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Metapragmatics of Humor

Current research trends

EDITED BY

Leonor Ruiz-Gurillo

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Metapragmatics of Humor

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Volume 14

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Exploring metapragmatics of humor

Leonor Ruiz-Gurillo

University of Alicante, GRIALE Research Group

1. Why metapragmatics of humor?

This book contributes to a new area in the pragmatics of humor: its conception as a metapragmatic ability. Therefore, it may carry out a reflection on metapragmatics. In general terms, the main body of research about metapragmatics stresses that this is a metalanguage process – in other words, a reflexive activity of language (Lucy 1993b). If metapragmatics is seen as a type of metalinguistics, the large number of approaches must be organized into two different conceptions of metapragmatics:

1. Metapragmatics is related to pragmatic code.
2. Metapragmatics is related to pragmatic ability.

The first sense of metapragmatics “refers to linguistic signs that are about the pragmatic code, about how to interpret the extrasemantic meanings encoded in speech” (Urban 2006: 90). This point of view based on communication theory and the concept of metalanguage¹ (Jakobson 1960) is supported by Silverstein (1993), who understands semantics as a subset of pragmatics and consequently sees metasemantics as a subset of metapragmatics (see Lucy 1993b: 17). Indeed, pragmatics and metapragmatics are involved in the grammatical structure of language (Silverstein 1993) and characterize the *contextualization clues* to discourse (Gumperz 1982: 131). These approaches from anthropological linguistics and sociolinguistics mainly focus on the relationship between power and metalanguage (Mertz and Yowel 2003: 5).

A broader sense of metapragmatics has been developed despite this conception, since pragmatics is understood as a perspective involving psychological, cognitive, and social aspects (Verschuere 1999). This pragmatic ability related to consciousness actually refers to metalinguistic activities (Gombert 1992: 12), as described below:

1. For the concept of metalinguistics, see especially Hübler and Bublitz (2007: 2–4).

- (1) activities involving reflection on language and its use;
- (2) subjects' ability to intentionally monitor and plan their own linguistic processing methods (both in terms of comprehension and regarding production).

Within the framework of pragmatics, Caffi (1994, 1998, in press) also suggests three senses of metapragmatics. The first sense of metapragmatics refers to "the theoretical debate on pragmatics and its central concerns, its epistemological foundations, and the definition of its relevant object and scope" (Caffi 1994: 2464). The other two are closely linked to Gombert's 'metalinguistic activities. Thus, activities involving reflection on language and its use relate to the second sense of metapragmatics, understood as "the conditions which make speakers' use of language possible and effective" (Caffi 1994: 2461). Moreover, the ability subjects have to monitor and plan several linguistic processing methods is related to "the management of discourse", the third sense that Caffi (1994: 2464) assigns to metapragmatics (see Hübler and Bublitz 2007). Assuming that metapragmatic activities are reflexive by nature, the reflexive management of discourse is represented by aspects such as strategies, meanings, and contextualization clues (Lucy 1993a). Furthermore, the writer or the speaker can monitor and control these reflexive activities productively as well as comprehensively.

In this sense, the psychological body of research insists on describing metapragmatic awareness as an ability under development. The acquisition of metapragmatics actually takes place both in children with typical language development (Collins 2008; Collins, Adams and Clarke 2009; Szücs and Babarczy 2014) and in those with language disorders (Collins 2008). Overall, the development of metapragmatic abilities tends to be associated with other changes in maturation, since early awareness in children is identified by the incidental way in which language adapts to its context, that is, by an *epipragmatic behavior* where the child is enabled to separate language from the emission context (Gombert 1992: 119). The increased awareness of referential ambiguities – together with the improved processing capacity of the working memory – helps the child develop a metapragmatic behavior (Gombert 1992; Crespo and Alfaro 2009; Timofeeva 2014). Abilities emerging in metapragmatic development include politeness and humor, to name but two.

Considering humor as a figurative language form (Ritchie 2005; Brône, Feyaerts and Veale 2006; Hidalgo and Iglesias 2009) that manifests a creative use, humor might be dealt with epipragmatic and metapragmatic tools. In fact, some specific abilities are implicated in its development, such as cognitive, social and emotional ones. Thus, humor implies a cognitive development since it is interwoven with the development of the metapragmatic awareness (Verschuere 1999;

Crespo and Alfaro 2009; Crespo et al. 2010; Timofeeva 2014); humor constitutes a social development, since it makes relationships with peers and adults easier (Martin 2007: 266); humor is also a way to cope with stress or the unknown, and to improve one's mood (Martin 2007: 210; Führ 2002).

Consequently, "humor has become a more significant reflection of society and humanity as a whole" during the last decade (Derks 2007: XIV). However, this book does not explore the cognitive, social and emotional aspects of humor, but rather the most important discursive and psycholinguistic elements implicated in its metapragmatic awareness. The main body of research in linguistics has analyzed humor according to several general theories such as GTVH, Relevance Theory and Cognitive Linguistics. Without denying the importance of said approaches, this book focuses mainly on the metapragmatic abilities implied in humor.

2. The content of this volume

This monograph brings together several approaches to the metapragmatics of humor. It consists of thirteen chapters organized into three parts. With the aim of offering a broad approach to the metapragmatics of humor, each part is devoted to a main topic: *Revisions and applications of General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) in a metapragmatic context*; *Metapragmatic awareness of humor across textual modes*; and *Metapragmatic practices within the acquisition of humor*. The first part summarizes how the *General Theory of Verbal Humor* proposed by V. Raskin and S. Attardo could serve to reflect the metapragmatic ability for using and inferring humor. The second part focuses on humorous and non-humorous genres to organize the metapragmatic abilities: jokes, TV genres, and conversation. Finally, the third part reflects how children develop several humorous aspects. Thus, even though a psycholinguistic approach could be avoided, this framework is necessary to understand the development of humor competence.

Therefore, the first part of the book is devoted to several revisions and applications of the *General Theory of Verbal Humor* (GTVH Attardo & Raskin 1991; Attardo 2001). This proposal has proved its validity over time, thanks to which both Raskin's SSTH and Raskin and Attardo's GTVH are now "the two most influential linguistic humor theories of the last two decades" (Brône, Feyaerts and Veale 2006: 203). It is therefore a widely accepted theory in the context of linguistic research studies. Chapters by Laura Alba-Juez, Ana Pano Alamán & Ana Mancera Rueda, Marta Agüero Guerra, and Leonor Ruiz-Gurillo test the validity of the GTVH to assess the metapragmatic abilities in humor. This first theoretical background provides readers with a framework to understand the following sections. The second part proposes an approach to metapragmatic awareness of humor taking

into account the genre in which these elements are developed, namely jokes, TV genres and conversation. Chapters by Miguel Ángel Campos, Isabel Balteiro, Iulia Grosman, Craig O. Stewart, M. Belén Alvarado-Ortega, Béatrice Priego-Valverde, and Elisa Gironzetti, Salvatore Attardo & Lucy Pickering represent a fairly comprehensive sample of this approach. The third part deals with the acquisition of humor; it contains two chapters by Elena Hoicka and Larissa Timofeeva-Timofeev.

The first part of the book starts with Laura Alba-Juez's contribution entitled "The variables of the evaluative functional relationship: The case of humorous discourse". Focused on the evaluative content of humor, she proposes to include evaluation as one of the *knowledge resources* proposed by the GTVH, taking into account Ruiz Gurillo's *Revised General Theory of Verbal Humor* (2013). A corpus of 100 psychology jokes in English and Spanish allows her to explain and discuss this hypothesis.

An interesting application of the GTVH can be found in the chapter "Humor and advertising in Twitter: an approach from the General Theory of Verbal Humor and Metapragmatics" by Ana Pano Alamán and Ana Mancera Rueda. Assuming this proposal and adopting a metapragmatic approach, the authors analyze the use of humor in advertising on Twitter.

The chapter "Beyond verbal incongruity: A genre-specific model for the interpretation of humor in political cartoons" by Marta Agüero Guerra revisits previous approaches to GTVH in cartoons and proposes an analysis which looks beyond linguistic elements. Considering the multimodality of cartoons, the author outlines a genre-specific model that incorporates new parameters from visual arts and intersemiosis to analyze the two types of codes- verbal and visual- and their combinations in order to understand the humorous messages of cartoons.

The paper by Leonor Ruiz-Gurillo entitled "Metapragmatics of humor: Variability, negotiability and adaptability in humorous monologues" draws on the theoretical framework of the metapragmatics of humor, taking into account the GTVH and a conception of metapragmatics according to Verschueren (1999). Considering humor as a continuous choice, the author intends to integrate the productive process of the writer/speaker along with the interpretative process of the reader/listener.

The second part is devoted to metapragmatic abilities in several genres of humor. The first section of part two embraces two papers about jokes. The chapter "Lawyers, great lawyers and liars: The metapragmatics of lying in lawyer jokes" by Miguel Ángel Campos analyzes the pragmatic structure of lawyer jokes, more precisely those based on lying as a source of humorous effects. The author proposes a new joke analysis approach based not only on their explicitness, but also on a metapragmatic awareness.

Isabel Balteiro's chapter "A look at metalinguistic jokes based on intentional morphological reanalysis" delves into the intentional morphological reanalysis of metalinguistic jokes. The author demonstrates that the manipulation and reinterpretation in these jokes is supported by some linguistic elements, such as homophones, paronyms, graphic marks, even slight spelling changes.

The second section of part two raises two approaches to TV genres, humorous monologues and satires. Humorous monologues are analyzed in the chapter "How do French Humorists' adapt across situations? A corpus study of their prosodic and (dis)fluency profiles" by Iulia Grosman. Focused on an analysis of prosody (*rhythm and intonation*) and (dis)fluencies (*discourse markers, filled and unfilled pauses, repetitions, etc.*) of 8 humorists' speech variations across 4 situations (*theatre and radio sketches, radio and face-to-face interviews*), this study reveals that humorists make significant adaptations in their speaking style across situations supported by several but varying contextual determiners.

"Truthiness and consequences: A cognitive pragmatic analysis of Stephen Colbert's satirical strategies and effects" by Craig O. Stewart compares the different satirical goals and audiences of Stephen Colbert in two different TV-programs, *The Colbert Report* and *White House Correspondents' Dinner*. Considering Simpson's (2003) model of satire, the author determines the limits of satire as a critical discourse practice.

Finally, the third section of part two summarizes three different approaches to linguistic and metalinguistic elements of the metapragmatic awareness of conversational humor. Chapter by M. Belén Alvarado-Ortega entitled "Variability adaptability and negotiability in conversational humor: A matter of gender" analyzes several linguistic procedures that male and female speakers use to adapt their humorous utterances. This analysis shows that each gender's identity is defined through different strategies and procedures to adapt humor to context.

Béatrice Priego-Valverde's chapter "Teasing in casual conversations: An opportunistic discursive strategy" focuses on linguistic pinning (Traverso 1999), understood as a verbatim repetition of a word or expression by the hearer to create humor. This type of teasing is described in seven different examples of conversation. Corpus shows how the speaker is able to adapt her/himself to context and the triggered reactions, amongst other discursive functions.

"Smiling, gaze, and humor in conversation: A pilot study" by Elisa Gironzetti, Salvatore Attardo, and Lucy Pickering presents a pilot study based on the role of smiling as a marker of humor in conversation. Implementing an eye-tracking methodology, authors corroborate that participants pay attention to the facial areas involved in smiling, especially the mouth and the eyes area, when humor appears in face-to-face conversations.

The third part of this volume covers an under-researched approach to the linguistics of humor, humor acquisition in children. Elena Hoicka's paper, "Understanding of humorous intentions: A developmental approach" focuses on children of up to 2 years of age. In fact, this study demonstrates that children understand humor from an intentional perspective and especially that humor is the first type of non-literal communication; in such a way humor could allow children to identify and practice other forms of non-literal communication such as pretending, lying, metaphors, and irony.

On the other hand, the paper "Children using phraseology for humorous purposes: The case of 9-to 10-year-olds" by Larissa Timofeeva-Timofeev analyzes the use of phraseological units for humorous purposes in written production with regard to their metapragmatic development. Although these children usually use phraseological elements in humor in an epipragmatic way, this study demonstrates an unexpected use of phraseology as a metapragmatic ability.

In short, this book provides an up-to-date panorama of the metapragmatics of humor, where metapragmatic abilities are described in adults as well as in children, on humorous and non-humorous genres – jokes, cartoons, humorous monologues, parodies, conversation, Twitter –, and using several approaches, such as GTVH, multimodality, conversational analysis, eye-tracking methodology, etc.

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PART 1

Revisions and applications of *General Theory of Verbal Humor* (GTVH) in a metapragmatic context

The variables of the evaluative functional relationship

The case of humorous discourse

Laura Alba-Juez

UNED

In this paper I focus on the evaluative content of humor, an aspect which – to date and to my knowledge – has been dealt with only in a peripheral manner by research both on humor and on evaluation. Linguistic evaluation is viewed herein as a dynamical subsystem of language (as discussed in Alba-Juez & Alba-Juez 2012), and it is argued that it should be studied and analyzed as an important element in any theory of humor performance. A corpus of 100 psychology jokes in English and Spanish found on jokes websites was used as data, whose evaluative content was examined taking into account the findings of previous research on stance and evaluative language (e.g. Hunston & Thompson 2000; Martin & White 2005; Englebretson 2007; Bednarek 2006, 2008a, 2008b, 2009a & b; Thompson & Alba-Juez 2014) and the evaluative function of irony (e.g. Partington 2007, 2011; Alba-Juez & Attardo 2014).

Evaluation is treated herein as a pragmatic and cognitive phenomenon which is a function of a number of variables that interact with one another. Thus, a methodology and procedure to analyze the stance taken by the jokester (and transmitted through the jokes) is proposed, by means of which the evaluative content of the jokes is scrutinized in order to assign the corresponding qualitative values to each one of these interacting variables. This methodology is applied not only to the analysis of jokes in isolation, but also to the comparison of the evaluative equations of different jokes, or of similar jokes in different languages (English and Spanish, in this particular case). Likewise, it is suggested that this procedure can prove valid for the analysis of the evaluative content of any other discourse type, although genres other than humor are beyond the scope of this paper.

Thus, this study has two main aims: On the one hand, it is proposed that evaluation be included in humor theories as one of its ‘knowledge resources,’ and for this purpose Ruiz Gurillos’s *Revised General Theory of Verbal Humor* (2013) is taken as a point of departure. On the other hand, the six main variables or

'knowledge resources'¹ of evaluation (found as the result of previous research on the topic) are explained, discussed and exemplified within the specific genre of psychology jokes. Evaluation is viewed as a function of these resources, the relationship between them being therefore a functional relationship.

Keywords: evaluative function, stance, humorous discourse, knowledge resources/variables of the evaluation function 'F', functional relationship

1. Introduction

In the present paper I approach the study of the evaluative content of humor, an aspect that – to my knowledge – has only been touched on peripherally by humor theorists and researchers (e.g. Koestler 1964, Raskin 1985, Attardo & Raskin 1991). Even in recent publications such as Attardo 2008, Ruiz Gurillo & Padilla García 2009, Hirsh 2011, Ruiz Gurillo 2012, or Ruiz Gurillo & Alvarado Ortega 2013, which are quite exhaustive and where new perspectives on humor are explored, the fact that humor has a very strong evaluative component is not analyzed in depth. Similarly, the studies on linguistic evaluation and appraisal that have developed and thrived in approximately the last twenty years (e.g. Hunston & Thompson 2000; Bednarek 2006, 2008a, 2008b, 2009a & b; Thompson & Alba-Juez 2014) have not paid great or special attention to its manifestation within humorous discourse.

Thus, on the one hand, this work intends to fill that void by looking into the phenomenon of evaluation in humorous discourse and, in particular, within the subgenre of psychology jokes on the world web, in order to shed some light upon the close connection between stance and humor. Even in the initial stages of research, it will not demand too much effort on the part of the analyst to perceive that evaluation forms part not only of the production stage of humor, but also of the reception phase or reaction. Laughter, for instance, as a very possible and frequent reaction to a joke, normally contains a strong evaluative component. One of the two main aims of this article, therefore, is to discuss the possibility and necessity of including evaluation as a key element within any theoretical attempt to characterize humor.

On the other hand, this study is based on a linguistic-pragmatic and functional-cognitive perspective, which adopts a usage-based model of language and hence gives meaning and function a central role. Language is viewed as a dynamical

1. In analogy with Attardo's (2001) use of the term for the different elements of humor in his *General Theory of Verbal Humor*.

system whose meaning is not constructed independently in the mind, but reflects our overall experience as human beings. As Mackenzie (2016) points out, all functional views of language share the assumption that languages in human societies “have the primordial function of permitting sophisticated communication of ideas and feelings between human beings”. Humor is indeed a realm of discourse in which the sophistication of human communication can be found in its finest form. And thus, like any other discourse domain, humor is influenced by and reflects our experience of the world, thereby revealing the cultural and social identity of groups and individuals. The second main aim of this work is intimately connected to this view, and consists in analyzing the functional relationship that the system of evaluation holds with six main qualitative variables that interact with one another and that could be thought of as its ‘knowledge resources’. This analysis was applied to all the jokes in the corpus (which are 100 in total and belong to the discourse type of psychology jokes) by including the qualitative values for these variables in each one of the jokes, thereby completing the ‘evaluation equation’ which is hidden behind them. This perspective of language and evaluation will become apparent in the analysis carried out in 3, 5 and 6 below, where only eleven sample jokes are scrutinized, for it would have been impossible to include all 100 jokes in this paper due to space limitations.

I shall now proceed to discuss some relevant points and information in connection with the first aim of this article, namely the inclusion of the evaluative component within a theory of humor.

2. Evaluation/stance as a necessary element within a theory of humor performance

Some authors (e.g. Alba-Juez [1996] 2001, Partington 2007, 2011) have produced both theoretical and empirical works on the evaluative function of irony. In a very recent study, Alba-Juez & Attardo (2014) focus on the ‘evaluative palette’ of verbal irony both from a theoretical and an empirical viewpoint, showing how evaluation of different kinds (positive, negative or neutral) can permeate ironic discourse at various linguistic levels. However, to date and to my knowledge, much less attention has been given to the relationship between humor and evaluation. Some theories of humor have peripherally considered this relationship: The Superiority or Hostility Theory of Humor (which can be traced back to Plato (380 B.C.) and Aristotle (350 B.C)), for instance, without explicitly talking about linguistic evaluation or stance, focuses on the negative evaluative component of a considerable amount of jokes or humorous discourse. As Morreal (1983) notes, according to this theory, humor and its elicited laughter are basically a form of derision, a

mechanism that people use to ridicule or look down on others. Sigmund Freud (1905) also writes about the aggressive (and therefore, one infers, negatively evaluative) content of what he calls “tendentious jokes”.

Undoubtedly, humor and irony are related, but by no means do they refer to the same phenomenon. Ironic utterances may be humorous or not and, similarly, humorous utterances may or may not be ironic.² Thus, humor and irony share some characteristics, one of them being the fact that they can both be used for the expression of values, and that therefore they very often act as strong vehicles for stance-taking. As is the case with verbal irony, verbal humor may contain not only negative but also positive evaluative meaning, and considering that evaluation can have different manifestations, shades, and degrees, the stance hidden behind the joke may be placed at different points of the evaluation continuum – not just at the negative or positive poles – and can manifest at different linguistic levels and in different modes.

The approach adopted in this study views evaluation as a dynamical system entailing relational work, and therefore it aligns with Alba-Juez & Thompson’s (2014) definition of the phenomenon:

We now see and thus define evaluation as a dynamical sub-system of language, permeating all linguistic levels and involving the expression of the speaker’s or writer’s attitude or stance towards, viewpoint on, or feelings about the entities or propositions that s/he is talking about, which entails relational work including the (possible and prototypically expected and subsequent) response of the hearer or (potential) audience. This relational work is generally related to the speaker’s and/or the hearer’s personal, group, or cultural set of values. (2014: 13)

The results of the analysis carried out in this work show that the evaluative sub-system of language (as defined above) is highly notorious and relevant in humorous discourse. Consequently, I argue that evaluation should be included or taken into account as one or as part of the knowledge resources of humor, together with other aspects such as, for instance, *language* or *narrative strategy* within Attardo’s (2001a) *General Theory of Verbal Humor* (hereinafter GTVH). In particular, I will try to situate the evaluative element within the framework of Ruiz Gurillo’s (2012) *Revised General Theory of Verbal Humor*, which is based precisely on Attardo’s GTVH. Attardo GTVH includes six knowledge resources of humor: 1) Script Opposition, 2) Logical mechanism, 3) Situation, 4) Target, 5) Narrative Strategy, and 6) Language. Ruiz Gurillo proposes the addition of certain aspects to this

2. It is beyond the purpose of this paper to discuss the differences between humor and irony, for the focus herein is fundamentally on their evaluative content. For detailed accounts of the relationship between these two phenomena see, for instance, Attardo 2000, 2001b or 2008, Alba-Juez (2001 [1996])

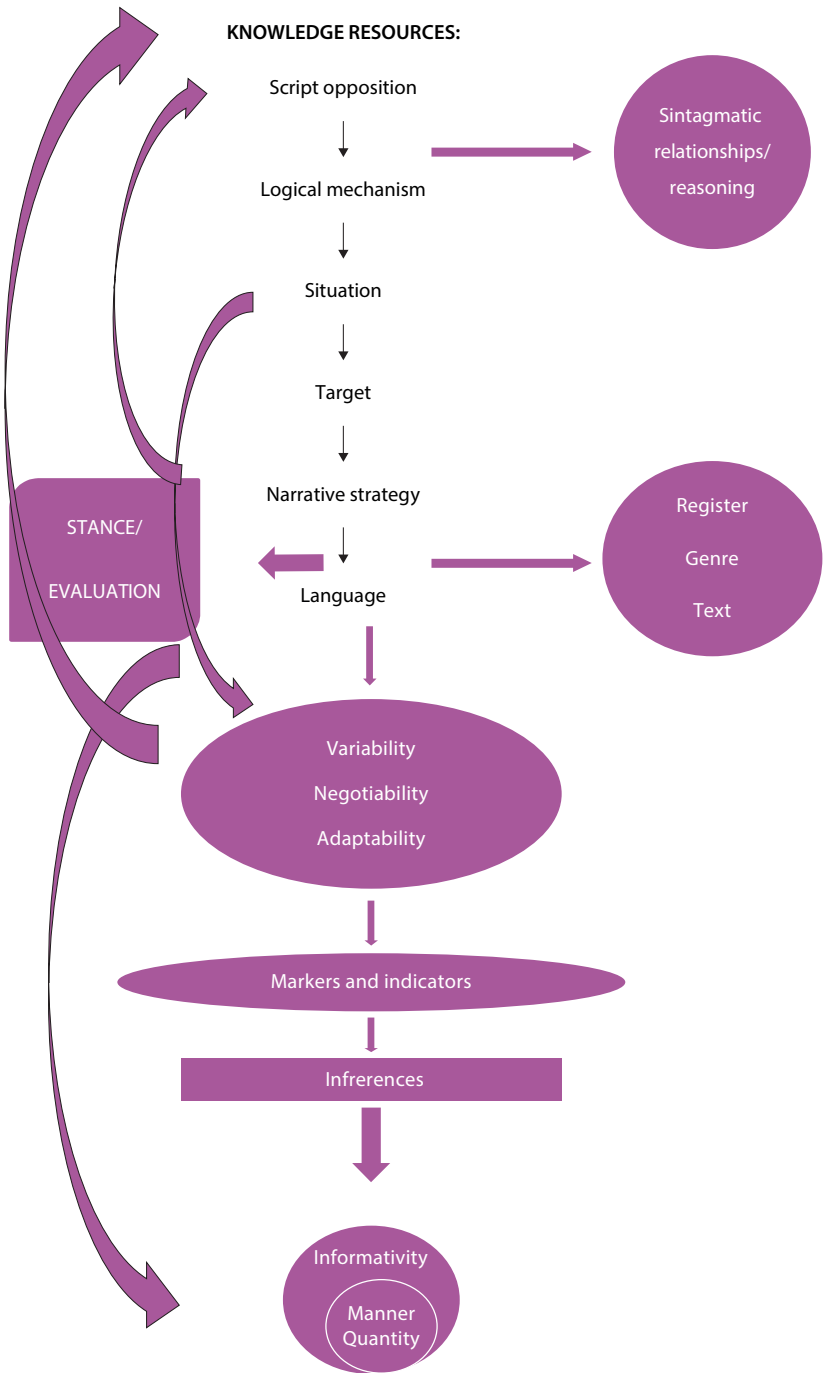


Figure 1. Proposal of inclusion of the stance/Evaluation component within Ruiz Gurillo's (2012) Revised model of Attardo's GTVH.

original proposal: 1) She extends the comprehension of the logical mechanisms by explaining that they are based either on syntagmatic relationships or on reasoning, 2) She completes the narrative strategy with aspects related to register, genre, and text type, and 3) She adds the concepts of variability, negotiability and adaptability of speakers/writers to the language knowledge resource, taking into consideration that markers and indicators, together with certain inferences, serve the purpose of achieving the humorous effect, and that those inferences also entail the infringement of the conversational principles of Informativity, Manner and Quantity. Thus, and considering that there is reasonable consensus among humor researchers in that GTVH is the model which best explains humor, I will take here Ruiz Gurillo's revised GTVH model as a point of departure for my argument. My point is that more often than not, the evaluation made of some situation, thing or character is a key element to the interpretation of the humorous content of jokes or humorous narrations, and for this reason I propose that the stance/evaluation component of humor be included as an element that permeates through all the knowledge resources of humor, but that can be more specifically manifested (in the form of different markers or contextualization cues that trigger inferences) through the narrative strategy and language knowledge resources of the model. Figure 1 shows this inclusion graphically.

With this proposal I do not intend to put forward a new theory of humor, but to make a point about the fact that evaluation is an element that should be considered in the humor equation, and from here my interest in analyzing its occurrence and manifestation in jokes, to which I now turn.

3. Methodology and data

In my analysis I will focus mainly on the verbal and visual evaluative content of a group of psychology jokes on the world web, but it should be pointed out that the methodology and philosophy of the analysis could be applied to any other kind of text.

The definition of evaluation adopted and quoted in 2 makes it patent that, as part of the methodology of analysis, it will be necessary to consider certain aspects, including:

- a. both the speaker's and the hearer's expression of their system of values, attitude or feelings at the different discourse-linguistic levels,
- b. every aspect related to the context, be it the immediate local co-text or anything related to the particular situation or culture affecting them and their use of language (visual images, cultural, political or historical background, etc.),

- c. the fact that an utterance that has a negative valence within a given situation, group or culture may have a positive one within another, or vice-versa,
- d. the fact that the resources deployed to realize evaluation may vary according to the medium that is used,
- e. the fact that, being context-dependent, the language of evaluation also depends heavily on the text type in which it is used.³

The view of evaluation as a dynamical system is reflected both in the definition and the methodology followed herein. The system, in turn, encompasses an interrelated set of sub-systems that instantiate the superordinate system, showing a relationship between brain/language, bodies and the environment, as shown in Figure 2 (reproduced from Alba-Juez & Alba-Juez, 2012).

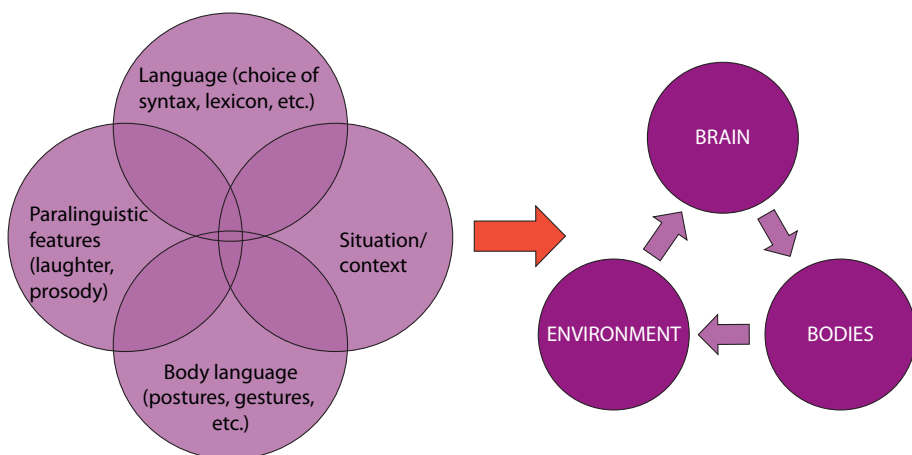


Figure 2. Interrelated dynamical subsystems of evaluation (2012: 586)

Taking this characterization of evaluation as the point of departure, in my analysis I will follow the methodology developed within the framework of the FunDETT (Functions of Language: Evaluation in Different Text Types) and EMO-FUNDETT research group and projects in the last seven years, by means of which the stance taken by the speaker or writer (in this case, the jokester) is scrutinized through the analysis of the six main variables or knowledge resources of which evaluation is a function. These variables interact in all kinds of evaluative discourse, and are the following: 1) phase of the evaluation (**PH**), 2) linguistic level at which the evaluation is realized (**LL**), 3) degree of (in)directness of the evaluative meaning (**Deg**), 4) position along the evaluation continuum (**ContPos**), 5) parameter of evaluation (**P**), and 6) mode of the evaluation (**Mo**). All of these variables will be discussed in 5 below.

3. See, for instance, Santamaría (2014) on the e-evaluation found in web social networks.

The jokes used as data combine verbal and visual humor, and were taken from different websites, in most cases under the category of ‘psychology jokes’, both in English and Spanish. For copyright reasons, I will not be able to reproduce the images in this article, but the link to their corresponding websites, together with a verbal description of them, will be provided for each of the jokes analyzed.

In very general terms, it can be stated that the jokes contain three main evaluation targets, and can thence be classified as follows:

1. Jokes that evaluate the psychology profession and its professionals: Joke 1, in which the capacity of psychologists to help their patients is negatively evaluated, is an example of this type

Joke 1: <http://www.someecards.com/usercards/viewcard/>

MjAxMi05MWU1ZTYwYmJhOGQxN2Ni

Joke description: A male psychologist is sitting at a table with a woman (who could be thought to be his patient or, possibly, his friend, and who – one can infer – has been telling him about some personal problem of hers. With an expression of confusion, and holding his face with both hands, leaning with his elbows on the table, the psychologist says to the woman: “*I have a PhD in psychology but all I can tell you is good luck with that shit.*”

2. Jokes that evaluate the mental state or capacity of a famous politician or celebrity, as is the case with Joke 2, where the former President of Argentina, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, is both verbally and visually depicted as an insane person.

Joke 2: http://www.flickr.com/photos/humograficoargentinoymundial/2431008676/in/pool-humor_argentino%7Chumograficoargentinoymundial

Joke description: In the image we can see a picture of the Argentinean ex-President in a straitjacket and with a very somber expression on her face, on what looks like the front cover of a book, whose title is “*La irrazón de mi vida*” (*The ‘irrationality’ of my life*), and whose publishing house (Ediciones Peuser) is the same as that of Evita Perón’s book titled “*La razón de mi vida*” (*The reason of my life*). To any person who has a minimal knowledge of Argentinean history, it is evident that the cover with the picture of Cristina Kirchner has been jokingly designed in analogy with Evita Perón’s counterpart.

3. Jokes that evaluate the psychology, mental state or capacity of men and women, and could also fall within the so-called ‘gender jokes’, of which Joke 3 is a prototypical example.

Joke 3: <http://i1.ytimg.com/vi/gnEmFuYmyIU/0.jpg>

Joke description: In the image there is a drawing of a man and a woman looking at each other. On both their heads we can see their brains divided in many compartments, each one of them having a word written in it. These words or concepts in fact refer to certain values assigned to one sex or the other. The woman’s brain has six value compartments, namely, *love, talk, babies, respect, security* and *shoes*. The

man's brain has seven compartments: *Sex, food, beer, TV, sex, football and sex*. The size of each compartment is also a key aspect of the image, as it is evidently motivated by the importance that each one of them supposedly gives to the different values. In the man's case, the most important one is obviously the *sex* compartment, for there are three of them instead of one, therefore occupying a great part of his brain. In the woman's case, the biggest one is the *love* compartment.

These three jokes will be analyzed in detail in 5 below, by scrutinizing the above-mentioned variables or knowledge resources of evaluation and assigning a qualitative value to these variables in each one of the jokes.

4. The evaluation equation

The functional relationship described and analyzed herein shows evaluation as a function of a number of variables that interact with one another. In mathematical symbols, this evaluation equation can be represented as consisting of two terms (E and F), the variables being the arguments of the functional relation F:

$$E = F(\text{PH, LL, Deg, ContPos, P, Mo})$$

where:

E: Evaluation

PH, LL, Deg, ContPos, P, Mo: variables or 'knowledge resources' of evaluation, as presented in 3.

F: Evaluative Function, giving a value to E for each set of values given to PH, LL, Deg, ContPos, P, and Mo

It should be pointed out that, in the model outlined herein, the variables included in the equation constitute qualitative variables that are thought to be (un)consciously considered and appropriately weighed by the interlocutors for either the expression or the interpretation of their evaluative act during discourse. We now turn to them.

5. The main variables (arguments) of the evaluative function (F) and their manifestation in psychology jokes

In this section I will examine the six main variables (introduced in 3) that have been found to interact and always affect the final evaluative meaning of a given text or discourse. I will look into each one of them in some detail, and at the same time will present examples where these variables intertwine as the vital 'ingredients' for

the evaluative ‘recipe’. As we progress through the explanation of the variables, the values for each variable in Jokes 1, 2, and 3 will be completed one by one.

5.1 Variable 1: Evaluation phase

In Alba-Juez & Thompson (2014) the three following phases of evaluation are identified:

1. Pre-realization phase: This phase is purely cognitive, and has to do with the first two stages of the ‘sense → think → act’ cycle found in cognitive dynamical systems.⁴ It is assumed that the speaker has a given set of values and a stance related to them that may or may not be realized verbally. This is a ‘silent’ but active stage, in the sense that the speaker has a certain emotion and/or thought in relation to something or someone that s/he may choose to express in a verbal way (by means of a discourse act) or not. The intertextuality of discourse can be said to play an important role in this phase, for the speaker will normally base her decision to express her stance verbally on her previous experience with evaluative language in other contexts or situations.
2. Textual phase: If the speaker eventually decides to verbally express her stance, then it can be said that she has moved onto the textual phase, where her stance or positioning with respect to any topic at stake in the discourse can materialize in words. It has to be pointed out here, however, that there is not necessarily a one-to-one relationship between the cognitive organization of values and its manifestation through words in the discourse. For instance, and as Bednarek (2009b) observes, in a given situation it may be more important for a speaker to comply with rules of politeness than to express her genuine emotions or inner system of values.
3. Interlocutor’s reaction phase: As a reaction to the speaker’s textual phase, an interlocutor may have a stance related to what was said, but remain at her own pre-realization phase without responding, or she may respond to the initial evaluation by accepting, rejecting, or simply making some comment about it. If the response includes another evaluation, then we may speak of a *metaevaluation phase*, which would simultaneously constitute another textual phase.

As far as the reaction phase is concerned, in the case of humor and jokes, the possible reactions could be mainly of three kinds:

4. For the explanation of the sequential cycle sense→ think→ act, see, for instance, van Gelder 1998.

1. **Laughter and/or mode adoption:** The laughter that could form part of the reaction phase coming from an interlocutor or audience after a speaker tells a joke can be considered as a positive (meta)evaluation of the stance transmitted through the joke in question. As Attardo (2003: 1289) explains, “on hearers’ part, laughter after a joke expresses some degree of agreement with the speaker that the occasion was appropriate for joking...” In these cases, therefore, the evaluation implicit in the laughter is generally polarized towards the positive end of the evaluative continuum. Laughter is then seen as a conversational strategy to acknowledge and support humorous utterances (“humor support” in Hay’s (2001) terms). Another possible strategy is the “repetition of the humorous turn” (Hay 2001) which, seen through the evaluation prism, would have the same positive effect as laughter. Both strategies would fall within Attardo’s (2001b) concept of “mode adoption”.
2. **“Not funny” reaction:** If we think in terms of conversational adjacency pairs (Schegloff & Sacks 1973), the “not funny” reaction constitutes a second, dis-preferred part because it entails the rejection of the humorousness of the joke. Attardo (2008:1210) notes that the comment “That’s not funny” coming after a joke “is not a comment on a failure to produce humor, but rather a jockeying for power in a relationship by denying the wanna-be-humorist the right to do so.” But apart from the struggle for power mentioned by Attardo, it should be pointed out that in most cases this reaction is metaevaluative of some previous (generally negative) evaluation stated in the joke. Hence, this is another of the reasons why I argue that evaluation should be made visible within a theory of humor performance, for it not only forms part of the production stage of humor, but also of the reception stage or reaction: Laughter alone has a very strong evaluative component, which can be positive or negative, depending on the discourse situation.
3. **Ignoring the joke:** Remaining silent or ignoring the joke and/or the joker are discourse strategies that may be used with different meanings. One very frequent meaning has to do with the rejection of the joke, thus reflecting a negative stance on the part of the hearer.

If we analyze Jokes 1, 2 and 3 above in terms of their phase, we will say that their evaluative content is found in the textual phase in the three cases. In fact, in all the examples presented in this study we would not have access to the reaction phase unless we analyzed our own reaction to them, but this falls outside the scope of this paper.

Evaluation is a function of the PH variable in the same way as it is a function of the other five variables described in 3 above. I shall now start with the logical representation of the evaluation equation for jokes 1, 2, and 3 by including the

qualitative value for the first variable (*Textual Phase* (*T*) for the three of them), and will complete the specific values of the remaining five as I progress through the discussion of each one of variables in 5.2. through 5.6. Thus:

Jokes 1, 2 and 3: $E = F(T, LL, Deg, ContPos, P, Mo)$

This representation should be read in the following manner: “Evaluation (*E*) is a function of the **PH** variable, whose qualitative value for this particular case analysis is *T*”. The manner of interpreting the relationship will be the same for the remaining five variables (**LL, Deg, ContPos, P, Mo**), to which I now turn.

5.2 Variable 2: Linguistic level at which the evaluation is realized (LL)

Attardo (2001b) notes that, while irony is purely a pragmatic phenomenon, humor has two facets: the semantic and the pragmatic one. Thus, these two linguistic levels would be those at which the funny or humorous effect of the joke can mainly be found. The evaluative meaning, however, can work not only at these two levels, but also at any of the other levels of linguistic description (phonological, morphological, lexical or syntactic). The sub-components of this variable are then the following: Phonological (*Ph*), Morphological (*Morph*), Syntactic (*Synt*), Lexical (*Lex*) and Semantic-Pragmatic (*Sem-prag*). In Joke 1 the evaluation is mainly found at the semantic-pragmatic level, for the negative evaluation of psychologists has to be inferred: the words of the psychologist inevitably trigger the implicature that he (as well as any other psychologist) knows nothing about his field of research and cannot solve his patients’ problems. Furthermore, the essence of the humor in this joke lies precisely on the negative evaluation of these professionals.

In joke 2 we find evaluative content mainly at the morphological level. The reader or audience will also need to have some cultural knowledge about the history of Argentina to understand that the apparent title of Cristina Kirschner’s book, *La irrazón de mi vida* (*The irrationality of my life*) constitutes a sarcastic emulation of the title of Evita Perón’s book titled *La razón de mi vida* (*The reason of my life*). By only adding the negative prefix *i-* to the word *razón*, the jokester is not only coining a new word (because in Spanish the negative counterpart of *razón* in this case would be *sinrazón*), but also playing with the two different meanings of the word (i.e. *reason* in the sense of “purpose or motive for doing something”, and *reason* in the sense of “the power of the mind to understand in a logical way”). With the addition of this morpheme (in conflation with the image of Kirschner in a straitjacket) both the humorous intention and the negative stance of the joker with respect to the Argentinean President are made manifest.

In Joke 3 the evaluation is found mainly at the lexical level. Some of the values occupying the woman’s brain, such as *love* or *respect*, have inherent positive

connotations, while others, such as *shoes* or *talk* appear to be pointing to more superficial aspects of the female mind, which might therefore be less positive from the evaluative point of view. The male brain is mainly occupied by less philosophical and more ‘primitive’ concepts that have more to do with biological urges (*sex, food, beer*) than with feelings or moral values.

Therefore, and considering the two first variables discussed, the equations for the three jokes would so far look as in the equations below. The indications as to how the LL variable should be read and interpreted is expressed between parentheses below each one of them, but in the case of the remaining variables in the next sections of this article, this parenthetical information will not be included, for it would become repetitive and unnecessary.

Joke 1: $E_1 = F(T, \textit{Sem-prag}, \textit{Deg}, \textit{ContPos}, P, Mo)$

(“Evaluation (E) is a function of the LL variable, whose value for this particular case analysis is *Sem-prag*”)

Joke 2: $E_2 = F(T, \textit{Morph}, \textit{Deg}, \textit{Cont Pos}, P, Mo)$

(“Evaluation (E) is a function of the LL variable, whose value for this particular case analysis is *Morph*”)

Joke 3: $E_3 = F(T, \textit{Lex}, \textit{Deg}, \textit{Cont Pos}, P, Mo)$

(“Evaluation (E) is a function of the LL variable, whose value for this particular case analysis is *Lex*”)

5.3 Variable 3: Degree of (in)directness of the evaluative meaning (Deg)

The evaluative meaning found in the jokes (as in any other type of discourse) may be overt or covert. To use Martin & White’s (2005) terms, the evaluation may be either a) ‘inscribed’ – and therefore, directly and openly expressed in the text – or b) ‘invoked’ or ‘hidden’ behind the literal meaning of the words used – and thus conveyed in an indirect manner. Joke 4 is an example of the former.

Joke 4: <http://politicalhumor.about.com/od/barackobama/ig/Barack-Obama-Pictures/Pinky-and-the-Brain.htm>

Joke description: In the image we see a picture of President Barak Obama being followed by John McCain, the latter making a very funny gesture (sticking his tongue out) and in a funny posture (with his arms stretched and his hands open, as if he were crazy or something very strange was happening to him). Superposed on this image is the inscription: “*They are Pinky and the Brain... One is a genius. The other’s insane*”.

This joke exhibits a rather direct kind of humorous evaluation, considering that it is directly stated that Obama “is a genius” and McCain “is insane”. The picture

of them both makes this appraisal completely clear and overt even though their names are not found on the text. It could be argued that there are other evaluative meanings that might be inferred through the metaphor that compares them to ‘Pinky and the Brain’ (a couple of cartoon characters), but the basic appraisal of both politicians is made in a very explicit way. In Joke 5, on the contrary, we see that the evaluation of psychology professionals is made in an indirect or covert way.

Joke 5: <http://psychologyjokes.tumblr.com/image/27995847645>

Joke description: In the image we can see Jimmy (a little boy) and his psychologist, both smoking a pipe and sitting in separate armchairs in the psychologist’s office. Jimmy’s behavior appears to be identical to that of his therapist, for he is not only smoking a pipe, but he is also seated in a similar posture, wearing exactly the same clothes as the psychologist. In the caption coming out of the therapist’s mouth, we can read: *“You’re making real progress, Jimmy. I’m sure your parents will be proud”*.

The reader/viewer of joke 5 will infer that psychologists are depicted as self-centered, arrogant people who suffer from a superiority complex and thus think that their patients only make progress if they behave at their image and likeness. This joke is very similar to Joke 10 in Spanish, analyzed in all its variables and compared to Joke 5 in section 6 below.

Going back to Jokes 1, 2, and 3, the corresponding qualitative value for the **Deg** variable, which happens to be the same one in the three cases, is added below.

Joke 1: $E_1 = F(T, \text{Sem-prag}, \text{Cov}, \text{Cont Pos}, P, \text{Mo})$

Joke 2: $E_2 = F(T, \text{Morph}, \text{Cov}, \text{Cont Pos}, P, \text{Mo})$

Joke 3: $E_3 = F(T, \text{Lex}, \text{Cov}, \text{Cont Pos}, P, \text{Mo})$

The value for variable 3 in Joke 1 is *Cov*, for the negative evaluation of what psychologists know about their discipline has to be reached by means of implicature, and therefore is made in a covert way. The same can be said of joke 2, where the evaluation of President Kirchner as an insane person is made in an indirect way, through the ‘ungrammatical’ addition of a morpheme and her image in a straitjacket. Likewise, in Joke 3 the evaluation of both genders is made in an indirect manner by the anonymous jokester, for s/he limits her/himself to provide the reader with what s/he thinks both men and women have in their brains, but does not provide any overt appreciation of it. The reader will possibly infer that women are sensitive and a bit superficial, and that men are more primitive human beings than women, but that is not directly expressed within the joke.

The specification of the functional relationship for these three prototypical jokes is still incomplete. Let us now turn to analyze and include in their equations the value for the fourth argument or variable of the ‘F’ term.

5.4 Variable 4: Position along the evaluation continuum

In Alba-Juez & Attardo (2014) it was stated that the stance or evaluation found in discourse does not necessarily have to show extreme negative or positive polarity. In that study, as in this one, the phenomenon of evaluation is seen as a continuum (Fig. 3) where intermediate or mixed stances can be identified. Put it simply, evaluative language can be found at any of the different points of a continuum that includes different positions from one pole to the other, the central one being the neutral stance.

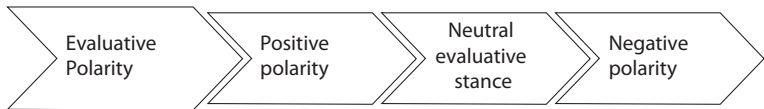


Figure 3. Evaluation continuum

This graphical representation, together with that of Figure 4, aims at showing the fact that, given the complexity of the human mind and language, on many occasions it is impossible to assign a clear-cut orientation to the evaluation or stance found in a piece of discourse, a fact that allows the speaker to express both a positive and a negative evaluation at the same time, as shown, for instance, in Joke 3, where mixed evaluative content (i.e. both positive and negative) is conveyed in the case of the female brain. The evaluation made of the male brain would be located

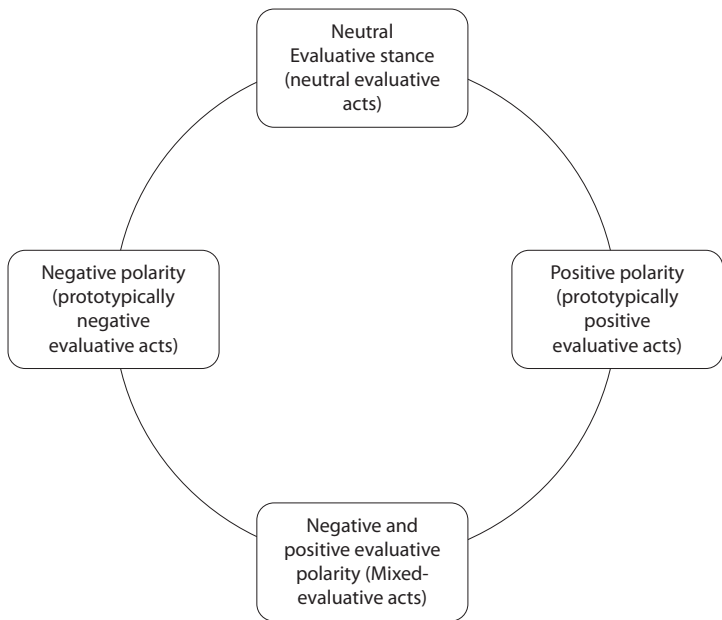


Figure 4. Mixed evaluative acts within the evaluation continuum

somewhere nearer the negative pole, but it cannot be classified as completely negative, as is also the case with Joke 6.

Joke 6:

A: *Why is psychoanalysis a lot quicker for a man than for a woman?*

B: *Because when it's time to go back to childhood, a man is already there.*

Taken from: <http://unijokes.com/joke-1574/>

As may become apparent, therefore, evaluation is not a matter of ironclad distinctions. In jokes, as in other types of discourse, we also find instances of neutral evaluation, as is discernible in Joke 7, where the social network *Facebook*® is evaluated in a way that would be difficult to assess as either positive or negative. There is indeed an appraisal of the network as a place where everyone exposes their lives to the world (and from there the therapist's observation that it is not necessary for the patient to tell him his life), which stands out as humorous, but appears to be neutral from the evaluative point of view.

Joke 7: <http://psychologyjokes.tumblr.com/post/40618310917/psychmajors-mwahaha-oh-freud>

Joke description: A psychologist and his patient are in a therapy session. The patient is lying on a couch and asks the therapist: *Shouldn't I tell you all about me?* To which the psychologist responds: *Not necessary. Just show me your Facebook ads!*

Returning now to the equations for the prototypes of the three main kinds of psychology jokes analyzed herein, I shall now proceed to add the values for Variable 4 into the equation. While both jokes 1 and 2 have a more negative evaluative charge, Joke 3 presents mixed evaluative meaning, and therefore if we had to locate it along the continuum, we would have to mark two positions instead of one, both of them being intertwined.

Joke 1: $E_1 = F(T, \textit{Sem-prag}, \textit{Cov}, \textit{Neg}, \mathbf{P}, \mathbf{Mo})$

Joke 2: $E_2 = F(T, \textit{Morph}, \textit{Cov}, \textit{Neg}, \mathbf{P}, \mathbf{Mo})$

Joke 3: $E_3 = F(T, \textit{Lex}, \textit{Cov}, \textit{Mix}, \mathbf{P}, \mathbf{Mo})$

where:

Neg: Negative evaluation,

Pos: Positive evaluation

Mix: Mixed evaluation (both positive and negative)

5.5 Variable 5: Parameter of evaluation

In line with other researchers in the field, Thompson & Hunston (2000: 22) explain that "the act of evaluating something can be done along several different parameters". Notwithstanding, there is still no consensus as to which and how many these

parameters are. I adhere to Thompson and Hunston's view that the GOOD/BAD parameter is the most basic one, as well as the one to which all others can relate. But in conflation with these basic parameters (and depending on the discourse type under scrutiny) we may find many others. Different authors approach the classification of parameters in different ways. Martin & White's (2005) Appraisal Theory presents the most elaborate taxonomy of appraisal categories in the literature to date, but there are other attempts, such as Bednarek's (2006, 2008c), where the author puts forward a taxonomy with ten parameters of evaluation, seven of which she considers to be "core" parameters (*comprehensibility, emotivity, expect-edness, humorousness, importance, possibility/necessity* and *reliability*) and three of which she deems peripheral (*evidentiality, mental state, and style*). In this study I will adopt her taxonomy for the description of the parameter variable in the jokes, and even though it could be enlarged in its number and types of categories,⁵ it will suffice for the analysis carried out herein. In fact, given the nature of the jokes examined in this article, the evaluation found in most of them falls under Bednarek's *Mental State*⁶ (MS, State of mind) parameter, as shown in the equation for our three prototypical examples:

$$\text{Joke 1: } E_1 = F(T, \text{Sem-prag}, \text{Cov}, \text{Neg}, \text{MS}, \text{Mo})$$

$$\text{Joke 2: } E_2 = F(T, \text{Morph}, \text{Cov}, \text{Neg}, \text{MS}, \text{Mo})$$

$$\text{Joke 3: } E_3 = F(T, \text{Lex}, \text{Cov}, \text{Mix}, \text{MS}, \text{Mo})$$

5.6 Variable 6: Mode of the evaluation

The last variable or knowledge resource in the evaluation equation considered for this study has to do with the mode in which the evaluation is conveyed. In the jokes under scrutiny, this variable may have one or a combination of any two or of the three following values:

1. Linguistic (*L*)
2. Paralinguistic (prosody and gestures) (*PL*)
3. Through images and/or symbols other than writing (e.g. photos, drawings, emoticons, videos, etc.) (*Im*).

5. It is my experience that, when working with different types of discourse, new parameters (other than Bednarek's ten, which were the result of her research with journalistic discourse) and values may arise. The corpus used may limit the number of parameters or, on the contrary, it may require the description and consideration of more categories.

6. For space reasons I do not present the notation for all ten parameters and their values. A complete list of the parameters can be found in Bednarek 2006, pp. 188–89.

Joke 8 exemplifies evaluation conveyed both in a linguistic mode and through emoticons. The text is ironical and displays a critical attitude towards psychiatrists (by implying that they view themselves as Gods), and the emoticon is marking (with its smile and wink) the fact that it is a joke, and therefore should be taken lightly. Since the emoticon represents a human facial expression or gesture, it could be said that the evaluation in this joke also has a paralinguistic value.

Joke 8: A: What's the difference between God and a Psychiatrist?

B: God knows he's not a psychiatrist... 

From: <http://counsellingresource.com/features/2008/07/16/difference-between-a-psychiatrist-and-god/>

Joke 9: <http://www.puzzleclopedia.com/en-que-piensa-freud/>

Joke description: In the image we see a drawing of Sigmund Freud's head where a naked woman can also be identified: the woman's right leg constitutes Freud's nose, her left leg is his left cheek, etc., playing with the figure and background perception of the viewer. The only words that can be read are just the famous psychologist's name: *Sigmund Freud*.

Joke 9 is a good example of image evaluation (*Im*), which plays with the perception of figure and background, where the only linguistic clue turns out to be the name of 'Sigmund Freud' as a label to the drawing. As may become apparent, this clue is as crucial to understand the humorousness and the evaluative content of the joke as the drawing, the conflation of both elements triggering the implicature that sex and women were the only things Freud had in his head.

Having discussed the last variable, it is now due to complete the equations started in 5.1 for the first three jokes. Thus, if we think in terms of the mode of the evaluation, it can be observed that in the three cases the stance is transmitted through both the text and the images: In Joke 1, both the expression of the psychologist in the drawing and the linguistic content evaluate these professionals as people who know nothing about their field. In Joke 2, both the image of Kirschner in a straitjacket and the title of the book hypothetically written by her evaluate the President as a crazy or irrational person. Finally, in Joke 3 we can also see a conflation of image and words in order to convey the evaluation of both men as simple-minded people and of women as more profound in some senses but very superficial in some others. Herewith, then, the complete equation for the three cases:

Joke 1: $E_1 = F(T, \text{Sem-prag}, \text{Cov}, \text{Neg}, \text{MS}, \text{Ling/Im})$

Joke 2: $E_2 = F(T, \text{Morph}, \text{Cov}, \text{Neg}, \text{MS}, \text{Ling/Im})$

Joke 3: $E_3 = F(T, \text{Lex}, \text{Cov}, \text{Mix}, \text{MS}, \text{Ling/Im})$

We have now dealt with the six main variables that so far I have found to be crucial for the analysis of evaluative discourse. However, the list is not a closed one, and the possibility of including other variables in the whole equation as a result of future research with different linguistic genres is not discarded.

6. Analysis and comparison of two final examples

In all the jokes analyzed for this work, both in English and in Spanish, the humorous approach to the topics or people mocked at presents itself as an excuse to level some kind of criticism at them or to set a given stance on the part of the jokester. Now that the qualitative values of all the arguments of the evaluation equation have been established, it is worth noting that the methodology presented herein can be taken as a reference for establishing comparisons of the evaluative content of utterances and/or texts at different levels. As a way of illustration, I shall analyze the evaluative functional relationship for Jokes 10 and 11, which have some kind of resemblance with Jokes 5 and 3, respectively. I will compare the two pairs of jokes by looking at the different or similar values for the six variables in each case. It is hoped that these comparisons will help the reader appreciate the usefulness of the methodology of analysis proposed in this work, which makes it easier for the analyst to detect nuances of meaning between two jokes in this case, but which can be applied to the comparison of the evaluative variables found in any other type of discourse.

Joke 10: <http://www.pinterest.com/pin/269934571386668559/>

Joke description: In the image we can see a male psychologist and his patient in a therapy session. While the psychologist is seated in a big armchair which has been lifted up to a very high position, he invites his patient to sit on a tiny stool that would place the patient at a very low height with respect to his therapist. The caption (in Spanish) coming out of the psychologist's mouth is the following: "A ver, póngase cómodo y hablemos de ese complejo de inferioridad..." (*Let's see, make yourself comfortable and let's talk about that inferiority complex of yours*).

It is evident that in Joke 10, as was the case with Joke 5 above, there is a somewhat negative covert evaluation of psychotherapists, given by the clash between text and image. The psychotherapist's utterance appears to show an understanding of the patient's problem and an invitation to talk about it, but the picture of them both obviously stands in contrast with any neutral attitude on the part of the psychoanalyst, who is seated in a very comfortable armchair at a very high position, looking down on the patient, who has to sit on a very little stool. The image is thus symbolizing the evident fact that the therapist has a superiority complex. Both

Jokes 5 and 10 are typical examples of humorous irony used to covertly express a criticism of a given character (in this case, psychotherapists in general), conveyed through the high degree of dissonance found between what this character says and what he really does. It is ironic (and funny) that a person who suffers from such a great superiority complex is supposedly qualified to treat another one with an alleged inferiority complex.

So if we look into the obvious evaluative component of Jokes 5 and 10, we shall see that 1) the phase at which the evaluation is found is the textual one, 2) the linguistic level at which the evaluation is conveyed is the semantic-pragmatic one (we would not be able to get the evaluative meaning by just looking at its vocabulary or syntax, without looking at the whole situation, including, for instance, the relationship between interlocutors), 3) the evaluation of psychotherapists is made in a covert way, for it is arrived at by means of implicature, 4) the stance taken and transmitted about psychoanalysts is certainly found nearer the negative pole of the continuum than the positive, for it depicts them as victims of the same mental illnesses they are supposedly qualified to treat, and therefore as inept professionals; 5) the parameter of evaluation is, as in all the jokes analyzed herein, the Mental State one, and 6) the evaluation is conveyed through both words and image. The evaluation equation for both jokes would therefore contain the exact same values, and thus, even though one is in English and the other one in Spanish, both jokes can be said to reflect the same stance on the part of the jokester or author, as shown in the equation:

Jokes 5 and 10: $E_5 = E_{10} = F(T, Sem-prag, Cov, Neg, MS, Ling/Im)$

Joke 11: <http://www.wordsonimages.com/photo?id=109995-Funny+george+carlin+quote+495x>

Joke description: In the image we see a photo of the American stand-up comedian George Carlin, delivering one of his famous monologues, a part of which is written on the image, and reads like follows:

"Here's all you have to know about men and women: women are crazy, men are stupid. And the main reason women are crazy is that men are stupid".

–George Carlin

Joke 11 belongs to the third type of jokes, i.e. that in which the mental state or capacity of men and women is evaluated, and through which the stance of the joker (the comedian George Carlin in this case) can be inferred. Therefore, it bears some similarity with Joke 3 in that it presents an evaluation of the mental state of men and women, but in contrast with Joke 3 (where the evaluation of men and women is done in an indirect manner), in Joke 11 Carlin is very direct and overt in his appraisal. At the beginning he seems to hold a very negative stance towards both

sexes (*women are crazy* and *men are stupid*), but his final statement lets the reader or hearer see that he is being much more critical of men than of women (*And the main reason women are crazy is that men are stupid*), whose craziness turns out to be caused by men's stupidity. The value for the first variable of the evaluative function is as for all the jokes analyzed herein, the textual phase. The linguistic level at which the evaluation is realized is mainly the lexical one, for Carlin resorts to and plays with the basic semantic meaning of the adjectives "crazy" and "stupid" in order to convey his final stance with respect to gender differences. Thus in Joke 11 the position along the evaluation continuum is clearly polarized toward its negative end, especially in his appreciation of men, while in Joke 3 there is a mixed kind of evaluation, where some aspects appear to be deemed as positive and some others as not so positive for both men and women. The parameter in both jokes is once more the Mental State (MS) parameter, evaluating men and women's mental capacities, and the mode of the evaluation is purely linguistic in Joke 11 (for it would have the same meaning even if the image of George Carlin were not accompanying his words), while in Joke 3 the image is necessary and affects the final evaluative message. Thus the functional relationship for Joke 11 can be represented in the following manner:

$$\text{Joke 11: } E_{11} = F(T, \text{Lex}, \text{Ov}, + \text{Neg for men} / - \text{Neg for women}, \text{MS}, \text{Ling})$$

And if this equation is compared to that of Joke 3 (in 5 above), it will be noticed that, in spite of its apparent similarity (both are critical of men and women), there are differences concerning variables 3, 4 and 6 that can be detected when applying the methodology and analysis of the variables proposed herein.

