a liar (which is the real situation), while in the counterfactual trigger space what we have is a husband who never lies to his wife (which is a false depiction). But evidently, there is an oddity here, since the hearer does not believe that her husband is untruthful to her. In any event, even if the analysis in terms of expected and counterfactual spaces is restricted to cases of positive irony, as illustrated by the utterance *I love people who signal*, Coulson's analysis fails to deal with the attitudinal element in the ironic act, which, as already pointed out in the present overview of approaches, has been argued by most scholars to lie at the heart of ironic meaning.

Palinkas (2014) has attempted to refine Coulson's analysis. He has noted that, in Coulson's example, the motorist does not actually signal, but the speaker pretends that he did. The hearer notices this conflict, since he knows that the driver has broken traffic norms. This conflict is the grounds for the implication that the speaker actually expresses irritation at the driver's actions. In other words, the actual conflict comes from the pretense that the driver is responsible for his behavior but is praised for it. Palinkas's (2014) addition to Coulson's explanation makes use of the notion of pretense, which is original with Pretense Theory. However, like Coulson's analysis, it also fails to account for the speaker's dissociative attitude derived from the expression of irritation towards the driver's misbehavior. This last element is essential to irony, but merely acknowledging its existence does not seem sufficient to explain its interaction with the rest of the elements in irony. In addition, Coulson (2005) and Palinkas (2014) limit themselves to addressing, rather selectively, the conventional and the counter-conventional dimensions of irony. However, this aspect of their proposals can readily be made part of broader frameworks, including the relevance-theoretic approach and our proposed scenario-based account. We will come back to this example in Section 3.5.

Also, within Blending Theory, Tobin and Israel (2012) claim that there is a need for a definition of irony, and for a unifying perspective which takes into account the similarities in what has been labelled "ironic" over time. To these authors, irony relies on mental spaces and viewpoint. These authors define irony as a viewpoint phenomenon which requires 'zooming out' to a 'higher' ironic viewpoint, from which the 'lower' ironized viewpoint is reevaluated and understood as opposed to the speaker's actual viewpoint.

Following Blending Theory, they claim that the nature of irony cannot be explained only in terms of a comparison between the literal meaning of an utterance and an intended, opposite meaning, since both meanings represent two alternative mental spaces, one of which is aligned with the reality space. In order to perceive the contrast between the alternatives, one needs to take a higher viewpoint in the network, where contrast between the alternatives can be resolved. Hence, irony resides in the perception of the nature of the contrast between the literal utterance and the intended meaning rather than on the person saying something that is blatantly not true. While Tobin and Israel's (2012) claims seem to point at the existence of two parallel realities that collide, one of them based on reality and another one based on an alternative space, the attitudinal element remains unexplained and so is the nature of the alternative space.

A partial solution to the weaknesses in these accounts has been provided in Ruiz de Mendoza (2017a), which is further developed in Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano (2019a, b). Ruiz de Mendoza (2017a), who brings together analytical

categories from pragmatics and cognitive semantics, argues that ironic meaning is essentially the result from a clash between two scenarios, an *observable scenario* and an *echoed scenario*. Ruiz de Mendoza (2017a) borrows the relevance-theoretic notion of echo, which is seen not as a pragmatic task but as a cognitive operation used to build a conceptual scenario. The observable scenario is based on how the real-world situation is perceived by the speaker or by both the speaker and the hearer. However, the echoing involves more than the repetition of a target utterance or thought; it is a door to a more complex conceptual construct with elements that are found to be at odds with corresponding elements in the observable scenario. As opposed to Relevance Theory, which claims that the speaker's attitude is merely associated with the ironic utterance, the scenario-based approach put forward by Ruiz de Mendoza (2017a) spells out the reasoning process involved in deriving the attitudinal element of irony from the clash between the echoed and observable scenarios. This view of irony is compatible with that of blending theorists since it also contemplates the alignment of conceptual structure and the resolution of the clashing elements. But it accounts for the existence of an attitudinal component, whose inferential origin and nature is made explicit, and gives pride of place to echoing as a central cognitive operation in the production of verbal irony. Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano (2019b) have further elaborated on these ideas, which will be fully laid out in Chapter 3.

2.2.6 Irony in psycholinguistics

Psycholinguists have carried out a good deal of work not only to test the claims of linguists, but also to shed further light on the processing and production aspects of the phenomenon. Gibbs and his collaborators have conducted experiments with real-life data (e.g., Gibbs and Beitel, 1995; Colston and Gibbs, 2002; Gibbs and Colston, 2012). As far back as 1991, Gibbs and O'Brien set up the pillars for a psycholinguistic treatment of irony comprehension. They concluded the following:

1. People do not need to recognize irony to comprehend what speakers mean by using irony.
2. Understanding irony does not require speakers to see that the rules of cooperative communication are being broken.
3. People can easily understand sarcasm without specific intonational cues.
4. People find statements particularly ironic when they allude to social norms or expectations.
5. People can understand statements as ironic based on the situation even if the speaker never meant to be ironic.

In later work, Gibbs (2011) identified several purposes of irony: jocularity, sarcasm, hyperbole, rhetorical questions, and understatements. He noted that both their production and interpretation depend on various linguistic and social factors. Leggitt and Gibbs (2000) had previously concluded that not all types of ironic statements prompt the same reactions in the addressee. They acknowledge that the choice of a statement evidently has an effect on the addressee's emotions and explain that while with sarcasm and satire the speakers may reveal their own emotions with little intention to affect the addressee's emotions, overstatements, for instance, had a negative unintended effect on the addressee. Gibbs (2012) further claimed that, contrary to what many language scholars believed, irony might not be as deliberate as was thought in its creation and use. Irony does not necessarily arise from completely conscious states of mind. Gibbs's view of irony as not necessarily deliberate not only applies to verbal irony but also to situational irony, which we discuss later on in this section. Often a non-ironic utterance prompts an ironic situation where the utterance acquires ironic overtones. Let us take one where two friends, James and Hanks, are discussing a case of wife-beating. The speaker, James, who also beats his wife, is speaking to Hanks of that case with horror, unaware of the fact that his friend is aware of what he does. Hanks may find it sadly ironic to learn about this situation. In this example, the speaker does not intend to be ironic, but the hearer may find the speaker's words ironic within the communicative context described above.

Irony has also been analyzed in relation to other figures of speech. Colston and Keller (1998) have explored the roles of irony and hyperbole in producing surprise. Colston and Gibbs (2002) have focused on how the processing of irony differs from that of metaphor and have concluded that processing the former is more complex than processing the latter due to the fact that irony requires second order, meta-representational thoughts, needed to infer ironic messages. Colston and O'Brien (2000) have also worked on the relationship between irony and understatement. The two figures of speech perform similar pragmatic functions because they both make use of a contrast between expected and experienced events. However, verbal irony, they conclude, is not only more expressive as a figure of speech, but it also creates a stronger contrast effect than understatement. These findings are particularly interesting in terms of cognitive modeling, since they shed light on the cognitive operations that may link certain figures of speech (Ruiz de Mendoza, 2020a).

Giora's work (Giora, 1995, 2001; Giora and Fein, 1999; Giora et al., 2005, 2009) has focused on irony comprehension, salience, and negation. To Giora (2002), the processing of irony involves the priority of a salient over a less salient meaning. This is what Giora and Fein (1999) have called the *Graded Salience Hypothesis* (GSH). A meaning is salient if it is coded in the mental lexicon, but salience is not permanent and it varies depending on factors such as frequency, conventionality, and prototypicality. Drifting away from Pretense Theory and Relevance Theory,

Giora (1995) has further argued that irony is a case of indirect negation. The interpretation of irony does not involve the cancellation of a negated message and its replacement with an implicated one, but instead it involves the processing of both the negated and the implicated message so that the differences between them can be computed. The application of the Graded Salience Hypothesis to irony, however, can be problematic. In irony, meanings are not more or less salient, but they are both present in the interpreter's mind, and it is previous knowledge and the observation of the reality that surrounds the communicative situation that prompt the recognition of a contrast. What is more, irony does not necessarily involve the negation of a meaning, but often just the adjustment of this meaning to its intended form. In other words, not all the intended meanings in irony are the exact opposite of the literal meanings.

The nature of the intersection of psychology and linguistics, has awakened the interest of psycholinguists not only on verbal irony, but also on situational irony. The exploitation of irony in Greek drama and its perception in daily life has led some psycholinguists to carry out work on this type of irony. Lucariello (1995) and Lucariello and Mindolovich (1995) have worked extensively on situational irony. Lucariello (1995) points out that situational irony is a particular type of irony that makes us reflect on the vulnerability of the human condition, as evidenced by Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* (429 BC) (cf. Sophocles, 2006). However, this author also points out that situational irony is strongly intentional and aimed at making the audience reflect. We can perceive this in the cathartic effect of Greek tragedies. In situational irony, according to Lucariello and Mindolovich (1995), we find the opposition between what is expected and what takes place. Situational irony suggests a state of mockery about the world as it is and the "fitness of things" in it. These authors further point out that, since event representations must be manipulated to recognize and construct ironic events, situational irony involves meta-representational reasoning. Indeed, situational irony involves a contrast between what is expected and what is observably the case. However, these authors do not explain why or how event representations must be 'manipulated'. Let us take a situation where someone finds a fire station in flames. Fire stations are not expected to burn since they are the workplace of firemen and firewomen, but this expectation clashes with the observable situation, in which the fire station is in flames. Lucariello and Mindolovich (1995) do not explain either where such expectations come from or how they interact with the observable situation. Those aspects are crucial to understand the connection of situational irony and verbal irony at a higher level. We shall return to this point in Section 3.1.

A different account is provided by Shelley (2001), who claims that situational irony arises when a situation is "bi-coherent" in terms of its conceptual structure, has adequate cognitive salience, and an appropriate configuration of emotions.

A bi-coherent class of elements contains two mutually conflicting elements such that the opposite of one of them is consistent with the other. For instance, in the previous example, we find two conflicting elements, i.e., the fire station being in flames and the expectation that this will not happen since the fire station has specialized fire equipment that is used by professional firefighters. At the same time, the opposite of extinguishing a fire is consistent with the fire station burning down. Shelley (2001), like Lucariello and Mindolovich (1995), seems to agree about the dual and contradictory nature of irony. For these authors, irony is grounded in a mismatch between what is expected and what takes place. Lucariello and Mindolovich (1995), however, go one step further in terms of the recognition of situational irony. They claim that situational irony must be recognized as such by the reader (in case of literary works), the spectator (in theatrical plays), or the hearer (in ordinary speech), but it can also be recognized by the character of a theatrical play, or by both. At any rate, the contradicted expectations that occur unintentionally are not ironic without someone perceiving and interpreting the irony.

2.2.7 Irony in artificial intelligence

The increasing interest of artificial intelligence (AI) and computational linguistics in figurative language has also included irony. The production and interpretation of irony is complex and irony is not easy to systematize. Veale (2012), in discussing linguistic creativity and computation, explores the intricacies of what takes place before a ‘consumer’ is presented with a creatively finished linguistic product. According to Veale, humor (often built on the basis of irony) seems improvised but very often it is not script-free. By this, Veale means that we often take situations that are already scripted and build irony on them, hence drawing on the audience’s previous knowledge, aiming for a more felicitous kind of irony. This remark points at the context-based nature of irony. Veale and Hao (2010) explain that irony is particularly common in online documents that express subjective and deeply felt opinions due to its capacity to express sentiment-rich viewpoints with sharpness and humor. For this reason, irony poses a significant challenge to the analysis of web documents. These authors identify the most common characteristics of ironic comparisons to create algorithms that will enable the identification of irony. The conclusions reached by Veale and Hao (2010) are not at all unpredictable. Irony, they note, is particularly difficult to integrate in computation due the use ironic speakers make of imagination and ingenuity to disguise a negative sentiment. Although irony does require creativity on the part of the ironist, these scholars do not take into account positive ironies or any of the socio-historical factors that are part of the context surrounding irony. This is certainly one major drawback of the application of algorithms to figurative language, and to irony in particular. Veale

and Hao have not been the only ones to acknowledge the complex relationship between irony and computation. Reyes et al. (2012, 2013), and Reyes and Rosso (2014), for example, have noted that, while irony is an increasingly pervasive linguistic phenomenon in social media, its systematization remains a challenge for computational linguistics due to its strong contextual nature and the complexity of the ironic interaction.

2.2.8 Conclusions

Irony has attracted the attention of a wide variety of disciplines throughout history. The present chapter has provided an overview of studies of irony in rhetoric, literary theory, philosophy, the philosophy of language, pragmatics, linguistics, psycholinguistics, and AI, reviewing some of the main postulates and analytical categories put forward in each discipline. These postulates are not necessarily at odds with one another. Often, there is a large degree of complementariness. For example, literary theory and rhetoric emphasize the place of the socio-cultural context and the reader's response to ironic uses, while linguistics and psycholinguistics share a common interest in the processes involved in irony production and interpretation. Nevertheless, dialogue between disciplines and approaches has not been strong enough for the production of a unified framework. This is, of course, a challenging task, which the present book hopes to undertake at least initially.

2.3 In search of a unified framework

The present section is divided into two subsections. The first one outlines the central elements of a unified framework of analysis for irony, which is based on the theoretical postulate that all kinds of irony are grounded in the interaction between two types of scenario: (1) *a pretended agreement scenario*, and (2) *an epistemic scenario*. These scenarios play a central role in the explanation of so-called verbal and situational irony, which we have relabeled for reasons that will be fully apparent later on (see Section 2.4), *communicated* and *non-communicated* irony. The resulting analytical framework, which stems from an exhaustive analysis of the sources mentioned in Section 4.4, subsumes into it the more traditional (and often controversial) notions of *ironic echo* from Relevance Theory and of *ironic pretense* from Pretense Theory and Gricean pragmatics. It also incorporates the notion of clashing scenarios from Ruiz de Mendoza's (2017a) scenario-based account, which is deeply rooted in the principles of cognitive modeling as laid out in Ruiz de Mendoza and Galera (2014). The claims made will be supported by examples extracted from data

collected from a variety of sources, as well as from the examples used by scholars in the field. The second subsection will deal with the typology of irony.

The theoretical scaffolding for the present study originates in a critical review of previous approaches to irony, especially those in literary theory, the philosophy of language, psycholinguistics, and linguistics. For more productive dialogue between these disciplines, we need to create the right theoretical conditions. An integrative unified framework is part of the solution. The following observations identify challenges which the present work undertakes:

1. The approaches to irony provided by most disciplines are oriented towards verbal irony, thus leaving situational irony aside. However, a unified approach which integrates both situational and verbal irony is not only convenient but also necessary to fully understand the phenomenon.
2. As a phenomenon that is indissolubly tied to the socio-historical context where it is produced, such an approach must acknowledge the role of socio-cultural factors.
3. Even inside disciplines, the lack of consensus has led to confrontation among approaches. An integrated approach to irony should be open to taking elements from other studies whenever they prove analytically productive.
4. The initial distinction between verbal and situational irony leaves out other examples of irony that may be purposely communicated through channels other than words, such as images, or a combination of images and words. Hence, we believe a more comprehensive classification should be which takes this analytical situation into account.

2.3.1 Previous integrated approaches to irony

As noted above, the main confrontation in the linguistic literature on irony can be found between Relevance Theory and Pretense Theory. On the basis of a review of previous reconciliation proposals, Popa-Wyatt (2014) has attempted to integrate the similarities between the two accounts into the core structure of a unified mechanism. This core structure has the following features:

1. Dissociation from the vehicle of irony (often what is said).
2. Similarity between the vehicle of irony and the target thought.
3. The implicit attribution of the target thought to an individual or people in general.
4. The implicit expression of a dissociative attitude towards the target thought.

According to Popa-Wyatt (2014), the pretended thought takes the form of an echo that may be attributed to someone. An advantage of this approach over previous ones is that it places precise constraints on the vehicle and the target of irony. There are some reasons for this. One is that the notion of pretense holds for an array of linguistic and non-linguistic vehicles. This way, the number of resources available to produce an echo extends beyond utterances to attributed beliefs, social conventions, and stereotypes. Another reason is that ironists do more than just produce assertions: they pretend to believe in what they say, thereby alluding to those that actually believe in it, who thus become the target of their ironic dissociative attitude. A third reason is that there are degrees of pretense, which vary with the similarity between the vehicle and the target, thus bearing upon the degree of dissociation which characterizes the ironist's attitude. For example, the expression *Big party at the Lockwood mansion!* carries with it a lower degree of pretense than *We couldn't have had a greater party than at the Lockwood mansion!* This lower degree of pretense renders this expression less dissociative than the latter, which involves a stronger degree of pretense.

As observed in Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano (2021, p. 218), the main strength in Popa-Wyatt's unification proposal is not in the core structure outlined above. It has some potential weaknesses. For example, one may wonder why it is necessary to differentiate between dissociation from the vehicle and from the target, since the vehicle echoes the target. Also, one may wonder about the relevance of specifying that the echoed thought can be individual or not, when what is relevant is to note that any kind of real or attributed thought can be echoed. Instead, the main strength of Popa-Wyatt's proposal lies in the recognition that the similarities between the vehicle and the target are grounded in an echo produced in an act of ostentatious pretense, which is potentially manifest to some degree. It is precisely this strength that will provide us with a point of departure for our own proposal initially based on the notion of pretended agreement (Section 2.3.2), which is later integrated into the more encompassing notion of epistemic scenario (Sections 2.3.3 and 3.2).

The question might be raised as to the possibility of inscribing our integrative approach within the tradition of so-called Cognitive Poetics, which applies analytical categories from Cognitive Linguistics to the study of literature (cf. Freeman, 2003; Gavins and Steen, 2003; Semino and Culpeper, 2002; Stockwell, 2002; Tsur, 2008). Cognitive Poetics has made use of such notions as knowledge frames, scripts, focal points, and metaphor. Our account of irony, which is a cognitive-linguistic one, could be added as one useful tool for Cognitive Poetics. However, while this is true, our aims go beyond the world of literary analysis into other areas such as rhetoric, communication theory, psychology, and cultural analysis. The discussion of literary works found in this research is not used to make a point about the works in question, but about the phenomenon itself in relation to any kind of communicative

context. In this connection, we partly follow the methodological approach taken by Ruiz de Mendoza and Barreras (2015), who use Conceptual Metaphor Theory to understand central aspects of a literary piece, in the cognitive-poetic tradition, while shedding light on the power of metaphor to sustain its argumentative line. It is this second aspect of their study that has the kind of theoretical implications that we look for in the present study. So, no part of the integrative approach is ascribable to Cognitive Poetics any more than Conceptual Metaphor Theory is. But the approach can certainly be of interest to the analytical pursuits of this school of literary criticism.

2.3.2 The pretended agreement

Our first observation here is about the notion of pretense. Ruiz de Mendoza (2017a) and Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano (2019a), as pointed out in 2.2.4, have argued that echoes may be total or partial and that pretense is epiphenomenal, potentially present in irony, but not a defining feature of this phenomenon, since it also a characteristic of other forms of figurative language like understatement and overstatement. For example, when faced with a challenge, a person may play down its seriousness (e.g., *It's nothing*) or exaggerate it (e.g., *Nothing could ever be worse!*). In either situation, the speaker is involved in an act pretense, intended to mitigate its impact (understatement) or to strengthen it (overstatement). If epiphenomenal, pretense in irony could be but subsidiary to the more central ironic echo. Nevertheless, on close inspection the data shows that pretense, although not distinctive, is actually essential to verbal irony, as evidenced by the correlation between higher degrees of pretense in ironic echoes and correspondingly higher degrees of attitudinal impact.

Our second observation is that, in verbal irony, echoing is simply a way of showing pretended agreement with someone on the content of an echoed utterance or thought. In our previous example, *Big party at the Lockwood mansion!*, by echoing what the hearer had previously said or thought about the party, the speaker only appears to agree with the hearer. That conveying pretended agreement is an invariant of verbal irony will become evident in the next chapter. Now, let us turn our attention to what postulating pretended agreement means for a cross-scenario account of irony.

In the pretended agreement scenario, the ironist is only adopting a pose. The following example, initially discussed in Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano (2021, p. 221), illustrates this issue further. In the example, drawn from the TV series *Friends* (S3 E18), Monica and Rachel are engaged in friendly conversation in a restaurant. Monica, who seems to resent her inability to date men easily, tells Rachel: *You know what? In the last year I've only gone out with two guys: Richard and Julio. You've gotta get me back in the game.* Rachel's reply is ironic: *That shouldn't be a*

problem. I work in fashion. All I meet is eligible straight men. Rachel's irony is partly based on her pretended agreement with Monica, which is echoic of Monica's implicit belief that her friend meets many men and can easily find her a date. However, what Rachel actually does is present her friend with what to her is the real-world scenario: she works in fashion, where, according to the prevailing social stereotype, most of the men that she meets could not possibly be straight nor eligible. In this situation, Rachel, from her perspective, is unlikely to be able to help her friend out with her problem.

Pretended agreement scenarios can be built in different ways. One of them is, of course, echoic repetition, which is thus seen from a different perspective, as an agreement-building strategy. Echoes can be full or partial and accurate or inaccurate. To exemplify the notion of full echo, think of a conversation between a husband and his wife. The wife loves opera and her husband has secured tickets for an exclusive performance. He tells his wife: *Next weekend you will have the best evening ever, attending your favorite performance.* The weekend comes and, after the opera, which has been less than impressive, the wife ironizes with stoic acceptance: *Yeah, sure, the best evening ever, attending my favorite performance.* There are other possibilities, though. For example, she could have opted for a looser echo: *Sure, darling, a masterly performance.* This kind of echo only captures one aspect of the echoed utterance, while strengthening some of its meaning implications. This happens as a result of the wife's focus on the quality of the performance (*a masterly performance* loosely echoes *your favorite performance*) to the detriment of her enjoyment (*best evening ever* is left out of the echo).

Wording a social stereotype, as a norm-based assumption, can also be used to build a pretended agreement scenario. In the exchange between Rachel and Monica, described above, Rachel's remark on the ties between her professional activity and the kinds of men she meets is echoic of a simplistic assumption about the typical sexual orientation of men in the world of fashion.

Pretended agreement scenarios can also arise from non-echoic strategies. One is based on the use adverbial expressions expressing positive confirmation (*yes/yeah*) or agreement (*sure/of course/absolutely/totally*) whether alone or in combination. In English, when in combination, the affirmative adverb usually precedes an agreement adverb (e.g., *Yeah, right/sure/of course*, etc.). These adverbial expressions were initially labelled *ironic markers* by Muecke (1969). Later on, they were more adequately labelled *indices of irony* by Attardo (2000a), since they do not invariably signal the existence of ironic meaning, but may merely convey agreement. Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano (2019b) have refined Attardo's observation and claimed that, if treated as echoic markers, they invariably point to ironic meaning. This is more clearly so when they act in combination (e.g., *yeah, right/sure*), as can be seen from some of our previous examples. Nonetheless, owing to the fact that these adverbs

are used to convey agreement or consent, their real function is broader than that of encapsulating an ironic echo. They can thus be treated as agreement markers and, when associated with other contextual and textual pointers to irony, as *pretended agreement markers*.

Another, more subtle, way to build a pretended agreement scenario is through fixed expressions carrying a non-explicit but highly conventional pragmatic implication to that effect. This is the case of the sentence *That shouldn't be a problem*, which was part of a previous example. This expression conveys the idea that, unless there is an unforeseeable obstacle, the speaker agrees to do as required.

At this point, we may wonder whether echoic mention is equivalent or not to the other strategies. At times the echoed thought may be replaced by an adverb of agreement. Remember the ironic exclamation *Big party at the Lockwood mansion!* It echoed a couple's expectations while clashing with the fact that such expectations were not met. However, let us imagine that, unaware of the disappointing party, someone makes the following casual non-ironic remark: *You must have had a big party at the Lockwood mansion!* Then, the couple replies ironically: *Yeah, right, absolutely!* The use of three adverbs rather than two or one enhances the ironic strength of the couple's response. These adverbs do not echo the comment; they only pretend to agree with it, but they definitely convey ironic meaning in an impacting way. Other factors may cooperate, such as a falling tone, vowel lengthening, or an edge in the voice. This ironic strategy does not exclude echoic mention, alone or in combination, from agreement expressions. Thus, there could be other more economical ironic reactions: *A great time!*, *A great time, sure*, *Yeah, right, a great time indeed!* The first one is merely partial echoic mention; the second one combines echoic mention and one expression of agreement; the third one acts similarly by putting together echoic mention and several affirmative adverbs (*yeah, right, indeed*) thereby reinforcing the pretense component of the scenario.

It is worth noting that, in non-ironic language, bringing together agreement markers can increase the strength of the agreement function of the utterance. By contrast, when the speaker ostentatiously pretends to agree, adding agreement markers cannot have an effect on the agreement function itself, since the speaker is in disagreement, but rather on the pretense dimension of the utterance. In addition, there is no theoretical limit to the number of agreement markers that can be brought together. However, as a general tendency, our data reveal the existence of an upper limit of two to three (usually consecutive) markers in each utterance. What is more, in irony, an excessive accumulation of agreement markers may convey such negative feelings as anger and contempt: *Yeah, of course, right!; absolutely right!; a great time indeed!* This happens because this strategy has the interesting effect of shifting focal attention from the agreement component to the pretense component of the ironic utterance thereby leading to the implication that the speaker is

more than just skeptical about the target thought. This focal shift has an inherent cultural-pragmatic motivation: an excess of explicit agreement loses descriptive credibility in favor of an interpretive motivation (e.g., anger). The combination of two or three agreement markers is generally considered enough to enhance the sense of agreement. Since additional markers are unnecessary, the implication of using them is that the agreement conveyed is not true, which motivates the shift to the idea of a pretended act.

2.3.3 The epistemic scenario

In general, the approaches on irony discussed in Section 2.2 acknowledge the existence of a discrepancy between prior expectations and what is manifestly the case. Situational irony takes place in the face of a situation that cancels out previously held assumptions. In verbal irony the utterance is used, often in conjunction with a paratextual features of an intonational and gestural kind, as the means to make hearers aware of the clash between their beliefs and what is observably the case. This clash calls for a reexamination of the nature and source of any broken expectation. Let us take an example drawn from Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano (2021, p. 228), where two friends, Paul and Sean, talk about the likelihood of the Manchester United winning the next match. Paul is positive that the team will win, but Sean is not. The team wins and Paul tells Sean: *Yeah, right, Manchester United; they're absolute losers!* This utterance is an echo of Sean's previous belief, which, in clashing with reality, conveys Paul's attitude of criticism toward Sean's belief. It should be stressed that the role of Paul's pretended act of agreement is to set up an epistemic scenario, which has to be assessed against attested reality as contained in the observable scenario.

According to Sperber et al. (2010), humans have developed epistemic vigilance mechanisms (2.2.4), which we use to assess the quality of any available information. To make such assessments, people match any new information input with previous related assumptions in terms of an estimate on the reliability of the source of such information. In our view, modality systems in grammar (Nuyts, 2001; Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004) are one consequence of the need to express such assessments. We also argue that the notion of epistemic vigilance applies to both verbal and situational irony. In situational irony, for perceivers to detect the ironic nature of a state of affairs they need to set the observable situation against previously held assumptions, with which the observable situation clashes. We call these assumptions the epistemic scenario. Thus, the epistemic scenario is the conceptual correlate of a state of affairs which is considered highly likely or even certain to occur. In verbal irony, the existence of an epistemic scenario is manifested through a pretended agreement with previous assumptions, including social stereotypes. This pretended

agreement can be manifested through agreement expressions like those discussed in Section 2.3.2.

There is a correlation between the discrepancy between the epistemic and observable scenarios and the ironic impact of a situation such that the stronger the discrepancy the greater the ironic impact. Evidently, such a strength is not necessarily equal for the ironist and the interpreter of irony, since they may differ in their degree of trust in the reliability of the same epistemic scenario or its source. In view of this, the notion of epistemic scenario is a broader category that includes the pretended agreement scenario as a subcategory. It also brings together verbal and situational irony under a single explanatory paradigm. Let us now see how the notion of epistemic scenario applies in an example of each kind of irony.

Take first the utterance *Yeah, sure, Sam plays the guitar like a legend*, in a context in which Sam is in fact much less than a good player. Here, the epistemic scenario consists in Sam playing the guitar with masterly ability to the delight and admiration of his audience. The epistemic scenario clashes with the observable scenario, which, to everyone's dismay, attests to Sam's poor skills. However, this clash, by itself, cannot give rise to ironic meaning, but only to a contrast between assumptions, as is the case in disagreements. For irony to be built, the ironist's pretended agreement with the content of the epistemic scenario is needed. Contrast now situational irony. Recall our previous discussion of the fire station going down in flames. In the epistemic scenario, fire stations are highly unlikely to burn down, since it is the place where specialized firefighting equipment is stored ready for use by professional fire fighters. Here, the clash takes place between the perceiver's assumptions and attested reality. The result is the detection of the ironic aspects of the situation which the perceiver has unexpectedly come across, which underlie the perceiver's attitude (e.g., one of astonishment).

The stronger an epistemic assumption, the greater the likelihood for the cross-scenario clash to be detected. There are three possible sources for the degree of confidence in the certainty of a knowledge item: world knowledge, logical implications (deductive or inductive reasoning), or implicational inference (abductive reasoning) (Givón, 1995, p. 19). World knowledge includes all the information that participants in the ironic event may have gathered from their life experience or learned from a third party. For instance, John knows that his sister Susanne hates escargots but, to play a prank on her, he tells her new date that she loves eating them. Susanne overhears the conversation and, with a flippant attitude, she tells John in front of her date: *Sure, John I love escargots; I do snail races every week*. Through echoic mention, Susanne builds an epistemic scenario that she knows will be understood by her brother (and maybe later on, after some explaining, by her date). Nevertheless, the ironic content of this utterance may not be yet accessible to her date, who may feel initially confused about it. Evidently, the felicity of an ironic

act depends to a large extent on the hearers' confidence in the likelihood of the epistemic scenario; if the epistemic scenario is judged to be unlikely, the clash with attested reality will be detected and ironic meaning will arise. In the example under analysis, attested reality is only implicated by Susanne's rather surprising remark about her involvement in snail races. This can make it difficult for Susanne's date to have full confidence in the assumption that she does not like escargots.

Irony is not possible if the epistemic scenario cannot be questioned. There is, however, no necessary correlation between the ironist's, or the perceiver's, certainty and universal validity, since not all knowledge is universally valid. For instance, we all know that all humans are mortal. However, this objectively indisputable assumption would not preclude any ironist holding an erroneous belief about the mortality and immortality of, for example, a great emperor such as Caligula, who was worshipped as a god. Shockingly for those who believed in Caligula's godlike status, he was stabbed to death by conspirators. This situation presents a clash between an epistemic and an observable scenario. However, it is not a case of irony unless any of the citizens who holds the belief that Caligula is immortal is confronted with the facts and dissociates himself or herself from them.

2.3.4 Revisiting previous perspectives

So far, we have drawn a basic picture of irony. In this picture, verbal and situational irony are treated under the same theoretical umbrella, where the person facing an ironic utterance or an ironic situation does so by detecting the discrepancy between the epistemic and the observable scenarios. In this process, verbal irony has direct communicative consequences, whereas situational irony can only have such consequences if reported. Chapter 3 discusses these ideas in much more detail.

Now, the question which we want to bring up here is: what does this basic picture, which we consider integrative, incorporate from the previous perspectives addressed in 2.2 and what does it reject, if anything? The answer requires a clear understanding of what is central to irony. We think that irony is a cognitive-pragmatic phenomenon. Its range of pragmatic uses, which determine its value, can be accounted for in terms of the principles of cognitive modeling. Among such uses, we have mentioned teaching, persuading, and criticizing, which are but forms of raising awareness on reality. Raising awareness can be achieved through the direct use of ironic utterances, but also by reporting on ironic situations or by creating them fictionally. As an example of a non-fictional report on an ironic situation, consider a young woman who tells a friend of hers about the embarrassment of another young woman, who they find rather presumptuous, when the latter discovers that she was wearing the same dress as one of her teachers at the prom dance. Examples of fictional ironic reports abound in literature. A well-known case is found in the

Greek tragedy *Oedipus Rex*, which is discussed in more detail later in 5.2.1.4. In this play the members of the audience are consistently aware of the futility of Oedipus's attempts to evade fate, but he is not. Thus, the challenges Oedipus faces are only ironic from the perspective of the audience. The difference between Oedipus and the audience in terms of knowledge is that only the latter can build a manifestly true observable scenario, whereas Oedipus works exclusively on the basis of his own assumptions, the epistemic scenario. In this process, the members of the audience either learn about fate or strengthen their previous assumptions about it. Different versions of this technique are found across the history of literature in different genres. To give another example, to be discussed in greater depth in 5.2.2.3, consider George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. This tale is an attack on the fallacies of communist ideals when put into effect, as in the case of Stalinism. The animals on a farm seize power and ban their oppressors, the farmers. But their original idealistic organization succumbs to the lust for power of the pigs, who were part of the revolt but finally become the new ruling and oppressive caste. This tale takes the form of an allegory where readers, as the plot unfolds, soon find out that their expectations about the equality ideals of communism are at odds with reality. While a friend's informal report, a Greek tragedy, and a postmodern allegorical tale would seem to have little in common, this is not true in terms of the way they build irony. They are constructed on the basis of the same explanatory categories.

This analytical situation also holds for the various uses of verbal irony. For example, within rhetoric, Demosthenes's or Cicero's speeches often contain attacks to public figures based on irony. These can go undetected unless interpreters align themselves with the ironist's arrangement of epistemic and observable scenarios. The epistemic scenario usually hinges on the belief that a certain public figure, the ironic target, is worthy of admiration. However, this belief is formulated in such a way that it acts as a pointer to reality, the observable scenario, which only the ironist and his audience share. The epistemic scenario is thus invalidated. In "On the False Embassy", Aeschines becomes the target of irony when Demosthenes, his opponent contrasts the magnificence of Athens and Aeschines's indignity (Demosthenes 18.180, cf. Gagarin, 2005, p. 209). This use of irony aligns the audience with Demosthenes as they "realize" that they share knowledge with the ironist upon detection of what the orator ranks as observable reality in contraposition to the epistemic scenario, which is thus invalidated.

We come now to the set of related perspectives on irony provided by inferential pragmatics, psycholinguistics, artificial intelligence, and blending theorists within Cognitive Linguistics. Although seemingly far away from one another in terms of their goals, these disciplines do share some epistemological concerns. Psycholinguists are interested in the production and comprehension of irony, pragmaticists in the principles which regulate its use, artificial intelligence theorists in

simulating (or even emulating) the mental processes involved in it, and blending theorists in how conceptual structure is managed in its production. Underlying these pursuits, the scenario approach provides explanatorily adequate analytical categories. This book will give evidence of how they work. These categories concern the correlation between cognitive processes, as cued by linguistic structure and function, and actual use, as observed from a careful study of cooperating textual and contextual variables. Such a correlation determines the use potential of ironic constructions. For example, the sentence *You could not play tennis well even if Nadal became your trainer* can be used in an insultingly ironic way (see 4.6.1 for similar examples in connection to the difference between irony and banter). An inferential pragmaticist might want to allude to the negated pragmatic echo in apodosis (the hearer is assumed to think he or she plays well). However, this negated echo actually functions as part of an observable scenario, where it is evident that the hearer cannot play tennis well, while acting as a pointer to the implicit echo of the hearer's erroneous belief on his or her good tennis skills. The following development of the previous example makes the implicit echo fully explicit: *So, you think you could play tennis well; you couldn't play tennis well even if Nadal became your trainer*. This implicit echo is but an epistemic scenario which is contradicted by the explicit part of the expression, which supplies the elements of the observable scenario just as is manifest to the speaker. An artificial intelligence theorist might want to determine the principles that model the use of this expression so as to endow an intelligent machine with ability to interpret it. The pattern *You couldn't X even if Y*, where X refers to performing an action requiring some skill and Y to any facilitating condition for the performance of the action, is suggestive in this regard. Finally, a blending theorist would make emphasis on how partial conceptual structure about tennis playing and training is first recruited from our world knowledge and then integrated into one single meaning representation. The scenario account definitely assigns a meaningful place within the integrated framework to each of these cognitive tasks and their pragmatic consequences. Ironic meaning arises from the interplay between an epistemic and an observable scenario where the latter cancels out all or part of the former thereby giving rise to a general attitudinal inference about the speaker's or the perceiver's dissociation from its content. The rest of this book is devoted to a detailed examination of these components of this integrated framework. To do so, it attends to all linguistic clues of the cognitive and pragmatic activity involved in ironic meaning derivation and its uses together with a careful examination of the elements of the ironic event in relation to how the interplay of scenarios is handled.

2.4 Irony types

Beyond the basic distinction between verbal vs. situational irony, the main distinctions between irony types have been offered by literary theorists. One example is provided by Muecke's (1970) fifteen types of irony. This author classifies irony according to a wide range of criteria that include the types of literary works where irony is used: (1) irony as a rhetorical enforcement, (2) mock-modesty or self-disparaging irony, (3) ironic modesty, (4) irony by analogy, (5) non-verbal irony, (6) ironic naivety, (7) dramatic irony, (8) unconscious irony, (9) self-betraying irony, (10) irony of events, (11) cosmic irony, (12) ironic incongruity, (13) double irony, (14) Catch 22 irony, (15) Romantic irony. In this classification, irony is seen in terms of its communicative purpose, as is the case of (1), (2), and (3), its underlying cognitive structure, as in (4), its communicative or non-communicative nature, as in (5) and (10), the type of involvement of the protagonist in the ironic event, as in (6), (8), (9), (11), (12), and (14), the role of irony in supporting the plot or other aspects (e.g., the literary technique) of a narrative, as in (7) and (15), and its complexity, as in (13). Evidently, Muecke's classification is not supported by a discussion of criteria, but rather irony types are listed from the author's *ad hoc* observation of its use in literary texts or in relation to other rhetorical strategies. As mentioned in Section 2.2.2, Booth (1974) distinguishes between *stable* and *unstable* irony. The former refers to ironies where the opposite of what is being said is implicated; the latter to the ironies that do not provide a straightforward negative or positive counterpart. Although a simpler and apparently clearer distinction, it does not prove particularly enlightening as to how irony works, since it only applies to verbal irony, and it merely states that the intended meaning might correspond to totally or partially to the echoed thought. A discussion of ironic types requires different criteria. We argue in the following section for a classification consistent with our proposal for a unified framework for situational and verbal irony.

2.4.1 Communicated and non-communicated irony

We have provided evidence in the previous section that irony is a single phenomenon involving a cross-scenario clash that gives rise to an attitude of dissociation. Verbal ironists dissociate themselves from what they pretend to agree on, whereas perceivers of situational irony dissociate themselves from what they had thought to be the case. This does not mean that there are no differences between the two manifestations of this single phenomenon. But these differences are not a matter of the essence of ironic meaning or ironic attitude. Rather, they are related to how irony is communicated. In this regard, we make a distinction between *communicated*

and *non-communicated irony*. The former is ironic meaning constructed with the intention to communicate the speaker's dissociation from a previously held assumption or set of assumptions. The latter, by contrast, is not constructed but detected in a state, situation, or event. This latter kind of irony can be represented either non-fictionally or fictionally by means of narratives, performances or other modes of communication. Figure 1 outlines these basic distinctions, which we will illustrate and discuss in more detail below.

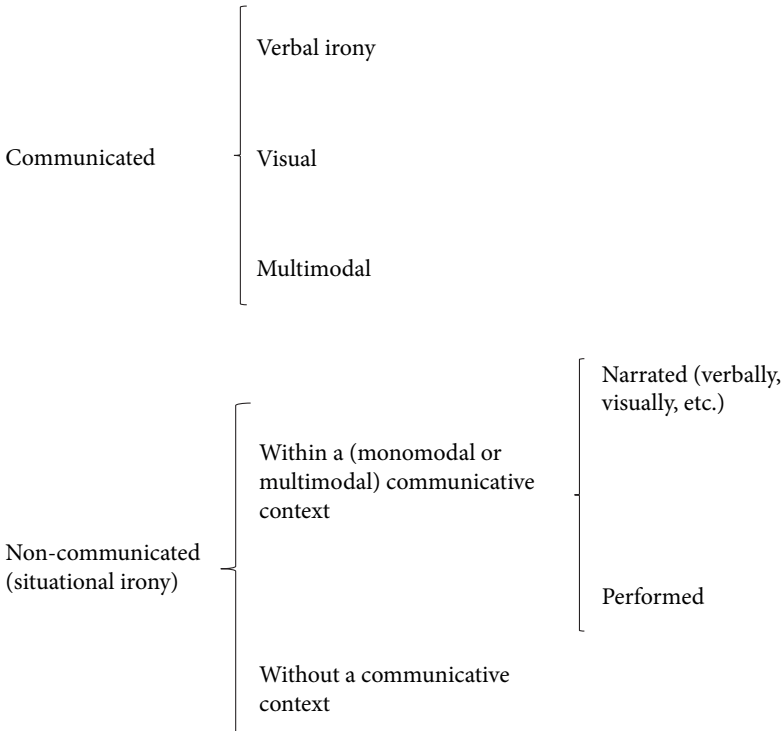


Figure 1. Irony types from a communicative perspective

According to this classification, *communicated irony* can be either verbal, visual, or multimodal. On the other hand, *non-communicated irony* (*situational irony*, according to the traditional dichotomy), can be either framed within a communicative context, or not. If it is, it can be verbally reported (e.g., narrated), or otherwise conveyed either through images or through a combination of words and images; it can alternatively be performed for an audience. The reader should note that there is no overlap between communicated irony and non-communicated irony framed within a communicative context. In the former category, the utterance, the depiction, or the combination of both, is ironic in itself; in the latter, it is not. The latter

either reports on or acts out (through different modes) a situation or event which the communicator finds ironic.

The present work has presented enough examples of *communicated verbal irony* for our current purposes in this section. Let us now take a case of *communicated visual irony*. Consider Banksy's work *Madonna with gun*. This is a piece of mural art in Naples where the British artist represents Virgin Mary, the Madonna, with a mystic expression in her face. However, the mural also depicts a bubble with a gun above the Madonna's head, as if capturing her thoughts (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. Depiction of *Madonna with gun*

The mural draws attention to Naples's reputation as a bastion of both devout Catholicism, for which the Virgin stands, and gun crime. The irony arises from the clash between what we would expect from a place whose citizens entertain the highest ideals of Christian behavior (the epistemic scenario) and the crude reality of violent death (the observable scenario). As a controversial and satirical body of work, Banksy's art often resorts to irony to convey an attitude of dissociation from what others believe to be true (the epistemic scenario) and what the artist and others believe to be the real social situation, which should be amenable to criticism (the observable scenario).

Multimodal irony is recurrent in communication, particularly in comic strips, graphic novels, and advertising. Imagine the pictured image of a woman looking through the round glass of a door of a washing machine, which, in this specific image, resembles an airplane window. Below we find a text that reads *Women adventurers* (see Figure 3).



Women adventurers

Figure 3. Depiction of a woman looking through the door of a washing machine

Through a metonymic shift, the combination of the text and the image affords access to the epistemic scenario of a free, independent woman traveler. However, this scenario, which is epistemic in nature, clashes with what the image actually portrays, a woman that assumingly does the laundry as one of her household chores, thereby complying with the housewife stereotype, which is the observable scenario.

Non-communicated or situational irony is unplanned and unintentional. It arises from the perceiver's detection of a clash between an epistemic and an observable scenario. Non-communicated irony does not involve a producer of irony, an ironic target or an interpreter, but simply a perceiver of the ironic nature of a situation. One instance of non-communicated irony (Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano, 2021, p. 233) is the notice reading *No dogs allowed*, found in a park covered with dog excrements. Underlying this situation there is a clash between the expected reaction of dog owners when they come across the warning, and the observable situation, which evidences that the warning has been completely ignored. This example involves an utterance, but there is no verbal irony in it. It is the situation, rather than what the notice says, that is ironic. This is easily seen from the fact that there is no evidence whatsoever of the utterance conveying pretended agreement. This

means that the text on the notice simply acts as a pointer to the epistemic scenario that specifies one of the City Hall regulations. However, non-communicated irony can also be part of a communicative event, although it does not affect its intrinsic non-communicated nature. For instance, the situation described above could provide material for a narrated joke where the humorist presents a law-abiding character that is shocked when he or she sees the dog excrements on the park lawn. In this case, situational irony is narrated to create a humorous effect in the audience. While in the non-narrated version of the example irony simply occurs and is identified by the perceiver, the narrated version is framed within a communicative context that includes the joke-teller and the interpreter of the joke. The insertion of situational irony into a communicative context does not detract from its non-communicated nature. What the audience gets is a report on, or a depiction of, the ironic situation. This means that this type of irony is also based on the clash between an epistemic and an observable scenario.

Another interesting example of situational irony, extracted from the American sitcom *Friends*, has been discussed in Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano (2021, p. 234). The episode “The One with the Jellyfish” (S4 E1) narrates a trip of the five protagonists to the beach. While sunbathing with Joey and Chandler, Monica is stung in the leg by a jellyfish. Because of the poison, it is impossible for her to walk back home. In order to alleviate the sharp pain she is experiencing, Joey suggests that someone urinate on Monica’s leg. His idea is based on some odd advice from a television program. Once the three characters have returned home with the rest of their friends, it is revealed that Joey was unable to do as he proposed and help Monica because of “stage fright”. Joey is an actor, used to performing in front of big audiences in theatres in New York City, which makes the situation an ironic one. The irony of this situation is embedded in a communicative context consisting in Joey’s telling the story to his friends while being unaware of its ironic nature. His friends (and potentially the audience of the show) do find it ironic that a professional actor suffers from stage fright. The reason why the audience may only potentially interpret this situation as ironic is that they can only do so if they know about Joey’s professional background as an actor (the epistemic scenario). The audience is not provided with this information, since they are supposed to have it from previous episodes. Instead, the audience only gets the observable scenario, which is expected to clash in their minds with what they already know about this character.

Fiction has extensively exploited situational irony in artistic works with the aim of fostering the engagement of the audience with the story. One such example is dramatic irony. Literary and theatrical communication add complexity to situational irony since they provide a context where irony is embedded in fiction. The author of a literary piece uses the strategy of embedding to let the reader become

a perceiver of situational irony, as is the case of dramatic irony (cf. Muecke, 1969). An example of dramatic irony is found in Shakespeare's tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* (1597) (cf. Shakespeare, 2015). At the end of the play, Juliet drinks a potion which sends her into such deep sleep that Romeo believes that she is dead. In despair, Romeo reacts by killing himself. Within the context of the play, only Juliet perceives the irony. Her reaction to this is her own suicide, which she commits using Romeo's dagger. However, the audience's level of awareness is greater than Juliet's, since she only knows about Romeo's behavior once he is dead. The audience, however, witnesses his reaction to Juliet's apparent death.

Although ironies embedded in fiction are very common in theatrical plays, they may also be found in narratives. The *Sleeping Beauty* supplies a clear example. In one of the various versions of this popular tale, a wicked fairy warns the princess's parents that their daughter will prick her finger on a spindle and die as a result. The terrified king and queen react by banning all the spindles in the kingdom. However, the prophecy is eventually fulfilled, although the princess ends up falling into a deep sleep rather than dying (see also analysis in Section 5.2.2.4). As in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, the audience is aware that the prophecy will be fulfilled in spite of the endeavors of the characters in the story to the contrary. The *Sleeping Beauty* thus supplies another example of non-communicated irony embedded within the communicative context created by the (literary) relationship between the author and his readers.

2.4.2 Sequenced and delayed non-communicated irony

Our discussion of non-communicated or situational irony in narratives and theatre plays takes into another classificatory dimension which relates to the stages of presentation of its central constituting elements. In this connection, we shall put forward the notions of *delayed* and *sequenced non-communicated irony*, which further elaborates cases of narrated and performed irony.

We first address delayed irony, as defined in Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano (2021, p. 235). This kind of irony takes place when the irony-production process starts at some point in the narration, but it only becomes clearly recognizable as such later on, once the observable scenario is provided. By way of illustration, think of the following remark, taken from Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*: "She is tolerable but not handsome enough to tempt me". This derogatory remark, which is passed by Darcy on the woman whom he found unsuitable to dance with, is not immediately ironic, but it becomes so later on, when Darcy falls in love with her (cf. Austen, 2012). Evidently, the irony in this statement will only be detected if the reader remembers Darcy's remark thus building the epistemic scenario out of

it. The reason why delayed situational irony can more readily take place if irony is embedded within a communicative context is that a context of this kind enables the communicator to activate the epistemic and observable scenarios at different stages as the plot unfolds. On the other hand, in the absence of an embedding communicative context, the epistemic scenario may be retrieved from world knowledge when the observable scenario is identified.

A given observable scenario can be shared by a succession of ironic acts. Thus, there can be sequences of either non-communicated or communicated ironies, or also several communicated ironic acts. We can illustrate this phenomenon with another example taken from the TV show *Friends* (S3 E18) (Reich, Cohen and Bright, 1997). In this episode, Frank, Phoebe's teenage brother, introduces his new girlfriend, Mrs. Knight, his schoolteacher, who is in her 50s, to his sister and her friends. Mrs. Knight, upon meeting Phoebe, says to her: *You know, it's funny; Frank has told me so much about you but that's not how I pictured you at all.* Then, Phoebe retorts: *Yeah, I'm a big surprise.* It is really odd to see how Mrs. Knight finds Phoebe's appearance striking, especially if we take into account that she has not realized that her age gap with Frank is even more striking. Mrs. Knight remains at all times unaware of the irony in the situation. However, this irony is evident to her interlocutor, the audience, and the rest of the characters in the scene. Phoebe's verbal response is part of a sequentially different ironic act. In this sequence of ironic acts Phoebe's communicated verbal irony is built into a context of non-communicated irony.

Sequenced and delayed situational irony may also be combined. This makes it possible to plan lengthy intervals between successive ironic acts. In Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour" (Chopin, 2000), the protagonist, Mrs. Mallard, who supposedly has a heart problem, receives news that her husband has died. She is initially grieved by the sad event, but she soon realizes that she is happy about it. However, later on she finds out that her husband was in fact alive when she sees him coming back home. She dies from the shock. This story presents the reader with different ironies, all related to Mr. Mallard's purported accidental death. However, these ironies are only detected later on in the story. Perhaps the most impacting one happens when Mrs. Mallard's false heart trouble finally becomes real. This strongly ironic situation is built on a sequence of previous preparatory ironic events. The first preparatory irony results from the clash between what people would expect about Mrs. Mallard's reaction to her husband's death and her happiness when she feels free from him. The second preparatory irony takes place when, at the end of the story, Mr. Mallard suddenly appears, thus showing that he was never dead, which involves a drastic change in the observable scenario. Finally, the third preparatory irony in this sequence arises when we find out that the husband was alive,

completely unaware of the railroad accident in which he was thought to have died. The epistemic scenarios of each of these ironies are arranged in a sequence, and they all clash with the same observable scenario which is modified as the story develops. Thus, the final form of this scenario is only completely disclosed at the end of the story, thus allowing for delayed sequential irony to take place.

2.5 Conclusions

This chapter has laid out the main theoretical foundations of this work. These are based on the notions of pretended agreement and epistemic scenario, which stem from a close observation of the pros and cons of previous approaches to irony outlined in Chapter 2. We have first made a survey of already-existing integrated approaches to irony. Then, we have argued for an approach to irony which brings together elements from the disciplines that take the socio-cultural context and the reader as essential elements in the analysis of irony, and also those that place their focus on the processes of production and interpretation of irony. We take Ruiz de Mendoza's approach to irony as a starting point. This approach, which is grounded in the principles of cognitive modeling, borrows the notion of echo from Relevance Theory and defines irony as a clash between an echoed and an observable scenario, out of which arises the attitudinal element. We have gone one step further and defended the view that in irony there is a clash between an epistemic scenario and an observable scenario. The epistemic scenario can be largely retrieved from the ironist's and the interpreter's socio-cultural knowledge. We claim that the notion of echo proposed by Relevance Theory and the notion of pretense, put forward within the framework of Pretense Theory, are in fact, compatible. We have integrated both of them into a combined category which contributes to the activation and ironic exploitation of an epistemic scenario. Both notions are exclusive to verbal irony. However, although the pretended agreement is an intrinsic feature of verbal irony, the epistemic scenario may be based on an echo or not. This approach not only accounts for verbal irony by bridging the gap between Relevance Theory and Pretense Theory, but it also explains verbal and situational irony within a single unified theoretical framework.

Secondly, we have proposed a new classification of irony types that overrides the traditional distinction between verbal and situational irony. We argue that this distinction is not broad enough to cover examples of irony that are conveyed multimodally, or simply visually, whether in a narrated or a performed format. The classification we have devised differentiates between communicated and non-communicated irony, the latter being equivalent to the traditional situational

irony. Communicated irony invariably features the pretended agreement, either in the form of a visual, verbal or multimodal text. On the other hand, there is no pretended agreement in non-communicated irony. Pretended agreement is only necessary to make others aware of the existence of a clash between what someone thinks and what is the case or, in the case of thinking or speaking aloud to oneself, as a form of reflective self-assurance about one's own awareness of the clash. Awareness raising is not a factor in situational irony since it is not communicated, not even to oneself. There is only perceiver's realization.

CHAPTER 3

The epistemic and the observable scenarios

3.1 Introduction

As explained in Section 3.2, we define the epistemic scenario as the conceptual correlate of a state of affairs that someone regards as highly likely or even certain to occur. The epistemic scenario is common to verbal and situational irony, since both types of irony involve a clash between what we believe to be highly likely or certain and the observable situation. In verbal irony, the epistemic scenario is further framed within an agreement scenario, since in all cases of verbal irony we find the ironist's attitude of pretended agreement with a given state of affairs. There is no such pretended agreement in situational irony, where the epistemic scenario is merely drawn from world knowledge. On the other hand, the observable scenario can be drawn from any source of new evidence. In the case of verbal irony, such a source can be the attested context of situation or it can be any information drawn from the speaker's world knowledge which the speaker treats as more reliable than the information drawn from the epistemic scenario. It is for this reason that the epistemic scenario is presented as invalid in the process of ironic communication. In situational irony, the observable scenario is necessarily drawn from the context of situation whether perceived by chance or created communicatively in a narration, a performance, or in any other way.

3.2 The epistemic scenario

This section addresses the notion of epistemic scenario in detail. This notion is intended to be an encompassing one capable of accommodating the idiosyncrasies of both verbal and situational irony, while laying out the rationale for an account of their differences. Sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 are devoted to exploring the role of the epistemic scenario in verbal and situational irony respectively.

3.2.1 The epistemic scenario in verbal irony

There are multiple ways to form the epistemic scenario in verbal irony. These strategies are either connected with the overall act of pretended agreement or with the source of knowledge used to build the ironic echo. Within the first category we have found (i) ironic marking, and (ii) the creation of echoes. Both kinds of strategies are explained in the ensuing sections.

3.2.1.1 *Agreement markers*

As we have noted before, a non-echoic way of forming the epistemic scenario is by expressing explicit or implicit agreement. We very often come across examples of irony that merely use one or more of the adverbial expressions discussed in Section 2.3.2 (*yeah, sure, of course, right, absolutely, totally*). Take, for instance, a situation where two fellow workers go to the pub on Friday evening after a full week of work. For A, the week has been quite calm, since his department has not had any new projects to manage, but B's week has been extremely stressful, and has involved an issue with one of her team members. A says: *Oh well, it's been a chill week*, to which B ironically replies: *Yeah!* It is enough to have an agreement adverb used with falling intonation to build an irony. By pretending to agree with A's words, B is conveying not only an attitude of dissociation towards them, but also making it evident that she disagrees. In Section 2.3.2, we noted that these agreement adverbs have been labelled ironic markers by Muecke (1969), but since they do not invariably involve irony, they have been treated by Attardo (2000a) as mere indices of irony. Attardo provides a list of such indices, among which stand out intonation that deviates from normal patterns, exaggerated stress prominence, typographical means (e.g., scare quotes), kinesic markers (winks or nudges), contextual elements (the co-occurrence of incompatible elements in the same sentence), or some morphological devices (e.g., the use of phrases such as *so to speak, everybody knows, one might say*). In our view, these indices of irony are only complementary resources. For this reason, they are never infallible in marking irony. Their function is to strengthen the eco by hinting at the possibility that what is being said cannot be interpreted at face value.

Redefining Attardo's observation, Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano (2019b, p. 134), have claimed that these adverbs work invariably if treated as echoic markers. We believe that the function of these adverbs is actually to point to an implicit echo by pretending to agree with a previous utterance. If we take the example above, B's remark *Yeah!* points to an echo of A's words (*it's been a chill week*). Hence, B's utterance acts as the equivalent of *Yeah, it's been a chill week*. And indeed, A will not understand the irony in B's words unless he realizes that B is pretending to agree with his words. Hence, it is more accurate to say that the real function of these

adverbs is to convey agreement or consent towards a previous utterance by also echoically pointing to a previous utterance rather than encapsulating an echo. These adverbs can further be used to express other echo-related pragmatic functions, such as encouragement, or to show phatic communion (Jakobson, 1963). Adverbs and adverbial phrases might appear in different positions in the ironic utterance (e.g., *Absolutely, that's what I meant* or *That's what I meant, absolutely*). Markers may also be repeated in order to highlight their ironic effect (e.g., *Yeah, yeah, she's such a delight*) or they can be combined with other markers (e.g., *Absolutely, yeah, for sure, that's what I meant*).

The efficacy of these markers lies in the fact that they are used to convey the pretended agreement intrinsic to irony. Communicatively, as Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano (2019b) note, the outcome is not very different from that of cumulative echoes, which provide different variants of one same thought. To illustrate this point, these authors give the example of an aristocratic family who is holding their yearly reunion, during which two siblings observe their uncle's extravagant and shameful behavior. One of them notes: *Uncle Jim, the pride of the family!*, to which the other adds: *A jewel in the crown!* The first sibling's statement is only ironic if either the speaker or some other family member has ever entertained the thought that uncle Jim is worthy of admiration. The second sibling's reply to the first sibling's statement recognizes the ironic intent of the latter's remark, which it reinforces. The first sibling echoes someone's attributed thought or opinion, and in pretended agreement, the second sibling echoes the first sibling's thoughts. They both clash cumulatively with the observable scenario (uncle Jim's behavior), thus strengthening the ironic effect. However, a similar effect could have been achieved by combining markers, such as *Yeah, right!*, or *Yeah, sure!*, which would have pointed to the echo implicitly.

Ironic markers may create formal reduplications (e.g., *Yeah, yeah!*, especially when bearing prosodic marking) but they tend to form conceptual reduplications (e.g., *Yeah, right*). Since repetition cannot be limitless, Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano (2019b) suggest that it is likely that the number of reduplicated echoes is constrained by the balance between effort and effect as propounded by Relevance Theory for all kinds of communication (Sperber and Wilson, 1995). Given the fact that they are economic by nature, the reduplication of ironic markers is only reasonable to the extent that they do not burden the processing effort, or that, once the ironic effect has reached a sufficiently heightened effect, accumulating more is judged completely unnecessary. For example, the presence of ironic markers in *Yeah, right, such a gentleman* gives more hints to irony than merely *Yeah, a gentleman*. However, we may find cases where reduplication may be considered unnecessary in terms of processing burden or excess of intensification (*Yeah, right, sure, of course, certainly, such a gentleman*).

Agreement or consent can also be expressed with some fixed (or semi-fixed) expressions. We have already mentioned (Section 2.3.2) the expression *That shouldn't be a problem* meaning 'Unless something goes wrong, I will be able to do as you say', which can be used in an ironic context to convey pretended agreement. Just as in the case of agreement adverbs, *That shouldn't be a problem* signals the existence of an implicit echo, this time based on an inference on the interlocutor's beliefs rather than a previous utterance. Other fixed expressions of agreement that could be used in the same context are *You bet!*, *It goes without saying*, and *needless to say*.