7. Summary and conclusions

This article makes two main points:

1. Humorous discourse (and psychology jokes in particular) always contains an underlying stance (on the part of the interlocutors), manifested through the use of evaluative language/discourse, gestures, prosody, laughter, or images. Therefore it is argued that stance/evaluation should be taken into account as a relevant variable or knowledge resource in any theory of humor performance. In this particular study, I have proposed its inclusion within Ruiz Gurillo's (2012) Revised GTVH.
2. A specific methodology for the analysis of the evaluative content of discourse – and of jokes in particular – has been presented and explained. The functional relationship where evaluation (E) is a function of a number of qualitative

variables has been established and developed for some of the jokes analyzed, thereby assigning specific qualitative values to each one of the arguments of the function *F*. This procedure enables the researcher to determine the final value of the variable *E* for each case analysis, a value that comes out as the result of the interaction of the arguments in the equation, and which will eventually render the final evaluative meaning of the jokes. It is argued that this kind of methodology and analysis can prove useful for the analysis of the evaluative content of other types of humorous discourse, as well as other types of discourse in general. Likewise, it can help the researcher in the detection of various differences, be it between different genres, languages, or, as shown in this particular study, between two different jokes in the same language (Jokes 5 and 10), or two similar jokes in different languages (Jokes 3 and 11). The variables and values affecting the evaluative functional relationship, however, have not been conceived as a closed set, but as an open one that could be modified and improved as a result of further and future research on the subject.

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Humor and advertising in Twitter

An approach from the General Theory of Verbal Humor and Metapragmatics

Ana Pano Alamán and Ana Mancera Rueda

Università di Bologna / Universidad de Sevilla

Irony and verbal humor play a leading role in computer-mediated discourses. Irony, for instance, is mainly used to criticise politics and politicians in Twitter, while verbal humor contributes to strengthen social relations in Twitter or Facebook. In this paper, we focus on humor in order to explore more in deep its mechanisms, function, and effects within Twitter “conversations” between Spanish companies or public institutions and microblog users. Assuming the main premises of the General Theory of Verbal Humor and adopting a metapragmatic approach, this research aims at identifying the knowledge resources at work when humor is used as an advertising strategy; as well as categorizing these tweets according to the types of logical mechanisms adopted by the interactants to solve the script-opposition in which humor is based. The analysis proves that verbal and visual humor is a strategy adopted by most companies and institutions in order to give visibility to their products and services and to reinforce the social ties with their potential customers.

Keywords: General Theory of Verbal Humor, Metapragmatics, Twitter, Spanish advertising

1. Introduction

The main functions of a Community Manager¹ (CM) are promoting the products of a company, stimulating a better brand awareness, listening to customers, using

1. According to J.A. Gallego, President of the Spanish Association of Online Communities (AERCO), the CM administrates the community of followers of a given company, being an expert in the use of social media: <http://posicionamientoenbuscadoreswebseo.es/documentos/guia-community-manager.pdf> Last accessed: 15-11-2015.

social networks as a customer service, driving “traffic” to the web site, and increasing the number of followers. Twitter is particularly profitable for companies, because it is very common for users of this social network to become brand advertisers. In fact, the probability that active consumers on Twitter positively affect the reputation of a brand is three times higher than the impact of conventional consumers (Schaefer 2012: 43). In order to catch the attention of Twitter users, many Spanish companies and institutions post messages with humorous contents with the intention that they impact the audience.

This paper focuses on how the CMs of several Spanish companies and public services, such as the police, use verbal humor in Twitter as a strategy for giving visibility to their products and services, as well as strengthening the social ties with their potential customers. A corpus of 250 tweets has been analysed, with a metapragmatic approach, and according to the principles of the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH). Also, we have applied the GRIALE research group theoretical model (Ruiz Gurillo 2012) on verbal irony marks and indicators connected to the inferential processes that facilitate the understanding of humor, since they provide a useful guide for establishing a taxonomy of different types of humorous tweets.

2. General Theory of Verbal Humor and Metapragmatics

According to the GTVH (Attardo 1994, 2001, 2008; Attardo and Raskin 1991), and to recent developments of this theory (Attardo, Hempelmann and Di Maio 2002; Davies 2011; Ruiz Gurillo 2012; Ruiz Gurillo and Alvarado Ortega 2013), humor can be analyzed through six knowledge resources: the *script-opposition* (see also Raskin 1985, 2008), as a necessary requirement for humor to appear; the *logical mechanism*, which presents the playful logic at the origin of the opposition, and aims at resolving the incongruency generated by the script-opposition; the *communicative situation*, including participants, activities, or objects; the *target* of the humorous text or utterance in conversation, either internal or external to the communicative situation; the *narrative strategy*, referring to the text organisation; and the *language*, which is related to the linguistic choices made by the speaker to provoke humor effects on the hearer or the audience (Attardo 2001: 1–28).

The definition of the logical mechanism which explains the opposition within a humorous text is a controversial aspect of the GTVH (Hempelmann 2004; Hempelman and Attardo 2011); however, as Ruiz Gurillo (2012: 46–51) points out, the taxonomy proposed by Attardo, Hempelmann and Di Maio (2002) provides a valid definition of this knowledge resource by applying a distinction between the mechanisms based on syntagmatic relations, like juxtaposition or

parallelism, and those based on reasoning, like analogies, exaggerations or false premises. Assuming the main postulates of the GTVH and adopting a linguistic and a pragmatic perspective, the GRIALE research group (Ruiz Gurillo 2012) proposes a model based on the inferential processes which facilitate the understanding of humor. Within this model, the linguistic choices made by speakers in order to provoke humor can be understood as marks and indicators that facilitate the process of inference and the resolution of the incongruity derived from the script-opposition within the text (Ruiz Gurillo 2012: 36); also, they are a crucial resource, as they respond to the processes of variability, negotiability, and adaptability of the speakers to the communicative context (Verschueren 1999, 2002).

Linguistic choices are related to the metapragmatic awareness or competence of speakers (Gombert 1992; Reyes 2002), which concerns the ability of a person to establish relationships between the linguistic message and its context of use. As stated by Verschueren, any use of language implies a level of metapragmatic awareness (2002), and whenever individuals elaborate a message, they make a series of linguistic choices evaluating their own competence and that of their interlocutors. Reyes notes that this participation or intervention of the speakers in their own speech is reflexive, since it implies decisions, preferences, and evaluation processes which are echoed in the structure of the text. Speakers consider what is said and what is implied throughout the analysis of the choices made at the grammatical, lexical or phonological levels of a text, as well as on the stylistic devices and the intertext set in motion (Reyes 2002: 14; Silverstein 1993).

The production and the interpretation of verbal humor entails this metapragmatic competence as well. In regards of puns in conversation, Norrick (2003: 1346) asserts that they “presuppose our close attention to the local context and engage our wits to reanalyze the talk within it rapidly, as well as requiring us to ‘be able to take a joke’ in some cases”. According to the distinction established by Grice (1975) between literal meaning and speaker’s intention, Norrick indicates that the recipient processes the literal meaning of an utterance assuming that the speaker adheres to the cooperative principle and its associated maxims, and then checks this interpretation against the context. If there is a violation of any of the maxims, in particular those of quality and quantity, the recipient works out possible implicatures corresponding to what the speaker intended; the clash between the initial literal interpretation and the implicature serves the purpose of humor theories requiring two opposed meanings or scripts (Attardo 1994). In this process, the metapragmatic competence of the recipient allows, on the one hand, the identification within a text of the linguistic marks and indicators of humor which signal the choice made by the speaker to provoke an incongruity; on the other hand, it facilitates the logical resolution, that is, the recognition and the understanding of this incongruity, leading to the appreciation, and the agreement of

humor within a specific context (Alvarado Ortega 2013: 193–200). In this respect, humor may be defined as

an *intentional communicative event* of a transversal and regulatory nature which goes simultaneously through the different levels where communication is realized. [...], it affects all the metacommunicative and contextual knowledge owned by speakers which are useful to them acting as an interpretative guide to give sense (the best possible sense) to the utterances generated during the activity in which humor is inserted (Méndez García de Paredes 2013: 86, italics ours).

These theoretical assumptions have been tested in different contexts and types of discourse, such as Spanish TV programmes (Méndez García de Paredes 2013), colloquial conversations (Alvarado Ortega 2013), graphic humor (Padilla García 2013), and political discourses (Carranza Márquez 2010). On the other hand, studies on humor in business contexts (Poon and Fatt 2002) and advertising, in press and television (Catanescu and Tom 2001) or radio (Flaherty, Weinberger and Gulas 2004; Gulas and Weinberger 2006) indicate that humor may be used as a strategy to capture the audience, so it may be understood as an intentional act capable of producing effects of collusion between not only the media and its audience, but also between the institutions and companies and, respectively, their potential users and customers. In the line of previous research, we intend to show that humor in Twitter has a similar function.

3. Corpus and methodology

Our qualitative research is based on the linguistic and pragmatic analysis of 250 tweets in which verbal humor and irony are used with propagandistic and advertising purposes. The messages were compiled in April 2015 by the social analytics tool Topsy Pro, a tool widely used by marketers and Twitter researchers, although it is not available since December 2015. It was a real-time search engine for social posts and socially shared content, primarily on Twitter and GooglePlus. The tweets that we analysed constitute a monolingual corpus of messages published in the diatopical variety of peninsular Spanish. The messages selected for this research have been sent both by State institutions (Police, Guardia Civil) and by national (Renfe, Campofrío, Telepizza and Cola Cao) and multinational (Media Markt, Fnac, Oscar Mayer, Movistar, Vueling Airlines, Yoigo) companies, which tweet frequently and have a large number of followers, in order to see whether their different function and communication purposes have an impact on the humoristic strategies adopted. Working on the assumptions of the GTVH, first, we focus on the linguistic choices made by speakers, and on the script-opposition

and the logical mechanisms at work in these tweets. The metapragmatic perspective applied here to the analysis of humor raises the idea of choice, which is a key concept in Pragmatics, since the selection process performed by the speaker at various levels, in order to generate humor, discloses some degree of awareness of the linguistic forms available – as the concept of “awareness of the paradigm” (Reyes 2002:30) suggests –, as well as some knowledge of their functions and their possible effects on communication (Levinson 2000: 367). We aim, thus, at exploring the mechanisms adopted by users in the production and the interpretation of humor in these particular tweets, as well as analysing the main effects of this type of advertising in digital settings.

Second, we provide a taxonomy of the tweets according to the knowledge resources present and to their propagandistic effect. As Charaudeau (2012: 127) points out, the discourses of propaganda are mainly characterised by the position of the authority of the speaker and by the fact that the target is always a collective instance. Advertising is a sort of propaganda discourse because it is based on the idealization of the individual wishes, and it seeks the complicity with the hearers. In addition, promotional texts² can be considered propagandistic discourses as well, since they attempt to correct a stigmatized behaviour. As we shall see, this is the most common strategy adopted by the CMs of the Spanish Policía Nacional and Guardia Civil (hence force PN and GC), when these institutions try to persuade people to adopt specific habits, or to report criminal acts.

4. Results of the analysis

4.1 Twitter “conversations” and humor

Current studies on language use in social networks like Facebook or Twitter indicate that communication is here highly expressive because of the constant updating of textual and audiovisual content generated by users themselves. Moreover, linguistic and pragmatic research reveals a high degree of “conversationality” in the microblog, which is facilitated by the use of @ as a marker of addressivity (Zappavigna 2012). Partly because of the brevity of messages, the communicative immediacy and the dialogic character of computer-mediated discourses, conversations in Twitter favor the adoption of some elements of orality and colloquiality (Mancera Rueda and Pano Alamán 2013b), giving dynamism to the communicative process. As shown in Pano Alamán and Mancera Rueda (2014b), the model

2. Mancera Rueda and Helfrich (2014) analyse this aspect in political and media discourses in Twitter.

proposed by the group Val.Es.Co (Briz 2007) for the analysis of colloquial conversations in Spanish proves to be valid for the analysis of Twitter interactions.

In Twitter dialogic exchanges, speakers frequently turn into irony and humor, especially while they agree or disagree with an interlocutor: in fact, irony may be used to criticise politics and politicians (Mancera Rueda and Pano Alamán 2013a; Mancera Rueda 2014, Pano Alamán 2015), while humor may contribute to strengthen social relations (Pano Alamán and Mancera Rueda 2014b). It is important to note that tweets may not be considered as humoristic genres, even if they may contain humoristic utterances or have a parodic purpose, as it has been illustrated in Pano Alamán and Mancera Rueda (2014a). In this sense, they may be assimilated to conversation (cfr. Ruiz Gurillo 2012). These findings are useful for our current analysis, as humor plays an important role in the “conversations” considered here. The CMs interact with Twitter users frequently adapting their messages to the linguistic register as well as to the humorous intentions of their interlocutors, while replying to questions addressed to the companies or institutions via the @. They elaborate their messages, which are in general answers and clarifications about their services or products, in a collaborative manner (Fant 1996: 171–176), their answer being directly connected to the previous message. See, for instance, the following exchange:

- (1) Señor Dios (@SeñorDios). “@Telepizza_es *Servís pizzas a cementerios?*”³ 03-5-2014. Telepizza (@Telepizza_es). “@SeñorDios si, *siempre que este dentro de nuestra zona de reparto*. Pero si al tercer día resucitas, pide menú de grupo a 6,50€ cada uno ☺”. 03-5-2014. [...] Telepizza (@Telepizza_es). “*Nuestro repartidor está en el cementerio que nos dijiste @SeñorDios, pero no hay nadie :-/*”. 05-5-2014. Woels Tucks (@xxx). “@Telepizza_es *sois unos putos trolls jajajajajaja!!!*”. 05-5-2014. [Señor Dios (@SeñorDios). “@Telepizza_es *Do you deliver pizzas to cemetaries?*”. 03-5-2014. Telepizza (@Telepizza_es). “@SeñorDios *yes, if they are in our delivery area*. But if you rise on the third day, ask for a group menu € 6.50 each ☺”. 03-5-2014. (...) Telepizza (@Telepizza_es). “*Our delivery boy is in the cemetary that you told us @SeñorDios, but there is no one in it :-/*”. 05-5-2014. (@xxx). “@Telepizza_es *you are fucking trolls hahahahahah!!!*”. 05-5-2014.]

The first speaker, whose nickname is @SeñorDios (@MrGod), asks @Telepizza_es if the company delivers pizzas in cemetaries, thus, generating a clear incongruity between the type of service requested and the location indicated, this being the

3. We follow the MLA guidelines for quoting tweets. For privacy concerns, we hide the name or the nickname of users (@xxx), maintaining those of the companies, since these may be relevant for the purposes of the study.

last place where one would deliver, and even eat a pizza. The speaker juxtaposes two contexts, two meanings, which are incompatible with each other, therefore, inviting and challenging the CM of the company to recognise this contrast and activate a process of inference, which must lead to the recognition of the non serious attitude of the speaker and the interpretation of the (implied) humoristic sense of the message. In other words, the CM is invited to identify, throughout her metapragmatic competence, the underlying logical mechanisms of such inconsistency (Méndez García de Paredes 2013). In this case, the CM not only accomplishes adequately this process, “taking the joke”, but also, while responding, conveys a new humorous message, which emphasizes the first incongruity and extends its effect to the subsequent interventions.

This is a common strategy in the colloquial conversation in Spanish, as it has been shown by Alvarado Ortega (2013). Similarly, the analysis conducted by Ruiz Gurillo (2012) on verbal humor in informal conversations confirms that in these settings, irony and humor⁴ may appear both in initiative and in reactive interventions, and that humor may result of a continued incongruity which occupies more than a single turn, thus, being produced by speakers collaboratively (2012: 112).

In (1), the script-opposition set by @SeñorDios in the initial intervention is maintained and even reinforced thanks to the unexpected answer of @Telepizza_, who confirms the delivery of pizzas in cemeteries only on a logistic condition, which contrasts with the policy of the company and the non-sense of delivering a pizza in a graveyard. Surprisingly, this humorous performance is extended the following day through a new message addressed by the CM to the same recipient, informing of an “actual” delivery in a cemetery, even though nobody is there. The linguistic choice of the CM, based on the juxtaposition of two meanings in contrast, has a humorous effect on another user who displays laughter: “you are fucking trolls hahahahahah!!!”.

Humor is here a strategy adopted by the CMs for entertainment purposes and for building camaraderie as well. As Norrick suggests: “humor allows conversationalists to demonstrate and test a wide variety of shared knowledge and

4. However, irony entails negative inferences, whereas humor requires a substitution of one script for another; irony may be understood as an indirect negation, while humor revolves around a script-replacing antonymic mechanism; finally and most important, “with regard to the inferences involved, irony primarily entails the violation of the principle of quantity. Instead, humor involves the infringement of the informativity principle” (Ruiz Gurillo and Alvarado Ortega 2013: 5; see also Rodríguez Rosique 2013: 27–32 and Ruiz Gurillo 2012: 131–141).

attitudes, as well as to perform for their mutual entertainment with a consequent enhancement of rapport” (2003: 1345).⁵ This is particularly evident in (2):

- (2) (@xxx). “@Renfe oie tetes kuando bais a konstruir el abe mirin-desenvrigo del rei; es xra un hamijo xd”. 24-04-2014. Renfe (@Renfe). “@xxx los abes los konstrulle el hestado, renfe solo pone trenes en la bia, rekuer2 a tu hamijo ;-))”. 24-04-2014. (@cxxx). “@Renfe NO PUEDE SER WOAJAJAJAAJAJXJXD”. 24-04-2014. Renfe (@Renfe). “@xxx Teníamos miedo de que no nos entendieras bien. ¡Buen final de jueves, que ya no queda nada!”. 24-04-2014. [(@xxx). “@Renfe lads, when r’ u goin’ 2 build the abe [AVE high-speed rail] to mirin-desenvrigo del rei; tahts a Q FAFWOA [For a Friend Without Access] xd”. 24-04-2014. Renfe (@Renfe). “@xxx the abes ar’ built by the st8, renfe just puts trains on the rail, RGDS 2 ur friend ;-))”. 24-04-2014. (@xxx). “@Renfe IT CANNOT BE TRUE WOAJAJAJAAJAJXJXD”. 24-04-2014. Renfe (@Renfe). “@xxx We were afraid that you did not understand us well. Have a good day on this Thursday! 24-04-2014.]

The first tweet contains a question which is formulated in an heterographic way openly violating the ortographic norms of standard Spanish; at the same time, the question is intended to give an answer to a “friend” of the speaker, an expression used in Spanish to hide one self behind an invented friend while formulating uneasy questions or requests. These two elements clearly invite the reader, in this case the CM of the Spanish railway company Renfe, to activate her metalinguistic and metapragmatic competences. Again, the CM not only resolves the incongruency, but appreciates and agrees the humorous intention of the interlocutor. Furthermore, her reply echoes the question by imitating that heterographic code as well as mentioning that hypothetical friend; this surprises positively the first speaker, due to the unexpected answer of the company, which shows a witty attitude. In this case, the CM strategy proves to be effective too, since her interlocutor praises the answer by “laughing”, that is, using the onomatopoeic “hahahahah” in the written message; and, as the last tweet implies, this positive reaction allows the CM to further contribute to the joking, even if on a more serious attitude, strengthening the relationship with the potential customer.

5. In situations of social equality, it may act as an element of cohesion and solidarity (Antonopoulou and Sifianou 2003; Alvarado Ortega 2013).

4.2 A taxonomy of humorous tweets with propagandistic purposes

In this section, we provide a tentative taxonomy of tweets based on the knowledge sources identified by the GTVH to explain humor and on the metapragmatic perspective adopted so far. This will allow us to identify the different categories of messages that can be found in the selected profiles, in relation to the propagandistic purposes pursued by the CMs. However, these are not exclusive categories because, as we shall see, a single tweet can serve several purposes.

4.2.1 *Humorous tweets based on script-oppositions*

As Raskin (1985) suggests, in order to consider a text as humorous one should note, at least, two different scripts that oppose each other in the manner of an antonymic relationship, overlapping partially or completely. For example, in the following tweet, the speaker, using the word “silencer”, implicitly equates printers with firearms through a logical mechanism based on an imperfect reasoning sustained on an exaggeration:

- (3) (@xxx). “@MediaMarkt_es ¿Vendéis silenciadores para impresoras? Os juro que ahora me vendría uno muy bien”. 01-04-2015. [(@xxx). “@MediaMarkt_es Do you sell silencers for printers? I swear that if I had one it would certainly suit me”. 01-04-2015.]

According to the GTVH, there are three phases involved in the interpretation of script-oppositions: the establishment phase, the phase of incongruity and the resolution phase. However, for Padilla García and Gironzetti (2012), in multimodal genres, scripts may coexist in the same discursive space. For example, the image accompanying (4) promotes a double interpretation of “chocolate” in its colloquial sense: the CM of the Spanish GC presents it as a metaphor for “hashish” (script enabled by the image where the drug is hidden in juice packs), instead of the more literal snack (mentioned in the text).

The informativity principle is violated here since the polysemy of “chocolate” provokes a multiplication of references, acting in this context as an indicator of humor. The metapragmatic competence of the reader, which makes her know the two possible meanings of the word “chocolate”, guides her to the correct interpretation of the tweet as a humoristic one; by the way, humor is reinforced here by the implicit references to the fact that the author of such a criminal action – trafficking hashish – had to dinner “with us”, in other words, in jail:

(4)



[Guardia Civil (@guardiacivil). “Someone thought that would have the perfect snack with #juice and a little bit of #chocolate. At the end of the day, he had supper with us”. 15-12-2014.]

In the tweets published in the PN (Policía Nacional) Twitter profile, humor is used as a strategy to encourage users to report criminal acts:

- (5) Policía Nacional (@policia). “*Si has visto a algún camello (y no los d la cabalgata)*, cuéntanoslo a antidroga@policia.es No por competencia desleal, sino por lucro infame”. 05-01-2015. [Policía Nacional (@policia). “*If you’ve seen a camel (but not those of the Magic Kings parade)*, please, tell it to us on antidroga@policia.es. This is not unfair competition, but shameful profit”. 05-01-2015.]

The traditional parade of the Magic Kings on the 5th January serves as a pretext to make smile the followers of this account, through a script-opposition based on the dilogy of the word “camel”, a mechanism similar to the one seen in (4). Other examples of script-oppositions supported by logical mechanisms based on syntagmatic relations can be found in our corpus. For instance, in (6) the mobile phone company Yoigo speaks as a human being⁶ and adopts the characteristics of human beings like, for example, having parents:

- (6) (@xxx). “@somosyoigo @xxx oye y de donde surgió el nombre de Yoigo”. 28-12-2014. Yoigo (@somosyoigo). “@xxx @xxx No sé, *pregúntale a mis padres*”. 28-12 2014. [(@xxx). “@somosyoigo @xxxlisten what’s the origin of the name Yoigo?”. 28-12-2014. Yoigo (@somosyoigo). “@xxx @xxx I don’t know. *Ask my parents*”. 28-12-2014.]

6. Personification or “prosopopoeia” is a resource commonly used as an indicator of humor.

The interaction between the CM of this mobile company and the same user goes on, but evoking a different script, related to “New Year’s Eve” family dinners, in (7):

- (7) (@xxx). “@somosyoigo @xxx puff, *a los suegros*, pregúntaselo tú, anda”. 28-12-2014. Yoigo (@somosyoigo). “@xxx @xxx No, que así *vas cogiendo confianza para la cena de Nochevieja*”. 28-12-2014. [(@xxx). “@somosyoigo @xxx phew, *you, ask your parents-in-law!*”. 28-12-2014. Yoigo (@somosyoigo). “@xxx @xxx No, do it yourself *so you gain confidence for the New Year’s Eve dinner*”. 28-12-2014.]

4.2.2 Humor based on exaggeration

CMs often use humorous tweets based on exaggeration in order to highlight the qualities of their companies’ products. The following tweet evokes the script of a child promptly asking his parents to buy him a new mobile phone, comparing the haste of this sort of petitions with the quick solubility of the popular cocoa powder Cola Cao:

- (8) Cola Cao (@colacao). “Tarda menos en disolverse, que tu hijo en pedir un #smartphone nuevo. #colacao #turbo”. 27-02-2015. [Cola Cao (@colacao). “It takes less time to dissolve than your child asking for a new #smartphone. #colacao #turbo”. 27-02-2015.]

In (9) we see another reasoning mechanism based on a hyperbolic comparison between a *smart* house and the potential customer of Media Markt – identified here as *you* –; however, the assumption that the house may be smartest than the customer may carry here an attack to her positive face, being a risky strategy for the company:

- (9) Media Markt España (@MediaMarkt_es). “¿Cómo ahorrar dinero y energía con *una casa que es más inteligente que tú?*”. 31-03-2015. [Media Markt España (@MediaMarkt_es). “How to save money and energy with *a house which is cleverer than you?*”. 31-03-2015.]

Another case is that of the CM of the Guardia Civil, who frequently uses hyperboles to increase the impact of the recommendations published in its Twitter profile:

(10)



[Guardia Civil (@guardiacivil). “Don’t take #WhiteChristmas literally. #Coca[ine] consumption increases disproportionately in these days. Step over the #line”. 17-12-2014.]

In the previous message, one notices the figurative sense of the noun phrase “White Christmas” and the colloquial shortening of the word “cocaine”, both indicated as hashtags.⁷ The imperative verbal form at the end of the tweet (“Step over the #line”/“pasa de la #raya”) reworks the meaning of the phrase “crossing the line”, which undergoes a semantic disautomatization (Timofeeva 2009). At the same time, the exaggeration contained in the image might be understood as a complement of the verbal humor in the message.

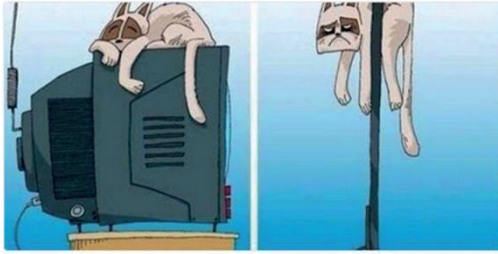
4.2.3 *Humorous tweets based on graphic information*

The frequent number of multimodal messages suggests that there is another category of tweets in which the CM make people smile not only through verbal content, but also through graphic humor,⁸ like in cartoons:

7. A hashtag is frequently used to mark the topic of the tweet as a form of explicit metadata in the message.

8. See Padilla García (2013) in relation to humor and graphic humor in the media.

- (11)  Media Markt España @MediaMarkt_es · 27 de mar.
A los únicos que no les gustan las pantallas
planas.



Retweet 173 · Favorito 152 · Más opciones Ver más fotos y videos

[Media Markt España (@MediaMarkt_es). “The only ones who do not like flat screens”. 27-03-2015.]

In these cases, the CM tends to retweet humorous messages sent by other users, strengthening the social ties with them, while increasing the number of their followers:

- (12)  Media Markt España ha retuiteado
 pegina @HeilHitlexxd · 31 de mar.
Mira qué curvas tan perfectas. @MediaMarkt_es



Retweet 6 · Favorito 16 · Más opciones Ver más fotos y videos

[Retweeted by Media Markt España. “Look at those perfect curves @MediaMarkt_es”. 27-03-2015.]

4.2.4 Humorous tweets based on current news

News foster the creativity of Twitter users in the elaboration of humorous tweets as well. In (13), the CM of Oscar Mayer refers to a well-known event in order to advertise the products of this food company, using hashtags with some appeal among Twitter users, who probably follow the news on television; these hashtags may even turn into Trending Topics (TT). In this tweet, the hashtag #terremoto, referring to an earthquake which struck the Iberian Peninsula in February 2015, became a TT, and this inspired the CM, who published a humorous tweet based here on an exaggeration:

- (13) Oscar Mayer (@oscarmayerspain). “*El #terremoto ha sido claramente las tripas de alguien con mucha hambre...*”. 23-02-2015. Tuit. [Oscar Mayer (@oscarmayerspain). “*The #earthquake has clearly been the guts of someone being very hungry...*”. 23-02-2015. Tuit.]

Humor is grounded on a faulty reasoning that violates Grice’s (1975) maxim of Truth as well; in this sense, it may astonish the reader, aware of the incongruity that presupposes the ignorance of the obvious. This seems to be the case in (14), where the Police, using a hashtag, refers to the successful game show #Masterchef, actually in order to indicate the menu of a detainee; this strategy increases the impact of her recommendations, the hashtag being probably read by a high number of Twitter users:

(14)



[Policía Nacional (@policia). “Speaking of food in different places... If you drive after drinking you will taste the detainee’s breakfast #Masterchef”. 24-07-2014.]

4.2.5 Tweets based on parody and intertextuality

Parody is a key mechanism for verbal humor in Twitter (Pano Alamán and Mancera Rueda 2014a). In the corpus analysed, many tweets recur to parody and intertextuality in the production of humorous utterances, since these appeal to the shared knowledge between the author and the brand’s followers, who – by means of their metapragmatic competence – will be able to solve the conflict generated between different meanings and voices in the current context. As we see in (15), the reader is invited to recognise in the first sentence the first strophe of a well-known Spanish poem, which has been distorted with humorous purposes:

- (15) Campofrío España (@Campofrio_es). “*Con diez salchichones por banda...’ La Canción del Pirata de Espronceda empezaba a ‘sí, ¿no?.* [sic] ¡Felicidades, maestro!”. 23-03-2015. [Campofrío España (@Campofrio_es). “*With ten sausages on each side... Espronceda’s Pirate Song began like that, isn’t it? Congratulations, master!.*” 23-03-2015.]

Another strategy frequently used in Twitter by the Police, with a promotional aim, is parodying the behavior and the mentality of certain individuals, in order to highlight their irresponsibility:

- (16) Policía Nacional (@policia). “*El tuit que estaba escribiendo al volante era tan bueno que la @policia ha empezado a seguirme y todo...’.* YA. SI CONDUCES, MEJOR NO TUTEES”. 10-12-2014. [Policía Nacional (@policia). “*The tweet I was writing while driving was so good that @policia has begun to follow me...’* YEAH. If you drive, better not to tweet”. 10-12- 2014.]

In some cases, a literal interpretation of the utterance may indicate the presence of an humoristic intention. See in (17) the ambiguity of the verb *liberar* / “to release” in the conversation between a journalist of *El Mundo Today*, a satiric newspaper, and the CM of Movistar, a Spanish mobile company:

- (17) 

[El Mundo Today (@elmundotoday). “International forces release six mobiles retained by Movistar”. 16-01-2014. Movistar España (@movistar_es). “Here is one waiting for years that someone claims for its release”. 16-01-2014.]

The company uses humor in front of the provocative message of *El Mundo Today*, it adopts a strategy based on the generation of different meanings around the word “liberación/release”, which in the first message has a negative sense for the company; in the second message, which is a humorous piece of multimodal discourse, it has an (implicit) positive sense which is exploited by the company, somehow autoironically. This is an effective strategy, since the Movistar message had a high impact on its followers: it was retweeted 186 times and marked as favorite by 137 users.

4.2.6 *Ironic tweets*

A literal interpretation of an utterance may indicate here an ironic intention too (Bruzos 2009: 49; Ruiz Gurillo y Padilla García 2009). In fact, an ironic utterance and a clear case of transparent insincerity (Haverkate 1985) appears in the answer of the low cost air company Vueling in (18). Previously, a user has asked in a provocative way if he will be charged by a second pack or bulge (metaphorically alluding to the male sexual organ), in the case he “gets an erection” while accessing the airplane. As we see, the message of the company, which includes a smiley, contains an answer based on the literal interpretation of the question, ultimately leading to an inconsistency and, then, to an ironic utterance with humoristic effects:⁹

- (18) (@xxx). “@vueling Hola buenas, *si entro al avión empalmado me cobráis otro bulto? Gracias de antemano*”. 02-02-2015. Vueling Airlines (@vueling). “@xxx Hola Albert, *solamente si supera las medidas de equipaje de mano que son: 55x40x20cm. Si no, tendrás que facturar... :)*”. 02-02-2015. [(@xxx). “@vueling Hi, *if I enter into the airplane with an erection do you charge me a second pack? Thanks in advance*”. 02-02-2015. Vueling Airlines (@vueling). “@xxx Hello Albert, *only if you exceed the measures of the hand luggage: 55x40x20cm. Otherwise, you will have to check... :)*”. 02-02-2015.

See also the following conversational exchange, which may be considered a case of continued irony (Ruiz Gurillo et al. 2004: 237), between the users of the mobile company Yoigo and its CM:

- (19) (@xxx1). “Feliz con mi Sinfin. Una pasada de tarifa... 20 gigas de datos y llamadas ilimitadas por 29 euros IVA incluido. Es la mía xD. @somosyoigo”. 11-03-2015. (@xxx2). “@xxx1 @somosyoigo Os *van a denunciar. Tendréis la culpa de que se quemen un gran número de móvil de tanto gastar datos xDDDD*”. 11-03-2015. Yoigo (@somosyoigo). “@xxx2 jajaja *Me encanta este post. Pues ahora voy...y te retwitteo ;)*”. 11-03-2015. (@xxx2). “@somosyoigo *También os dejo que me hagáis un descuento en la factura, o me regaléis un*

9. See Kreuz and Glucksberg (1989) or Kumon-Nakamura, Glucksberg and Brown (1995) for these type of utterances.

iPhone por la cara o algo así más pro, eh? XDDDD". 11-03-2015. Yoigo (@somosyoigo). "@xxx2 Buff se me escapa de las manos lo que me pides :(, pero me has caído bien así que te deseo una buena noche ;)". 11-03-2015. [(@xxx1). "Happy with my Sinfin [Noend]. A great fare... 20 gyga of data and unlimited calls for 29 euros IVA included. It's my fare xD. @somosyoigo". 11-03-2015. (@xxx2). "@xxx1 @somosyoigo You will be reported. You'll be guilty of burning lots of mobiles because of spending so much data xDDDD". 11-03-2015. Yoigo (@somosyoigo). "@xxx2 hahaha I love this post. Now I'll... I reweet it ;)". 11-03-2015. (@xxx2). "@somosyoigo You are also allowed to make me a discount, or give me an iPhone for free or something more pro, uh? XDDDD". 11-03-2015. Yoigo (@somosyoigo). "@xxx2 Uff what you ask for exceeds my possibilities :(, but I like you, so have a good night ;)". 11-03-2015.

As we see here, it is frequent that the CMs use irony in reactive or responsive tweets, promptly answering to the direct questions and comments of their potential customers.

4.2.7 *Humor responding to an attack or a complaint*

Both irony and humor may be used by the companies as strategies to answer to a customers' complaint, thus, mitigating the effects of the negative comments. See in the following messages how the CM of the multimedia store Fnac uses the alo-repetition and talks about the company staff using the exact dysphemistic epithet ("soplapollas"/ "wanker") addressed to them by the customer:

- (20) (@xxx). "EN QUÉ MOMENTO ME HICE SOCIO DEL FNAC DEJAD DE MANDARME CUATROCIENTOS CORREOS AL DÍA PUTA PANDA DE SOPLAPOLLAS". 11-03-2015. Fnac España (@Fnac_ESP). "@MisterJagger_ Hola, *aquí los soplapollas*, si quieres podemos gestionarte desde aquí tu suscripción. Mádanos por DM tu número de Socio ;)". 11-03-2015. [(@xxx). "WHEN DID I JOIN THE FNAC AS A MEMBER STOP SENDING ME DAILY THOUSANDS OF MAILS *FUCKING CREW OF WANKERS*". 11-03-2015. Fnac España (@Fnac_ESP). "@xxx Hi, *here the wankers speaking*, if you want we can manage your subscription from here. Send us a DM with your number of membership ;)". 11-03-2015.]

4.2.8 *The customer as a target*

This is a strategy frequently used by the Media Markt's CM, a company located in Barcelona. See how by saying "good morning" in the afternoon, at 4.55 p.m, the following message generates an incongruity, intended to mock the andalucians in the Spanish April Fool's Day (Día de los Inocentes), which is celebrated on the 28th December:

- (21) Media Markt España (@MediaMarkt_es). “Buenos días Andalucía”. 28-12-2014. [Media Markt España (@MediaMarkt_es). “Good morning Andalucía”. 28-12-2014.]

This was, in fact, intended as a mockery addressed to Andalusia and its inhabitants, and so, it was criticised¹⁰ by a number of Twitter users, who threatened to boycott the company, even though many other decided to be ironic, as we see in (22):

- (22) (@xxx). “*Y digo yo, si los andaluces nos levantamos a las 5 de la tarde, ¿para qué coño abre @MediaMarkt_es a las 10:00 en Andalucía?#YoNoSoyTonto*”. 30-12-2014. [(@xxx). “*I guess, if the Andalusians wake up at 5 in the afternoon, why the fuck @MediaMarkt_es opens at 10 a.m. in Andalusia? #IAmNotaFool*”. 30-12-2014.]

The reiterated ironical use of the company’s slogan #YoNoSoyTonto (#IamNotaFool) in messages like the previous one, converted it in a TT during some hours, so it had a great impact on the social network. In fact, the company had to publish an official excuse, in order to mitigate the negative effects of the first message.

5. Conclusion

In this work we have carried out a pragmatic analysis of how the CM of various Spanish companies and public institutions use verbal humor in Twitter. The qualitative analysis shows that humor is used in both types of profiles as a promotional and an advertising strategy, in order to consolidate the brand and the institution images and to increase the number of their followers in the microblog. The authors of the tweets make a series of lexical, grammatical and phonetic choices, according to the context and the promotional strategy adopted; these choices are also made in the perspective of an interpersonal exchange with the reader (Ruiz Gurillo 2012) and, in the case of the companies, the potential customer, who must be amused and convinced. Moreover, such choices are likely to be interpreted as marks and indicators of verbal humor, since they allow the resolution of the logical inconsistency posed by the humorous utterances contained in the tweets.

By being humorous, the CMs show closeness to citizens, in the case of public institutions, or to their potential customers, if we consider companies. However, it is essential that there exists a common knowledge base between the authors of the tweets and the readers, which will allow these to correctly interpret the funny intention behind the messages, using both the contextual and the situational

10. “Media Markt se burla de los andaluces en su Twitter en Barcelona: ‘Buenos días... a las 17:00 horas’”, *La voz libre*, 29-12-2014: <http://bit.ly/1JtcA3I> [22-04-2015].

information available, as well as the background of experiences and the cultural frames evoked in the messages. In other words, the author and the readers of these tweets have to activate their metalinguistic and metapragmatic competences to code and to interpret humor in this context. This depends to a large extent on culturally shared rules and conventions, since most of the humorous forms present in the corpus produce particularized conversational implicatures.

The analysis shows that there are different categories of humorous tweets. We distinguish between those supported by an opposition-script based on a hyperbolic imperfect reasoning, and those supported by an opposition-script based on the current news information. In these promotional messages the multimodal content plays a central role too, hence, we may also speak of tweets in which the image contributes to the resolution of the incongruence. Frequently, the tweets analysed recur to parody and intertextuality, and some are clearly ironic, specially in conversational exchanges.

Putting the focus on the communicative goals of these tweets, beyond the purely promotional ones, we have identified a number of messages in which humor may be used to respond to the attacks addressed to the company, and other messages, whose target is the customer herself, even though this is a practice that may be risky for the company.

Humor serves, thus, a wide range of functions in everyday social interactions, and in digital settings such as the microblog Twitter it can be a discourse strategy to reelaborate new identities for companies and institutions, as well as for reinforcing the ties with the audience. Holmes and Marra (2002a, 2002b) establish an interesting distinction between reinforcing and subversive humor. The former underpins existing or solidarity relationships, whereas the latter challenges existing power relationships. In our corpus, humor is used as an instrument of cohesion, leading to a greater closeness between the brand and the potential customer, as well as to cooperate in elaborating jokes within informal interactions. In addition, and in connection with the theories of aggression, it could be said that the CM uses humor in order to provoke the readers too, giving more visibility to the company's profile. Last but not least, unlike the companies' traditional customer care, we see here how the CMs develop a strategy in which humor serves to minimize the impact of possible grievances.

As a result of the findings of the present study, we think it might be interesting to embark on future research to see whether these humorous mechanisms and their functions are used in other computer-mediated promotional and commercial discourses. Moreover, in an attempt to explore common patterns or differences in the behaviour of CMs from different cultural backgrounds, the results of our findings may be tested against the analysis of humor of companies from other countries.

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Beyond verbal incongruity

A genre-specific model for the interpretation of humor in political cartoons

Marta Agüero Guerra

University of Iowa

The General Theory of Verbal Humor (Attardo and Raskin 1991) opened the path to study the mechanisms of humor. Research on the comprehension and production of cartoons has traditionally adopted cognitive-semantic theories to explain how readers interpret their humorous messages. While perfectly applicable, these theories focus on the linguistic components of cartoons, analyzing exclusively the text in their speech balloons or captions with little to no attention paid to what the visual components add to their meaning. This paper analyzes the nature of cartoons as narrative monomodal or multimodal ensembles and revisits previous approaches with the goal of proposing a new genre-specific model for the understanding of their humorous messages.

Keywords: humor, political cartoons, multimodality, social semiotics

1. Introduction

Humor is a multi-faceted phenomenon involving cognitive, affective, and physiological systems (Marín-Arrese 2008: 2). This explains why it is very difficult to determine the different mechanisms that participate in its production and comprehension. Disciplines such as linguistics have offered competent theories that have set the basis for subsequent investigations. However, these theories have not been able to offer a comprehensive analysis that works for the different humorous manifestations.

Linguistic theories of humor have focused either on the pragmatic characteristics surrounding the texts or on the examination of their linguistic content. Although the humorous message of cartoons can be explained by means of the study of the verbal code alone, these theories do not extend to the analysis of the visual code and, therefore, they cannot offer a complete interpretation.

Considering the nature of cartoons as narrative (verbo) pictorial ensembles, authors like Forceville (1994) and El Refaie (2003) have claimed the need to resort to semiotics to study their visual components. Similarly, research on visual grammar (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006 [1996]) and intersemiosis (Martinec and Salway 2005) has examined the different components that comprise pictorial or multimodal texts. There is little research on how these modes of representation convey the humorous message of cartoons or how the interpreter's levels of visual and multimodal literacy affect the interpretation.

This article examines the nature of cartoons and offers a genre-specific model for the interpretation of their humorous message. The originality of the model lies in completing previous theories of humor with an analysis of the visual components of cartoons and their ways of intermingling (or not) with the verbal captions in order to achieve a holistic decoding of the incongruous blend and, consequently, understand the humorous message.

2. Definition of the genre

Cartoons are one-panel artistic compositions that combine iconic (monomodal) or verbal-visual (multimodal) elements to express a humorous or sarcastic message. They are different from other graphic formats in the medium of comics such as comic strips, comic books or graphic novels in that they do not consist of a sequence of juxtaposed panels.¹ Some scholars have also claimed that they are still spatio-temporal units with narrative potential, or "graphic haikus" (Peñalba García 2014: 693), since they invite the reader to imagine a moment that comes after the depicted action (Carrier 2009: 108). The frame of the panel acts as a separation between the world of the cartoon and the real world surrounding it in the newspaper or on the website. Reading a cartoon is therefore a process of ellipsis, "a form of amplification through simplification" (McCloud 1993: 30).

Political cartoons are published in the opinion pages of newspapers, in magazines or on websites, and have a clear ideological function. Their purpose is to comment on or to satirize a social issue or political event, and usually they have as the target of their criticism the ruling forces or specific political leaders. As Marín-Arrese (2003: 4) asserts, they are used as a form of subversive activity against power. They manage to transmit their message by exaggerating situations or by profiling specific characteristics of the targets to depict them as incompetent. However,

1. Manuel Barrero states that in one-panel cartoons there is also a possibility for sequentiality if the panel includes more than one image or several medium-specific verbo-iconic signs (2012: 46).

cartoonists count on one prerequisite for the success of a political cartoon – the complicity of their readers (Marín-Arrese 2008: 16).

Some editorial cartoonists prefer to use what in this article is termed *mono-modal cartoons* (see Figure 4), that is, cartoons in which the humorous message is rendered exclusively by their pictorial components. The depicted moment in this type of cartoon is usually a pictorial metaphor that does not need verbal support to evoke the desired message on its own. It is the readers' responsibility to decipher the hidden meaning behind the metaphorical thought. Other cartoonists, however, prefer a multimodal format (see Figure 5) in which the visual elements are intertwined with verbal texts to communicate a joint message. In what follows, it is argued that both codes complement each other in different ways to create a comic effect.

The pictorial or verbo-iconic nature of cartoons and their dependence on the reader's will to collaborate in the communicative process make the production and evaluation of cartoons a difficult task. This article will propose different parameters to evaluate the humorous discourses cartoonists intend to convey. However, the content and style of the cartoon also depend on extratextual factors, such as the socio-cultural context to which the cartoonist belongs, the ideology of the newspaper where it is published, and its target audience.

It is therefore essential that research on the verbal and visual languages of cartoons avoids generalizations by narrowing its object of study. This can be achieved by selecting a stylistic tradition (whether Western or Eastern), or by specifying the socio-cultural context of the moment and the ideology of the newspapers/websites where cartoons appear. The cartoons selected for the purpose of the present article were created by the same Spanish cartoonist, Manel Fontdevila.² They all share a specific topic: the Spanish economic crisis. Their main target is the *Partido Popular*, the liberal right-wing political party that took office in 2011, and its relationships with the political leaders of other countries in Europe.

2. Manel Fontdevila (Manresa, 1965) has worked as a cartoonist since he was 15 years old, publishing his editorial cartoons in different newspapers and magazines such as *Región 7*, *El Vógora*, and *Público*. From 1993 to 2014 he contributed several comic strips to the satirical magazine *El Jueves*. Currently, he publishes his political cartoons in *El Diario* (<http://www.eldiario.es/>) and co-directs an online magazine, *Orgullo y satisfacción* (<http://www.orgulloysatisfaccion.com/>). His humor is intelligent, witty, and usually very cutting. He offers a fearless point of view about Spanish society, as can be seen in his compilation album about the Catholic Church, *Profundamente anticlerical* (2012), and in his graphic essay about the economic crisis, *No os indignéis tanto* (2013), among others.

3. Linguistic approaches to humor

Many factors come into play in the creation and interpretation of cartoons. An attempt to define how their different elements evoke a humorous effect is not a simple endeavor. To the difficulties of the study of an elusive phenomenon such as humor, linguists must add the puzzling specificities of a genre that does not rely exclusively, or perhaps not at all, on linguistic signs. Nonetheless, linguistic research has offered well-grounded and competent analyses that have set the basis for subsequent studies. This paper briefly revisits the theories that are relevant for the proposed model of analysis.

Most linguistic approaches to the study of humor evolve from the concept of *incongruity*. Philosophical theories of humor stated that laughter is produced as the result of an incongruity between what is expected in a situation and what eventually takes place (Morreall 1983: 15). When the expectations are frustrated and there is a necessary abrupt twist in interpretation, tension is relieved in the form of laughter or a smile. Subsequent semantic and cognitive theories have adopted the perception of an incongruity as the basis for understanding humorous messages. Thus, these two branches of linguistics have centered their studies of humor on the bisociation (Koestler 1964) produced by the opposition of two confronting frames of reference, or “scripts” (Schank and Abelson 1977).

3.1 Semantic-cognitive theories

Adopting the concept of “script,” Victor Raskin (1985) developed the Semantic Theory of Humor, which was later revised and completed by Attardo and Raskin (1991) as the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH). This theory is the most influential and widely accepted linguistic theory of humor, linking two disciplines that Raskin and Attardo consider necessary for the decoding of the humorous message. They have claimed that humorous discourse must have two cognitive frames or “scripts” that are incompatible in their semantic relations (Script Opposition, or SO). In addition, in an attempt to incorporate into this theory different linguistic areas, such as textual linguistics, narrative, or pragmatics, they added parameters that must be taken into account to resolve the incongruity and comprehend the humorous texts: *Script Opposition* (SO), the main requirement for the production and perception of humor: real/unreal, normal/not normal, possible/impossible; *Logical Mechanism* (LM), the manner in which two scripts are related (ambiguity, analogy, contradiction, exaggeration, juxtaposition, etc.); *Situation* (SI), the context of the joke; *Target* (TA), the butt of the joke; *Narrative Strategy* (NS), the genre of the joke; and *Language* (LA), the necessary information (phonetic, morphological, lexical, etc.) for the verbalization of a text. Scholars such as Paolillo

(1998), Samson (2008), Tsakona (2009), and Agüero Guerra (2013a) have shown that the six parameters of the GTVH and other linguistic theories like the Test 3 WD (Hempelmann and Ruch 2005) are applicable to the study of different types of humorous manifestations, including cartoons.

In spite of the popularity and applicability of Raskin and Attardo's theory, other scholars have noticed that some parameters were worthy of further consideration. In her book *La lingüística del humor en español* (2012), Ruiz Gurillo proposes a reconsideration of the definitions of the *Logical Mechanisms*, *Narrative Strategy* and *Language* parameters. Along similar lines, this paper integrates the parameters of the GTVH into a more complete model for the analysis of mono-modal and multimodal cartoons in which cognitive and semantic perspectives are combined with those that can help decode the components specific to the genre.

3.2 Cognitive theories

Drawing on Koestler's concept of bisociation, other cognitive theorists state that the perception of an incongruity is the basis of most of our humorous experiences. As with the GTVH, they claim that the interpretation of a cartoon is not a linear process. It is the perception of an incongruity and the necessary cognitive shift from one mental concept to another in order to solve it that provokes the humorous response.

Fauconnier and Turner (1998: 163) propose the theory of *Conceptual Integration*, or *Blending*, and state that every process of meaning construction has particular input representations: "during the process, inferences, emotions and event-integrations emerge which cannot reside in any of the inputs." Elements from those input spaces are projected by processes of composition, completion, and elaboration into a new definite blended space.

Giora suggests the concept of "*salience*" (conventionality) and argues that jokes "tend to involve some salience imbalance that invites the comprehender to process the more salient but eventually incompatible meaning first" (Giora 2003: 168). Along similar lines, theorists like Marín-Arrese (2008) have argued that the creation and interpretation of humor also involves the construction of a blend that results in an incongruity or cognitive dissonance. It is resolved by projecting backwards to the original input spaces in order to unpack the blend or de-blend in search of the right meaning. Readers assume that the content of the joke is not to be taken seriously and agree to "suspend disbelief" (Marín-Arrese 2003: 4). This process yields unexpected emotional effects that contribute to the appreciation of humor (Coulson 2002). Marín-Arrese goes even further, proposing a model of cartoon analysis that comprises five different stages (2008: 4). She claims that (1) readers have an initial access to a salient/familiar scenario; (2) there is a relevant

linguistic or visual cue that prompts access to an alternative non-salient meaning; (3) there is an incongruity between the salient and non-salient meanings that invites a reinterpretation process; (4) the salient meaning is discarded and the incongruity is solved; and (5) there is some sort of emotional involvement on the part of the reader, or as Coulson argues, a feeling of satisfaction of having solved the puzzle by activating the appropriate information.

An important addition to Marín-Arrese's model is Coulson and Oakley's statement about the need for conceptual integration networks to include some device in order to account for local contextual aspects that affect meaning construction (2005: 1516). They propose the inclusion of a *presentation space*, or mental scenario, which evokes a *reference space*, the focus of attention in the depicted scene, and a final *blended space*. In addition, they add the concept of the *grounding box*, which contains the important contextual information that the reader needs to take into account in order to unpack the blend, such as who the participants of the communicative process are (usually cartoonist and reader), what the forum is, and what the sociopolitical circumstance is (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. “Momentos de gran emoción.” [“Moments of great excitement.”]

Manel Fontdevila. *El Diario*, May 18, 2015

(http://www.eldiario.es/vinetas/Momentos-gran-emocion_10_389261071.html)

[I don't know. This year I prefer not to look!]

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This cartoon depicts a circus scene. The tamer in the center of the panel is a caricature of Mariano Rajoy, the Prime Minister of Spain (Rajoy is the tamer). Holding a hoop and a whip, he is trying to tame a wild beast in the presence of two men wearing suits. When readers focus their attention on the animal, however, they see a ballot box, which is a *salient visual cue* providing access to a *non-salient meaning*: the votes representing the political preferences of the Spanish electorate. With the

help of socio-political knowledge from the readers' *grounding box*, this incongruous object activates a *reference space*, the municipal elections taking place in Spain at the time the cartoon was published. The dialogue between the two men, visual metaphors of the people who support the Spanish *Partido Popular* and their distrust of Rajoy's skills, help the reader background the initial meaning and resolve the incongruity. The point of the cartoon is that the right-wing *Partido Popular* and their electors are not confident that their strategy to control the voters is going to work "this year."

In the third stage of Marín-Arrese's model, the perception of the incongruity, she recognizes that monomodal and multimodal cartoons work in different ways. In monomodal cartoons there is a visually depicted incongruity, but in multimodal ones, the incongruity is characteristically found in the verbal element or there is "some form" of interaction between the verbal and visual elements. However, Marín-Arrese does not specify which elements work as visual cues (e.g., Rajoy's gestures in Figure 1) nor what those forms of interactions are. This is nonetheless vital for the aim of this project and those gaps will be addressed in the genre-specific model proposed in the last section.

Brône and Feyaerts (2003) have also theorized about humor in cartoons from this perspective, taking into account the different modes that participate in their meaning-making process. They point out that cartoons typically incorporate at least one linguistic or visual cue that is sufficiently salient to guarantee an adequate interpretation of the scene. They also claim that there are certain construal mechanisms that are used to achieve the humorous effect, such as *profiling*, highlighting certain features of the visual images, *metonymy*, when a point in the frame refers to another frame as a whole, and *metaphor*, when a source domain in the cartoon evokes a target domain.

Metaphors are a common device in political cartoons. Most of the time the visual part in the blend is a "pictorial" or a "multimodal metaphor" (Forceville 1994, 1996, 2006). Consequently, to identify the two domains of the metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) and to understand it and subsequently map back to the input spaces of the incongruous blend to resolve it, one cannot ignore the non-verbal elements.

Regarding the comprehension of metaphors, Forceville (1996) also states that readers construe a pictorial metaphor if and because they think that the cartoonist intends them to do so. He relates metaphors' interpretation to Sperber and Wilson's (1986) Relevance Theory: "The very fact that we know that what we see is not a work of art, for instance, or a child's drawing, considerably helps shape our expectations about what it will communicate as well as our strategies and interpretation" (Forceville 1996: 67). Ruiz Gurillo (2012: 52) also mentions paralinguistic signs surrounding verbal jokes that prepare the reader to expect something

comical (body language, intonation, smile, pause). However, in cartoons, because of their lack of immediacy, evidence needs to be found in the visual components. Equally important is the readers' familiarity with the artist and the topic of the cartoon, as well as its genre-based attributions (Forceville 2005).

In the case of multimodal metaphors, target and source are rendered exclusively or predominantly in two different modes. British scholar Elisabeth El Refaie has focused on the study of visual and multimodal metaphors, criticizing the Conceptual Metaphor Theory's logo-centric assumption that metaphors can be understood by all human beings, and claiming that they must always be studied within their socio-political context (2003: 75). Her arguments are important for this article since she analyses newspaper cartoons arguing the need to understand the grammar of the visual metaphor.

4. A genre-specific perspective

El Refaie's research (2011) on young people's responses to newspaper cartoons dealt with the inherent difficulties in understanding cartoon messages, which stemmed from their lack of familiarity with the genre. Similar conclusions were reached in a recent study of humor perception of Spanish editorial cartoons by learners of Spanish at an academic institution in the United States (Agüero Guerra 2013b). Results have shown that participants who had been trained in a workshop on cartoon composition had a better understanding of the humorous messages regardless of their level of proficiency in the target language.

A genre-specific approach to humor in cartoons needs to count on social semiotics, the branch of semiotics that focuses on social meaning-making systems (modes) of all types, whether visual, verbal or aural, as well as on multimodal ensembles (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006 [1996]). The study of multimodality emerged from Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (1985), which defines language as a system of choices organized in different metafunctions. Social semioticians argue that SFL is applicable to non-linguistic resources as well, resulting in the development of metafunctional frameworks for visual images (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006 [1996]) as well as for other semiotic resources (O'Halloran 2008; O'Toole 2010). Kress and van Leeuwen regard communication as based on a continuous translation between modes, thus developing the grammar of visual design. They claim that visual images, like languages, fulfill the metafunctions of representing the experiential world (representational or ideational meaning), interacting with viewers (interactive meaning), and arranging the visual resources (compositional meaning).

Following Kress and van Leeuwen, the analysis of cartoons should focus on how the three metafunctions are fulfilled by means of the two semiotic modes. For example, the *ideational meaning* expresses the different ways in which objects can be represented and related to each other (narrative and conceptual structures). In the same way, the *interactive meaning* involves two kinds of participants: *represented participants*, those depicted in images, and *interactive participants*, the producers and viewers of images.

Finally, the *compositional meaning* relates the *ideational* and *interactive* meanings to each other through three interrelated systems (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006 [1996]: 177). The first is *information value*, which explains the placement of elements in the different areas of an image (see Figure 2). They distinguish three types:

1. *Given–New*: The information is presented in a horizontal axis. The information the readers already know is presented in the right part of the cartoon, while on the left they can find the new contents, which in political cartoons, usually coincides with the punch line.
2. *Real–Ideal*: The information is presented in a vertical axis. The most important information or the most powerful characters (ideal) are placed on top, while the real or less important information is placed at the bottom.
3. *Center–Margin*: The most important information or character appears in the center while the rest appears surrounding it.

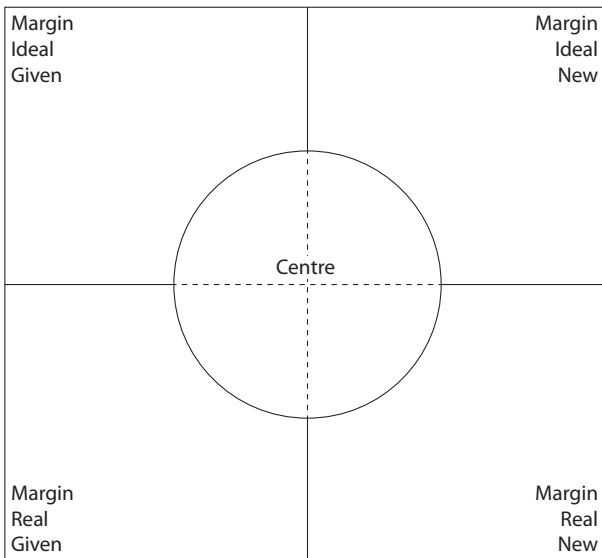


Figure 2. Information value
(Kress and van Leeuwen 2006 [1996]: 197)

The second system is *salience*, which refers to the weight given to the different components of the image. It can be determined by *size*, *sharpness of focus*, *color contrast*, *placement* in the visual field, or *perspective*. Finally, the third system is *framing*, which refers to the presence or absence of framing devices, connecting or disconnecting the elements of the image.

Following Kress and van Leeuwen's theory, Serafini (2011) has studied visual literacy³ in fields like education, alleging that we live in a world surrounded by images. Taking as a model the analytical method developed by Panofsky (1955), he distinguishes three levels in the reading of images. The first level, *preiconographic*, consists of an initial approach to visual data in which readers identify objects in relation to their experience. The second level, *iconographic*, focuses on the composition of images. Finally, the third level, *iconological*, consists of the interpretation of the intrinsic meaning of the image, which depends on the background knowledge of the reader or viewer (Serafini 2011: 344).