3.2.1.2 *Echo-formation strategies*

Although agreement adverbials and other agreement expressions are some options to build the epistemic scenario, the most common way of doing so in verbal irony is to use an echo. This is probably the case because echoic mention, if complete and accurate, can involve exact identity between beliefs or thoughts. This maximizes the clarity of formulation of the epistemic scenario and consequently of the clash with the observable scenario. By resorting to echoic mention, the ironist makes reference to someone's previously uttered remark, or to a collective or individual belief or assumption.

Ironic echoes can be built by using a number of different strategies initially discussed in Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano (2019a): (i) the elaboration of socio-cultural references, (ii) echoic compounding, (iii) the creation of echoic chains, (iv) the construction of cumulative echoes, and (v) multi-operational echoes (or echoes constructed through the confluence of more than one cognitive operation). Here, we further elaborate on this previous work by providing a more detailed analysis. Let us discuss each strategy in turn.

3.2.1.3 *The elaboration of cultural and sociohistorical references*

The success of this complexity strategy is highly dependent on the degree of epistemic convergence between the ironist and the target audience. The cognitive-pragmatic notion of epistemic convergence is consistent with the well-known notion of *horizon of expectations* with reception theory (Jauss, 1982). One example of this kind of strategy is found in Toni Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye* (1970), where irony is based on gender (cf. Morrison, 1999). The story, which is told from the point of view of three mistreated African American women, sometimes with the help of irony, condemns such social evils as gender and ethnic oppression. In one ironic situation the novel echoes the social assumption that prostitutes rank with the lowest in the social scale. Ironically, this standard does not hold for white prostitutes, who ironically are better off than married African American women. Capturing the ironic import of this situation, as depicted in Morrison's novel, requires having access to the relevant cultural and sociohistorical knowledge.

Nevertheless, cultural knowledge is not necessarily bound to specific social and historical parameters. A case in point is provided by the skillful use of cultural assumptions in the Pixar animated film *Monsters Inc* (Gerson and Docter, 2002). The plot spins around the existence of a corporation run by monsters whose job is to scare children. There are stories about monsters across different societies and historical periods. One only need look at the Hydra or the Minotaur in Ancient Greece, Leviathan and Behemoth in Hebrew culture, the Yeti in East Asia, Bigfoot in North America or the Loch Ness Monster in Scottish folklore. The irony in *Monsters Inc.* lies in role reversal. It is the monsters that are afraid of children rather than the other way around. Hence, the general belief that children are scared of monsters (the epistemic scenario) clashes with the fact, which is only accessible to the spectators, that it is the monsters that are afraid of the children (the observable scenario). This leads spectators to a major breakaway from their cultural expectations.

Irony may also rely exclusively on the interpreter's knowledge about a certain set of sociohistorical circumstances, as is the case of Jonathan Swift's satirical pamphlet *A Modest Proposal*. In this text, the author pretends to be a high-class Englishman and explains: "I therefore humbly offer to public consideration that of the 120,000 children already computed, 20,000 be served for breed [...]" (Swift, 1729/1996, p. 54) (see also Section 5.2.2.3). The interpreter needs to have knowledge about the harsh policies of England of Ireland, as well as on the fact that Swift himself was an Irishman whose aim was to denounce such policies, in order to understand why he ironically proposes that children be given such a morally reprehensible treatment. In Swift's remark, we find an echo of the English cultural belief that Irish people are of no worth. This echo clashes with Swift's own beliefs (which he hopes to share with the interpreter) about the intrinsic value of human beings. In a similar way, a reader of Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* will need knowledge about the sociohistorical context surrounding the novel in order to interpret ironically some of the remarks made about the educational institutions of the American South. One example of such ironies is uttered by Miss Caroline, Scout's teacher, when the girl shows up at school having already learned to read. The teacher tells the pupil: "Now tell your father not to teach you any more. It's best to begin reading with a fresh mind" (Lee, 1960/1982, p. 22). The teacher's ignorant attitude is revealed by her words, which echo socio-cultural beliefs. However, this attitude is inconsistent with correct teaching values and goals. As a consequence, this use of irony targets the misled assumptions of the educational system in the part of the United States where Scout lived with her family.

It may be interesting to compare the previous examples with others where irony appears to be of the non-communicated kind but they still require a correct understanding in terms of their socio-historical context. In principle, there should be no ironic echo. However, this may not be always the case. An example is found in the

parable of *The Good Samaritan* in the New Testament (Luke 10: 25–37, KJV), used by Jesus to criticize Jewish hypocrisy. The expression “good Samaritan” has become synonymous in English with a person who is always willing to help others in a selfless way. But in the days in which Jesus taught through this parable, for social and historical reasons, the Jews considered Samaritans a worthless people with mixed impure ancestry that had distorted Jewish traditions, including the Law of Moses. In the parable, the Jewish priests and religious officials refused to help a man who was attacked and beaten by thieves who left him half dead on a road. Ironically, a Samaritan, but not a Jew, showed mercy and provided the injured man assistance even at his own expense. By itself, the parable depicts an ironic situation which a present-day audience can only discern if provided with the relevant socio-historical background information. It thus qualifies as an example of narrated situational irony. However, when used by Jesus to attack Jewish hypocrisy, the parable can additionally be seen as a verbal depiction of what for Jesus, but not for the Jewish religious elite, was attested reality or what we call the observable scenario. The dialogical context of this parable is important in this respect, since it was but an ironic answer to a Jewish expert in the law, who was trying to put Jesus to a test through malicious questions. The Jewish expert had asked Jesus how to obtain eternal life. Jesus told him to love God first and then his neighbor. The expert then asked who his neighbor was. This is when Jesus uses the parable and asks the lawyer who he thought was the injured man’s neighbor. The expert had to acknowledge that it was the one that had exercised mercy, ironically the Samaritan. Within this dialogical context, the parable, which is the narration of an ironic situation, is used to build verbal irony. The parable affords access to an observable situation, which clashes with the cultural stereotypes of the social system which Jesus criticized. These stereotypes constitute an implicit echo.

3.2.1.4 *Echoic compounding*

Echoic compounding consists in the syntactic combination of any number of echoes which are thus used to ironize about different aspects of a situation. Imagine two friends, Paul and Fred, who have agreed to share the household tasks of the apartment in which they live together. Fred, however, tends to neglect his duties, although he seems to think he does more than his fair share. Paul decides to draw attention to the problem: *So, as you can see, Fred, I sit around doing nothing most of the time, while you do all the chores, right?* In this example, the speaker builds a two-part echo. The first part is echoic of Fred’s misled belief about Paul’s habits, and the second part echoically refers to what Fred seems to think is his own behavior. The first part clashes with what Paul thinks are his own real habits, and the second one with what Paul thinks are Fred’s habits.

In the previous example, syntactic combination is based on explicit marking by means of a connector. However, mere juxtaposition will also work. Let us take a situation in which two former fans of the same soccer team, Jan and Sam, meet again and remember some good moments with longing. However, at one point Sam seems to have a distorted memory of one of the sporting events: *Do you remember the match against Manchester United? Great game.* Jan, faced with the circumstance that they lost, comments: *Yes, I remember well, Sam. Great game. Happy day!* The first part (*Great game*) echoes Sam's misled memory. The second part (*Happy day!*) makes explicit a regular meaning implication arising from what Sam thinks is the case. Jan believes in the truthfulness of neither part, so both clash with Jan's memory about the event. One addresses Sam's explicit comment and the other an implication in which Sam is expected to believe. The two echoes present different but logically related aspects of the same situation thus adding complexity to the echoic strategy and strength to its communicative function.

Consider now a teenager ironically complaining about his father having broken for a second consecutive year his promise to buy him a bicycle for his birthday: *Yeah, right, thanks a lot. This year's bicycle is even better than last year's.* This remark contains at least three ironic echoes. First, the son is not thankful. His pretended expression of thanks is echoic of what he would have said if he had received the long-awaited present. This echo is compounded paratactically to two other echoes which are in turn compounded through the comparative construction. This second combination presupposes two purchases in two consecutive years, one better than the other, which are the (also pretended) reason why the son is thankful. The addition of three ironic echoes has a cumulative effect which is achieved in part through syntactic parataxis and in part by a construction-driven conceptual connection which is functionally equivalent to syntactic compounding.

Finally, echoic compounding can be used to bring together two or more loosely associated echoes thereby giving rise to a tighter conceptual dependency relationship between them; this dependency relationship is captured by syntactic expression. Let us take a situation where a mother struggles to get her son to do his fair share of household chores. The boy seldom obeys his mother and, when he does, he makes an open show of his reluctance. However, one day he decides to please his mother and, for the first time in months, sets the table for dinner. The boy is proud of himself and feels his mother should be proud too; but he feels disappointed at his mother's rather skeptical reaction. The boy's sister, who is fond of passing nasty remarks at him, comments ironically: *Oh, how thoughtless of her. She should be so proud of you taking care of all your duties!* This remark combines two ironic echoes: one is based on the boy's expectation that he should deserve instant praise for taking care of one of only one of his duties for the first time in months; the other is based on the boy's belief that setting the table was as much as was to be expected

of him. These two echoes, one on the extent of maternal pride and the other on the extent of personal responsibility, are only loosely related. However, the boy's sister brings them together into a tight cause-consequence relation (the mother's expected pride is a consequence of the boy's good behavior) which is reflected in syntactic dependency. In the boy's sister's mind, of course, this compounded echo is doubly inconsistent with reality, which gives rise to strengthened ironic meaning.

3.2.1.5 *Echoic chains*

Echoic chains are a discourse-oriented form of endowing ironic echoes with complexity. Echoic chaining happens as a result of echoing a previous echo. Take a modified version of our previous example where a boy expresses his frustration when his father fails to fulfil his promise of buying him a bicycle. In this modified version, the boy is misled into misjudging his father and uses irony to vent his feelings: *Son, you will have a bicycle; yeah, right*. His father, who has bought the desired gift, suddenly shows up with the promised bicycle and remarks: *Yeah, right, son! You will have a bicycle*. The father's remark is an echo of the son's previous echo of his father's apparently failed promise. Unlike the son's echoic expression, the father's use of an echo on his son's echo is not intended to express frustration, but simply to show his dissociation from his son's erroneous belief and draw attention to the real situation. The chained echo in this example is thus a pointer to the observable scenario.

Let us now take a more complex example, initially brought up in Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano (2019a, p. 132), where an echoic chain is used to reverse someone's logic for rebuttal purposes. Here, we address this analytical situation in greater detail. In this more complex example, Alice and Ben disagree about whether it is likely that Donald Trump will continue as president of the United States for a second term. Alice, who thinks this could be the case, tells Ben: *I think Trump could win another presidential election*. Ben, who disagrees with Alice's statement, answers back: *Yeah, sure, Trump could win another presidential election, and I could win the lottery!* However, a couple of months later, Ben unexpectedly wins the lottery. In this new, unexpected situation, Alice, echoing Ben's words, repeats the "and" part of Ben's previous statement: *Yeah, right, and you could win the lottery!*

Ben's remark is an example of analogy-based rebuttal. It is used ironically to build what for Ben is the observable scenario, here accessed through pragmatic implication: Ben believes that it is just as unlikely that he will win the lottery as Trump will win the next presidential election. This meaning is based on the pragmatic adjustment of the particle *and* (cf. Sperber and Wilson, 1993) into a world knowledge-induced neutral complementary alternation relation, that is, one where two negative alternatives complement (rather than exclude) each other (Ruiz de Mendoza and Gómez, 2014; Iza, 2015, 2021, p. 50). However, Ben's remark is later

counteracted by Alice's second statement. Here, the pretended agreement adverbs (*yeah, right*) point to the existence of an implicit echo containing the assumption that Trump could win, based on the fact that, when Ben wins the lottery, there is a reversal of probability in Ben's judgement, which now becomes the new observable scenario. It is this new observable scenario that Alice echoes in order to dissociate herself from Ben's belief that he could never win the lottery (and consequently, that Trump has no chances of winning the next election).

This conversational interplay, as described above, is supported by an echoic chain where Alice's final remark explicitly echoes the "and" part of Ben's rebuttal argument. Since this echo is cancelled out by the new evidence, Ben's rebuttal is invalidated in Alice's eyes. In this process, Alice's remark also carries an implicit echo of the first part of Ben's remark (*Trump could win another presidential election*), which is echoic of Alice's initially expressed belief. This echoic chain contains implicit and explicit elements. This is not by any means an unusual analytical situation, given the evidence discussed in the previous sections, where implicit echoing has been found to play a relevant communicative role in the construction of irony.

3.2.1.6 *Cumulative echoes*

We have already seen the enhancing effect of some cases of echoic compounding when the compounded echoes refer to the same aspect of a previous utterance or thought. However, this type of effect is secondary to other more central processes such as setting up dependency relations between echoes. There are, however, ironic contexts where such effects are directly sought after by speakers. This is the case of what we will term *cumulative echoing*, which consists in the consecutive appearance of multiple echoic terms that refer to the same ironic target, thus causing similar clashes with a single observable scenario. The result is a single, reinforced echo. Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano (2019a, p. 131) discuss the transformation of the ironic echo in *Mary is an angel* into a cumulative echo by adding terms that make reference to the same target meaning (Mary's behavior): *Mary is an angel, a saint, a gem, a treasure!* The four terms *angel, saint, gem, and treasure* provide comparable echoes of Mary's expected or attributed behavior; so, they all conflict with the observable scenario in a similar way. The four terms denoting goodness produce a pragmatic crescendo effect based on the positive connotations of 'angel' and 'saint' as quintessentially benign beings, and of 'gem' and 'treasure' as among the most valuable materials. To build cumulative echoes speakers usually select what they think is the communicatively most relevant element in terms of the target meaning (in this case, goodness). Cumulation is grounded in iconicity. Cumulative expressions imitate real-life experience of added impact when, for example, a person hits another person repeatedly or when someone has to carry greater and greater amounts of objects.

A second cumulative echo-building strategy, identified in Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano (2019a), makes use of merism. An example of this strategy is the following sentence: *I love her with all my heart, my mind, my body, my soul*. As Watson (1986) explains, merism is a figure of speech where the totality is expressed in abbreviated form by mentioning two or more of its prominent constituents. Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano (2019b) provide a more detailed definition. They argue that merism is the serial and/or cumulative combination of two or more contrasting and/or complementary terms or descriptions, which denote culturally or perceptually salient parts or aspects of the entity or state of affairs which they designate. Merism invokes totality, while giving due prominence to a selection of its elements. We may find examples of present-day merism in expressions such as *sword and sandal movie*, used to refer to movies that take place in classical antiquity, *hook, line and sinker* denoting completeness; or *for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health*, used as part of marriages vows in wedding ceremonies to denote possible life situations (cf. Ruiz de Mendoza, 2020a, Peña, 2021). The example *I love her with all my heart, my mind, my body, my soul* is meristic too, to the extent that the intended target meaning is the speaker's whole self, which includes his emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual sides. In an ironic use, merism serves as an intensifier that carries over from the echoic part of the utterance to its inferred attitude of dissociation.

At this point an observation of the potential status of cumulation as a constructional meaning-making strategy is in order. Constructions are cognitively entrenched and socially conventionalized form-meaning pairings (Goldberg, 2006) where meaning motivates form and form realizes meaning (Ruiz de Mendoza, 2013). Cumulation can be argued to be constructional because of the conventional nature of the mechanism used to create it and the stability of its intensifying meaning. Similar effects can also take place through other constructional strategies. A case in point is the different forms of the *reduplicative construction* (*All I think about is you, you, you!*; cf. Ghomeshi et al., 2004, p. 309; Ruiz de Mendoza and Agustín-Llach, 2013) and also the other intensifying constructions (e.g., *He's not poor, but beyond poor*). Given the right context, where the state of affairs denoted by the intensifying expression is contradicted by reality, it is possible to use these constructions to enhance ironic meaning. Imagine that Bob is critical of Mary's excessive self-centeredness. Unaware of what she is like, Peter, a common friend, compliments Mary on some apparent selfless act. Then, Bob ironizes: *Yeah right, Mary will never, never, ever do anything with just Mary in mind*. The cumulative echo here is achieved through repetition of the same frequency adverb, rather than through functionally synonymous terms, as was the case of *Mary is an angel, a saint, a gem, a real treasure!* But terms can also be the object of intensifying reduplication that is thus available for ironic cumulation effects: *Mary is an angel, angel, angel!*

In a similar manner, other ways of achieving intensification would yield similar effects: *Mary is not an angel; she's beyond an angel!; Mary is a real angel; Mary is an angel, every inch of her!*; etc.

3.2.1.7 *Multi-operational echoes*

The formation of an ironic echo can be based on the contribution of more than one cognitive operation, i.e., the ironic echo is either built through or enhanced by the cooperating activity of the cognitive operations involved in other figures of speech. Our data reveals the activity of metaphor, metonymy, and hyperbole in combination with ironic echoes.

When an ironic echo is created through such combinations, we speak of *multi-operational echoes*. Multi-operational echoes reinforce the attitudinal element of irony. They also add sophistication to it, since echoes may benefit from the combination of figures of speech to increase their complexity. In this regard, Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano (2019b) discuss the ironic utterance *Yeah, right, Mary is an angel*. Here, the ironic echo is based on a combination of hyperbole and metaphor. One of the contributions of metaphor to ironic echoing is the enhancement of the attitudinal element of the utterance. This can happen either through the recoverability of the elements of the ironic event, or by reinforcing its target meaning. Let us take *Mary is an angel* once more, as uttered by Amy. To her words, Bob ironically replies: *Yeah, right, a real treasure*. Rather than reproduce Amy's words exactly, Bob prefers to introduce a metaphor which captures the most relevant feature in what Amy said: Mary's contribution to other people's happiness and well-being. This feature is echoed as a result of the metaphor that maps the causal structure of treasure ownership to the causal structure of Mary's behavior: being associated with Mary is to be cherished for its positive effects on others as much as holding a treasure is (since this contributes to other's happiness and well-being). Of course, since the echo is ironic, this enhanced meaning is cancelled out by the clash with Bob's view of the observable scenario.

Let us now take a different reply to Amy's assumptions about Mary: *Yeah, right, an angel, a Hell's Angel!* Here Bob first seems to agree with his interlocutor by producing a partial echo of her words, but then cancels out this assumption by shifting the metaphoric source (angel) to Hell's Angels, the name of the feared motorbike gang. In so doing, Bob offers both an ironic echo (*Yeah, right, an angel*) and a textual cue to the observable scenario (Mary is rather like a Hell's angel).

Finally, let us take a third case where Amy tells Bob: *Mary is beautiful like an angel*, and Bob replies ironically: *Yeah, right, the picture of beauty*. Bob's ironic echo is constructed on the basis of a metonymy. In this metonymy, the picture stands for the representation in it, which stands for its beauty; this second metonymic target is highlighted as a result. This last metonymic target is mapped metaphorically onto

our understanding of Mary, which thus echoes Amy's remark. What is more, Bob's answer is also a case of cumulative echo, since Amy's utterance points to an implicit echo through the two affirmative adverbs (*yeah, right* is the equivalent of repeating *Mary is beautiful*), to which we now add the target meaning of the expression *the picture of beauty*. This reinforced echo is in conflict with what Bob believes to be observably the case, hence creating a strongly ironic utterance. Therefore, in this case, metaphor provides the basis for a cumulative echo conveying Bob's attitude towards Amy's statement.

On a superficial level of analysis, it is difficult to see why metonymy should play any central role in irony since metonymy is simply a point of access from a conceptual domain to another functionally related conceptual domain within the same knowledge frame (Kövecses and Radden, 1998) generally involving a "stands for" connection between the two (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). For example, the notion of *hand* gives access to the notion of *manual worker* in *We would need to hire a new hand for our farm*. *Hand* substitutes for *manual worker* without adding much in terms of meaning; it only supplies a point of view from which to see the target concept. This differentiates metonymy from metaphor since in metaphor there is a source-target reasoning process that gives rise to a whole array of inferences. This point can be easily made even through the simplest cases of metaphor, like the insulting use of *chicken* by schoolchildren to mock other children that shy away from challenges. The idea behind thinking of a child's behavior in terms of a chicken's behavior requires the activation of two corresponding knowledge structures where chicken's behavior when they sense any potential danger (e.g., a predator in the poultry yard) is used to reason about children's behavior when threatened. Both the chicken and the (cowardly) children run away in fright. If we think of *Mary is an angel* again, we realize that much of the meaning impact of the irony arises from the metaphorical use of *angel*, which denotes an extremely kind being. A similar reasoning applies, in the case of cumulative echoes, to the functional synonyms *a saint, a treasure, a gem, and the like*.

This would suggest that metonymy may only play an accidental role in ironic utterances by providing a point of access for a change of referent. But this is not necessarily the case if we look at the larger picture of elaborated ironic uses across history. For example, in Greek theater, in Sophocles' tragedy *Oedipus the King*, Oedipus stands for mankind (see also the analysis in Section 5.2.1.4). This allows the audience to identify themselves with Oedipus and think of fatality as potentially applying to them in the same way as to Oedipus. It may be recalled that, in the tragedy, the oracle had predicted that Oedipus would kill his father and marry his mother. Even though the character at points holds the belief that he has escaped his fate, there is a turn of events that he misinterprets and ends up fulfilling the

prophecy. The metonymy, which is not verbal but situational, is a case of what Ruiz de Mendoza (2000) has termed *double* metonymy, also known as metonymic chains or triers (cf. Brdar and Brdar-Szabó 2007; Brdar-Szabó and Brdar, 2011): a member of a class (Oedipus) stands for the whole class (mankind), which in turn stands for each member of the audience.

Finally, hyperbole and understatement can be found recurrently in ironic echoes. Both figures of speech maximize the contrast between the observable and the epistemic scenarios in irony, thus enhancing the attitudinal load of the irony derived from the clash.

The recurrent interaction between hyperbole and irony leads us to consider the former figure of speech as a particularly common resource to enhance the impact of the latter (e.g., Kreuz and Roberts, 1995; Colston and Keller, 1998; Colston and O'Brien, 2000). Hyperbole can act as a cue for irony since it cooperates in the maximization of the incongruity between the epistemic scenario (usually echoed) and the observable scenario. It does so by acting on the echo or in general on one or more related features of the epistemic component, which is magnified out of proportion. In the case of verbal irony, by building the echo in conjunction with hyperbole, the ironist forces the interpreter to parameterize his or her words to adjust them to the actual echoic meaning. Let us go back to one of our previous developments of the standard example *Mary is an angel*. In it, the ironist says: *Yeah, right, Mary, an angel, every inch of her!* With this strategy, what the ironist does is build an echo grounded in the exaggerated statement that every inch of Mary is good. Literally, the expression *every inch of her* refers to Mary's physical body. Nevertheless, this expression actually refers to the pervasive nature of Mary's exemplary behavior. This meaning is obtained from experience-based reasoning: since good things are likeable, they produce pleasure; then, continued physical pleasure gives rise to positive feelings of reward and joy. Hence, we find the correlation metaphor MORAL JOY IS PHYSICAL GOODNESS, which underlies the non-physical interpretation of every inch of Mary being morally good. The implication is that Mary is characterized by pervasive good moral behavior, without exception, since completeness maps onto completeness. Of course, since this situation is impossible, it is therefore hyperbolic. This hyperbolic nature of the echo enhances the discrepancy between the epistemic and the observable scenarios, where Mary is not as good as depicted by Amy. In terms of the ironic attitude, the utterance *Yeah, right, Mary, an angel, every inch of her!* conveys a greater attitudinal load than, for instance, *Yeah, right, Mary, an angel!*, where the presence of hyperbole is lower. Similarly, let us take a situation where Sarah and her boyfriend Connor have decided to meet up at 6 pm, but when Sarah shows up at his place, he is far from being ready. An hour later, Connor says, *I'm all set, it wasn't such a long wait after all*. Exasperated, Sarah

replies, *Well, yes, good that I haven't had to wait for an hour*. The clash takes place between the epistemic scenario (Connor's belief that the wait has not been long) and the observable scenario (Sarah's one-hour wait). However, let us imagine that instead of using the expression *Well, good that I haven't had to wait for an hour*, Sarah says *Well, good that I haven't had to wait for a week*. In the second case, the exasperation derived from the clash between the two scenarios has a more powerful impact than in the first case, where it is less impacting. Hence, hyperbole and understatement require a process of parameterization from which the interpreter derives the attitudinal load of the ironist's words.

3.2.2 The epistemic scenario in situational irony

The more straightforward nature of situational irony, when compared to verbal irony, is reflected in the formation of the epistemic scenario. As we have already noted, in situational irony, interpreters are confronted with a situation where what they learn (through observation or hearing) is in conflict with what they consider highly likely or certain to occur. Let us take some lines from Alanis Morissette's song *Ironic* to illustrate how the epistemic scenario can be built in the case of situational irony:

*It's like rain on a wedding day
It's a free ride when you've already paid [...]
Who would have thought, it figures.*

The foul weather on a wedding day and the free ride once the person has already paid for a ticket are both examples of narrated situational irony (see the classification in Section 2.4.1), where someone's expectations (the epistemic scenario) are broken. In the first situation, one hopes for the wedding to take place in a day in which the weather contributes to the joy of the celebration. In the second situation, it is puzzling to be given a free ticket for a ride which one has paid for. These two instances of situational irony contain both the epistemic scenario and the observable scenario. It is when the interpreter is presented with this situation, if identified as ironic, that the attitude of dissociation may arise, which, in the case of situational irony, is generally parameterized as surprise (*Who would have thought, it figures*).

Evidently, the epistemic scenario in situational irony is not built on an echo or on a pretended agreement. Rather, it stems either from the interpreter's expectations and knowledge of the world, which may clash with what the interpreter learns from the context. Let us go back to Morissette's song to exemplify the first way the epistemic scenario can be built:

*Mr. Play It Safe was afraid to fly was afraid to fly
 He packed his suitcase and kissed his kids goodbye
 He waited his whole damn life to take that flight
 And as the plane crashed down he thought
 "Well, isn't this nice?".*

The situation described in these lines is puzzling on two counts. First, one would not expect someone to die the first time he takes a flight. Second, the person referred to could have avoided death if he had stuck to his fear of flying; however, fear of flying is a disorder people are counselled to overcome. These two expectations combine to build an impacting epistemic scenario, which is further strengthened by the designation of the affected individual by the description "Mr. Play It Safe", where "play it safe" captures a regular habit of the person referred to which is consistent with his fear of flying.

Finally, consider the situation illustrated by the last two lines: *It's like meeting the man of your dreams / and then meeting his beautiful wife*. In this example, the woman who meets her perfect match has a set of expectations about what her life could be like with that person. However, such expectations, which hinge on the epistemic assumption that the man is single, are broken on account of the observable scenario, made explicit by the utterance itself, where the woman realizes her perfect match is a married man in a rather embarrassing context where she meets this man's wife. Here, the ironic impact is also high, this time on account of the fact that a woman would normally not want to feel humiliated in the way described above.

3.3 The observable scenario

The observable scenario, both in verbal and situational irony, can be what the ironist and the interpreter perceive, which contradicts their expectations or firm beliefs about a given state of affairs. The observable scenario may be present in the communicative situation where irony is produced if the interpreter and the ironist are both present, but in communicative contexts where they are not, like in literary works, the observable scenario may be extracted from someone's beliefs, or from the text itself.

3.3.1 The observable scenario in verbal irony

In verbal irony, the observable scenario can be built either from the physical context that surrounds the ironic act, from world knowledge (whether common or expert knowledge), from previous discourse to which at least the ironist is a witness to, or

from the text itself. Situational irony only makes use of the first of these choices. Let us return to our example *Yeah, right, Mary is an angel*, uttered by A to B in a situation where Mary, who is present, is involved in a clear display of unexemplary behavior. The epistemic scenario is contained in A's words, and the observable scenario in the situation that surrounds the communicative act. In order to identify A's words as ironic, B will have to look around and find Mary's behavior unexemplary, so that the cross-scenario clash can take place. This scenario-building strategy is particularly common in everyday uses of irony, which tend to be less complex than those found in artistic works.

We shall consider now a case of observable scenario based on world knowledge. Take a situation in which John boasts that his 11-year-old son can run 20 miles in an hour. His close friend, Fred, responds to the boast: *Yeah, sure!* It is common knowledge that even trained adult runners could have a hard time to cover 20 miles in one hour (although maximum speeds for short stretches can be higher). This common knowledge is used to build the observable scenario, which cancels out John's boastful statement. However, the observable scenario, as we have seen in some of our previous analyses, can also be extracted from the text either explicitly or implicitly. Some additional illustration of how the text can supply the observable scenario could be the following extension of Fred's answer: *Yeah, sure, 20 miles an hour. Not even hardcore athletes are capable of such a feat.* Here, *Yeah, sure, 20 miles an hour* expresses reinforced pretended agreement through the repeated use of agreement adverbs and an echo of John's utterance. This contrasts explicitly with Fred's next observation (*Not even hardcore athletes are capable of such a feat*), which clearly expresses what Fred believes is reality, thus qualifying as the observable scenario.

The observable scenario can also be accessed through pragmatic reasoning. Imagine a third variant of Fred's reaction: *Yeah, sure, and by the age of 18 he will outrun Kal El.* Kal El, as Superman, the fiction hero, is supposed to be unbeatable in speed. Adding the remark whereby Fred believes something that is completely impossible can be taken as a reinforcement of the pretense element of the ironic agreement adverbs resulting in a multi-operational echo, as discussed in 3.2.1.7. But this echo has an additional role as a pragmatic pointer to the observable scenario, where people are not expected to run as fast as the fiction superhero. We have already pointed to the existence of a special reasoning process for this kind of ironic use in connection to the example *Yeah, right, Trump could win the next election, and I could win the lottery* (3.2.1.5). This is the process:

Being faster than Superman would mean running at a speed that is impossible for human beings.

John's son, as a human being, cannot run at such a speed.

Therefore, Fred does not believe in the truthfulness of his assertion.

The conclusion of this cause-consequence logical pattern can counteract any possible misinterpretation of Fred's response. It is, as we have noted twice before, part of a rebuttal-logic strategy. But it is also grounds for the construction of an implicated scenario that plays the role of an observable scenario, based on what the ironist says, in the absence of a supporting situational context.

3.3.2 The observable scenario in situational irony

Situational irony is a different case. It differs from verbal irony in the impossibility of the speaker reacting to what someone says or thinks. Situations can be ironic if they clash with the perceiver's expectations, the ironic impact of the situation being higher or lower depending on the strength of the assumptions that make up such expectations. That is, what the perceiver is a witness to is the observable situation, which clashes with the epistemic scenario. The observable scenario thus has to be present.

3.4 The interaction between the epistemic and the observable scenario

As noted in Section 2.3.3, the formation of the epistemic and the observable scenarios in verbal and situational irony varies, and so does their interaction. Verbal irony is more complex than situational irony, which is first due to the fact that it is based on an echo and a pretended agreement, and, second, to the fact that it is inserted in a communicative context that involves at least an ironist and an interpreter. This allows for a wider variety of options on how the two scenarios interact. On the other hand, in the case of situational irony, since there is neither an echoic element nor a pretended agreement, the range of options is much more reduced. We shall look at this in the sections to follow.

3.4.1 The interaction between the epistemic and the observable scenario in verbal irony

The complexity of the interaction between the epistemic scenario and the observable scenario in verbal irony is tightly tied to the notion of echo and to the source and degree of explicitness of the observable scenario. This yields several interaction possibilities.

1. A common situation is to find an explicit echo and an observable scenario derivable from the context. Let us go back to the example where Mary, who is thought by A to be good-natured, one day displays rather unexemplary

behavior in front of A and B, prompting B's ironic statement: *Yeah, right, she is an angel*. In this example we have an explicit echo of Mary's initially attributed behavior, which clashes with the situation that is observable to both the ironist and the interpreter.

2. We may also find an explicit echo and a linguistically cued explicit observable scenario, if, in the same situation, B says, while pointing at Mary: *Look at the angel; look what she's done*. In this example, B points both to the echoed scenario and to the observable scenario by using the imperative *look*. The first use of *look* brings A's attention to the echo of his/her own beliefs about Mary, whereas the second points to the observable scenario, where B makes sure that A sees the behavior that clashes with his/her own previous belief. Or take this utterance: *That's John again speaking wise words!*, in a situation in which John is talking nonsense, as usual. The indexical part of the utterance (*That's John again*) points to the observable scenario, while the rest of the predication activates the echoed scenario where John presumptuously believes he is being wise.
3. Another option is to find an implicit echo and a linguistically cued explicit observable scenario. Instead of pointing to the echo, as in the previous example, the echoed scenario can be kept implicit, so that the observable scenario acquires greater prominence. The interpreter is thus expected to gather echo-building clues from the observable scenario, as well as from other indices of irony such as ironic intonation or gesture. One such example would be if, in the example where A thinks that Mary's behavior is exemplary, B replied to A: *Look what she's done to our neighbor*. Here, the implicit echo would be A's initial thought about Mary's supposedly exemplary behavior. The situational context would provide a sharp point of contrast, acting as an observable scenario. Similarly, the utterance *That's John again speaking!* can stand by itself as ironic without explicitly designating the echoed scenario, provided that this scenario can be retrieved from our world knowledge on John's self-conceitedness.
4. We may also find an implicit echo and an implicit observable scenario that is cued for linguistically. Merely saying *Look at the girl* referring to what Mary, the neighbor's daughter, is doing, activates a metonymically generated explicature by domain expansion (PART FOR WHOLE), where the ironic utterance *Look at the girl* stands for *Look at what Mary is doing and how unexemplary it is*. The sentence *That's John again!* needs a similar part-whole development into 'that is John speaking foolishly again without being aware of it'. A special case of this analytical situation is provided by the sentence *That's about as useful as buying one shoe* (cf. Veale, 2012, p. 121). This sentence creates an analogy through a simile between the usefulness of what someone has done and that of buying one shoe. Since buying one shoe is generally pointless, the analogy suggests that

what the person the speaker is talking about has done is likewise pointless. The simile does not provide us with a direct echo. What it does is more complex, in fact: the source domain of the analogy points to the observable scenario, where someone has done something useless, and the target of the analogy to an implicit echo, where someone thinks he or she has done something useful.

5. Finally, we may encounter an implicit echo that can be activated through an ironic index. This implicit echo may be combined with an observable scenario that is also implicit. For instance, the ironic utterance *Yeah, sure*, used to refer once more to Mary's unexemplary behavior, contains an ironic index that expresses agreement with what A thought or said, and through suprasegmental features it becomes equivalent to saying: 'I pretend to agree with you (or someone else) about Mary's behavior but of course it is evident that I do not'. We can find a similar example in a situation where Laura and Tom are having coffee. Laura tells Tom that the coffee looks very hot. Tom disagrees. In order to prove himself right, Tom takes a sip of coffee, and burns his tongue, making it evident that the coffee is indeed very hot. He ironically replies to Laura: *Absolutely not!* In this example we find a negative ironic index that points to Tom's own reaction when drinking the coffee, which proves Laura right. In this example, Tom pretends to agree with his own words previous to knowing that Laura was right about the temperature of the coffee.

3.4.2 The interaction between the epistemic and the observable scenario in situational irony

In the case of situational irony, the absence of the echoic component yields a less varied array of combinations between the epistemic and the observable scenarios. In situational irony, the pretended agreement is nowhere to be found, and the assumptions and beliefs that form the epistemic scenario are drawn from the perceiver's own knowledge of the world. In the previously cited example of the fire station in flames, the epistemic scenario is formed by the perceiver's knowledge about fire stations as places where firemen and firewomen work, and which are especially secured against fire. In this example of situational irony without a communicative context there is no pretended agreement, since there is no ironist. Nevertheless, the same happens in situational ironies within a communicative context (e.g., narrated). Let us take a friend who is explaining to his other friend that he has seen in the news that recently, in California, a fire station has burned down. Even though the situational irony is narrated, there is still no pretended agreement. Narrators may convey an attitude of surprise, but they will not pretend to agree with the epistemic scenario.

As opposed to the smaller number of options available in terms of the epistemic scenario, the observable scenario in situational irony is more complex. It adopts different forms depending on whether the situational irony is framed within a communicative context or not. If the irony is narrated verbally, the options available will be similar to those in verbal irony. These are the following:

1. One option is to find an epistemic scenario and an observable scenario that are derivable from the context. This is illustrated by a situation where a dog owner is walking his dog in a park. His epistemic assumption is that in parks dogs should always be on a leash, according to the usual regulations. However, the dog owner, who keeps his dog on a leash, sees during his walk that all dogs in the park are unleashed, and begins to suspect that there is no such regulation for that park. Consequently, the dog owner feels foolish about having followed a regulation that does not apply to that particular park. In this example, the epistemic assumption comes from the interpreter's previous knowledge and experience about rules apply to walking dogs in parks. This information is proven wrong by the evidence collected during his walk in that particular park. Through the observation of the behavior of other dog walkers, he concludes that his assumptions about dog-walking rules in that park were wrong.
2. The second and most common interaction possibility is the one between the epistemic scenario and an explicit observable scenario, where the epistemic scenario is derived from the perceiver's world knowledge and the observable scenario is evident for the perceiver. The example of the fire station in flames falls into this category. The epistemic scenario comes from people's common assumptions about fire stations and their security measures against fire, which clashes with what they are witnessing. However, the epistemic scenario may also be implicitly drawn from world knowledge. If we take a situation where a smoker takes a break in a place where he or she finds a non-smoking sign, the clash takes place between an epistemic scenario that is implicitly drawn from world knowledge (people who smoke know that they can smoke during a cigarette break) and an explicit observable scenario (a visible non-smoking sign). However, more complex examples can be found in visually narrated situational irony. Let us take Berenice Abbott's photograph "Gunsmith and Police Department, 6 Center Market Place, Manhattan". The image shows a sign consisting of a gigantic gun hanging from the building of a gunsmith store. Opposite the gunsmith store there is a police station. The photograph is taken from an angle where it looks like the gigantic gun from the store sign is pointing at the police station building. In this photograph we find visually narrated irony, since the photographer has taken a special angle where the connection between the gun sign and the building seems evident. This example is more complex than those we have seen

so far in this section. The epistemic scenario contains the idea that the police station is the workplace of policemen and policewomen, who carry guns and may use them. This picture clashes with the observable scenario where there is a gun pointing at the police station. In this case, the perceiver has access to the clash by being guided into the photographer's point of view, while the meaning connotations associated with the gun, which is actually a store sign, become the observable scenario, which clashes with the common assumptions about police stations that form the epistemic scenario.

3. Another possibility is that of delayed situational ironies where the epistemic scenario interacts with an observable scenario that is made observable later in time through some cue. For instance, in the movie *Roman Holiday* (Wyler, 1954), newspaper reporter Joe Bradley rescues a woman who is falling asleep at night in a street in Rome. He does not know who she is. The following day, Bradley gets the assignment of interviewing Princess Anne and writing an article about her for the journal that he works for. Bradley considers this task extremely challenging, since it is known that the princess rarely agrees to be interviewed or photographed. However, when the editor-in-chief shows him a photograph of the princess, he realizes that she is the woman whom he rescued the night before, who is sleeping in his apartment. Suddenly, what he considered a virtually impossible task becomes an easy one. In the case under analysis, the observable scenario is initially implicit, but is then made explicit through a narrative cue.

3.5 Chained reasoning schemas

3.5.1 Chained reasoning schemas in verbal irony

In this section, we make use of the notion of *reasoning* schema, as used in Sperber and Wilson (1995), to account for the logic underlying situation-based implicature. A reasoning schema is a premise-conclusion (or *if-then*) pattern, where the conclusion is derived from the elements of the premise that have not been made explicit by the linguistic expression (Ruiz de Mendoza, 2017a). For instance, the utterance *John failed to take his driving test* may implicate that John did not obtain his driver's license, on the premise that in order to obtain a driver's license, one needs to pass a driving test. Note that the conclusion is derived from the consequence part of the premise that if one wants to have a driver's license, one needs to pass the test beforehand.

Some implicature-derivation processes may require *chained reasoning schemas*. This analytical construct, which has been postulated in Ruiz de Mendoza and Galera (2014, 2020), accounts for cases in which an utterance fails to specify the

condition element of the premise of a reasoning schema. A slight variant of the example provided above, where we use the verb *show up* for *take*, can exemplify this situation: *John failed to show up for his driving test*. This sentence implicates that John did not take the driving test, which in turn implicates that John could not get his driver's license. The first implicature is a conclusion derived from the premise that if one does not show up for an exam, one cannot take it; the second implicature is a conclusion derived from the premise that if a person fails to take his driving test, he cannot have his driver's license. The resulting chained reasoning schema is spelled out below:

Premise 1: If people do not show up for a test, then they cannot take it.

Explicit meaning: John did not show up for the driving test.

Implicated conclusion: Then, John did not take the driving test.

Premise 2: If people do not take a driving test, then they cannot get a driver's license.

Explicit meaning: John did not take the driving test.

Implicated conclusion: Then, John failed to get a driver's license.

Evidently, as with other cases of implicature-derivation, the implicated conclusions derived from a chained reasoning schema can be cancelled out; also, their reliability depends on the accuracy of the premises that are called upon.

It is interesting to note that ironic meaning derivation requires the engagement of two reasoning schemas, which are operational under the same conditions, including their cancellation, outlined for the previous example. Consider the following example, which we borrow from Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano (2021, pp. 224–225): *Yeah, sure, Sam plays the guitar like a legend*. This ironic utterance works on the basis of a pretended agreement with the hearer about Sam's guitar-playing skills. This pretended agreement, which is echoic in nature, determines the premise in the first reasoning schema, which clashes with the observable scenario, where Sam proves to be a poor musician. In the initial reasoning schema, the observable scenario takes the place of the explicitly communicated meaning part of other reasoning schemas (i.e., those giving rise to situation-based implicatures). However, from a reasoning perspective, what the cross-scenario conflict does in this example of irony is cancel out the initial premise (i.e., the assumption that Sam is a good player). On this reasoning basis, the hearer is expected to conclude that the speaker thinks that he has been wrong to uphold the premise. In the second reasoning schema, which is linked to the previous one, this initial conclusion plays the role of the explicit meaning part of other chained reasoning schemas. Here, the premise is an invariant of ironic meaning construction. It takes the form of a cultural convention according to which we should not contradict others (whether implicitly or explicitly) unless it is necessary to prove them wrong and/or we want to dissociate ourselves from what

they think or say. This second premise interacts with the explicated assumption, derived from the previous conclusion, that the hearer is wrong about the initial premise. The final conclusion is that the speaker is questioning the hearer's belief in the initial premise, while expressing his or her general dissociation from it. This dissociation can be adjusted in context as skepticism, criticism, or derision, among other possibilities.

The chained reasoning schema capturing this process takes the following form:

Premise 1 (epistemic scenario): Sam is an excellent guitar player.

Explicit meaning 1 (observable scenario): Sam is a poor player.

Implicated conclusion 1: The speaker thinks the hearer is wrong about premise 1.

Premise 2 (socio-cultural convention): We should not contradict other people unless we want to prove them wrong and/or express our dissociation from what they think.

Explicit meaning 2 (previous implicated conclusion 1): The speaker thinks the hearer is wrong about premise 1.

Implicated conclusion 2: The speaker wants to prove the hearer wrong and/or the speaker is expressing his/her dissociation from premise 1.

Reasoning schemas with a premise-conclusion pattern may also be built within a communicative context where a speaker's partial knowledge is completed by an interlocutor's information. Let us compare two examples, where John failed to attend jury duty and hence was fined. In the first example, A says: *What happened to John? Did he get fined?* and B replies: *He failed to attend jury duty.* The speaker assumes that something has happened to John, and that John's actions may have had negative consequences (e.g., he might have been fined). By replying *He failed to attend jury duty*, B places A's question about whether John got fined within a cause-consequence schema where B's answer determines the cause of whatever happened to John. Within the context of this schema, the implicature to be derived from B's reply is that, indeed, John got fined due to his failure to attend jury duty. Now let us bring in a second example, where A's first question is *What's wrong with John?* while B's statement remains the same. This is a more complex example, since A does not seem to know anything at all about John's actions in contrast to the previous example, where A did know that John was in trouble. This information is also conveyed by B's words, since being fined brings to the situation the negative element A already knew about in the first example. Two implicatures are derived from B's reply in this case. The first implicature is that John is in trouble because he failed to attend jury duty, and that, consequently, he may have been penalized. The second implicature is that the first implicature seems to be the reason why it looks like something is wrong with John (e.g., he is worried, upset, etc.).

Premise 1: If people do not attend jury duty, it follows that they may be penalized.

Explicit meaning: John didn't attend jury duty.

Implicated conclusion: John may have been penalized.

Premise 2: If people are penalized, they may feel worried, anxious, stressed, etc. about it.

Explicit meaning: John may have been penalized.

Implicated conclusion: John may be worried, anxious, stressed, etc.

Verbal irony is invariably framed within a communicative context where ironists, to be successful in their role as such, presuppose certain knowledge in their audience. Let us have a look at an example where the speaker builds irony by echoing his/her interlocutor's words, and to how the chained reasoning schema applies to this case. In a situation where John and Paul have spent the evening with Paul's mother-in-law, John tells Paul: *It was a very pleasant evening with your mother-in-law*. Paul ironically replies: *Yeah, sure, pleasant like a root canal!* The epistemic scenario (premise 1) in *Yeah, sure, pleasant like a root canal* is built on Paul's echo of John's belief that the evening with Paul's mother-in-law was very pleasant. The explicit meaning which cancels out this premise is grounded in Paul's disagreement with John, since Paul thinks that the evening was not pleasant at all. This leads to the implicated conclusion that Paul believes that what John thinks of the evening is wrong. In the second reasoning schema, as in *Sam plays the guitar very well*, the premise is the socio-cultural convention that we should not contradict other people unless we want to prove them wrong and/or express our dissociation from their beliefs or statements. Both options are socially impolite, but the latter is generally less socially unacceptable than the former. Because of this, expressing dissociation is the favored interpretation in terms of pragmatic default values. This chained reasoning schema captures the essential aspects of the inferential process underlying Paul's reaction to John's remark:

Premise 1 (epistemic scenario): John and Paul's evening with Paul's mother-in-law was a pleasant one.

Explicit meaning 1 (observable scenario): Paul's mother-in-law was really unpleasant to Paul.

Implicated conclusion 1: John is wrong about his evaluation of the evening John and Paul spent with Paul's mother-in-law.

Premise 2 (socio-cultural convention): We should not contradict people unless we want to prove them wrong, which is very impolite, or to express our attitude of dissociation from what they say or think, which is still impolite but less so.

Explicit meaning 2: Paul thinks John is wrong about his evaluation of the evening John and Paul spent with Paul's mother-in-law.

Implicated conclusion 2: Paul wants to express his dissociation from John's evaluation of the evening A and B spent with B' mother-in-law.

Alternatively, if there were reasons for this conclusion to be discarded, then the less favored interpretation would apply (i.e., Paul wants to prove John wrong).

The previous examples are standard cases of *negative irony*, i.e., ironic utterances in which the speaker questions someone's erroneous assumption (usually the hearer's) by echoing it. However, there are cases of *positive irony*, in which the ironic utterance echoes a correct belief. The sentence *I just love people who signal!* can be more accurately explained inferentially on the basis of two chained premise-conclusion reasoning schemas, than, as proposed by Coulson (2005), on the basis of a blending process involving an expected and a counterfactual mental space, whose weaknesses we addressed in 2.2.4 and 2.2.5. The analysis would be as follows:

I just love people who signal! (the speaker, S, has just been cut off by another driver, D)

Premise 1 (echoed scenario): Drivers have to signal when they drive; otherwise, they will be in breach of traffic rules and their driving behavior will be considered unacceptable [S echoes a generally shared assumption: we like people who obey traffic rules]

Explicit meaning 1 (observable scenario): Driver D didn't signal.

Implicated conclusion 1: Driver D is in breach of traffic rules so his or her behavior is unacceptable.

Premise 2 (cultural convention): If someone is in breach of traffic rules and his or her behavior is unacceptable, that person is worthy of punishment, criticism, etc.

Explicit meaning 2 (previous implicated conclusion 1): Driver D is in breach of traffic rules so his or her behavior is unacceptable.

Implicated conclusion 2: Driver D's behavior is worthy of punishment, criticism, etc.

3.5.2 Chained reasoning schemas in situational irony

We have argued for an explanation of the attitudinal element of verbal irony based on two chained reasoning schemas. We now further claim that this mechanism can equally account for the attitudinal element in situational irony. In order to fully understand the points of convergence of both types of irony at the level of reasoning schemas, let us briefly overview the main points of divergence, which will account for the specific adjustments needed to analyze situational irony.

First, as opposed to verbal irony, in situational irony there is no ironist. This means that the ironic stimulus is not produced intentionally to be interpreted as such. It also means that the interpreter is initially a perceiver. Perceivers detect irony on the basis of situation about which they have some previous expectations, which constitute the epistemic scenario. Once perceivers detect the discrepancy between an epistemic scenario and the observable situation, they become interpreters; as such, they engage in reasoning processes which resemble the ones discussed for verbal irony. Thus, an interpreter's realization that a given epistemic scenario is wrong, because it clashes with reality (the observable scenario), gives rise to an initial implicated conclusion, which is the input for the "explicit meaning" part of a second reasoning schema. Second, we explained that the premise of the second reasoning schema in verbal irony is the socio-cultural convention that we should not contradict other people unless we wanted to prove them wrong or express an attitude of dissociation towards their beliefs, which is impolite. By contrast, situational irony hinges on the interpreters' realization that they held some erroneous assumption from which they are expected to dissociate themselves while developing acceptance of the situation as it now becomes manifest to them. The following chained schemas spell out the inferential process behind situational irony:

Premise 1 (retrieved or constructed epistemic scenario): X

Explicit meaning 1 (observable scenario): Y

Implicated conclusion 1: X is wrong in the face of Y.

Premise 2: When people realize that they have made some erroneous assumption about a situation, they are expected to dissociate themselves from such an assumption and develop acceptance of the situation as it now becomes manifest to them.

Explicit meaning 2 (previous implicated conclusion 1): Premise X is wrong.

Implicated conclusion 2: The perceiver is expected to dissociate himself or herself from premise X and develop acceptance of Y.

By way of illustration, let us analyze a simple example. Imagine that Leonard meets Lola, a marriage counselor who has just filed for divorce. Leonard may be shocked by the fact that Lola's marriage has not gone as well as expected, especially given the fact that her job is to give advice about how to make a marriage work. The chained reasoning schemas for this example of situational irony takes this form:

Premise 1 (retrieved or constructed epistemic scenario): Lola is a marriage counselor. Hence, she should know how to avoid problems in her marriage.

Explicit meaning 1 (observable scenario): Lola has just filed for divorce

Implicated conclusion 1: Leonard realized that his belief that Lola should not get a divorce, since she is a marriage counselor, is wrong.

Premise 2: When someone realizes that they have made an erroneous assumption, they are expected to dissociate themselves from such an assumption and develop acceptance of the situation as it now becomes manifest to them.

Explicit meaning 2 (previous implicated conclusion 1): Leonard's premise about Lola is wrong.

Implicated conclusion 2: Leonard dissociates himself from the premise that Lola should not have problems in her marriage and accepts that she may indeed experience issues and files for divorce.

Perceivers of situational irony dissociate themselves from their premises just like the interpreters of verbal irony. In both cases, the premise in reasoning schema 1 (epistemic scenario) is questioned through a clash with the observable reality (observable scenario). By means of the second reasoning schema, which includes an expected reaction or social behaviour, we obtain in both cases the second implicated conclusion, that is, the interpreter / perceiver's dissociation.

3.5.3 Differences between reasoning schemas in situation-based implicature and in irony

By way of summary, these are the central differences between the derivation of meaning implications in regular situation-based implicature and verbal irony (cf. Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano, 2021, p. 225):

- i. In verbal irony the premise of the first reasoning schema is of a unique kind. Unlike the premise in situation-based implicature, it is not derived from world knowledge. Since it is drawn from an agreement scenario, it expresses speaker's agreement on a previous utterance or thought.
- ii. The premise in irony is cancelled out; by contrast, in regular situational implicature there is partial agreement with the initial premise. The cancellation results from a clash between the premise and the observable scenario. As will be discussed later on in more detail, this latter scenario is either made explicit or is constructed on the basis of contextual clues.
- iii. In verbal irony, the conclusion of the first reasoning schema derives from the speaker's assessment of someone's thought, whether the speaker himself, the hearer, or a third party. It is not obtained from the content of the premise, as is the case of standard situation-based implicature.
- iv. The premise of the second reasoning schema in verbal irony is an invariant drawn from cultural convention containing a specification on a standard reason for contradicting people.
- v. In verbal irony, the conclusion part of the second reasoning schema is generic; as a consequence, it requires pragmatic adjustment supported by the context.

Based on Ruiz de Mendoza's (2017a) approach to irony within the context of cognitive modeling, the pattern outlined above spells out the source of the clash between the epistemic and the observable scenarios in verbal and situational irony. Furthermore, it fully accounts for the attitudinal element in irony, which is treated as the result of an inferential process rather than as an added meaning layer. That is, the attitudinal element is an inference based on socio-cultural convention or an expected reaction, and one that follows the regular processes of meaning construction. There is nothing extraordinary about this element; it follows regular meaning construction processes based on the principles of cognitive modeling.

The discussion above finally places us in a position to define irony in terms of the cognitive mechanisms involved in it. These mechanisms go beyond building conceptual structure (the epistemic and observable scenarios) into using such structure to produce ironic meaning implications. Therefore, we define irony (whether verbal or situational) as the cluster of attitudinal inferences that result from the activation of a premise-conclusion chained reasoning schema whose first premise originates in an epistemic scenario, which clashes with an observable scenario, and whose second premise is based on a social convention regulating dissociation and acceptance as awareness of observable facts arises in the perceiver of the clash. Through the application of this schema the perceiver develops an attitude of dissociation from the epistemic scenario and a degree of acceptance of the new situation, this attitude being parametrizable, with independence of the chained reasoning schema, through pragmatic adjustment to the context where the irony is identified.

3.6 Conclusions

This chapter has explained the epistemic and the observable scenarios in verbal and situational irony. We have first developed the formation of the epistemic scenario in verbal irony, both through ironic markers and agreement expressions, and through echo-building strategies (elaboration of cultural and sociohistorical references, echoic compounding, echoic chains, cumulative echoes, and multi-operational echoes). Then we have addressed the formation of the epistemic scenario in situational irony. We have noted that verbal and situational irony differ in the source of the epistemic scenario due to the absence of an ironist in situational irony, where a situation is found rather than presented to the interpreter. Similarly, we have analyzed the formation of the observable scenario in verbal irony, and how this is produced in situational irony. While the observable scenario may be included in the ironist's remark, this is not the case in situational irony, where it is invariably drawn from the communicative context presented to the interpreter. We have also explored the interaction between the epistemic and the observable scenarios in both

verbal and situational irony, and concluded that variations hinge on such factors as the relationship of the ironic remark with the context where it is produced, and the degree of explicitness of the epistemic and the observable scenarios. Thus, in the case of verbal irony, we have outlined five interaction combinations:

1. An implicit echo and an observable scenario derivable from the context.
2. An explicit echo and an explicit observable scenario.
3. An implicit echo and an explicit observable scenario.
4. An implicit echo and an implicit observable scenario.
5. An echo activated through an ironic index.

In the case of situational irony, we may find:

1. An epistemic scenario and an observable scenario derived from the context.
2. An epistemic scenario and an explicit observable scenario where the epistemic scenario is derived from the perceiver's world knowledge and the observable scenario is evident for the perceiver.
3. Delayed situational ironies.

We have further introduced the notion of chained reasoning schema in relation to verbal irony in order to account for the attitudinal element. We claim that chained reasoning schemas are universal in all types of irony. In the case of verbal irony, we find an epistemic scenario (premise 1), which clashes with the observable scenario (explicit meaning 1). From this clash interpreters are expected to infer that their assumptions about a certain state of affairs were wrong. A second step takes the socio-cultural convention that we should not contradict other people unless we want to express dissociation or prove them wrong (premise 2), which clashes with the speaker's belief that the hearer is wrong (explicit meaning 2). The final implicated conclusion is that the speaker wants to express dissociation.

Structural elements in irony

Structurally, irony is composed by three core elements: the ironist, the interpreter, and the target. Linguistic studies have focused primarily on the ironist, leaving the two other elements in the background. However, the previous chapter has already provided enough evidence of the important role which the interpreter plays in the construction of ironic meaning in both communicated and non-communicated irony (Section 2.4). In the former, the ironic utterance is devised with different meaning potential consequences, arising from the interplay between the various types of epistemic and observable scenarios, which are up for the interpreter to work out. The interpreter is thus an essential part of how the ironic utterance is constructed. In the latter, without the presence of an ironist but only a potentially ironic situation, the interpreter becomes absolutely central. Finally, the target (or “victim”) of irony has received even less attention than the interpreter, probably because these two elements often combine. Unfortunately, neither linguistics nor literary theory have devoted much effort to analyzing this element. However, since it is the object of speaker’s dissociation, which is central to the meaning of irony, we claim that the target must be included in a structural study of irony.

4.1 The ironist

Following Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano’s (2019a) initial distinction between *hierarchical* and *solidary* ironists, we propose to relabel this distinction as one of *solidary* versus *non-solidary* communicators, where by *solidary* communicators we understand those that are characterized by an attempted unity of interests, responsibilities, and especially of communicative goals, with the interpreter or with the members of the audience. Ironies built by *solidary* communicators may have two different types of goals. (1) First of all, *solidary* communicators may want to humiliate the interpreter by showing superiority (either economic, social, intellectual, political or cultural), or (2) they may want to make the interpreter or the audience a participant of an irony about a state of affairs or a third party. In order to illustrate this point, let us analyze some examples. Let us imagine an office where the boss, who deeply dislikes Sam, one of the office workers, who is known for being a productive worker. The boss has just received the productivity reports,

which show that Sam has been less efficient than usual, and handing him his new report, tells him: *Oh Sammy, you sure are a productive chap*. By uttering these words, the boss is humiliating Sam while showing his superiority. On the other hand, if the boss likes Sam, he might ironize about a situation where Sam is involved. For instance, he might jokingly echo another colleague's disappointment when the ice cream he repeatedly said was delicious turned out to cause him food poisoning. The boss tells Sam: *Paul's ice-cream, huh? A delicatessen for the body, right?* In this case, Sam shares his boss's irony by being included as an equal, and not excluded as in the previous example. Both cases are standard examples of verbally communicated irony where the communicator wants the interpreter to recognize the clash between the epistemic scenario (in the first example, Sam's productivity, and in the second one, Paul's belief that the ice cream was tasty) and the observable scenarios (first, that Sam has not been as productive as usual, and second, that the ice-cream turned out to cause damage to Paul's body). The attitudinal element, however, is parameterized differently. In the first example, it turns out to be humorous; in the second, the attitude is one of pungent dissociation.

A non-solidary communicator maximizes the divergence between the addressee's expected communicative interests or goals and what he or she communicates. In so doing, the non-solidary communicator adopts a superiority position which the domain of communication (which may or may not parallel his or her real social dominance), which can have the effect of humiliating the addressee (although not necessarily so). One way of doing so, is when an echo can be reported echoic form provided that the second echo is not an echo on the same situation as the original echo. The second echo is thus a replica of the first one. One example would involve taking the previously analysed situation at the office. In this case, the boss, speaking with a cue-less tone of voice, passes the following remark on Sam: *Oh, you have beautiful eyes*. Sam does not identify the irony, and later on, with his friends, the boss reports with humor: *See, there's this idiot at the office called Sam, who has the ugliest eyes, and today I told him I had beautiful eyes*. This is a case of reported irony. The boss, a non-solidary communicator, reports his case of non-solidary irony to his friends, and the humoristic effect comes from the fact that Sam did not find out the boss was being rude to him.