In his book *Reading the Visual: An Introduction to Teaching Multimodal Literacy*, Serafini develops a description of the basic elements of visual composition (2014: 57). In addition to the elements of visual grammar proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen, he distinguishes between the elements of visual art and the elements of multimodal ensembles. Among the elements of visual art, he mentions *dot*, *line*, *shape*, *color*, *size*, *scale*, and *position*, and explains the message that their different expressions transmit. Among the elements of multimodal ensembles, he distinguishes: (1) *Orientation*: horizontally oriented shapes (familiar, comfortable)/vertically oriented shapes (dynamic, energetic)/square shape (stable and solid); (2) *Typography*: it can be analyzed by its weight, color, size, slant, framing, formality; (3) *Borders*: straight, hard-edged lines/fading the edge/full bleed images; (4) *Motifs and symbols*: constructed in their social contexts.

In addition to the general elements of visual composition, cartoonists use specific techniques to communicate their meanings. Research on comics cognition (Saraceni 2003; Forceville 2011; Cohn 2013) claims that comics have their own lexicon, as languages do. Although these studies focus on sequential genres like comic books and graphic novels, one-panel cartoons, as a genre within the medium of comics, share parts of their visual language. Knowing the specificities of the medium is another essential piece to solve the puzzle that triggers the humorous response.

Forceville (2011), for instance, dedicates an entire article to the analysis of *pictorial runes*, or non-mimetic graphic elements that contribute narratively salient

3. Chauvin (2003) defines visual literacy as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and communicate information in any variety of forms that engages the cognitive processing of a visual image.

information (lines behind a running character that express speed or above garbage bins to convey their smell). Cohn, influenced by Scott McCloud's work (1993), claims that "the notion of visual language fills the gap for categorizing the cognitive system at work in graphic expression" (2013: 4). He then offers a detailed analysis of the visual lexicon of comics.

The elements of the visual language proposed by Cohn that are relevant for the analysis of cartoons are those integrating what he calls "visual morphology." He distinguishes between *bound morphemes*, *suppletion morphemes*, and *reduplication morphemes*. The first group includes those elements that connect as a whole to other signs, such as *carriers* (thought bubbles and speech balloons), and *upfixes* (symbols above the characters' heads depicting emotional or cognitive states like question marks). *Suppletion morphemes* are those that replace part or all of another morpheme, as when a character is running and the whole body is substituted by a spinning sign, or *eye unlauts*, expressing the whole emotion of a person. The third group, *reduplication morphemes*, refers to those elements or parts of them that are repeated as a way to show movement.

Once that the visual grammar, the elements of visual art, and the visual language of comics have been explained, there is still a last step for the complete analysis of cartoons. Some of them, as noted above, combine verbal and visual signs (multimodal cartoons). Therefore, in order to unblend the incongruity, readers need to add to their visual literacy a multimodal communicative competence, which allows them to understand the transcoding of meaning between the two types of signs.

Intersemiosis is a new branch of semiotics, strongly influenced by SFL that studies different genres of multimodal discourse. Its main interest is not only the grammar of the different codes, but also the different types of relationships between them. As O'Halloran (2008: 452) argues, theorization of intersemiosis is vital for the investigation of the processes which result in a convergence or a divergence of meaning (re-contextualizing relations of dissonance) in multimodal texts; that is, for the resolution of the incongruence in genres like cartoons.

Martinec and Salway (2005) have proposed a model that combines two kinds of relations: the relative status of images and texts, and how they relate to one another in terms of logico-semantics (Halliday 1985). Like clauses, images and texts are considered to have *unequal status* when one of them modifies the other. They have *equal status*, on the contrary, when they both can stand on their own. Here Martinec and Salway distinguish between *independent* (there is no sign of one modifying the other) and *complementary* status (image and text are joined equally and modify one another). Concerning logico-semantic relations between the two signs, there are two main types: *Expansion* (by means of *elaboration*, *extension*, and *enhancement*) refers to the relations between represented events in

the non-linguistic experience. *Projection* alludes to the re-representation in one mode of information that has been already presented in the other. This is specific of image-text contexts like comics (speech balloons and thought bubbles).

Swain (2012) offers a different intersemiotic perspective, using appraisal theories to map visual and verbal resources for making evaluative meanings in political cartoons. She offers a systematic analysis to show “how visual resources interact with each other and with verbal resources to construct evaluatively coherent authorial reading positions and align viewers with those positions” (Swain 2012: 83).

Appraisal theory (Martin and White 2005) was developed within the framework of SFL to develop further the interpersonal metafunction of language and, in particular, the relationship between jester, indicter, and observer. Departing from Economou’s adaptation of the appraisal theory for the analysis of visual appraisal in photographs (2009), Swain proposes a similar analysis for cartoons. She distinguishes three types of evaluative meaning potentials: *attitude* (positive or negative affect, judgment, and appreciation), *graduation* (by force and focus), and *engagement* (depending on the authorial subjectivity of artists, their attribution of attitude to characters, or on allusions to other visual styles or genres). She offers examples of analyses in which she applies these three evaluative keys to explain the different emotional reactions that they provoke in the reader or viewer. She notes that they can be visually expressed or evoked in cartoons, given “the repertoire of stereotypes, icons, stock visual metaphors and formulaic facial expressions and gestures on which cartoons draw” (2012: 84).

Swain claims that in cartoons there is an interaction between verbal and visual appraisal and ideation, and therefore verbal and visual components can mean intensification of appraisal meanings, either by repetition of similar meanings (consonance) or by creating a dissonance when meanings clash, which is the basis of irony and humor. Therefore, Swain’s dissection of the different strategies that make for the three types of evaluative meaning potentials (attitude, graduation and engagement) is necessary in a genre-specific model for the analysis of humor in cartoons since it provides some clues about what effects the cartoonist seeks with the choice of specific visual and verbo-visual techniques. In addition, it is directly related to the last step of Marín-Arrese’s model, the emotional response of the reader.

5. Analysis

Cognitive theories claim that the perception of humor involves the resolution of an incongruous blend. Projecting backwards to the input spaces is essential to unpack it. Although these theories can be applied to the interpretation of humorous

discourse in cartoons, as Marín-Arrese (2008) proposes, the genre-specific components (explained in the previous section) must be examined to account for their multimodal nature. This paper proposes a reconsideration of the incongruity resolution stage and incorporates new parameters from semiotics, comics cognition, and intersemiosis. Together with the parameters of the GTVH and Coulson's concept of the *grounding box*, these additions provide a holistic model for the analysis of monomodal and multimodal cartoons:

1. *Salient meaning*: The initial access of readers to cartoons, or as stated by Serafini, a *preiconographic* level, which consists in identifying a salient meaning or *presentation space* (Coulson and Oakley 2005).
2. *Incongruity*: A relevant cue, linguistic or visual, prompts access to a non-salient meaning/scenario, which causes an incongruity.
3. *Incongruity resolution*: Mapping back to the inputs to unpack the blend is the process of resolving the incongruity and, therefore, the point when all the elements previously explained play a crucial part. The model includes several genre-specific sub-phases:
 - a. The readers activate their *grounding box*, or *iconological* knowledge, which operates concurrently during the whole process of resolution. The readers' resources include knowledge of the culture, the type of media where the cartoon is published and its ideology, and the cartoonist. In addition, readers call on two parameters from the GTVH – the *target* of the cartoon and its (socio-political) *situation*. In other words, readers activate the *interpersonal metafunction* of communication.
 - b. The remaining parameters of the GTVH are identified at this stage (SO, LM, the NS, which is the type of cartoon, and its language). However, readers must analyze them through the lens of the genre; their interpretation will be based on linguistic and visual elements. For that purpose, the *iconographic level* proposed by Serafini is activated in this phase to fulfill the *compositional metafunction*. Thus, in the interpretation of monomodal cartoons (see Figure 4), readers (1) examine the *information value*, *salience*, and *framing* (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006 [1996]), (2) analyze the elements of visual art (Serafini 2014) and the visual language of comics (Forceville 2011 and Cohn 2013), and (3) consider those strategies that the cartoonist uses to achieve a desired *attitude*, *graduation*, and *engagement* (Swain 2012). In multimodal cartoons (see Figure 5), the same elements are examined with the addition of the different types of interrelations between the linguistic and semiotic codes and the meanings they convey (Martinec and Salway 2005).

4. *New message*: Readers background the initial salient meaning and foreground the new meaning with all of the attendant characteristics that it has achieved in the incongruity-resolution process.
5. *Emotional effect*: The resolution of the incongruity elicits a feeling of satisfaction in the reader that is expressed by means of laughter or a smile (see Figure 3).

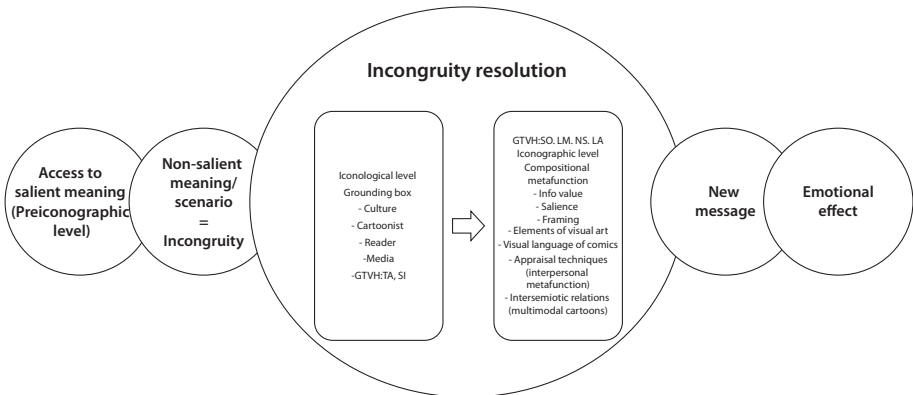


Figure 3. A genre-specific model for the analysis of humorous discourse in cartoons

Examples of analysis:

(1)

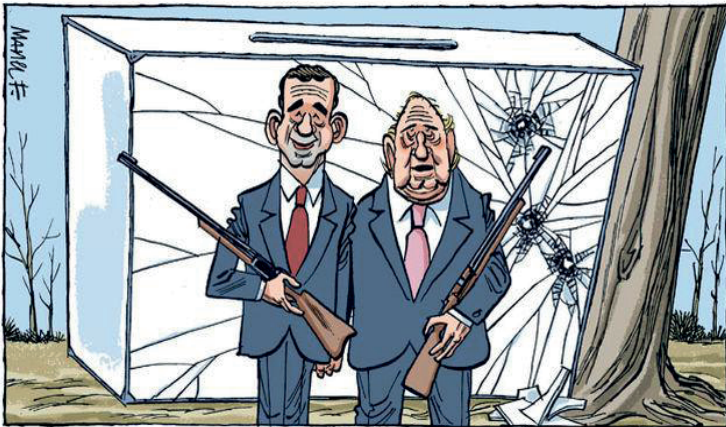


Figure 4. “La sucesión.” [“The succession.”]

Manel Fontdevila. El Diario, June 2, 2014

(http://www.eldiario.es/vinetas/sucesion_10_266773324.html)

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1. *Salient meaning*: The first *visual cues* in this cartoon are two caricatures of hunters, so the first *salient meaning* or *presentation space* is a hunting scene.
2. *Incongruity*: A look at the background of the main characters, however, presents the readers with another visual cue, a ballot box full of bullet holes, which is an incongruent object in the depicted scenario.
3. *Incongruity resolution*:
 - a. The readers have to activate their *grounding box* to take into account the following information during the whole process of resolution: (1) this cartoon appeared in the left-wing newspaper *El Diario*; (2) the cartoonist has previously created cartoons using these caricatures; (3) the *targets* of the cartoon are the two characters in the center of the panel, who represent the former king of Spain, Juan Carlos I, and his son, the present king, Felipe VI; (4) the cartoon was published shortly after the abdication of the king and the subsequent succession of his son, Prince Felipe. The king's decision to abdicate the throne followed close on the heels of a highly publicized and costly hunting trip to Botswana during the Spanish economic crisis, which resulted in a loss of public confidence. This is the *situation* in which the depicted scene is taking place.
 - b. With that information, readers understand that they have to answer the question: Why is there a ballot box in the middle of the forest? In order to answer this question, they move to the *iconographic level*. The first aspect that readers notice when they see this cartoon is their *narrative strategy*. It is a cartoon composed of one scene without verbal content (*language*). For the identification of its SO and LM, the readers need to activate the *compositional metafunction* to examine its visual content: the *salience* given to the ballot box by exaggerating its size and its position (*information value*) in the center of the panel leads readers to realize that it is hiding a message. At the same time, the use of caricatures to represent the King and the Prince diminish their realism. The *graduation* of their noses and mouths by exaggeration of their sizes, the use of *cold colors* for their elegant clothes, and the fact that they are holding rifles together elicit a negative *effect* in the *attitude* of the readers, who deduce that the cartoonist is offering *authorial judgment* of the characters (appraisal techniques).

The vertical *orientation* of the two characters indicates that they are comfortable in this situation, which contrasts with the hardness of the ballot box's *square shape*, a *symbol* for the citizenry of Spain. The fact that the two characters appear in the *foreground* with motionless attitude indicates that the cartoon is depicting the moment in which the characters were photographed. This is confirmed by the appearance of the ballot box, marked by *pictorial runes* symbolizing bullet holes, which makes reference to an action that

occurred before the photograph was taken. Thus, readers reach the conclusion that these two characters holding arms have previously shot at the box, triggering the *non-salient meaning* that helps solve the incongruity. The ballot box is a metaphor representing democracy, the power of the voters to decide who will govern them. The bullet holes on the box activate various *script oppositions*: democracy/no democracy, violence/no violence, and power/no power, which are resolved by means of *logical mechanisms* such as the metaphors and hyperboles previously mentioned, and the metonymy of the ballot box representing the Spanish citizenry.

4. *New message*: After resolving the incongruity, readers reach the point of the cartoon: the cartoonist claims that traditions like the succession of power from the king to his son without asking for the opinion of the country are an attack on democracy.
5. *Emotional effect*: The feeling of fulfillment triggers the readers' laughter or provokes a smile.

(2)



Figure 5. "Buen trabajo." ["Good job."]

Manel Fontdevila. El Diario, December 28, 2014

(http://www.eldiario.es/vinetas/Buen-trabajo_10_339916006.html)

[- See? 2015 is going to be just like this.

- Good job, Mariano! Good job!]

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1. *Salient meaning*: The first *visual cues* in this cartoon are the people who are walking on the ground as well as the woman who is walking in the opposite direction while two men observe them from the frame of the panel.

2. *Incongruity*: The *salient scene*, however, becomes incongruent when readers realize that all the people in the cartoon except for the two observers hanging from the frame have either their mouths or their eyes covered.
3. *Incongruity resolution*:
 - a. The activation of their *grounding box* helps readers engage in the resolution process by (1) recalling the left-wing ideology of *El Diario*, (2) considering the style of the cartoonist, Manel Fontdevila, (3) identifying the caricature of Mariano Rajoy on the upper left side of the panel as the *target* of the cartoon, and (4) connecting these details with the political *situation*: the leaders of the country participating in illegal actions and manipulating the justice system so that they are not held accountable.
 - b. In order to solve the incongruity, the readers move to the *iconographic level*. The *narrative strategy* of this cartoon is different from that of the previous one. It is a multimodal cartoon and, therefore, its message depends on transcoding information between the two semiotic codes: the images and the *language*, which in this case represents the speech of two of the characters. In addition, this cartoon does not narrate a frozen moment, but rather presents two scenes that depict parallel narratives. That information helps the readers identify the character in the center of the panel, a well-known *symbol* representing justice (holding the sword and the scale). Her *position* in the center as well as her prominent *size* indicates that she is the focus of attention. There are, however, two other *axes* in the cartoon: *up-down*, with the characters on the top representing power (Mariano Rajoy = god) and those on the ground lacking it, and *left-right*, which represents old and new information. The businessman on the right side of the panel introduces the punch line of the joke.

The visual elements of the cartoon embody *attribution*; that is, the different points of view of the characters and even the readers. The readers' *perspective* contrasts with that of the two characters in the upper two quadrants, who are looking down on the others. The prominence of these two characters is reinforced in numerous ways, including their right to speak. Although Fontdevila does not use the *speech balloon* in this example, the dark lines introducing their dialogues work as *carriers* depicting their ownership. This contrasts with the characters below, whose silencing in the public sphere is depicted graphically as cloth gags. This contrast, along with the use of *size* and *color* (real colors/monochromy) confer *salience* on these two characters, and evoke an *attitude* of sympathy from the readers.

Motion is expressed by the marks on the floor, the postures of the characters, and the position of the hands of the three biggest characters. While Rajoy is pointing as if he were giving a command, the businessman is rubbing his

hands in satisfied anticipation, a sign that evokes a *negative judgment* from the readers. Justice, however, being blind, holds out her hands to avoid collisions, which is a reinterpretation of the expression “justice is blind.” In this cartoon, instead of expressing that justice is objective, her blindness adopts the literal meaning; she cannot see anything because she has been blindfolded. Thus, she is walking metaphorically against the citizens, whom the readers identify in stereotypes by their clothes, their features, and the objects they hold: a construction worker, a teacher, a child, pensioners, and so forth.

Since the cartoon is multimodal, another aspect for readers to consider is whether and how the two modes combine. In this case, the conversation between the two large male characters is in *equal* and *complementary status* with the visual images of the cartoon since they modify one another. The *logico-semantic relation* between them is *extension*. Although the image and the conversation can be read on their own, both codes extend or add new meaning to the other: the images explain the “así” that Mariano Rajoy mentions, and the text explains why the rest of characters are silenced. There is also a relation of *enhancement* of the words by the images, which offer the *reasons* for the characters’ satisfaction.

Finally, the fact that the businessman rubs his hands together and says “buen trabajo, Mariano, buen trabajo” as opposed to the gagged common people and blindfolded Lady Justice triggers three different *script oppositions*: justice/not justice, equality/not equality, and kindness/not kindness. Thus, the *incongruity* is resolved by means of three main *logical mechanisms*: analogy, contradiction in the images (justice walking in the wrong direction), in the contrast between their happy statements with the depictions of the other characters, and by means of dramatic irony, because the citizens of Spain keep walking without noticing what happens around them.

4. *New message*: Readers reach the point of the cartoon: the citizens and even the justice system are manipulated by the Prime Minister of the country, who is, at the same time, manipulated by powerful business interests.
5. *Emotional effect*: The feeling of fulfillment triggers the readers’ laughter or provokes a smile.

6. Conclusions

The interpretation of humorous discourse is a complex process that requires different types of strategies from the addressees. Linguistic theories of humor claim that the humorous effect is triggered as the result of the resolution of an incongruity between a salient and a non-salient meaning. These theories are applicable to

the analysis of verbo-visual manifestations of humor such as cartoons. However, their logo-centric nature does not account for all the different aspects that interact in the resolution of cartoons' incongruity.

Only a genre-specific approach that incorporates parameters to analyze the two types of codes and their combinations can provide a complete description of the incongruity resolution process in cartoons. An integrated model for the study of cartoons' humor must therefore resort to disciplines such as semiotics, intersemiosis, and comics studies. In addition, ideal readers need to bring to the interpretation process their knowledge of the pragmatic factors affecting the production of cartoons: the target culture, the medium where they are published and its ideology, the cartoonist and his/her art, and the current socio-political situation.

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Metapragmatics of humor

Variability, negotiability and adaptability in humorous monologues

Leonor Ruiz-Gurillo

University of Alicante, GRIALE Research Group

The main aim of this paper is to propose a theoretical model for the study of humor as a metapragmatic ability, the so-called metapragmatics of humor (MH). After offering a short overview, humor will be analyzed from the conception of metapragmatics according to Verschueren (1999), (2000), (2009). Considering humor as a continuous choice where variability, negotiability, and adaptability become key notions, the *knowledge resources* in the *General Theory of Verbal Humor* (GTVH) (Attardo and Raskin 1991; Attardo 2001a, 2008; Ruiz-Gurillo, 2012) will be understood as metapragmatic awareness processes. Our proposal intends to integrate the productive process of the writer/speaker along with the interpretative process of the reader/listener. Finally, this metapragmatics of humor will be applied to humorous monologues.

Keywords: humor, metapragmatics, pragmatic awareness, *General Theory of Verbal Humor*, humorous monologue

1. Introduction

The present paper has as its aim to elucidate how writers and speakers use their metapragmatic abilities in humor and, consequently, how readers and listeners interpret certain texts as being humorous. The fact that metapragmatics represents a wide concept involving psychology, social studies, anthropology, mass media, and language, among others, leads us to draw a short panorama of pragmatic awareness from linguistics to start with. After a short presentation of the conception of metapragmatics (section 2), metapragmatics of humor will be proposed – understood as a reflexive use of language – taking into account pragmatic awareness (Verschueren 1999; 2009) and the *General Theory of Verbal Humor* (GTVH) (Attardo and Raskin 1991) – including its revision (Ruiz Gurillo 2012; 2013)

(section 3). In fact, the metapragmatic awareness model will be applied understanding awareness as a continuous choice where variability, negotiability and adaptability are implicated (Verschueren, 1999). Such a framework will therefore allow us to integrate the *knowledge resources* of humor (Attardo and Raskin, 1991) which hierarchically contribute to understand a text as being humorous, namely: script opposition; logical mechanisms; situation; narrative strategy; target; and; Verschueren and Brisard, 2009 language. The last section shows how the metapragmatics of humor can be applied to a humorous genre: the humorous monologue (section 4). Obviously, this proposal should be understood as a linguistic approach to the metapragmatic process that involves a humorous text.

Our corpus includes 203 printed monologues from the Spanish comedian Andreu Buenafuente's books *Sigo diciendo* [I continue to say] (2009), *Digo yo* [So I say] (2010) and *Hablar es gratis* [Speaking is free (of charge)] (2011), as well as some dramatized monologues. Buenafuente has become a referent for *late night* TV programs in Spain after conducting a daily program which started with a monologue between 2005 and 2011.¹

2. From metapragmatic code to metapragmatic awareness

In this study metapragmatics is understood within the framework of pragmatics. In fact, our approach is based on Caffi's (1994) suggestions. Thus three senses of metapragmatics are proposed. The first one refers to "the theoretical debate on pragmatics and its central concerns, its epistemological foundations, and the definition of its relevant object and scope". (Caffi 1994: 2461). However this broad sense could not be applied to our purpose. Thus, the second sense of metapragmatics, includes "the conditions which make speakers' use of language possible and effective" (Caffi, 1994: 2461), activities involving reflection on language and

1. In its first stage, the program was broadcast in the Spanish television channel *Antena 3* (from January 2005 to June 2007). The program was called *Buenafuente* – *BF* in its abbreviated form. Between September 2007 and June 2011, it was broadcast by another national TV channel, *La Sexta*; the name of the program remained as *Buenafuente*, but with a new abbreviation, *BNF*. From 2013 until now – 2015 – this comedian has been conducting a new daily program under the title of *En el aire* [On air] which starts with a monologue too. The monologues analyzed in this paper exclusively belong to the second stage of the program *Buenafuente*, that is, the one comprised between September 2007 and June 2011. Before his appearance in these national programs, Andreu Buenafuente had worked in two regional programs, *La cosa nostra* and *Una altra cosa*, broadcast in Catalan language by the Catalan television channel TV3. Both the national and the regional programs were produced by El Terrat, a production company founded by Andreu Buenafuente in 1989.

its use. Moreover, the third sense shows that the ability subjects have to monitor and plan several linguistic processing methods is related to “the management of discourse” (Caffi 1994: 2464). Assuming that metapragmatic activities are reflexive by nature, the reflexive management of discourse is represented by aspects such as strategies, meanings, and contextualization clues (Lucy 1993). Furthermore, the writer or the speaker can monitor and control these reflexive activities productively as well as comprehensively.

Consequently metapragmatics is understood in this paper as “the systematic study of the metalevel where indicators of reflexive awareness are to be found in the actual choice-making that constitutes language use” (Verschueren 1999: 188). Section 3 below will be specifically devoted to metapragmatics of humor.

3. A proposal for metapragmatics of humor

3.1 Adaptability as a key of metapragmatic awareness

For Verschueren, the utilization of language implies making continuous linguistic choices that involve three key concepts, namely: *variability*, which determines the range of possible choices; *negotiability*, through which these choices can be carried out following flexible principles and strategies; and *adaptability*, which helps human beings make linguistic choices that can be negotiated from a range of variable options seeking to satisfy their communicative needs (Verschueren 1999: 58–68; 2009). All the aforementioned choices can be totally automatic or fully conscious, and they accordingly form part of language use. Although these notions are mainly indivisible, a hierarchical conception may be suggested due to their pragmatic complexity (Verschueren 1999: 62). Thus, although adaptability appears as the main feature, it could hardly be understood without both variability and negotiability. In our opinion, some contextual correlates and structures, that is, the *locus*, have a close link with variability – but also with negotiability. Furthermore, *dynamic processes* are specifically related to negotiability, but also to variability. Finally, *salience* summarizes all the processes implied in adaptability, which is why it allows us to observe all metapragmatic choices as a *medium of adaptability*. Based on this methodological approach to the meaningful operation of language, some variability, negotiability and adaptability elements will be listed below seeking to subsequently determine a suitable framework for humor.

3.1.1 *Variability*

Variability – “the property of language which defines the range of possibilities from which choices can be made” (Verschueren, 1999: 59) – includes a number

of *contextual correlates* and several *structural objects*. Firstly, contextual correlates refer to speakers; the utterer’s many voices (according to Ducrot’s polyphony);² the mental, social and physical world; the linguistic channel (spoken/written language; non-verbal communication channels); the linguistic context; context manipulation; and contextualization. Secondly, structural objects allude to structures (languages, codes, styles, prosody, morphology, lexical meaning, clauses and sentences, propositions, suprasentential units, etc.), and utterance-building principles (cohesion, coherence, informativity, discourse topics, etc.). As for *contextual correlates* and *structural objects*, code, bilingualism, some aspects associated with register, manipulation of contexts, modality and modalization, evidentiality, coherence, cohesion, topics, word order, etc., they could be specifically investigated in relation not only to variability but also to negotiability. Table 1 summarizes this contextual correlates and structural objects associated with variability (and negotiability):

Table 1. Contextual correlates and structures for variability (and negotiability)

VARIABILITY (and NEGOTIABILITY)	contextual correlates and structures	Code
		Bilingualism
		Register
		Sociolect
		Channel (oral/written)
		Discursive participants
		Mental world
		Context manipulation
		Modality and modalization
		Evidentiality
		Coherence
		Cohesion
		Topics
		Word order,
		etc.

3.1.2 *Negotiability*

Negotiability is defined as “the property of language responsible for the fact that choices are not made mechanically or according to strict rules of fixed form-functions relationships, but rather on the basis of highly flexible principles and

2. See especially Ducrot (1986).

strategies” (Verschueren 1999: 59). Even though the *locus* of pragmatics as well as variability are involved in this notion, the *processes* of (inter)adaptation make both variability and negotiability dynamic, as a result of which the dynamic generation of meaning becomes relevant to negotiability. Thus, some aspects of dynamics such as temporal dimension, context and structure become more prominent. Taking into account these processes, the activation of variability seeks to generate meaning which is subsequently negotiated with participants. Despite the instability of strategies, Verschueren (1999: 256) listed several “instances of the strategic avoidance of explicitness”, such as implicatures, irony, metaphor, politeness, and even humor. Table 2 reflects this dynamics of communication which involves not only negotiability but also variability:

Table 2. Meaning generation, participants and strategies for negotiability (and variability)

NEGOTIABILITY (and VARIABILITY)	meaning	Implicitness
		Explicitness
	participants	Interactive meaning
		Generation
	(conventionalized) strategies	Implicatures
		Metaphor
		Politeness
		Irony
		Humor

3.1.3 *Adaptability*

Finally, adaptability constitutes “the property of language which enables human beings to make negotiable linguistic choices from a variable range of possibilities in such a way as to approach points of satisfaction for communicative needs”

Table 3. Adaptability and salience

ADAPTABILITY	salience	cognitive aspects	perception and representation
			planning
			Scripts
			Intention
			memory
			Recognition
			Recall
		ideology	

(Verschueren 1999: 61). It summarizes all linguistic choices – understood as structurally identifiable choices and also as contextual properties and influences. The way “in which people can use language in a variable, negotiable and adaptable fashion” (Verschueren 1999: 172) turns out to be a *medium* of adaptability mutually interadapted to cognitive aspects such as: perception and representation; planning (scripts, intention); memory (recognition, recall); and ideologies, to quote but a few (Table 3). Such elements are closely related to *salience*, which ultimately determines their different degrees.

3.1.4 *Metapragmatic awareness indicators*

Every metapragmatic awareness process is marked with indicators such as discourse markers, *verba dicendi*, hedges, reported speech, prosody, and code switching, amongst others. Because “a more systematic and integrated look at these phenomena would be desirable” (Verschueren 1999: 189), our next aim will consist in drawing a metapragmatics of humor and its own metapragmatic indicators.

3.2 Metapragmatic awareness of humor

Taking into account that “it is legitimate to consider all aspects of humorous language behaviour under the heading of metapragmatic behaviour” (Gombert 1992: 115), humor will be regarded as a metapragmatic ability from now on. Unlike Verschueren (1999), who portrays humor as a conventionalized strategy, our proposal exceeds those limits considering it an ability of metapragmatic awareness where variability, negotiability and adaptability work together to achieve the main humorous goals. It was already mentioned above that the *General Theory of Verbal Humor* (GTVH) (Attardo and Raskin, 1991; Attardo 1994, 2001a, 2008) constitutes our framework for humorous texts. The GTVH proposes six hierarchically-organized *knowledge resources* when it comes to identifying a humorous text (see Figure 1 below):

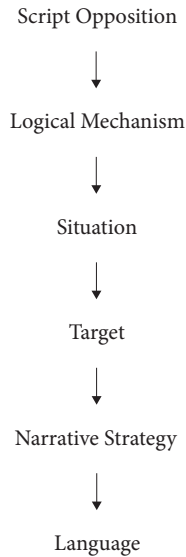


Figure 1. Hierarchical organization of knowledge resources for humorous texts according to the GTVH (Attardo, 2008: 28)

These six knowledge resources will determine whether any given text can be categorized as humorous or not:

1. *Script Opposition*, the basis of humor which explains that two scripts may be contrasted in a humorous text. The script is defined as “a bunch of terms alternately used to denote a structured chunk of information” (Raskin, 2008: 7).
2. *Logical Mechanism*, identified with the resolution phase in the incongruity-resolution model. This appears as the mechanism whereby the incongruity of Script Opposition is playfully and/or partially explained away (Attardo, 2008: 108). Several types of logical mechanisms, amongst them juxtaposition, false analogy or chiasmus, constitute the basis of Script Opposition.
3. *Situation*, that is, the context of humorous text that helps to understand its inferences.
4. *Target* or what is known as the ‘butt’ of the joke or humorous text. Group or individual stereotypes belong here. However, this knowledge resource may be optional at times because some forms of humor do not seek to ridicule anyone in particular.
5. *Narrative Strategy*, i.e. the genre of the joke or humorous text.
6. *Language*, or expressed differently, choices related to lexis, syntax, phonology, etc.

According to Ruiz-Gurillo (2012) (2013), it makes sense to propose the revised GTVH, insofar as some of the knowledge resources are likely to be completed with

other features. Therefore, the logical mechanisms (Attardo et al. 2002) based either on syntagmatic relationships or on reasoning are added to the initial GTVH proposal. In turn, the narrative strategy is completed with aspects related to register, genre, and text type. Moreover, language is understood as a reflection of speakers'/writers' variability, negotiability and adaptability (Verschueren 1999; 2009). In other words, writers or speakers *observe* the range of *variables* amongst the possible choices; *negotiate* such choices in context; and, finally, *adapt* to the possible options which allow them to achieve their basic aim: amusing their audience. More precisely, adaptability to the specific context turns out to be the mechanism which generates the most laughter or causes the most fun among the audience of a humorous text. These linguistic and paralinguistic choices are markers and indicators associated with certain inferences which serve the purpose of achieving the humorous effect. Additionally, those inferences entail the infringement of conversational principles (Informativity, Manner and Quantity) (Levinson 2000; Rodríguez-Rosique 2013; Ruiz-Gurillo 2014). Script opposition also becomes visible through the linguistic choices which appear in texts, thus making it possible to connect with markers and indicators. Finally, the situation is closely linked to linguistic choices (see Figure 2).

Despite the inclusion of variability, negotiability and adaptability in this revision of the GTVH, it now seems appropriate to consider metapragmatics of humor from a wholly pragmatic perspective (Verschueren 1999; 2009). In terms of metapragmatic awareness, the humorous text is understood as a continuous choice where participants, channel, register, grammatical structures, meaning, memory, intention, ideology, etc., act as a *medium of adaptability*. As a result, speakers' linguistic choices upon intending humorous effects lead to text which exhibit metapragmatic awareness indicators.

3.2.1 *Variability of humor*

It is actually possible to approach knowledge resources from a metapragmatic point of view; or expressed differently, focusing on variability, negotiability and adaptability. Within a metapragmatic process, the writer/speaker selects some variability features, especially a humorous mode adoption (Attardo 2001b), which determine subsequent communication with the reader/listener. This humorous mode adoption will probably influence narrative strategies – understood as register, text, and genre.

Likewise, the channel used could be oral or written, although a number of specific humor genres, such as jokes, humorous monologues, sitcoms, etc., primarily occur via the oral channel. On the whole, most humorous genres are non-spontaneous written texts uttered as if they were not written (Gregory and Carroll 1986). They are consequently planned, even though they do show several oral

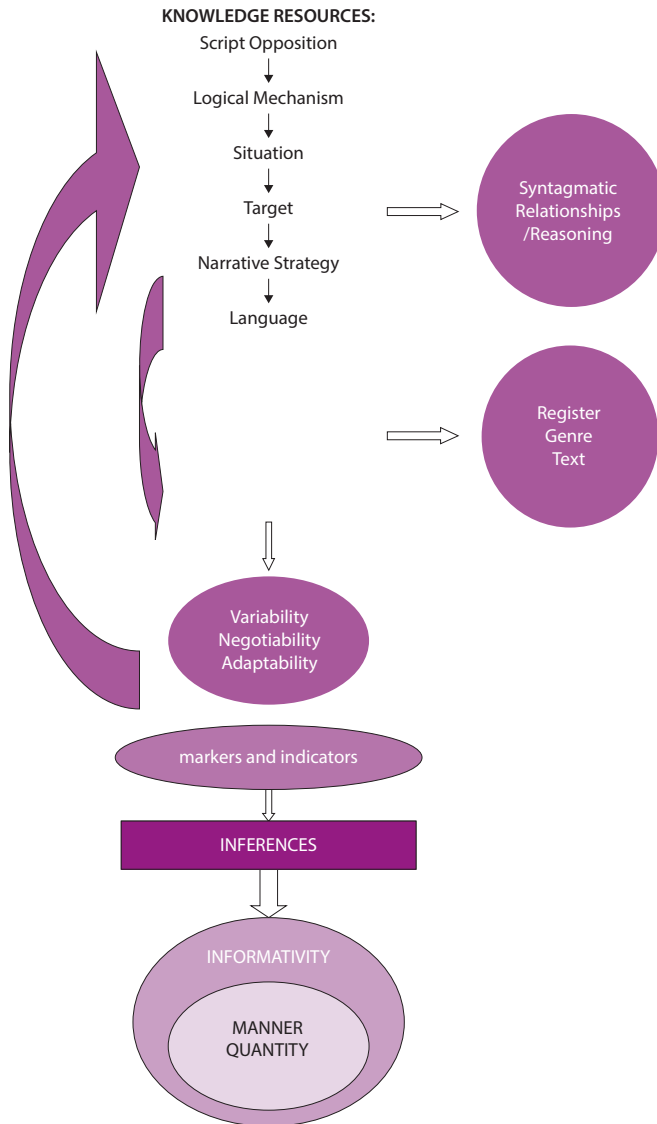


Figure 2. The revised *General Theory of Verbal Humor* proposal (Ruiz-Gurillo 2012; 2013)

features; amongst others, immediacy, face-to-face discourse to the audience, and, in some specific cases, feedback and dynamic interaction. Thus, the writer/speaker chooses an interpersonal aim – amusing the reader/listener –, an informal tone, and a non-specialized topic. Hence why both monological and dialogical genres exist. The monological genre as a humorous monologue is thought as a *person-to audience* genre (Calsamiglia and Tusón 1999: 39). Instead, a dialogical genre – e.g.

a sitcom – represents an interaction between some participants and the audience. Spontaneous conversation could additionally use humor as a strategy, in which case a dialogical genre arises.

As far as the humorous monologue is concerned, the narrative structure (presentation, complication, evaluation and coda), together with the predominant type of sequence (narrative/expository-argumentative), and register features (oral to be uttered as if it were not written, $\pm$ planning, $\pm$ immediacy, $\pm$ face to face, $\pm$ feedback, $\pm$ dynamism) determine the kind of humorous plot³ and consequently influence the success of *jab lines* and the *punch line*. However, jab lines may appear anywhere in the text and are always completely integrated into the narrative where they appear (Attardo 2008). A humorous monologue is generally structured by serious premises in each one of its parts (presentation, complication, evaluation, and coda), then giving way to a humorous conclusion known as a ‘jab line’ or ‘punch line.’

Table 4. Variability, narrative strategies and situation

VARIABILITY	NARRATIVE STRATEGIES	Code
		Bilingualism
		Register
		Channel (oral/written)
		Sociolect
		Planned
		Feedback
		Dynamic
		Immediate
		Face-to-face
		Interpersonal aim
		Informal tone
		Non-specialized topic, etc.
		Discursive participants
		Monological/dialogical
		Text and genre
		Serious premise/humorous conclusion
		Humorous plots: jab lines and punch line
	SITUATION	Context

3. Attardo (2008: 112–113) establishes several types of humorous plots. In the case of humorous monologues, the most frequent one consists in substantially complicating a story which is already humorous.

Therefore, all these features – seen as narrative strategies – will develop according to the humorous genre (humorous monologue, joke, parody, etc.). Despite being mostly a medium of adaptability, linguistic choices will be observed in relation to variability and understood as the structures and contextual correlates which remain available to the writer/speaker (Table 4).

3.2.2 *Negotiability of humor*

The text is thus understood as a humorous form which presents some features typical of narrative strategies (register, text, and genre) and a context. Thus, the writer/speaker will negotiate some metapragmatic choices related to meanings as well as to participants. The knowledge resource called *logical mechanisms* plays an important role in the selection of syntagmatic relationships and reasoning (Attardo et al. 2002) which contribute to create humorous effects. Consequently, the writer/speaker should negotiate the multiple choices that language offers in context, including chiasm, juxtaposition, parallelism, correct reasoning, faulty reasoning, etc. Target could therefore be dealt with as a part of negotiability, since the writer/speaker selects the “butt” of the humorous text – i.e. the participant, the group or the stereotypes inferred. This knowledge resource is sometimes optional, though, since some forms of humor do not have as their purpose to ridicule anyone in particular. In conclusion, negotiability allows the writer/speaker to establish a dynamic choice between explicit and implicit meanings, to highlight these dynamics between participants and, finally, to negotiate the inferred stereotypes (Table 5):

Table 5. Negotiability, logical mechanisms and target

NEGOTIABILITY	LOGICAL MECHANISMS	implicit meaning
		explicit meaning
	TARGET	participants
		stereotypes

3.2.3 *Adaptability of humor*

Once the writer/speaker has identified the range of variables amongst the possible choices and has negotiated such choices, he dynamically adapts his metapragmatic choices through cognitive aspects (memory, scripts, intention, etc.) and ideology. *Script opposition* is the knowledge resource that allows the writer/speaker to adjust structure and contextual correlates (variability) and dynamics (negotiability) to a specific degree of salience. According to the GTVH, two types of scripts may be contrasted in a humorous text. For this reason, the confrontation (establishment phase) produces an incongruity (incongruity phase) that should be solved during

the resolution phase. Cognitive aspects and ideology play a significant role when it comes to achieving humor in this regard (Table 6):

Table 6. Adaptability and script opposition

ADAPTABILITY	SCRIPT OPPOSITION	cognitive aspects ideology
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A number of metapragmatic indicators are available not only to choose variability aspects and negotiate them in context but also to adapt them to communication. After all, the writer/speaker uses the knowledge resource called *language* to reflect his humorous consciousness. It is additionally worth highlighting that language refers to metapragmatic awareness in two ways:

- *Metapragmatic clues* are humor *markers* such as intonation, discourse markers, evidentials, paralinguistic markers, etc.
- *Metapragmatic clues* are humor *indicators* of humor such as polysemy, antonymy, paronymy, phraseology, intentional register variation, etc. (Ruiz-Gurillo 2014).

3.2.4 *Metapragmatic awareness of humor*

To sum up, Figure 3 presents our proposal for metapragmatics of humor which, most importantly, may have a twofold reading:

- From top to bottom as a productive process of writer/speaker
- From bottom to top as an interpretative process of reader/listener

This analysis is consistent with the GTVH, since a text might be identified as being humorous by a reader/listener who infers humorous effects: relating language to the script opposition; connecting these with logical mechanisms and a possible target; and, finally, drawing a context and some narrative strategies. Moreover, the writer/speaker selects a humorous mode adoption; chooses some narrative strategies (code, register, etc.) and a context to achieve it; and also negotiates the logical mechanisms and a target for script opposition adapted to a specific language.

Similarly, based on the understanding of pragmatics as “an approach to language which takes into account the full complexity of its cognitive, social, and cultural (i.e. ‘meaningful’) functioning in the lives of human beings” (Verschueren 2000: 443), metapragmatics of humor pays attention to the metalinguistic choices made by the writer/speaker as well as to those made by the reader/listener. In fact, from a productive point of view, the writer/speaker achieves his humorous goals using several aspects related to narrative strategy, situation, logical mechanisms, target, and script opposition. Their metapragmatic clues are humor markers and

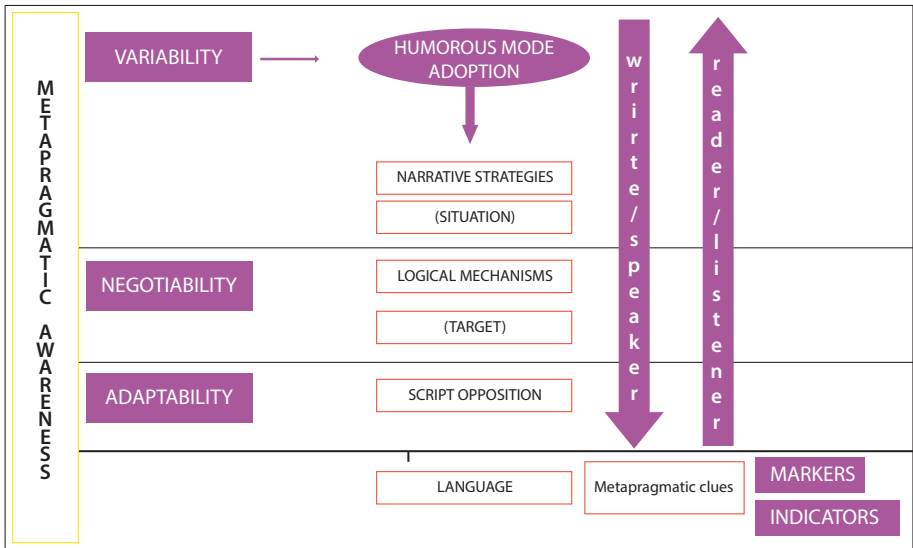


Figure 3. Metapragmatic awareness of humor

indicators which reveal this productive process. Instead, from an interpretative perspective, the reader/listener observes the metapragmatic clues utilized by the writer/speaker; reinterprets the script opposition, relates these to specific logical mechanisms and a target; and connects these aspects with the situation as well as with narrative strategies.

Furthermore, it deserves to be mentioned that this double perspective only exists according to critics of the GTVH (see especially Ritchie 2004), in whose view both script opposition and logical mechanisms constitute idiosyncratic humor aspects, whereas other knowledge resources appear in both humorous and non-humorous communication. Therefore, the most prominent knowledge resources – productively as well as interpretatively – are script opposition and logical mechanisms. Finally, our model is also in keeping with the conception of humor as a metapragmatic ability (Gombert 1992; Verschueren 1999), since it focuses not only on the speaker's intention but also on the detection of linguistic incongruities by the listener.

As a hypothesis, this proposal should be applied to planned discourse, rather than to unplanned humorous texts. Therefore, an illustration is shown on the humorous monologues below.

4. Metapragmatics of humorous monologues

Humorous monologue appears as a typically humorous genre – along with jokes and parodies – where humorous mode adoption is assumed by both the writer/speaker and the reader/listener. A description of the writer/speaker will firstly be provided on the basis of the proposal mentioned above, after which a number of interpretation features in the reader/listener might complete this approach. Thirdly, some clues to humorous monologues will be illustrated with examples.

4.1 Metapragmatics from the writer/speaker

The writer/speaker sets up the range of possibilities for language elements through the selection of a code, a language, and some register aspects. Some aspects associated with narrative strategies, and more specifically to register, will be considered below taking a specific language – Spanish – and a specific comedian – Andreu Buenafuente – as our reference.

Andreu Buenafuente's humorous monologues were written by a scriptwriter.⁴ As Ruiz-Gurillo (2013) explains, what the comedian puts on stage is a text planned and thought to be uttered before the public at the set and before the television audience too. However, the comedian dramatizes and improvises on the original text, which makes that text change in terms of planning, feedback, immediacy, face-to-face interaction or dynamism with the audience.

Focusing on the speaker, an oral register is utilized. Despite having to use the teleprompter⁵ to read his texts, Andreu Buenafuente can undoubtedly be described as a good monologist who has previously rehearsed the text in order to ensure the fulfilment of his main aims: triggering laughter; and persuading his audience.⁶ Therefore, this is a non-spontaneous text meant to be uttered as if it were not written (Gregory and Carroll 1986). Depending on the comedian's technique and skill, the monologue will move away to a greater or lesser extent from the text on which it is based – obviously written by a scriptwriter. It is planned too, although its immediacy and the fact of standing face to face with the public entails a higher or

4. These are some of the most outstanding scriptwriters responsible for the monologues analyzed here: Andreu Buenafuente, Berto Romero, Jordi Évole, Joan Grau, Ángel Cotobal, Marcos Rodríguez, David Lillo, Oriol Jara, Rafel Barceló, Xavi Roca, Jaïr Domínguez and Tomás Fuentes. Many of them belong to 'El Terrat' audiovisual production company.

5. A teleprompter or telescript is a display device which prompts the person speaking with an electronic visual text of a speech or script.

6. Actually Andreu Buenafuente is directly or indirectly involved in the drawing-up of his monologue script.

lower degree of improvisation as the comedian goes along. Consequently, the aim is interpersonal, insofar as the comedian tries to cause laughter in the audience. The tone tends to be informal, which provides register with many of the features inherent to colloquial language (informal or slang vocabulary, phraseology, etc.). Finally, the comedian develops a discourse around a current topic that is obviously well known to his target audience.

With regard to participants, this can be described as a *person-to-audience* genre (Calsamiglia and Tusón 1999: 39) which involves a monologue discourse similar to a lecture, a presentation or a class. The monologist consequently addresses the public present at the TV set on one side, and the television audience on another.

Hence why the narrative structure of a Buenafuente monologue (thesis; argumentative body; and conclusion), as well as the predominant type of sequence (expository-argumentative), and register features (oral to be uttered as if it were not written, $\pm$ planning, $\pm$ immediacy, $\pm$ face to face, $\pm$ feedback, $\pm$ dynamism) influence the success of jab lines and the punch line. The monologist therefore constructs a discourse where the jab lines and the final punch line are gradually inserted in the narrative plot.⁷ Table 7 shows the structure of a typical monologue by Andreu Buenafuente:

Table 7. Overall structure of a monologue by Andreu Buenafuente

MONOLOGUE PARTS	SERIOUS PREMISE	HUMOROUS CONCLUSION
THESIS	Serious premise	Humorous conclusion jab line
ARGUMENTATIVE BODY	Serious premise	Humorous conclusion jab line
	Serious premise	Humorous conclusion jab line
	Serious premise	Humorous conclusion jab line
	...	...
CONCLUSION	Serious premise	Humorous conclusion punch line

7. See Ruiz-Gurillo (2013) for more details about the narrative strategies of dramatized monologues.

Secondly, negotiability determines the logical mechanism as well as the target implied in humor. As far as the logical mechanism is concerned, the writer/speaker observes the possible forms in a particular language – Spanish in this case – through which his goals can be achieved. Supposing the basic structure composed by a serious premise and a humorous conclusion, the writer/speaker would look for a logical mechanism based on syntagmatic relationships or on reasoning (Attardo et al. 2002). These mechanisms could be: a syntagmatic relationship based on spatial relations; a chiasm; a parallelism; a correct reasoning based on analogy; a faulty reasoning based on exaggeration; self-reflexive humor, etc. Example (1) illustrates a logical mechanism supported on a correct reasoning from a false premise. The correct reasoning of the Spanish word *retraso* might be interpreted as a delay – time – but the monologist infers the meaning of ‘being late’ as having an intellectual disability:

- (1) El retraso forma parte de nuestra manera de ser. Yo, por ejemplo, ya nací con retraso.
 [The delay (being late) forms part of our personality. Me, for example, I was (already) born late.] (Andreu Buenafuente, *Retrasos horarios* [Time delays]. DY 2009:67 and 68).

The metapragmatic choice might affect the butt of humor, such as participants and stereotypes. Thus, Andreu Buenafuente can make fun of anybody, including himself. A number of generic references are prominent, such as Spanish people, Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, or politicians such as José Montilla⁸ and Rita Barberá.⁹ Sometimes the teasing focuses on TV characters; examples are Risitas or Carmen de Mairena, amongst others. There is often a humor butt, even when Buenafuente invents imaginary friends such as el Javi, el Roca, el Picó, el Gallardo, etc. That happens in example (2), where he criticizes Spaniards’ ‘good’ organization:

- (2) Los españoles llevamos la organización en la sangre. Ahí está Barajas¹⁰ para demostrarlo. No se rían que, como caos, lo de Barajas estuvo muy bien montado.
 [We Spaniards have organization in our blood. There is Barajas to prove it. Don’t laugh because, as a chaos, what happened in Barajas was very well

8. José Montilla was the President of the *Generalitat de Catalunya* (Catalonia’s Autonomous Government) between 2006 and 2010.

9. Rita Barberá was the Mayor of Valencia (Spain) between 1991 and 2015.

10. Barajas is the airport of Spain’s capital city: Madrid.

arranged.] (Andreu Buenafuente, *Organizar eventos* [Organizing events], SD 2010: 53–54)

Thirdly, salience makes prominent the script opposition on which logical mechanisms are based. The monologue *Organizar eventos* [Organizing events] (SD 2010, 53–54) compares the script ORGANIZING INSTITUTIONAL EVENTS with ORGANIZING PARTIES AT HOME. In fact, the whole argumentation revolves around this script opposition. The monologue *E-medicina* [E-medicine] (SD 2010: 152–154) contrasts the script BEING A TRADITIONAL DOCTOR with BEING AN E-DOCTOR. Example (3) develops such a script opposition; MEDICAL LANGUAGE/COMPUTER LANGUAGE:

- (3) Con todos estos avances los médicos se van a tener que adaptar al lenguaje informático; ya no hablarán de diarrea, que nunca ha sido un término agradable, sino de “reiniciar el sistema digestivo”, los supositorios se “introducirán por el puerto USB” y en lugar de decir “Está embarazada”, dirán: “Está a punto de salir una versión beta- ¿Quiere descargarla ahora?” [With all these advances, doctors are going to have to adapt to computer language; they will no longer speak about diarrhea, which has never been a nice term, but about “rebooting the digestive system,” suppositories will be “introduced through the USB port” and, instead of saying “You are pregnant”, they will say: “A beta version is about to be released, would you like to download it now?”] (Andreu Buenafuente, *E-medicina* [E-medicine], SD 2010: 154).

In conclusion, metapragmatic choices in humorous monologues are reflected in language as a medium of adaptation from the writer/speaker, that is, both in metapragmatic markers (such as intonation, pauses, typographical signs, etc.) and in metapragmatic indicators (polysemy, paronymy, phraseology, intentional register variation, etc.).

Example (4) shows how a metapragmatic marker, colon (:), serves to express the pause made by the comedian before clarifying what an ‘elevator check’ really is:

- (4) ¿Qué haces en esos quince minutos? Se puede decidir el futuro de un país, ¿eh? A Zapatero se le ocurrió el “cheque ascensor”: tres mil quinientos euros para quien le saque de ahí.
[What do you do in those fifteen minutes? You can decide the future of a country, can’t you? Zapatero thought of the ‘elevator check’: three thousand five hundred euros for whoever gets him out.] (Andreu Buenafuente, *Pánico en un ascensor* [Panic in an elevator]. DY 2009, 36–38).

Example (5) illustrates a punch line based on a phonological game where the initial sentence sounds very much like the final one, even though they are not

similar at all in terms of content. Consequently, paronymy has been chosen as the metapragmatic indicator here:

- (5) En fin, menos mal que salieron todos ilesos, aunque dicen que en esos momentos de pánico, Zapatero le dijo a Montilla: “**Jose, si salimos de ésta, te prometo el Estatut.**” Y entonces se abrieron las puertas. “Perdona, ZP, ¿qué decías? (*Disimulando*). “**Nada, Que si salimos de fiesta, te invito a un vermut.**”

[Well, it's a good job they all came out unscathed, although it is said that during those panic moments, Zapatero said to Montilla: “**Jose, if we get away with it this time, I promise you the Estatut,**” And then, the doors opened. “Sorry, ZP, what did you say? (Pretending). “**Nothing, that if we go partying, I will pay you a vermuth.**”] (Andreu Buenafuente, *Pánico en un ascensor* [Panic in an elevator]. DY 2009: 36–38).

Example (6) shows a punch line based on the polysemy in the word ‘agua’ [water], since Buenafuente plays with the meaning of ‘agua’ [water] as a liquid and the meaning of the Spanish idiom *hacer aguas* [to take in water]:

- (6) En fin, que el agua es muy importante y en España podemos estar tranquilos de que nunca nos faltará. Porque si algo ha conseguido Zapatero es que el país **haga aguas.**

[Well, I mean, water is very important, and in Spain we can be sure that there will always be enough of it for us. Because if Zapatero has achieved something, it is that the country takes in water (–like a sinking boat–)
(Andreu Buenafuente, *Agua* [Water]. HG 2011: 205).

4.2 Metapragmatics from the reader/listener

The main goal sought with a humorous monologue is to amuse an audience. To that end, the reader/listener infers humorous effects linking linguistic choices through script opposition; connecting these choices with logical mechanisms implied as well as with a possible target; and, finally, observing the situation and the narrative strategies used by the comedian. A clue to these goals is the laughter observed in dramatized monologues.

This feedback between speaker and listener becomes visible in example (7). From the speaker, gestures act as humorous markers which support what he says and contribute to his dramatization. The monologist even adds directions on how language must be used to convince others (“*le tienes que poner énfasis*” [you must

lay emphasis on it)). From the listener, laughter and applause show that humorous goals have been achieved.¹¹

- (7) BNF: dice *no te lo vas a creer* dic- ¿*pues no salgo de casale tienes que poner énfasis* ¿eh? *pues no salgo de caasaa*¹²

Público: RISAS

BNF: *y cuando estaba a medio caminoo/ me doy cuenta de que iba a piee?*

Público: RISAS Y APLAUSOS

[BNF: he says *you aren't going to believe* say- well, the thing is I leave from home **you must lay emphasis on it, eh?** *well, the thing is I leave from hoomee*

Public: LAUGHTER

BNF: *and when I was halfway/ I realize that I was walking?*

PUBLIC: LAUGHTER AND APPLAUSE](Andreu Buenafuente, *Retrasos horarios* [Time delays]. DY 2009: 67–68).

4.3 Metapragmatic clues to humorous awareness

Metapragmatic clues to humorous awareness, not only from the production point of view (writer/speaker) but also from the interpretation perspective (listener/reader) are reflected when jab lines and the punch line achieve their main goal: amusing the audience. Conversational dynamism with the public consequently arises as an important clue to metapragmatics of humor. The corollary between speaker and listener is observed when the role of the public becomes essential for dramatization. Thus, the public can make simple phatic signals (“*si*” [yes]) or more elaborate interventions (“*hombree/ un respeto ¿eh?*” [maan!/ some respect, eh?]), as exemplified in (8). This time, dynamism with the audience is precisely the register feature which adapts the humorous text to the oral situation:

- (8) BNF: el retraso↑/forma parte de nuestra manera de ser↓ es que nacemos así/ buen- bueno yo/ yo nací con retraso

Público: RISAS

BNF:¹³ **hombree/ un respeto ¿eh?**

11. The transcription keys provided by the Val.Es.Co group are used in the transcribed oral text fragments (Briz, A. and grupo Val.Es.Co. 2002: 29–31, <http://www.valesco.es/sistema.pdf>). The comedian Buenafuente is identified as BNF, the abbreviation for the television program broadcast on *LaSexta* television channel.

12. He makes a gesture holding out his hand.

13. He shows an amazed face looking at the public on both sides of the set.

[BNF: the delay (being late)↑/forms part of our personality↓ the thing is we are born like that/ wel- well I/ I was born late
Public: LAUGHTER
BNF: **maan!/ some respect, eh?**](Andreu Buenafuente, *Retrasos horarios* [Time delays]).¹⁴

5. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to analyze verbal humor from a metapragmatic point of view and propose a theoretical model for its study. The consideration of humor as a continuous choice where variability, negotiability and adaptability are key notions (Verschueren 1999) makes the *knowledge resources* of the GTVH (Attardo and Raskin 1991; Attardo 2001a, 2008) take a new direction as soon as they become integrated as metapragmatic awareness processes (see Figure 3). This proposal was finally applied to the humorous monologue in such a way that the metapragmatic consciousness of both the writer/speaker and the listener/reader show a connection with: narrative strategies, situation, logical mechanisms, target, script oppositions and language. Obviously, this theoretical proposal still needs to be checked with other planned discourses. Future research could corroborate its validity.

Table 8 below summarizes how this metapragmatic awareness works in a humorous monologue:

Table 8. Metapragmatic awareness in humorous monologues

VARIABILITY	NARRATIVE STRATEGY	REGISTER
		Non-spontaneous, oral text to be uttered as if it were not written + planned/ + improvised – feedback/ + feedback – dynamic/ + dynamic – immediate/ + immediate – face to face/ + face to face interpersonal aim informal tone non-specialized topic

(continued)

14. The script for this monologue appears in DY (2009: 67 and 68) and the dramatized monologue can be watched in <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EujAhvyfLzs>.

PARTICIPANTS

± monologic: story sequence
structure

From person to public at the
set (direct interaction)

From person to television au-
dience (indirect interaction)

STRUCTURE

THESIS

Serious premise-Humorous
conclusion

Jab line

ARGUMENTATIVE BODY

Serious premise-Humorous Jab line
conclusion

CONCLUSION

Serious premise-Humorous Punch line
conclusion

	SITUATION	Context	
NEGOTIABILITY	LOGICAL MECHANISMS	Syntagmatic relationships	
		Reasoning	Correct Faulty
	TARGET	Stereotypes	<i>Spaniards</i>
		People	<i>Prime Minister</i>
ADAPTABILITY	SCRIPT OPPOSI- TION	Serious script/humorous script	
	LANGUAGE	Metapragmatic markers	Intonation Gestures Pauses Typographical signs
		Metapragmatic indicators	Polysemy Paronymy Phraseology Intentional register variation

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PART 2

**Metapragmatic awareness of humor across
textual modes**

2.1

Jokes

Lawyers, great lawyers, and liars

The metapragmatics of lying in lawyer jokes

Miguel Ángel Campos

University of Alicante

This chapter analyses the pragmatic structure of lawyer jokes, specifically those based on explicit references to lawyers' inclination towards lying and their ability thereto. Lying has been extensively studied as an indication that the Cooperative Principle has not been followed; however, the explicit reference to lying as a practice found in lawyer jokes has not received much attention. From a sample of lawyer jokes collected from various online sources, the metapragmatic mechanisms of non-truthful statements and lying are described from a double point of view: the social implication of lawyers as liars and a Gricean analysis of lawyers not following cooperative principles in communication. The analysis demonstrates how these can lead to humorous reactions, but also, to the construction and acceptance of a cultural stereotype that represents a given profession as a dishonest one. This study shows that lying is indeed a source of humorous effects, and that such results are not hampered by the explicit reference to lying. This seems to favor a new approach to the analysis of jokes whose success may be based on their explicitness, but also on a clear metapragmatic awareness.