Similarly, imagine the speaker, John, ironizes over Mary's inability to understand irony by telling her: *Yes, I know, you never miss irony*. The addressee does not realize that she is an ironic target. Later on, John is with his friends and he reports on his echo of Mary's inability to pick up irony by using the same words embedded in the context of the report:

You know Mary, what she's like. So, I go, Yes, I know you never miss irony. And she kind of agrees with me.

This is not an echoic chain since the speaker's replicated echo takes place in a different communicative context in the absence of the previous addressee. In the same way as the replica of a work of art is produced in a different context to be used in a different context, here, the replicated echo makes meaning in the new context where the speaker reports on his ironic experience.

It could be argued that the distinction between solidary and non-solidary communicators is a mere manifestation of what was already captured in Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle as a general communicative feature (i.e., a solidary ironist is cooperative vs. a non-solidary ironist is uncooperative). Nevertheless, this is not the case, since irony, like all other figures of speech, involves a breach of the Maxim of Truthfulness of the Cooperative Principle. Both types of ironists are cooperative to the extent that they do their best for their ironic attitude to be grasped by the interpreter. As we will explain in the next subsection, if this is not the case, the irony is pointless. Irony relies on a number of factors that mark whether the outcome of the ironic act is more or less felicitous (see Section 4.5). Of course, other linguistic uses may be labelled elitist, especially if figurative language is involved in them; however, since it is conceptually more complex, irony is especially suitable for this purpose. This property of irony has already been highlighted by literary theorists (e.g., Hutcheon, 1994; Colebrook, 2004). The potential of irony to exclude possible interpreters is by no means exclusive to its use in literature. Rather, it is a potential feature of all ironies that may be exploited to a greater or lesser degree. In fact, as shown by Herrero (2009), Athanasiadou (2017b), and Gibbs and Sammermit (2017), among others, ironic elitism may very well be found in everyday, non-literary contexts, like in groups of teenage friends or in political debates.

There are a number of ways of being solidary. These are the following:

- i. First, solidary communicators may draw on information that they think is certain or highly likely to be shared by the interpreter. In other words, the ironist may build an epistemic scenario based on the assumption that the interpreter will be able to easily identify and interpret it as such. For instance, if we go back to the example where the boss ironizes about Sam's productivity, the information that he is productive is available to Sam. Had he not known that he was repeatedly rated as a very productive employee, he might have not interpreted his boss's remark as ironic. The lack of solidarity results in the interpreter very unlikely interpreting the irony, as in the example where John tells Mary that she always gets the ironies. Mary does not have access to the epistemic scenario built on the echo of her own inability to "get ironies", and so John's remark will pass unnoticed to her.

- ii. In the specific case of communicated irony, total echoes are more likely to be recognized as such than partial ones. Total echoes are an exact link to what someone said, someone's belief or a particular state of affairs. The more accurate the echo, the more information the interpreter is given to identify the irony. This can be illustrated by a situation where, at a Christmas family dinner, the family's daughter, Lillian, says in disgust that the prawns her mother has prepared taste horribly. Almost one year later, Matthew and Lawrence, her two brothers, who were present at the celebration, while planning the next Christmas dinner, ironize about the situation. Matthew tells Lawrence: *It's nice to be planning it all again. And there's always something interesting going on, like when last year Lillian passed that really tactful remark on mum telling her that her prawns tasted horribly.* Matthew echoes the nature of Lillian's remark about their mother's Christmas dish by giving information about what Lillian said and when that took place. However, an instance of a partial echo would have been if, instead, Matthew had said: *He! Remember that wonderful gesture Lillian had with mum?* In this case, Lawrence only knows that what Lillian did to their mother was not nice, but he does not know what it was that she did, and he is missing contextual information such as when that event took place. If we compare both cases, the task of retrieving information to identify the clash between the epistemic scenario (the echoed belief that Lillian's remark about the taste of their mother's prawns at Christmas was wonderful) and the observable scenario (the tactless nature of Lillian's remark), is considerably more demanding in the case of the partial echo. Thus, the more accurate the echo, the more solidary the communicator.
- iii. Third, a communicator may build a more or less powerful clash between the epistemic and the observable scenarios. The more distant the scenarios, the more powerful the clash, and the more solidary the communicator. Let us see how this correlation works in two examples. Let us go back to Lillian's unfortunate behavior at the Christmas dinner, and imagine that Lawrence identified the irony in Matthew's words. Having interpreted the irony and dissociated himself from his brother's remark, he replies: *Yeah, you know Lillian is a tactful person.* Or he may have replied: *Yeah, Lillian has always been the most tactful person on the planet.* The introduction of a hyperbolic element in the second reply makes the distance between the epistemic and the observable scenarios larger, and thus, the clash between the two scenarios is more evident. Put differently, it will be much easier for Matthew to understand the intended meaning in Lawrence's ironic utterance in the case where the clash is made hyperbolic.
- iv. Another way of showing solidarity is to exploit the potential of suprasegmental features associated with irony. These features may be gestures, such as back and forth head movements to reinforce the pretended agreement, or prosodic

features, such as a particular intonational pattern (cf. Kreuz and Roberts, 1995), which may act as cues to ironic interpretation. The more exaggerated the gestures or the intonation of an ironic utterance, the greater the solidarity. This may also be achieved by using ironic markers. As explained in Section 5.2.1.1, the use of textual pointers to irony (*yeah, right, sure*, etc.) show pretended agreement and point to the epistemic scenario. What is more, the reduplication of these markers has the same effect as the exaggeration of gestures and intonational patterns. Thus, *Yeah, Lillian is a tactful person* is less solidary a statement than *Yeah, right, Lillian is a tactful person, of course*.

Table 1. Basic ironist types

Ironist type	Description
Solidary communicators	Attempt to make themselves understood by the audience, and abide by a unity of interests, responsibilities, and especially of communicative goals, with the interpreter or with the members of the audience.
Non-solidary communicators	Maximize the divergence between the addressee's expected communicative interests or goals and what they communicate. They may use irony to mark themselves off as superior to the interpreter. There are two main reasons for this, which are not exclusive of each other: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Show superior economic, social, intellectual, political, or cultural status. b. Humiliate the hearer.

4.2 The interpreter

The potentially elitist nature of irony yields a distinction between two types of interpreters: *naïve* and *non-naïve* (Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano, 2019a). Naïve interpreters are those who do not share with the ironist the information which they need to interpret an utterance as ironic. Because of this, they are less likely to detect the epistemic and observable scenarios, and the clash between them. When naïve interpreters are involved, successful irony requires a solidary communicator. As explained in Section 4.1, the ironist's cues will either guide the interpreter into filling the missing information about the epistemic or the observable scenario or hint at the clash between them. On the other hand, non-naïve interpreters are informed enough to derive ironic meaning without the need for the ironist's solidarity. Let us illustrate these categories with examples. One very clear case of naïve interpreter can be found in adult conversations where children are present. Children are naïve interpreters with respect to their parents, in terms of experience and world knowledge. Let us consider a situation where a mother and her 7-year-old son are watching the news, which show that the newly promised increase in minimum wages not

only has not been implemented, but that a case of corruption among the politicians has been uncovered. The mother then utters: *These politicians, always so generous with us citizens!* The child will most probably lack the necessary information about politics to derive the ironic meaning from her mother's words. On the other hand, if the mother was watching the news with her husband, who is expected to share more knowledge about this topic than their son, her ironic remark will more likely be interpreted as such.

Needless to say, these categories, like those of solidary and non-solidary communicators, are gradable. It is very often the case that the interpreters share part of the information, or understand some of the pointers to irony, and we may also find partially solidary communicators. What is more, just as there are examples of delayed irony where interpreters go through a learning process that gives them the necessary information to understand the irony (remember, in Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr. Darcy's derogatory remark on the woman he would later fall in love with; Section 2.4.2), interpreters and ironists may change their status throughout the discourse. Consider Marc Anthony's soliloquy in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* as an example. In the soliloquy, we observe the progressive increase in the ironist's solidarity, and the interpreter's necessary evolution from more a naïve to less naïve status. Marc Anthony begins by stating, with apparent sincerity, that he did not come to praise Caesar, but to bury him, and that Brutus and his accomplices are honorable men. However, throughout the speech, Marc Anthony enumerates the accusations to Caesar that Brutus had used to justify his murder and claims that they are untrue. Yet he continues to state that "Brutus is an honourable man". By doing so, the ironist himself is giving information to the interpreter, who is increasingly more solidary, which changes his/her interpretive category. Then, the statement that Brutus is an honorable man acquires a new meaning.

Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;
 I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.
 The evil that men do lives after them;
 The good is oft interred with their bones;
 So let it be with Caesar. The noble Brutus
 Hath told you Caesar was ambitious:
 If it were so, it was a grievous fault,
 And grievously hath Caesar answer'd it.
 Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest—
For Brutus is an honourable man;
So are they all, all honourable men—
 Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral.
 He was my friend, faithful and just to me:

But Brutus says he was ambitious;
And Brutus is an honourable man.
 He hath brought many captives home to Rome
 Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill:
 Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?
 When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept:
 Ambition should be made of sterner stuff:
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
And Brutus is an honourable man.
 You all did see that on the Lupercal
 I thrice presented him a kingly crown,
 Which he did thrice refuse: was this ambition?
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
And, sure, he is an honourable man.

(Shakespeare, 1599/1997, p. 78–79 [our emphasis])

Marc Anthony's first statement about Brutus being honorable is consequently less solidary than the last one, since at the beginning interpreters know less about how they feel about Caesar. By the end, Marc Anthony has explained the reasons why Caesar was nothing like what Brutus made everyone believe in order to justify his murder, and then the interpreter turns into a less naïve one. The clash between the epistemic scenario (the belief that Brutus is an honorable man, allegedly shared by both the audience and Marc Anthony) contrasts with the observable scenario (Marc Anthony's claims about Caesar's generosity and Brutus' dishonest behavior). This clash is made more evident to the audience by the time Marc Anthony gets to the end of the speech and it is evident that he disagrees with Brutus's claims. The clash is furthermore reinforced through the questions about whether Caesar was truly ambitious ("Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?"; "Which he did thrice refuse: was this ambition?").

Table 2. Interpreter types

Interpreter type	Description
Naïve interpreter	The interpreter does not share with the ironist the necessary knowledge about the epistemic and/or the observable scenarios and is unable to detect the ironist's ironic cues.
Non-naïve interpreter	The interpreter shares with the ironist the necessary knowledge about the epistemic and/or the observable scenarios and is capable of detecting the ironist's ironic cues.

4.3 Combinations of ironist and interpreter types

As show in Table 3 below, the types of ironist and interpreter can be combined, yielding different ironic situations. Given the fact that solidarity and naivety are not absolute terms but gradable categories, the array of communicative situations we may find is virtually infinite. Bearing this in mind, we would like to address the most basic combinations between the ironist and interpreter types explained in Sections 4.1 and 4.2. These combinations are grounded in the following logic:

- i. A non-solidary interpreter must be paired with a non-naïve interpreter, or ironic meaning will not arise, since the ironist will make no efforts to help the interpreter identify the two scenarios, the clash and the attitudinal element. Communicative situations based on a non-solidary ironist and a non-naïve interpreter, which are the most commonly found, are often geared toward clearly demarcating social status and relations. Sometimes, sarcasm, which is generally treated as an aggressive type of irony with clearer cues and a clearer target (Attardo, 2000a, p. 795), may underlie this combination. Whether sarcastic or not, it is a combination frequently exploited in literary texts. A literary genre that often uses exploits this combination is historiographic metafiction (cf. Hutcheon, 1988). For instance, Jeannette Winterson's (2012) *The Daylight Gate*, which narrates a love story between two women accused of witchcraft in the Middle Ages. Throughout the novel, the author presents the two protagonists from a feminist standpoint, emphasizing the unfairness of the treatment they were given for engaging in activities that went beyond their roles as women, which were considered dangerous in terms of gender. This perspective, presented by the author as the untold truth, constitutes the observable scenario, which clashes with the canonical version of the events. The reader is expected to know about Winterson's feminist perspective in order to identify that her point is to claim that women have been treated unfairly throughout history.
- ii. A non-solidary ironist that is paired with a naïve interpreter will inevitably lead to the interpreter's failure to identify the remark as ironic. Let us go back to the example explained in Section 4.1, where John ironically tells Mary *Yes, I know you never miss irony*. If, as described in the analysis of the example, Mary believes that she has the necessary skills to interpret irony on a regular basis, although that is not the case, she is a naïve interpreter. If John does not give her any hints through suprasegmental cues or ironic markers, he will be labelled a non-solidary communicator, and as long as neither John is more solidary, or Mary knows more about her irony detection skills, the irony will be unsuccessful.

- iii. A solidary ironist may be paired with either a naïve or a non-naïve interpreter. In the case of the former, the ironist's efforts will help the interpreter gain knowledge about the epistemic and the observable scenarios, or to detect the clash between them. If the ironist's solidarity is enough to equip the interpreter with this information, the irony will be successful. Let us take once more the example about John's remark about Mary's ironic skills, and imagine that instead of *Yes, I know, you never miss irony*, John said, with exaggerated gestures and intonation: *Yeah, right, absolutely, Mary, you never cease to amaze me with your incredible, astounding skills to get all ironies in the world*. The second statement is much more openly ironic than the first one, since it uses the tools listed in Section 3.2.1.1 to help the interpreter detect the irony.
- iv. If a solidary ironist is paired with a non-naïve interpreter, communicative efforts will be useless, since the interpreter already has the necessary information to interpret the irony as such. No matter how many ironic cues John gives Mary to guide her to the finding that his utterance is ironic, if Mary knows in advance that John likes to make fun of that particular aspect of her, she will not need his solidarity. What is more, a statement like *Yeah, right, absolutely, Mary, you never cease to amaze me with your incredible, astounding skills to get all ironies in the world*, in a situation where the interpreter is non-naïve may cause him/her irritation, since it could be easily interpreted as sarcasm.

Table 3. Results of combining the different ironist and interpreter types

Ironist type	Interpreter type	Result
Solidary communicator	Naïve interpreter	The ironist's efforts will help the interpreter gain knowledge about the epistemic and the observable scenarios, or to detect the clash between them, but unless the ironist manages to do so, irony will be unsuccessful.
Solidary communicator	Non-naïve interpreter	Communicative efforts are unnecessary, since the interpreter already has the necessary information to interpret the irony as such.
Non-solidary communicator	Naïve interpreter	This combination will inevitably lead to the interpreter's failure to identify the remark as ironic.
Non-solidary communicator	Non-naïve interpreter	Ground for elitism. Most often aimed at highlighting social relations.

4.4 The target

Finally, the third structural element is the *target* of the irony, what Muecke (1970) calls the ‘victim of the irony’. We understand the notion of target as the object of the ironic remark, be it (i) a person, (ii) a state of affairs, (iii) an institution, or (iv) another type of animate or inanimate entity. If the target of the irony is a person, he or she may be either present or absent. The target may also be the interpreter of the irony or not. Whether the target is present or absent, just as the presence or absence of the interpreter at the moment of the utterance, defines the purpose of irony and the way it is used. For instance, in Socratic irony the interpreter will necessarily be the target, and he or she must be present in the situation. By contrast, metafictional irony most often exploits the absence of the ironist when the interpreter is dealing with the verbal or visual ironic input. Additionally, we often encounter ironies that are not aimed at the interpreter but at a third party, such as those in satirical irony, where the target is an institution, a political leader, or an event. Let us now explain the types of target in more detail:

- i. The target of the irony may be a person, either present or absent in the communicative situation. In the case where the target is present, in order for him or her to interpret irony, he or she will have to be a non-naïve interpreter. In Example (6.1), Matthew and Lawrence ironized about Lillian’s offensive remark on their mother’s food, but Lillian was not present at that moment. However, if this discussion had taken place in a communicative context where Lillian had been present, she would have had the chance to interpret the ironic meaning, but this would have only happened if she had shared the belief that what she had said to their mother was offensive (if she had been a non-naïve interpreter). Otherwise, ironic communication with her would have been unsuccessful, independently of her presence in the ironic situation.
- ii. Ironies are often aimed at a state of affairs, which can be a situation or an event that took place in a particular moment in time. As a state of affairs, the target is not personalized, but the ironist may show dissociation from it. For instance, we may ironize about past historical events. Let us illustrate this briefly. Among a group of Irishmen, an Irish woman makes an irony about the Great Famine in the 40s in her country by saying: *We definitely built a culinary tradition in the 40s, good thing that we don’t like potatoes!* By uttering these words, the Irish woman is echoing the events that took place during the Great Famine in Ireland, when a potato blight infected the crops in the country, causing disease, lack of food and, ultimately, the death of a large part of the Irish population.
- iii. Ironies may be aimed at an institution, as in sarcastic comments about a given government or company. For instance, consider a situation where two friends,

James and Martha, are discussing the price of Apple products. James, who thinks Apple products are affordable. Martha, in disagreement, produces the following ironic remark: *Sure, Apple has always been a company producing tech for people with low income, we all know that.* By passing this remark, Martha is dissociating herself from James' belief that Apple products are affordable, ironizing about the company's pricing of their products.

- iv. The last type of ironic target is another type of animate or inanimate entity that may have not fallen into the previous categories.

Table 4. Target types

Target type	Description
Person (present or absent)	The ironist dissociates him/herself from a person, who may be present or absent. If present, the target person may or may not realize that he or she is such a target.
State of affairs	Ironists dissociate themselves from a state of affairs. Successful interpretation requires sharing with the ironist enough cultural clues on the target situation.
Institutions	Ironists dissociate themselves from an institution. Successful interpretation requires sharing with the ironist enough assumptions on the nature of the institution.
Another entity (animate or inanimate)	Ironists dissociate themselves from another entity. Successful interpretation requires sharing with the ironist enough assumptions on the nature of the entity.

4.5 The felicity of irony

The concept of felicity has a long tradition in pragmatics, especially in speech act theory (Austin, 1955; Searle, 1969, 1975, 1979). In origin, the notion of felicity related to the adequacy of an utterance to the context in which it was produced. Kumon-Nakamura et al. (1995) have discussed ironic utterances in terms of their felicity too, since their interpretation of irony within the Pretense Theory framework ascribes to irony the quality of a pretended speech act. Kumon-Nakamura et al. (1995) propose two conditions for an utterance to be ironic: pragmatic insincerity (based on a flouting of the sincerity felicity condition), and a violation of expectations. While the second condition is generally shared by inferential pragmatics approaches to irony (which is the equivalent of the notion of a cross-scenario clash), the first one is problematic, since it works under the assumption that in irony there is a sincerity condition that may or may not be flouted (i.e., ostentatiously violated) conversationally. It is not clear that that conversational

interaction makes use of sincerity conditions any more than it makes use of any of the other Gricean maxims within the Cooperative Principle. This point has been emphatically made by relevance theorists following Sperber and Wilson (1995). But independently of whether pragmatic insincerity plays a role on irony or not, as we have noted, this notion cannot be part of a definition of irony since it does not separate irony off from other “insincere” uses of language, like metaphor, metonymy, hyperbole, and paradox. These and other figures also involve an ostentatious breach of Grice’s first maxim of Quality. The same problem holds if we regard sincerity from the point of view of satisfaction conditions within speech act theory. The idea behind this condition is that for some speech acts to be such the speaker genuinely wants the hearer to perform the requested act. Requests are clear cases of the application of this condition. But ironic utterances are not directive speech acts. Their “felicity” is independent of the speaker’s sincerity on the speech act performed by the utterance.

We take the notion of felicity in a different way. An ironic utterance, like any utterance, is felicitous if it is judged by the speaker to have accomplished the speaker’s communicative goals to a satisfactory extent. In general, the basic goal of an ironist is to draw the hearer’s attention to a set of assumptions that are granted validity by the hearer or by someone else, including the speaker, so as to question such validity. This basic goal, as we have seen from the analysis of our data, can take more specific forms or give rise to sub-goals. For example, by questioning a long-held assumption the speaker may be trying to teach the audience. But sometimes irony is only intended to show the ironist’s skepticism on a state of affairs, or it may be used in a derogatory fashion to diminish the ignorant. And so on.

Judging the felicity of irony is thus intimately bound up to the speaker’s goals, which means that felicity assessments can be as varied as such goals. In view of such potential variation, a theoretically sound step is to determine the broad-scale variables that can be examined for ironic utterances to be judged potentially felicitous. In this respect, Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano (2019a) have briefly mentioned the importance of understanding the roles of hierarchical/solidary ironists and of naïve/non-naïve interpreters in determining in producing felicity/infelicity. Evidently, a non-solidary ironist who uses irony as a way of distinguishing himself or herself from the ironic target may not care much about the target of irony, but he or she may care about the hearer’s interpretation, depending on whether the speaker’s non-solidary nature is intended to mark him or her off as special in whatever ironic context. A solidary ironist, on the other hand, uses irony with the intention of irony to be detected and interpreted. If we have a non-solidary ironist and a non-naïve interpreter, the ironist may well be aware that his or her irony can be detected and processed no matter how opaque it is. A naïve interpreter, however, may contribute

to the non-solidary ironist's sense of elitism. The situation is different if we have a solidary ironist, who in fact may prefer a non-naïve interpreter but will likewise cooperate with a naïve one.

To illustrate the possibilities expounded above, consider the following examples:

1. Non-solidary ironist and non-naïve interpreter. A surly cab driver, who has a bad attitude to some foreigners, is asked *Are you free?* by one of them. He answers: *No, I charge like everybody else here.* The foreigner takes it as a joke and laughs.
2. Non-solidary ironist and naïve interpreter. The same situation as above, but the customer feels confused and answers: *Of course, I want to pay. I just want to know if I can get a ride to the airport now.*
3. Solidary ironist and non-naïve interpreter. A group of classmates meet together to discuss the details of a project they have to work on together. One of them breaks the ice with a rather odd proposal on changing the color of cabbage juice through a chemical reaction. His classmates do not like, and one complains: *Sad if that's the very best we can get so far!* The first student answers back: *Yeah, right, sad if that's the very best we can get so far!* He clearly wants his classmates to understand that he is upset, so his irony is fairly straightforward, based on ironic pointers and a clear perfect echo of his classmate's complaint. Evidently, this example of irony is easy for a non-naïve interpreter to work out.
4. Solidary ironist and naïve interpreter. We can now imagine the same ironic utterance, *Yeah, right, sad if that's the very best we can get so far!*, in a situation in which we have a naïve interpreter. Such an interpreter might miss the ironic point and remark: *I'm glad you realize it's not a good idea.* This kind of reaction would call for further irony in an elitist context. However, with a solidary ironist, there are two possible solutions: one is making the ironic intention explicit: *It's just irony, John.* Another could be a rephrasing or the utterance with the support of further ironic marking: exaggerating the ironic tone of voice, winking, nudging, etc.

Solidarity hinges on a variety of linguistic and paralinguistic factors. The literature on irony interpretation attests to the correlation between these factors and successful irony. Linguistic factors include ironic markers (e.g., Attardo, 2000) or ironic constructions (Veale and Hao, 2010), and paralinguistic factors range from prosodic cues (pitch, volume, pace) (Bryant, 2010) to co-speech gesture (Attardo et al., 2003; Pexman et al., 2009). Different combinations of these elements give rise to ironic utterances which are more or less likely to be interpreted as felicitous.

The felicity of irony is clearly interpreter-oriented except for those rare cases in which ironists feel satisfied with producing a ironic utterances which mark them

off as superior to their potential audience. The degree of felicity of irony is thus dependent on the interpreter's ability to recognize its existence (helped in a greater or lesser extent by the ironist) and make the correct (or intended) interpretation. In verbal irony, this requires the following:

- i. The recognition of the speaker's pretended agreement and the assignment of a degree of certainty to it (remember that the expression of pretended agreement is used to build an epistemic scenario).
- ii. The recognition of what the speaker thinks is the observable scenario and an assessment of the strength of the speaker's trust in his or her own witness of this scenario.
- iii. The maximum possible discrepancy between the scenarios in (i) and (ii). The greater the cross-scenario clash, the greater the likelihood of an utterance to be recognized as ironic.

This last item is crucial. A solidary ironist will strive to create conditions for maximum cross-scenario discrepancy to be detected by potential interpreters. A non-solidary ironist, however, may not do so, which endangers the recognition of an ironic utterance as such.

4.6 Irony and related figures of speech

The discussion in this chapter, in combination with the insights in the previous chapters, has yielded a precise description of verbal and non-verbal irony. This means that we are in a position to set up the boundaries between irony and other phenomena with which it holds similarities. We will specifically refer to two kinds of phenomena. First, we will address banter, which does not meet the criteria to be considered irony but holds some similarities with it. Second, we will deal with figures of speech that can be regarded as specific cases of irony. These are sarcasm, antiphrasis, satire, and prolepsis. These figures have already been discussed in Ruiz de Mendoza (2020a, b) in connection to irony as variants of this figure of speech. However, the treatment offered in this book benefits from a more encompassing analysis of irony. This will be useful to make more accurate and explicit connections.

4.6.1 Irony and banter

Banter is not a figure of speech, but a discourse practice connected to humor (Jobert and Sorlin, 2018, p. 9). It was described in Leech (1983, p. 144) as a form of mock impoliteness, i.e., an apparently offensive way of teasing friends in a playful manner (see also Leech, 2014). For example, a teenager may greet another teenager with an

apparent compliment as follows: *You're the most awesome person I've met... so far*. Banter can be confused with irony or, if taken offensively, with so-called sarcasm (which we will define in the next section as a kind of irony where the target is derided). In this example, the hearer is met with a compliment that is toned down at the end where the speaker suggests that the hearer is not so awesome so that he or she will probably meet someone better. Strictly speaking, this is not a case of irony unless there are clear contextual factors that may call for an ironic interpretation. If the speaker thinks that the hearer believes that he or she is awesome, the utterance can serve as an echo of such belief, which is then questioned through the afterthought remark (... *so far*). But this is not central to banter: the friendly teasing is independent of the possible ironic use, i.e., there is banter provided that the speaker pretends to be impolite to the hearer in a playful way.

Defining banter in terms of “friendly” teasing can be, however, a tricky issue. Consider the utterance: *You couldn't handle me even if I came with instructions*. This utterance exemplifies a sarcastic pattern that is fairly conventional. In Cognitive Linguistics it would not be unsafe to assume that such a pattern is constructional, following the criteria laid out by Kay and Fillmore (1999) for the famous *What's X Doing Y?* pattern, as exemplified by *What's John doing knowing mathematics?*, where John is not supposed to know any mathematics. The main criterion is that the formal properties of a set of utterances can be motivated by their common meaning properties. These correlation between formal and meaning features has been discussed in detail in Ruiz de Mendoza and Galera (2020). For example, in *What's John doing knowing mathematics?*, the main assumption is that the speaker thinks that there is something wrong or striking in the fact that John knows mathematics. The main verb is in gerund even though the meaning of the sentence is not progressive simply because the question is laid out as if it were a rhetorical question about a situation that the speaker is being a witness to (for instance John showing off his skills). But this is only a pretense: what the speaker finds striking is not John's particular show-off, but the evident assumption that John knows mathematics in general. In a similar way, the sentence *You couldn't handle me even if I came with instructions* reveals a pattern, *You couldn't X even if Y*, where X is an action that the speaker finds it impossible for the hearer to carry out, even if assisted to do so as specified in Y. Obviously, the underlying meaning composition for this formal pattern is derogatory to the hearer, but, in a playful context, it could be a case of teasing rather than an insult. In fact, this example is frequent in bumper stickers and stamped T-shirts, where it is not supposed to offend but simply to produce humor while signaling the owner's pose. At the same time, this pattern can be considered to offer the hearer the description of an observable scenario, the epistemic scenario taking the form of an implicit echo: *You think you could X, but you couldn't X even if Y* (*You think you could handle me, but you couldn't handle me even if I came with*

instructions). This simply means that banter can be straightforwardly (although not necessarily) taken as the expression of an observable scenario, with its corresponding epistemic scenario remaining implicit. This observation highlights the ironic potential of banter and incorporates this discourse practice into the general theoretical framework of a scenario-based approach to irony.

4.6.2 Sarcasm, antiphrasis, satire, and prolepsis

Ruiz de Mendoza (2020a) has suggested that these traditional figures of speech, which are often acknowledged to be connected to irony, are in fact variants of irony based on specific ways of handling one of the components of irony. *Sarcasm*, which is generally defined as a type of irony used for verbal aggression (cf. Haiman, 1998, p. 20), provides an evident case. The difference with other ironic types is found in the attitudinal element of irony. Think of the *You couldn't X even if Y* pattern examined above. We have noted that this pattern can be used as a form of banter grounded in irony. However, its potential to produce banter can be canceled out if the *even if Y* part of the construction is not produced in the context of friendly teasing. Produced in an aggressive, despiteful tone of voice, the example *You couldn't handle me even if I came with instructions* is one of sarcasm. What is more, the greater the weight given to the *even if Y* constructional element, the greater the likelihood of an interpretation of the resulting utterance as sarcasm. Compare:

You couldn't handle me even if I came with fully illustrated handbook of instructions and someone took the time to spell them out to you slowly and carefully.

This should not be surprising. The role of the *even if Y* element is to set up a highly hypothetical (and thus unlikely to happen) set of conditions (protasis) in which the hearer could be capable of performing an action successfully (apodosis). This conditional layout makes the performance of the action that the hearer thought he or she could carry out a highly questionable event. In other words, giving greater weight to the *even if Y* element enhances the clash between what the hearer could expect to do (epistemic scenario) and what the speaker is certain that the hearer can or cannot do (observable scenario).

Another way of enhancing the sarcastic potential of this construction is by specifying conditions in the *even if Y* part that are too unrealistic to be workable. The following example illustrates this strategy: *You couldn't win this competition even if you were the only one in it!* Since a competition requires at least two contenders, the *even if Y* part is simply absurd. Creating this absurd observable scenario enhances the clash between what the hearer is supposed to believe and what the speaker is certain about (i.e., that the hearer is incapable of winning any competition).

There are other constructions that can have a certain sarcastic potential. For example, expressions of intense like may easily be turned into sarcasm provided that the context makes it clear that expression is one of pretense and that the irony is an attack on the hearer or someone else:

*I just love the way people drive here.
Great, just what I needed most! You made my day again.
You couldn't have done any better!
That was all perfect, as you always do things.*

But sarcasm has a weak constructional grounding. It is derived inferentially through the text and/or context-induced parameterization of the general dissociative attitude conveyed by the cross-scenario clash characteristic of irony.

A second figure of speech that can relate to irony is *antiphrasis*. Rhetoricians have defined it as using a word or expression (rather than a full statement) which is manifestly opposite to the speaker's true intention. Not all cases of sharp contrast are ironic (cf. *fat like a noodle*; Mellado, 2015, p. 116), but they easily lend themselves to such a use. Imagine two co-workers are struggling to comply with an impending deadline and suddenly one of them, John, decides to take a break and relax. The other worker remarks: *Sure, John, take your time!* This is not intended as an attack on John but as a way of calling his attention to the inconvenience of wasting any time in the situation at hand. Expressions like *great, wonderful, thank you*, among others, can convey emotional reactions of skepticism, humor, acceptance, etc., in the face of situations where what has happened (the observable scenario) is the opposite of what the speaker would have expected or desired (the epistemic scenario). This is a typical way of producing ironic antiphrasis. Another way is to use statements, instead of exclamations, where the statement contains an explicit contrast: *Yes, your talk was really brief; three consecutive hours!* Part of the statement contains the epistemic scenario (in this example, in the form of pretended agreement) and the other part the observable scenario (three hours, which is long for a talk). The attitude to be inferred could be a humorous one of pretended shock or dismay. The attitudinal element is thus close to any other antiphrastic exclamation.

The third figure that we aim to treat here is *satire*. Of course, satire is well known as a literary genre. In our view, the literary genre is a case of communicated non-verbal irony, as discussed in 2.4.1. Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal*, which we treat again later on in 5.2.2.3, provides an example. However, here we concur with Ruiz de Mendoza's (2020a) contention that, on a low-scale, we can have satirical utterances. These are cases of verbal irony where irony is intended to raise awareness on the weaknesses of individuals and of society. Ruiz de Mendoza (2020a) provides the example of a remark made by Huckleberry Finn in Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) (Chapter 16) (cf. Twain, 2003):

Well, then, says I, what's the use you learning to do right when it's troublesome to do right and ain't no trouble to do wrong, and the wages is just the same?

Huckleberry Finn is using common sense to question the extended social belief that doing the right thing is rewarding. Following our scenario-based approach, this belief is an implicit epistemic scenario (an echo of a social belief) which is accessed as prompted by the explicit reflection provided by Huckleberry Finn. This reflection captures what to this character is reality, that is, the observable scenario. The attitudinal ingredient of satire is not one of contempt or derision, but of denunciation by highlighting human frailty.

We end this section with some observations on *prolepsis*. As noted by Ruiz de Mendoza (2020a, p. 31), this is a rebuttal technique where speakers raise objections to their own arguments and then they answer them (cf. Walton, 2007, p. 106). Ruiz de Mendoza (2020a) has argued that prolepsis can relate to irony because it invariably contains its essential ingredients: an echo, a contrast, and an attitude. In our own framework, the echo is part of an epistemic scenario as an expression of pretended agreement and the contrast is a cross-scenario clash with what is thought by the speaker to be verifiable reality (the observable scenario). A typical construction conveying prolepsis is: *It is difficult/hard to see/understand how X without/unless Y*. For example:

It is difficult to see how lowering taxes will boost employment without any of the previous market reforms experts are asking for.

In theory, examples like these are not necessarily ironical. However, the first part of the construction embeds an echo of a proposal made by someone. In the example, the proposal has been to lower taxes to boost employment. The matrix clause combined with the introduction of an exception is intended to supply the (speaker's) observable scenario. Since the echoed thought and the observable scenario clash, it is possible to ascribe a dissociative attitude to the speaker with respect to the echoed thought. To the extent that this is possible, it can be argued that this expression is ironical: the speaker does not believe other people's claims on the benefits of lowering taxes for employment without making previous market reforms. Notice that we can resort to ironic pointers to recast the utterance above into a clear irony-compliant format:

Yea, sure, let's lower taxes to boost employment without any of the previous market reforms experts are asking for!

4.7 Conclusions

The present chapter has discussed the role of the structural elements of irony: the ironist, the interpreter, and the target. We have argued that the ironist and the interpreter must be taken into account as equally important elements in the analysis of irony in order to achieve a complete understanding of the phenomenon. We have produced a typology of ironist and interpreter types, and of their possible combinations. We have distinguished between solidary and non-solidary communicators, depending on how helpful the ironist is willing to be to the interpreter (i.e., through the degree of explicitness of ironic cues). We have distinguished between naïve and non-naïve interpreters, depending on whether or not the interpreter has the necessary knowledge to interpret an utterance as ironic, by identifying the clash between the two scenarios. These categories are gradable and can be combined in different ways. We have outlined four possible combinations of these categories: (1) a solidary communicator and a naïve interpreter, (2) a solidary communicator and a non-naïve interpreter, (3) a non-solidary communicator with a naïve interpreter, and (4) a non-solidary communicator with a non-naïve interpreter. We have furthermore provided a typology of target types, concluding that targets may be (1) people, (2) states of affairs, (3) institutions, or (4) other objects, either animate or inanimate. We have then explained irony in relation to the degree of felicity of the outcome. Like the degree of solidary of the ironist or the naivety of the interpreter, felicity is also gradable. The analysis of these structural elements brings us to the conclusion that the production and the felicity of the interpretation of irony are dependent on a variety of gradable categories that determine whether the clash between the epistemic scenario and the observable scenario is detected, and whether the attitudinal element is derived. Finally, we have made use of the insights provided by the analysis of the various structural elements of irony to set up connections between irony and banter, on the one hand, and between irony and irony-related figures of speech, like sarcasm, antiphrasis, satire, and prolepsis, on the other hand. This analysis has developed the scenario-based approach to irony further by postulating a cross-scenario clash between an epistemic and an observable scenario as underlying the attitudinal inference that we intuitively identify with ironic meaning.

CHAPTER 5

Ironic uses

5.1 Introduction

Irony is a figure of speech indissolubly linked to its historical and socio-cultural context. The interpretation of irony relies on the interpreter's detection of a clash between an epistemic and an observable scenario, the epistemic scenario being based on knowledge that must be shared by the ironist and the interpreter. Both the ironist and the interpreter are part of a socio-cultural and historical context which constrains the shared information on which the construction and interpretation of irony hinges. Let us take a rather trivial example. A and B are two Americans who ironize about American politics. A, who is a Republican, says: *I just love Ocasio-Cortez; she makes such a peaceful congresswoman*. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is a Latino activist and congresswoman. B, who has access to this knowledge, should be able to detect the irony in B's words against Ocasio-Cortez. However, imagine that someone else, for example a recent Cambodian immigrant with no knowledge of American politics, overhears the conversation. He would evidently miss the ironic impact of A's statement. Reception Theory already pointed out that the interpretation of any text varies according to the knowledge its reader has by belonging to a specific community, which could be related to his or her country, culture, age, upbringing, etc. The proponents of this theory claimed that any literary work can have as many readings as readers (Jauss, 1982). We agree with this premise and further add that the context of an ironic text should be looked at from a perspective which integrates the socio-cultural and historical circumstances that mark the ironist and the interpreter's background knowledge.

Cognitive linguists base their understanding of the context on the notion of *frames*, which can be defined as internally coherent schematizations of our experience of objects, characters, and their properties and relations (Fillmore, 1977, 1982, 1985; see also Fillmore et al., 2003; Boas, 2005). Evidently, our understanding of epistemic and observable scenarios, and the way we contrast them in producing and interpreting irony, is a matter of how we construe the world of our experience.

A well-known example of frame is the "buying" frame. It contains a buyer, a seller, the goods, a price, the quality of the goods, and/or the extent of the sale. These are the participant entities. There are also two main relations involving these participants: the transfer of goods and of money. The same event can be expressed

from different frame perspectives. We can focus on the goods and the price (*She sold her old car for 1000 dollars*) or on the seller and the price (*She charged 1000 dollars for her old car*) or the buyer and the price (*I bought her old car for 1000 dollars*).

Perspective is important for irony. Imagine that someone believes that he has been deceived by the seller of a second-hand car: *Can you imagine? I paid 1000 dollars to her for this old piece of junk!* The addressee does not believe that the car is overpriced and ironizes: *Yeah, definitely, she charged you an outrageous price.* The ironic load of this utterance would be unclear with a fully accurate non-perspectivized echo: *Yeah, right, you paid 1000 dollars to her for this old piece of junk!* This observation further reinforces the need to distinguish between accurate and inaccurate echoes, as pointed out in Section 2.3.2. We have seen how inaccurate echoes are often motivated by reasons of focus. It is now necessary to add reasons of perspective, which can act provided that the inaccurate echo will not affect the tendency to maximize contrast between the epistemic and observable scenarios.

The context is thus to be seen as a subjective reality modeled by our brain rather than an objective external element. What is more, since frames are dynamic and can change as our subjective and intersubjective experience of the world changes too, they have the potential to account for the socio-historical variables that constrain the production and interpretation of irony. The analysis provided in this book is intended to be sensitive to the essentials of frame structure as is manifest in the construction of ironic scenarios. This observation will become more evident in the following sections, where cultural knowledge plays a more visible role than in our previous analyses.

5.2 A typology of ironic uses

As discussed in Chapter 2, irony is a linguistic resource which has been used widely across disciplines and with different purposes. It invariably involves a game of knowledge. In the case of communicated irony, the ironist establishes a dialogue with the interpreter, who derives the intended meaning by identifying the epistemic and the observable scenarios (often guided by suprasegmental cues) and then inferring the attitudinal component. The interpretation of irony creates a link between the ironist and the interpreter that is based on knowledge: the knowledge the ironist and the interpreter share, and the knowledge the ironist wants to prove wrong (which can be his or her own assumptions, or someone else's). On the other hand, in the case of situational or non-communicated irony, interpreters detect ironic meaning by learning through conflicting situations that what they assumed to be highly likely or certain is not. Hence, in both cases, evidence is produced that either the interpreter or a third party's assumptions about a state of affairs were incorrect.

In other words, all types of irony are characterized by an intended or a perceived reversal of previous knowledge assumptions. This explains why irony has been used as a tool for such a wide variety of purposes, from the rhetoric exploitation of the persuasive potential of irony, to the self-criticism of Romantic irony.

Literary theory has already pointed out the existence of various ironic types and has provided a wide variety of classifications. Muecke (1969) distinguishes historically between *early concepts of irony* (those that were created between Ancient Greece and the 17th century), and *later concepts of irony*, referring to the acceptations of the term during and after Romanticism. Recall Muecke's long list of irony types, which, as we discussed in 2.2.2, reveals a multiplicity of often unconnected classificatory criteria. For instance, the differentiation between verbal and non-verbal irony refers to the communicative situation, whereas dramatic irony is associated with a particular literary genre, ironic modesty and "irony by analogy" are considered ironic devices, unconscious irony has to do with the speaker's intent, and cosmic irony with fate; self-betraying irony is linked to the false image characters have, and irony of events with what is expected to occur in a series of events; finally, Catch 22 irony, like irony of fate, is associated with "no-win" situations. On the other hand, Colebrook (2004) has attempted to relate the historical contexts in Western literature to the use of irony. She separates irony historically (e.g., in Ancient Greece and Rome, in the Middle Ages, in the Renaissance, etc.) and also according to different salient features: philosophical irony; Romantic irony; irony and subjectivity; contextual irony; satirical irony; humorous irony; postmodern irony. According to this author, some of these ironic types can be found across historical periods, although she fails to observe that some of them can be grouped according to their roots, since they stem from previously generated ironic types.

In 2.4.1 we have also offered a classification of ironic types as seen from the perspective of whether it is communicated or not. In the present section, we take a socio-historical stance, which elaborates on previous insights in Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano (2019a), where we put forward the notion of *ironic uses*. We define these as irony types envisaged from a socio-cultural and historical perspective, with some being developments of previous ones. This classification is complementary of the classification provided before in terms of communicative criteria (Section 2.4.1) since it casts further light on the complexities of the diversity of communicative contexts created to represent non-communicated irony. The essence of ironic uses is the purpose of irony measured in terms of a combination of factors, among them, its impact on the audience (e.g., raising awareness) and the ironist's attitude on cultural constructs including their medium of transmission. We claim that there is a limited number of ironic uses, which we call *basic*. These evolve over time and give rise to variants, which we label *re-adapted ironic uses*. We shall look closely at the different basic and re-adapted uses of irony in the sections to follow.

5.2.1 Basic uses of irony

The first testimonies of irony in Western literature, which date back to Ancient Greece, point to its utility. Socrates used irony as a tool to help his disciples realize when their assumptions were wrong, rhetoric exploited its persuasive potential, satire used it to ridicule, and theatre to provoke a cathartic effect in the audience. In its theatrical exploitation, the audience was expected to feel helpless as they witnessed, from their privileged position as spectators, how the protagonist's efforts to challenge divine providence were pointless. All these uses involve a clash between an epistemic and an observable scenario, but the aim of each of them varies. Irony has proven to be a particularly versatile linguistic mechanism for subversion and challenge. This point is especially relevant because, in spite of the wide variety of contexts where irony is used, in all of them there is a more or less subtle element of challenge to someone's knowledge, be that knowledge the reader's, another character's in a fictional story, or an interlocutor.

We define *basic uses* of irony as the foundational utilizations of irony in literary texts, which are the roots for later evolutions which we label *re-adapted uses*. Basic uses can be found at the earliest stages of the literary tradition and provide the groundwork for their adaptation to other contexts. We have identified six: Socratic irony, rhetorical irony, satirical irony, dramatic irony, tragic irony and metafictional irony. These uses have either given rise to new ones or have evolved and have been exploited in later socio-cultural periods. The first two are instances of verbal irony, whereas the rest are cases of narrated or performed situational irony. We shall now address each of the six basic uses in depth.

5.2.1.1 Socratic irony

Socratic irony is the first type of irony traced in the history of linguistic studies. As noted in Section 2.2.1, the term *irony* (Gr. *eironeia*) was first used by Plato in *Republic* with reference to Socrates' feigned ignorance. Socratic irony was part of the so-called maieutic method, based on the ironist feigning to be ignorant in order to raise the pupil's awareness of the master's superior knowledge. The maieutic method involved 'giving birth to knowledge', as if the philosopher was a midwife and the pupil a pregnant woman who, with the help of the midwife, would give birth to her child (the truth or knowledge). In order to do so, Socrates would echo his own purported ignorance and his interlocutor's wisdom. Throughout the process, the pupil would discover that his assumptions about the philosopher's and his own wisdom clashed with reality, where the pupil was ignorant, and the philosopher was wise. In Socratic irony, the philosopher uses irony as an instrument to challenge his pupils' beliefs. Let us see how this applies to an excerpt from Socrates' dialogues collected by Plato. In one of them, *Eutyphro*, Socrates discusses the concept of justice

with sophists Polemarchus and Thrasymachus. Before showing that he knows about this concept better than they do, the philosopher says:

Nay, it is more reasonable that you should be the speaker. For you do affirm that you know and are able to tell. Don't be obstinate but do me a favour to reply and don't be chary of your wisdom, and instruct Glaucon here and the rest of us
(Plato in Hamilton and Huntington, 2005, 337e–338a)

Socrates praises the sophists to get them to display their purported wisdom so that both Glaucon and himself can be instructed. The dialogue ends with the sophists' realization that, from the start, the seemingly humble and ignorant Socrates knew much more about the concept of justice than they did. This is a common structure throughout his dialogues, notably in *Symposium*.

Similarly, in *Gorgias*, Socrates discusses with Gorgias, Polo, and Callicles the relationship between the art of rhetoric and morality, debating about the qualities that the proposed fair man should have. Once more, the philosopher, instead of warning his interlocutors that he believes them to be wrong, poses a series of questions to guide them to truth. In the example below, Socrates praises Callicles right after demanding patient instruction from him:

Since by 'better' you don't mean 'stronger', tell me again from the beginning what you mean. And teach me more gently, admirable man, so that I won't run away from your school. (Plato in Hamilton and Huntington, 2005, 489d5–e4)

Socratic irony combines delayed irony with a magnified attitudinal element, which serves the purpose of hiding the philosopher's true intentions. All dialogues begin with the philosopher inviting his interlocutor to enlighten him with his knowledge. The clash of scenarios takes place between an epistemic scenario formed by the pupil's initial beliefs (as echoed by Socrates) and the observable situation, which is only made evident gradually. Throughout the process of discovering the truth, the philosopher asks questions that become clues that lead the pupil to attaining knowledge. The interlocutor eventually finds out that Socrates is actually adopting a pose by pretending to agree with his interlocutor's beliefs. Consider Socrates' discussion with Agathon about the concept of love:

But now that we've had the pleasure of hearing your magnificent description of Love, there's just one point I'm not quite clear about. Tell me. Do you think it is the nature of Love to be of somebody, or of nobody?
(Plato in Hamilton and Huntington, 2005, p. 553)

The observable scenario is invariably shown as the dialogues proceed through textual cues. The solidary ironist's questions guide the interlocutor into detecting the clash between the epistemic and the observable scenario, to make sure that the

ironic meaning is understood. As opposed to such uses of irony as rhetoric irony, where it is important for the intended meaning to be identified immediately, in the Socratic type, like in the tragic one, the process serves a didactic purpose. In Socratic irony, unveiling the ironic meaning involves identifying the cues to the epistemic and the observable scenarios, and discovering that the ironist's attitude of pretense is but a lesson.

5.2.1.2 *Rhetorical irony*

The second basic use of irony is rhetorical. As explained in Section 2.2.1, this kind of irony, which was initially framed in the context of politics, exploits the potential of this figure to persuade. In spite of its use in Ancient Greece, it is not until Cicero sets out to write about irony in rhetoric that we have testimonies of how this device was used. According to Cicero, irony was used by the sophists to convince an audience without telling the full truth, a strategy to persuade about a non-legitimate matter. This purpose is different from that of Socratic irony. Instead of teaching, what the ironist wants in rhetorical irony is to make someone believe something false. While teaching is about guiding the interpreter to the truth, in rhetorical irony, persuading involves hiding the truth and misleading the interpreter into thinking that something false is true. Nevertheless, we do find Cicero's own use of irony in rhetoric as a tool to convince juries of the culpability of certain public figures. By stating something that ostentatiously clashes with their manifest opinion, the interpreters (most often the jury) are expected to identify the clash between the epistemic scenario (what the ironist echoes) and the observable scenario (what the ironist believes to be true) and to identify the attitudinal component. We observe, however, that both uses exploit the ability of irony to make the interpreters rethink and challenge their previous assumptions. Predictably, this results in scenarios that differ in nature from those in Socratic irony.

Formally, in rhetorical irony, the speaker ironizes about a third party, so the interpreter is often not the same as the ironic target, as opposed to Socratic irony, where the interpreter must be the interlocutor. In the context of political speeches, the most common scenario, even nowadays, is to make an audience be critical of a certain public figure, often a political candidate. For a rhetorical ironist, it would not make much sense to make people believe that a falsehood is true. Rather, in this kind of language use, the ironist wants to gear the audience into what he considers to be true about the ironic target. Let us have a look at Cicero's speech about Rubrius in *Against Verres* (Lozano, 2019):

One of [Verres'] followers was a certain Rubrius, a man tailor-made for the lusts of this man there, who was wont to track all of this down with *wonderful* skill whether he went. (Cicero in Gildenhard, 2011, p. 179 [64] [our emphasis])

Rubrius was a notorious plunderer and a tyrant in the island of Sicily whose atrocities were criticized by Cicero, who, as shown in the example, used rhetorical irony to persuade the jury of the need to punish the tyrant.

Kaufert (1977) explains that irony as a rhetoric device can be used as:

1. An epideictic strategy to create group cohesion by drawing on the common knowledge between the ironist and the interpreter once the interpreter has derived the ironic meaning of the utterance.
2. A means of targeting a common enemy, or as a way of promoting solidarity and creating group cohesion.
3. A rhetoric tool to victimize the audience the ironist is addressing.
4. A means to bring together the interests of opposing audiences.
5. A way to represent a false character.

In rhetorical irony, persuasion mainly rests on strategy (2), based on creating a connection between the ironist and the interpreter. The clash between the epistemic and the observable scenarios is built on the contrast between the beliefs echoed and the facts as seen by the ironist. The attitudinal component remains as one of critical dissociation.

5.2.1.3 *Satirical irony*

The target of satirical irony is either an individual, a group of individuals, or even society as a whole. Satirical irony is based on the combination of hyperbole and irony, where the target's flaws are magnified in order to lead the audience into thinking critically about them and claiming for an alternative (Highet, 1962). For this reason, as will be evident from the examples below, this ironic type proves to be very useful to instigate ideological change. By echoing an exaggerated epistemic scenario and making it clash with the inferred observable scenario, coincidental with the author's beliefs, the ironist conveys an attitude of dissociation that is most often parameterized as mockery or sarcasm.

The Latin root *satūra*, meaning 'medley' or 'hotch-potch', hints at the multiplicity of scenarios where satirical irony can be found. Satirical irony is especially prominent in politically convulsive periods, such as the 18th century in Great Britain, where laughter can be used as a tool for subversion (Bakhtin, 1993). Contrary to other uses of irony, such as Socratic irony, where the emphasis is placed on the attitude of pretense, in satirical irony the attitudinal element is magnified. One such example is found in Juvenal's *Satire Nine* (cf. Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano, 2019a), in a conversation between Juvenal and professional homosexual Naevolus. Juvenal reassures Naevolus, who looks miserable because his occupation is gone, by telling him that he will invariably have the support of other homosexuals:

Be not afraid; so long as *these seven hills of ours stand fast, pathic friends will never fail you: from every quarter, in carriages and ships, those effeminates who scratch their heads with one finger will flock in*. And you have always a further ground of hope – if you fit your diet to your trade. (Juvenal in Ramsay, 2004, p. 130–134)

As is clear from his *Satire Two*, Juvenal was unsympathetic towards homosexuals. The readership of this author's satirical work was expected to know that the apparent empathy displayed in his speech was but an exercise of irony. His reassuring words build an epistemic scenario by echoing Naevolus's ideas about the homosexual community. Juvenal's belief about homosexuals provides the ground for the observable scenario. The criticism in his words arises from the clash between these two situations. Hyperbole is used to enhance the implausibility of the epistemic scenario ("from every quarter, in carriages and ships, those effeminates who scratch their heads with one finger will flock in").

The use of irony in satirical literature is not limited to prose. In fact, in Ancient Greece, comic theatrical plays very often drew from satire to criticize the flaws of their society and used ridicule to subtly challenge political authority. In theatre, satirical irony ceases to be exclusively verbally communicated and becomes mainly situational (non-communicated) or visually communicated through the physical appearance of the characters or their actions. One outstanding example is Aristophanes' comedies. In his theatrical plays (e.g., *Wasps*, *Wealth*, *Lysistrata*), Aristophanes presents characters who embody hyperbolized epistemic scenarios. For instance, in *Lysistrata* (Aristofanes, 1982), a woman determines to end the interminable Peloponnesian war by depriving men from having sex, which, she claims, is the only thing they deeply desire, above the thirst for power. By persuading the women of the warring towns to withhold sexual privileges from their husbands and lovers, they ignite a battle between sexes that eventually leads in the declaration of peace between sexes and between political enemies. In this case, the epistemic scenario (the situation where women powerfully manage to end the war) clashes with the observable scenario, where, as was common in Ancient Greek society, the role of women was limited and powerless. Hyperbole is used to create an empowered female character who manages to stop such an important event as the Peloponnesian war. In this example, satirical irony serves the purpose of criticizing the patriarchal social structure in Ancient Greece.

5.2.1.4 *Tragic irony*

The didactic purpose of irony was not reduced to Socrates' *petit comité* interactions. As the quintessential mass medium, theatre took advantage of the potential of irony to teach life lessons to a mostly illiterate audience. In the deeply religious Ancient Greece, the gods had an omnipresent role in theatrical plays, and in tragedies in particular. Tragedies were articulated around *mimesis* and *catharsis*, often

accompanied by *hybris* or self-pride. The former refers to the similarity-based connection between the audience and the characters, and the latter to the effect of spiritual cleansing the audience undergoes by identifying with the tragic hero's misfortunes, which inevitably lead him to a tragic ending. The term tragic irony has often been used as an equivalent to *cosmic irony* or *irony of fate*, which refer to the character's ignorance about the magnitude of divine power (Muecke, 1969).¹

Tragic irony presupposes the protagonist's ignorance on the one hand, and divine knowledge and power, on the other. The ironist (the playwright) ironizes about a third party (the main character in the story). The ignorant but proud protagonist is the center of the epistemic scenario, which reflects the potential belief of the audience that it is possible to fool divine providence or challenge the gods (the observable scenario). The observable scenario unfolds as the protagonist is led to failure. Contrary to Socratic irony, tragic irony involves a sad learning process through fateful experience rather than mere admonition, where the interpreter becomes an empathetic spectator to the character's misfortune. As in all kinds of irony, the attitudinal element arises from the clash between epistemic and observable scenarios. The difference is to be found in the context-driven parameterization of this attitudinal component into one of fatality. One such example is Sophocles' tragedy *Oedipus the King* (see also Section 3.2.2.5). In the play, Oedipus' parents, the king and the queen of Thebes, visit the oracle in Delphi, who foretells that when their son would grow up, he would kill his father and marry his mother. In order to keep the prophecy from happening, the monarchs decide to give his son away to the royal family of a neighboring kingdom. Nevertheless, in spite of their efforts to prevent the godly designs from taking place, Oedipus, unaware of who his parents were, eventually kills his father and marries his mother, hence becoming king of Thebes and fulfilling the prophecy. The spectator was expected to identify the clash between the epistemic scenario (the monarchs' belief that they could fool the oracle and avoid the prophecy) and the observable scenario (Oedipus fulfilling the prophecy and bringing the curse over his kingdom). Interestingly, the spectator's empathy is grounded in metonymic thinking, which thus becomes a central component of tragic irony. Thus, the situation depicted in the epistemic scenario is metonymic for the audience's alleged belief that man could overpower god and the one attested in the observable scenario is metonymic for the divine punishment over those who dare challenge the gods. The attitudinal component that arises from this clash is parameterized into the fatalistic tone of the story.

Although the best-known examples of tragic irony can be found in tragic plays, this use of irony need not only be found in theatrical works. For instance, tragic

1. We claim that tragic irony, irony of fate, and cosmic irony refer to the same phenomenon. Hence, in the present study we shall use the term *tragic irony*.

irony is ubiquitous in Ancient Greek and Roman mythology. Let us take Ovid's telling of Arachne's myth. Arachne, a woman with extraordinary weaving skills caused Athena's jealousy. The goddess challenged Arachne to a weaving contest. Arachne's *hybris* was to accept the competition and to win. As a result, Athena turned Arachne into a spider, doomed to spend the rest of her life ceaselessly weaving, to remind her that mortals who dared to challenge the gods would be severely punished. As in Sophocles' tragedy, the interpreter of the irony was expected to be acquainted with the structure of the myth, where the gods were always victorious, and mortals were always punished. The tragic irony in Arachne's myth stems from the clash between her *hybris* (the epistemic scenario, again, metonymically, any mortal's *hybris*) and the punishment (also a threat to the interpreter).

Tragic irony adopts the didactic purpose of Socratic irony and adds the cathartic element. In Socratic irony, the attitudinal element derived from the clash between the epistemic and the observable scenario was parameterized as the acknowledgement of the philosopher's wisdom, whose questions led the interpreter to the truth and knowledge for its own sake. In tragic irony, the ironist's lesson is more imposing. By adding a layer of fiction, the ironist encapsulates the epistemic and the observable scenario metonymically, and the spectator is expected to establish a connection of empathy with that character, with whom he bears resemblance. The attitudinal element is not parameterized as pity, but rather as a victim identification.

5.2.1.5 *Dramatic irony*

Muecke (1969, p. 66) links the dramatic use of irony to the potential of the stage as "a place where things are bound to happen or be revealed". This author claims that in theatre, the audience knows about what will happen, but the *dramatis personae* do not. Hence, dramatic irony is grounded in the difference between the spectator's knowledge and the *dramatis personae*'s unsuspecting attitude. Indeed, as Muecke explained, the dramatic use of irony is generally associated to theatrical plays, where the spectator observes and learns but does not participate. Nevertheless, as we will see in Section 5.2.2.5, this use may be applied to other contexts such as multimodal texts or prose fiction. At any rate, Muecke's explanation of dramatic irony determines some of the key features of this kind of irony. To begin with, dramatic irony involves a third party's ignorance and the interpreter's knowledge. Second, the third party is a passive entity, who cannot change the process of events, but only observe. In all cases of dramatic irony, the ironist presents the interpreter with a situation where he has more information than the rest of the participants. The interpreter is an external observer to the situation, and his or her attitude of dissociation arises from the clash between what the interpreter, a privileged spectator, knows, and a less informed third party's knowledge. Dramatic irony is a situational use of irony where the epistemic scenario is built on the spectator's knowledge about a state

of affairs, and the observable scenario on what happens to characters who do not have that information. The clash between the epistemic and the observable scenario triggers the attitude of dissociation, which in this use of irony can be parameterized as humorous or just remain dissociative.