Keywords: metalinguistic humor, lawyer jokes, legal language, pragmatics of lying

1. Introduction: lawyers as the target of humor

If we look at those topics that are the subject matter of jokes, the obvious choices are things that are taboo, such as sex, that we might be afraid of, such as death, or things we bear a grudge against (e.g. politicians). Out of these three examples, law and lawyers perfectly fit two of them: something that has caused, or may cause us, trouble, or something we are afraid of. In this initial section, we shall briefly comment on how something as serious as the law and its players may be used as humor.

Although there are many studies on lawyers as the subject matter of jokes (Post 1987, Cramton 1996, amongst others), probably the most detailed studies

of lawyer humor are those by Galanter (1998, 2005, 2008), which we shall often refer to in this section. For a start, it must be said that lawyer jokes, as pointed out by Galanter (2005:142), are almost exclusively about those in private practice, i.e. government lawyers and public interest attorneys are very seldom featured in lawyer humor.

In our analysis, we have started from the existence of the “lawyer joke” as a specific, distinctive subgenre of jokes. This is proven by the existence of common features, which we will try to describe here, but also by the visible acceptance of the existence of such sub-genre. For instance, a simple Google search for “lawyer jokes” in June 2015 offered 345,000 hits, which make it rank close to doctor jokes and teacher jokes, whereas other subgenres, such as mother-in-law jokes, only featured 38,700. However, this has not always been the case. As Galanter (2008) explains, this is a relatively recent occurrence, and studies conducted before the last decades of the past century show an insignificant percentage of lawyer jokes as opposed to other categories (Galanter 2008: 388). This starts to change in the 1980s, and by the mid-nineties we can even find lawyer meta-jokes:

- (1) Question: How many lawyer jokes are there?

Answer: Only three. The balance are documented case histories.

(Galanter 2005: 3)

The reasons why lawyer jokes are made and are successful are many. In principle, since they fit within the general category of disparaging jokes (see, amongst others, Zillman 1983), i.e. jokes which offer a negative depiction of a given individual (e.g. Bill Clinton) or group (Italians, Chinese, the Belgians in France, the Irish in Britain, etc.), the reason for such success is that they allow “the socially acceptable of negative sentiments toward a target” (Maio et al. 1997: 1987, although the idea goes back to Freud). The difference is, however, that while telling a joke about a racial minority or a national group may constitute harassment or discrimination, or be plainly against the law, professions are not “legally protected categories,” and therefore it is more or less “safe” to bash lawyers (although there have been calls to label these as “hate speech,” see Torres 1993). This is how, for instance, the famous quote from Shakespeare’s play “The first thing we do, let’s kill all the lawyers.” (*Henry the Sixth*, Part 2 Act 4, scene 2, 71–78) may still be heard without danger. Even in the academic world, some scholars, such as Hobden & Olson (1994), have felt that conducting experiments on disparaging jokes is “safer” if lawyer jokes are used instead of racist or ethnic ones. Other more specific explanations for lawyer jokes’ success are those offered by Overton (1995), according to whom the social hatred of lawyers is caused by specific grievances; Post (1987), for whom it is a result of society’s own contradictions and the discrepancy between “our aspirations and realities” (Post 1987:389); or Galanter (1992), who suggests that the pervasive

presence of law and lawyers in society (both in the media and in sheer numbers) might also be one of the reasons for these jokes' success. An alternative, more positive view is that these jokes may be a way of alleviating the tension between lawyers and clients (Puma 1994). Cramton (1996) offers a more general explanation, and lists a series of factors which include, in addition to all the above, lawyers' unresponsiveness to moral and emotional factors and the imbalance between law and justice. Finally, as it happens with many other types of jokes, lawyer jokes may be used as a "probing tool" (Kane et al. 1977:14), whereby we may detect the ideological stance of the addressee by gauging their reaction to a given type of joke.

2. Lawyer jokes and the language of humor

A usual feature of many jokes (including many lawyer jokes) is the presence of specific scripts classifying them as humorous dialogic exchanges, structures such as "Have you heard about the one" (Yus 2003:1299). Some of these lawyer jokes are explicitly labelled as such through syntactic "joke-like" framing structures (for a list of such structures, see, for instance, Blake 2007:95ff). In our study, we consider these scripts as "metapragmatic framing strategies" (as used by Janney 2007:223). While some of them may be confused with bona fide questions, such as "What is the difference between x and y?" (which may introduce a joke, but also a bona fide question), the script "How many xxx does it take to screw in a light bulb?," as a reference to the alleged characteristics of a group, can hardly correspond to a real question:

- (2) Q: How many lawyers does it take to screw in a light bulb?
A: Four: one to climb the ladder, one to hold the ladder, one to shake the ladder and one to sue the ladder company.
- (3) Q: How many lawyers does it take to screw a light bulb?
A: One but it has to have a good case.

In addition to the explicit "joke" script (which identifies it as a "LBJ" or "light bulb joke"; see Attardo 2001:71), there are other features which trigger all the assumptions of lawyer jokes. The mere mention of "lawyer" or other triggers at the beginning the joke ("judge," "law," "court," "attorney," etc.) has such expressive power that the ensuing speakers' contribution is easier to identify as a lawyer joke, i.e. as "non bona-fide communication" (Raskin 1998:100ff) and processed accordingly; such processing implies the acceptance of a number of alleged "lawyer-like features" in the USA, such as lying, immorality, stupidity, etc. (see below) without which the joke would not make sense. These features are also central in Yus's

basic categories of jokes according to relevance theory, and lawyer jokes would be classified as jokes “whose main source of humor lies in the reinforcement or invalidation of commonly assumed stereotypical background information about the society in which the audience lives” (Yus 2008:142).

Galanter (2005:17–18) also identifies a number of categories or types of lawyer jokes, which he divides into “the enduring core,” i.e. those based on the traditional view of the legal profession (“discourse,” “economic predators,” “allies of the devil,” “conflict,” and “enemies of justice”) and “the new territory,” that is, new characteristics which have appeared in modern jokes as from the 1980s, such as “betrayers of trust,” “moral deficiency,” “objects of scorn,” and “death wish.” It is to be noted that, in view of our corpus (see below), these “categories” should be interpreted as “components,” that is, even when one of these elements is the central *leit motiv* of the story, one or more of the other elements can also be present.

The following example contains, for instance, assumptions (a) [ambulance-chasing] is the practice of preying on victims of accidents in order to file actions for damages where the lawyer may collect a substantial part of the compensation], (f) [stupid: parked ambulances do not move, and one is likely to bump into them if one runs after them] and (g) [immoral: this activity, which profits from the suffering of others, is not for the benefit of the client, and leads to unnecessary payments, increases in insurance premiums, etc.]:

(4) Q: Why is it that many lawyers have broken noses?

A: From chasing parked ambulances.

From the point of view of pragmatic analysis, it would appear that, if a joke is based on non compliance with cooperative principles, it should not be able to convey information. However, we agree with Attardo (1993:551) in that it does: once hearers perceive the cooperative principles have not been followed, they “switch to joke mode” and reinterpret the message. Arguably, in this and in many other scenarios where the jokes focus on a given group, the *animus jocandi* is subordinated to quite a different intention: that of disparaging the group.

3. Lies and humor

Pragmatics has revealed itself as a suitable tool for the analysis, both of humor (Yus 2003, 2008, 2013, amongst others) and of lying. In the case of jokes, some pragmatic studies have focused on the way jokes do not follow the cooperative principle, as initially pointed out by Hancher (1980), although according to others, such as Raskin (1985), jokes have a specific cooperative principle of their own, where the hearer expects just the opposite, i.e. the speaker *not* to tell the truth and

not to convey relevant information. This, in our opinion, would apply clearly to those jokes in which the dialogue allegedly takes place between the narrator and the joke addressee, e.g.:

(5) Q: Do you know how to save a drowning lawyer?

A: Take your foot off his head.

In this kind of dialogue, which follows a very standard “question-answer” pattern, the hearer does not expect any normal, law-abiding citizen to justify lawyers being murdered in hideous ways, but to humorously accept the ideological foundation for the punchline (here, “lawyers deserve to die”). One might even argue that many times this type of question-and-answer joke, also known as a “two-liner,” is a choral exercise where the hearer already knows the answer, and such answer is supplied by the speaker and the hearer (who already knows the joke), sometimes simultaneously, once the metapragmatic cues for the interpretation have been identified.

However, as aptly described by Yus (2003:1299), the controversy on whether jokes constitute non-compliance with cooperative principles or not lies heavily on *who* does not comply: there is a second level of non-compliance, i.e. that where one of the characters does not follow the principle, and the narrator clearly shows that a principle is not followed, whereby the joke itself is no longer a non-compliance, i.e. the non-compliance is “de-activated” by the narrator distancing him/herself from it: this is what Yamaguchi (1988) calls the “character-did-it” hypothesis (which is in itself problematic, since the narrator is also not following the maxims by either not mentioning them or exposing them, as pointed out by Attardo 1993: 547).

As regards lying, it has been analyzed from a variety of perspectives, which include the linguistic and the logical one. Perhaps the most important factor is the *intentional* nature of lying, i.e. the fact that one is lying not when one says something which is not true, but when one says something one believes not to be true. Our starting point may be Grice’s supermaxim “Do not say what you believe to be false” (Grice 1989:27), combined with the traditional view of the “intention to deceive” and that of “falsely implicating” (Meibauer 2005; see also the definition by Carson 2010). However, one of the most refined definitions of lying is that offered by Fallis (2008), for whom lying consists in saying what one believes to be false when the Gricean norm “Do not say what you believe to be false” applies.

One of the interesting features of jokes for which pragmatics, in general, and Grice’s conversational maxims in particular, are useful, is the fact that in jokes there is always an initial level at which the joke does not follow the maxims, but in those jokes in which there is a conversational exchange there is, as we have just mentioned, an additional, metapragmatic level of analysis. In our case, we will

concentrate on this “second level,” where the lawyer visibly is shown to not to follow cooperative maxims, but the structure of the joke is arranged in such a way that there is pragmatic evidence (usually supplied by the narrator, either directly or through contextual clues) that the lie is always exposed.

4. Our analysis: let sleeping lawyers lie

For this study, a sample of 213 jokes was collected from online sources in March 2015, Internet being now probably the most useful source of unsystematized folk knowledge. For each joke, repetitions and small variations have been disregarded (for instance, the joke starting “How can you tell that a lawyer is lying?” appeared in 4820 different hits, at times literally, at times with variations between “his mouth is moving” or “his lips are moving”). The metapragmatic mechanisms in these “canned jokes” (as described by Attardo 1994:294ff) have been studied, focusing on the use of non-truthful statements and references to lying, and the double result produced, namely, humorous reactions and the construction of a cultural stereotype that represents a given profession as a dishonest one. In this case, “metapragmatic” will be used as a wide category referring to all those elements referring to the negotiation of meaning (Verschuieren 2000), as exemplified by the way the non-truthful statements of lawyers are explicitly or contextually marked as such. On the basis of Galanter’s components described earlier (see section 2 above), a classification has been made according to the presence of the following components, which function as “common-ground” metapragmatic devices: (a) lawyers are money-hungry; (b) lawyers screw clients; (c) lawyers deserve to die; (e) lawyers go to hell; (e) lawyers screw clients; (f) lawyers are stupid; (g) lawyers are immoral; (h) lawyers lie; (i) lawyers are generally undesirable people. A table showing the components appearing in each joke is attached as Appendix 1.

In this study, we are concentrating on what Galanter (2005) called the “discourse” component, that is, lawyers’ manipulation of language. Interestingly enough, this category does not confine itself to the pure “lying” feature, but also jargon and complexity:

Discourse: Lawyers lie incorrigibly. They corrupt discourse by promoting needless complexity, mystifying matters by jargon and formalities, robbing life’s dealings of their moral sense by recasting them in legal abstractions, and offending common sense by casuistry that makes black appear white and vice versa.

(Galanter 2005:17).

In fact, within what Galanter calls “the enduring core” of usual topics, lying comes first in the list (followed by other “virtues” like “economic predators,” “allies of

the devil,” etc.). Out of the 213 examples of jokes studied, 32 show the lawyer not following Grice’s principles; we shall provide instances from our sample in which such acts of lying are called as such (though they do not appear in the joke), or are seen at work not following the maxims of quality, quantity and manner.

4.1 Explicit lying: labelling

Out of the 32 jokes analyzed, 11 make explicit mention of the act of lying, which may take the form of universal assertions. Some of them, of the question-answer type, imply that lawyers are incapable of true communication (which, paradoxically, would enable them to deceive their addressees if they ever told the truth). It must be noted that in these jokes what matters is not the implicature which may be derived by the hearer, because there is no actual instance of the participants lying, but the social implication that lawyers are liars, a message which is accepted by the addressee and creates the mutuality feeling “us vs. lawyers”

- (6) Q: How can you tell when a lawyer is lying?
A: His lips are moving.
- (7) When do you know a lawyer is telling the truth?
When his lips are shut.

Similar assertions about their propensity towards lying are made using the “disambiguation” type of joke or phonological proximity:

- (8) Q: How does an attorney sleep?
A: First he lies on one side, then he lies on the other.
- (9) Q: What’s the difference between a lawyer and a liar?
A: The pronunciation.

In the following example, the phonetic similarity “lawyer/liar” is also used, with the additional “allies of the devil” component we mentioned earlier:

- (10) A minister and lawyer were chatting at a party.
“What do you do if you make a mistake on a case?,” the minister asked.
“Try to fix it if it’s big, ignore it if it’s insignificant,” replied the lawyer. “What do you do?”
The minister replied “Oh, more or less the same. Let me give you an example.
The other day I meant to say ‘the devil is the father of liars’, but instead I said, ‘the devil is the father of lawyers’

4.2 Lying and the maxim of quantity

Flouting the maxim of quantity constitutes a form of lying (i.e. not “the whole truth”). As regards lawyer jokes, many of them are based on lawyers’ ability to conceal information, or in other words, to “lie by omission.” This is a clear instance of how folk wisdom de-constructs something which lies at the very foundation of the profession, i.e. the attorney-client privilege, whereby it is perfectly ethical (and indeed, basic) for a lawyer not to disclose any information which may be harmful to his case. In the following two examples, the strategy is based on either the judge or the other party not being privy to all the information (‘the client has an artificial arm’ in (11); ‘my case was a very weak one’ in (12)). The difference here is the narrative result, which in (13) shows a successful lawyer (it is the artificial arm which serves the prison sentence, while the defendant walks), whereas in (14) the lawyer in practice has lost the case because he has agreed to a settlement for a non-existent loss:

- (11) A lawyer defending a man accused of burglary tried this creative defense: “My client merely inserted his arm into the window and removed a few trifling articles. His arm is not himself, and I fail to see how you can punish the whole individual for an offense committed by his limb.” “Well put,” the judge replied. “Using your logic, I sentence the defendant’s arm to one year’s imprisonment. He can accompany it or not, as he chooses.” The defendant smiled. With his lawyer’s assistance he detached his artificial limb, laid it on the bench, and walked out.
- (12) A big-city lawyer was representing the railroad in a lawsuit filed by an old rancher. The rancher’s prize bull was missing from the section through which the railroad passed. The rancher only wanted to be paid the fair value of the bull.
- The case was scheduled to be tried before the justice of the peace in the back room of the general store. The city-slicker attorney for the railroad immediately cornered the rancher and tried to get him to settle out of court. He did his best selling job, and finally the rancher agreed to take half of what he was asking.
- After the rancher had signed the release and took the check, the young lawyer couldn’t resist gloating a little over his success, telling the rancher, “You are really a country hick, old man, but I put one over on you in there. I couldn’t have won the case. The engineer was asleep and the fireman was in the caboose when the train went through your ranch that morning. I didn’t have one witness to put on the stand. I bluffed you!”
- The old rancher replied, “Well, I’ll tell you young feller, I was a little worried about winning that case myself, because that durned bull came home this morning.”

This latter example corresponds to the sub-genre which we might call the “too-clever-by-half lawyer,” where lawyers try to deceive apparently easy victims (farmers, “blondes” – yet another group characterization –, etc.) and eventually not only their lies are exposed, but their strategy collapses. In the following story, the lawyer prefers to “lie by omission” by failing to admit he is a lawyer, and thus lose a valuable possession, rather than risk any retaliation by the remaining passengers (while earlier he was quick to say that he *was* a lawyer). Note the intentional detail of the *blonde* stewardess:

- (13) A lawyer boarded an airplane in New Orleans with a box of frozen crabs and asked a blonde stewardess to take care of them for him.
 She took the box and promised to put it in the crew’s refrigerator. He advised her that he was holding her personally responsible for them staying frozen, mentioning in a very haughty manner that he was a lawyer, and proceeded to rant at her about what would happen if she let them thaw out.
 Needless to say, she was annoyed by his behavior. Shortly before landing in New York, she used the intercom to announce to the entire cabin, “Would the lawyer who gave me the crabs in New Orleans, please raise your hand.”
 Not one hand went up . . . so she took them home and ate them.

The following joke is an adaptation of a classic, told with diverse places of birth (Minsk, Adelaide), different names (Natalie, Valerie), and sometimes told as a Jewish joke (e.g. Minkoff 2013). This is yet another instance of traditional jokes being adapted in order to disparage a given community, where the old man, in order to profit from a woman even in the saddest of circumstances (something “a lawyer would do,” according to this construction) flouts the maxim of quantity by postponing the relevant piece of information (“the money I am giving you is your father’s/sister’s bequest”) in order to obtain sexual services:

- (14) The Madam opened the brothel door to see a frail, elderly gentleman. “Can I help you?” the madam asked.
 “I want Natalie,” the old man replied.
 “Sir, Natalie is one of our most expensive ladies, perhaps someone else...”
 “No, I must see Natalie.” Just then Natalie appeared and announced to the old man that she charges \$1,000 per visit. Without blinking, the man reached into his pocket and handed her ten \$100 bills. The two went up to a room for an hour, whereupon the man calmly left.
 The next night he appeared again demanding to see Natalie. Natalie explained that no one had ever come back two nights in a row and that there were no discounts...it was still \$1,000 a visit. Again the old man took out the money, the two went up to the room and an hour later, he left.

When he showed up the third consecutive night, no one could believe it. Again he handed Natalie the money and up to the room they went. At the end of the hour Natalie questioned the old man: "No one has ever used my services three nights in a row. Where are you from?"

The old man replied, "I'm from Philadelphia."

"Really?" replied Natalie. "I have family who lives there."

"Yes, I know," said the old man. "Your father died, and I'm your sister's attorney. She asked me to give this \$3,000 to you."

In the following case, also the maxim of quantity is not followed, since the utterance "Don't worry about the cows," which one would usually construe as "the cows will be yours" by assuming the contribution to fulfil the maxim of relevance ["You are worried about something; if I tell you not to worry, it is because I have a solution to your problems"], is to be re-interpreted as "it is pointless for the client's to worry about the cows, because none of them are getting them anyway" (this would be a lie through a "false implicature" as described by Meibauer (2005):

- (15) A farmhand consulted a lawyer. He had long tended the late farmer's cows, and believed they would his when the farmer died. Now the farmer's son claimed ownership.

"I'll take your case," said the lawyer, "Don't worry about the cows."

The next day the farmer's son came in. The cows were raised on his land, he said, they should be his.

"I'll take your case," said the lawyer, "Don't worry about the cows."

Later, his secretary asked, "How can the cows belong to both?"

"Don't worry about the cows," the lawyer said. "The cows will be ours."

4.3 Lying and the maxim of quality

This category would include those jokes that portray lawyers as sources of blatantly false information. Note that in all cases, the lie is told by the character: the role of the narrator is to expose such lie, which agrees with the "character-did-it-hypothesis" as described by Yamaguchi (1988).

In this example, a whole life of lying is exposed by a mathematical impossibility (interestingly enough, this joke combines the lawyer genre, the "lying" topic and the "pearly gates" scenario, also frequent in jokes, by hinting that lawyers (Joe is a general term) charge their clients for non-existent hours (which makes them liars, in addition to money-hungry):

- (16) Joe the lawyer died suddenly, at the age of 45. He got to the gates of Heaven, and the angel standing there said, 'We've been waiting a long time for you.'

‘What do you mean,’ he replied, ‘I’m only 45, in the prime of my life. Why did I have to die now?’

‘45? You’re not 45, you’re 82,’ replied the angel.

‘Wait a minute. If you think I’m 82 then you have the wrong guy. I’m only 45. I can show you my birth certificate.’

‘Hold on. Let me go check,’ said the angel and disappeared inside.

After a few minutes the angel returned. ‘Sorry, but by our records you *are* 82.

I checked all the hours you have billed your clients, and you have to be 82...’

In the following joke, the lie is based on using social practices in a deceptive way, i.e. implying that somebody has sent something by including a business card, although technically the fact that a business card is within a package does not necessarily mean that somebody has sent a package:

- (17) A defendant in a lawsuit involving large sums of money was talking to his lawyer.

“If I lose this case, I’ll be ruined!”

“It’s in the judge’s hands now,” said the lawyer.

“Would it help if I sent the judge a box of cigars?”

“No! The judge is a stickler on ethical behavior. A stunt like that would prejudice him against you.

He might even hold you in contempt of court.”

Within the course of time, the judge rendered a decision in favor of the defendant. As the defendant left the courthouse, he said to his lawyer,

“Thanks for the tip about the cigars. It really worked!”

Confidently the lawyer responded, “I’m sure we would have lost the case if you’d sent them.”

“But I did send them.” replied the man.

“What?” shouted the lawyer?

“I sure did, that’s how we won the case... good thing I remembered to enclose the plaintiff’s business card.”

In this interesting example, the lawyer is conducting a conversation with one addressee while trying to lie to another who is allegedly listening (another instance of “false implicature,” since the false utterance – the lawyer is speaking to nobody – is actually addressed at somebody else):

- (18) A lawyer is sitting at the desk in his new office.

He hears someone coming to the door.

To impress his first potential client, he picks up the phone as the door opens and says, “I demand one million and not a penny less.”

As he hangs up, the man now standing in his office says,

“I’m here to hook up your phone.”

In this other example, the lie is seen as a “white one” (on “white lies,” see, amongst others, Camden et al 1984): the lawyer admits to lying to his own son, which is morally unacceptable, but is justified in order not to hurt his feelings, which agrees with the definition of a “situation where not telling the truth is justified.” However, here it may be logically inferred from the fact that a lie is told that “being an attorney is worse than being a murderer, a thief and a drunkard”:

- (19) A grade school teacher was asking students what their parents did for a living. “Tim, you be first,” she said. “What does your mother do all day?” Tim stood up and proudly said, “She’s a doctor.”
 “That’s wonderful. How about you, Amie?”
 Amie shyly stood up, scuffed her feet and said, “My father is a mailman.”
 “Thank you, Amie,” said the teacher. “What about your father, Billy?”
 Billy proudly stood up and announced, “My daddy murders people, steals from them, and drinks.”
 The teacher was aghast and promptly changed the subject to geography. Later that day she went to Billy’s house and rang the bell. Billy’s father answered the door. The teacher explained what his son had said and asked if there might be some logical explanation.
 Billy’s father said, “I’m actually an attorney. But how can I explain a thing like that to a seven-year-old?”

In this joke based on the traditional comparison between prototypical characters (“a Frenchman, a German and a Spaniard...”), the lawyer is capable of the most blatant lie if required by the circumstances:

- (20) An engineer, a physicist, and a lawyer were being interviewed for a position as chief executive officer of a large corporation.
 The engineer was interviewed first, and was asked a long list of questions, ending with “How much is two plus two?”
 The engineer excused himself, and made a series of measurements and calculations before returning to the board room and announcing, “Four.”
 The physicist was next interviewed, and was asked the same questions. Before answering the last question, he excused himself, made for the library, and did a great deal of research. After a consultation with the United States Bureau of Standards and many calculations, he also announced “Four.”
 The lawyer was interviewed last, and was asked the same questions. At the end of his interview, before answering the last question, he drew all the shades in the room, looked outside the door to see if anyone was there, checked the telephone for listening devices, and asked “How much do you want it to be?”

In this further following example, both participants – lawyers – are using deception: one verbally, by lying (“He has not found the ball, but extracted it from his pocket”), and the other by cheating:

- (21) Two lawyers, Jon and Amanpreet, head out for their usual 9 holes of golf. Jon offers Amanpreet a \$50 bet. Amanpreet agrees and they’re off. They shoot a great game. After the 8th hole, Amanpreet is ahead by one stroke, but cuts his ball into the rough on the 9th.
- “Help me find my ball. Look over there,” he says to Jon. After a few minutes, neither has any luck. Since a lost ball carries a four point penalty, Amanpreet secretly pulls a ball from his pocket and tosses it to the ground. “I’ve found my ball!” he announces.
- “After all of the years we’ve been partners and playing together,” Jon says, “you’d cheat me out of a lousy 50 bucks?”
- “What do you mean, cheat? I found my ball sitting right there!”
- “And you’re a liar, too!” Jon says. “I’ll have you know I’ve been **STANDING** on your ball for the last five minutes!”

4.4 Lying and the maxim of manner

In order to comply with the maxim of manner, information must be provided in such a way that it may be readily understood. One classical non-compliance is the use of fine print in order to prevent information from being successfully received:

- (22) Q: Have you heard about the lawyers’ word processor?
A: No matter what font you select, everything comes out in fine print.

Quite in agreement with the general view among the population, lawyers are shown not to follow the maxim of manner by using complicated language which overwhelms the addressee. Here’s a variation on the “how many ... lightbulb” type, which precisely operates through the intentional expansion of the traditional script as described by a lawyer (however exaggerated it may seem, all the formulae are perfectly possible in the language of written contracts):

- (23) Whereas the party of the first part, also known as “Lawyer,” and the party of the second part, also known as “Light Bulb,” do hereby and forthwith agree to a transaction wherein the party of the second part (Light Bulb) shall be removed from the current position as a result of failure to perform previously agreed upon duties, i.e. the lighting, elucidation, and otherwise illumination of the area ranging from the front (north) door, through the entryway, terminating at an area just inside the primary living area, demarcated by the beginning of the carpet, any spillover illumination being

at the option of the party of the second part (Light Bulb) and not required by the aforementioned agreement between the parties.

The aforementioned removal transaction shall include, but not be limited to, the following steps:

1. The party of the first part (Lawyer) shall, with or without elevation at his option, by means of a chair, stepstool, ladder or any other means of elevation, grasp the party of the second part (Light Bulb) and rotate the party of the second part (Light Bulb) in a counter-clockwise direction, this point being non-negotiable.
2. Upon reaching a point where the party of the second part (Light Bulb) becomes separated from the party of the third part ("Receptacle"), the party of the first part (Lawyer) shall have the option of disposing of the party of the second part (Light Bulb) in a manner consistent with all applicable state, local and federal statutes.
3. Once separation and disposal have been achieved, the party of the first part (Lawyer) shall have the option of beginning installation of the party of the fourth part ("New Light Bulb"). This installation shall occur in a manner consistent with the reverse of the procedures described in step one of this self-same document, being careful to note that the rotation should occur in a clockwise direction, this point also being non-negotiable.

Note: The above described steps may be performed, at the option of the party of the first part (Lawyer), by any or all persons authorized by him, the objective being to produce the most possible revenue for the party of the fifth part, also known as "Partnership."

Another usual script in jokes is "What do you get if you cross x with y," which in this case refers to lawyers' inability to speak clearly, but simultaneously creates some proximity between lawyers and mafia bosses by playing on a famous quotation:

(24) Q: What do you get when you cross the Godfather with a lawyer?

A: An offer you can't understand.

In this final example, the attorney tells a lie which not only allows him to steal an enormous amount of money, but also leads to somebody's instant death. There is a double non-compliance: quantity (lawyer withholds information on location of the money) and quality (final assertion by the lawyer deliberately giving the wrong translation of the accountant's words).

- (25) A Mafia Godfather finds out that his bookkeeper has cheated him out of ten million bucks. His bookkeeper is deaf. That was the reason he got the job in the first place. It was assumed that a deaf bookkeeper would not hear anything that he might have to testify about in court.

When the Godfather goes to confront the bookkeeper about his missing \$10 million, he brings along his attorney, who knows sign language.

The Godfather tells the lawyer, "Ask him where the 10 million bucks he embezzled from me is."

The attorney, using sign language, asks the bookkeeper where the money is.

The bookkeeper signs back, "I don't know what you are talking about."

The attorney tells the Godfather, "He says he doesn't know what you're talking about."

The Godfather pulls out a pistol, puts it the bookkeeper's temple and says, "Ask him again!"

The attorney signs to the bookkeeper, "He'll kill you if you don't tell him!"

The bookkeeper signs back, "OK! You win! The money is in a brown briefcase, buried behind the shed in my cousin Enzo's backyard in Queens!"

The Godfather asks the attorney, "Well, what'd he say?"

The attorney replies, "He says you don't have the guts to pull the trigger."

An interesting issue is whether the lies backfire on the lawyer. Indeed, many lawyer jokes are based on the lawyer pretending to out-smart somebody else and his strategy failing miserably. In some of the examples above (14, 19), the lawyer eventually loses out in spite of (as a result of) his lying. This type of story has a blatantly moralistic intention: lying does not pay. Or in other words, if lawyers always win ("the cows will be ours"), it is sometimes nice to see them punished in jokes, which causes a feeling of euphoria (observed, amongst others, by Zillman 1983: 96) among the audience.

5. Conclusions

If jokes are instances of discourse where the inner workings of communication are made explicit and questioned, lawyer jokes are even more of a metapragmatic event. As we have seen in previous sections, these jokes have very specific features, which cover both structure (there are scripts and rituals which are repeated time and again) and topics (most, if not all lawyer jokes, tend to refer to a limited set of recognizable assumptions). This is why, if jokes are a genre with visible conventions, lawyer jokes are a genre by themselves, recognizable and accepted as such, and whose effectiveness, far from being hampered by what could be considered lack of originality, is precisely based on such consistency with known models. As we mentioned earlier, there is evidence (Galanter 1997) that some of the lawyer jokes (e.g. the "sign language" one, or the prostitute one) used to be applied to other ethnic groups.

One of the sub-types of jokes whose metapragmatic mechanisms are more visible is those based on lawyers being incorrigible liars. As we have seen, such lies may be approached in two ways: either by looking at the implication that lawyers are liars with no further evidence provided (the joke is conditional upon the acceptance of the social assumptions regarding lawyers), or from a Gricean perspective, whereby “lying” may be viewed as not following the maxims of quality, quantity, or manner. Quality would correspond to the classical intentional falsehoods, quantity to “dispensing” information as befits their interests, and manner is seen in those cases where the lawyer resorts to deliberately obscure language, a trait well-accepted by the cultural community and therefore a perfectly predictable assumption.

Another conclusion which may be derived from the analysis of these jokes is the fact that the obviousness – and the self-referentiality – of the lying practice, which is almost to be expected, does not make the jokes less successful: indeed, their predictability is another fact of success. The participants (the joke-teller and the audience) are clearly aware of the type of discourse involved, of the rules it is governed by, and the underlying ideology, but such metapragmatic awareness is precisely one of the most powerful mechanisms supporting this type of humor. At this stage, it might be worth remembering this old joke (probably the quintessential meta-joke), which is not about lawyers, but it shows to what extent “expectability” is not a problem:

A man has a friend who is a comedian, his friend invites him to the national comedian convention. When there the comedians start telling jokes, the first one stands up and shouts “44” and everyone starts laughing. The man asks his friend why they are laughing “We just say the number of the joke in our routine” his friend says. The man stands up feeling brave and shouts “27!” and nobody laughs. He sits down and says to his friend why aren’t they laughing and his friend says “I don’t think you said that well.”

Going back to the traditional paradox, we might ask ourselves the question of whether jokes do communicate, and how. After our analysis, it appears that in this – as in many other cases – humor, far from being a harmless pastime, has a given ideological activity: the transmission and reinforcement of a specific construction of a group. In fact, as is often argued, disparaging jokes are more powerful at reinforcing stereotypes because, unlike plain slurs or insults, which involve no processing effort, jokes are to be decoded and interpreted, and the effort by the hearer leads to the ideological imprint being a stronger one.

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Appendix 1. Thematic components in jokes studied

Component	Number of jokes (total: 213)	
lawyers are money-hungry	45	
lawyers screw clients	15	
lawyers deserve to die	39	
lawyers are stupid	19	
lawyers are immoral	39	
lawyers lie	32	Explicit: 10
		Quantity: 6
		Quality: 13
		Manner: 5
lawyers are generally undesirable characters	59	

A look at metalinguistic jokes based on intentional morphological reanalysis

Isabel Balteiro

University of Alicante

This chapter analyses metalinguistic jokes produced by intentional morphological reanalysis, particularly, those which involve intentional morphological misinterpretations of morphemes or word parts. One single morpheme or word may be decomposed into pseudo-morphemes, through what Guiraud (1976) calls “defunctionalization” of language, which most often become fully meaningful and transparent due to their formal identity with an already existent free morpheme. Consequently, new, potential and highly motivated words are created with humorous purposes. In our sample, the manipulation and reinterpretation of the *a priori* indivisible word structures are supported by the existence of, mainly, homophones and paronyms, graphic marks and, less frequently, by slight spelling changes, e.g. Q: What do you give a skeleton for Valentine’s Day? A: Bone-bones in a heart-shaped box.

Keywords: metalinguistic jokes, morphological reanalysis, intentional morphological misinterpretation, ambiguity, word play

1. Introduction

The present paper, grounded on both the Relevance and Incongruence Theories (see Yus 1997), highlights the importance of metalinguistic mechanisms, mainly morphological ones, in achieving verbal humor in the English language. The study shows how language is distorted, more precisely, how (ortho)graphic and morphological structures of words are manipulated or even “violated” in favor of ambiguity, word play and humorous effects.

The notion of humor (and what makes people laugh) has been largely studied from different perspectives and disciplines since Aristotle. Linguistic research on humor has mainly been devoted to the pragmatic study of the different types and functions of humor as well as to the mechanisms to achieve it (see Alexander 1997,

Attardo 1994, Dynel 2009, Norrick 2004, 2010, or Raskin 1985, amongst others) at both the production and reception ends, translation problems, sociolinguistic issues, cognitive processes, etc.

Linguistically speaking, humor often depends “upon the unexpected use of words, wherein two meanings are implied, one of which has an incongruous connotation” (Chiaro 1992:1). Thus, verbal humor and, in particular, jokes are produced through the manipulation of language and the creation of more than one and opposed interpretations of a given utterance. By being intrinsically ambiguous and even incongruous (on *incongruity* see, for example, Attardo 1994; Forabosco 1992, 2008; Martin 2007; or Dynel 2009), jokes may be said to break two of the maxims (the maxim of quantity and the maxim of manner) for effective information exchange or communication (see Grice’s Cooperative Principle, Grice 1975:45; Norrick 1993:95) to achieve humorous effects. However, as Yus (2008:133–134) states, humor involves an intentional play with the interpretations that are more or less accessible and/or likely (from the humorist’s point of view) and also an alteration of the expectations of relevance (from the audience’s point of view; see also Sperber and Wilson’s (1981), Principle of Relevance). Consequently, “if word play is to be successful, it has to play on knowledge which is shared between sender and recipient” (Chiaro 1992:11), and this is particularly true in metalinguistic jokes which play with boundaries with(in) English words, as the ones we analyse below, which, in our opinion, require not only mutually manifest assumptions on socio-cultural aspects but also a proficient knowledge of the English language.

Furthermore, following the Cognitive Principle of Relevance, as Yus (2008:132–133) notes, “humorists design their humorous discourses by resorting to [this] mind-reading ability and hence predict that certain stimuli will be more relevant than others and that certain assumptions will inevitably be entertained by their audience during comprehension”. This is also valid for jokes “which base the humorous effect not on explicit interpretations but on the audience’s extraction of contextual implications” (Yus, 2008:139).

As we shall see below (see the riddles in our sample), for an utterance to be humorously effective, discriminative contextual cues are required, indicating that such a piece of discourse is not to be taken seriously. Thus, in puns, two incongruous interpretations (two scripts or frames, see Attardo 2001:20), that is, the serious and the humorous interpretations, may be simultaneously accessible to the recipient, who should make some effort and devote cognitive resources to identifying the ambiguity and select the adequate interpretation (to disambiguate) with the aid of both world and linguistic knowledge.

In the following sections we will first explain and contextualize our object of study, that is, the so-called metalinguistic jokes, in which we include word plays and within them puns. Then we will explain the objectives and methodology of this

study and, finally, we will devote one section to the results, that is, to the analysis of intentional morphological reanalyses as a strategy to create metalinguistic jokes.

2. (Meta)linguistic Jokes: Puns and/or Word Play

So far we have referred to ‘humor’ to mean ‘verbal humor’ or ‘linguistic humor’ (Dynel 2009:120), humor expressed through language, that is, that produced not only by the meaning of words but also by the linguistic forms of words (see Attardo et al. 1994:32 for a definition of ‘verbal joke’). Even though verbal humor may be ambiguity-based (as in puns) or not (as in alliterations), most researchers agree that “linguistic humor covers primarily punning (puns), in which similar or identical structural features ... are exploited for the confrontation of two different meanings” (Dynel 2009:120; see also Lew 1997:124).

Note that, apart from ‘linguistic jokes’ (Raskin 1987), some authors use other terms like ‘poetic jokes’ (Hockett 1977), ‘language-dependent jokes’ (Attardo 1994), amongst others. For the purposes of this study, however, we prefer the term ‘metalinguistic jokes’ to name those jokes which depend on the explicit distortion, violation or manipulation of word forms or word boundaries to produce ambiguity, word play, surprising and funny effects, or simply humor. As Aarons (2012:126) argues, “a contrast” is perceived “between what we know about language and the way in which language works in the joke” and which seems to be necessary to generate humor (see Suls 1972). Hence, the contrast or discrepancy between a real world interpretation and a metalinguistic world interpretation in our sample produces humorous effects.

According to Oaks (1994), Lew (1996:127) or Ritchie (2004:39), this type of jokes “very often depend for their existence on linguistic ambiguity”, which may be situated at any level of the linguistic system and it may be determined by identifying the minimal string that varies between the two mentioned readings or interpretations. Hence, three subtypes of jokes have been identified in the literature: (1) phonological, (2) lexical; and (3) syntactic jokes (see Ross 1998; Attardo et al. 1994), depending on whether variation exists at the level of phonemes or sounds (e.g. *The magician who loved his chocolate could perform a lot of Twix*, Lew 1996:130), at the semantic level or level of meanings (*Best wishes from Mama and Pauper*, Attardo et al. 1994:34) and at the level of sentence structure (*Man in restaurant: I’ll have two lamb chops, and make them lean, please. Waiter: To which side?*, Oaks 1994:378), respectively, (for further information on this see also Lew 1996). Note that Seewoester (2011) adds two types of ambiguity that contributes to the creation of jokes, namely syllabic and morphological, but which should be included, in her opinion, within the categories of phonological and lexical jokes respectively.

Central to the study of metalinguistic jokes and to the notion of ambiguity is the linguistic phenomenon, or rhetorical device known as puns (see Attardo 1994, 2001; Raskin 1985; Redfern 1984). These phenomena, which may be considered as a type of metalinguistic joke or wordplay, are characterized by the co-existence of at least two identical or similar forms and/or pronunciation and at least two incongruous or opposite meanings. This overlapping of “double meaning” (Redfern 1984) or ambiguity due to similarity of sound in a given context generates humor in puns. Likewise, Raskin (1985) defines puns as “linguistic resources that function as a “script-switch trigger” in a humorous text, enabling the switch from one reading to the other; that is to say, humor is created by the semantic gap and association between the serious reading and the non-serious one. As Attardo (1994) puts it, puns function as a “disjunctive”, disconnecting two incompatible meanings, on the one hand, and as a “connector”, on the other.

However relevant puns may be in the study of humor, for the purposes of this paper and like most traditional approaches, puns are conceived as one special subtype of wordplay, that is, one of the resources used in language or the ways in which language is used to produce humorous effects. Accordingly, as Chiaro (1992:49) notes, traditional definitions see puns exclusively as word games based on homophony but also equate puns with wordplay or plays on words. The study below uses these two terms as interchangeable, even though some approaches consider that there is no terminological consensus on what these terms denote. Furthermore, if the term pun were to be maintained and used, the division between exact puns (homophones) and near puns (paronyms), as proposed by Partington (2006:113), would be maintained.

We believe, however, that puns, word plays and/or metalinguistic jokes depend on other linguistic phenomena like homophony, polysemy, homonymy, morphophonological and semantic reinterpretation and reanalysis or manipulation of parts of words, and word-formation/morphological mechanisms that are actually the primary sources of ambiguity.

While the association between ambiguity and humor has been studied in quite a good number of works, there seems to be an important lack of analyses which focus on the underlying linguistic mechanisms that produce ambiguity. This is precisely the main objective of this paper: to analyze intentional syllabic and morphological reanalysis or intentional manipulation of words marked by graphic devices to produce deliberate metalinguistic jokes. Pepicello and Green (1984) and Seewoester (2011) consider what they regard as syllabic, morphological mechanisms and morpheme inflation but their approaches are slightly different to ours, as we shall see below.

3. Objectives and methodology

Our sample comprises a compilation of thirty-four metalinguistic puns (see Appendix) which are the result of what we have called intentional ‘morphological reanalysis’ and which have been retrieved from two books of jokes, namely Roop and Roop (2004) and Schultz and Gable (2004).

Even though the sample may look as rather small, we consider that it is representative enough of the phenomenon we analyze mainly because, as we shall see, the cases are ample and varied and include homograph-based jokes and homophone-based ones (cf. “phonological jokes”, Lew 1996). Furthermore, we believed it appropriate to extract our examples from two well-accepted and well-known books on verbal humor which actually contain instances of the mechanism that we wanted to study. In relation to this, Attardo et al. (1994:30–31) “doubt that any collection of printed jokes may be ‘representative’ in the technical sense ... if for no other reason than that the number of potential texts to be included is infinite”. Therefore, as they argue, “no attempt at obtaining a ‘representative’ corpus” was made but simply they studied the jokes in four joke books. Similarly, research into humorous puns has mostly concentrated on the “written” media (see, for example, Bucaria 2004, Lew 1996, Seewoester 2011), as in our case.

The selection of the sample was done manually, that is, by reading the joke books that we used as sources for the present study. Once compiled, we have analyzed them in depth in order to identify and discover the different strategies used in the manipulation and violation of word boundaries to produce funny and even surprising effects. Finally, we offer a descriptive-analytical account of our findings in section four below.

Our general aim is to show how by playing with and within word boundaries, especially by creating (pseudo-)morphemes, by means of what we have labelled as re-analysis (reanalysis), intentional manipulation, reinterpretation or even misinterpretation, humor is created.

Secondly, more specifically, we attempt to analyze how this strategy or mechanism affects and distorts words at all linguistic levels, namely phonological, morphological, semantic, syntactic and even (ortho)graphic. The formal level of the language is here divided into two levels, the morphological and the graphic ones, because of their importance in our data, in which the second seems to support the first for the attainment of humor. Furthermore, we pay attention not only to the departure point, that is, to the undistorted word, but also to the result, that is, to the manipulated word.

Thirdly, by doing so, we also examine whether, on the one hand, the manipulation of word structures upgrades or maintains word boundaries, and, on the other, if the pseudo-morphemes in the initial undistorted word become either

already-existing bound or free morphemes or completely new non-existent words are created.

Finally, we explore how these strategies either produce ambiguity and humorous effects allowing the two readings simultaneously and/or unveil the two interpretations that enable puns to occur.

4. Intentional morphological reanalysis as a metalinguistic Joke/Pun-making strategy

Previous works on metalinguistic jokes have focused on cognitive processes in the interpretation of puns (Duffy, Kambe, and Rayner 2001; Giora 2003; Gorfein 2001), on linguistic ambiguity (Oaks 1994, Taha 1983), on categories and frequencies (Attardo 1994, Attardo et al. 1994, Bucaria 2004, and Seewoester 2011) and even on the problems of translating English jokes into other languages (Lew 1996, or Zabalbeascoa 1996). However, none of them has yet focused on how intentional morphological reanalysis (also called morphological manipulation) produces humorous effects.

The starting point of the study that follows is the observation that word boundaries can be manipulated and reanalyzed at any part of the word, by playing with syllable and morpheme levels to create pseudo-morphemes and, consequently, humorous effects. This type of intentional reanalysis or manipulation, as an *ad hoc* mechanism to create humor, may also be considered as deliberate misinterpretation of internal phonological (or syllabic) and morphological word structures in favor of amusement or even surprise, as in:

- (1) Q: What musical instruments do skeletons play?

A: Trom-bones.

(1) shows how one single indivisible morpheme may be reanalyzed and divided at syllabic level to produce pseudo-morphemes that, as in this case, may coincide with existent fully meaningful words in the language, which contribute to the (semantic) reinterpretation of the original 'serious' lexical unit.

Humorous effects are produced due to the discrepancy between either the ambiguous phonological level and the morphological explicit reinterpretation or the actual morphological form and the potential one(s), on the one hand, and also, on the other, by connecting two incongruous elements or meanings, as in (2), (3) and (4) below, amongst many other instances in our sample:

- (2) Q: What's a favorite ghost dance?

A: Boo-gie woogie.

(3) Q: Where do ghouls stay on vacation?

A: At the gobl-inn.

(4) Q: What do you find at the beach on Halloween?

A: Sand-witches.

Attardo (1994:132) apparently refers to this phenomenon as “metanalysis”. However, the examples he provides discover that our conception of the phenomenon is radically different to his, as Attardo basically sees it as some kind of truncation or clipping. Accordingly, he provides instances like the truncation *gruntled* from *disgruntled* and also a back-formation of suffixed forms like *if it’s feasible, let’s fease it*.

4.1 Upgrading word boundaries and other non-morphological alterations

On the one hand, the intentional morphological reanalysis or manipulation of words may imply the explicit and marked disintegration of simple and unmotivated words into motivated and transparent pseudo-morphemes, as in (1) above (see also the Appendix) but also the reinterpretation or misinterpretation of derived motivated words like *boo-ties* in (16).

(16) Q: What do baby ghosts wear on their feet?

A: Boo-ties.

This simultaneously creates some kind of so-called folk or even false etymologies, based on (or similar to) the popular and false belief that one actual single morpheme may be composed of two or more morphemes as in (1) (cf. an experiment in Spanish which demonstrates how speakers reinterpret words on the basis of folk etymologies or misinterpretations of structural divisibility).¹

Syllables, morphologically arbitrary and inexistent word parts, or bound morphemes may be upgraded to the status of free morphemes which may even be identical to actual words, e.g. *bones* in *trom-bones* (see (1) above or in the Appendix), or *bats* in *acro-bats* (21) below.

(21) Q: Why do witches go to the circus?

A: To see the acro-bats.

In other words, some lexical units (as the one just mentioned and the ones that follow) are formed of only one single morpheme which cannot be structurally separated into smaller meaningful units, however, this morphological rule can be violated in metalinguistic jokes and/or puns to obtain ambiguous and humorous

1. <http://www.abc.es/sociedad/20150602/abci-palabras-definidas-ninos-201506021922.html>

effects by upgrading word boundaries. That is, by converting a bound morpheme or even a non-existent one (placed at level below the word) into a free morpheme or word and situate it at word level, e.g. *boo-k*. in (19) and *Colum-bus* (27):

- (19) Q: What does a ghost read in bed?
A: A scary boo-k.
- (27) Q: What was the first bus to cross the Atlantic Ocean?
A: Colum-bus.

This type of reanalysis, as a humorous technique, may also allow the creation of completely new, inexistent or potential words, as in (33), where phonology contributes to the reinterpretation:

- (33) Q: What's a good time to go to the dentist?
A: Tooth-hurty (2:30).

Graphic marks and/or punctuation devices may also be intentionally used as morpho-semantic devices to highlight the reinterpretation (see *tur-key* (6) or *acro-bats* (21)):

- (6) Q: What kind of key do you use on Thanksgiving?
A: A tur-key.
- (21) Q: Why do witches go to the circus?
A: To see the acro-bats.

Furthermore, some reinterpretations may also be supported and/or guaranteed by simultaneous spelling games, like the use of lower case instead of upper case (e.g. *noel-ephant* (17)) or, just the opposite, the capitalization of a word whose serious reading would use the lower case, e.g., *Nick-nacks* (20) or *Nickle-less* (34):

- (17) Q: What's gray, weighs more than 10,000 pounds, and comes down your chimney on Christmas Eve?
A: A noel-ephant.
- (20) Q: What does Santa have on his fireplace mantle?
A: Saint Nick-nacks.
- (34) Q: Why won't Santa give you five cents?
A: Because he's Nickle-less.

In certain instances, some spelling alterations together with punctuation marks are essential to guarantee the purposes and understanding of the reanalysis or misinterpretation of word boundaries:

(28) Q: What do skeletons wear in the sun?

A: Sun bone-ets.

(29) Q: Why did Holly miss school on her birthday?

A: She heard it was a Holly-day.

It is to be noted that probably unlike other languages, the flexibility and morphological features of the English language favor structural (and phonological) ambiguity and also intentional reanalysis or manipulation of internal lexical boundaries. Furthermore, even though we may argue that in creating humor the language uses the same resources as to create any other effect, humor at the same time has its own distinctive features, as Giora (2003) and Brône et al. (2006) have already noted. That is the case of example (17), which might also be analyzed as a blend with complete overlapping (on blend formations, see Adams 1973, Bauer 1983, or Cannon 1986, amongst many others). However, the presence of an explicit graphic mark, that is, the dash, leads us to interpret it as a result of morphological manipulation rather than blending. Besides, the ambiguity and incongruity associated to reanalysis of word boundaries is seldom present in blends.

Although all our examples have been selected on the basis on the existence of explicit morphological reanalysis, this may also simultaneously involve manipulation of other linguistic features or linguistic levels. Accordingly, the reinterpretation and, hence, the ambiguity may also affect the phonological level through the use of so-called paronyms, which function as minimal pairs, as in jokes (4), (5), (8), (9), (10), (11), (12), (14), (18), (19), (22), (23), (24), (25) and (30) (see Appendix for full list). In phonological terms, note the insertion of the phoneme /t/ in the reanalysis of *sandwiches* (4); the substitution of phonemes or even diphthongs as /au/ for /æ/ in (5); /t/ for /sw/ in (9), /r/ for /b/ in (10), /əʊ/ for /ə/ in (12), or /g/ for /k/ in (25), for example. Similarly, in jokes (8), (14), (18), (19), (23), and (30) the reanalysis produces the pseudo-morpheme *boo* /bu:/ (important for its humorous reading) that alternates with /3:/, /ʌ/, /ʌ/, /ʊ/, /ʌ/, and /ʌ/, respectively, that correspond to the serious interpretation. Apart from those, jokes (7) and (24) deserve special attention because they have been quite clearly conceived of with a phonological purpose in mind, where the joke-teller might even add in an oral medium some special “effects” by imitating a French accent, as “bon bons” are not commonly used in English as “chocolates” and also to imitate the French pronunciation of Napoleon’s last name.

The morphological reanalysis, however, may also affect or create ambiguity at the lexical level. Indeed, some examples have been identified in our sample, which produce humor due to the existence of incongruous meaning under an (apparently) identical linguistic form, namely jokes number (1), (2), (3), (6), (7), (13), (15), (16), (17), (20), (21), (26), (27), (28), (29), (31), (32), and (33); see Appendix. Thus, in

(28) Q: What do skeletons wear in the sun?

A: Sun bone-ets.

the ambiguity is produced due to the co-existence of two homonyms which fit in the utterance: while *sun bonnets* (serious reading, without reanalysis) are hats to protect you from the sun, *sun bone-ets*, its reanalyzed form, denotes little bones exposed to the sun.

Finally, it should not be forgotten that ambiguity in one linguistic level may affect other levels as well, as Ritchie (2004:41) claims. Thus, in examples like

(31) Q: What did the elves say when the reindeer refused to help make the Christmas goodies?

A: “We’ll do it ours-elves.”

it may be argued that it not only affects the morphological and the lexical levels but also the syntactic one: in (31) there is a change from *ourselves* (pronoun) to *ours-elves*, which may be regarded as a phrase formed by a pronoun which is used as a determiner of the following noun.

4.2 On the interpretation of semantic ambiguity or wordplay

As regards the interpretation of these metalinguistic jokes, the recipient of a joke “often needs to be able to recognize instances of broken (or merely bent) linguistic rules” (Chiaro 1992:13). Not only world knowledge but also proficient linguistic knowledge is required on the side of the recipient in order to be able to identify the ambiguities and hence be able to interpret puns, establishing the connections between the serious and the non-serious readings. Sometimes the speaker or humorist provides hints to contribute to the disambiguation process, which range from the extralinguistic and linguistic contexts of the joke to the purely linguistic (including graphic) devices used in playing with the language, as we have seen in the previous lines.

As just said, in our study graphic and morphological devices are used in this way. However, these devices may apparently work better in the written medium than in the oral one, as in examples like:

(29) Q: Why did Holly miss school on her birthday?

A: She heard it was a Holly-day.

(31) Q: What did the elves say when the reindeer refused to help make the Christmas goodies?

A: “We’ll do it ours-elves.”

(32) Q: Is “Saint Nicholas” Santa Claus’s real name?

A: No, it’s his Nick name.

In spite of this, the speaker may probably compensate for this by playing with stress, pauses or by varying the length of the vowel at the time of speaking or telling the joke.

Apart from that, in the examples that occupy us here, the communicative act in itself is a good indicator of the fact that the utterance should not be taken seriously. The initial strange or absurd question serves as the context and provides hints to the listener (and also the reader) as regards the fact that the answer is also going to be “different” from conventional ones (see (31) above or in the Appendix).

In our sample this type of so-called ‘riddles’ (see Pepicello 1987, Chiaro 1992:68) exploit word play and ambiguity and present the pun or joke in the resolution or punchline.

In addition to that and as we have already commented, the correct interpretation of these metalinguistic jokes requires a good knowledge of the English language (see (33)) but also some background or world knowledge to make the inferences required to understand the joke (see (11) and (20)):

(33) Q: What’s a good time to go to the dentist?

A: Tooth-hurty (2:30).

(11) Q: What do elves like to eat?

A: Elf-elfa.

(20) Q: What does Santa have on his fireplace mantle?

A: Saint Nick-nacks.

Accordingly, a good knowledge of the pronunciation at both segmental and suprasegmental levels is required to interpret and understand the joke (33), despite the hints provided in the question “What’s a good time” (serious reading). We believe that this is especially true in the case of telling the joke orally. However, if the recipient reads it, the interpretation is more easily reached because the writer or compiler has introduced a very clear hint by including the time in number.

Similarly, for jokes (11) and (20) some world or background knowledge is required: in (11) that elves eat alfalfa (serious reading), and in (20) that *niknaks* may refer to either small, odd or unusual things; basically objects that you wish to get rid of or also to a specific brand of a type of snack (serious reading).

5. Conclusions

As we have seen, intentional morphological misinterpretations, reanalysis, manipulation or division of indivisible words are essential mechanisms in the creation of humorous puns, language-based jokes or metalinguistic jokes. What appears as an “arbitrary division of words into their morphemes and the use of these morphemes as independent lexical items” (Pepicello and Green 1984:40) is, our opinion, purely intentional, perfectly calculated and not arbitrary at all. Furthermore, this phenomenon may be accompanied and supported by graphic devices, mainly dashes, which are used as morpho-semantic aids or guides to enable the recipient to perceive the ambiguity and effectively interpret the joke. In addition to this, we have also acknowledged that in a small number of cases some spelling changes are also required, e.g. *gobl-inn* in (3) or capitalization in *Nick name* (32). Thus, pseudo-morphemes are provided with meaning thanks to the analogy with an actual well-established form or lexical unit.

The study has proved the undeniable importance of the necessary interplay or interaction among different language levels in the creation of metalinguistic jokes and, as a corollary, in the attainment of ambiguity and humor. Thus, the sounds or phonology of English words favor morphological reanalysis or manipulation and the creative play with language. In fact, homophony and near-homophony are usually exploited together with the play with word parts or pseudo-morphemes to generate humor. As Aarons (2012:126) argues: “Linguistic jokes are only funny if we perceive a contrast between what we know about language and the way in which language works in the joke”. This “contrast”, incongruous or ambiguous semantic or pragmatic meaning is the basis of jokes and humor.

Furthermore, this work has also slightly drawn upon the importance of cognitive processes in the interpretation of jokes. It has demonstrated that those ambiguities and violations of language are not to be seen as communicatively problematic, unlike what Grice’s maxims predict, because the recipients of jokes are *a priori* prepared to select the relevant information, by entering into “joke mode”, to disambiguate and understand the given joke, despite exceptional cases in which problems may derive from lack of either world or linguistic knowledge. In other words, contextual linguistic cues (from different language levels) contribute to the selection of the relevant information to attain the correct interpretation.

Despite the limitations that this work may have due to the quite reduced number of cases in our sample, we believe it to be representative of metalinguistic jokes based on intentional morphological reanalysis or misinterpretation of indivisible words, as the present paper has shown. Moreover, the representativeness of our sample is also supported by the fact that its sources are two well-known joke books.

This analysis may be extended in future research, which may focus on these specific phenomena but also include other relevant morphological mechanisms in joke creation that have been excluded from the present paper. Among those, we suggest examples like the one below, which are the result of blending processes of different kinds, and which may look like as some of the examples above, but a deep analysis reveals that the process is radically different:

Q: Where does Santa Claus go when he's done delivering presents?

A: Ho-ho-home.

Similarly, other cases like

Q: What do you call the furry coats monsters wear?

A: Wolf-wear.

which evidence the flexibility of the English language and its ability to reanalyze words for humorous purposes, will be the object of future studies.

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Appendix

- (1) Q: What musical instruments do skeletons play?
A: Trom-bones.
- (2) Q: What's a favorite ghost dance?
A: Boo-gie woogie.
- (3) Q: Where do ghouls stay on vacation?
A: At the gobl-inn.
- (4) Q: What do you find at the beach on Halloween?
A: Sand-witches.
- (5) Q: What holiday do werewolves like best?
A: Howl-oween.
- (6) Q: What kind of key do you use on Thanksgiving?
A: A tur-key.
- (7) Q: What do you give a skeleton for Valentine's Day?
A: Bone-bones in a heart-shaped box.