Let us have a look at the dramatic use of irony in Plautus' comedy *Amphitruo*. Jupiter, determined to have sexual relationships with Amphitruo's wife Alcmena, while he is exerting his duty as a military general, adopts Amphitruo's shape and tricks her into believing that he (Amphitruo) has returned from the war. Before Jupiter has left the house, the actual Amphitruo and his servant Sosia arrive, causing a chain of humorous misunderstandings between Alcmena and Amphitruo, since the latter of course does not recall having been to bed with his wife. The spectator knows what Jupiter and Mercury are up to by means of their asides:

Mercury (*aside*): I haven't yet said a single wrong word. For I was present there and so was my father, during the battle [...] Keep still, Night, like you have until now. Be complacent with my father. It is the best way of serving the best of gods. It is a good investment for your services. (Plautus, 1989, p. 125, the authors' translation)

Theatrical asides can be pointers to dramatic irony, and anything marked as such constitutes part of the epistemic scenario. Asides are also the information hidden to the unsuspecting third party, who is unaware of the epistemic scenario and only a participant in the observable one. In the example cited above, Mercury explains that he is acting as his father's accomplice while he is sleeping with Alcmena as long as the night lasts. Spectators, who know about Jupiter's strategy, first realize that this information clashes with Amphitruo's or Alcmena's attitude of surprise when they are first confused and then they further realize that these characters have been conned. Since the text is a comedy, when spectators detect the clash between the epistemic and the observable scenarios, they are expected to parameterize the attitude of dissociation as one of humor.

Nevertheless, the attitudinal component of the dramatic use of irony is not always a case of humor, since it is tied to the genre it is used for. If we take again the example of *Oedipus the King* (3.2.2.5 and 5.2.1.4), Oedipus does not know about the prophecy although the audience does. As an external witness to the full story, the audience knows that the man Oedipus kills is his father, and that the woman that she marries is his mother. The epistemic scenario (Oedipus's destiny as predicted by the oracle) clashes with what happens (Oedipus's actions, which unbeknownst to him, step by step fulfil the prophecy). Contrary to the example extracted from Plautus's comedy, the epistemic scenario is not based on the asides of the characters. However, the oracle's prophecy has the same function. It is information hidden from the protagonist but available to the audience. The attitudinal element is parameterized differently in tragedy, where, instead of provoking laughter, the aim

is to enhance the fatalistic tone of the play. Thus, it is more accurate to say that the tragic sense of *Oedipus the King* originates in its status as a case of dramatic irony, parameterized as tragedy, than merely from an independent tragic use of irony.

5.2.1.6 *Metafictional irony*

In metafiction, the author of a fictional work or a character in the story introduces remarks about the creation of the elements in the text or about the communicative medium it is being used in. Metafiction makes the reader aware of the boundary between reality and fiction (see Barthes, 1959; Abel, 2003). It has been used for a variety of purposes, notably to raise awareness about the craftsmanship of literature (in Romanticism, a metonymic representation of the universe) (Muecke, 1969, p. 19), or as a playful instrument to subvert the canonical notion of History (Eco in Nicol, 2002, p. 111). Metafictional irony highlights the ironist's dissociation from the text as a literary construct. The reader's belief that the fictional world is real forms the epistemic scenario. By revealing the fictional nature of the text, the ironist leads the interpreter to infer the implicit observable scenario. The reader is expected to show dissociation towards his discovery that what he believed to be real is actually not. Although metafiction may have a potential for irony, not all metafiction is ironic. That is, even though metafiction involves the clash between a fictional world and reality, in order for it to be ironic, the author must be adopting a pose, and the clash between the two scenarios must result in the reader's attitude of dissociation.

An example of non-ironic metafiction can be found in David Lodge's comedy *The British Museum is Falling Down*. In the example below, the protagonist, David Appleby, discusses the thematic changes that the rise of the novel brought to the literary landscape. Lodge's use of metafiction in this fragment is not ironic, since the narrator merely digresses about fiction without making readers realize that they are being tricked into believing that fiction is real.

Well, then, consider that before the novel emerged as the dominant literary form, narrative literature dealt only with the extraordinary or the allegorical – with kings and queens, giants and dragons, sublime virtue and diabolic evil. There was no risk of confusing that sort of thing with life, of course. But as soon as the novel got going, you might pick up a book at any time and read about an ordinary chap called Joe Smith doing just the sort of things you did yourself. Now, I know what you're going to say – you're going to say that the novelist still has to invent a lot. But that's just the point: there've been such a fantastic number of novels written in the past couple of centuries that they've just about exhausted the possibilities of life. So all of us, you see, are really enacting events that have already been written about in some novel or other.

(Lodge, 1965, p. 129–130)

The metafictional use of irony was nowhere to be found in Ancient Greece, like the rest of the uses of irony, and its origins can be found in Geoffrey Chaucer's 14th-century collection *The Canterbury Tales*. In these tales, told by the pilgrims who walk their way to visit St. Thomas Beckett's shrine in Canterbury, the author often interrupts the narration to insert digressions and opinions about the characters in the story or integrates passages delivered by other characters who metafictionally satirize certain literary genres (Chaucer, 2005). One such example is the representation of the protagonist in the tale "Tale of Sir Thopas", which narrates Sir Thopas's quest for the elf-queen. The tale is at one point interrupted by the Host, whose voice is used to ridicule the literary genre of romances, including its characters (e.g., knights and fairies) and their grandiose yet absurd plots, as well as the readership of such tales. The readership's beliefs about the value of romances as represented by Sir Thopas and the Host's reflection about romances as a literary genre (epistemic scenario) clashes with the author's opinion (observable scenario). By detecting the clash between the two scenarios, interpreters are expected to dissociate themselves from the author's pretended agreement with the popular opinion about romances.

5.2.2 Re-adapted uses of irony

Every context brings a particular set of ideas and circumstances that make some uses of irony more useful and consequently, more popular. The socio-cultural circumstances of certain historical periods determine whether it is a moment characterized by stability in politics and art, or if, on the contrary, it is a subversive period where conventions are challenged. Art and literature are in constant change and periodically reach a point where what was initially experimental becomes the establishment, which is to be overthrown once again.

Owing to the subversive nature of irony, many socio-cultural and historical moments have found this figure of speech useful to challenge the *status quo*, to ridicule or to teach a given set of ideas. Our observation of examples of irony from different socio-historical moment has led us to the conclusion that, essentially, literary history has recycled the basic uses of irony that we find at the dawn of Western literature. The most widespread trend when taxonomizing irony in literary theory is that different historical periods have given rise to different types of irony (see Colebrook, 2004). We argue, however, that, instead, only six basic types of irony can be found, and that any later uses of irony are but re-adaptations of those basic ironic uses. Re-adaptation in irony is a particularly interesting phenomenon for various reasons. First of all, it means that irony as a figure of speech remains the same across literary periods, artistic genres and socio-historical circumstances. Hence, it is possible to find a single universal explanation of the ironic phenomenon. Second, re-adaptation involves a continuous process of enriching irony with

layers of history that makes this figure of speech a particularly versatile one. Of course, not all uses of irony are equally popular or have had an equally smooth re-adaptation. For instance, rhetoric irony has found its place in political language. Its ubiquity in political speeches across time is due to the fact that rhetoric irony is not tied to a particular genre or linguistic structure. On the other hand, dramatic irony is mostly found in theatrical plays, although the modern artistic media (e.g., film), which share the performative nature of theatre, have exploited this use as well. Even though there are evidently some exceptions, dramatic irony is rather restricted in terms of the artistic medium where it can be found.

We shall now delve into the re-adaptation of each basic use of irony in order to illustrate when each of them has become more popular, and whether what has predominated has been a basic use or whether new elements have cropped up to create subtypes that have their own identity within the sociocultural framework associated with each basic use.

5.2.2.1 *Re-adapted Socratic irony*

Worth highlighting at this point is the fact that, although it is very often the case that re-adapted ironic uses are developed chronologically forward after the basic ironic use is established, the difference between basic and re-adapted ironic uses is, in principle, not necessarily a historical one. Rather, the difference lies in a usage mode and other usages derived from it. The delayed identification of the clash between the epistemic and the observable scenario, and the prominent attitude of pretense are the main features of Socratic irony, as outlined in Section 5.2.1.1. However, we can find examples of a similar type of irony in the Book of Genesis in the Bible, which scholars date back to at least the middle of the 10th century BC, and possible to the 15th century BC (Hamilton, 1990). In the Genesis account, Cain, Adam's first son, kills his brother Abel. In Genesis 4: 9–12, we read of the Lord's visit to Cain after the murder:

9 And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?

10 And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

11 And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand;

12 When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.

The question "Where is Abel thy brother?" is deeply ironic in view of God's omniscience. Furthermore, Cain's response, defiant and arrogant (very much like the Greek *hybris*), is evidence of his erroneous assumption arising from his lack

of understanding of God. This is the epistemic scenario. Then God reveals His knowledge and punishes Cain. For Cain, this is the new observable scenario which he painfully becomes aware of. As in later Greek tragedy, Cain is faced with the inevitability of his fate, which he tries to avoid by challenging God one more time (Genesis 4: 13–14):

13 And Cain said unto the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear.
 14 Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall aslay me.

The Lord promises Cain that, although cast away from His presence, he shall not be killed and places a mark on him for that purpose.

In later uses of Socratic irony, we find that those characteristics have been kept, even if the context was no longer that of making pupils aware of their misconceptions, or of their arrogance (*hybris*). Re-adaptations of Socratic irony have kept its dialogic nature where the interpreter is led through a process of enlightenment and ends up not only revealing his own ignorance but also often giving away information. One such example can be found in police interrogations. Let us look at the episode “Sex and the Married Detective” from the television series *Columbo* (S8 E3) (Levinson and Frawley, 1989). A sex therapist, and radio show host, murders her cheating lover by masquerading as a mysterious “lady in black” high-class prostitute. She is clever and sophisticated, while *Columbo* is unsophisticated and apparently naïve. But he finally traps her into confessing her murder. Strikingly, she is astonished and concerned about *Columbo*’s potentially low opinion of her more than about having been caught. They have the following ironic exchange.

Dr. Joan: Do you think less of me?
 Lt. *Columbo*: *Ma’am, I’m just a policeman. Judging people... that’s all up to someone else, but I have to say that I’ve enjoyed our talks very much, and I think I do understand.*

Columbo is at all times aware of his feigned ignorance, and keeps ahead with his pose, even in the face of his observable superiority. While he feigns his ignorance before Dr. Joan, the observable scenario progressively becomes available to the “lady in black”, who discovers with astonishment that he is more intelligent than she thought and that she has failed to keep the secret of her murder. In this example, an element of Socratic irony shows in the ironist’s pose, which gradually supplies relevant interpretive clues as the situation progresses. The epistemic scenario, the murderer’s belief that she is in a superior position, clashes with the realization that *Columbo* has managed to make her confess her crime. However, contrary to the basic use of Socratic irony, the purpose is not to make interlocutors realize that

they are more ignorant than they think, but simply to ensnare the culprit into a confession. Hence, although the basic features of the ironic use are kept, changes have been made with regard to the purpose of the ironic use.

Socratic irony can often be found in parents' conversations with their children. Let us take a situation where the parents have seen that their daughter Lilly has accidentally broken their precious blue china vase. The mother asks the daughter whether she knows where the vase is, arguing that she has been very absent-minded recently and does not know where she put it. Through a series of questions about the vase, the mother leads Lilly to confess that she has indeed broken the vase. The epistemic scenario (Lilly's belief that she knows more than her mother) clashes with what eventually becomes evident (Lilly's realization that her mother knew everything from the beginning). Contrary to the basic use, where the purpose was to guide the interlocutor to the truth, in later uses of Socratic irony, the aim is to extract information that is being intentionally hidden by the interlocutor but which the interrogator already knows.

In the realm of literature, one example of Socratic irony can be found in Atticus Finch's interrogatory to Bob and Mayella Ewell in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Tom Robins, an African American man, is being tried for the alleged rape of Mayella Ewell. Atticus Finch, the defense lawyer, cleverly interrogates Mayella Ewell and her father into confessing that their testimonies are incongruent. First of all, by making Bob Ewell write his name, Finch proves that, unlike Robins, who had a paralyzed right hand, he could have caused the bruises in Mayella's neck. Secondly, through a series of questions about her family and her relationship with her father, Mayella confesses that she has been deprived of schooling and that she is confined in a house taking care of her seven siblings and with no friends.

"You say you're nineteen," Atticus resumed. "How many sisters and brothers have you?" He walked from the window back to the stand.

"Seb'm," she said, and I wondered if they were all like the specimen I had seen the first day I started to school.

"You the eldest? The oldest?"

"Yes."

"How long has your mother been dead?"

"Don't know – long time."

"Did you ever go to school?"

"Read' n' write good as Papa yonder" (Lee, 1960/1982, p. 244)

"Miss Mayella," said Atticus, in spite of himself, "a nineteen-year-old girl like you must have friends. Who are you friends?"

The witness frowned as if puzzled. "Friends?" (Lee, 1960/1982, p. 245)

As Atticus's interrogatory advances, the questions become more personal, and he asks Mayella whether her father is nice to her, raising the question of whether he is respectful to her, and whether he beats her, which confirms his suspicion that the bruises he had enquired Bob Ewell about in the previous example could have been caused by a violent father.

“Do you love your father, Miss Mayella?” as his next.

“Love him, watcha mean?”

“I mean, is he good to you, is he easy to get along with?”

“He does tollable, ‘cept when –”

“Except when?”

[...]

“Except when he's drinking?” asked Atticus so gently that Mayella nodded.

(Lee, 1960/1982, p. 245)

Through the use of Socratic irony, Atticus Finch manages to guide Mayella to admit the truth, hence proving his position of superior wisdom and control. As the narrator explains: “Slowly but surely I began to see the pattern of Atticus's questions: from questions that Mr. Gilmer did not deem sufficiently irrelevant or immaterial to object to, Atticus was building up before the jury a picture of the Ewell's home life” (Lee, 1960/1982, p. 244). The ironist once more guides the interpreter into “giving birth” to the truth, in this case, such as in the example extracted from Columbo, one that they are in principle unwilling to share.

We observe that Socratic irony has been re-adapted by keeping the essential elements of the ironic use, although applied to a variety of contexts that do not necessarily involve a didactic context as in the basic use.

5.2.2.2 *Re-adapted rhetorical irony*

The simple and persuasive nature of rhetorical irony in the realm of politics has made this use of irony pervasive throughout history. Although rhetorical irony can sometimes be found in literary works, its place is more often than not the political sphere (Al-Hindawi and Kadhim, 2017). In fact, these authors claim that even present-day political speeches exploit the persuasive potential of irony. One example they provide is extracted from President Obama's speech about Governor Romney's electoral campaign in the United States.

I feel happy for the state of Wisconsin – you've had a lot of commercials about Governor Romney's sales pitch.

(Al-Hindawi and Kadhim, 2017, p. 29 [our emphasis])

In his speech, Barack Obama criticizes Romney's longstanding appearance on commercials, which he labels metaphorically a “sales pitch”. Obama's disparaging

remark aimed at gaining him more voters by drawing the audience's attention to Romney's purported empty marketing strategies. Obama's irony, although rhetoric, differs from Cicero's speech (see Section 5.2.1.2) in that, instead of referring to his enemy ironically (Rubrius was a man of *wonderful skill*), it refers to the audience of Romney's campaign and the effect his opponent's electoral campaign is having on the citizens.

Similarly, former United States President George W. Bush also used irony in one of his speeches to attack the Democrats.

Governor Romney and his allies in Congress tell us that somehow, we can lower our deficits – they say that the deficit is the most important thing. They say this is vital for our future. But when you ask the, all right, what's your plan – they say, well, we're first going to start by taking \$ 5 trillion out of the economy and giving it to folks like me and Mr. Romney, and then, somehow, *it's all going to create prosperity for the rest of you.*

(Al-Hindawi and Kadhim, 2017, p. 32–33, [our emphasis])

By saying “it's all going to create prosperity for the rest of you”, Bush is building a scenario that highlights the incongruity in the Democrats' words in order to convey the message that they are lying. This incongruity is built on a situational irony, where taking \$ 5 trillion out of the economic system in the United States clashes with the alleged Democrat promise that their government will create prosperity for American citizens. Bush's words point at this apparent irony in order to gain more voters. This is a point worth highlighting. Some cases of rhetoric irony are not mere cases of just verbal irony, since they embed their ironic echoes in reported situational irony. Evidently, reporters of situational irony use their report to make their audiences aware of their possibly misled assumptions about the people they want to disparage. Then, they use verbal irony by pretending to agree with the political opponent: in the final remark (*and then, somehow, it's all going to create prosperity for you*), *and then, somehow* has the same function as *yeah, right* in other examples of verbal irony (i.e., they serve as pointers to verbal irony). Let us note the possibility of replacing *and then, somehow* by an introductory *yeah, right*: [...] and *yeah, right, it's all going to create prosperity for the rest of you.*

It is not uncommon to find rhetorical irony in political speeches that are recreated in literary works where certain characters perform political roles. This is particularly common in the performing arts, such as theatrical plays or movies. Remember the example provided by Mark Anthony's funerary speech after Caesar's death in the hands of a group of conspirators led by his adoptive child Brutus, who he recurrently calls an honorable man, as we noted in Section 4.2. The emphasis placed on Brutus and the conspirators' good nature is ironic. At the beginning of the speech, Marc Anthony seems to praise Brutus's deeds. However, as the speech progresses, the repetition of the idea that Brutus is honorable, in its different

formulations, becomes a careful rebuttal of the belief that Caesar deserved to die because of his ambition. Instead, Marc Anthony claims that Caesar truly cared for the Roman people (“When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept / Ambition should be made of sterner stuff / Yet Brutus says he was ambitious”). The epistemic scenario (the people’s belief that Caesar deserved to die, and that Brutus and his accomplices are honorable men) clashes with the observable scenario as described by Marc Anthony (that Caesar cared for the Roman people and Brutus and the other conspirators are the ones to blame).

5.2.2.3 *Re-adapted satirical irony*

The presence of satirical irony in literature is ubiquitous throughout history and across cultures. The exploitation of irony as a tool to foster critical thinking through laughter has been widely used in literature, especially in contexts of political conflicts and turbulences, as is the case of Swift’s *A Modest Proposal*, where in order to expose the unfair treatment of British politics on Ireland, the narrator pretends to be a high-class Englishman who suggests serving Irish children as food for the English upper class to solve the famine (cf. Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano, 2019a) (see also Section 3.2.2.1). In Swift’s words:

I therefore humbly offer it to public consideration that of the 120,000 children already computed, 20,000 may be served for breed. (Swift, 1729/1996, p. 54)

Once more, the use of hyperbole is key in order to produce a more visible contrast between the epistemic scenario and the observable scenario. The epistemic scenario is scaffolded on the generalized British belief at the time that Irish people were worthless, which clashes with the author’s own opinion about his own country. The hyperbolized epistemic scenario serves the purpose of magnifying the content of the echo in order to make the unfair British treatment of Ireland more evident. The observable scenario stems from the audience’s knowledge about Swift’s background as an Irishman. The attitude of dissociation from this clash is parameterized as mockery and skepticism.

The Age of Enlightenment, which was a ground-breaking literary period, prompted the use of irony as a tool to show discontent and evidence the flaws of the European praise of reason. Contrary to the Romantic use of irony, which enhances the self-reflective element by introducing metafiction, the re-adapted use of satirical irony keeps its original hyperbolic element. Satire is used as a means of ridiculing ideological trends among the intellectuals of the time. In particular, Voltaire’s *Candide* (1759) (cf. Voltaire, 1995) satirizes the Theory of Optimism, which, following Leibniz’s ideas, claimed that all human suffering was but a part of a benevolent cosmic plan. The Theory of Optimism is embodied by Doctor Pangloss, *Candide*’s mentor, who indoctrinates his disciples by repeating the formula that everything

is “the best of all possible worlds”. Throughout the book, all sorts of unfortunate events occur to the protagonist. He witnesses the carnage of the Bulgar-Abar conflict, is caught in a tempest and an earthquake, his parents die, and undergoes severe penuries during the Inquisition. All these events, which are hyperbolized, build an observable scenario that clashes with the ideological tenets of the Theory of Optimism (epistemic scenario). Contrary to Swift’s *A Modest Proposal*, *Candide* displays both the epistemic and the observable scenarios in the narration. Both scenarios are hyperbolized, and the ideological premises of Optimism repeatedly clash with the actual situations where they do not prevent evil from happening to the protagonist (observable scenario).

Satirical irony has also been recurrently used in dystopian literature. A well-known example is Orwell’s *Animal Farm* (1945), a satirical tale completely nested within a fictional context, where the Soviet-era Stalinism is portrayed allegorically (cf. Orwell, 2008; see Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano, 2019a). Old Major, an old boar on the Manor farm represents philosopher Marx and Soviet political leader Lenin. He gathers the animals in the farm into rebellion against their abusive human masters, and under the command of two young pigs: Napoleon and Snowball, who stand for Stalin and Trotsky respectively. Once the rebellion has taken place and the animals have managed to expel the farmers from their farm, the animals take over the power. Both Snowball and Napoleon teach animals to read, write, and to follow the principles of animalism. However, eventually Snowball and Napoleon’s interests collide. Napoleon declares himself leader by taking credit for Snowball’s good ideas. The pigs start resembling humans and Napoleon ends up founding a party with his animal and human allies, while from outside nobody can distinguish between humans and pigs. Allegory and hyperbole are combined in this example to create a fictional world that is grounded in a distorted yet true image of reality. The epistemic scenario clashes with the historical reality (the observable scenario), which the author satirizes. The clash between the real and the ideal is made explicit by the plot itself, where the high ideals of the animal’s rebellion are in practice left aside, and the result is the same oppression the animals in the farm revolted against, just as, Orwell claimed, the Soviet Union had failed to fulfil its promise of freedom.

Similarly, and more recently, British television series *Black Mirror* has used satirical irony to draw the audience’s attention to the potential damage of new technologies in the future. One such instance is Joe Wright’s (2016) episode “Nosedive” (S3 E1), which portrays a society every aspect of which is controlled by the new technologies. Citizens are constantly being reviewed by their peers and are given more or fewer stars to their profile depending on how nice other people think they are. The greater the number of stars citizens get, the more social privileges they have access to. The other side of the coin is that citizens who are non-conformist or are not liked by others become social outcasts by being deprived of stars. As a

consequence of a series of unfortunate events, the protagonist's bad reviews cause her downfall into rejection. Differently from Swift or Orwell, who used satirical irony to criticize their current situation, Wright uses irony as a warning. "Nosedive" builds a fictional set where irony arises from the contrast between the widely accepted review-based social system in technological Western society (the epistemic scenario) and the hyperbolized drawbacks it may have in the future (the observable scenario).

5.2.2.4 *Re-adapted tragic irony*

After Ancient Greece and Rome, literary history has exploited the potential of the tragic use of irony to highlight the powerlessness of mortals in a variety of genres. Man is repeatedly portrayed as a daring but ignorant being who repeatedly challenges God and consequently receives a punishment. The didactic element in the tragic use of irony as a warning is kept throughout historical periods and literary genres, although it has not been kept as a central narrative argumentative element in all cases. Some genres, like children's fairytales have an explicit didactic structure, and often include a moral at the end of the story; some genres, like the novel, are less explicitly didactic.

Let us first analyze the use of tragic irony in the Grimm Brothers' tale *The Sleeping Beauty* (Ruiz de Mendoza and Lozano, 2020) (see also the preliminary insights in Section 2.4.1) (Grimm, and Grimm, 1972). In the fairytale we are presented with a wicked witch who casts a curse over a princess. Following the curse, the princess should inevitably die when she pricks her finger on a spindle. The monarchs, fearing the fate of their daughter, burn all the spindles in the kingdom in order to avoid any chance that the princess would come across a spindle to prick her finger on. However, the day comes when a spindle magically appears in front of the princess, who of course pricks her finger on it and falls into profound sleep. Like in *Oedipus the King*, the epistemic scenario is built on the prophecy, which states the will of a higher power. In this case, it is the witch's curse to the princess. The observable scenario, on the other hand, is built on the parent's attempts to avoid this prophecy, only to realize that no matter how hard they try, they will always be subjected to a higher power.

Although it is very common to find a prophecy that must be fulfilled, tragic irony can also be found in other contexts, where, although equally didactic, the observable scenario does not hinge on a previous warning but unfolds as the story advances. This is a very common use of tragic irony in fables and allegories. Let us take the Biblical tale of the Tower of Babel. According to the Bible, after the Flood, men defiantly decided to build a tower that would reach Heaven to be closer to God. As a response to the men's arrogance, God decides to punish them by confusing their languages. Without communication, men are unable to continue their

work and finish the tower. In the same way as in the Sophoclean tragedy or in Arachne's myth, the men in the Biblical tale challenge a superior power (epistemic scenario) and suffer a punishment as a result of their defiant behavior (observable scenario). The parameterized attitudinal element, once more, conveys a sense of inescapable fate.

A more recent example of the re-adapted use of tragic irony is Thomas Hardy's novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented*. In the story, Tess, the protagonist, falls prey to countless misfortunes while at all times being presented as an innocent woman. After Tess is first raped by the suitor her parents want her to marry, she loses her sickly child, who has to be buried with unbaptized infants because the parson is not allowed into Tess's family's cottage. Tess marries in love, but Alec, her husband, having learned about her rape, abandons her. She waits for him for years, until her rapist reappears and manages to convince her to become his lover under the pretext that her husband will never come back. However, Alec does come back. Tess then murders the rapist and escapes with Alec planning on building a new life together, until she is eventually found and executed. The novel ends with the phrase "Justice was done, and the President of the Immortals had ended his sport with Tess" (Hardy, 1891/1978, p. 489). Like Oedipus, Tess is an innocent mortal whose misery is explained to be caused by a supreme power or "the President of the Immortals". In Hardy's novel the godly origin of the protagonist's misfortune is not revealed until the end of the play, as opposed to the Sophoclean tragedy, where Oedipus's destiny is predicted by the oracle. The epistemic scenario (Tess's attempts to do what is right) clashes with her failure to reap the blessings of happiness that should arise from being good. Less evident than in Greek Tragedies or in the Grimm Brother's tale, in this case, the protagonist does not defy the gods or aims to challenge their power; instead, she is an ordinary mortal who, despite her innocence, is powerless in the hands of fate.

5.2.2.5 *Re-adapted dramatic irony*

A variety of genres have used dramatic irony with the purpose of creating surprise, provoking laughter, enhancing the tragic element of the story, or enriching the link between the audience by giving the spectator a privileged perspective. As a situational use of irony, it has not only kept its original theatrical application, but, more recently, it has also been exploited in other visual and performative media such as film or graphic novels.

One example of the re-adaptation of the dramatic use of irony is Shakespearean drama. Both in tragedies and comedies dramatic irony is recurrently used in order to either provoke laughter at social and political aspects of the time or to enhance the tragic element in the story. For instance, in the same way as in Mercury's aside in *Amphitruo*, the tragic ending in *Othello* is set from the beginning, available to the audience but not the protagonist. In *Othello*, a Moorish military leader of the

Venetian army is tricked by his servant Iago into believing that his beloved wife Desdemona is cheating on him with Cassio, one of his comrades. Othello blindly trusts Iago, who pretends to be a trustworthy friend when he is with Othello, but who voices his real intentions through the asides. One example of the re-adaptation of dramatic irony in an aside is Iago's monologue "How am I the villain?"

And what's he then that says I play the villain?
 When this advice is free I give and honest
 Probal to thinking and indeed the course
 To win the Moor again? For 'tis most easy
 Th' inclining Desdemona to subdue
 In any honest suit. She's framed as fruitful
 As the free elements. And then for her
 To win the Moor, were to renounce his baptism,
 All seals and symbols of redeemed sin,
 His soul is so en fettered to her love,
 That she may make, unmake, do what she list,
 Even as her appetite shall play the god
 With his weak function. How am I then a villain
 To counsel Cassio to this parallel course,
 Directly to his good? Divinity of hell!
 When devils will the blackest sins put on
 They do suggest at first with heavenly shows
 As I do now. For whiles this honest fool
 Pies Desdemona to repair his fortune
 And she for him pleads strongly to the Moor,
 I'll pour pestilence into his ear. (Shakespeare, 1604/1994, p. 86–88)

In the monologue, Iago reveals his true intentions to overthrow Othello (the Moor) by using Desdemona and Cassio as puppets. This information is never revealed to any of the characters. However, from the beginning, the audience knows Iago's evil intentions but from their role as a passive interpreter they can do nothing to stop the tragedy from unfolding. Iago's real intentions (the epistemic scenario) clash with Othello's opinion of him (observable scenario).

In the previously mentioned example of *Romeo and Juliet*, the two protagonists' death is a clear example of the re-adaptation of dramatic irony to enhance the tragic effect of the ending of the lovers' romance. Falling prey to their families' rage and in the midst of the trouble Romeo and Juliet's love has caused, Juliet drinks a potion that appears to kill her, although she is only in deep sleep. When Romeo finds her, he believes she has committed suicide. Immediately, he gets hold of some real poison and drinks it. Juliet then wakes from her sleep to find that Romeo has killed himself and, out of despair, stabs herself to death with his dagger. The audience

knows at all times that Juliet is not actually dead, but asleep, and that when she wakes up, Juliet will find her lover dead. The epistemic scenario, which again is based on the audience's knowledge of the real situation, clashes with Romeo's belief that Juliet has taken her life.

Another context re-adaptation for dramatic irony is provided by film, where, as in the case of theatre, the spectator is a witness to a series of performed actions. The movie *Roman Holiday* is articulated around the dramatic use of irony (Section 5.2.1.5). Princess Anne is at all times aware of her identity as a princess although she pretends not to be one, and her identity remains secret until Mr. Bradley recognizes her on the newspaper. Until the very end of the story, Mr. Bradley and the photographer pretend to ignore Anne's identity and act as mere friends. As the story unfolds, the spectators know that Anne thinks that she is safe under anonymity, but they also know that Mr. Bradley and the photographer are taking advantage of this misunderstanding. In this case, dramatic irony does not serve a humorous or tragic purpose but is rather a resource for mere entertainment. The same lack of pre-determined parameterization can be found in the Pixar movie *Toy Story*, where the toys are alive only when humans are not present. The spectators have a privileged position, since they have access to more information than the humans in the story. Dramatic irony in this movie is only used to justify the lack of plausibility of the story. It neither acts as a narrative device of the kind found in *Roman Holiday* nor does it serve the purpose of developing the characteristics of a genre, as in the case of Shakespearean drama.