- (8) Q: What do ghosts like to eat for dinner?
A: Ham-boo-gers and french fright potatoes.
- (9) Q: What is a pig's favorite holiday?
A: Valen-swine's Day.
- (10) Q: What do skeletons like to eat for dinner?
A: Maca-boney and cheese.
- (11) Q: What do elves like to eat?
A: Elf-elfa.
- (12) Q: What do ghosts like to drink?
A: Le-moan-ade.
- (13) Q: What kind of knot does Santa use to tie up his reindeer?
A: A rein-bow knot.
- (14) Q: What do ghosts and goblins eat for lunch?
A: Peanut boo-ter sand-witches.
- (15) Q: How does a ghost open the door of a haunted house?
A: She uses a spoo-key.
- (16) Q: What do baby ghosts wear on their feet?
A: Boo-ties.
- (17) Q: What's gray, weighs more than 10,000 pounds, and comes down your chimney on Christmas Eve?
A: A noel-ephant.
- (18) Q: What do little ghosts do before bedtime?
A: They take boo-ble baths.
- (19) Q: What does a ghost read in bed?
A: A scary boo-k.
- (20) Q: What does Santa have on his fireplace mantle?
A: Saint Nick-nacks.
- (21) Q: Why do witches go to the circus?
A: To see the acro-bats.
- (22) Q: Who makes scary movies about Santa Claus?
A: Elf-Red Hitchcock.
- (23) Q: What do you call a ghost pirate?
A: A boo-caneer.

- (24) Q: Who is the most famous French skeleton?
A: Napoleon Bone-aparte.
- (25) Q: What do hogs do on Labor Day?
A: Go on pig-nics.
- (26) Q: How do you bargain with a witch?
A: You hag-gle.
- (27) Q: What was the first bus to cross the Atlantic Ocean?
A: Colum-bus.
- (28) Q: What do skeletons wear in the sun?
A: Sun bone-ets.
- (29) Q: Why did Holly miss school on her birthday?
A: She heard it was a Holly-day.
- (30) Q: What do you call a rancher ghost?
A: A boo-ckaroo.
- (31) Q: What did the elves say when the reindeer refused to help make the Christmas goodies?
A: "We'll do it ours-elves."
- (32) Q: Is "Saint Nicholas" Santa Claus's real name?
A: No, it's his Nick name.
- (33) Q: What's a good time to go to the dentist?
A: Tooth-hurty (2:30).
- (34) Q: What does Santa have on his fireplace mantle?
A: Saint Nick-nacks.

2.2

TV genres

How do French humorists adapt across situations?

A corpus study of their prosodic and (dis)fluency profiles

Iulia Grosman

The VALIBEL Research Centre, Institute for Language and Communication (IL&C), Université catholique de Louvain (UCL)

The paradigm of humor studies has deemed prosody (*rhythm and intonation*) and (dis)fluencies (*discourse markers, filled and unfilled pauses, repetitions, etc.*) as relevant cues in conversational humor for expression of sarcasm and irony. However, they also make valuable (interactive) devices for discourse planning and structure since they carry both semantic and pragmatic information. After a summary on the study of humorists' speech and its meta-pragmatic implications (Sections 1 & 2), a two-fold corpus-based analysis offers results on 8 humorists' speech variations across 4 situations (*theatre and radio sketches, radio and face-to-face interviews*) and their relevant contextual features. Firstly on the continuum from hypo- to hyper-articulation (Lindblom, 1990), temporal and melodic variations reveal which discourse adaptation is motivated by a specific pragmatic determiner. Secondly, (dis)fluencies' distribution within speakers and across situations reveal the importance of the individual's *Speaker Dis/Fluency Profile (SDFP)*. Discussion shall focus on the study's contribution to humorists' *phonostyles* and persona, as well as on the implication of native language SDFP for assessment of non-native speakers.

Keywords: humorists' speech, corpus linguistics, prosody, disfluencies, register and style variation, French

1. Studying the prosody and variation of humorists' speech

The large majority of linguistic theories on humor analyses concentrate on joke's information content, without taking into account outside factors such as the

audience or the communicative purposes and characteristics of the situations; as a consequence, most studies deal with *humor competence* rather than with the specificities of *humor performance* (Taylor, 2014, p. 455). Through the intra and inter speaker variations of 8 French humorists' speech in four different speaking contexts (*face-to-face interview*, *radio interview*, *radio show* and *live comedy show*), this contribution explores the "inter-relation of language structure and principles of language use" (Levinson, 1983, p. 9), that is the Register and Style Variation (RSV) or – essential linguistic features common in a text variety and their (functional and aesthetic) fluctuations in association with communicative purpose and situation context of texts (Biber & Conrad, 2009, p. 2–23).

Our specific interest lies in the fact that (French) stand-up comedians often need to wear more than one hat as they endorse many differing public roles (i.e. *on stage*, *on radio*, *face-to-face*). Thus, the language used by humorists is, as with anyone, multifaceted and dependent on contextual constraints. A humorist is here defined as "a self-conscious creator of laughter" or as a person "who is skilful in the use of humor, as in writing, talking or acting" (Popa, 2014, p. 371). Drawing upon the fact that both the participants' role and contextual properties organise the linguistic form of the message (Verschuere, 1999, p. 69), this corpus-based study investigates the prosodic and (dis)fluency (i.e. uses of *filled* and *unfilled pauses*, *repetitions*, *substitutions*, *false-start*, *insertions*, etc.) discourses' specificities across situations since, in both production and perception, their pragmatic and semantic value may contribute to portraying the humorists' mental state.

Prosody encompasses, on the one hand, melodic features (syllables pitch and pitch registers) and on the other temporal features (syllable's durations and variations). Aside from the relevant linguistic functions prosody plays in discourse structuration and in turn organisation (Simon, 2004, p. 81–125), substantial fields of research have also enquired on the functions of prosody in regional accent marking (Bardiaux, 2013), in the production and perception of emotions (Grichkovtsova, Morel, & Lacheret, 2012; Lacheret, 2011) or in genre identification (Wennerstrom, 2001, p. 116–117). Close to the latter, Léon (1993, p. 21–22) argued in favour of the *identifying function* that prosody can carry and thus developed the notion of *phonostyle* standing for a typified acoustic image perceived as characteristic of a person (women, men, young, old), a social group (proletarian or bourgeois) or, as here, a particular circumstance (political discourse, stand-up comedy).

As a result, a flourishing corpus of research studies the prosodic variations in the production and perception of registers and styles (Degand, Simon, Tanguy, & Van Damme, 2014; Goldman, Auchlin, & Simon, 2013; Goldman, Pršir, Christodoulides, Simon, & Auchlin, 2014; Goldman et al., 2014; Simon, Auchlin, Avanzi, & Goldman, 2010). And, though in the field of "humor studies" prosody

has mostly been investigated for its relevance in conversational humor (Bertrand & Priego-Valverde, 2011; Flamson, Bryant, & Barrett, 2011) or as a valuable cue for the expression of sarcasm and irony (Bryant, 2011), it can also be seen as a tool used by humorists to develop multiple personae in various situations.

This Chapter is structured as follows. This first Section presents a methodological introduction to the definition of registers and styles variation and the implications of a culturally integrated metapragmatic of humor. Section 2 briefly introduces the speech material present in C-Humor corpus as well as the main annotations in order to comprehend the problematics and hypotheses of the present empirical study. Section 3 delivers results both on prosodic temporal and melodic features as well as prominences and accent distributions ; on the continuum from hypo- to hyper- articulation (Lindblom, 1990), temporal and melodic variations reveal which discourse adaptation is motivated by a specific pragmatic determiner (Section 3). Finally Section 4 gives an outlook of the distribution of the (co-occurrent) (dis)fluency markers' humorists use across situations and reveals cues of individual *Speaker Dis/Fluency Profiles* (SDFP) (Section 4). The discussion focus on the study's contribution to humorists' *phonostyles* and personae as well as on the implication of native language SDFP for assessment of non-native speakers.

In this regard, this contribution aims at revealing, on the extra phonological level, which prosodic features and, on the lexical level, which (dis)fluencies comedians use to adapt their speech to a specific audience – e.g. the intended recipient of their discourse (Voth, 2014, p. 70) and communicative purpose of the situation. This approach allows us to investigate the linguistic choices made by humorists in 4 different situations, through the behaviour of specific linguistic devices that are not to be seen as an isolated system but as an “example of language use as a whole” (Ruiz-Gurillo, 2013, p. 114; Verschueren, 1999).

1.1 Factors of prosodic registers and styles variations

In the production of humor, this contribution will differentiate *psychological humor* from literal styles of comedy as forms of genre, being interested only in the latter (Taylor, 2014, p. 351). A widely accepted assumption in many speech studies lies on the fact that the conditions of production of a situation modify the discourse form and structure – as discourses are partially representative of the mental state of a person. In this manner, the comparative analysis of RSV across situations can be split into two opposite yet partially complementary approaches. In an intuitive top-down fashion, different communicative situations or tasks can be distinguished (e.g. *sketch comedy show*, *radio narrative show*, *radio interview*, *face-to-face interview*, defined in more detailed Section 1.2). Nonetheless, this method faces the danger, among others, of an *a priori* description by the analyst

and might benefit from a complementary approach: describing situations according to a greater set of *contextual features*.

This latter ‘bottom-up’ view of context description inherits from previous works (see Llisterri (1992) for a comprehensive review). Past sociolinguistic investigations recognize at least 3 relevant factors to context definition: (1) the type of relation between speakers, (2) the social context and (3) the thematic of the situation (Labov, 1972, p. 237). In a rather more specific and operationalize way, Biber and Conrad (2009, p. 40–47) propose a set of 72 situational characteristics broken down into 7 main categories, in order to describe registers and genre variations (e.g. participants, relations among participants, channel, production circumstances, setting, communicative purposes and topic). These categorisations of situations enriches the way one looks at the scope of linguistic variation. It allows apparently different situations to become closer to one another. Political discourse and homily, though encompassing very different communicative aims, are both public, monological and only optionally broadcasted discourse. Their common contextual features help to understand why they might share a great amount of prosodic characteristics in French discourse (Pršir, Goldman, & Auchlin, 2013, p. 112). On the other hand, even though radio news and radio interviews are both broadcasted communication, the speech differences can be explained by the fact that they distinguish themselves by many other factors (co-presence of speakers, degree of preparedness, degree of thematic constraints, etc.).

With regard to prosody, several factors related to production conditions have been recognised to have a main effect on the supra-segmental level. These are, *inter alia*: (1) the degree of familiarity of the situation (e.g. the private vs. public aspect), (2) its broadcasting aim/degree of mediation and (3) the preparedness of the speech (Goldman, Auchlin, & Simon, 2011, p. 209; Simon et al., 2010, p. 863). In an approach similar to context description, Koch & Osterreicher (2001, p. 586) propose a set of 10 gradual features for which the two extremes of the continuum allow the register and stylistic distinction between the “language of distance” and the “language of proximity”. This scalar view of context and the aforementioned literature inspired Table 1 classification model of contextual features used in the evaluation of the communicative situations characteristics (see Section 1.2). The main aim of this updated classification was to render a minimal set of characteristics operationalize for the analysis of prosody and RSV studies. Its operationalisation is supported by an almost perfect Fleiss’ Kappa inter-rater agreement score $k = 0.88$, $n = 222$, $raters = 4$, $z = 113$, $p < 0.001$, computed over five¹ different

1. The five corpora include situations extracted from *C-Humor Corpus* (Grosman, 2013), *DisFren* corpus compilation (Crible, 2015a), *LINDSEI* (Gilquin, De Cock & Granger, 2010), *LOCNEC* (De Cock, 2004) and *LSFB Corpus* (Meurant, 2015).

corpora across situations and features and executed by four raters on more than 37 situations and their corresponding situational features).²

Table 1. Set of situational characteristics of registers and genres conceived by the members of the ARC Fluency-Disfluency Project.

Contextual Feature	Definition	Factor Values
Number of speaker(s)	Defines a categorical factor determined by the number of speakers actively taking part in the interaction.	<i>Monologue</i> <i>Dialogue</i> <i>Multilogue</i>
Degree of preparation	Concerns the extent to which the main speaker prepared his speech and a potential written material. In case of a prepared speech the speaker has entirely prepared both content and form of its scripted speech that may be produced with textual support. On the opposite, a spontaneous speech does not involve any preparation of the speech whereas a semi-prepared speech involves the speaker knowing the general frame of the speech but without having fully script it.	<i>Prepared</i> <i>Semi-Prepared</i> <i>Spontaneous</i>
Degree of Interactivity	Refers to the speakers' ability to adapt their speaking behaviour to the other interlocutor(s) with respect to what is expected from their status in the interaction. Interactivity can be referred as the degree of symmetry of the relationship between the participants and can be observed by the allocated time of speakers to hold the floor.	<i>Non-Interactive</i> <i>Semi-Interactive</i> <i>Interactive</i>
Degree of media coverage	Defines the extent to which broadcasting is the main aim of the interaction. It allows the distinction of semi-broadcasted situations: when the interaction is broadcasted but would still have taken place even without broadcasting (e.g. parliamentary debates).	<i>Broadcasted</i> <i>Semi-Broadcasted</i> <i>Non-Broadcasted</i>

2. This research benefits from the support of the ARC-project "A Multi-Modal Approach to Fluency and Disfluency Markers" granted by the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles (grand nr. 12/17-044, <http://www.uclouvain.be/415256.html>). The Contextual Classification of Speaking Styles Model and the Protocol for (Dis)Fluency annotation are both the result of its members' collaboration. Special grateful acknowledgements are due to Anne Catherine Simon, Liesbeth Degand (Supervisors) and Sophie Roekhaut (Technical Assistance).

1.2 Culturally integrated metapragmatic of Humor in French corpora

Analysis of inter and intra humorists' RSV presume a comprehensive apprehension of the different conditions of language use that speakers undergo in the relevant situation. In this sub-section, we present some cultural specificities of the particular variety (as category of text sharing social and situational characteristics) relevant to C-Humor, revealing some of the fixed set of textual conventions particular to each type of situation and leading to their categorisation in terms of situational features following the ARC Fluency set of situational characteristics (Table 2).

Humorists embody their main profession through situations such as *sketch* or *stand-up comedy*, though these situations have a set of characteristics surrounded by norms and can constitute a genre, they are characterized by great flexibility, thus making them especially hard to describe (Mills, 2014, p. 699). During their performance, typically constituted of several individual stand-alone comedic pieces, humorists depict the first and ultimate symbol of their *front stage persona* (Goffman, 1959, p. 13) "assuming a role and, in doing so, [he or she] reveals a manipulating intelligence behind the mask of the unknowing humorist he or she pretends to be" (Popa, 2014, p. 372). In this instance they contribute to the development of a fixed representation of their identity as a comic performer for the audience, fundamental feature of the comedy process which to some extent is different to (or an exaggerate version of) their "actual persona" (Lockyer, 2014, p. 377). In fact, it is worth noticing that, the cultural pragmatic norms surrounding *theatre sketches* differ from the ones of the classic *stand-up comedy show* insofar that the public and private characters of the humorist are tightly bound together and with the audience. While classic stand-up comedians portray their own character on the stage, sketch humorists tend to adopt an individual speaking style proper to the character they impersonate, more or less differing from their own identity. Thus, their discursive performance as a humorist is closer to a theatre enactment than the one of the stand-up comedian and is further from their private *back stage persona* (Goffman, 1959, p. 69). To say the least, often the layers of identities are blurred and it is no clear which identities is being adopted. In both case though, these comedic situations are "a conversational form of professional humor that occurs on a stage in front of and direct toward a responsive audience" (Brodie, 2014, p. 733).

One more specificity is that, in a paradoxical manner, this scripted sketch speech encompasses the particular will (or need) to give the appearance of spontaneity in order to communicate pun naturally to the audience they are in dialogue with, even if the latter is aware that the performance is given respecting the aesthetics norms of stand-up comedy. In this line, even if the humorist is the only one actively holing the floor, it is non refutable that his/her performance is

highly influenced by the *primary audience* reactions and the purpose of being seen later by a *secondary audience* not physically present at the delivery of the message (Voth, 2014, p. 71). This situation is thus accounting for a particular set of contextual features – a monological but semi-interactive (i.e. asymmetry of the participants) and semi-broadcasted situation. The speech style is generally in prose, though certain studies suggest a more prosaic talk due to patterning of the speech (rhythm, cadence, repetition) (Brodie, 2014, p. 734).

Aside from stage performances, when invited on the airwaves as public figures, humorists often engage with a second *broadcasted front stage persona* (Goffman, 1959, p. 69). Though a number of them are only solicited for interviews, a growing part of more experienced French humorists is also invited as *national radio-show talkers* where they conduct their own talk-show (i.e. “radio narrative” or “radio sketch”) often close to the genre of “satire radio news”, combining both entertainment and public affairs. If both situations are radiophonic, they oppose each other on a number of situational characteristics. While radio-shows are monological, prepared, non-interactive speech, radio interviews are dialogal, only semi-spontaneous and semi-interactive situations. Notwithstanding the channel modification (stage *vs.* radio), not only both of these practices require the involvement of a totally different set of pragmatic skills than stage situation, they also entail great management of their own persona: on radio shows the humorist continues to impersonate his most front stage persona, whereas in a radio interview he is invited to deliver a more metapragmatic approach of his own activity, and thus a more private side of his identity.

In the last situation, humorists also reveal themselves in a more complete manner through relatively *familiar face-to-face interviews* (e.g. coffee shop, back-stage room) for low-media coverage, where they share a more *private back stage persona* through casual or even spontaneous speech, in the sense that the constraints of the formal situation are overridden (Labov, 1972 p. 86). Nonetheless, this exercise of style can't be claimed to be completely exempt of the humorists' *front stage persona*; although meant for a smaller audience they still know they are being broadcasted. Finally, regarding the specific description of humor presented in the four different situations of C-Humor corpus, theatre and radio sketches differentiate themselves on the basis that the form of humor can be talked as *intentional* and *canned* (rather than *accidental* and *spontaneous*) (see Taylor, 2014, p. 351), contrary to spontaneous situations such as radio interview and conversation. In light of the previous observations, Table 2 summarises the four situations situational characteristics in order to analyse their RSV.

Table 2. Situational characteristics represented in the C-Humor Corpus.

Communicative Situation	Face-to-Face Interview	Radio interview	Radio sketch	Theatre sketch
Number of speakers	Dialogue	Dialogue	Monologue	Monologue
Degree of Preparation	Spontaneous	Semi-Prepared	Prepared	Prepared
Degree of interactivity	Semi-Interactive	Semi-Interactive	Non-Interactive	Semi-Interactive
Degree of broadcast orientation	Semi-Broadcasted	Broadcasted	Broadcasted	Semi-Broadcasted

2. The present study

2.1 Speech material and corpus treatment

The two-hour C-Humor corpus consists of 26 audio samples of an average of 3.5 minutes per samples. It gathers the speech of 8 French comedians in 4 natural (i.e. non experimental) speaking contexts, namely: (1) stand-up comedy show, (2) face-to-face interaction (3) radio show and (4) radio interview (recorded between 2011 and 2014). As the two latter types of situations are short by definition, the complete text was studied. On the opposite, choice was made for the former non broadcasted situations to only study text excerpts; beginning and end were avoided in order not to encounter warming-up or overworked voices. Though every comedian takes part in stand-up comedy show and face-to-face interviews (8 audio samples each, 16 total), radio situations are separated into two complementary groups of comedians: the ones participating in radio shows only (6 audio samples) or radio interview only (4 audio samples);³ resulting in a total amount of at least 3 audio samples per comedian.

The corpus selection was a partly stratified random sample: the humorists are all originating and/or have lived most of their life in Paris (France), as such they can all be thought as part of the same *local speech community* (Labov, 2010, p. 186) sharing close socioeconomic classes, or at least nothing that would say that a social differentiation could be correlated with a drastic change in linguistic behaviour of the socioeconomics classes concerned (Labov, 2010, p. 196). We can thus expect

3. One supplementary audio sample was added for two of the radio show comedians considering that the shortness of their performance would have jeopardize the total temporal equilibrium between situations and speakers in the corpus.

that they share the common conception about communicative styles and genre, i.e. expected textual conventions and adaptation according to the situations. However, there is no deniability of the reality of the differences between speakers, which is the focus of the second part of this contribution. Inspired by previous research on communicative behaviour variation through situational and contextual determiners, the corpus structure allows to correlate the humorists' performance over at least three different axes: sex (4M/4F), degree of experience (+ 10/– 10 years practice on stage), and speaking contexts (situations characteristics). This contribution solely focusses on the latter.

On a technical level, the data was treated with Praat (Boersma & Weenink, 2015) and processed with several tools. Manual transcription was carried out respecting VALIBEL conventions (Bachy et al., 2007). Segmentation and phonetic alignment were executed with EasyAlign (Goldman, 2011) while prosodic profiles of the audio samples were extracted using Prosogram v.2.9 (Mertens, 2004). Automatic alignment and syllabic segmentation were rigorously revised according to rules enunciated in Bigi et al.(2010). In addition to syllabic, lexical and segmentations inter-pausal the corpus includes several; supplementary annotations. Among them, the part of speech tagging was done using TreeTagger (Schmid, 1994) and was manually corrected. Moreover, following Goldman et al. (2007, p. 99), the creation of a tier of exclusion called "Delivery" allows the annotation of hesitation, post-tonic schwa, silences and "junk" syllables that cannot be prosodically analysed due to noise or overlapping speech. This tier guarantees the automatic annotation of syllabic prominences using Prosoprom and ProsoGrad (Goldman et al., 2007) and their accentual categorisation following the work of Morel & Danon-Boileau (1998), Henry (2002, p. 466) Goldman et al. (2010).

Furthermore, by means of Perl and R scripts, the corpus was semi-automatically annotated in (dis)fluencies following the ARC Fluency and Disfluency Markers protocol (Crible, Dumont, Grosman, & Notarrigo, 2016).⁴ Based on the word level surface annotation this system includes more than 20 annotated phenomena – among which the ones of interest in the present study are set out in Table 3. Examples from C-Humor corpus with annotated phenomenon in bold are given for purposes of illustration.

4. This annotation system applies to multimodal (i.e. signed vs. oral speech), multilingual (French and English) and multispeaker (native vs. non-native) data. For its various applications see respectively Notarrigo & Meurant (2015), Crible (2015b) and Dumont (2015).

Table 3. Annotated (dis)fluent phenomena included in the ARC Fluency and Disfluency Markers protocol (Crible et al. 2016)⁵

	Tag	Fluencemes	Example from C-Humor corpus	English literal Translation
Simple (dis)fluencies	UP	Unfilled Pause	<i>Le chocolat // puis même tout ce qui se mange en fait*</i>	<i>Chocolate // and even anything that can be eaten actually</i>
	FP	Filled Pause	<i>Mon pêché mignon euh le chocolat</i>	<i>My guilty pleasure hum chocolate</i>
	DM	Discourse Marker	<i>C'est des choses qui passent à travers moi en fait</i>	<i>It is stuff that pass through me actually</i>
	ET	Editing Term	<i>je veux dire les mecs ils ils montent plus d'entreprises</i>	<i>I want to say guys they they start more business</i>
	FS	False start	<i>Une petite euh ma carte bleue aussi</i>	<i>A small hum my credit card also</i>
	TR	Truncation	<i>J'ai ac/ j'ai accueilli Louis aussi</i>	<i>I have wel/ I welcomed Louis also</i>
Composed (dis)fluencies	RI	Identical Repetition	<i>Les banques les banques elles arrêtent pas de fusionner entre elles</i>	<i>Banks banks they don't stop to merge with each other</i>
	RM	Modified Repetition	<i>Il faut être euh il faut montrer</i>	<i>You have to be uh you have to show</i>
	SP	Propositional Substitution	<i>C'est son amoureuse euh sa meilleure amie</i>	<i>It's her lover euh her best friend</i>
	SM	Morphological Substitution	<i>Même dans le boulot les boulots normaux</i>	<i>Even at the job in normal jobs</i>
	IL	Lexical Insertion	<i>Je l'ai fait je l'ai bien fait</i>	<i>I did it I did it well</i>
	IP	Parenthetical Insertion	<i>C'est comme // attention je vais faire une métaphore / c'est comme</i>	<i>It's like // careful I will use a metaphor / it's like</i>

* According to VALIBEL transcription conventions (Bachy et al., 2007), slash and double slashes (“/” and “//”) respectively symbolised perceptually short and long pauses.

5. The ARC Fluency and Disfluency Project works with the central renowned hypothesis that disfluent markers (e.g. *filled pauses*, *repetitions*, *corrections*, etc.) might work as fluent markers (e.g. interpersonal, structuring functions). The main aim of the project being the contextual disambiguation (e.g. lexical co-occurrences, prosodic and syntactic context) of their function. Thus, discourse markers, which can endorse many functions (signalling topic change, allowing for hesitation without losing the floor, etc.) are an entire part of this protocol: in some context they might indicate a resumption of discourse flow while in other they play a key role in the explication of discourse structure. Evidently, this subject is beyond the scope of the present contribution.

A quick specification of the different datasets is necessary before presenting the results. While overall the corpus contains 27867 syllables (1987 words) accounting for a total duration of 1h55, only the humorists' speeches have been phonetically aligned and analysed. From the exclusion of overlapping and second speakers' speech, the actual data used for (dis)fluency analysis is reduced to 1h30 of speech. Finally, due to noise or paralinguistic material (sneezes, laughs, coughs, etc.) the prosodically analysable material is reduced to 1h22. Table 4 numerically summarises the corpus content across situations.

Table 4. Quantitative corpus overview by situation, differentiating between: duration of the entire corpus, the humorists' speech and the prosodically analysable parts of the material.

Genre	Entire Corpus		Humorist Speech			Prosodically analysable
	Duration (min.)	Recording Speaker number	Duration (min)	Syllable number	Word number	Duration (min.)
Face-to-Face Interview	33.6	8 8	26.6	7734	5572	25.2
Radio interview	18.4	4 4	11.8	3864	2799	10.0
Radio sketch	19.3	6 4	17.4	5729	3777	16.1
Theatre Sketch	44.02	8 8	33.3	9904	7092	30.3
Total	115.4	26 8	89.1	27231	19240	81.5

2.2 Research question

This contribution considers the analysis of the adaptation of humorists' speech across situations on two distinct levels, namely segmental and supra-segmental. The term *adaptation* does not imply that the humorist strategically decide to engage in a particular register; rather that he does so automatically and spontaneously. Firstly, in order to draft the typified acoustic image of each considered situation, this section develops a prosodic analysis on the temporal and intonative level as well as on the combination of these two types of information giving access to the rhythmic level (i.e. stress and accent). These analyses allow to enquire which contextual features have a significant impact on the linguistic form of the humorists' message and, more particularly in a comparative approach of registers, how to characterise the theatre sketch relative to other types of speech. In other terms, we look for evidence in the type of linguistic production that the speaker is using a speech style A that contrasts with style B.

Secondly, we propose an analysis of the distribution of (dis)fluencies on a lexical level as well as their co-occurrence and placement in (dis)fluent sequences (i.e. a string of consecutive contiguous simple or composed (dis)fluencies). This descriptive part of the contribution enquires whether the same contextual features relevant to prosodic analysis impact on the production of (dis)fluencies (and could be, thus, integrated into the situational phonostylistic analysis) or whether such distributions reveal particular dynamics.

We thus refer solely here to oral verbal humor, as opposed to visual or physical humor (though by definition a stand-up act is likely to contain all three form of humor) (see Taylor, 2014, p. 352) and in contrast to *referential humor* (i.e. focusing here on the formal segmental and supra-segmental levels) (Attardo, 2014, p. 791). Furthermore, it is not about describing specific language tools on short length segment and their content, but *how* the form and structure of the full (excerpt of) text, or the choice and organization that a humorist make, operates on the lexical and prosodic material of his speeches.

2.3 Hypotheses

The main hypotheses behind the prosodic enquiry are drawing upon H&H theory according to which a speaker adapts his discourse production depending on the communicative and situational requirements (Lindblom 1990).

In line with the theory, humorists are expected to vary their speech along a continuum of hyper or hypo- articulated speech depending on the situation. Nonetheless, factors might show different dynamics toward specific temporal or acoustic features. Hence, the first hypothesis claims that prepared situations (i.e. radio and theatre sketches) will incline speakers to produce discourse on the temporal level with higher articulation ratio (proportion of phonation), speech rate and articulation rate. Due to their time pressure and mediated aspect, radio situations might exhibit even more hyper-articulate characteristics. Aside from the overall higher speech and articulation rate, they would exhibit more melodic excitation on the intonation level with for example wider speech range, higher proportion of glissandos, etc. than in other situations (Hupin & Simon, 2007), especially taking into account the presence of a microphone, these situations would allow greater use of tone and inflection (Brodie, 2014, p. 735). With regard to the prominence and accentual density, broadcasted situation are expected to lead the peloton as hyper-articulation as they compensate for the lack of speakers co-presence (Simon & Grobet, 2005, p. 11). On the other hand, though high in expressivity, and thus probably in prominence and accent density, theatre sketches might show less melodic excitation because of the adaptation to characteristics of non-prepared speech in order to communicate puns naturally.

Regarding (dis)fluency production, one can expect an overall greater production for spontaneous situations than for prepared ones (Bortfeld, Leon, Bloom, Schober, & Brennan, 2001; Moniz, Batista, Mata, & Trancoso, 2014). In this line, the use of discourse markers might be re-enforced especially in unprepared genre. Moreover, due to (dis)fluencies role in turn taking organisation and discourse structuration, their proportion might also be increased in highly interactive situations.⁶ Furthermore, as stand-up comedy is a prepared genre needing to appear natural and that the speaker will still yet remain the floor holder, we could expect a great use of false starts, repetitions, and other verbal transgressions (Brodie, 2014, p. 735). Though (dis)fluency markers might serve as communicatively fluent devices, the hypothesis according to which situations with higher cognitive constraint might result in more complex (dis)fluency sequences (contiguous (dis)fluency (within) other composed (dis)fluencies, rather than isolated ones) is not farfetched. Nonetheless little is known and no assumption will be made on the (probably high) variability in (dis)fluency marker types and patterns of combinations across speakers.

3. Prosodic variation

This section presents the results from the observations of the acoustic materials (temporal and intonative features) on the prosodically analysable part of C-Humor corpus. For each prosodic feature, the data is presented by situation or contextual features according to relevance.

3.1 Temporal variations

Temporal features are related to the (sum of) syllables and pauses' duration(s) in utterance. The first hypothesis in accordance with Lindblom's H&H theory (1990) claims that public and prepared situations (radio and theatre sketches) will incline speakers to produce discourse with a higher ratio of articulated speech as well as higher speech and articulation rate. Articulation rate is estimated from the total speech duration of the speaker minus duration of pauses whereas speech rate is

6. For generalisation purpose all statistical analysis was carried out using linear mixed effect models with subjects and situations as random effects and one of the contextual features as the determiner. Some of the factors are ordered, justifying the alternation between Fisher-F and T-student. This modelling, comparable to repeated-measures ANOVAs, allows recognising the within-subject particularity through the corpus (i.e. consider for all features the variation of each speaker across situations).

related to the number of syllable segments per seconds including pauses. Results per situations are shown Table 5, even though the lack of main effect within speakers across situation of any of the contextual features does not go in line with H&H theory, the first hypothesis is partially confirmed by the remaining temporal parameters, revealing the importance of pauses in the understanding of humorists' phonostyles.

Table 5. Temporal features across the corpus situations (Mean | Standard Error).

Genre	Face-to-Face Interview	Radio Interview	Radio Sketch	Theatre Sketch
Prop. Phonation (%)	54.0 11.0	57.0 11.6	74.4 9.5	53.7 8.2
Speech Rate (syll/sec)	5.9 0.4	6.1 0.2	6.1 0.6	6.2 0.5
Articulation rate (syll/sec)	5.5 0.3	5.9 0.2	6.0 0.8	5.7 0.5

Overall, the time pressured broadcasted situations present higher articulation rate (with highest mean for radio sketches ($t(13) = 3.7$, $p < 0.003$)) than non-broadcasted situation (lowest for theatre sketches along with face-to-face interviews ($t(13) = 15.5$, $p < 0.001$)). Moreover, as expected there is an effect of mean articulation rate with regard to the degree of preparation ($\chi^2(6) = 6.5$, $p < 0.04$). In line with previous results, non-broadcasted situation have a lower articulation ratio than broadcasted ones ($F(1, 15) = 7.7$, $p < 0.002$). The articulation rate also shows a linear decreasing trend: -0.2 syll/sec for spontaneous speech (face-to-face and radio interview) compared to a prepared one (radio and theatre sketches) ($t(14) = -2.5$, $p < 0.03$). These results seem more due to the degree of interactivity ($\chi^2(5) = 12.6$, $p < 0.001$) and broadcasting aim ($\chi^2(5) = 6.8$, $p < 0.01$) than the type of interaction (n.sig) and contribute to the pragmatic hypothesis that humorists' speech on stage aims at being close to temporal characteristics of face-to-face spontaneous speech.

3.2 Intonative variations

Intonative features relate to melodic dynamism of speakers' speech. The following analysis examine vocal range (i.e. the measure of the breadth of pitches that the speaker phonates in semi-tone (ST)), the proportion of glissandos (i.e. the proportion of syllables with pitch movement superior or equal to 4STs) and pitch rises and falls (respectively the proportion of syllables with pitch rises or falls superior or equal to $+4$ and -4 STs) (Table 6). In addition, melodic agitation (TrajIntra) is analysed by taking into account the pitch trajectory within syllabic nuclei divided by duration (ST/s).

Table 6. Melodic features across the corpus situations (Mean | Standard Error), Pitch range within 2%–98%.

Genre	Face-to-Face Interview	Radio Interview	Radio Sketch	Theatre Sketch
Pitch Range (ST)	16.52 4.44	16.40 2.77	15.62 2.15	16.60 3.70
Glissando	6.65 4.29	15.15 4.80	11.20 8.77	8.40 6.062
Rises	3.02 1.81	5.97 2.58	4.30 1.93	2.84 2.568
Falls	3.88 2.88	9.60 3.134	7.15 2.31	5.76 3.767
TrajIntra	17.89 4.46	26.66 3.08	26.46 4.75	21.45 6.49

While most melodic features reveal interesting interactions, pitch range variation is the only one not showing any main effect with any of the contextual determiners. Broadcasting shows a main effect on the proportion of pitch rise ($\chi^2(5) = 5.8$, $p < 0.02$) with a linear tendency to lower of -1.5% on the continuum of broadcasting ($M = 4.0$, $SD = 0.6$): the lowest rises proportions are attested for non-broadcasted situations ($t(15) = -2.6$, $p < 0.02$). These results go in line with the literature according to which broadcasted speech use of more initial (emphatic and rhythmic) accents, characterized by a short rising and lowering contour (Lacheret-Dujour & Beaugendre, 1999, p. 223). Nonetheless, this prosodic feature does not show other significant differences across situations or other contextual features.

Moreover, glissandos and falls proportions are especially informative for appreciation of the intonative dynamism of humorists' speech. They are significantly different across situations, degree of preparation, degree of broadcasting orientation, number of interlocutors and degree of interactivity. Radio interviews show the highest glissandos proportion (15.1%) while sketch scene shows the lowest (only 1.1% superior to face-to-face interview). In general sketches situations have a lower ratio than other situations. Furthermore, the highest the degree of preparation the lowest are the glissando proportions ($\chi^2(6) = 7.7$, $p < 0.05$), lowering in average of -5.8% , ($t(14) = -2.6$, $p < 0.02$). In line with this, degree of broadcasting also follows a linear decreasing trend (-3.8%) from broadcasted to non-broadcasted situations ($t(15) = -2.9$, $p < 0.02$). Correlated to glissandos, falling proportions are significantly different within speakers and across situations ($\chi^2(7) = 9.4$, $p < 0.03$), degree of preparation ($\chi^2(6) = 8.6$, $p < 0.02$) and level of broadcasting orientation ($\chi^2(5) = 6.2$, $p < 0.02$). Falls proportions are the most pronounced for broadcast orientated situations (-2.4%) ($t(15) = -2.7$, $p < 0.02$), and in consequence, the lowest for theatre scenes and spontaneous face-to-face speech situations (-3.7%) ($t(14) = -2.7$, $p < 0.02$).

In summary, humorists' tend to adopt on scene a melodic style closer to the one of spontaneous face-to-face interviews than any of the other styles. Radio

sketch do gathers the most hyper-articulated of melodic and temporal feature levels while radio interview seems to inherit from different main contextual determination being broadcasted but spontaneous. In this regard, although intra-syllabic pitch trajectory does follows a higher dynamism for broadcasted and prepared situations (+ 8% than non-broadcasted semi-prepares ones) ($\chi^2(7) = 10.9, p < 0.02$), it also shows a higher intra-syllabic ratio for non-interactive situations (e.g. radio sketch) + 5.1 ST/s on average than for semi-interactive ones vs non interactive ones) ($\chi^2(5) = 3.9, p < 0.05$).

3.3 Accentual density

Prominences and accents affect ones discourse expressivity and are as such integrated in phonostylistic analysis. Prominences are stress syllables for which one or several acoustic feature(s) differentiate them from the context: relative duration from surrounding syllables, relative pitch movement and amplitude (Goldman et al., 2010). Combining perceptive annotation of prominence and grammatical information (lexical vs. grammatical words) gives access to a new annotation distinguishing between syllable initial or final accent in a word. French final accents are lexically grouped: they carry information on discourse structuration and are characterised by lengthening; the more final accent proportion you get, the more segmented speech is perceived (Lacheret-Dujour & Beaugendre, 1999, p. 105, 144). Initial accents on the other side are probabilistic (Fonagy, 1980) and can occur either for rhythmic or emphatic purposes (Astésano, 2001, p. 66). For convenience of space, Figure 1 illustrates the proportions of prominent syllables for each speakers across situations while Table 7 summarises means by situations.

Overall the proportion of prominent syllables varies between 27.4 and 36.5% ($M = 32.1\%$, $SD = 2.3$). The variation is significant across situations and within speakers ($\chi^2(7) = 8.8, p < 0.04$) and confirms the aforementioned expectation showing the lowest proportion for face-to-face interview and highest for sketch on scene (+ 2.0) ($t(13) = 3.1, p < 0.009$). Nonetheless the absence of effect of the broadcasting orientation or degree of interactivity goes against the previous hypothesis. Apart from situations themselves, prominence proportion is associated with the number of speakers (+ 1.6% from monologue to dialogue, $t(7) = 3.2, p < 0.02$) and the degree of preparation (– 1.2% and – 1.9% from prepared speech to respectively semi-prepared and spontaneous speech ($t(10) = -3.1, p < 0.02$)).

Results reveals that the type of accents across situations and within subject varies significantly ($\chi^2(7) = 13.8, p < 0.005$) with higher proportions of initial accent for sketch situations, significantly higher for a radio sketch with + 5.9% of initial accent relatively to face-to-face interview ($t(13) = 3.9, p < 0.002$) while the radio interview shows the lowest initial accent rate (n.sig). These results go in line

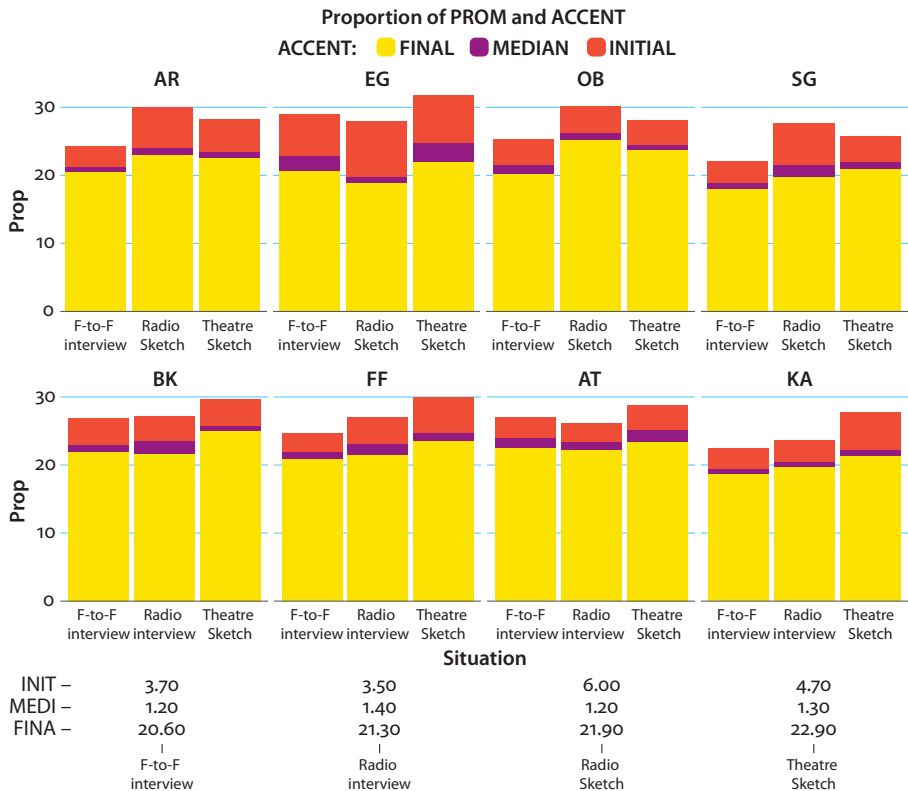


Figure 1 and Table 7. Frequencies and proportions of prominence + accentuation density within speakers across situation (notice upper and lower panels regroup radio sketches vs. radio interviews speakers). [PROM-gram: prominent non-lexical/non accentuated syllables, MEDIAN = non peripheral stress on a lexical word, INITIAL = lexical accent on first syllable (rhythmic, emphatic), FINAL = lexical accent on last (poly and monosyllable) words.]

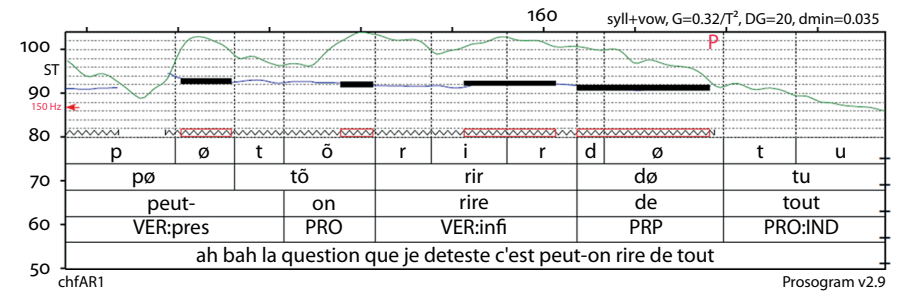
Fónagy (1980) and Fónagy & Fónagy (1976) according to which initial accent are particularly present in professional radiophonic styles. Once more, prosodic features of theatre sketch do seem closer to the one of face-to-face spontaneous interaction than the one of radio sketch.

3.4 Illustration of prosodic register and style variation

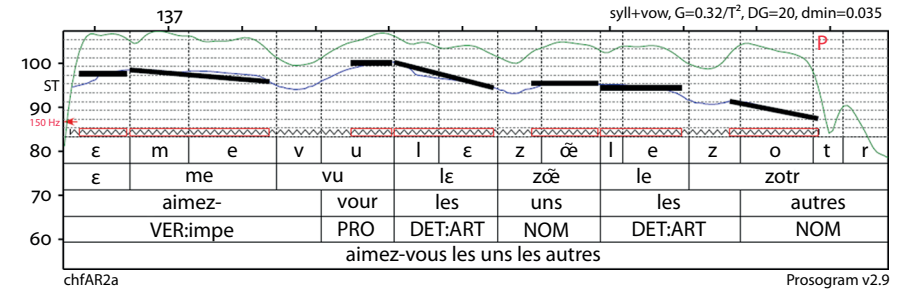
Prosodic variation can be associated with either register or style variation. Figure 2 illustrates schematically the temporal and intonation variations of short excerpts from “chfAR” speaker in 3 situations (*face-to-face interview*, *radio sketch* and *theatre sketch*). They follow the general trends observed statistically in the above

sections. These excerpts were sampled for their similarity at a prosodic level and their relative syntactic similarities (i.e. they all constitute verbal segments enunciated between two silent breaks).

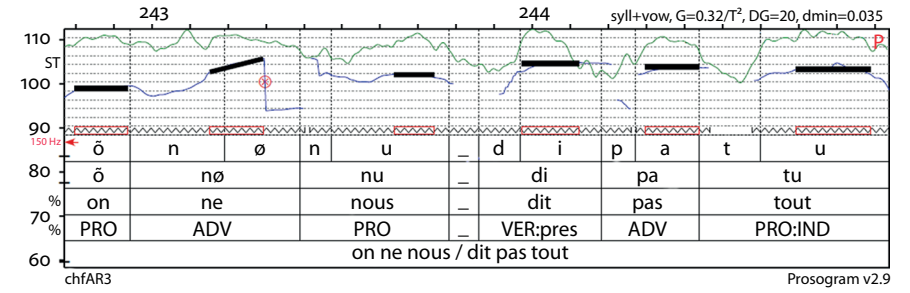
On the temporal level, radio sketch is characterized by the highest articulation rate, while there is no significant difference in articulation rate between spontaneous speech and theatre sketch. On the intonative level, radio sketch is also marked by a great amount of dynamic pitch syllables with high intrasyllabic trajectory, while spontaneous and theatre sketches are dominated by static or flat tones. Finally, the speaker tends to adopt a higher register range in theatre sketch



a. spontaneous face-to-face situations



b. radio sketch



c. theatre sketch

Figure 2. Prosogram stylization of “chfAR” speaker in 3 situations.

situation (up to 110 ST) and its speech range seems to be located in between radio sketches and face-to-face interview.

4. (Dis)fluency analysis

This section draws upon the central working hypothesis according to which, depending on contextual factors, (dis)fluencies (or *fluencemes* in Götz (2013) terminology) can be thought as part of “fluent communicative devices” (Moniz et al., 2009; 1721) and contribute to or hinder both the production and reception of fluent speech as repair strategy compensate for a certain loss or lack of information (Labov, 2010, p. 371). This view is corroborated by Bortfeld et al. (2001) and Moniz et al. (2014) for whom results enlighten on the influence of, among other variables, the setting, topic and participants and on the production and perception of (dis)fluencies. After giving a glimpse at the significantly different proportion of (dis)fluency markers by humorists’ across situations (4.1 & 4.2) we will pounder the results by looking at the complexity levels of contiguous (dis)fluency markers (4.3) considering especially on the ones including filled and unfilled pauses.

4.1 Overall (dis)fluencies distribution

The literature reports (dis)fluency ratios varying between 6–15% of total speech (Bortfeld et al., 2001; Shriberg, 1994). Taking into account the fact that one (dis)fluency can include several words (e.g. in DM such as “*tu vois*”, “*you see*”), the corpus gathers 4909 single (dis)fluencies (considering *filled and unfilled pauses, discourse markers, editing terms, false start, truncation, identical repetitions, modified repetitions, propositional substitution, morphological substitution*) that is to say 25.51% of all words in C-Humor corpus (Table 8).⁷ This relatively high proportion is explained by the inclusion of a rather large number of phenomena in the annotation scheme.

The difference in proportion of (dis)fluent segments for each speaker across situations is overall highly significant ($\chi^2(7) = 31.8$, $p < 0.001$), with the highest (dis)fluency density for face-to-face interviews and radio interviews (difference between both being non-significant). Moreover, (dis)fluency density is slightly lower for theatre sketches (– 13%) and the lowest proportion is expectedly observed for

7. In this regard, the proportion does drop to 16.06% at the exclusion of DMs and to 15.86% at the exclusion of silent pauses an equivalent of 2736 single sequences. Nonetheless, these proportions are highly variable within the corpus across speakers and situations ($min = 17.33$, $max = 51.92$, $SD = 10.98$).

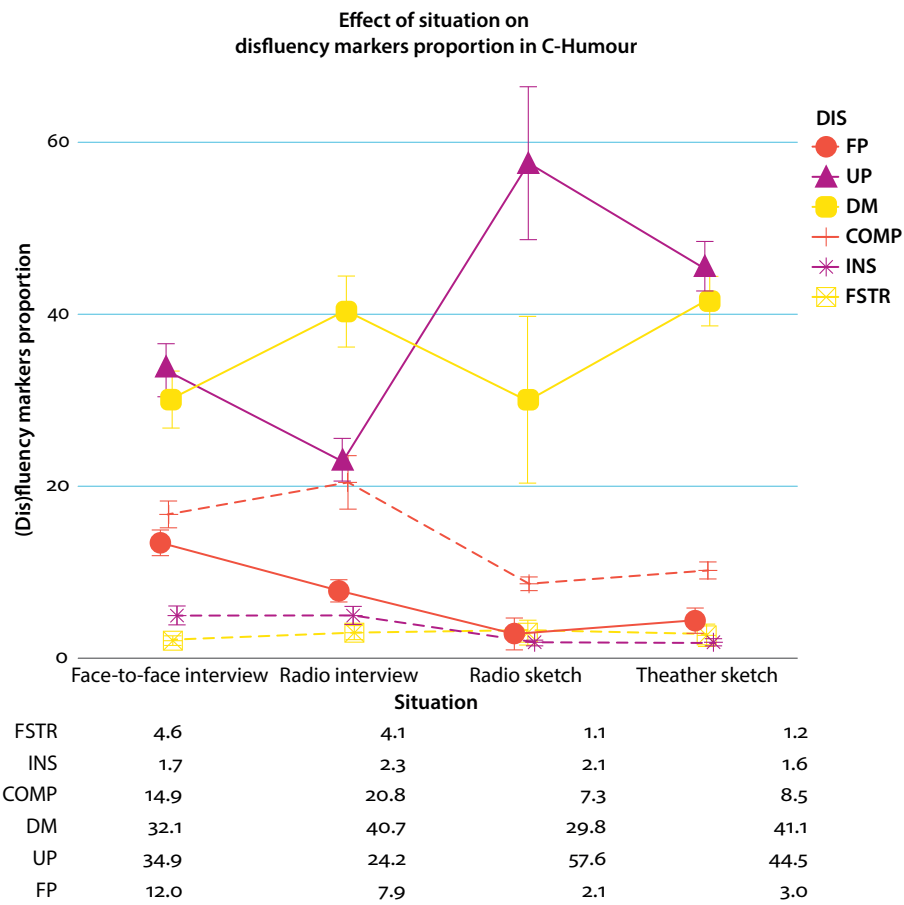
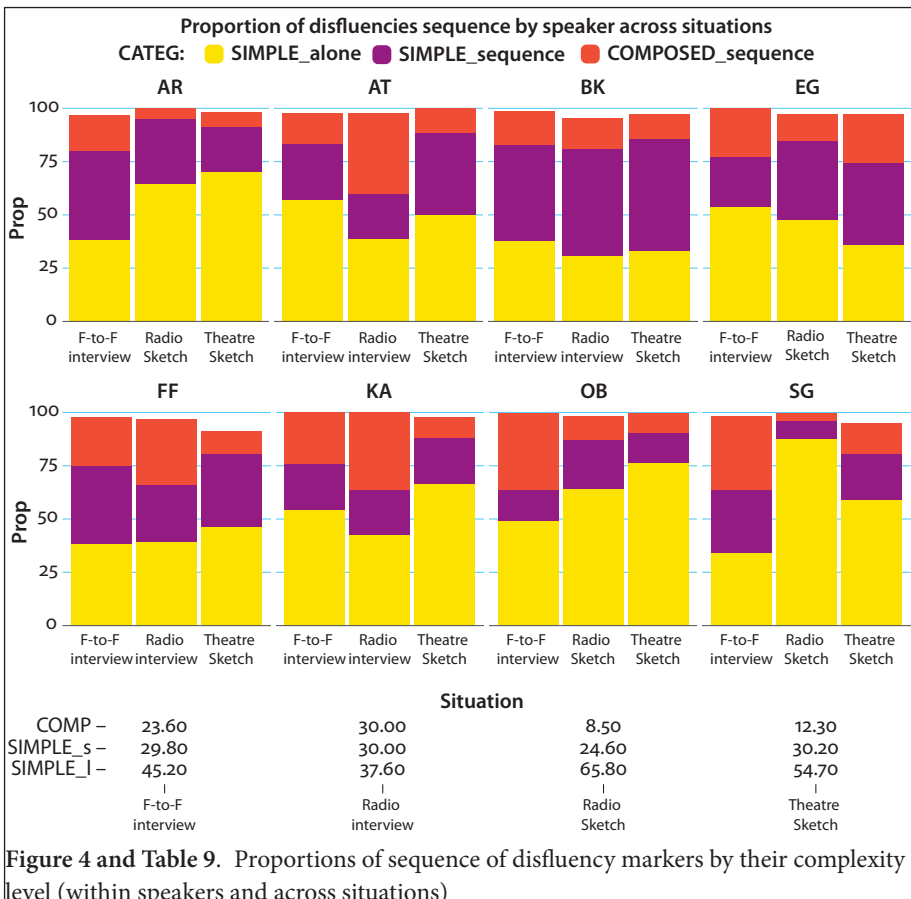


Figure 3 and Table 8. Frequencies and proportions of (*dis*)fluent words in C-Humor across situations

radio sketches, a highly prepared situation ($M = 42.92$, $SD = 3.44$) as the degree of preparation shows a main effect on (*dis*)fluency proportion ($F(1, 10) = 18.0$, $p < 0.001$) increasing with high degree of spontaneity ($t(10) = 5.3$, $p < 0.001$). These results confirm the renowned hypothesis of reduced (*dis*)fluency proportions for prepared speech. On the contrary, degree of broadcasting and interactivity do not appear to be significant determiners. Though the situation has a main effect on (*dis*)fluency overall proportion, none of the contextual features prove significant on the types of (*dis*)fluency the speaker uses across situations pointing out the fact that types of (*dis*)fluency use is particularly speaker dependent.

4.2 Complexity of (dis)fluency sequences

Led by the hypothesis that the (co-occurring) (dis)fluency markers' context might be used as a cue of their fluent or disfluent function, in order to enquire about inter-speaker variability in (dis)fluency markers use and across situations, the following analysis makes emphasis on the complexity level of contiguous (dis)fluency sequences. It distinguishes between *simple* and *composed* (dis)fluencies, the latter being the only ones structured around a reparandum and a reparans (Shriberg, 1994, p. 8). In this respect, Figure 4 differentiates (dis)fluency markers as being (1) isolated (2) in contiguity with other simple (dis)fluencies (e.g. [DM + UP], [DM + FP + FM], etc.) and (3) either in periphery or within composed (dis)fluencie(s) (e.g. [FP *within a repetition*], [DM *before a substitution*], etc.).



These contexts correspond respectively to the following tags: [SIMPLE_alone], [SIMPLE_sequence] and [COMPOSED_sequence].⁸

Overall, the distributions are significantly different for each speaker across situations, for the overall complexity of (dis)fluency sequences, with a tendency for a strong tendency for comedians to utter (dis)fluency as an isolated device (+ 26% more than in composed ones) or in a sequence of contiguous simple (dis)fluencies (+ 8.9%). On the opposite we notice a weak tendency to use them within a sequence of composed (dis)fluency ($F(62) = 20.11, p < 0.001$).

The corpus data also reveals a main effect of situations themselves ($\chi^2(7) = 9.6, p < 0.02$): radio-sketches along with theatre sketch seem to use more isolated (dis)fluencies than other situations (plus 14 to 27% average). On the contrary face-to-face interview has the highest proportion of contiguous simple (dis)fluencies (32.7%) and the radio interview the highest proportion of simple (dis)fluencies integrated in a composed (dis)fluency device (31.8%). In spite of these revealing results in terms of situations, none of the other contextual determiners appeared significant in (dis)fluency sequence modelling. In fact the lack of a main effect of the degree of preparation (opposing sketches to interviews) might reveal that the high proportion of isolated devices is more a specific tools used in monologue, possible functions might be punctuating discourses in order to increase its interactivity.

4.3 Types of sequences including pauses

Finally, in line with the prosodic analysis enlightening on the crucial role of pauses in production of phonostyles, the last analysis considers going in depth into the distributions of pauses across situations using the same categorisation complexity levels than above. In addition (dis)fluency sequences in the corpus have been categorised either as including (1) at least one unfilled pause [UP], (2) at least one filled pause [FP], (3) a particular combination of pauses [P + P], that is not (4) the unique combination of a unfilled and filled pauses [UP + FP], or (5) [FP + UP] and finally a sequence not including pauses at all. Proportions of sequences by situations are given in Table 10 while distribution of the pauses by speaker and situation is shown in Figure 5.

Overall, the difference in proportion of these tags within speaker and across situation is statistically significant ($F(1, 169) = 45.88, p < 0.01$). Within these tags, 43% and 18.1% represent respectively cases of isolated pauses. In detail, we can see that the sequence including [UP] tends to be more isolated in radios and sketches situations. Approximately the same behaviour is observed for [FP] sequences. Furthermore, [P + P] sequences (as well as UP + FP and FP + UP) are almost only

8. All contiguous (dis)fluency markers have been considered as part of the same sequence.

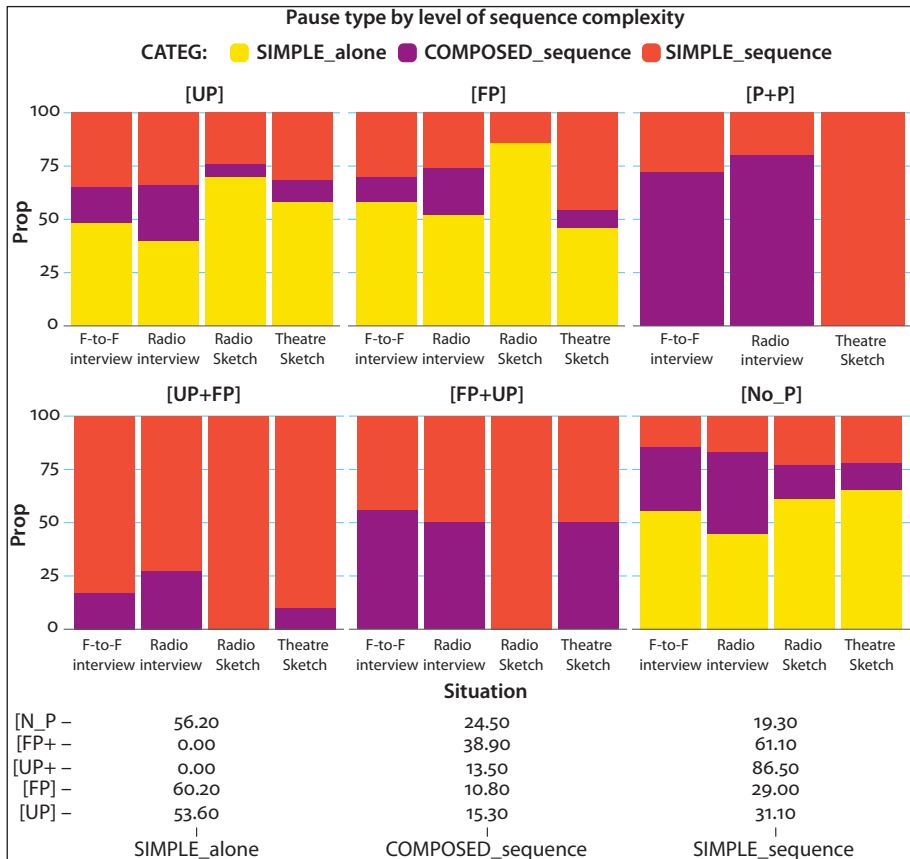


Figure 5 and Table 10. Pause types by level of sequence complexity

used as contiguous markers and not in composed (dis)fluencies for sketches, enlightening again the particularly interactive use and the make of them, thus corroborating the hypothesis that they might embody fluent communicative devices.

5. Conclusion and discussion

The analysis of prosodic variations of humorists' speech reveals that humorists do make significant adaptation of their speaking style across situations supported by several but varying contextual determiners. *Register shift* in Biber and Conrad's terms (2009) or *style shift as* in Labov (1972, p. 208) is a reality, even if some humorists tend to have wider range of style shifting than others.