Finally, dramatic irony has also been used in narration through static images, as is the case of graphic novels or comics, normally with a humorous purpose. On the cover of a *Mort & Phil* comic book, the two weakly secrete agents are hiding behind a wall, ready to beat a thief that they expect to be about to turn around the corner. However, the image shows that they are unaware that, instead of the thief, they are about to punch a strong-looking Superman in the face. The comic effect arises from the clash between the two men's expectations about easily beating the thief coming around the corner (observable scenario), and the full picture where they will be confronted with someone much stronger than them, who will shatter their expectations (epistemic scenario).

5.2.2.6 *Re-adapted metafictional irony*

Chaucer's incursions into the ironic use of metafiction to parody certain fictional literary genres was later taken up by other authors, one of them being Miguel de Cervantes. In *Don Quixote* (1605) we find two layers of metafictional irony (Cervantes, 2005). To begin with, following Chaucer's precedent, the novel is a parody of chivalric romances that criticizes this genre and its readership (see Section 5.2.1.6). The protagonist, Alonso Quijano, an avid reader of chivalric

romances, deludes himself into believing that he is a knight-errant who should fight evil and rescue a princess to win her love. Under the name of Don Quixote, Alonso Quijano undertakes this quest accompanied by Sancho Panza, a farmer Don Quixote believes to be his squire. Throughout the novel, Don Quixote's and Sancho Panza's visions clash. During their travels the two protagonists are constantly faced with situations that Don Quixote takes to be different episodes of his quest (this is the epistemic scenario that parodically echoes people's liking of chivalric romances), whereas Sancho Panza entertains a contrasting realistic vision of the same events (the observable scenario as seen by the author). The contrast between the two perspectives brings up the ridicule nature of chivalric romances as an absurd literary genre whose fantasy-like stories do more harm than good to their readers (as they do to Don Quixote). Cervantes repeatedly confronts the ideas of his time on chivalric romances (which give rise to a variety of epistemic scenarios) with the real world (the observable scenarios) to cause his readers to dissociate themselves from the assumptions of this genre.

Secondly, Cervantes introduces metafictional irony to make it evident to his readers that what they are reading is fiction. In order to do so, the author arranges the events in the story so that Don Quixote finds a chivalric romance with the same title as the book where he is a fictional character, but which, in this case, has been written by a Muslim historian called Cide Hamete Benengeli. The introduction of a fictional novel to which the protagonist belongs (epistemic scenario) draws the reader's attention to the fact that what he is reading is a fictional work (observable scenario). However, Cervantes takes one step further and makes his fictional character (Don Quixote) find the book about himself. In so doing, the author expects Don Quixote himself –who, like a parodic version of the reader, enjoys reading chivalric novels– to realize that the worlds created by such a fiction are not real.

Although we can already find examples of the metafictional use of irony in the Middle Ages and later on in the early 17th century, this use of irony was only popularized in the early 18th century–Germany under the label *Romantic irony*, where it became a tool for Romantic philosophy to capture the feeling of dissociation and helplessness of man in the universe. Irony ceases to be labelled a linguistic resource and becomes a vital attitude where artists dissociate themselves from the world in which they live (Thorlby, 1988). The artist is simultaneously the craftsperson of a literary text, but also, like his/her characters, a puppet of God's plan. In spite of the philosophical tone given to metafictional irony in Romanticism, the use has remained essentially the same (i.e., the clash takes place between an epistemic scenario where the reader believes that fiction is real, and the observable scenario, which contains the author or narrator's unveiling of the true nature of fiction by introducing remarks about the creative process). Byron provides an instance of this ironic use in his version of the myth of Don Juan. In *Don Juan* we find an alternation

between chapters that narrate the story of the famous womanizer, and other sections where the narrator disserts about how the text was written. In the following excerpt, the author gives the reader information about the storyteller's nationality:

Our friend the storyteller, at some distance with a small elderly audience, is supposed to tell his story without being much moved by the musical hilarity at the other end of the village green. The reader is further requested to suppose him (to account for his knowledge of English) either an Englishman settled in Spain, or a Spaniard who had travelled in England. (Byron, 1819/1996, p. 39)

The information given by the author of the fiction to the reader and his request to expect the character to be fluent in English clashes with the previous chapter in the novel, where the story of Don Juan is being narrated.

A different purpose of metafictional irony is the subversion of literary or artistic conventions to claim that these should be replaced by more modern ones. The clash between the reader's previous knowledge of what literature should be like and the novelties shown by the author triggers the interpreter's challenge to the artistic *status quo*. Laurence Sterne's novel *The Life and Adventures of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* uses metafictional irony to experiment with the conventions of the novel as a literary genre. In the novel, the protagonist narrates his own life story in a humorous and playful fashion, subverting not only formal conventions of the novel (e.g., one of the pages is left blank, another one with only a couple of letters) but also its content (e.g., the novel includes explicit sexual allusions, as well as politically controversial statements). Metafictional irony contributes to this artistic subversion by initially informing readers that they are reading a novel, and later explicitly stating that alterations (e.g., "I have so complicated and involved the digressive and progressive moments [...] that the machine, in general, has been kept a-going") have been implemented on purpose.

– This is vile work. – For which reason, from the beginning of this, you see, I have constructed the main work and the adventitious parts of it with such inter-sections, and have so complicated and involved the digressive and progressive movements, one wheel within another, that the whole machine, in general, has been kept a-going; – and, what's more, it shall be kept a-going these forty years, if it pleases the fountain of health to bless me so long with life and good spirits. (Sterne, 1759/1996, p. 22)

The clash, in this example, arises from the fact that readers already know that they are reading fiction. The conventions of the genre that readers may know from previous experience (epistemic scenario) contrast with the experimental changes the author lists (observable scenario).

Sterne's use of irony set a precedent for the use of metafictional irony made in Postmodernism, the quintessentially ironic artistic period on account of the role it

assigns to irony as a way of revisiting the past critically (Eco in Nicol, 2002, p. 111). Postmodernism uses irony in order to reexamine history and provide a critical perspective on it (cf. Hutcheon's *Politics of Postmodernism*, 1988). This is carried out by giving the reader an explicitly revised version of history where gender or race relations are altered (observable scenario), which is opposed to the traditional view the reader may have (epistemic scenario). This can be done from a content point of view, or from a formal point of view (metafictional irony). In terms of content, Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad* (Atwood, 2005) presents Penelope's point of view of her years of waiting for her husband Ulysses in Ithaca from 21st century Hades. The feminist perspective of the novel emphasizes Penelope's struggle to keep the kingdom afloat while her husband was away, and her strategies to keep the suitors away from her while being faithful to her husband. Metafictional irony, however, is drawn from the postmodern revision of literary genres and the processes of creation and interpretation of literature. In his novel *If on a winter's night a traveler*, Italo Calvino divides the narration between odd-numbered passages and even-numbered passages. In the former, he addresses readers and gives them detailed instructions on how they should be reading the book, as if they became characters in the story. In the latter, the novel develops a story about the protagonist's relationship with Ludmilla, a woman he meets at a bookstore. The odd-numbered passages, narrated in the second person, are clear examples of metafictional irony. Like Sterne or Byron, Calvino makes readers aware of the fact that they are reading fiction (the observable scenario) by introducing metafictional remarks. The epistemic scenario, once more, is the readers' belief that the story they are reading is real and not a made-up product crafted by a writer:

You are about to begin reading Italo Calvino's new novel, *If on a winter's night a traveller*. Relax. Concentrate. Dispel every other thought. Let the world around you fade. Best to close the door; the TV is always on in the next door. Tell the others right away, "No, I don't want to watch TV!" Raise your voice – they won't hear you otherwise – "I'm reading! I don't want to be disturbed!" Maybe they haven't heard you, with all that racket; speak louder, yell: "I'm beginning to read Italo Calvino's new novel!"
(Calvino, 1979/1998, p. 3)

Finally, as a type of communicated irony, the metafictional use of irony is not limited to its verbal form. Visually narrated and multimodally narrated irony have also been exploited. An example of multimodally narrated metafictional irony is Art Spiegelman's graphic novel *Maus* (1991), which portrays the prosecution of the Jewish community during the 40s in Nazi Germany as lived by the artist's father Vladek. *Maus* tells Spiegelman's grandfather's story in the comic format, combining images and text. Throughout the narration, metafictional sections are inserted into the comic. These scenes feature the artist in his studio, working on the graphic

novel the reader is reading, and often include remarks about how it was written. For instance, the chapter “Time Flies” is devoted to the artist’s remembrance of how he collected the data from his father and include bubbles where the author alternates between the narration of Vladek’s story (the epistemic scenario) and his own story and trajectory of the graphic novel (observable scenario). The artist, like the reader, dissociates him/herself from the fictional story, knowing that the graphic product is nothing but a crafted story.

Vladek died of a congestive heart failure on August 18, 1982... Françoise and I stayed with him in the Catskills back in August 1979. // Vladek started working as a tinman in Auschwitz in the Spring of 1944... I started working on this page at the very end of February 1979. // In May 1987 Françoise and I are expecting a baby... Between May 16, 1944 and May 24, 1944 over 100,000 Hungarian Jews were gassed in Auschwitz // *In September 1986, after 8 years of work, the first part of Maus was published. It was a critical and commercial success.*

(Spiegelman, 1996, p. 41 [our emphasis])

5.3 Conclusion

This final analytical chapter has been articulated around the different uses of irony according to the purpose of their production. Taking literary criticism as a starting point, we have made a distinction between basic and re-adapted ironic uses, where the former are original manifestations of the phenomenon, and the latter, developments of those original uses. A classification of ironic uses highlights the relevance of socio-historical factors and the cultural circumstances that surround the ironic act. By analyzing ironic uses we acknowledge the role of these factors in the production and interpretation of irony. We also argue that there is a limited number of ironic uses that evolve over time, and that ironic uses that have sometimes been considered separate from previous uses are nothing but developments of their original forms. We have listed and explained six uses of irony: (1) Socratic irony, (2) rhetorical irony, (3) satirical irony, (4) tragic irony, (5) dramatic irony, and (6) metafictional irony, and we have illustrated these uses in both their basic and their re-adapted forms through the extensive analysis of examples from both literary and non-literary sources. We conclude that irony can be classified according to its purpose, which determines its form, and that there is a limited number of uses of irony available. These uses may be used over time in different socio-cultural contexts or develop into re-adapted ones to account for socio-historical changes or new communicative media.

Conclusions

6.1 A summary of findings

Throughout this study we have argued for an approach to irony that bridges gaps among disciplines and solves controversies between conflicting approaches, in search for an integrated framework that is analytically productive for all examples of both verbal and situational irony regardless of the nature of their source. We have also defended the need for a new classification of irony that can account for any example of irony and have examined the elements that form the structure of irony. Finally, we have provided a classification of uses of irony and explained their possible developments according to the evolution of their socio-cultural context. We believe that the analysis carried out in this study is a theoretically solid starting point to further analyze irony in a variety of contexts. For this reason, in this chapter we will also suggest some potential future lines of research. We started from the observation that the attention given to irony by different disciplines has been uneven and isolated. In this context, we have argued for an integrated approach to irony that is capable of explaining both verbal and situational irony, one that can account for the nature of its attitudinal element, and that contemplates the role of the socio-cultural context. We have also challenged previous classifications of irony and advanced that the present study will provide a new one. In this connection, we have argued that the cognitive approach proves a particularly adequate starting point to analyze irony. We have also argued in favor of the qualitative approach and defends the reasons why it is appropriate to apply to the study of irony. The examples of irony have been collected from different sources and historical moments in order to formulate both high-level, broad-ranging, linguistic generalizations and fine-grained descriptions that can then be accommodated into a broader framework of theoretical principles.

Our proposal has acknowledged the multiplicity of disciplines that have shown an interest in irony and highlighting the main analytical findings of the most prominent schools in each discipline. We have noted that disciplines such as philosophy or literary theory have produced studies of irony that focus on the interpreter, that take the socio-cultural context into account as a key element in the production and interpretation of irony. These disciplines typically draw their conclusions from the

use authors make of irony in linguistically and conceptually complex literary or philosophical texts. On the other hand, approaches developed by disciplines such as pragmatics, psycholinguistics, and AI have traditionally shown more concern with the mechanisms that underlie irony, typically showing more interest in the ironist and devoting little effort to the analysis of the socio-cultural context. We have furthermore noted that, even though these disciplines have provided insights into complementary aspects of irony, the lack of dialogue between them has resulted in too many isolated studies that do not take each other into account. Hence, approaches to irony remain incomplete due to the failure to acknowledge developments carried out through the analytical tools of other disciplines.

We have strongly argued for the need for an integrated approach that can account for both verbal and situational irony. After an overview of the main previous attempts to produce integrated approaches to irony, we have proposed our own set of theoretical pre-requisites based on the notions of pretended agreement and of epistemic and observable scenarios. On the basis of the approach to irony outlined in Ruiz de Mendoza (2017a), which incorporates the notion of echo, taken from Relevance Theory, into Cognitive Linguistics, we have argued that irony consists in a clash between an epistemic and an observable scenario, out of which arises the attitudinal element in irony. The notion of pretended agreement solves the controversy between Relevance Theory and Pretense Theory. We claim that in all examples of verbal irony we find the ironist's pretended agreement with what someone is attributed to have said or thought. This pretense is meant to be detected by the interpreter. We furthermore note that the notion of echo is subsidiary to that of pretended agreement: an echo is one possible way of forming the epistemic scenario in verbal irony. The epistemic scenario, on the other hand, is a category that can be found invariably in verbal and situational irony and covers whatever knowledge is necessary to interpret irony as such. Additionally, in this chapter we propose a new typology of irony. After surveying previous typologies of irony, we propose a distinction between communicated and non-communicated irony. The first item of the classification covers verbal irony, but also visual and multimodal irony. Non-communicated irony, which is equivalent to the more traditional notion of situational irony, can be framed or not within a communicative context. It can be either narrated or performed.

In the analytical sections of this book, we have dealt with the epistemic and the observable scenarios, the structural elements in irony, and the uses of irony respectively. We have first discussed the formation and manifestation of the epistemic and the observable scenarios in verbal and situational irony. We have emphasized the points of convergence and divergence in both types of irony, and in the case of verbal irony, we have listed and explained echo-building strategies that may be involved in irony (elaboration of cultural and sociohistorical references, echoic

compounding, echoic chains, cumulative echoes, and multi-operational echoes). We have furthermore provided a classification of options of the interaction between the epistemic and the observable scenarios in verbal and situational irony. We have concluded that, among other factors, the combinations differ in situational and verbal irony, owing to the absence of the ironist and the pretended agreement in the former.

We have outlined five cases of interaction in the case of verbal irony: (1) an implicit echo and an observable scenario derivable from the context, (2) an explicit echo and an explicit observable scenario, (3) an implicit echo and an explicit observable scenario, (4) an implicit echo and an implicit observable scenario, and finally, (5) an echo activated through an ironic index.

In the case of situational irony, we have listed and explained three possible scenarios: (1) an epistemic scenario and an observable scenario derived from the context, (2) an epistemic scenario and an explicit observable scenario where the former is derived from the perceiver's world knowledge while the latter is evident for the perceiver, and (3) the existence of delayed situational ironies, where the perceiver gradually becomes aware of accumulating (observable) evidence that counteracts the epistemic scenario.

This chapter has furthermore explained the reasons behind our proposal to use chained reasoning schemas to explain irony, whether verbal or situational.

We have then addressed the question of the elements that form the structure of irony: the ironist, the interpreter, and the target. We have distinguished between solidary and non-solidary ironists, and naïve and non-naïve interpreters. The classificatory criterion for the former is the degree of helpfulness of the ironist towards the interpreter. Interpreters may be naïve or non-naïve depending on their knowledge and ability to detect the clash between the epistemic and the observable scenarios. We have also explained the possible combinations between ironist and interpreter types, and the degree of felicity of the ironic outcome. This chapter has also included a classification of target types.

Finally, we have carried out an analysis of different uses of irony according to their purpose. We have claimed that the number of ironic uses is limited, contrary to some assumptions, and that ironic uses that have often been considered completely new, are in fact developments of previous forms as a consequence of a change in the socio-cultural context. We have thus distinguished between basic and re-adapted uses of irony. Basic uses are Socratic irony, rhetorical irony, satirical irony, tragic irony, dramatic irony, and metafictional irony. These can have re-adapted counterparts. All the uses identified in this chapter have been illustrated through the analysis of a large number of examples from literary and non-literary sources. This analysis has shed light on the role of the historical and socio-cultural context in the use and development of irony throughout history and across disciplines.

6.2 Theoretical implications

In Chapter 1 we laid out the main research questions that have guided the present study, and we wondered whether our study could provide theoretical developments of previous studies of irony. Let us overview the main findings of this study in relation to the questions that have motivated our research. This will enable the reader to assess the relevance of this research.

1. To begin with, we have asked ourselves whether irony was a unified phenomenon that could be defined in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions, or whether there was a diversity of language uses that bear similarities to one another that could be considered ironic. We have claimed that these necessary and sufficient conditions for verbal irony were (1) the speaker's pretended agreement with real or attributed beliefs or thoughts, (2) an observable situation that manifestly clashed against the pretended agreement, (3) and an inference on the speaker's dissociation from the pretended agreement. Through the analysis of various literary and non-literary examples we have provided evidence that these conditions are solid theoretical principles that apply not only to verbal irony, but to situational irony as well.
2. Secondly, we wondered whether irony could be explained by means of a unified theoretical framework capable of bringing together relevant aspects of different approaches to address the multifaceted nature of this phenomenon. For example, our study has argued that the analytical divergences between Relevance Theory and Pretense Theory may be solved through an approach that combines the notions of ironic echo and pretense, both exclusive to verbal irony. However, our proposed solution addresses situational irony as well. This has been done by defining irony as a clash between the speaker's knowledge (*the epistemic scenario*) and reality (*the observable scenario*), out of which the attitudinal element arises inferentially. The validity of this proposal has been illustrated by examples of irony extracted from a wide variety of sources. We have furthermore applied this approach to account for all conventional ironic uses as discussed in the literature on the topic over centuries. We have treated such uses as no more than specific exploitations of irony intended to accomplish different socio-cultural purposes which can be examined historically. These uses, we have shown, can be best addressed by means of the integrated approach we propose.
3. Our third question has been whether verbal and situational irony, in spite of their differences, could be explained with reference to the unified framework, and which analytical categories are common to both types of irony. We have

concluded that irony, both in its verbal and situational manifestations, is essentially determined by the attitudinal element arising from the clash between an epistemic and an observable scenario. In spite of the heavier focus of linguistics on verbal irony and on the differences between verbal and situational irony, we have found that the two types are not more than different materializations of the same phenomenon. In both cases, the epistemic scenario is drawn from the speaker's certainty about a state of affairs (be it formed through an echo or not), and the observable scenario from the situation that is evident to the speaker.

4. In the fourth place, we have wondered whether, since the range of situations where ironic meaning can be studied is broad, it could be systematized, and how. The examples collected have provided a wide variety of communicative and socio-cultural contexts that have made us realize that the dichotomy of verbal vs. situational irony is not sufficiently accurate to explain the complex variety of contexts where irony may be found. We thus, propose a distinction between *communicated* and *non-communicated irony*, where verbal irony is a subcategory of the former, and situational irony is the equivalent of the latter. Communicated irony can be either verbal, visual or multimodal, and situational irony can be framed or not within a communicative context.

We have furthermore enquired into the correlation between text and context in producing ironic effects. We have concluded that the historical and socio-cultural context of irony must also be taken into account. Particularly, examples of irony in literary works and literary approaches to irony have emphasized this point. This aspect of the phenomenon has often been neglected in linguistics, which is more focused on analytical than socio-cultural issues. The socio-cultural and historical contexts, however, shed light on a variety of factors that explain why certain ironies are more or less felicitous, or more or less successful.

5. Finally, since irony is a pragmatic phenomenon, our last question was whether it is sensitive to an analysis in terms of felicity conditions, and how could such conditions be addressed. Our study has inevitably involved looking at the interpreter in relation to the context. This has yielded a classification of ironist and interpreter types. Ironists can be taken as *solidary* or *non-solidary communicators* depending on the clues they provide for the interpreter to engage in the ironic act, and interpreters can be *naïve* and *non-naïve* depending on their knowledge about the epistemic scenario produced by the ironist. These categories are gradable and may be combined, producing a classification of communicative situations that take into account both the ironist and the interpreter.

6.3 Prospects

The present study has advocated a unified treatment of irony that brings together analytical tools from several traditions in linguistics, psycholinguistics, philosophy, rhetoric, and literary studies. Although the unified approach put forward in the previous pages has shown its analytical strength (i.e., its strong descriptive and explanatory adequacy), it has done so by addressing a necessarily limited volume of examples and no attention has been paid to the balance between the different sources. It is necessary to enrich the analytical database still further and to do so in an internally homogenous way to ensure the correct representation of different genres and discourse types. There are genres, like sitcoms, where irony is constant, while in others, the presence of irony is more or less likely depending on author, age, and literary style. One question that comes to mind is whether it is necessary or not to scan a source for all possible cases of irony or some may be discarded for the sake of balance across sources. The answer to this question is very delicate, since the criteria to discard examples are not self-evident. So, the best possible strategy could be to let each genre and discourse type speak for itself and produce as many examples as possible. This broad array of examples from each source could be argued to result in representativeness imbalances across genres and discourse types, but very likely this is not a drawback since it would allow for in-depth analyses of the various manifestations of irony within genres and discourse types. Such fine-grained analyses would be highly beneficial to understand the following:

1. The role of irony in certain kinds of discourse, genres, or forms of language use in general.
2. The differences in uses of irony across the various genres, discourse types, and uses of language.

This kind of work has to be done with a clear idea in mind of the nature and scope of each area in which irony is going to be investigated. Sometimes, elements typically belonging to one genre may be imported into others, and this could potentially affect the presence of irony in some manifestations of the genre in question. We have tried to make provision for situations like this in our classification of ironic uses into basis and re-adapted uses, but more work may be needed, with a more detailed discussion of social, cultural, and historical variables. In any event, the present unified approach has laid the groundwork for any future analytical endeavor where different uses are taken into account.

The unified treatment has found relevant convergences between situational and verbal irony, thus breaking away from the analytical tradition that has treated the two kinds of irony as separate phenomena. This is a path that should be pursued

and tested more extensively against a larger amount of data. What is more, in our treatment of situational irony, we have made provision for its communicated use. It is not verbal irony because verbal irony makes use of language to produce ironic impact, but it makes situational irony communicatively relevant. Because of this special nature and its impact for literary analysis, those examples of situational irony that are framed within a communicative context should be studied in greater depth in connection with what basic and re-adapted uses of irony, like tragic and dramatic irony. More specifically, it would be necessary to characterize genres and subgenres in terms of their treatment of epistemic and observable scenarios (e.g., what techniques the author uses to build them) and the way they are made to clash. This approach would align literary theory with communication theory and Cognitive Linguistics.

In this proposal, psycholinguistic research has been taken into account in only an incidental way as was necessary for the purposes of argumentation. However, the amount of psycholinguistic research that has been carried on irony is worthy of more consideration. Psycholinguistic experiments take into account research variables that could be interpreted also from the point of view of a scenario-based unified approach. For example, in recent work, Giora et al. (2015), and Becker and Giora (2018), give empirical evidence that the default interpretation of a negative utterance is sarcastic and the non-default is literal. Conversely, the default interpretation of an affirmative utterance is literal and the non-default sarcastic. For example, *Alertness is not her main attribute* is preferably interpreted as sarcasm, while *Alertness is her main attribute* does not take such a default value. We need specific situations for these interpretations to be reversed. This finding is consistent with our model but it is not directly derivable from it. That is, in our model, what the speaker says is considered ironic if there are reasons for us to assume that it is presented as if it were in agreement with what someone thinks or has said previously, while there are contextual evidences that it is not. But there is no provision for expressions or patterns of expressions that carry an intrinsic ironic load, whether cancelable or not. This is an issue that has to be investigated from a constructionist perspective. Very likely, there are constructions bearing a greater irony-carrying potential. We have seen some in connection to our discussion of sarcasm (Section 4.6.2). These could be some others:

X is not (precisely/exactly) the most Y (That's not precisely the most entertaining movie in the world)

X is not particularly Y (George is not particularly good at mathematics)

X is not really the (very) best/most Y (That's not really the very best idea in the market).

Constructions of this kind are specialized in constructing observable scenarios. Our unified approach does take into account the existence of ironic expressions where the pretended agreement is implicit and the observable scenario is explicit. However, it has not yet dealt with the conventionalization issue except for the case of ironic pointers (Section 5.1.1.1). Psycholinguistic research can be used to establish degrees of entrenchment of these and other constructions and perhaps assign them an ironic potential.

Another area in which psycholinguistic research is necessary to improve the unified scenario-based account is found in the domain of complexity. We have dealt with complex ironic echoes from an examination of the values that could potentially be attributed to their uses from a communicative perspective. For example, some cases of complex echo have a cumulative effect that can be used for communicative impact. But complex echoes should be detectable in experimental research by investigating them in connection to reaction times and their meaning impact should be measurable on a scale. The present development of the issue of complexity arises only from our corpus data so far. A future expansion of the corpus may yet reveal other complexity patterns or sub-patterns. These would be the object of experimental research too.

We have offered a basic typology of ironist and interpreter types together with an analysis of how the different types relate producing identifiable ironic situations and communicative results. This work should be linked more systematically to the topic of ironic uses and the felicity of ironic utterances. Again, this expanded research needs a larger corpus of examples, which may allow the analyst to set up a more refined classification of ironist and interpreter types. But the resulting account will increase the delicacy of the present account, which will thus align the elements of the ironic event with the communicative potential of ironic utterances and uses. This kind of study may have an additional benefit in the field of experimental research on default interpretations. So far, default interpretations have been correlated only for analytical situations involving certain constructional patterns. But the default interpretations are more than an all-or-none matter. Interpreters are very likely faced with some situations where they assume that the ironic load is clearer than in others. In other words, it would be necessary to correlate ironist and interpreter types not only with broad-range communicative results, but also with specific constructional patterns thus producing a testable account of default interpretations of clear cases of ironic meaning versus non-default interpretations of degrees of likelihood of ironic load.

Finally, it should be theoretically feasible to determine licensing factors and constraints on ironic uses. There is work of this kind carried out by Ruiz de Mendoza and Galera (2014) for metaphor, metonymy, and hyperbole. Among

them, the *Extended Invariance Principle* – a development of Lakoff's (1990) *Invariance Principle* – and the *Correlation Principle* have been posited as common to all figures of speech. This happens because these are generic cognitive-communicative principles. Thus, the Extended Invariance Principle is a qualification on the nature of mappings: only homologous conceptual structure can be placed in correspondence. In metaphor, tops map onto tops, bottoms onto bottoms, middle parts onto middle parts (think of the top of a tree being mapped onto a person's head, the trunk onto the body, and the roots onto the legs and feet). In hyperbole, the source domain is postulated to contain an unrealistically distorted version of the target, where understanding the target in terms of the source produces the exaggeration effect and a feeling of intensified emotional impact. For example, in *This suitcase weighs a ton*, the relationship in the source between the speaker and his suitcase, where the former feels frustrated about the weight of the latter, is preserved in the mapping to the real-world target situation Ruiz de Mendoza, 2014b, Peña and Ruiz de Mendoza, 2017. In irony there are correspondences between what we call the pretended agreement scenario and the observable scenario where the latter cancels out elements of the former. In turn, the Correlation Principle is a qualification on the nature of the source domain of a mapping. For example, in metaphor, the meaning structure of the target together with its associated meaning implications dictates the kind of source domain that is required, i.e., one that contains parallel structure and meaning implications. In the case of LOVE IS A JOURNEY, a target domain containing a fast-progressing relationship calls for a fast vehicle in the source. Following this logic, we can speculate that, in irony, the correlation of the observable scenario with the pretended agreement (or epistemic) scenario should contain maximally opposed elements and meaning implications. Then, there are figure-specific constraints (Ruiz de Mendoza and Galera, 2014). In the case of hyperbole, one of them is *scalar symmetry*, which captures the tendency of some cases of understatement to be based on symmetric parts of a scale; for example, *a bit* is interpreted as 'a lot'. The question is whether irony also has its own figure-specific constraints. Since many verbal irony uses are based on echoic mention, constraints on the formation of ironic echoes should be investigated. A possible constraint would be the quality of the echo. We have seen before that partial and inaccurate echoes may have a smaller ironic potential than better formed echoes. This observation likely captures an irony-specific constraint. If we think in terms of epistemic and observable scenarios, any qualification on their construction and interaction would set up figure-specific requirements. Thus, the epistemic and observable scenarios should share as much non-central corresponding structure as possible while containing opposed core structure. Whichever the exact situation, an analysis of constraints on irony needs to take into account not only the basic aspects of the

formation of the contributing scenarios, but also phenomena of complexity and of implicitness and explicitness; and all this in relation to a general theory of constraints for all figures of speech, which is still a pending task, although partial work can be found in Ruiz de Mendoza (2020b).

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This book adopts a broad cognitive-pragmatic perspective on irony which sees ironic meaning as the result of complex inferential activity arising from conflicting conceptual scenarios. This view of irony is the basis for an analytically productive integrative account capable of bridging gaps among disciplines and of recontextualizing and solving some controversies. Among the topics covered in its pages, readers will find an overview of previous linguistic and non-linguistic approaches. They will also find definitional and taxonomic criteria, an exhaustive exploration of the elements of the ironic act, and a study of their complex forms of interaction. The book also explores the relationship between irony, banter and sarcasm, and it studies how irony interacts with other figurative uses of language. Finally, the book spells out the conditions for “felicitous” irony and re-interprets traditional ironic types (e.g., Socratic, rhetoric, satiric, etc.), in the light of the unified approach it proposes.

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