Humor effects is thought to be the most often relying on the achieved *incongruity* of a message, meaning when the message differs from the mental model a

subject has of how a stimulus should feature (Forabosco, 2014, p. 135–136). In this contribution, we argue that *incongruity* could be marked on the content level but also on the form level. Nonetheless, we showed that humorous discourse as represented by sketch scene overall doesn't present particular prosodic form numerically deviating from the other compared situations of communication (namely, radio sketches, radio interviews and spontaneous face-to-face conversations). On the contrary, it seems that ease of information processing and humor do seem to be associated (or the main aim) with sketch situation: temporal and intonation features variation profiles are in fact closely in between the ones of face-to-face interviews and radio situations (Forabosco, 2014, p. 137). Following Brodie's (2014) remarks on the general subject content of stand-up comedy, we could argue that the focus and the attention on an everyday speaking form allows as well to "establish a common reference frame that could transcend additional barriers to intimacy such as race, gender, or region", achieving with success intimacy in such a peculiar set-up (Brodie, 2014, p. 735).

In more detail, articulation rate and proportion of phonation constantly decreased from prepared, broadcasted, non-interactive speech to spontaneous, non-broadcasted, interactive speech. In this view theatre sketches show a double standard since they are closer to a radio sketch on the articulatory level but rather closer to the prosodic characteristics of spontaneous situations on the proportion of phonation. On the melodic level, the pitch range did not reveal any significant differences within speakers or across situations but pitch trajectory, rises, glissando and falls proportions are revealed as relevant features varying with several contextual determiners. Overall, proportion of pitch trajectory and proportions of glissando and falls are significantly higher for prepared broadcasted situations than for spontaneous non-broadcasted ones. Rises were only significantly higher for broadcasted situations and the pitch trajectory seems revealed for non-interactive situations. Overall sketches on scenes melodic characteristics did reveal closer to face to face interview situations than in any other situations, especially regarding glissandos and falling proportions. Nonetheless with regard to the accentual density sketches these have the highest prominence and accent proportions especially in the case of theatre sketches.

In summary, the corpus data confirm a decreasing continuum of hyper-articulation from prepared and radio situations to spontaneous and face-to-face ones. During shows and on the radio this hyper-articulation serves as a strategy of proximity between the actor/presenter arising from a necessary effort to counterbalance the lack of shared contextual knowledge between the speakers: if the comedian fails at communicating the pun, the legitimacy of his practice could be questioned. If the radio host doesn't manage to formulate a clear message, the radio audience won't have (at least directly) the chance to ask for additional information. As

such the prosodic variation of humorist speech has a pragmatic and epistemological value as it carries an “identifying function” for the speaker (identity control in regard to a given genre) and the listeners (information and perception of the speaker’s singular identity) (Attardo, 2014 ; Goldman et al., 2011).

Analysis revealed consistent existence of phonostyles for speakers across situations. However, analysis of (dis)fluency markers revealed heterogeneity in their use across situations and/or speakers. Though overall proportion of (dis)fluencies within speakers across situations revealed significant, none of the contextual determiners showed main effect on the actual types of (dis)fluencies used by humorists. Further analysis enlightened on particular uses of (dis)fluency in sequences by each speaker across situations. A closer look at the use of pauses in sequences revealed that the particular way radio and theatre sketches use pauses (in non-composed (dis)fluency sequences) might be a cue for their use as punctuating interactive devices.

The common core linguistic and extra linguistic determiners between both these analysis showed important relation between segmental and supra-segmental levels such as the effect of interactivity on pauses with regard to phonostyles or to the definition of (dis)fluency profile; doing so, it enlightened how crucial is the meta-pragmatic definition of the interaction when analysing humorous speech. If we define a speech community as a group of speakers who share a set of social attitudes towards language, we can say that humorists do seem to share the common communicative purpose behind the situations that they are in and the way they vary their speech across each one.

We described the situation in terms of genre and communicative purpose and analysed the (temporal and intonative) variation of the humorist production. One of the difficulty that must be addressed is that in the case of prosody the boundary between a functional or aesthetic interpretation of these variation is rather blurred: one can always interpret in terms of functional motivation but cannot elude the fact that the humorist might vary his style for aesthetic reason closely related to the situation communicative purposes. The next step of this study will test a recurring but yet poorly tested hypothesis according to which significant prosodic contrasts between humorous and non-humorous portions of the discourse exist (Adams, 2014, p. 361). The difficulty will certainly lie in the fact that, as suggested Salvatore Attardo, there seem to be no specific pitch that serves a humor marker, and that it is rather the pitch level and contrast with other contextual or structural element that would allow to identify *humor factors* and *humor markers* (Adams, 2014, p. 361).

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Truthiness and consequences

A cognitive pragmatic analysis of Stephen Colbert's satirical strategies and effects

Craig O. Stewart

Department of Communication, University of Memphis

Using a discourse perspective on the production and reception of satire, this paper comparatively examines the different satirical goals and audiences of Stephen Colbert's ironic satire on *The Colbert Report* (TCR) and at the 2006 White House Correspondents' Dinner (WHCD). While some research suggests at least some viewers of TCR did not perceive it to be ironic satire, Colbert's WHCD speech successfully and unambiguously achieved its satirical goals. The analysis shows that one possible explanation for the success of the speech, as opposed to the ambiguity of *The Colbert Report*, is that the speech's structure facilitated both the immediate audience's and potential mediated referee's cognitive processing of satirical communication as described in Simpson's (2003) discourse model of satire.

Keywords: discourse analysis, humor, irony, pragmatics, satire, Stephen Colbert

Irony and satire are inherently ambiguous modes of communication, because "what is being said is *not meant*" (Colebrook 2004, 2). Successful irony and satire therefore rely on *metapragmatic awareness* (Verschueren 2000), as ironists and audiences draw on both explicit and implicit metadiscourse to arrive at (ideally) shared ironic interpretations of literally ambiguous communication. Despite their inherent ambiguity, irony and satire are increasingly prevalent in various media, especially as a strategy for commenting on contemporary politics (Jones 2010). Television programs like *The Daily Show*, *South Park*, and *Saturday Night Live*, regularly use irony and satire to poke fun at politicians and comment on political issues. Perhaps the best recent example of political satire on U.S. television is *The Colbert Report* (TCR), which aired on Comedy Central from 2005–2014. For a half-hour, four nights a week, Stephen Colbert satirized the "personality-centered emotional rhetoric" of conservative punditry, especially that of Bill "Papa Bear"

O'Reilly of Fox News (Jones 2010, 185). *TCR* parodied Bill O'Reilly's Fox News program *The O'Reilly Factor*, with the actor Stephen Colbert playing "Stephen Colbert," a conservative blowhard. *TCR* offered its audience a nightly dose of *reductio ad absurdum*, "tak[ing] conservative positions and spin[ning] them out to their most ludicrous extreme" (Colletta 2009, 861). As Jones (2009) argued, such "satire and parody have become important forms of social discourse in political culture" (130) because, "ideally [they] should lead the audience to move beyond taking news and information from authoritative sources at face value, and instead engage with the material in ways that lead to an examination and questioning of it" (139).

While Colbert's ironic mockery of conservatism was no doubt satisfying for fans of *TCR*, whether it successfully persuaded its audience to be more critical of authoritative discourse is unclear (Anderson & Kincaid 2013). From a discourse pragmatics perspective, unlike direct communication, the intended meaning underlying ironic satire is not strongly manifest in the audience's cognitive environment (Wilson & Sperber 1992), therefore making it a risky persuasive strategy. For example, readers of James Finn Garner's *Politically Correct Bedtime Stories* often failed to recognize the author's ironic intentions and believed him to be endorsing, rather than satirizing, political correctness (Pfaff & Gibbs 1997). Consequently, readers may have been persuaded to accept a less extreme version of political correctness than Garner's satirical representation, rather than reject political correctness, thus resulting in successful humor but failed satire (Gring-Pemble & Watson 2003). More recently, *The New Yorker* published a cartoon on its cover portraying then presidential candidate Barack Obama and his wife Michelle as a Muslim and a Black militant, respectively, in an effort to satirize right-wing discourse about the Obamas. The reception of this cartoon showed that most viewers saw it as a reproduction, rather than critique, of this discourse, and positioned *The New Yorker* as a purveyor of right-wing, racist discourse (Stewart 2013). While these studies show the potential for satire to backfire, a reception study of four satirical video clips suggests that even if audiences fail to interpret a text as satire, they may still sometimes arrive at evaluations of the target consistent with the intended, satirical, meaning (Johnson, del Rio, & Kemmitt 2010).

Although it may be possible for satirists to achieve their persuasive goals even if their audience fails to get the satire, some studies showed that the ironic ambiguity in *TCR*'s satire could have indeed backfired, leading to greater support for Colbert's satirical targets. Specifically, in an experiment conducted prior to the 2006 elections, Baumgartner and Morris (2008) compared the influence of clips of *The O'Reilly Factor* and *TCR* on undergraduates' support for Republicans. They found that both Colbert and O'Reilly similarly influenced participants to be more supportive of Republicans. In this case, young people who failed to arrive at a

satirical interpretation of Colbert were influenced in the same direction as those who watched Bill O'Reilly's sincerely conservative political messages. As another study showed, whether viewers are likely to interpret *TCR* satirically is predicted by political conservatism, with conservatives perceiving Colbert to be humorous, as well as a conservative Republican who dislikes liberals (LaMarre, Landreville, & Beam 2009). Similar findings were revealed in an analysis of comments posted on the Colbert Nation discussion board (Mohammed 2014). LaMarre, Landreville, Young, and Gilkerson (2014) compared how segments from *The Daily Show* and *TCR* on the Supreme Court's upholding of the Affordable Care Act influenced attitudes toward the law. Those who watched the *TCR* segment were less favorable compared to those who watched the *Daily Show* segment. Together, these studies suggest that *TCR* may have succeeded as comedy but failed as persuasive political communication to the extent that viewers failed to see Colbert as critiquing conservative political discourse rather than producing a humorous but sincere version of it.

On April 29, 2006, just six months after the debut of *TCR*, Stephen Colbert was the headline entertainer for the White House Correspondent's Dinner (WHCD), an annual event hosted by the White House Correspondents' Association and typically headlined by a comedian, bringing together journalists, politicians, and other celebrities. While it may be possible for television viewers to have missed the irony in *TCR*, it was unmistakable in Colbert's WHCD speech (Colbert), as evidenced by responses from various audiences and from scholars (Colletta 2009; Gray, Jones, & Thompson 2009; Jones 2010). This speech, like *TCR*, contained ironic attacks on political conservatives, George W. Bush, and the news media, and was delivered to an audience that included Bush, other prominent government figures, and members of the national news media. As Gray et al. (2009, 3) describe the immediate audience's response to the speech, "The president's initial laughs grew increasingly uncomfortable, as did those of Colbert's live audience, for the satirist laid into them, too, for being a flabby press corps that refused to question the administration." Broadcast live on the public affairs cable channel C-SPAN, the speech became an Internet sensation, reaching a much larger and more appreciative audience than was initially intended, at least by the White House Correspondents' Association.

Given the inherently ambiguous nature of ironic and satirical comedy in general and of *TCR* in particular, the nearly universal assessment that Colbert's WHCD speech succeeded as satire makes it an interesting case for discourse analysis. This chapter analyzes Colbert's satire on *TCR* and in his speech from a discourse processing perspective, drawing on Simpson's (2003) cognitive pragmatic model of satire to account for the reception of satirical discourse and on Bell's (1991) theory of audience and referee design to account for its production. The

following section applies these theories to account for the different communicative interactions represented by *TCR* and the WHCD speech and to explain how the speech successfully achieved its satirical goals, whereas *TCR* may sometimes have failed for certain viewers.

1. Simpson's discourse model of satire

In this model, Simpson (2003, 82) conceptualizes satire not as a genre of discourse, but as a discursive practice that can "incorporate and then subvert genres from different classes of discourse." Satire, according to Simpson, relies on irony in three phases of a cognitive pragmatic model. The first two of these phases reflect metapragmatic awareness on the part of the satirists as they use explicit and implicit metadiscourse to comment both on prior texts and on their own text in order to invite a satirical interpretation from their audience (Verschuere 2000). First, the *prime* phase, refers to a prior text, event, or speaker that is echoed or parodied in the satirical discourse; second, the *dialectic* phase, refers to the intra-textual discursive strategies that mark a text as ironic, and involves various discourse strategies, including metonymic representations, caricature, and pretense (cf. Kreuz & Roberts 1993). These two ironic phases create "a dissonance between the domains of the prime and dialectic which creates an interpretative framework for satire and brings about the style-shift necessary to place the reader-listener on a satirical footing" (Simpson 2003, 10). This dissonance is a necessary but not sufficient condition for a piece of discourse to be read as satirical.

The third phase of this model is the *uptake* phase and reflects metapragmatic awareness on the part of the audience, who must ultimately recognize both the prior discourse to which the satirist is referring as well as the satirist's intended interpretation or evaluation of that discourse. Drawing on Habermas' universal pragmatics, Simpson (2003) argues that satire is successfully achieved as a perlocutionary effect of discourse when audience members perceive the discourse to be both communicatively appropriate and pragmatically insincere. In other words, audience members must perceive that the discourse is contextually appropriate and either recognize the discourse as insincere or reject the discourse's claim to sincerity. As an effect of discourse, satire in this model is not a discrete genre that clearly includes some texts but not others. Instead, satire relies on a particular uptake by audiences and some texts may be taken up as satirical even if that is not the intention. Simpson argues that the discursive practice of satire constructs three subject positions: the satirist, the satiree (i.e., the satire's addressee or "confederate"), and the satirized (i.e., the "victim" of the satire; Gibbs & Izett 2005). Successful intended satire brings together the satirist and confederate subject

positions in a shared position of superiority over the satirized victim; conversely, failed satire creates cohesion between the would-be satirist and victim subject positions, distancing the satirist from his or her intended satirical confederates.

2. Reading Colbert's satire through a discourse lens

2.1 The Colbert Report

In this section, Simpson's model is first used to situate and understand previous research on *TCR*. It is then applied to the 2006 WHCD speech. During its run, *TCR* made use of a number of intertextual primes drawn from current events to build its satire. The intertextual prime that bound each episode, regardless of whatever specific topics or issues were featured, was Bill O'Reilly, after whom Colbert's character was modeled (Baym 2009). This prime was not sufficient for audiences to recover satire as the intended perlocutionary effect, because parody also has an intertextual prime, but is not necessarily ironic. That is, *TCR* could still be read as a humorously exaggerated but sincere instantiation of conservative political commentary, rather than as irony. To read *TCR* as ironic, audience members needed to recognize not only the intertextual prime, but additionally to have recognized that they were viewing a performance of pretense, in which Colbert only pretended to be the character Stephen Colbert, an intratextual (dialectic) cue that *TCR* was ironic satire. The recurring segment "The Word" also represented an intertextual parody of O'Reilly's "Talking Points." In addition to pointing to an ironic prime, this segment also functioned dialectically, providing intratextual cues in the form of text on the screen that ironically commented on Colbert's monologue (Baym 2009). For example, in a segment that aired on 25 April 2012, discussing a campaign to connect global warming to "illegal immigration" in the United States, Colbert said, "so any immigrant who comes to our country is immediately one of the worst polluters on the planet," followed by text on the screen stating "Who Do They Think They Are? Us?" In this way, the literal content of Colbert's commentary was supportive of a conservative political argument, while the text on the screen pointed out the hypocrisy underlying the argument.

With these inter- and intratextual cues in place, *TCR* created humor by discursively distancing the satirical text from its intertextual prime (Simpson 2003). Its success as satire, however, additionally depended on whether audience members ultimately perceived this discourse as communicatively appropriate but pragmatically insincere, as political arguments that meant the opposite or "other than" their explicit, literal content. As discussed above, not all viewers necessarily perceived *TCR* as satire but instead perhaps as humorously exaggerated conservative

comedy, and therefore may come to show stronger support for its ostensibly satirized targets (Baumgartner & Morris 2008). The results of LaMarre et al.'s (2009) study lend support to Simpson's cognitive pragmatic account for how texts can fail to achieve a satirical effect. More conservative viewers tended to perceive Colbert to be genuine as well as to be personally conservative and to dislike liberals, while still perceiving him to be funny. Additionally, this study found that such judgments of Colbert's personal beliefs on a specific topic (embedded journalists) mediated the effects of viewers' ideology on attitudes toward that topic. In other words, conservatives were influenced to agree with the literal content of Colbert's discourse to the extent that they perceived him to personally believe what he was saying (i.e., perceived him to be sincere).

3. The White House Correspondents' dinner

While Colbert necessarily ran the risk of viewers not recovering his ironic meanings on *TCR*, this risk was seemingly averted at the WHCD. This difference may have been the result of the different participant roles for the audiences between *TCR* and Colbert's speech, as explicated by Bell's (1991) theory of audience- and referee-design in media discourse. *TCR*'s audience, both in studio and on television or online, comprised confederates who are Colbert's addressees, for whom the message was designed as ironic satire. In Bell's terms, satirical victims viewing *TCR* were "auditors" or "overhearers," not directly participants in the interaction between Colbert and his confederates/addressees. Whereas *TCR* was addressed to an audience of confederates, his 2006 speech was instead addressed to an immediate audience of victims. The speech was therefore designed for confederate referees (absent from the immediate communicative context) while addressed to an audience of victims. Before his speech could be read as satire, according to Simpson's model, Colbert had to make clear to his immediate audience and his potential referees that he is performing in character (to establish an intertextual prime) and utilize intratextual strategies in order to create dissonance between his discourse and that which he was parodying. In other words, Colbert had to design the speech such that his ironic intentions were made as manifest as possible, thus putting both the immediate audience and mediated referees on a satirical footing to successfully position each as the satirized/victims and satiree/confederates, respectively.

I argue here that Colbert's WHCD speech successfully accomplished these goals because its first approximately twelve minutes facilitated satirical processing as proposed by Simpson's model. That is, it began with an introductory segment that focused on establishing the intertextual prime for Colbert's performance. The

next segment then focused on the targets of George W. Bush and the news media and corresponded with the dialectic phase, using deliberate intratextual strategies to clearly mark Colbert's discourse as ironic. I conclude this section by discussing the uptake phase in terms of communicative goals for satire. Building on Simpson's (2003) model, I also refer to Booth's (1974) *A Rhetoric of Irony* to identify and describe specific ironic strategies in Colbert's speech.

4. Prime phase

The beginning segment of the speech constituted the ironic prime phase of this satire, cueing the audience to the intertextual antecedents for Colbert's performance. Indeed, the audience was explicitly cued that Colbert would be performing in character with this remark immediately prior to the start of the speech: "Tonight, no one is safe. Ladies and gentleman, here with a special edition of *The Colbert Report*, Stephen Colbert." This introduction functions as what Booth (1974) calls a "straightforward warning" of ironic intent. The first approximately five minutes of the speech functioned to reinforce the ironic prime, constructing Colbert as an ironic animator of conservative political discourse practices. By initially establishing this intertextual prime, Colbert firmly established his ironic pretense without yet directly positioning George W. Bush or the news media as his satirical targets. While this first segment of the speech did not directly target the president, Colbert strongly attached Bush to the style of political discourse he was parodying (Jones 2010, 81), as seen in the following excerpt:

...my name is Stephen Colbert and tonight it is my privilege to celebrate this president. 'Cuz we're not so different, he and I. We both get it. Guys like us, we're not brainiacs on the nerd patrol. We're not members of the factinista. We go straight from the gut, right sir?

This initial segment suggested that while Bush was a target of the speech, it would be only indirectly, as someone like the kinds of pundits who are the direct targets of Colbert's satire. In this segment of the speech, Bush was mentioned directly or indirectly thirteen times, mostly linked to Colbert ('he and I', 'we', 'guys like us'), whereas the phrase 'I believe' or 'I feel' was repeated fourteen times, showing that it was a personal, emotional style of conservative political punditry, rather than Bush, that was the direct target in this segment. Besides making frequent mention of beliefs and feelings, Colbert uses this language even to express obvious facts, heightening this parody of emotional conservative discourse ("...I believe in America. I believe it exists. My gut tells me I live there. I feel it extends from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and I strongly believe it has 50 states.") The above excerpt

also offers another potential cue to Colbert's ironic intent. Were he speaking as the actor Stephen Colbert, reintroducing himself ("my name is Stephen Colbert") would be redundant, and therefore communicatively inappropriate. However, this statement could be read as another reminder that he is speaking as the character "Stephen Colbert," thus signaling his ironic intentions.

5. Dialectic phase

Having established a style of conservative discourse as the parodic antecedent for the speech, Colbert made a clear turn toward directly targeting Bush, and then the news media, when he culminated the initial parody of right wing punditry by saying, "Ladies and gentlemen, I believe it's yogurt. But I refuse to believe it's not butter. Most of all, I believe in this president." Colbert continued his discursive parody of right wing pundits, but Bush now became the focus of the speech. To illustrate this shift in focus, I counted direct and anaphorical mentions of Bush before and after this segue. Bush is mentioned directly or anaphorically 28 times (before turning his focus to the news media), a rate of 4.5/100 words, compared to 2.3/100 words in the previous segment. This part of the speech mapped onto the dialectic ironic phase, as it moved from echoic to "oppositional" irony (Simpson 2003). That is, Colbert's speech was no longer merely parodying previous discourse, but was now to be interpreted as meaning the opposite of its literal content. Specifically Colbert attacked Bush, followed by the news media, by making various ostensibly positive comments about them. But, Colbert used several discourse strategies to mark this oppositional irony and to put his addressees and referees on a 'satiric footing.'

Booth (1974) identified both playing on common sayings and obvious illogicality as strategies of irony. Colbert used both of these strategies. For example, addressing Bush, he said "pay no attention to the people who say the glass is half empty, because 32% means it's 2/3 empty," where one would expect some variation on the glass being "half full." Colbert also made obviously illogical statements, such as, "I ask you this, does that not also logically mean that 68% approve of the job he's not doing? Think about it. I haven't." Another ironic strategy that Booth identified is the ironist presenting a "conflict of facts," wherein the satirist undermines or contradicts him or herself. Colbert frequently used this strategy. For example, Colbert analogized Bush with the film character Rocky, ostensibly to set Bush up as underdog who will make a comeback. However, he concluded the anecdote by saying, "Like Rocky, he [Bush] gets back up, and in the end he – *actually, he loses in the first movie.*" Likewise, later in the speech when he targeted the news media, Colbert ostensibly praised the media, then undermined this ostensible praise: "Over the last five years you people [the news media] were so good

– over tax cuts, WMD intelligence, the effect of global warming. We Americans didn't want to know, and you had the courtesy not to try to find out. *Those were good times, as far as we knew.*").

Colbert not only explicitly marked his oppositional meanings, but also did so implicitly. As Booth (1974, 73) further noted, "we are alerted to [ironic intent] whenever we notice an unmistakable conflict between the beliefs expressed and the beliefs we hold *and suspect the author of holding.*" Colbert expressed such a conflict, to those who know that TCR's sartirical target is often Fox News, in this excerpt: "I am appalled to be surrounded by the liberal media that is destroying America, with the exception of Fox News. Fox News gives you both sides of every story: the president's side, and the vice president's side." Thus, for Colbert's confederates, there was a clear conflict between his spoken utterance and the views presented satirically in TCR. For those in the immediate audience, who might not know TCR, he further cued them to this conflict by, once again, playing with the common saying about "both sides of the story," and undermining that statement by identifying those sides as being the president's and vice president's.

Corresponding to Simpson's dialectic phase, this section of the speech clearly marked its oppositional meanings, and clearly differentiated these meanings from the literal content of the discourse. It is here that the speech moves from parody of conservative discourse styles to ironic attacks on President Bush and the news media. As discussed above, establishing an intertextual prime and engaging in intratextual strategies of oppositional irony are not sufficient for successful satire. As will be discussed in the next section, however, the uptake of the speech suggested that Colbert's satirical confederates and targets recognized their respective subject positions and responded accordingly.

6. Uptake phase

Both Colbert's victims and confederates seemed to clearly understand their subject positions vis-à-vis his speech. The immediate audience reacted more and more uncomfortably as the speech went on and media commentators subsequently either ignored the speech or reported that it had flopped – successful humor not being a necessary precondition for successful satire (Gray et al. 2009; Jones 2010). The uptake of ironic satire not only divides the audience by victim and confederate subject positions, but also into "wolves" and "sheep," those who get the intended message and those who do not (Gibbs & Izett 2005). On *TCR*, the communicative goal was to create cohesion between Colbert and his audience of wolf-confederates (Kaufer 1977). At the WHCD, however, Colbert used ironic satire to accomplish a very different goal – to "victimiz[e] an audience while addressing it" (Kaufer

1977, 102; cf. Colletta 2009). Colbert's immediate audience recovered the irony and understood they were its victims, although many of them certainly did not see it as communicatively appropriate. In this case, despite clearly recognizing their position as wolf-victims, these audience members opted out of a satirical footing, as Simpson (2003) would suggest, thus accounting for some of the negative reactions in the press. Conversely, Colbert's wolf-confederate referees reveled in the immediate addressee's victimization, viewing and sharing the speech millions of times online. Colbert's WHCD performance expanded his audience of addressees for *TCR*, the ratings for which grew by a third following the speech (Jones 2010).

7. Conclusion

Like other ironic satirists, Colbert always risked having his intended message misunderstood. While some conservatives watching *TCR* may have taken it as humorous parody rather than as ironic satire, this misunderstanding ultimately did not disrupt the relationship between Colbert and his intended addressees. That is, *TCR* successfully brought together Colbert and his audience of confederates in a position of superiority over his victims, regardless of whether some victims "overheard" *TCR* and misinterpreted it. However, if an analogous misunderstanding had occurred at the 2006 WHCD, this would have represented a communicative failure both to the immediate audience of victims and mediated confederate referees. Specifically, Colbert ran the risk of being identified with his intended victims/addressees and would have created distance between himself and his confederates/referees. The available evidence suggests that the WHCD speech succeeded where *TCR* sometimes failed, and that this success may potentially have been due to the speech having been structured in a way that facilitated satirical discourse processing, successfully positioning the addressees and referees in their appropriate satirical subject positions.

As Jones (2010, 230) argued, Colbert's satire "invite[d] the audience to play with politics, thereby offering not only pleasure and inclusion, but a degree of interpretive agency in constructing political meaning and understanding through such participation," but he also cautioned that "we would be mistaken to overdetermine the politics at work in *The Colbert Report*." While both fans and casual viewers of *TCR* may have been moved to think more critically about political discourse and to participate in other forms of political engagement, their responses may have also run counter to Colbert's communicative intentions. But while *TCR* was fairly ambiguous, in terms of both its content and its likely influence on viewers, Colbert's WHCD speech has often been taken as an exemplar of satire as a political practice, with relatively unambiguous interpretations.

Simpson's discourse model refocuses our attention on Colbert's satire as instantiating discourse practices implicating particular cognitive processes. In this view, satire is an effect, not a type, of discourse. Consequently, critical engagement with or rejection of dominant political discourses via political satire are second-order effects, dependent on whether satire has successfully been achieved as a first-order effect. While the WHCD speech was structured such that all participants were seemingly placed successfully on specific satirical footings, whether as victim or confederate, *TCR* did not follow such a specific structure, was more variable and playful, and therefore perhaps more likely to have been read as something other than satire. Achieving satirical effects relies on relatively complex cognitive processes, requiring both appropriate background knowledge of intertextual references and inferences based intratextual cues and strategies. Simpson's model suggests some cognitive effort would need to go into determining that discourse is both insincere and appropriate, making a satirical interpretation possible. Dual process models of information processing show that messages are often processed heuristically, using cognitive shortcuts, rather than systematically (e.g., Todorov, Chaiken, & Henderson, 2002), thus suggesting that many viewers of *TCR* may not have made the cognitive effort to read it as satire. These viewers may have been particularly susceptible to biased cognitive processing, such that viewers will tend to see the message as conforming to whatever their existing attitudes or ideologies might be (LaMarre et al. 2009).

Colbert's performances at the WHCD and on *TCR* point to both the power and the pitfalls of ironic satire as political discourse. These two texts, one a discrete speech, the other, a diffuse, long-running television production, reveal critical distinctions in the reception of satirical discourse. Whereas the WHCD speech was arranged to clearly position both its victims and confederates on a satirical footing, *TCR* varied in its topics and its strategies, and empirical studies show that it was, or at least could be, misunderstood in ways that might have lead to outcomes opposite of its intended effects (Baumgartner & Morris 2008; LaMarre et al. 2009). Consequently, discourse analysts interested in the potential for satire in popular media to subvert dominant discourses should attend to the discourse processes that enable a satirical interpretation as a first-order effect that is necessary for subsequent second-order effects, such as the critique or rejection of dominant discourses. Simpson's discourse model of satire offers a powerful lens for explaining both clear cut examples of successful satire, such as the 2006 WHCD speech, as well as why more ambiguous texts, such as *TCR*, sometimes fail to achieve satirical effects. Satire, or at least ostensible satire, is often controversial, such as *The New Yorker's* "Politics of Fear" cover, which was intended as a satire of right-wing discourse but was interpreted as an example of it (Stewart 2013), or the film *Borat*, which was both praised as brilliant satire and condemned as anti-Semitic (James

2008). Simpson's model offers a framework for understanding why audiences can arrive at such divergent interpretations of satire, and consequently, the limits of satire as a critical discourse practice when many audience members are "overhearers" (Bell 1991), unable or unwilling to do the cognitive work necessary to interpret discourse as ironic satire.

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2.3

Conversation

Variability, adaptability and negotiability in conversational humor

A matter of gender

M. Belén Alvarado-Ortega

University of Alicante, GRIALE Research Group

The present study has as its aim to analyze conversational utterances containing humor produced by men and women from the pragmatic perspective of Verschueren (2002), ultimately seeking to check whether discrepancies exist between the respective strategies that they use. In most cases, the interlocutors utilize different linguistic procedures to adapt their utterance – or not – to the humorous mode, by means of various conversational strategies that will depend both on gender and on the contextual situation. It all is determined by the nature of the corpus gathered as well as by the concepts of *variability*, *adaptability* and *negotiability* described by Verschueren (1999, 2002). Briz and the Val.Es.Co. Group's *Corpus de conversaciones coloquiales* [Corpus of Colloquial Conversations], which is currently going through a digitization process, was used to achieve our aims. The analysis showed us that, when humor appears, each gender's identity is defined through different strategies and procedures to adapt to the context.

Keywords: negotiability, adaptability, variability, conversational strategies, image

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper consists in observing and analyzing the verbal humor strategies used by women in conversation with the aim of checking whether their behavior differs from that of men, taking as a reference the metapragmatic concepts of *variability*, *adaptability* and *negotiability* (Verschueren 1999, 2002) which are present in language. One of our previous works (Alvarado 2014) revealed that women act differently in the context of a conversation, depending on whether a continued or a failed humor is performed in it; hence our decision to compare these results with the humor which appears in conversations between men and

women seeking to define gender identity. The General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) proposed by Attardo and Raskin (1991), and Attardo (2001a, 2008), together with its application to the study of Spanish carried out by Ruiz Gurillo (2012) and Alvarado (2013, 2014), will serve as the pragmatic foundation for our work. The ideas developed by Verschueren (1999, 2002) will be taken as a reference for the pragmatic notions of *adaptability*, *negotiability* and *variability*, insofar as the choice of the different humor markers and indicators as well as of the various linguistic procedures plays an essential role when it comes to defining gender strategies. Our treatment of gender identity is based on the works written by Hay (2000, 2001), who shows some functions and stages of humor in conversation; Santaemilia (2002), who brings together the most important ideas about gender, dominion, and conversation; Mills (2005), who relates gender and impoliteness; Kotthoff (2006), who shows the union between gender and humor; Bell (2009a, 2009b), who evaluates failed humor responses; and, finally, Sunderland and Litosseliti (eds.) (2002), who develop gender identity within the framework of discourse analysis.

The study will be illustrated with humor occurrences extracted from the *Corpus de conversaciones coloquiales* – currently being digitized¹ – of Briz and the Val.Es.Co. Group, where men as well as women participate. Our analysis of this corpus focused on 116 minutes of 8 different colloquial conversations between 18-to-25-year-old men and women, from which 60 occurrences showing both continued and failed humor were selected – with 30 occurrences corresponding to conversations between men, and the other 30 to conversations between men.

Our starting hypothesis is that a man and a woman will behave differently before a humorous utterance. This leads us to carry out an analysis thanks to which it will be possible to appreciate humor in conversation from a number of humorous stages (Section 2). An effort will be additionally made to identify the specific conversational strategies – including politeness – that may appear in utterances from the utilization of three metapragmatic concepts – *variability*, *negotiability* and *adaptability* – associated with the choice of a language usage made by speakers (Section 3). Attention is going to be paid to the way in which men and women act in the context of conversation (Section 4), ultimately seeking to establish a set of conclusions about humor utilization and gender identity in the conversations held between participants of both sexes (Section 5).

1. This corpus is currently going through a digitization process and I would like to express my gratitude both to A. Briz and to the Val.Es.Co. Group for allowing us to access it. Some of the occurrences are already published on the website <http://www.valesco.es/?q=es>

2. The phases and linguistic elements of humor in conversation

Humor can spontaneously appear in everyday conversations between relatives and friends for various reasons: either to develop closer ties with one another or to attack each other's image,² to name but two. That is why humor presents different functions in conversation which have been considered by authors such as Attardo (2001b) and Hay (2000, 2001), amongst others. Therefore, when humor is used in conversation, this reflects our wish to join a social group, our intention to show sophistication, politeness, or even the possibility for us to convince our interlocutor of something. Humor consequently performs a number of social functions in conversation which lead us to state that its utilization at a specific point in time reveals a specific communicative intention on our part which perhaps has different procedures in men and women. This idea was treated by Alvarado (2012, 2014), proving that humor – together with irony – can contribute to create closer ties between the speaker and the listener.

For Attardo (2001b: 167), both the speaker and the listener must be actively involved in the humorous communicative exchange and incorporate a series of linguistic mechanisms into the utterance which can help the interlocutor interpret it correctly (Alvarado 2006). This idea of mutual collaboration between the speaker and the listener represents a common ground between Attardo's GTVH and the GRIALE Group's proposal, (Ruiz and Alvarado 2013) according to which every humorous communicative exchange places at the disposal of the listener indicators or markers – i.e. *linguistic mechanisms*, using Attardo's terminology – which serve as a clue to interpret the utterance like that, in ironic-humorous terms.

It thus becomes essential for all humor occurrences to observe where the linguistic elements appear and which clues allow the listener to interpret the utterance in a humorous manner. Such clues are termed by Attardo as *jab lines* (2001a: 82), if they appear inside the plot, or *punch lines*, if they appear at the end of the text. These are identical elements from a semantic point of view, the only difference between them lying in their textual position and their pragmatic function. Therefore, their appearance within the core of a conversation provides the listener with clues about their humorous intention, or expressed differently, they are used as a jab line. Instead, when they occur at the end of a conversation, their role is that of a punch line. Furthermore, due to the characteristics of our corpus,

2. Brown and Levinson (1987: 13) define the concept of *image* as a *notion of face which consists of two specific kinds of desire (face-wants) attributed by interactants to one another: the desire to be unimpeded in one's actions (negative face), and the desire (in some respects) to be approved of (positive face).*

the appearance of laughter³ is one of the phenomena used to recognize humor in conversational utterances, since it constitutes a direct consequence of humor and consequently becomes the most accurate way to observe that humor has been present in a conversation.

The starting point for our study about humor in conversations between men and women will be the stages through which a humorous utterance goes until effectively reaching humor, as it was also previously done in Alvarado (2014). The reason for this choice lies in the fundamental need not only to see where the humorous phase has occurred but also to subsequently relate it to the strategy used by the speaker. This idea of 'phase recognition' was dealt with by Hay (2001: 67), and later by Attardo (2001b: 166), who identify four phases – recognition; understanding; appreciation; and agreement – closely linked to *humor competence* and *humor performance*.

The recognition of an utterance in humorous terms is the first phase during which interlocutors must see humor. This initial humor recognition phase has to do with *humor competence*, or expressed differently, with the interlocutor's ability to realize that there is humor in an utterance.

The next phase – that of understanding – is closely related to the previous one because the listener has previously recognized the humorous utterance and has additionally understood it during this phase.

The appreciation phase marks the transition to the humor performance stage, insofar as the interlocutors can share the speaker's starting humorous intention because it has been recognized, understood, and appreciated as such. This is the phase which determines whether a shared, continued humor takes place or, instead, failed humor appears.

The last phase that a humorous utterance goes through is the agreement likely to be shown by both the listener and the speaker when it comes to producing and interpreting humor. During this humor performance stage, the interlocutors have decided to continue humor in their conversation.

In order for all these phases to take place, it must be borne in mind that both the speaker and the listener participate and accept the utterance in humorous terms; in other words, there is a *mode adoption* by the interlocutors (Attardo 2001b). According to Attardo (2001b), this *mode adoption* exists when the listener reacts to humor with humor, giving rise to different humorous interventions, a

3. Numerous authors have expressed their opinion in this respect. Coser (1960), Raskin (1985), Attardo (2001a), Hay (2001), or Kotthoff (2003) have explained jokes and pranks from laughter and developed theories about humor. Nevertheless, our preferences go for the ideas of Norrick (2003) about laughter, since he sees this explicit sign as the most appropriate one to support a humor corpus like ours.

concept which is also mentioned by Eisterhold et alii (2006: 1240); or expressed differently, when continued humor arises.

The following figure was suggested in our previous work (Alvarado 2014) to illustrate the stages through which a humorous utterance goes inside our corpus, to which *jab lines* and *punch lines* have been added in order to show the specific phase where they appear:

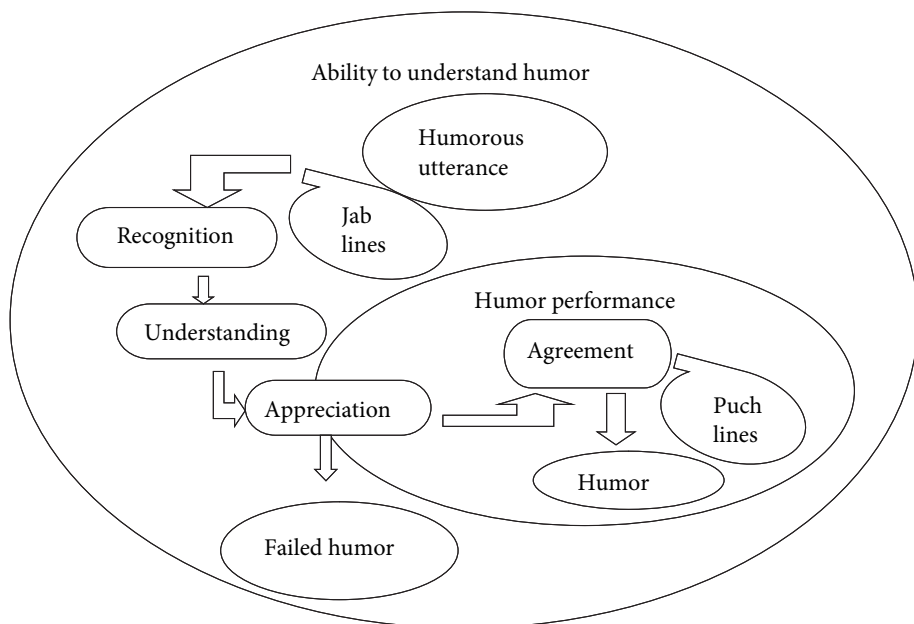


Figure 1. Humor utterance phases (Alvarado 2014).

Figure 1 shows the ability to understand humor as the large sphere that contains all the other elements because, as highlighted above, the starting point for our approach is the idea that all the interlocutors taking part in the corpus own that humorous capacity. Thus, after a humorous utterance which contains markers or indicators (*jab lines*), or to put it in another way, which has clues for the interlocutor, the listener has to be able to interpret it as such. There should be a recognition and understanding of humor on the part of the interlocutor. That would place us in the humor recognition and understanding stage. These first two phases are followed by that of appreciation, situated halfway through humor performance. This happens because it is at this moment that the listener must decide if he/she continues the humorous mode (*mode adoption*) and, consequently, goes on to the agreement stage, and produces or accepts humor using *punch lines* or, instead, he/she rejects humor and does not extend it (*failed humor*, Alvarado 2013, 2014). This is also the stage where gender differences showing the identity of men and women can be found.

Figure 1 thus illustrates cases of continued and failed humor in the conversation of men and women. Continued humor appears in occurrences when the interlocutors have a humorous capacity, that is to say, when they recognize, understand and appreciate humor from the *jab lines* that the speaker shows them – and they additionally share it and accept it, continuing with the *punch lines*, as can be seen through laughter. By contrast, failed humor occurs when both interlocutors own the humorous capacity but one of them recognizes or understands a false jab line and despises humor, without there being a punch line. Example (1) below – where three friends are talking about the need to have the driving license – can prove helpful to understand the concepts which have just been presented.

- (1) B: a(ho)ra me falta a mí // a(hora) veremos↓ cuándo
 A: eso digo yoo↑ a(ho)ra veremoos↑ a ver ↑ cuando te fas⁴ el ánimoo
 B: yo es que tengo conductoor→ (o sea) que⁵
 A: pero [no tía]
 C: (risas) [noo] \$
 B: §[yaa]
 A: [pero es muy cómodo ¿eh?]\$
 [B: now it's me left // we'll see ↓ when
 A: that's what I say↑ we'll see now↑ let's see ↑ when you get down on it
 B: the thing is I have a driiiver→ (so...)
 A: but [no, gal]
 C: (laughter) [noo] \$
 B: §[well, yeah]
 A: [but it is very convenient, eh?]\$
 (Corpus Val.Es.Co., digital [146.A.:35–41])

Example (1) shows A encouraging B to get the driving license, but B does not have the license yet because her boyfriend drives her everywhere and, as is clearly stated by her, she does not need to drive. B creates humor from the utterance *yo es que tengo conductor*, which acts as the first humor marker for the listener, since C recognizes, understands, appreciates, and agrees with B's humor, as shown by the fact that she laughs. Even though A does not take part in humor at first because it has been built from her idea that B should get her driving license, her subsequent intervention, *pero es muy cómodo ¿eh?*, does adopt a humorous mode, since it acts as a punch line. In her case, she recognizes, understands, and appreciates humor but does not share it in her second intervention, with which she wants to return to the

4. Catalan for 'haces [you do]'

5. Amidst laughter

serious topic. In any case, seeing that her two interlocutors extended the humorous mode, she eventually joins them to prevent her public image from being damaged.

3. Variability, negotiability and adaptability: conversational strategies in humorous utterances

Speakers permanently have to make linguistic choices with the aim of achieving an optimal communication with their interlocutor in the course of a conversation. Many of these choices are related to the strategies that they produce during their intervention as well as to the procedures used to react before a humorous utterance. Verschueren (2002: 114) mentions three key concepts when it comes to understanding that linguistic selection metapragmatic process applied by us to humor, namely: *variability*; *negotiability*; and *adaptability*. The first term, *variability*, is understood as all the possible linguistic options within the speakers' reach when they want to issue a humorous utterance; and it will vary according to different contextual factors such as gender, age, register, socio-cultural level, etc. The second one, *negotiability*, has to do with the flexible and permutable selection that speakers decide to perform in their message – humorous, in this case. As for the third term – the *adaptability* of a humorous utterance to the context and to its ultimate purpose – it refers to the selection made by speakers in accordance with their metapragmatic awareness and their specific communicative needs. These three concepts are in turn associated with gender identity and with the humor stages described in the previous section, as shown below in Figure 2. After all, if the interlocutor has a variety of linguistic options to develop his/her message, that is so because an utterance recognition and understanding task has previously been carried out; if the speaker chooses to prolong the humorous mode or not, the latter does so because he/she has appreciated humor and thus suitably selects his/her message; and, finally, if the speaker adapts the message to a humorous mode, this happens because there has been an agreement with the interlocutor's utterance from an interpretative point of view.

Selection process	<i>Variability</i>	<i>Negotiability</i>	<i>Adaptability</i>
	Recognition		
Humor phases	Understanding	Appreciation	Agreement

Figure 2. Linguistic selection and humor phases

Therefore, as can be seen in Figure 2, these pragmatic language selection processes are related to the humor phases that may appear in an utterance. It thus seems coherent to think that most of the conversational strategies used in the cases of continued humor and failed humor have occurred after a dynamic and metapragmatic process of language variability, negotiability and adaptability on the part of the speaker. This happens because the speaker has selected the humorous mode amongst all the possible options and has adapted it to his/her utterance, thus building a gender identity inside the conversational group.

In some cases of humor, both the speaker's and the listener's image may be attacked when they become the target of humor, which is why it becomes essential to know which strategies are applied by speakers to defend themselves as well as the extent to which those strategies differ between men and women. Some researchers specify the strategies utilized in humor, including Culpeper (1996: 355), Hay (2001: 60), Norrick (2003: 1342), Bell (2009a: 1828; 2009b: 151), Spencer-Oatey (2005: 107), Attardo (2001b: 174), or Eisterhold, Attardo, and Boxer (2006: 1250). All these strategies are connected with the public image, politeness, (Alvarado 2009), and impoliteness projected in the course of a conversational exchange, such as the strategies of social management, of affiliation to a conversational group, of sophistication, of evaluation, of persuasion, of appearance, of friendliness, of contradiction, of self-humor, of overlapping, or simply the mere fact of contributing to humor.

Our hypothesis is aimed at demonstrating that all these strategies differ in the use of humor by men and women, ultimately seeking to see the procedures that they use and the role played by each one of them in conversational exchanges. Since our focus here is placed on examining humor in the conversations of both genders, attention will exclusively be paid to those strategies which can be documented in the corpus analyzed.⁶ Hence our decision to approach their study drawing a distinction – from the data obtained – between the use of humor produced by a woman and that produced by a man, regardless of whether it is continued or failed humor, ultimately seeking to identify the specific strategies which distinguish them and how they ascertain their identity inside the conversational group, with the choice of linguistic resources and under the notions of language variability, adaptability and negotiability. For this reason, the next fundamental concern within our analysis of humorous utterances is going to be gender identity.

6. It must be remembered that our corpus is extracted from Briz and the Val.Es.Co. Group (digital corpus), from which 116 minutes of 8 different colloquial conversations between 18-to-25-year-old men and women were analyzed, and where occurrences of continued and failed humor have been found.

4. Gender identity: men and women in conversation

Gender identity as well as the search for typical characteristic of men's language as opposed to that of women has become the focus of interest for many researchers throughout the history of linguistics. This issue was already of interest to R. Lakoff (1975), whose ideas stem from his predecessors Jespersen (1922), Labov (1972), and Trudgill (1972), amongst others. For these authors, dominated by the socio-cultural context that surrounded them, a woman had no sense of humor because she could not understand the humorous punch line of jokes (R. Lakoff 1975: 56), which is why women were situated on an intellectual level below that of men. Perhaps influenced by her role in society, (Holmes 2006 Holmes and Mazza 2002) women – as opposed to men – have established different modes and behaviors before humor which have changed over the years, as the corpus will give us the chance to see.

Santaemilia (2002: 104) specified three factors that influence both gender and conversation: *deficit*, which has to do with the lack of authority that a woman has with respect to a man; *dominion*, which is a man's privilege to be able to interrupt the discourse of women; and *difference*, which refers to the different vision about the world that these two genders have. Nevertheless, our corpus will allow us to check that these factors are no longer valid at present, since women are integrated into the working world, they have adopted the rules of masculine discourse and made them their own (interruptions, direct language, jokes, etc.). At the same time, the theories about humor in women have evolved, such as those of Sunderland and Litosseliti (2002), who develop gender identity in discourse analysis as well as in the construction of roles within society characterized by social condition.

Along these same lines, Kotthoff (2000; 2006: 21 2006) shows the union between gender and humor, relating it to socio-cultural level. He states that women with a low socio-cultural level carry out humor like men, whereas men with a high socio-cultural level create humor like women – it remains to be seen whether this distinction holds true in our corpus.

Other researchers such as Mills (2005: 276) or Bell (2009b: 158) claim that some cases of humor can cause a direct impact on the interlocutor's image. For instance, if they are used to interrupt the conversation, since this fact will most probably alter the behavior expected by that interlocutor. Hence why the production of humor requires empathizing with our interlocutor and knowing how the latter will react before the humorous utterance.

It is consequently our understanding that, both for men and for women, the higher the degree of familiarity and proximity between the interlocutors, the more likelihood there will be of humor appearing in conversations. This is so because the interlocutors who find themselves in a relaxing atmosphere feel more determined to produce and receive humor, as it happens in our corpus. Therefore, a

gender identity is going to be created in accordance with the procedures utilized in the conversations of men and women that will serve to characterize them and to establish usage differences.

5. Humorous analysis of the conversation of men and women

A total of 60 occurrences of humorous conversations between men and women were selected by us in the corpus analyzed – of which 30 correspond to conversations between women, and the other 30 to conversational exchanges between men. Our attention will now focus on some examples of conversations between women (occurrences 2, 3, and 4) and then on some held between men (occurrences 5, 6, 7, and 8), extracted from our corpus. The participants were 18-to-25 years old and their educational level ranged from intermediate to high. Based on these occurrences, our analysis will be aimed at seeing how they act before humorous conversational utterances and what procedures are used which show gender identity.

Even though the idea that women have less sense of humor than men prevailed in classical research on humor (Hay 2000: 712), the analysis of our corpus will reveal that women utilize humor with a number of specific functions which distinguish them from men. Let us observe example (2), which shares the same context as example (1): A and C are sisters, and they are talking about the fact that their grandmother does not understand things properly:

- (2) C: ya pero b- quedamos que- que si llamaba era para- p(or)- /aprobado
 A: mi abuela no se entera tía/ cuando vinieron Jose y todos estos al chalet/
*eixos amiguets teus són molt simpàtics,*⁷ eh? / yo digo *ni se le ocurra a*
nadie decir nada, tía, que s- que lo trabuca todo y no se entera de nada\$
 C: §¿tú eres el novioo? (RISAS)
 A: (RISAS) además de verdad↓ tía
 C: y Jose ¿eh?¿eh?
 A: *tú eres el d'Alacant*↓ *el que anaves a casar-te en ella*?⁸
 C: (RISAS) bueno tía→ se- se lo tengo que decir también al primo Santi//
 ¿y Jesús cómo ha quedao [yo es que antes no los he visto]?
 C: yeah, but b- we agreed that- that if I called it was for- f(or)- /a pass
 A: my grandmother does not know what's going on, gal/ when Jose and all
 these came to the country house/ *those buddies of yours are very nice*,

7. Cat. for 'esos amiguitos tuyos son muy simpáticos'[those buddies of yours are very nice]

8. Cat. for '¿tú eres el de Alicante, el que ibas a casarte con ella?' '[you are the one from Alicante↓ the one who was going to marry her?]

*aren't they? / I say, nobody should even think of saying anything, gal, tha
s- she mixes everything up and doesn't understand a thing*

C: *§you are the boyfriend?* (LAUGHTER)

A: (LAUGHTER) indeed too↓ gal

C: and Jose *eh?eh?*

A: *you are the one from Alicante*↓ *the one who was going to marry her?*

C: (LAUGHTER) well, gal→ I- I have to tell cousin Santi about it too// and
Jesús, how did he end up [the thing is I haven't seen them before]?

(Corpus Val.Es.Co., digital [146.A.:37–46])

A number of humorous interventions take place in (2) because A uses direct speech to reproduce the words that her grandmother said about a friend (*eixos amiguets teus són molt simpàtics*), and C continues with the reproduction of several interventions using direct speech that imitates the indiscreet grandmother (*¿tú eres el novio?/ tú eres el d'Alacant...*), which makes both female interlocutors laugh. Looking more carefully at the example tells us that humor continues in a few other interventions that act as a humorous *jab line*, since the humor target is their own grandmother, who does not take part in the conversation – which is why A and C are strengthening their ties within the conversational group. These tie-reinforcement strategies are achieved from the variability of linguistic resources available to them when it comes to extending humor in accordance with the colloquial register used, the alternation of languages, the age difference between the grandmother and their granddaughters, and their socio-cultural level. Therefore, they negotiate with all that and adapt their discourse to the humorous mode. The metapragmatic awareness which they own thus allows them to develop the concept of adaptability to the humorous message. Furthermore, since it is the grandmother of both women, they feel that they have enough authority and power to be able to prolong humor. This shows a sharp contrast with B who, despite being present in the same conversation, understands humor but does not participate in it because she does not want to attack the image of A and C's grandmother, as seen in (1).

Example (3) shows the same female interlocutors talking about the celebration of C's driving license:

(3) C: *¿tú no me→ acompañas?*

A: *ella tiene que [estudiar]*

B: *[es que→] estoy terminándome el libro→*

A: *lo senti[mos// nos alegramos] =*

B: *[me faltan dos hojas]*

A: *= un montón por lo tuyo↑ pero yo no puedo celebrarlo*

B: *mm// (bueno) si traes una botella de champán→*

A: *[(RISAS)]*

- C: aren't you→ coming with me?
 A: she has to [study]
 B: [the thing is→] I'm about to finish the book→
 A: we're so[rry]// we're glad] =
 B: [only two pages left]
 A: = very much so for what you've done↑ but I can't celebrate it
 B: mm// (well) if you bring a bottle of champagne→
 A: [(LAUGHTER)]
 (Corpus Val.Es.Co., digital [146.A.:50–57])

In this case, the target of humor is a specific context that has nothing to do with any of the female interlocutors, which is why the three of them feel confident and sure that they will be able to make continued humor out of that situation, in which A and B cannot attend C's celebration because they have to study and read, but they joke about the fact that they will definitely be there if there is champagne. Hence why B carries out an ironic-humorous utterance (*mm, buenos si traes una botella de champán*) which serves as a *jab line* for humor, as can be seen in the laughter of A's intervention, thus acting as a humorous *punch line* and supporting the humor created by B to show a group identity.

The conversational strategy used here consists in the affiliation to the conversational group, which has been achieved through an appropriate choice of the linguistic procedures available to speakers according to the variability of age, sex, socio-cultural level, etc. Irony appears in this case too, as a resource which serves to make the ties between the interlocutors stronger. This subsequently gives way to negotiability between those interlocutors and the humorous or the serious mode, in which a decision is made to extend humor; and, finally, the speakers' adaptability to the humorous mode to meet the communicative needs of the group – as shown by the final laughter. This example therefore reflects the metapragmatic awareness of humor in these female interlocutors through the concepts of adaptability, variability and negotiability.

A number of cases found in our corpus show speakers carrying out self-humor to protect their image from an imminent attack. In (4), the same friends from the preceding examples are talking about a degree paper that these women have to finish:

- (4) A: pesadísimo no además/ luego pasarlo y todo// ((tío)) a mí me cuesta más ((que te den-dejeme)) un trocho- un tocho- ay un trocho
 B: (RISAS) UN TRocho (RISAS)
 A: hablo de categoría⁹ ya↓

- B: se t'ha pegao de mí
 A: síí (RISAS)/ tanto estudio y luego na de na/// (2") me voy a tumbar aquí un poco porque ya// estoy cansá del todo ¿eh?
 A: extremely hard work no besides/ then writing it out and all// ((gal)) for me it's more difficult ((when they give you)) a weighty trompe- a tome-oh dear, a weighty trompe
 B: (LAUGHTER) A TRome (LAUGHTER)
 A: I'm speaking about category now↓
 B: I passed that habit on you
 A: yeas (LAUGHTER)/ so much study and then no(th)ing at all/// (2") I'm going to lie down here for a little while because already// I am dog-tired, you know?
 (Corpus Val.Es.Co., digital [235.A:147–153])

Humor arises in (4) after A mispronounces the word *tocho* when referring to the amount of pages that they have to write, and she says *trocho*. B picks up the words reproduced by A to introduce irony and humor (*un trocho/ risas*); however, A feels that her interlocutor is attacking her negative image – as shown by B's laughter – and tries to defend herself through an ironic intervention that she uses for protection purposes (*hablo de categoría*). A has had to intervene seeking to adapt her utterance to the specific communicative needs, insofar as it had been erroneously taken as a false *jab line*. Continued humor consequently appears in B (*se t'ha pegado de mí*) during this intervention that A decides to finish with the introduction of a serious topic (*me voy a tumbar aquí un poco...*). This time A adapts her message to the humorous mode with the aim of prolonging self-humor but, after B's ensuing humorous intervention (*se t'ha pegado de mí*), she decides to change her conversational strategy, negotiating her message through the variability of resources available, ultimately seeking to protect her image and to produce failed humor.

Thus, most of the cases found in women's conversations show the adaptability of a humorous message to create closer ties between the interlocutors, or the negotiability and the rejection of that message, to protect the negative image against the speaker's potential attacks, to a lesser extent. These conversational strategies have materialized through the variability, negotiability and adaptability of the utterances selected by these female interlocutors to avoid damaging each other's image. However, this last conversational strategy focused on attacking the negative image increases in cases of failed humor amongst men, as will be shown below.

The group of friends in example (5) are spending a day in the countryside and talking about the log that A has placed for them to sit on and be more comfortable:

- (5) D: ¿quiés cocacola?
 A: síi/ echa// este tronco lo mandamos a tomar por culo

- D: [(RISAS)]
 C: [(RISAS)]
 B: pues tú lo has puesto/ tío
 D: EL [boyescout este]
 A: [a ya ya ya]\$
 D: § TAPÓN§
 A: § pues si no llega a ser por mí no encontráis un
 [sitio como este =]
 B: [(())]
 A: = el mejor sitio de todaa/ la historia\$
 B: § [sí]
 D: d'you wan(t) cocacola?
 A: yes/ pour// this log we'll pack it in
 D: [(LAUGHTER)]
 C: [(LAUGHTER)]
 B: well, you put it there/ man
 D: THIS [boy(e)scout one]
 A: [ah well well well]\$
 D: § CAP§
 A: § I mean, if it hadn't been for me, you wouldn't
 have found a [place like this one =]
 B: [(())]
 A: = the best place in aall/ history\$
 B: § [yees]
 (Briz & grupo Val.Es.Co., 2002 [H.38.A.1:17–29])

A's intervention in (5) (*sii/ echa// este tronco lo mandamos a tomar por culo*) acts as a false *jab line* in the conversation, insofar as the other interlocutors have considered it humorous, when it actually is not, because A's intention was not to make humor. The adaptability to a humorous mode that his interlocutors have produced thus compromises the public image of A, who had previously placed that log so that they could be more comfortable. Furthermore, C and D's laughter, along with the subsequent interventions by B (*pues tú lo has puesto, tío*) and D (*el boyescout este*) lead A to safeguard his image with a new utterance negotiated and adapted to that end, and to state that it is thanks to him that they find themselves at a privileged location. In this case, A's intervention has caused humor in the other interlocutors, but he did not seek that effect, as shown by the fact that he has to intervene again so that his image can be protected. This is consequently an example of continued humor as far as interlocutors D, C, and B are concerned, and one of failed humor in the case of speaker A – towards a situation that he has not

deliberately provoked. This fact makes the speaker decide to defend himself from a negotiability and a dynamic adaptability based on the selection of strategies which can modify the linguistic context to avoid damaging his image.

Failed humor in the speaker may also take place towards an absent person, as illustrated by (6), where the same interlocutors of the previous occurrence are chatting about a waitress who knows some of them:

- (6) D: §que- que me conocía a mí que- conmigo iba/ gente
 A: [(RISAS)]
 B: [(RISAS)]§
 D: § que iban dos o tres [amigos]
 B: [una conclu]sión bastante [acertada]¹⁰
 D: [¿que tú ibas≠] por
 blaquing blau¹¹ y todo esto/ por el sordo [preguntó]
 D: §that- that she knew me that- people/ went with me
 A: [(LAUGHTER)]
 B: [(LAUGHTER)]§
 D: § that there were two or three [friends]
 B: quite a [right] [conclu]sion
 D: [that you used to]
 frequent blaquing blau? and all this/ by the deaf [he asked]
 (Briz & grupo Val.Es.Co., 2002 [H.38.A.1:151–158])

The utterance issued by D in (6) reproduces the words that the waiter told him about his friends (*que me conocía a mí, que conmigo iba gente*). A and B interpret that intervention as a false *jab line* because it is something obvious; after all, one normally goes for a drink with some friends – B's ironic comment reflects this perception (*una conclusión bastante acertada*). An attack therefore takes place which has as its target someone who is not present in the conversation: the pub waitress. However, failed humor takes place in the speaker because, within the whole variety of linguistic procedures available to him depending on age, sex or socio-cultural level, to name but a few parameters, D negotiates his message and reorients his utterance towards the serious topic (*¿Qué tu ibas por blanquin blau...*), since it is a girl that he likes. Therefore, failed humor in speaker D – who adapts his utterance to the serious topic – arises as an image protection strategy focused on an absent person that he appreciates.

10. Ironically

11. Name of a pub

In (7), several friends are chatting about an anecdote which happened to B, who braked suddenly while he was driving:

- (7) A: si oigo un frenazo↑ por allí ya sé quién es
 B: ¡la virgen!¹²/ oigoo
 A: y di- y digo- pero dije ¿quién será el loco ese!?!// digo ¡hostias!/ y luego dice pos (()) y bailas¹³ §
 B: § tampoco frené tanto/ tío↑/ lo que pasa es que la chavala está GILIPOLLAS/ macho// veo↑ que quiere que se pone a cruzar la acera y ya↑ levanto el pie/ ahí/ to despacete/ y la tía↑ pero que me estaba como de aquí a la estufa¹⁴ y me seguía cruzando/ tío↑§
 A: if I hear a screeching noise↑ over there I know who it is
 B: my God! / I heaar
 A: and I s- and say- but I said, who must that fool be!?!// I say, (what) the hell!/ and then he says, well, you (()) and dance §
 B: § I didn't brake that much/ man↑/ what happens is that the lass is a JERK/ man// I see ↑ that she starts crossing the pavement and I already↑ lift my foot (off the pedal)/ there/ sooo slowly/ and the gal↑ but she was like from here to the stove and she kept crossing/ man↑§
 (Corpus Val.Es.Co., digital [170.A:174–181])

Example (7) shows several friends arranging to meet the next day when A ironically reproduces the following intervention *si oigo un frenazo por allí ya sé quién es*, which recalls that, in the past, B was about to run over a girl who wanted to cross the street. Before that ironic-humorous *jab line*, B continues with the laughter and accepts humor, adapting his attitude to the message. However, A's next utterance (*y digo pero dije ¿quién será el loco ese?*), which extends the humorous mode, is no longer accepted by B, who sees his public image being attacked and has to defend himself with a justification that tones down the message (*tampoco frené tanto tío...*). In other words, A's second intervention has produced failed humor in the speaker because the target of humor was B, who is present in the conversation and negotiates his message seeking to adapt it to the serious topic as a toning-down, image-protection strategy.

On other occasions, failed humor appears in the listener if it is the latter that wrongly interprets one or several linguistic elements as *jab lines*, as shown by the

12. Amidst laughter

13. Amidst laughter

14. A distance of approximately two and a half meters

fact that the speaker ignores them and continues with the conversation in a serious manner. An example of this is provided by example (8), where some friends are talking about the height of someone absent from the conversation:

- (8) A: ¿uno muy alto? ¿quién sería?§
 C: § el Conejo¹⁵§
 A: § o Emiliano/ a lo mejor§
 B: § ¿Emiliano alto de qué?
 A: ¿có[mo sería de alto?]
 B: [ni física ni mental]mente es alto nano§
 D: § como yo/ como nosotros/ más o menos
 A: entonces muy alto el Conejo/// pero el Conejo nunca ha ido por el Carmen¹⁶
 A: a very tall one? who could it be?§
 C: § the Rabbit§
 A: § or Emiliano/ maybe§
 B: § What d'you mean, Emiliano tall?
 A: ho[w tall could he be?]
 B: neither [physical(ly) nor mental]ly tall, man§
 D: § like me/ like us/ more or less
 A: then very tall the Rabbit/// but the Rabbit has never been to El Carmen (Briz & grupo Val.Es.Co., 2002 [H.38.A.1:136–143])

The dialogue between A, B, C, and D in (8) revolves around recognizing a person who frequents a neighborhood of Valencia using his height as a reference. This time it is a person absent from the conversation who might be *Emiliano* or *el Conejo*, as they are identified in (8). The interlocutors are giving information about that feature when B interprets a false *jab line* (*¿cómo sería de alto?*) to continue and adapt his message to humor by means of an ironic-humorous *punch line* (*Emiliano, ni física ni mentalmente es alto*) which nobody interprets as such, since they are more interested in recognizing the individual than in creating humor. Thus, within the wide variety of linguistic procedures available to him depending on such factors as age, sex, socio-cultural level, etc., he negotiates his message and reorients his utterance towards the serious topic (*como yo/ como nosotros/ más o menos*), insofar as identifying the boy constitutes a priority. Failed humor consequently arises in the listener because the others choose to continue with

15. Nickname of the person who is not present in the dialogue

16. A neighborhood in the city of Valencia

the serious topic, thus forcing B to adapt his future interventions to the common group affiliation strategy adopted by the remaining interlocutors.

5.1 Linguistic procedures and data

Data observation allows us to conclude that women and men utilize different linguistic procedures before humor because, whereas women try to adapt their message to the humorous mode when humor appears seeking to strengthen their ties with the conversational group, men decide to negotiate their message and leave the humorous utterance as a way to safeguard their public image, sometimes threatened by other participants in the conversational exchange. In other words, not only negotiability differs between men and women but also variability.

Figure 3 shows the data referring to strategies used in the 60 occurrences where humor appears in men and women:

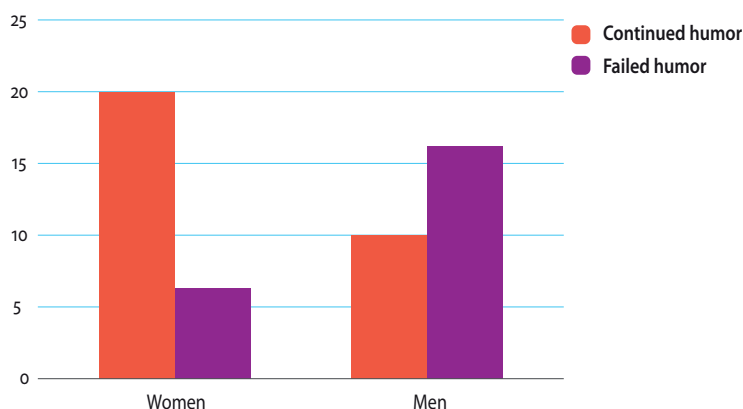


Figure 3. Representation of occurrences according to gender

All 60 humor occurrences found in the conversational corpus – 30 between men and another 30 between women – can be seen in Figure 3. Women's occurrences include 22 of continued humor and 8 of failed humor, whereas those of men are distributed into 12 instances of continued humor and 18 of failed humor. This variation in the data corresponding to humorous utterances produced by men and women derives from the fact that their respective conversational strategies are not the same – because of the metapragmatic variability, negotiability and adaptability resources in which a humorous mode is negotiated according to whether it affects the interlocutors' image or not. As for women, and regardless of whether they use continued humor or opt for failed humor, they always strive to strengthen their conversational group without attacking the interlocutor's image, and their humor refers to individuals who are not present in the conversation or to situations.

Instead, when faced with similar contexts, men use continued and failed humor utterances seeking to strengthen their conversational group from an attack against the public image of some participant in the conversational exchange – which makes it difficult for them to extend the humorous mode. These data allow us to draw a number of conclusions.

6. Conclusions

The analysis presented in our paper appears to be based on the conversational utterances produced by women and men which show the appearance of a humorous mode on the part of the speaker or the listener. If the humorous mode is perceived and shared, the four phases of humor described in Figure 1 (recognition; understanding; appreciation; and agreement) would take place. By contrast, if the humorous mode is not continued, because agreement does not exist, only three of these phases – recognition; understanding; and appreciation) occur – this being what happens in most of the examples corresponding to men. The aforesaid phases are related to the metapragmatic concepts of: linguistic variability owned by the speaker; negotiability of a specific communicative situation; and adaptability or not to the humorous mode. These concepts help define and build gender identity – as can be seen in Figure 2, which shows that a correspondence exists between the linguistic selection process and the humorous utterance stages. Thus, the variability of resources that speakers have at their disposal is linked to the recognition and understanding of their interlocutor's utterance; negotiability has to do with appreciating the humorous utterance; and adaptability refers to the humorous agreement adopted by the interlocutors.

Therefore, continued humor largely prevails in the cases of humor between women, above all because this kind of humor utilizes the linguistic resources available and, consequently, the pragmatic notions of variability, negotiability and adaptability for the purpose of showing their humorous intention within the communicative situation, ultimately seeking to build closer ties with the conversational group. This fact makes it possible to protect the public image of the female interlocutors, and humor is especially aimed at situations or at absent individuals, as illustrated by (1), (2), (3), and (4). When failed humor arises in women's conversations, it is because an attempt has been made to protect the image of the interlocutors. The degree of familiarity and proximity between women favors the appearance of the irony and humor which directly attacks the image of those involved in the communicative act. In such cases, the odds are that speakers will leave the humorous mode and return to the serious topic after negotiating their message with the possibilities in terms of variability, negotiability and adaptability

that language offers them. Female gender identity is consequently characterized as a mechanism that reinforces the conversational group.

Conversations with failed humor predominate in the case of men, or expressed differently, the interlocutors recognize, understand, and appreciate humor. Variability and negotiability are present in the linguistic procedures, but not the adaptability to a humorous mode, since there is nearly always one speaker who does not prolong it because the humorous utterance attacks his public image and he must protect it from the conversational group, as seen in (5), (6), (7), and (8). In this case, gender identity characteristically safeguards public image, giving it priority over the conversational group.

On the whole, it can be stated that women carry out continued as well as failed humor in everyday conversation with the aim of strengthening conversational group ties, whereas men make both types of humor to protect their public image from the interlocutor's attacks.

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Teasing in casual conversations

An opportunistic discursive strategy

Béatrice Priego-Valverde

Aix-Marseille Université, Laboratoire Parole et Langage, Aix en Provence,
France

In order to study teasing in casual conversations, I will focus the present work on a specific humorous device that frequently occurs in casual conversations: “linguistic pinning” (Traverso, 1999) described as a verbatim repetition of a word or expression said by the hearer to create humor. Teasing, as many other forms of conversational humor in a broad sense, is thus seen as a rebound on, at least, the prior turn. Consequently, the humorous speaker will be depicted as both a participant able to adapt her/himself to the context (discursive and more generally, relational) and an opportunist, watching out for the possibility of producing humor.

After a description of the forms and function of linguistic pinning and after a comparison to other related phenomena (repetition and punning), I will analyze seven examples of pinning to show its discursive functioning and some reactions it triggers.

Keywords: teasing, casual conversation, “linguistic pinning”, conversational humor

1. Introduction

This present work is an exploratory study on a specific discursive strategy of teasing: pinning. In terms of form and function, teasing by pinning may be considered as a form of conversational humor because it is based either on ongoing talk, or on previous talk actualized in the ongoing talk. Thus, for the speaker, it consists of repeating what has been said by one of the participants in order to initiate a humorous sequence. The goal of such an opportunistic humor is certainly to introduce a “play frame” (Bateson, 1953), but in a complex and ambivalent way: by teasing.

Considering that teasing is ambivalent, I will begin this article with a brief overview of studies showing this complex nature, enlarging this ambivalence and complexity to casual conversation itself. Then, I will define more precisely “linguistic pinning” (“ pinglage linguistique”, Traverso, 1999, for the French terminology and Guardiola et al., 2012 for the English) and I will compare it to two other related phenomena: repetition and punning. Finally, I will focus my analysis on seven examples of teasing by pinning over five different audio recorded conversations between close friends, and/or co-workers. I will try to show on what kind of word or expression pinning rebounds, with which goal (denounce (supposed) inappropriateness or reveal a second meaning), and what kinds of reactions it triggers. This last point will allow a surprising question to be raised: is the play frame initiated by teasing with pinning always accepted?

2. Teasing and teasing in casual conversations

Since the seminal study by Radcliffe-Brown (1940), teasing has seen increased research interest in social sciences and linguistics.¹ Following this study which presented teasing as “a peculiar combination of friendliness and antagonism” (1940: 196), the extreme majority of studies point out its *ambivalent nature*, associating verbal aggressiveness and playful intent, through a large variety of terms. To name but a few examples: “playful humorous jibes”, (Drew, 1987), “double-edged sword”, (Boxer and Cort s-Conde, 1997), “playfully annoy or challenge the interlocutor”, (Dyner, 2008), diminishing “within a non-serious or jocular frame”, (Haugh, 2010).

By focusing the present study on a specific teasing device, pinning, I place this work in line with those that support the ambivalence of teasing. Indeed, as shall be seen with the examples, pinning may be considered as “aggressive” by disrupting the ongoing talk (Norrick, 1993) while being cohesive, at least for some participants.

Focusing their research on teasing in conversations, some authors interrogate the link between teasing and having a close relationship, arguing that the better participants know each other, the more frequent and permitted the teasing is (among others: Pawluk, 1989; Straehle, 1993; Boxer and Cort s-Conde, 1997; Lampert and Erving-Tripp, 2006). Nevertheless, if the link between teasing and having a close relationship seems to be often verifiable in different data (this data included), this

1. See (Keltner et al. 2001) for an overview on the various corpora and methods of research, and for the definitions, (Haugh and Bousfield, 2012) for the links between (im)politeness and mockery, (Haugh, 2014), for the design features and the answers.

leads two different questions. Firstly, as Haugh pointed out (2011), teasing is not only the privilege of closely acquainted people but can appear between people who are becoming acquainted with each other. Secondly, it interrogates the very nature of conversation itself which is sometimes presented as the canonical example of a symmetrical and cooperative interaction or, on the contrary, as an interaction where, precisely because the participants are very well acquainted, allow themselves larger flexibility with “face work” rules as defined by Goffman (1959). It thus seems possible to attribute very different characteristics to the notion of conversation. As an example, Laforest and Vincent (1996) argued that: “Une vraie conversation est une activité en soi qui émerge dans une atmosphère de paix et de quiétude. C’est une activité privée qui rassemble un nombre limité de participants qui sont dans un état d’attention et de confiance. Une vraie conversation implique la réciprocité et une écoute attentive, en plus de sujets sérieux qui sont abordés en profondeur. Il s’agit d’un moment spécial pour l’expression des émotions et de l’intelligence.” (in Vincent, 2001: 177). On the contrary, a sort of aggressiveness has been presented as the basis of an intimate interaction: “[...] it is a convention about interaction that frankness, rudeness, crudeness, profanity, obscenity, etc. are indices of relaxed, unguarded, spontaneous; i.e. intimate interaction.” (Jefferson et al., 1987: 160).

Despite these differences, such definitions of conversation are not opposites. Casual conversation, as teasing, is an ambivalent interaction where “bonding and biting” (Boxer and Cortés-Conde, 1997) can and maybe must coexist because it is exactly what spices up this specific interaction. Considering this ambivalence, it is thus logical (as we will see with some examples) that even if teasing by pinning may be considered as a “coup d’état” made by the speaker, it has to be accepted by the hearer to be successful. Following Haugh and Bousfield (2012), and Haugh (2014), teasing must be “interactionally achieved” (2012: 1104) in order to work, i.e. both accomplished and recognized as playful. However, I would add that, on the one hand, the target(s) has/have to *accept to switch into the play frame* the tease initiates, and, on the other hand, the target(s) has/have to *accept the biting illocutionary force*. However, we will see that agreeing or overbidding too much can hinder the efforts produced by the speaker to tease the hearer.

Thus, even if teasers have the intention to tease, are able to adapt themselves both to the ongoing talk (by pinning at the right moment) and to the larger context (based on shared knowledge), the tease still has to be, in some way, negotiated.

3. Linguistic pinning as a specific teasing device

In this section, I will define linguistic pinning and I will delimit it in comparison to another related humorous phenomenon (punning) and one which could be considered related (repetition).

3.1 Formal and functional characteristics of linguistic pinning

As previously defined by Traverso (1999: 85), linguistic pinning “consiste   relever, dans le discours de son interlocuteur, un mot ou un syntagme qui devient source d’une  laboration ludique.” This definition was refined by Guardiola et al. (2012) who suggest that the simple act of noticing becomes an “other repetition” and the playful creation, becomes, more precisely, teasing. In other words, for its speaker, pinning consists of repeating a word or an expression which has just been said to tease its producer. In this regard, and following Drew (1987), the discursive context of pinning is the same as that of teasing “[...] tease are not freely occurring in conversation, but are sequentially ‘second’ to some prior utterance(s) of the one who is teased.” (1987: 233). That is the reason why he considers teasing as “parasitic” (1987: 235) and why I add that pinning is also opportunistic.

3.2 Pinning and repetitions

As pinning is a form of repetition, in dealing with pinning in depth, Guardiola et al. (2012) based their work on Tannen’s typology of repetitions (1989). Thus, for these authors, pinning belongs to the fourth category of repetitions proposed by Tannen: “interaction” (1989: 51–53), and more precisely, to the sub-categories “humor” and “savoring” (Tannen, 1989: 63–64).

If pinning has much in common with some of Tannen’s repetitions (hetero repetition, an interactive function with sub-functions of “humor” and “savoring”), it digresses partially from them both in its form (a *verbatim* repetition and not repetition with variation) and in one of its functions (teasing).

3.3 Pinning and punning

As identified in Norrick’s study of punning (1993), pinning and punning have some properties in common. They both belong to conversational humor in a broad sense, i.e. a speaker relying on what has just been said to produce humor. Thus, both enter into the category of word play introducing a play frame. Concerning their sequential position, none of them is freely occurring and both constitute at least a second turn. Finally, both can be considered as aggressive as much for the

interaction itself, disrupting the topic, as for the participants: “Punning as a type of word-play may function either to amuse or to verbally attack. Both types are aggressive in disrupting turn taking and topical talk, and in testing for understanding, but the punning attack adds personal aggression as well.” (Norrick, 1993: 80).

Nevertheless, pinning has significant differences when compared to punning. Firstly, punning is not necessarily based on a verbatim repetition. Secondly, according to Norrick (1993) following Sacks’s definition of pun (1973), punning always plays with a double meaning, the first, logical and expected one said by the hearer, and the illogical and unexpected second one actualized by the speaker, pretending not to have understood. As some examples will show, while pinning, the humorous speaker does not always pretend not to have understood and, more importantly, does not always play with a second meaning, even if it often occurs. Inasmuch as pinning frequently allows a tease; the play is more concerned with the participants’ images than the discovery of a second meaning.

Taking into account both these various aspects and the reality of the data presented here, it is worth noting one more element. In this study, I will enlarge the range of the targeted discourse. Indeed, as we shall see, a speaker can pin a word or an utterance not said in the ongoing conversation but in a previous one.

Here, pinning is presented as:

- (1) A hetero verbatim repetition of a word or a phrase produced (at one moment) by the hearer.
- (2) A second turn (at least)
- (3) Which teases a (supposed) inappropriateness

4. The data

The examples presented here come from five different audio recorded conversations. In order to show that linguistic pinning is a very frequent discursive device, I have chosen interactions with people belonging to different groups, the only common point being my presence as a *participant-observer*.

- Example (1): 4 participants. Two sisters and their boyfriends
- Examples (2) and (7): 2 participants, both co-workers and friends of 15 years
- Examples (3) and (4): 3 different participants than in (2) and (7), except myself, but with the same links
- Example (5): 4 participants. The two women study together and the two men are their boyfriends

- Example (6): 4 participants. The two men study together and the two women are their girlfriends

In total:

- 11 different persons were recorded² in different apartments.
- A duration of 14h25mn.
- 103 humorous sequences were isolated. Here, it is worth noting that many sequences have much more than a single humorous utterances.
- In these 103 sequences, 33 cases of pinning were extracted.

Finally, each time the microphone was there, the participants knew they were being recorded but not why exactly – even if they suspected it was probably for humor – because they are used to being regularly recorded by me. In fact, they never asked for the real reason of the recordings, contenting themselves with noting that they were – once again – “wiretapped” (as one of the participants said).

5. Analysis of the data

5.1 Pinning revealing a linguistic inappropriateness (real or considered as such)

Bellow, the first example shows a pinning on a slip of the tongue, which may be considered as a real lexical inappropriateness while the three other are just considered as such by the teaser.

Example 1. “The cornflour”

The four participants are talking about couscous restaurants and are saying that some of them are expensive.

- 1 M2: quand tu sais combien ça coûte un paquet de maïzena ↑ il en /
- 2 n'en fait dix /
- 3 F2: maïzena
- 4 dix de couscous avec ça + sans déconner oh
- 5 F1: (*en riant*) je mangerai jamais le couscous chez toi hein
- 6 F2: maïzena
- 7 M1: < j'connaisais pas ça ? > j'en / j'en ai jamais goûté
- 8 F1: (*toujours riant*) je mangerai jamais le couscous chez toi
- 9 F2: (*en riant*) de la maïzena
- 10 M1: ça doit être assez heu:: pfff

2. Thus, the same coding (M1, F1 etc.) does not always refer to the same person

- 11 F1: (*en riant*) le jour où tu le fais tu me le dis
 12 F2: quand tu sais combien i coûte le paquet de maizena heu = oui
 13 M2↑
 14 M2: ouais c'est la semou::le quoi
- 1 M2: do you know how much a cornflour bag costs ↑ it / does ten /
 2 ten
 3 F2: cornflour
 4 couscous with it + no kidding oh
 5 F1: (*laughing*) I'll never eat couscous at your place
 6 F2: cornflour
 7 M1: < *I didn't know that?* > I've / I've never tasted it
 8 F2: (*laughing*) cornflour
 9 M1: it must be hug:: pff
 10 F1: (*laughing*): the day you make it you tell me
 11 F2: when you know how much it costs the cornflour bag hug = yes M2
 12 ↑
 13 M2: yeah it's semo::lina

M2 criticizes some couscous restaurants due to the price of the meal in comparison with the low cost of the raw material. This explains M2's first utterance. However, he makes a slip of the tongue using "cornflour" instead of "semolina". This slip of the tongue is immediately pinned by F2 who overlaps M2's utterance to repeat the word first in a deadpan way (3, 6) and then laughing (8). This simple pinning opens the door of a play frame which F1 and M1 rush into, the three of them creating a co-constructed teasing sequence against the target (Priego-Valverde, 2003, 2006), M2, throwing themselves into it differently. Indeed, while F2's reactions are limited to pinning first "cornflour", and then M2's entire first utterance (11, 12), F1 and M1 overbid on the first tease staging a M2 who does not know how to cook couscous. Here, the successive teases allow the speakers both to point out a real lexical inappropriateness and to build an image of M2 who does not even know how to cook couscous. But the laughter (at least) signals at the same time that the teasers are engaging a play frame. Finally, M2 produces a "po-faced" answer (Drew, 1987) to the teases (13), rectifying, as a concession, his utterance.

Example 2. "The saint X"

The two participants are spending the evening at F1's apartment. At one moment, F1's phone signals she has received a SMS. Her aunt wishes her in advance a happy saint's day which will be the day after. X refers to F1's first name.

- 1 F1: et c'est ma tante qui m'a / qui me souhaite ma fête (*petit rire*)
 2 hou ça alors (*petit rire*) merci

- 3 M1: sainte sainte
 4 F1: OUI (*éclat de rire*)
 5 M1: (*en soupirant*) ah ouais (en)fin bon + + enfin
 6 F1: je me suis demandée si (il) y avait eu une sainte X qu'est-ce
 7 qu'elle a pu être
 8 M1: putain ben
- 1 F1: and it's my aunt who / who is wishing me a good saint's day
 2 (*small laughter*) oh well well (*small laughter*) thanks (*to her aunt*)
 3 M1: saint saint
 4 F1: YES (*roar of laughter*)
 5 M1: (*sighing*) oh year well + + anyway well anyway
 6 F1: I wondered if there was a saint X what she could have been
 7 M1: fuck err

This excerpt will be divided into two. The pinning presented here occurs in (3). F1 says that she has just received a SMS from her aunt who wishes her a good saint's day (1). M1 pins twice the adjective "saint". This pinning allows M1 to express doubt concerning F1's holiness. Despite the fact that M1's tease is produced in a deadpan way, F1 immediately both recognizes it as such and agrees (with an increased "yes" and some laughter). While F1 plays along with the tease, wondering if a Saint X really had existed (6), M1 insists on his doubt concerning F1 in particular (5) and the eventuality that a saint X could exist (7).

F1 plays along with the tease instead of being affected. Aside from the close relationship between the two participants, this reaction can be explained by another reason. Indeed, teases – and humor in general – must be at least plausible to work (Attardo, 1994). Yet, here, F1's holiness is not plausible. The tease is thus unrealistic and can be easily rejected as potentially hurtful.

Example 3. "The intellectual work"

The three participants are at F1's apartment. F1 is going to work to Switzerland. Before the beginning of her contract, she splits her time between France and Switzerland. Back for a weekend, she gives her first impressions of her new laboratory. Here, she explains that she is very surprised by the fact that, unlike her, the Swiss do not often take a break to smoke a cigarette. Each of the participants being smoker, they develop this topic saying how many times they smoke during a work day (1).

- 1 F1: toutes les heures quoi + ça m(e) paraît honnête comme / comme
 2 rythme
 3 M1: ah ouais
 4 F2: c'est ça moi
 5 j'en fais toutes les heures

6 F1: attends on fait un travail intellectuel heu il faut que le cerveau
 7 se repose à un moment
 8 M1: c'est ça ::
 9 Tout le monde: (*rire*)
 10 F1: eh ouais attends j(e) veux dire / non mais c'est vrai //
 11 M1: ah bon + (*en riant*) vous faites un travail intellectuel vous ↑
 12 F1 et F2: (*rires*)
 13 M1: oh ben (*en riant*) je savais moi
 14 F1 et F2: (*rires*)
 15 F2: on t'avait pas dit ↑
 16 F1: non mais sincèrement [...]

1 F1: every hour like + it seems to me honest as / as rhythm
 2 M1: oh yeah
 3 F2: that's it I do take break
 4 every hour
 5 F1: wait we do intellectual work ugh the brain must rest at some
 6 point
 7 M1: that's it::
 8 Everybody: (*laughter*)
 9 F1: yeah wait I mean / no but it's true //
 10 M1: really ↑ (*laughing*) you do intellectual work
 11 you ↑
 12 F1 & F2: (*laughter*)
 13 M1: oh right (*laughing*) I didn't know
 14 F1 & F2: (*laughter*)
 15 F2: we didn't tell you ↑
 16 F1: no but sincerely [...]

(The topic continues and is developed in a serious way.)

In this example, the three participants have a serious conversation about how many breaks it is acceptable to take while working. As a person (at the moment of the recording) in between two countries and two different modes of functioning, F1 places herself as a kind of expert able to know what the “right rhythm” is (1).³ In (3 and 4), F2 agrees with her, probably mocking herself a little about the interval of her own breaks. But in (5), the potential self-denigrating previous utterance is taken literally by F1 (“wait”). Moreover, it is explained and even justified (“we do intellectual work / the brain must rest”) in a serious way.

3. It is not present in the transcription but she shows no hesitation in gossiping about her future colleagues.

M1 does not wait for the end of F1's utterance and, overlapping it, he initiates a humorous sequence (7) which may be both self-deprecating humor (he presupposes that he does not do intellectual work) and teasing against F1 (who thinks she does). Indeed, with his utterance produced in a fake dubious tone of voice, (which is not a pinning per se but a punning) he stages a person who has just realized the reason why he takes so many breaks in a day. This allusive humor is perceived as such by the two F who laugh (8). But F1 does not want to be interrupted either in the content of her talk or in its serious mode: after a short "yeah" functioning more like a pragmatic concession to recover her speech turn than a real agreement, she tries to pursue her serious argumentation "wait I mean / no but it's true" (9).

So, M1 explicitly pins the adjective "intellectual" (10) and rephrases it as a question. This underlies this qualification and, while laughing, he pretends to discover that the work they all do is intellectual, presupposing he does not have the same vision of their work. As a consequence, he both teases F1 for a seeming lack of modesty and accentuates his self-deprecating humor by dividing himself from the others "you" (11). His humorous/teasing utterance is perceived as such by the hearers who laugh (12). M1 takes advantage of the hearers' reaction by overbidding on his own humor (13). While F1 is trying to play along with M1's humor (15), F1 keeps going with her serious argumentation ("no but sincerely", 16), explaining and justifying the reason why she takes breaks so often.

This example is very interesting because it again shows the importance of the hearer(s)'s reaction in judging the degree of aggressiveness of a tease.⁴ Indeed, at first glance, M1's utterance does not seem to be very aggressive. Firstly, as he includes himself in the targets, the teasing thus becomes self-deprecating humor and, secondly, because the two F's immediate reaction is to laugh. However, afterwards, still taking into account the hearer's reaction (here F1), we can see that M1's tease is in fact perceived as aggressive, or at least disturbing, not because of its content, but pragmatically in that it interrupts F1's discourse and disrupts the seriousness of her argumentation, which she refuses.

Finally, even if this pinning is more aggressive in its pragmatic effect than in its content; the hypothesis according to which M1 points out F1's lack of modesty cannot be excluded.

Example 4. "New scientific adventure"

This example occurs during the same evening as example 3. F1, who is preparing for her departure to Switzerland is talking about the drinks party she is going to give in her current laboratory, the place where F2 and M1 also work. She is worried about the speech she will probably have to give. The expression "new scientific adventure" refers to F1's moving.

4. Which will be developed in a future study

- 1 F1: j'espère que j'aurais pas de discours à faire +++ faut pas faire
 2 de discours dans ce cas ↑ hm ↑
 3 M1: (*long soupir*) ou alors tu fais un discours heu ::: genre heu : //
 4 F2: genre ava / nouvelle aventure (*en riant*) scientifique
 5 F1: (*rires et en riant*) oh ça va avec ça + qu / quelle SAlope (*rires*)
 6 mais pu :tain : (*rires*) qu /
 7 M1: (*rires*)
 8 F2: (*rires*)
 9 quelle garce mais quelle garce quand j'ai reçu le mail j'ai dit +
 10 PUTAIN (*rires*)
 11 F2: (*rires*)

- 1 F1: I hope I won't have any speech to give +++ we don't have to
 2 make a speech in this case ↑ ugh ↑
 3 M1: (*long sight*) or you make a speech ugh::: like ugh: //
 4 F2: like ne / new (*laughing*) scientific adventure
 5 F1: (*laughter and laughing*) oh enough with that + wh / what a
 6 Bltch (*laughter*) but fuck (*laughter*) wh /
 7 M1: (*laughter*)
 8 F2: (*laughter*)
 9 (*laughter*) wh / what a cow but what a cow when I received the e
 10 mail I said SHIT (*laughter*)
 11 F2: (*laughter*)

(*The transcript does not show it but from line 10 to 26, F1 justifies herself, both seriously and laughing at herself, trying to explain why she wrote such an expression*).

This example is remarkable for two reasons. The first is its excessiveness both in the apparent aggressiveness produced by F2's utterances and F1's answers and in the intensity of the laughter induced. The second reason is the form the pinning takes. Indeed, to tease F1 about her anxiety concerning her possible future speech, which is approached in the ongoing conversation, F2 does not pin an expression which has just been said by F1 but one she produced days before in an e mail she sent to announce her drinks party. Thus, this pinning is not based on the immediate discursive context but on the "conversational history" (Golopentja, 1988) of the participants.

In (1), F1 expresses her anxiety about a potential speech she will have to give. She does not know what to say in such a situation so M1 wants to help her (3), but he does not know the content of the speech. He sighs, he hesitates. F2 takes advantage of his hesitations by interrupting him to tease F1 (4). Even if her utterance

finishes the utterance M1 could not (repeating “like”), it is not pragmatically collaborative, firstly, because she interrupts M1 and secondly, because she produces a tease against F1 which is perceived by her as both very aggressive and funny. Indeed, when F2 produces “new scientific adventure”, she is pinning an expression F1 employed in a previous e mail and on which she had already rebounded in the same vein (which will be made explicit below). Saying that, of course she is laughing, expressing that she is introducing a play frame (which is accepted as such by F1 because she laughs too, line 5). However, F2’s tease is also perceived as rude for at least two reasons. Firstly, F2 behaves as if she does not take F1’s anxiety about her future speech seriously. Secondly, she produces exactly the same tease she made in her answer to F1’s e mail. She thus perfectly understands the effects of her tease and she repeats it. F1 begins to laugh and, still laughing, she counter-attacks, insulting F2 (5, 6 and 9).

From F2’s tease until the end of the sequence, M1 contents himself with laughing without intervening at any point, acting as if he was neutral. Two reasons can explain this. First, despite the fact that F1, in her answers, makes it explicit that F2’s pinning is based on a previous written exchange, he was not aware of this. And second, perhaps M1 does not want to enter into such a duel between the two women.

This sequence is quite complex. It is indubitable that the content of the discourse is highly aggressive; both from the teaser and from the reactions she obtains. But it is also indubitable that much noisy laughter is produced from the two women – noisier than in all the other excerpts. – One could hypothesize that no matter the words used, an analyst cannot only study what is verbally expressed to get the measure of what is at stake in a humorous sequence and beyond, in a casual conversation. Here, the aggressiveness of the discourse (the tease and its reactions) is possible and does not degenerate into a serious conflict, probably because the two women are close friends and that they allow themselves to say very rough things while probably enjoying them in some way.

5.2 Pinning revealing a second meaning

While the fifth example presented here is both a pinning putting in doubt what the target says and a play on a second meaning, the others present principally a second meaning, even if a play on the images of the participants is still present.

Example 5. “Dead body”

M2 is telling an anecdote. Once on a boat trip with his parents, he saw a dead body. In French, we can just say “cadavre” to refer both to a dead body or a “carcass”, which explains the sequence below. In a metaphorical sense, it refers to a “dead bottle”.

- 1 M2: et une fois on a trouvé un cadavre
- 2 F2: < *ton dédaigneux* > ouais:: + ouais c'est ça ouais avec l'autre Picsou
- 3 F1: un cadavre de quoi de mouette
- 4 F2: (*rires*)
- 5 F1: (*rires*)
- 6 M1: un cadavre de bouteille↑
- 7 M2: non mais moquez-vous moquez-vous + moquez-vous
- 8 F1: < *redevenant sérieuse* + *voix enfantine* > un cadavre humain↑ ++ dé
- 9 composé::
- 10 M2: il était bien gonflé
- 11 F1: (*expression de dégoût*)

- 1 M2: and once we found a dead body
- 2 F2: < *disdainful tone of voice* > yeah:: + yeah that's it yeah with the other
- 3 uncle Scrooge
- 4 F1: a dead body of what a seagull
- 5 F2: (*laughter*)
- 6 F1: (*laughter*)
- 7 M1: a dead bottle ↑
- 8 M2: no but you can laugh you can laugh + you can laugh
- 9 F1: < *becoming serious* + *childish voice* > a dead body ↑ ++
- 10 decomposed::
- 11 M2: he was very all swollen up
- 12 F1: < *mimicry of disgust* >

In this excerpt, M2 wants to tell, in a serious way, an anecdote he experienced years ago when he saw a dead body in the sea. As the experience he wants to share is serious, he would like to be taken seriously by the audience. But F1 immediately rebounds on his utterance and, by pinning the word “dead” (the polysemous “cadavre” in French), teases M2 by deprecating his experience. Transforming a dead body into a carcass and more, into a carcass of a gull (4), F1 deprecates M2's experience on two levels. Firstly, she renders normal an experience which was probably perceived as extraordinary – what is more common than seeing a seagull in the sea?-. Secondly, she acts as if she does not believe M2. The following laughter (from F2 and F1 herself, lines 5 and 6) leads M1 to overbid on the tease (7). He deprecates even more M2's experience substituting the seagull with a bottle. The mockery produced by F1 and perceived as jocular by the audience is not perceived as such by the target himself, M2 (8). His denunciation of that he considers as genuine mockery is taken into account by F1 (the instigator of the tease), who goes

back to a serious key and who gives M2 sufficient collaborative signals to allow him to continue his story (9,10).

As with the example of “the intellectual work”, this example shows, on the one hand, that a simple pinning can be the starting point of a teasing sequence but on the other hand, to be interactionally accomplished, the other participants (and here the target) have to accept the opened play frame. In other words, no matter the ability of a speaker to produce humor with the given words at the right time, if the initiated play frame is refused, the teasing may fail. Here, if F1 did not give up joining M2 in his serious frame, more playful developments would have become a kind of dedication transforming her jocular mockery into genuine mockery.

Example 6. “It comes”

To explain F2's humor, it is important to know that, at that moment, one of the recurring jokes of the four friends was that the two F do not want any children, regretfully for M2. Line (1) refers to the maternal instinct.

- 1 M2: i paraît = que ça vient naturellement
- 2 F2: (*en riant*) ça vient d'où ↑
- 3 F1: (*éclat de rire*)
- 4 F2: (*rires*)
- 5 M2: putain “chuis” pas encore heu:: //

- 1 M2: it seems = that it comes naturally
- 2 F2: (*laughing*) it comes from where ↑
- 3 F1: (*roar of laughter*)
- 4 F2: (*laughter*)
- 5 M2: fuck I'm not yet hug:://

Before this excerpt, the participants, who are not yet parents, are saying how it might be difficult to raise children. As a kind of reassurance, M2 drifts to the maternal instinct (“it”, line 1), meaning that, thanks to this instinct, it would be easier to face to parents’ responsibilities. F2 immediately pins “it comes” (2) and she actualizes a second meaning, concrete and special, adding “from where”. Moreover, by presenting her utterance as a question, she stages the role she and F1 are used to taking when they all produce such a recurring inside joke; the one of a woman who has so little desire to have children that she does not even know what maternal instinct is.

It is worth noting that this pinning, at first glance, could be interpreted as self-deprecating humor. But, taking into account the shared history of the participants, it is more a tease against M2. Knowing that he wants children while F2 does not, in some ways, she rubs it in.

This interpretation is also retained by the hearers' reactions. Indeed, while F1 (3) immediately laughs loudly (she shares the same role in their recurring joke), M2 begins to answer to the fact that he will not be a father yet and not to the potential stupidity of F2 who does not know what maternal instinct is. It is not transcribed here but the teasing sequence continues a little in the same vein but without any other pinning.

Example 7. "Somewhere"

This last excerpt directly follows the second example, as the line numbers show.

- 9 F1: oh si je suis une sainte
 10 M1: ouais :
 11 F1: oh si je suis une sainte quelque part non ↑ ++ quelque part un peu
 12 M1: ouais ↑ quelque part mais OU ↑
 13 F1: (*éclat de rire*) C'EST CA quelque part LOIN mais :: + j'ai pas trouvé
 14 encore mais heu
 15 M1: (*petit rire*) (*petit rire*)
- 8 F1: oh yes I'm a saint
 9 M1: yeah:
 10 F1: oh yeah I'm a saint somewhere no↑ ++ somewhere a little
 11 M1: yeah ↑ somewhere but where ↑
 12 F1: (*roar of laughter*) THAT'S IT somewhere FAR but:: + I didn't find
 13 yet but ugh
 14 M1: (*small laughter*) (*small laughter*)

After having asked if a Saint X existed (in the previous excerpt), F1 counter-attacks in a jocular way, claiming that she is actually a saint (8, 10). However, she finishes by mitigating it with "somewhere" and "somewhere a little" (10). As the overlap shows, this mitigation is immediately pinned by M1, who, as the participant of the example 6, actualizes a second meaning of "somewhere" which is, of course illogical but literal. This tease is not really based on an inappropriate lexical item used by F1. By pinning it, M1 acts as if it was, at least, vague. He thus challenges her to clarify the locution "somewhere" (11), which is revealed by the connective word "but" and by the interrogative form of his utterance.

Once again, F1 fully enters into the play by laughing at first and by taking on the responsibility of M1's utterance (12). She develops the second literal meaning of "somewhere" by adding "far" and self deprecates saying that she has not yet found out how she can be a saint. Such an answer receives a minimal response from M1 and ends the humorous sequence.

The final minimal answer from M1 (14) suggests that not only does he not want to develop F1's playing along, but above all, that a teaser may have a specific expectation while teasing: biting. If the target does not seem to be at least affected, the tease may become uninteresting. Here, F1 not only agrees with the teases but she overbids. The tease has thus lost its luster. An illocutionary force of a humorous utterance must be thus negotiated by the participants. It is one thing to want to tease, but the other must accept it as such.

6. Concluding remarks

In this article, linguistic pinning has been analyzed as a teasing device, both structurally and interactively. Following previous studies (Traverso 1996, Guardiola et al., 2012); it has been defined, up to now, as *a hetero verbatim repetition of a supposed inappropriate word or expression in order to tease its producer*. Thanks to the data presented here, the range of the discourse targeted has been enlarged, adding word(s) or utterance(s) produced in a previous exchange. Linguistic pinning has been also compared to two other phenomena, repetition and punning, pointing out their similarities and differences.

From an interactive point of view, linguistic pinning has been presented as an opportunistic phenomenon, not only because of its major function of teasing, where the speaker fires on all cylinders, but above all because it is a *rebound* on what has been said. Thus, the speaker shows her/himself to be a participant constantly on the lookout for a word or an utterance either to point out as inappropriate, or to actualize a second meaning. In both cases, pinning allows the teaser to play with images of the target(s).

However, the data showed that even if this opportunism seems to be very aggressive, both pragmatically and relationally, it is counterbalanced by the proceedings of the interaction itself and, more precisely, by the hearer(s)'s reaction(s). Indeed, as with every interactive activity, conversational humor and here, teasing by pinning, must be accepted by the hearer(s) to work. We already know that a mockery has to be framed both by the speaker and interpreted by the hearer as jocular to be "interactionally achieved" (Haugh and Bousfield, 2012, Haugh, 2014), but this study brought two other surprising elements out which have to be confirmed. Firstly, the *biting dimension* of a tease must be interpreted as such to work. Some examples ("Saint X" and "somewhere") show that this is not always the case. Secondly, three other examples ("cornflour", "dead body" and "intellectual work") show different reactions depending on whether the hearer her/himself or the audience is the target, the former preferring to stay in a serious key while the others are enjoying the teasing sequence, until the creation of a coalition

(Priego-Valverde, 2003). These three examples lead to formulate the following hypothesis: *if the tease(s) seem, in some ways, refused by the target(s), it is not because of its (real or supposed) aggressiveness but because of the play frame it/they introduce(s)*. In other words, even the introduction of a play frame has to be negotiated by the interactants. This hypothesis has to be linked to more general topics studied in Conversational Analysis like (dis)alignment/affiliation (Stivers, 2008) and (dis)agreement (Pomerantz, 1984; Schegloff, 2001).

Besides this hypothesis which has to be verified, these five examples quoted above (two within a face-to-face interaction and three within a multi-party interaction) show that this exploratory study opens the way for further research. Indeed, it would be useful to compare, in a deeper way, the target's reactions engaged in these different settings.

In addition, considering that occurrences of teasing are produced in a deadpan way, it would also be interesting to interrogate the importance of shared knowledge of the participants in interpreting a tease as such. More generally, it would be useful to list the different kinds of reactions according to the kind of pinning. Finally, I would like to enlarge the definition of the pinning itself, both in terms of its functions (adding the pleasure of producing a word-play), and its targets (adding the speaker her/himself, thus producing self-deprecating humor). This would allow these future interactive studies to be based on a description of this phenomenon which is closer to what my data show.

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Transcription conventions

F/M	Female/male participants	=	Fast succession of words. After the syllable/word
Word(s)	Word(s) Overlapping	↑	High intonation. After the concerned syllable
:	Vocalic lengthening. The quantity is proportional to the duration	()	Description of behavior (in italic)
/	Self interruption of the discourse	<disgust>	Analyst's interpretation
//	Hetero interruption	<because?>	Uncertain interpretation
+	Pause. The quantity is proportional to the duration	YES, Bltch	Increased word or syllable

Smiling, gaze, and humor in conversation

A pilot study

Elisa Gironzetti, Salvatore Attardo and Lucy Pickering

Texas A&M University – Commerce, Applied Linguistics Laboratory

This paper presents a pilot study, which is part of a larger research project intended to shed light on the role of smiling as a marker of humor in naturalistic conversation. Building on previous research (Attardo, Pickering, and Baker 2011; Calvo, Fernández-Martín, and Nummenmaa 2013; Calvo, Gutiérrez-García, Averó, and Lundqvist 2013; Heerey and Crossley 2013), a mixed methods approach was adopted to collect qualitative and quantitative data in order to determine if there is a relationship between gaze patterns, humorous events, and the smiling behavior of native English speakers taking part in a dyadic face-to-face conversation. Preliminary results show that occurrence of humor and increased participants' attention to the mouth and eyes areas of the interlocutor's face tend to co-occur.

Keywords: smiling, humor markers, eye-tracking, gaze, discourse analysis

1. Introduction

The pilot study presented here is part of a larger research project on humor in conversation carried out at the Applied Linguistics Laboratory at Texas A&M University – Commerce. As part of this project, we are creating and analyzing a multimodal corpus consisting of video and audio-recorded interactions among dyads of native speakers of English, Spanish, and Chinese. Moreover, eye-tracking data are also being collected for each participant using two portable, non-intrusive eye-trackers. This unique setting takes advantage of the possibilities offered by social eye-tracking combined with discourse analysis in order to shed light on the relationship between gaze patterns, humorous events, and smiling behavior in dyads of conversational partners.

The goal of this pilot study is to begin to explore the complexities of a social and interactional paradigm for eye-tracking studies involving dyadic face-to-face

interaction, and the relationship between humor, gaze patterns, and smiling among participants in dyadic humorous conversations, which will allow for further research on the role of smiling as a humor marker (Attardo, Pickering, Lomotey, and Menjo 2013).

Previous studies have shown that an increase in smiling intensity in relation to the baseline of the conversation co-occurs with the presence of humor; conversational partners display very different smiling gestures, reciprocating each other smiles (Wild, Erb, Eyb, Barthels, and Grodd 2003; Hess and Bourgeois 2010), and matching each other smiling intensity (Heerey and Crossley 2013; Gironzetti and Menjo 2014). We hypothesized that, in order for these behaviors to occur, participants were paying greater attention to the facial areas involved in this behavior, namely the mouth and the eyes area (Ekman and Friesen 1978). This hypothesis has been tested in the present study by implementing a social eye-tracking study of humor in conversation and analyzing the length and number of eye fixations on the facial regions of the mouth and eyes.

2. Humor in interaction

The field of humor in interaction has been widely researched from several different approaches, primarily discourse analysis and psychology. However, the current study is situated in neither properly speaking. Researchers have focused mostly on the functions of humor in conversation (see, Attardo, *in press*, for a review of the literature on the discourse analysis of humor), and on the responses to humor in conversation (see, for example, Kotthoff 2003; Eisterhold, Attardo, and Boxer 2006). The research focus on conversations derived from the seminal work of Sacks (1974), in which the author analyzed the telling of a canned joke among a group of young friends, and recognized three kinds of responses to humor: silence, laughter, and delayed laughter. Many scholars followed the work of Sacks and focused their research on laughter as a behavior co-occurring with humor (see Schegloff 1977, on multi-party laughter; Jefferson 1979, and O'Donnell-Trujillo and Adams 1983, on laughter as a cue on the humorous intention of the speaker). Norrick (1993) even claimed that humor and laughter form an adjacency pair. *De facto*, and usually without theoretical discussion, (but see Attardo 2015, for some exceptions) the assumption that most researches make in conversation and discourse analysis of humor is that laughter can be used as a marker indicating the presence of humor in conversation.

However, using laughter as a marker for humor in conversation is problematic because laughter can occur with and without humor, and humor in conversation can occur with and without laughter. Therefore, the presence or absence

of laughter potentially tells us nothing about the presence or absence of humor (Attardo 1994).

Recently, the research on humor markers has been broadened to multimodality and particularly prosody. Various theories of the prosody of humor predicted that speakers would mark humor with high pitch and volume, extensive pauses, and marked speech rate. Research on prosodic markers of humor (Pickering, Corduas, Eisterhold, Seifried, Eggleston, and Attardo 2009; Attardo and Pickering 2011; Attardo, Pickering, and Baker 2011; Attardo, Wagner and Urios-Aparisi, 2011), found that, contrary to expectations, speakers do not mark humor in conversation or in experimental situations by means of volume, pitch, pauses, or speech rate. The only markers that occurred in non-insignificant numbers were smiling and laughter. However, as mentioned above, neither is a reliable marker of humor. Moreover, whereas laughter has been the subject of significant study within linguistics (see Chafe 2007), smiling has been largely ignored. It is not even clear whether smiling is an attenuated form of laughter or a different phenomenon. Therefore, a research program was developed to investigate the hypothesis that smiling may be a good candidate to mark the presence of humor in conversation (Attardo et al. 2013).

Smiling has been researched primarily within psychology, by applying the standard method for analyzing facial expressions, Ekman and Friesen's Facial Action Coding System (FACS, 1978). Ekman's FACS was developed based on facial muscular activity, categorized in 44 different Action Units (AUs), which are described as anatomically separated and visually distinguishable muscle movements that combine to produce different facial expressions. Furthermore, each action unit is given a laterality score (bilateral, unilateral, and asymmetrical), and an intensity score on a five-point scale (1–5).

Studies that apply FACS to investigate smiling focus mostly on identifying the type of smile being displayed in pictures and videos (sincere or non-sincere, also known as Duchenne or non-Duchenne smile), and using FACS-derived smiling scales (see Harker and Keltner 2001) to predict certain aspects of the life of the subjects based on their smiling in previous pictures and videos. For example, Hertenstein, Hansel, Butts, and Hile (2009) analyze whether smiling intensity in photographs can predict divorce; Oveis, Gruber, Keltner, Stamper, and Boyce (2009) study smiling intensity in photographs as an indicator of affective style in children and their families; and Seder and Oishi (2012) explore the relation between smiling intensity on a Facebook picture and future life satisfaction.

Harker and Keltner's FACS-derived scale, however, due to its additive nature, fails to integrate in a meaningful way the intensity scores of two different AUs (AU12 and AU6) and does not provide an overall smiling intensity score. Given these limitations, we opted for developing a new holistic five-point Likert-like

scale based on FACS by modifying and enhancing existing five-point scales in use in the research literature (Harker and Keltner 2001; Seder and Oishi 2012). The new Smiling Intensity Scale (see Appendix A) integrates the muscular movement of different AUs that may be involved in smiling without aiming at differentiating between Duchenne and non-Duchenne smiles, and allows researchers to score the overall smiling intensity of a person based on video recording or static images. The five levels of this Smiling Intensity Scale are descriptive of different smiling behaviors that go from Level 0 (neutral, non-smiling facial expression), to Level 4 (laughing smile). This scale is externally valid since it is based on the FACS standard for coding facial expressions, and was tested for internal validity with three raters that reached good inter-rater reliability (Cohen Kappa = 0.89). The SIS is currently being used to code for smiling intensity for each participant in the dyadic conversations of our corpus.

Despite the numerous studies on smiling, its role in relation to the presence of humor has been neglected until very recently (Attardo et al. 2013; Gironzetti and Menjo 2014). Our study situates itself at the interaction of the fields of research on humor markers and smiling behavior. In line with previous work on humor in conversation, we assume that conversational humor may be marked and, given that smiling tends to co-occur with humor (Attardo et al. 2013), we applied eye-tracking technology to explore whether conversational partners attend more to the smiling behavior of their interlocutor during humorous segments of conversation than non-humorous ones.

More generally speaking, the focus on the pragmatic markers of humorous intention (metapragmatic markers, see Ajmer and Simon-Vandenbergen 2011 for discussion) is part of a trend of work looking at applying the General Theory of Verbal Humor (Attardo and Raskin 1991) in discursive contexts. There have been proposals (Canestrari 2010; Tsakona 2013) that seek to expand the General Theory by introducing other knowledge resources that account for various contextual aspects of the text. In this context and elsewhere (Attardo *forth.*), we have preferred an approach that treats the GTVH as a theory of competence and we develop a separate (but not entirely independent) theory of performance, on the basis of corpus data.

3. Eye-tracking in interaction

The application of eye-tracking methodology to social settings is a novel (Clark and Gergle 2011; Rosegrant, Hearnington, Alvarado, and Keeble 2012; Broz, Lehmann, Nehaniv, and Dautenhahn 2012; Ye, Li, Fathi, Han, Rozga, Abowd, and Rehag 2012) extension of eye-tracking research allowed by the availability of

wearable and portable eye-trackers, in contrast with the traditional eye-tracking equipment that required participants to have their head strapped in the machine (Duchowski 2007). New head-free eye-trackers have enabled the broadening of eye-tracking methodology to social situations, allowing researchers to study multiple participants' interactions as they occur naturally (Hayhoe and Ballard 2005).

In the last few years, social eye-tracking studies have begun to attract a lot of interest within the field of interactional discourse studies (see, for example, Br ne and Oben 2015) and ecological psychology (see, for example, Paxton and Dale 2013). Two significant studies in this field, that implemented a social eye-tracking paradigm, are Rosegrant et al. (2012) and Broz et al. (2012). In the first study, Rosegrant et al. (2012) used wearable eye-tracking glasses to investigate students' attention during a lecture, while in the second Broz et al. (2012) focused on mutual gaze during face to face conversations.

With the exception of the few recent studies such as Rosegrant et al. (2012) and Broz et al. (2012), there is a lack of research within a truly social eye-tracking paradigm. The majority of research has focused on human-computer interactions, with subjects watching a video where social interactions occur, or with subjects directly interacting with a robot (Yu, Scheutz, and Schermerhorn 2010). Interactions among people have received limited attention, and have been studied mostly by recording the participants' gaze using a video camera (Kendon 1967; Williams, Burns, and Harmon 2009), eye-tracking just one participant in a face-to-face conversation (Vertegaal, Slagter, van der Veer, and Nijholt 2001; Gullberg and Holmqvist 2006), or having participants interact through a computer-mediated device, such as video-conferencing (Barisic, Timmermans, Pfeiffer, Gary, Vogeley, and Schilbach 2013; Raidt, Bailly, and Elisei 2007).

Within this semi-social eye-tracking paradigm, researchers have focused on the different functions of mutual gaze (when two people look at each other's face) and eye contact (when two people look at each other's eyes) among conversational partners. Results indicate that these two gaze behaviors are used for signaling the intention or willingness to start an interaction (Cary 1978), turn-taking regulation (Beattie 1978), as well as indicating higher levels of attraction, attention and familiarity (Kleinke 1986). In addition, factors such as age, gender, familiarity, conversational role (speaker or listener), type of utterances, and cultural background have been proved to have a strong influence on visual behavior of participants in a conversation (Anolli and Lambiase 1990; Kendon 1967; Knackstedt and Kleinke 1991; Levine and Sutton-Smith 1973). While all these studies provide useful insight into human gaze patterns, they failed to represent gaze behavior in naturalistic social situations where people interact with each other face to face.

Finally, eye-tracking studies of facial expressions, although providing useful insight into how people perceive other people's faces and expressions, investigate

visual attention patterns for faces in general, thus focusing only marginally on smiling (see, for example, Calvo et al. 2013; Fernández-Martín et al. 2013; Fernández-Martín and Calvo 2012). Moreover, these studies prefer to use static images of faces, often manipulated by the researchers to combine parts of the face expressing different emotions. No such study has been carried out investigating dynamic visual patterns for faces in real-time face-to-face interaction between participants.

The pilot study that we are presenting here combines the recent technology advances in portable eye-tracking within the recent field of social eye-tracking to explore the role of smiling in face to face conversations involving humorous events. In particular, we will investigate whether participants pay more attention to smiling facial areas (the mouth and the eyes) when humor is present than when there is no humor. We also intend to explore if and how mutual gaze and eye contact behavior are influenced by the presence of humor in conversation, thus contributing to the development of this growing research field.

4. Eye-tracking and humor in conversation

As part of the aforementioned larger study on humor and smiling in interaction, video, audio, and eye-tracking data were collected from pairs of conversational partners whose native language was American English, Mexican Spanish, and Mandarin Chinese. The description of the research method, instrument, participants, and data collection presented in the following sections applies to the research project at large. However, in the Data analysis and Results section we will be referring specifically to the interaction of two native English participants in a dyadic face-to-face conversation, which is the object of this pilot study. The data from this conversation have been analyzed to establish a baseline of gaze synchronicity and begin to investigate the relationship between gaze patterns and the presence of humor. Further analysis of the remaining conversations and cross-cultural comparisons will follow at a later stage in the research project.

4.1 Method

The study followed a mixed method approach and a concurrent triangulation design (Creswell and Plano Clark 2011). Quantitative and qualitative data were collected, analyzed and coded separately, and finally combined in order to answer the research question: is there a relationship between gaze patterns, humorous events, and the smiling behavior of participants in a dyadic face-to-face conversation?

Qualitative data comprise a transcription of the whole interaction, humor identification and coding (Attardo 2001, 2012), and a seven-item closed-response

demographic questionnaire addressing the participants' age, education background, nationality, mother tongue, foreign languages, and level of familiarity with each other. Quantitative data used include eye-tracking data relative to fixations on two Areas of Interest, mouth and eyes, involved in the smiling behavior. Because only one conversation of the corpus has been analyzed so far, no statistical inferences are presented.

4.1.1 *Eye-tracking set-up*

Given the novelty of the research method adopted for this study, we describe in some detail the set-up of the eye-tracking lab. A picture of the instrument is included below.

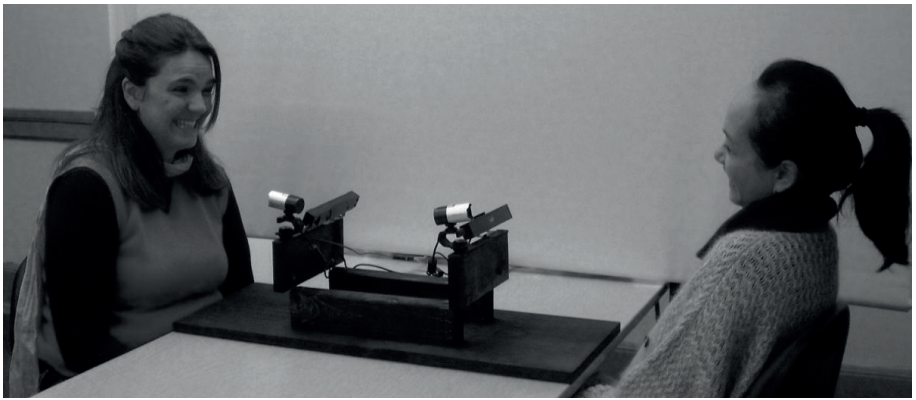


Figure 1. The social eye-tracking lab set-up at Texas A&M University – Commerce

As shown in Figure 1, a custom-made support was built to host the two eye-trackers and cameras. The support was designed to integrate the eye-trackers and cameras and make them as non-intrusive as possible for the participants, so as not to disrupt the natural flow of the conversation or interfere with participant's natural eye movements.

The height of the support and the relative vertical position of the video camera and eye tracker were kept as low as possible in order not to obstruct the view of the interlocutor's face, but high enough for the eye-trackers and cameras to be able to capture the participants' faces and eye movements. Moreover, the height of the support is adjustable, allowing for further modifications of the set-up. The horizontal position of the central support was determined to guarantee the correct positioning of participants in relation to the eye-trackers (about 60cm), a comfortable and natural distance between interlocutors, and also a comfortable seating position for each participant. The base of the support was positioned and fixed to the table in order to allow for comfortable seating of participants and the use of

adjustable chairs. The chairs are adjustable in height to guarantee the correct positioning of different participants in relation to the eye-tracker, but with fixed wheels in order to limit the participants' movements.

4.1.2 *Participants*

Participants with good or corrected to normal vision were recruited from university students using posters on campus. Participants who agreed to participate in the study received no course credits or any other compensation, but were offered water and cookies before the actual experiment took place. All participants provided written informed consent and the institution's IRB approved the study.

4.1.3 *Data collection*

Naturalistic dyadic interaction between native speakers were recorded using two portable eye-trackers (Tobii X60), two high-definition scene cameras (Microsoft HD LifeCam Studio), two dedicated laptops (Dell Precision M4800), and one PZM microphone. The recording procedure is non-invasive and all the instruments were chosen in order not to disrupt the normal course of the conversation and allow participants to interact as freely as possible. Each conversation lasted approximately between 15 and 20 minutes. Before starting the conversation, participants were given one joke each (in their native language) to memorize and use as an ice-breaker. This allowed the researcher to collect a sample of canned humor for each conversation. Participants were instructed to start the conversation by telling their jokes and then talk to each other in their native language for about 15 minutes about whatever topic they liked. This ensured that the tone of the conversation and the interaction between the participants were as natural as possible.

Before the experiment started, participants filled in consent forms and a demographic survey. Afterwards, calibration was completed manually using a five-point calibration grid. If calibration was successful, the two participants sat facing each other at a table where two Tobii X2-60 eye-trackers, two scene cameras and

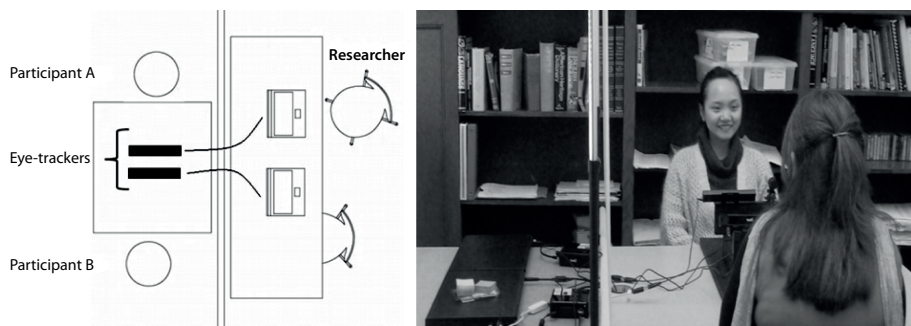


Figure 2. The eye-tracking lab at Texas A&M University – Commerce

one microphone were placed, as shown in Figure 3, and the recording started. In order to allow for data synchronization, at the beginning of the study, after the recording had started, the researcher took a picture of the participants using a camera with a flash. The flash was recorded by all the eye-trackers and scene cameras and is used as a signal to synchronize the data collected by these devices. As an additional synchronization instrument, key pressing was also recorded at the same time for both computers. After taking the picture, the researcher moved to a different area of the laboratory hidden from participants by a screen, in order not to interfere in the conversation.

Participants' number and duration of eye fixations, and pupil dilation measurements were recorded at a 60Hz sampling rate for each area of interest for the length of the conversation. Fixations, conceptualized as the pause of the eye movement on a specific area of the visual field, were filtered using an algorithm implemented in the Tobii I-VT Fixation Filter of the analysis software Tobii Studio (for more information on the algorithm, see Olsen 2012). Two Areas Of Interest were determined based on the two action units involved in producing a genuine smiling facial expression according to FACS (Ekman and Friesen 1978), AU6, which involves a contraction of the orbicularis muscle and visually results in the squinting of the eyes, and AU12, which involves the zygomaticus mayor muscle and visually results in the raising of the corner of the mouth. Two dynamic Areas of Interest were created per participant (see Figure 3), and manually adjusted for size and position in order to follow and accommodate the participants' movements and facial expressions.



Figure 3. Mouth and eyes Areas of Interest

4.2 Pilot study

As previously mentioned, while the Method section referred to the research project at large, the Data Analysis that follows focuses on one single conversation, which was the object of the pilot study.

The conversation was transcribed according to standard American English conventions. An example of humor coding can be seen in Table 1, where the punch line is marked in bold.

Table 1. Example of transcription (punch line)

John	and the engineer takes it out and says look I'm an engineer I don't have time for a girlfriend but a talking frog is really cool
	long pause (< 4 seconds)
Tony	okay (laughs)
	yours is just a lot longer than mine

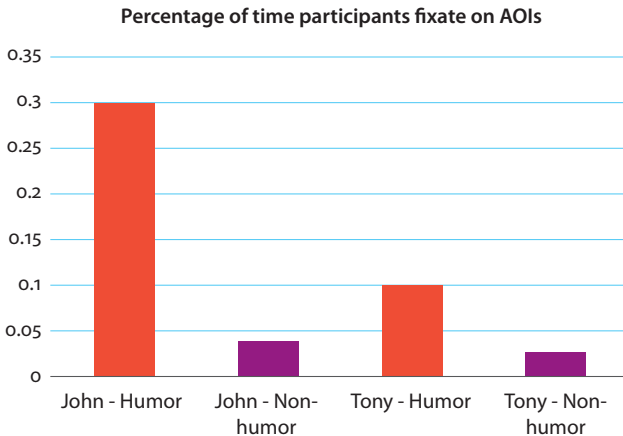
The coding of humor was performed by two independent raters following the triangulation method outlined in Attardo (2012), and relied on cues, including laughter, metalinguistic comments (*that was funny*), speaker's explicit claims (*let me tell you a joke*), and the semantic-pragmatic analysis of the text in order to determine if a humorous Script Overlap/Opposition (Raskin 1985) was present. The researcher also had access to the participants, and asked them to comment on the conversation (using either the audio file or the transcription of the interaction) to help identify what was intended as humorous and thus include in the analysis also cases of failed humor, when present. Participants' claims were used as one clue in the triangulation process, not as the "final say" on the presence/absence of humor.

In order to allow for comparisons between humorous instances and non-humorous instances in this particular conversation, all humorous events were identified and marked for a total of sixteen humorous events including punch lines, jab lines, and irony. However, due to some missing data from one of the two participants, only six humorous events could be analyzed. For each humorous event, a five-second segment was created, starting two seconds before the event and lasting three more seconds after the event. This gave us a set of six humorous segments containing information about each participant's fixations (presence and length), for a total of approximately thirty seconds of recordings. The same procedure was used to sample six non-humorous segments of the same length. These non-humorous segments were selected randomly. The data from the two sets were then extracted and compared across participants and Areas of Interest.

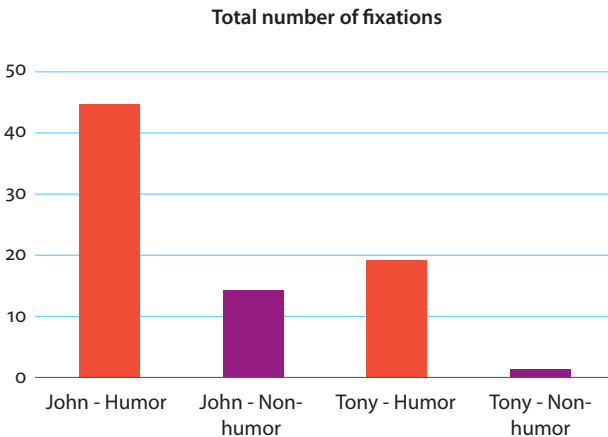
4.2.1 Results

The eye-tracking results obtained show: (a) the percentage of time participants fixated on the two Areas of Interest combined across humorous and non-humorous events; (b) the total number of fixations per participant on both Areas of Interest across humorous and non-humorous events; (c) the total fixations' duration per participant on both Areas of Interest across humorous and non-humorous events; and (d) the total fixations' number of both participants combined per Areas of Interest across humorous and non-humorous events.

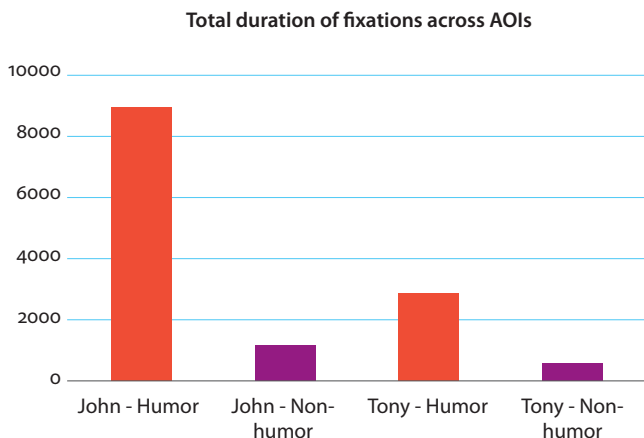
The graphs in Figure 4 summarize these results. The red columns represent the data for the humorous events, while the purple columns represent the data for the non-humorous events. Even at first glance it is noticeable that the red columns are always higher than the purple ones, indicating that fixations on the two Areas



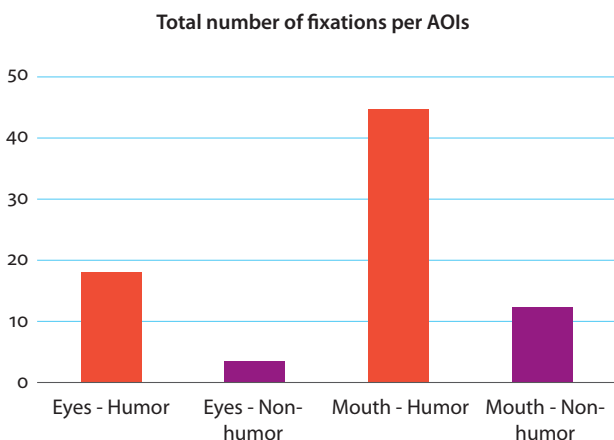
a.



b.



c.



d.

Figure 4. Fixations across humorous and non-humorous events

of Interest during humorous events tends to be overall more numerous and longer than fixations on the same Areas of Interest during non-humorous events.

The first graph in the top-left part of Figure 4 offers an overview of the percentage of time that participants spent fixating on the two Areas of Interest during humorous and non-humorous segments of conversation. The total time of humorous and non-humorous segments was approximately 30 seconds per each category, for an overall value of 1 minute. For example, John spent 3% of the total humorous time fixating on the two Areas of Interest, against 0.3% of the total non-humorous time spent fixating on the same Areas of Interest. The second participant, Tony, shows less variation across humorous and non-humorous segments, but nonethe-

less spent slightly more time fixating on Areas of Interest during humorous (0.3%) than non-humorous segments of conversation (0.2%).

The second graph in the top-right part of Figure 4 shows the total number of fixations produced by each participant. Again, John is the participant that generated the highest number of fixations overall, with the majority of them during humorous segments ($N = 45$). Tony generated an inferior number of fixations overall, but similarly to John, the majority of them were during humorous segments ($N = 14$).

The third graph in the bottom-left part of Figure 4 summarizes the total fixations length in milliseconds across participants and humorous or non-humorous segments. Both participants fixated longer on the two Areas of Interest during humorous segments (John = 8999 ms; Tony = 2750 ms) than during non-humorous ones (John = 1040 ms; Tony = 830 ms).

Finally, the last graph in the bottom-right part of Figure 4 summarizes the total number of fixations produced by both participants across Areas of Interest and humorous or non-humorous segments. The mouth is the area that gets the highest number of fixations in general, for a total of 58 fixations, with the majority of fixations happening during humorous segments ($N = 45$). The eyes get less attention, but show a similar pattern in that the number of fixations on this area is much higher during humorous segments ($N = 13$) than non-humorous ones ($N = 3$).

5. Discussion of results

The goal of the pilot study presented here is twofold: first, we contribute to the field of humor research by exploring the relationship between humor, gaze, and smiling; second, we propose a new social paradigm for eye-tracking research involving two participants interacting face-to-face.

Regarding our first goal within the field of humor research, this study contributes to the area of investigation on humor markers by adopting the multi-modal approach advocated for in Attardo et al. (2013) and examining the role of smiling and the attention participants pay to it during conversation. The data collected point to the fact that the presence of humor may tend to correlate with a greater attention being paid to facial areas involved in smiling. Different measures were collected to estimate the attention paid by participants to selected facial areas, and all these measures consistently point to the fact that the mouth and eyes regions of the participants face receive more attention when humor is present than when humor is absent. Overall, the percentage of time participants fixated on these areas was higher when humor was present; the absolute total time participants fixated on these areas when humor was present was higher; and the total

number of fixations per participant and per Area of Interest was higher when humor was present.

Previous findings showed that participants tend to display a higher smiling intensity when humor is present (see Gironzetti and Menjo 2014), thus suggesting that smiling may be used as a marker of humor in conversation. We hypothesized that, in order to be capable of using each other smiling behavior as a marker indicating the presence of humor in conversation, participants should pay attention to the facial areas involved in this gesture, namely the mouth and the eyes area. This hypothesis was confirmed by the present eye-tracking analysis of participants' fixations on the mouth and eyes facial regions. Both participants involved in the conversation fixated more and longer on the mouth and the eyes when humor was present relative to the baseline of the conversation. These data confirm our initial hypothesis, namely that there is a relationship between gaze patterns, humorous events, and the smiling behavior of participants in a dyadic face-to-face conversation; however, this pilot study is just one more step towards finding the answer to a much more complex question regarding the role smiling as a marker of the presence of humor in face to face conversation.

As per our second goal, recent eye-tracking technology developments make it possible for researchers to implement new research paradigms and explore how humans use gaze in real-life during face-to-face interactions. This pilot study outlined a methodology for social eye-tracking that allows researchers to investigate eye movements not limited to participants looking at videos or static images, but involving real-life changing and moving facial expressions. The application of this methodology is not limited to humor studies, of course, since any research area concerned with face to face interactions could benefit from it. While the possibilities offered by this novel setting are numerous, there is also one main disadvantage with respect to more traditional, video-based eye-tracking studies, namely, the loss of data. This problem is inherent in the very nature of social eye-tracking: in a natural setting, participants will move, gesture, cover their faces, look away, etcetera, and these behaviors, while perfectly acceptable in natural interactions, cause the loss of eye-tracking data. Moreover, if the research involves cross-analyzing data from two participants, the loss of data for one of them will cause the corresponding data from the other participant to be of no use. Researchers willing to pursue social eye-tracking studies should always take into account the possibility of losing data due to these circumstances and oversample.

The next step in the project will consist in expanding the analysis of the corpus in order to confirm or discard this initial hypothesis with a larger set of participants and conversations, and obtain some significance values. The analysis of the corpus will also be necessary to account for cultural differences and familiarity level (these data have been collected in the initial questionnaire), and conversational

roles of participants, since previous studies demonstrated that these factors may affect participants' eye movements. In the interaction analyzed here, for example, one participant (John) had almost exclusively the role of speaker throughout the whole interaction, while Tony was the listener. We noticed that John's attention was mostly on the mouth area of Tony's face, while Tony's attention was concentrated mostly on the eyes' area of John's face (see the top and bottom right graphs in Figure 4). We hypothesized that this difference may be due to their different conversational roles, and will be able to test this hypothesis with a larger set of data. This hypothesis is consistent with recent studies on eye-contact and mutual gaze according to which these behaviors are used by people to indicate willingness to listen and participate in a conversation (Beattie 1978; Cary 1978). Moreover, cultural differences – Tony has an Asian-American cultural background, while John's cultural background is American – may be partially responsible for the difference (Hall and Hall 1990; Jandt 2010) between the number of fixations and the overall fixation time (percentage and absolute time) across participants (see top and bottom left graphs in Figure 4). In this respect, since our corpus includes interactions among native speakers of Spanish, English, and Chinese, we will be able to test this hypothesis by contrasting participants' behavior across cultures. However, it should also be noted that participants with a Mexican cultural background showed a similar behavior, displaying differences in the fixation area – the mouth was preferred – and among participants – one participant consistently displayed higher fixation values than the other –. Future analysis and a larger set of data will allow for a fine-grained analysis of these differences.

Finally, since smiling seems to play a role in conversation, especially when humor is present, and given the possibilities offered by the social eye-tracking setting, we intend to look at participants' coordination of gaze patterns (mutual gaze and eye-contact, as well as shared attention on the mouth and eyes regions) and smiling behavior. Research in interpersonal alignment showed that speakers tend to "change their affect, behavior, and cognition as a direct result of their interaction with another individual" (Paxton and Dale 2013). Higher behavioral coordination and synchronicity were found to correlate with affiliative types of interactions (Richardson, Dale, and Kirkham 2007), while disaffiliative interactions, such as arguments, were found to have lower levels of behavioral coordination and synchronicity (Paxton and Dale 2013). Therefore, we expect to find higher levels of behavioral synchronicity and alignment for humor used with affiliative purposes as opposed to humor used for disaffiliative purposes.

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Corresponding author: Elisa Gironzetti, Elisa.Gironzetti@tamuc.edu, Texas A&M University – Commerce, P.O. Box 3011, Commerce, Texas 75429.

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Appendix A. The Smiling Intensity Scale (SIS)

The five levels of this Smiling Intensity Scale (SIS) are descriptive of different smiling behaviors:

- Level 0: Neutral. No smile, no flexing of the zygomaticus (no AU12), may show dimpling (AU14) or squinting of the eyes (caused by AU6 or AU7), but no raised side of the mouth (no AU 12), the mouth may be closed or open (AU25 or AU26).
- Level 1: Closed mouth smile. Shows flexing of the zygomaticus (AU12), may show dimpling (AU14) and may show flexing of the orbicularis oculi (caused by AU6 or AU7).
- Level 2: Open mouth smile. Showing upper teeth (AU25), flexing of the zygomaticus (AU12), may show dimpling (AU14), may show flexing of the orbicularis oculi (caused by AU6 or AU7).
- Level 3: Wide open mouth smile. Shows flexing of the zygomaticus (AU12), flexing of the orbicularis oculi (caused by AU6 or AU7), and may show dimpling (AU14). 3A: showing lower and upper teeth (AU25), or 3B: showing a gap between upper and lower teeth (AU25 and AU26).
- Level 4: Laughing smile. The jaw is dropped (AU26 or AU27), showing lower and upper teeth (AU25), flexing zygomaticus (AU12), flexing of the orbicularis oculi (AU6 or AU7); may show dimpling (AU14).



Figure 5. The five levels of the Smiling intensity Scale (0–4)

PART 3

**Metapragmatic practices within the
acquisition of humor**

Understanding of humorous intentions

A developmental approach

Elena Hoicka

University of Sheffield

This paper demonstrates that children understand humor from an intentional perspective as young as 2 years. This is interesting from two vantage points. First, the research shows that children understand both humor and intentions separately before understanding humorous intentions, suggesting these two concepts are dissociable. However, the research presented suggests that understanding humorous intentions could be a gateway to understanding intentions in complex ways. Humor is the first type of non-literal communication that children understand from an intentional viewpoint, compared to pretending, lying, metaphor, and irony. Understanding humorous intentions may thus allow children to identify and practice understanding others' mental states in increasingly complex ways.

Keywords: humor, joke, intention, social cognition, development

Leekam (1991) and Reddy (2001) originally pointed out that humor and social cognition must be linked, even in early development. Both suggest that humor is not only a cognitive, but also a social interaction involving intention understanding; a proposition recently reinforced in the adult literature (de Jongste 2013). To gain a greater perspective of the link between humor and social cognition it is important to look at the question from a developmental viewpoint.

Studies on young children provide several advantages over research with adults. First, in adulthood, socio-cognitive and humor abilities are already well-established, and so can be difficult to disentangle. However, in young children, we can see how more complex processes, i.e., fully intentional humor interactions, emerge from more simple components, e.g., appreciation of humor, understanding of intentions, and parental scaffolding. Second, we can strip down complex processes without worrying about how other complex structures, such as fully developed language systems, might interact. This therefore gives us a more streamline

model that could be easier to use in, e.g., computational models. Finally, from a developmental point of view, it is important to see which factors (e.g., cognitive, linguistic, social) are required for a socio-cognitive understanding of humor to come about.

This paper will separately outline the early development of humor, and intentions. It will then show when these two abilities come together, suggesting that children appreciate both humor and intentions before they understand humorous intentions. This paper will also demonstrate mechanisms by which children might come to understand others' humorous intentions, specifically, parental scaffolding. Finally, this paper will suggest that humor may be a gateway to understanding intentions more generally in a complex way.

1. The development of Humor Appreciation

Humor appreciation develops in the first year of life. Infants laugh from 3 months (Addyman and Addyman 2013, Mireault et al. 2012). However, initially, infants' laughter is random, and not necessarily related to humor itself (Mireault et al. 2012). Yet as early as 4 months, infants laugh at specific humorous stimuli. Sroufe and Wunsch (1972) had mothers of infants, aged 4–12 months, act as experimenters. Mothers acted out different types of jokes for their infants, and the researchers examined which types of humor made infants laugh at different ages. At 4 months, infants laughed only 10% of the time. However laughter increased to around 37% by 7 months, when infants mostly responded to strange noises (e.g., horse neigh), and tactile events (e.g., blowing raspberries). By 10 months, infants laughed at 43% of the events, in particular at social and visual events, such as their mother crawling, or putting a sock in her mouth.

Peekaboo is also very widespread in the first year (Addyman and Addyman 2013, Macdonald and Silverman 1978, Waters, Matas, and Sroufe 1975, Shultz 1976). It is the most popular way to make infants laugh across nationalities (Addyman and Addyman 2013). It is most effective when done by a parent, instead of a stranger (Waters, Matas, and Sroufe 1975, Macdonald and Silverman 1978). It is almost more effective with a human than a mechanical version of peekaboo (Shultz 1976). This suggests humor is intimately social early on.

Humor continues to develop in the second year, when infants start to appreciate silly actions with objects to a greater extent. At 15 months, infants understand that laughter should be paired with silly actions, such as rubbing a toy cat on one's head (Hoicka and Wang 2011). At 18 months, around half of infants laugh when an experimenter throws an object on the floor, compared to no infants laughing when she interacts with the object appropriately (Esseily et al. 2016). From at least

19 months, toddlers will copy silly actions, such as putting boots on their hands (Hoicka and Gattis 2008).

By 4 years, children detect incongruity and resolution in comics. Pien and Rothbart (1976) asked children to decide which comic ending was funnier – one which was only incongruous, and one which had incongruity and resolution. For instance, in one comic, one child points out to another that he is reading an up-side-down book. The endings could be that the child puts the book to the side, and sits upside-down (incongruity only), or that he sits upside down, such that the book is now right-side up for the child (incongruity and resolution). Children as young as 4 years thought the latter was funnier, suggesting a sophisticated leap in humor appreciation.

By 8 years, children appreciate verbal humor containing both incongruity and resolution (Shultz 1974). Children were told jokes, and asked to rate which was the funniest ending. There were three choices of endings. For instance, for the riddle, “Why did the cookie cry?” one possibility was “Because he was in the oven” which contains neither incongruity nor resolution. A second possibility was “Because his mother was a wafer” which contained incongruity only. The third possibility was “Because his mother was a wafer so long” which contained both incongruity and resolution. Six-year-olds judge the incongruity-only and incongruity and resolution jokes to be equally funny, and both funnier, than the non-joke options. However, from 8 years, children judged the jokes with both incongruity and resolution as funniest.

2. The development of Humor production

Not only do children appreciate humor from a young age – they also produce humor early on. Based on observations and parent reports, Reddy (2001) found that from 8 months, most infants repeat strange actions, such as splashing, pulling faces, and making snoring sounds, when their parents or others laugh. Parents report that most infants joke in the first year, with peekaboo being the most prevalent form of humor (Hoicka and Akhtar 2012).

In the second year, most parents report that children start to do silly actions as jokes, e.g., making funny faces, or spinning on the floor (Hoicka and Akhtar 2012), and this is supported by similar findings in observational studies of 1-year-olds in a nursery setting (Loizou 2005). Most 1-year-olds are also reported to chase and tickle as a joke (Hoicka and Akhtar 2012). While observation suggests 1-year-olds are capable of producing humor that involves misusing objects, e.g., jokingly wearing an apron as a skirt (Loizou 2005), and experimental research shows children copy silly actions with objects, such as putting a boot on their hands (Hoicka

and Gattis 2008), most parents report that 2-year-olds produce such humor, while this is not the case for 1-year-olds (Hoicka and Akhtar 2012). As well as misusing objects, Hoicka and Akhtar (2012) found that from 2 years, most children say silly things as a joke, such as cats having five legs. This marks a change in humor, from being based on the body alone, to being based on human conventions, including artefacts and language.

Observation and experimental research further support the view that children misuse objects and say silly things as jokes as young as 2 years. In an observation of 23 2-year-olds joking around with their parents for 10 minutes, most 2-year-olds misused objects, while some also said silly things (Hoicka and Akhtar 2012). In an experimental setting, after an experimenter modelled jokes where she gave the wrong object (e.g., a spoon instead of a toy pig), or mislabeled objects (e.g., calling a cup an “oogle boo”), 2-year-olds went on to produce novel jokes following the same form (Hoicka and Akhtar 2011). Three-year-olds further build their humor repertoire by mislabelling jokes, e.g., calling a duck a cat. This was found through both parent report and observations (Hoicka and Akhtar 2012).

3. The emergence of intention understanding in toddlers

Children begin to understand others' intentions from a young age. In a seminal study, Meltzoff (1995) found 18-month-olds already understand that others act intentionally. An experimenter showed toddlers either (1) a complete action with a novel object (e.g., removing the end from a dumb bell); (2) a failed attempt with a novel object (e.g., pulls on the end of the dumb bell, but it does not come off); or (3) holding the dumbbell (a control condition). Alternatively, toddlers were given objects without any social demonstration (another control condition). On average, children produced the complete action 80% of the time in the complete action and failed attempt conditions. In contrast, children in the control conditions only did so 20% of the time. Meltzoff suggested children imitated the experimenter's intended actions in the first two conditions to achieve the same goals. It was not about blindly copying, or else children would not have completed the actions in the failed attempt condition. According to Meltzoff, this suggests children understand others' intentions from at least 18 months.

Later research found children understand others' intentions even earlier. Carpenter, Akhtar, and Tomasello (1998) demonstrated novel actions on novel objects for 14- and 18-month-olds. The novel objects had various features, e.g., a ring that could be pulled on a rope, and a plank of wood that could be flapped. Each object also had an opaque property, for instance, a light could turn on. The experimenter showed children two actions on each box, after which the opaque

property would display itself. However, the intentional cues given for each action varied. For one group of children, for instance, the experimenter said “There!” when she moved the ring on the rope, and “Whoops!” when she flapped the wood on the box, after which the light turned on. For another group, the pattern reversed. The experimenter said, “Whoops!” when she moved the ring on the rope, and “There!” when she flapped the wood, after which the light came on. Toddlers were significantly more likely to copy the action paired with “There!” only, avoiding the action marked with “Whoops!” regardless of what the actions were. This suggests children as young as 14 months understand when other act intentionally versus accidentally.

Even without verbal cues, 14-month-olds can infer intentions. Gergely, Bekkering, and Kiraly (2002) tested infants on the classic head touch task. An experimenter has a novel object, a light box, that lights up when pressure is applied. However, when showing the child how to use the object for the first time, she bends over, and applies pressure to the box with her head, turning on the light. Fourteen-month-olds tend to copy this behavior, even though using one’s hand would be easier. This suggests toddlers assume the act was intentional, and that that is the way to use the box. However, when the experimenter had an alternative reason to use her head, i.e., she was cold, and so her hands were busy holding a blanket around her, children no longer copied the head-touch movement. Instead, they used their hands. The authors suggest the infants did so because in this case, the head-touch action was incidental, as her hands were in use, and so not the intended way to do things.

4. Understanding humorous intentions

While infants understand that people can act intentionally as young as 14 months (Carpenter, Akhtar, and Tomasello 1998, Gergely, Bekkering, and Kiraly 2002), what is less clear is whether young children understand that people can have different types of intentions. While past research focussed on children’s understanding of intentions to do typical or correct actions (Reid et al. 2009, Carpenter, Akhtar, and Tomasello 1998, Meltzoff 1995, Gergely, Bekkering, and Kiraly 2002), little research examined whether children understand that people can intentionally do the wrong thing, or something that is technically incorrect, or breaks convention. Humor is an excellent example of this type of more complex intention (Hoicka and Gattis 2008, Hoicka, Jutsum, and Gattis 2008), and may mark the first time children understand that people can do the wrong thing on purpose. While other forms of non-literal communication, including pretending, lying, metaphor, and irony, all involve technically doing or saying the wrong thing, humor, at its most

basic, may be cognitively easier to understand, and more socially and emotionally rewarding (Hoicka and Gattis 2008, Hoicka, Jutsum, and Gattis 2008).

Infants may start to understand something about humorous intentions as early as 15 months. Hoicka and Wang (2011) tested infants on a violation of expectation looking time paradigm. In this experimental design, infants tend to look longer at situations which are out of the ordinary, compared to normal situations. In this study, the experimenter gave either humorous vocal cues (laughter and funny tone of voice), or sweet vocal cues (Awww! And sweet tone of voice). She then either performed a funny action (e.g., stroking her head with a toy cat), or a sweet (and normal) action (e.g., stroking a toy cat normally). When the experimenter first gave sweet cues, infants looked longer when the experimenter then acted in a silly versus normal way. This is not surprising, as stroking a toy cat on one's head is fairly unexpected. However, when the experimenter first gave humorous cues, the pattern reversed. Infants instead looked longer at the normal, sweet action, suggesting perhaps they expected the experimenter to do something funny, and were perplexed when this did not occur. One possible explanation for these results is that 15-month-olds understand humorous intentions, and so expected that if someone expresses an intention to be humorous, they should follow through with a humorous action. Likewise, if someone expresses an intention to be normal, they should follow through with a normal action. However, it is also possible that infants responded without fully understanding the intentions. Infants may have expected that humorous actions follow laughter and funny voices, without tracking the experimenter's mental states.

From 2 years, children's understanding of humorous intentions is more clear cut. Hoicka and Gattis (2008) showed children between 19 and 36 months a technically wrong action. The action might be something like putting on a hat, but pulling it over her eyes. For half the children, the experimenter then laughed, signalling she intended to joke. For the other half of the children, the experimenter said, "Whoops!" as though she made a mistake. Children were then given the object and told, "Now you try." Children 25 months and up were significantly more likely to copy the action when cued as a joke, and to correct the same wrong action when cued as a mistake. This suggests children tried to match their actions to the experimenter's intentions. They wanted to joke when the experimenter joked, but do the right thing when the experimenter was trying to act sincerely (but failed). However, children under 25 months did not distinguish the cues. Instead, they copied and corrected at random. Thus, from 25 months children understand that people can intentionally do the wrong thing as a joke, and match that intention. The age differences found in this study are interesting, as infants appear to appreciate humor to some extent as early as 4 months (Sroufe and Wunsch 1972, Mireault et al. 2012), and understand basic intentions as early as 14 months (Carpenter, Akhtar, and

Tomasello 1998, Gergely, Bekkering, and Kiraly 2002), but do not combine these abilities to fully understand humorous intentions until 25 months. This suggests an initial dissociation between humor appreciation and intention understanding that later combines to form a richer understanding of both humor and intentions.

A further study bolstered findings by Hoicka and Gattis (2008). Hoicka and Akhtar (2011) extended the previous study in two ways. First, they were concerned that children may have copied actions marked with laughter, and corrected actions marked with “Whoops!” because they matched by emotion, rather than intention. That is, children may have wanted to do the happy action, and avoid the unhappy action. Second, they wanted to discover whether children would not only copy jokes, but continue along with the intention, and make up their own jokes following the same joke format. This would show children understood humorous intentions in a deep way, not based only on responding to cues. In their study, 30- and 36-month-olds saw a series of wrong acts. In one part of the study, this involved a confederate giving an experimenter the wrong object to the one requested. For instance, if the experimenter asked for the car, the confederate would give her a book instead. For half the children, the confederate, experimenter, and parent would all laugh, showing the intention was to joke. For the other half of children, the confederate said, “There!” the experimenter said, “Alright!” and the parent said, “Ok!” as though the act was sincere, and everyone was happy about it. Therefore in the joke condition, the cues matched the action, whereas in the sincere condition, it looked like the confederate made a mistake, but was unaware. After six trials, children had a chance to copy the same jokes, and then later, to continue the game with six more pairs of familiar objects not previously modelled by the confederate. Children in the humorous condition were more likely to give the wrong object, not only for the modelled trials, when children could have simply copied, but also in the additional trials, when children had to come up with new jokes on their own. In contrast, children in the sincere condition tended to give the correct objects throughout, suggesting they matched the intention to act sincerely.

In the second part of the study, the confederate verbally mislabelled familiar objects, e.g., calling a spoon an “oogie boo”. Cues were the same as the previous trials. Again, children in the humorous condition were more likely to mislabel the familiar objects themselves when it was their turn, and continued to mislabel the new familiar objects not modelled by the confederate. Additionally, children never used the same silly word as the experimenter, and always invented their own. For instance, one child called a cup a “goojooboojoo”, even though that word was never used in the experiment. This suggests children understood the intention behind joking so well they could come up with their own jokes to match the intention of the game. In contrast, children in the sincere condition tended to label objects correctly. This study therefore shows children were not just copying jokes

because people were happy- or else they would have also copied wrong actions in the sincere condition. Additionally, this study shows children understood what joking was about – in this case, mislabeling objects – as they were able to make up their own jokes.

Further research on laughter strengthens the interpretation that children distinguish jokes from mistakes. Bainum, Lounsbury, and Pollio (1984) observed 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds in a daycare setting. They found that children most frequently laughed when they themselves or others produce intentional jokes, far more often than when they themselves or others unintentionally produced wrong acts. Therefore in their day to day interactions, children respond appropriately to jokes and mistakes.

As mentioned earlier, other forms of non-literal communication offer themselves to children's understanding of complex intentions. However past research suggests humor is the earliest form that children understand. For instance, using a similar imitation paradigm, Rakoczy, Tomasello, and Striano (2004) found that children distinguish pretending and mistakes, but not until 3 years, although with extensive training, they can do this at 2 years (Rakoczy, Tomasello, and Striano 2006). Children also distinguish intentions to lie and mistakes from 3 years (Siegal and Peterson 1996, 1998), but no studies have found this ability earlier. Research suggests children understand metaphor from 4 years (Pearson 1990, Ozcaliskan 2005). Finally, while observation suggests 4-year-olds respond appropriately to irony to some extent (Recchia et al. 2010), experimental evidence suggests children do not fully understand intentions to be ironic until 10 years (Glenwright and Pexman 2010, Pexman et al. 2005). Therefore humor may provide the first instance in which children understand that people intentionally do the wrong thing, or break convention. Future research should examine whether understanding humorous intentions scaffolds these later developing types of complex intentions.

5. Parental scaffolding of humorous intentions

Parents scaffold children's understanding of others' humor very early on. Mireault et al. (2012) asked parents to make their infants laugh for 10 minutes each month from 3 to 6 months. They found that throughout, parents used clowning, or silly acts, such as pulling faces, or making raspberries, to make their infants laugh. Furthermore, they most often paired these acts with smiling or laughter. This could serve as a bridge to help infants understand that unusual acts are funny. Indeed, while 3-month-olds tended to laugh randomly, and not necessarily in relation to parents' clowning, by 6 months, infants were likely to laugh specifically when parents clowned around.

In later infancy, parents' cues help infants to determine whether to treat an unusual act as funny or not, such as putting a red ball on one's nose, pressing it, and saying "beep". In experimental tasks, either an experimenter modelled the strange actions for 6- and 12-month-olds (Mireault et al. 2014), or a parent did so for 5- and 7-month-olds (Mireault et al. 2015), after which the experimenter or parent would either laugh, or show neutral affect. Experimenters' and parents' laughter encouraged infants to increase and/or maintain their own smiling towards the absurd events, while an experimenter's or parents' neutral expression made infants more like to cease smiling.

Parents offer a variety of complex cues in the second year to scaffold humor understanding as well. When parents read a humorous versus sweet book to their 18- to 24-month-olds, parents used more disbelief statements (Hoicka, Jutsum, and Gattis 2008). For instance, if a parent joked, "The ducks says moo", they might follow it up with a disbelief statement such as, "Ducks don't really say moo." This in effect explains the jokes for the toddlers, who might otherwise think they are learning new, true information. It could also show toddlers that people say things wrong on purpose, explaining this in a detailed way.

In another study, when parents joked with their 16- to 24-month-old toddlers during play, again, parents increased their disbelief statements, and also decreased their belief statements, i.e., statements suggesting they believed the jokes to be true (Hoicka and Butcher 2015). Parents also showed more disbelief and less belief through their actions. For instance, if joking that a toy chicken was a hat, they were more likely to do non-hat actions, such as throwing the object, or making it peck, than if they actually had a hat to play with. Additionally, if joking they were drinking by putting a cup to their elbow, they were less likely to repeat the action than if they drank for real. This study also showed that toddlers responded in similar ways to parents, and that this was guided by parents' cues. For instance, belief language made children more likely to repeat actions, while disbelief language made children less likely to do so, leading children to repeat jokes less often than literal play. Parents' cues thus provide a mechanism by which children learn to distinguish when an act was intentional and true versus intentional and false, aka, a joke.

Parents also give more subtle cues to distinguish joking and literal acts. When parents read a humorous versus sweet book to their 18- to 24-month-olds, they exaggerated their infant-directed speech (IDS) (Hoicka and Gattis 2012). That is, they spoke higher, louder, and slower, which could make the joke easier for the child to understand. They also used a rising linear contour, which made the joke sound like a question, perhaps allowing toddlers to realize the content was meant to be false, and not literal. In a play setting with 16- to 20-month-olds, parents increased their smiling and gaze to their toddler, and decreased their gaze to objects, when joking versus acting literally (Hoicka in press). This could help toddlers

focus on the social situation, and avoid learning the information as literally true. Indeed, parents' gaze to the child increased the child's gaze to their parent; parents' gaze to the object increased the child's gaze to the object; and parents' smiling increased children's smiling; suggesting these low-level cues guided children's attention appropriately to distinguish joking and literal play. Therefore this might help children understand that joking is social and emotionally positive.

The research on parent-child interactions suggests children do not come to understand humorous intentions on their own. Rather, from a very young age, parents scaffold this understanding through cues. These cues (e.g., smiling, laughter) might help toddlers identify when information is meant as a joke rather than sincerely. More complex cues (e.g., disbelief language) may help explain *why* it is a joke, and that it was both intended, but also not true.

6. Humor versus other types of intentional wrongness

As mentioned earlier, humor is not the only complex intention involving purposely doing something wrong, unexpected, convention-breaking, and so on. Pretending, lying, metaphor, and irony involve intentionally doing the wrong thing as well (Hoicka and Gattis 2008, Hoicka, Jutsum, and Gattis 2008, Leekam 1991). One question is whether children not only distinguish intentions to joke from mistakes, or unintentional acts; but whether they can also distinguish intentions to joke from these other types of complex intentions. One possibility is children understand people can intend to do the wrong thing, but beyond that, they are not sure why. Therefore they may lump joking, pretending, lying, metaphor, and irony under the same umbrella, assuming they are the same thing. A second possibility is children think whenever someone has any of these types of complex intentions, they always intend to, e.g., joke. So if someone lies, children may think they have purposely said something wrong to amuse others, rather than deceive. Likewise if they pretend. Similarly, children could think people are always lying. So if someone jokes, children may think they have said something wrong to deceive others, rather than amuse them. A final possibility is children distinguish these different types of complex intentions. This would mark a sophisticated understanding of intentions, suggesting children not only understand that people intentionally do technically wrong acts, but also why they do them.

Research finds children distinguish joking and lying relatively late compared to when they understand intentions to lie or joke on their own. As Leekam (1991) points out, while joking and lying both involve intentionally conveying falsehoods, people want their audience to know the information is false when joking, but they want their audience to believe the information is true when lying. Therefore the

intentions vary depending on what the speaker intends the audience to believe. This involves children understanding second-order mental states, tracking not only intentions, but others' knowledge and beliefs as well. Leekam (1991) designed an experiment in which 4- and 5-old children were told stories that were similar, but varied on whether the main character intended to joke or lie. In both versions of the story, a child tells his mother he drew a picture he did not actually draw. In the joke version, he tells his mother it was really another child. In the lying version, he does not. Children were then asked which one was joking and which one was lying. Even 4-year-olds could distinguish the two.

When comparing intentions to joke versus pretend, we find children can distinguish these complex intentions even earlier. Hoicka and Martin (2016) set up an experiment in which a first experimenter either consistently joked (e.g., put teacup on head and laughed), or pretended (e.g., put empty teacup to mouth and made sound effects) with 2-year-olds for four trials. Then a second experimenter asked to join in. The first experimenter left, and the second experimenter did two novel joke actions followed by two novel pretend actions, or vice versa. Overall, children objected to or corrected the second experimenter more when the first experimenter had pretended. This suggests children had high standards for how to play the game when pretending was involved, but not when joking, viewing these as two different types of acts. Furthermore, children objected to joke actions more than pretend actions in the pretend condition, but not in the joke condition. One possibility is children just responded to the actions, without actually considering the underlying intentions. Therefore a second set of conditions was run, which mirrored the first two, but in which the experimenters gave no cues they were joking or pretending. This time, children did not distinguish the conditions, suggesting the intentional cues gave meaning to the actions. Therefore children as young as 2 years distinguish intentions behind joking and pretending.

Just as parents may help scaffold children's ability to distinguish joking from sincere intentions, parents also appear to distinguish the differences between intentions to joke and pretend. Not only do parents show more disbelief when joking versus being sincere (Hoicka, Jutsum, and Gattis 2008), they also show more disbelief and less belief through language and actions when joking versus pretending (Hoicka and Butcher 2015), suggesting they believe joking to be more wrong than pretending. This makes sense, because while pretending is factually wrong, it is right in one's imagination (Nichols and Stich 2003). This does not need to be the case for joking (Hoicka, Jutsum, and Gattis 2008). Additionally, just as parents use low-level cues such as IDS to distinguish joking and sincere intentions (Hoicka and Gattis 2012), parents of 16- to 20-month-olds also use low-level cues, including increased gaze to child and smiling, and decreased gaze to objects, when joking versus pretending (Hoicka 2016). And as discussed earlier, toddlers pick

up on these explicit and implicit cues, leading them to also distinguish joke and pretend contexts.

The current research suggests children distinguish intentions to joke and lie from 4 years, and distinguish intentions to joke and pretend from 2 years. However, no research to date has examined whether children distinguish joking and metaphor, nor joking and irony. Future research should examine when and how children distinguish these different types of complex intentions.

7. Humor and autism

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is characterized by a communicative deficit (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). In particular, social cognition can be impaired in people with ASD (Baron-Cohen, Leslie, and Frith 1985, Perner et al. 1989). It is therefore not surprising that people with ASD may have difficulty understanding humor and humorous intentions, since much of humor requires socio-cognitive skills.

St. James and Tager-Flusberg (1994) observed six children ages 3–7 years diagnosed with ASD, and six children with Down's syndrome (DS). They found children with ASD produced fewer intentional episodes of humor than children with DS, although with the small sample size, the finding was not significant. In a separate study, Reddy, Williams, and Vaughan (2002) found that while children with ASD laughed as much as children with DS, they laughed less at social stimuli, such as funny faces. This suggests that while children with ASD do have a sense of humor, it may not be social in the same way as children with DS, or children with typical development (TD).

Indeed, experimental research shows children with ASD have difficulties identifying intentions to joke. Children diagnosed with ASD, ages 4–8 years, and children with TD, ages 2–3 years, watched an experimenter mislabel objects (Baron-Cohen 1997). When asked why the experimenter did so, most children with TD suggested the experimenter was joking. In contrast, children with ASD simply stated the experimenter was wrong.

Adults with ASD appreciate several types of humor, including non-verbal puns and semantic humor (Samson and Hegenloh 2010). However these same adults had difficulty understanding humor based on Theory of Mind, where they had to take the perspective of different people. Therefore while adults with ASD have humor, there are fewer types of humor that they can share with others, in particular, socio-cognitive types of humor.

Altogether, this suggests humor can technically be appreciated on one's own, perhaps by noticing incongruities in the non-social world. However, in children

with TD an important aspect of humor is that it is shared, and that one can identify when another intends to joke. This may not be the same for children, or even adults, with ASD, suggesting they may have a different experience of humor.

8. Conclusions

This paper demonstrates children understand humor from an intentional perspective as young as 2 years. This is interesting from two vantage points. First, the research shows humor and intention-understanding are not always linked, as children appreciate humor and understand intentions separately at earlier ages before combining these two concepts later on. Research on ASD further bolsters the view that humor and intention-understanding are dissociable, but when combined, they provide a richer humor experience. Second, this research suggests understanding humorous intentions could be a gateway to understanding intentions in complex ways. Humor is the first type of non-literal communication children understand from a socio-cognitive viewpoint, compared to pretending, lying, metaphor, and irony, and may provide a stepping stone to understanding social cognition in more complex ways.

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Children using phraseology for humorous purposes

The case of 9-to-10-year-olds

Larissa Timofeeva-Timofeev

University of Alicante, GRIALE Research Group

This paper analyzes the use of phraseological procedures for humorous purposes in 9-to-10-year-olds' written production with regard to their metapragmatic development. 148 humorous stories written by 4th grade Primary School children from 5 schools located in the province of Alicante (Spain) were quantitatively and qualitatively processed. The analysis revealed that children belonging to the age group examined use phraseology for humor in a mainly epipragmatic way, although evidence of metapragmatic reflection exists as well. Phrasal compounds and idioms present similar use rates, which refutes the initial hypothesis according to which transparent phrasal compounds are preferred over more opaque idioms. The unexpected outcome of the study was the use – though scarce – of manipulated phraseological units, since this procedure implies a high metapragmatic competence.

Keywords: children's language, phraseology, humor, metapragmatic ability

1. Introduction

This paper analyzes the utilization of phraseological procedures amongst 9-to-10-year-olds' for the purpose of generating humorous effects in their written narratives. The focus is placed on the development of children's metapragmatic ability. 148 humorous stories written by 4th grade Primary School children from 5 educational centers located in the province of Alicante (Spain) went through quantitative and qualitative processing. The analysis revealed that children in the age band examined still draw on different phraseological resources for humor in a mainly epipragmatic way, even though evidence of metapragmatic reflection exists too. Phrasal compounds and idioms present similar use rates, which contradicts the initial hypothesis according to which transparent phrasal compounds are preferred

over more opaque idioms. An unexpected outcome of the study was the use – though scarce – of manipulated phraseological units, insofar as this procedure requires a high degree of metapragmatic competence. As far as the gender perspective is concerned, girls seem to show better metapragmatic control over their discourse, although this fact should be empirically confirmed in further research.

Our analysis essentially rests on three theoretical mainstays related to the developmental aspects of metapragmatic (Section 2), phraseological (Section 3), and humor (Section 4) competence. The trial data and the methodology, together with the quantitative and qualitative results, are presented in Section 5, after which a summary of the most important conclusions drawn from this study is offered in Section 6.

2. Metapragmatic ability

The use of language with communicative purposes is grounded on an awareness of the way in which the linguistic system works, and of the specific features that define its relationship with the context. In other words, every verbal act means an intentional control over the linguistic parameters which determine the efficiency of the message as well as its correspondence with the extralinguistic situation (cfr. Crespo and Alvarado 2010: 95). Gombert (1992: 94) claims that while “pragmatic abilities permit the effective use of language in its (social) context, [...] metapragmatic abilities allow the comprehension and control of this use.”

Metapragmatic awareness is thus formulated with regard to such a discursive ‘monitoring’ based on the speakers’ ability to explicitly reflect on their message and to organize it seeking to prompt certain perlocutionary effect on the part of the addressee (cfr. Portolés 2004: 31–46; Collins et al. 2014: 32–33).

Verschueren (2000) argues that the notion of metapragmatic awareness plays an essential role when it comes to understanding our linguistic behavior:

Reflexive awareness is so central that all verbal communication is self-referential to a certain degree, or that there is no language use without a constant calibration [...] between pragmatic and metapragmatic functioning. This phenomenon forms the proper domain of metapragmatics (Verschueren 2000: 445–446).

Despite this evidence, metapragmatic awareness still remains a very abstract concept (cfr. Gombert 1997: 44; Stude 2007: 202), since “awareness is not measurable, and the notion lends itself to easy speculation” (Verschueren 2000: 445). Furthermore, speakers control their communicative acts in a rather wide variety of degrees, considering that not all the linguistic-contextual adjustments imply the same level of consciousness. Therefore, studies on the metapragmatic aspects

of communication gain accuracy through the analysis of specific verbal clues – phraseological units in this case – which speakers use and which provide evidence of the reflective consciousness on which linguistic communication is supported.

Metapragmatic awareness evolves throughout childhood, and this comes as a result of our communicative education. Different researches reveal that children, show signs of an active metapragmatic engagement from a very early age (cfr. Bates 1976; Becker 1988; Doherty and Perner 1998). The pragmatic input received by infants from their parents undoubtedly proves crucial for them to develop their reflective awareness. All the ongoing adjustments and corrections performed by parents concerning their children's pragmatic performances become examples of an explicit metapragmatic reflection that the infant progressively imitates and grasps (cfr. Stude 2007: 201–202). Subsequently, youngsters learn to make their own metapragmatic judgements and to state them explicitly in a proper fashion.

A number of studies claim that the age of children and their metapragmatic knowledge are directly proportional (cfr. Gombert 1992, 1997; Doherty and Perner 1998; Crespo and Alfaro 2009; Collins et al. 2014). A number of different developmental stages of the metapragmatic awareness may be outlined in accordance with this progressive approach.

Based on Piaget's (1972) developmental theory, Gombert (1992) proposed his model for the metalinguistic development that deals with metacognitive processes in relation to language. Expressed differently, Gombert's model focuses on how children learn to reflect upon language and monitor their conscious use of it. Various aspects associated with metaphonological, metasyntactic, metalexical, metasemantic, metapragmatic and metatextual development are consequently analyzed from their comprehension as well as from their production.

The assumption of the schema designed by Gombert (1992) as a core framework allows us to describe four general stages that children go through during their metapragmatic maturation. Figure 1 depicts these stages in relation to Piaget's (1972) developmental model:

Piaget (1972)	Sensory-Motor Stage	Preoperational Stage	Concrete Operational Stage	Formal Operational Stage
Gombert (1992)	Acquisition of first skills of language production and comprehension	Epipragmatic control	Metapragmatic awareness	Automation of metapragmatic competence
	Ages birth through 2	Ages 2 through 7	Ages 7 through 12	Ages 12 through adulthood

Figure 1. Metapragmatic development

It is worth noting that the two initial stages (i.e. first acquisition and epipragmatic) are systematic in nature, since they have to do with the storage and organization

of the information in long-term memory. As for metapragmatic competence, it has to do with the increasing functional ability of working memory, insofar as the latter is not systematic but dependent not only on the complexity of linguistic and contextual data but also on the individual speaker's aptitudes as well (Crespo and Alfaro 2009: 11–13; 2010: 232–233).

As stressed by Crespo and Alfaro (2009), such a conception should take account of the fact that the metapragmatic stage has a clearly recursive nature – which goes against Piaget's (1972) developmental theory. For Piaget, children can only find themselves at one given developmental level at a time. Once the goals of a particular stage have been achieved, the child enters the next one, which represents reality differently. Development is therefore viewed as a scale where children gradually change their cognitive system in qualitative terms, becoming increasingly efficient in their communicative interaction skills. However, the recursive perspective adopted with respect to metapragmatic knowledge means that infants need not leave one stage to enter the next one because they can simultaneously operate at different stages, adapting their behavior to each context (Crespo and Alfaro 2009: 11). This conception is congruous with the apparent 'overlapping' of different developmental stages so often found in primary school children's performances (Timofeeva 2014).

The 9–10 years age group around which this study revolves is situated in pivotal developmental period marked by the gradual shift from epipragmatic to metapragmatic verbal performance. For this reason, our expectations were that participants' written humor would stay mainly epipragmatic, although evidence of metapragmatic competence development could appear too.

3. Phraseological competence

The general framework for children's metapragmatic maturation presented above also includes phraseological competence development. A number of special features should be stressed with regard to this ability, though.

First and foremost, a basic definition of phraseology needs to be outlined. Broadly speaking, and without any references to different linguistic approaches (cfr. Timofeeva 2012: 19–118; Conca and Guia 2014: 11–27), phraseological items are understood here as multi-word lexical units where the whole meaning has a holistic nature. That is to say, "the meaning of the whole phrase is not understood in terms of the meanings of its individual parts; rather, all of them contribute to its configuration" (Timofeeva and Vargas 2015: 109). The range of phraseological items embraces idioms, collocations, discursive formulas, phrasal compounds, and other sets of words with a complex unitary meaning. Phraseology

may additionally be integrated into a more extensive topic related to formulaic language, the role of which becomes crucial for language acquisition. A significant body of research suggests that “formulaic speech is a core component of language acquisition” (Bannard and Lieven 2012: 14). Various studies reveal that children learn their first tongue through communicative chunks, insofar as they seem unable to clearly mark word boundaries in the spoken chain until they are 4-to-5 years old (Kurvers et al. 2007: 45). Within this broad formulaic context, the acquisition of idioms apparently follows the overall developmental steps, although the age benchmarks vary slightly.

Along the same basic line, Levorato and Cacciari (1995; 2002: 128–131) suggest their 5-stage Global Elaboration Model (GEM) in an attempt to reflect how figurative language is acquired. According to these authors, children carry out the literal processing of language until the age of 7 (Phase 1) – regardless of contextual indications. The age of 8 (Phase 2) marks the moment when children begin to pay attention to the context and realize that the actual meaning intended might differ from the literal one. Infants in Phase 3 – 10-to-12-year-olds – become aware of the fact that different linguistic forms exist to express the same communicative intention, which means that the speaker’s internal state is borne in mind. As for Phase 4 – which lasts until the age of 15 – GEM presents it as the period when a child develops the ability to produce figurative samples. The aforesaid scholars highlight that “[t]he developmental gap between the ability to comprehend and to produce figurative language [...] is progressively reduced, particularly as far as idiomatic expressions are concerned” (Levorato and Cacciari 2002: 130). Finally, Phase 5 is characterized by an adult-like figurative competence.

It deserves to be highlighted that, the same as metapragmatic ability, phraseological development is not strictly successive – hence the apparent overlapping of different phases in children’s phraseological competence can also take place. And yet, children under 7 do not live isolated from idioms or other figurative instances which form part of their communicative environment. Accordingly, they are drawn into an ‘accumulative’ process where phraseological items are stored and used as holistic, unanalyzed chunks with clear pragmatic functions (e.g. greetings, congratulations, etc.). In other words, such communicative behavior is basically epipragmatic, which is actually in keeping with the explanations offered by Gombert (1992: 21) with regard to metaphorical competence at large:

Young children appear to possess a basic metaphorical competence, which is probably indispensable to the later appearance of good understanding and control of metaphor production. However, this competence does not appear to require a reflective manipulation of language, and is therefore epilinguistic by nature rather than metalinguistic.

Within this broad framework, other research works have underlined the fact that context decisively influences idiom comprehension from the age of 6; however, metapragmatic knowledge of linguistic conventions does not appear until the child is 9 years old (Laval 2003). To this must be added that the age of 10 constitutes a ‘turning point’ when it comes to the storage and comprehension of idioms, since it is at this age that children’s phraseological performance resembles that of adults (Vulchanova et al. 2011).

With regard to the meaning of transparent vs. opaque idioms, a number of studies highlight how the former are more easily processed than the latter. Children around the age of 5 seem to be capable of understanding the meaning conveyed by transparent idioms from the context, whereas opaque idioms are not properly grasped until the child reaches the age of 7 years.

As can be seen, these data fit in with the metapragmatic maturation schema shown above. A combination of both models actually enables us to represent phraseological competence development as follows:

Piaget (1972)	Sensory-Motor Stage	Preoperational Stage	Concrete Operational Stage		Formal Operational Stage	
Gombert (1992)	Acquisition of first skills of language production and comprehension	Epipragmatic control	Metapragmatic awareness		Automation of metapragmatic competence	
	Ages birth through 2	Ages 2 through 7	Ages 7 through 12		Ages 12 through adulthood	
GEM	Phase 1		Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5

Figure 2. Phraseological competence

Figure 2 shows that phraseological ability entails a rather high level of metapragmatic awareness. As pointed out above, this does not mean that children under 8 are completely unfamiliar with idioms and other phraseological forms, but that they face such figurative samples in an epipragmatic way. The clearest examples of this can be found when children use some very colloquial or taboo forms as a mere reproduction of their parents’ communicative behavior.

Despite the growing interest in the developmental aspects of phraseological competence, the main body of research devoted to this subject focuses on comprehension and interpretative processes. As for the productive point of view, it remains almost unaddressed. Only a few studies (cfr. Levorato and Cacciari 2002) stress that the ability to produce phraseological units in a conscious and suitable way develops significantly later than their comprehension. Furthermore, Levorato and Cacciari (2002) claim that emotions (as opposed to actions) are more likely to be expressed by means of different figurative procedures since “figurative language

seems to be more appropriate for less determinate meanings such as those concerning mental and emotional states” (Levorato and Cacciari 2002: 145; cfr. also Citron et al. 2015). This explains why children are not very skillful at using figurative tools to depict their emotions before they are 10-to-11 years old or, to put it in a different way, when they find themselves at the 3rd Phase of the GEM.

With regard to the transparency vs. opacity of phraseological meaning, the same patterns seem to occur in production as in comprehension. Although chronologically delayed, transparent phraseological items appear earlier in children’s discourse than opaque ones do. This happens at about 9-to-10 years of age (cfr. Levorato and Cacciari 2002; Vulchanova et al. 2011).

According to these data, our informants are supposed to lie just at the borderline between Phases 2 and 3 of Levorato and Cacciari’s GEM in their phraseological development. In other words, they can be expected to have the ability to distinguish and manage explicit and implicit information properly, as well as to easily comprehend transparent figurative samples and many semantically opaque ones. Instead, on the productive side, they are still not skillful enough to express their internal and emotional states appropriately by means of figurative language, their discourse being bound to contain mainly transparent phraseological samples.

4. Humor competence

The verbal expression of humor is one of the most complex abilities within metapragmatic competence and, in fact, it appears quite late (cfr. Gombert 1992: 114–119). A variety of studies suggest that two basic factors jointly shape children’s humor competence, namely: *incongruity* and *intention*. Incongruity is associated with the surprise that arises from the discrepancy between expectation and reality. Even 6-to-7-month-old babies laugh to a significantly greater extent before a spontaneous or unexpected stimulus than before a repeated or expected one (Cunningham 2005: 99). Therefore, the notion of incongruity begins to take shape with the earliest humor manifestations in a baby’s life. As far as intention is concerned, toddlers can already distinguish intentional actions from unintentional errors at the age of 14-to-18 months. Shortly afterwards, from the age of 25 months onwards, they are able to discern between a joke and an error on the basis of their intentional or unintentional nature. When they are 36 months old, children learn to draw a distinction between pretense and a sincere intention, although they cannot identify a lie until they reach the age of 5 years. According to Hoicka and Gattis (2008), these findings suggest that humor allows the child to understand that an intention may underlie human acts, even if such acts are

wrong; hence why humor seems to be the first step toward the comprehension of lie and pretense (Hoicka and Gattis 2008: 186–188).

The development of humorous competence in children covers several evolutionary stages that run in parallel to their cognitive and linguistic maturation. Back in 1979, McGhee proposed his Model of Humor Development supported on a correlation with the four cognitive development stages described by Piaget (1972), which was subsequently reformulated (McGhee 2002) with an extension to six developmental stages – including an initial pre-humor period – that children go through in their humor maturation process:

- Stage 0: Laughter without Humor – 0–6 months;
- Stage 1: Laughter at the Attachment Figure – from 6 to 15 months;
- Stage 2: Treating an Object as a Different Object – from 15 months to 2–3 years;
- Stage 3: Misnaming Objects or Actions – from 3 to 4–5 years;
- Stage 4: Playing with Words – from 4–5 to 6–7 years;
- Stage 5: Riddles and Jokes – from 6–7 to 11 years.
- Adult humor

Children aged 9-to-10 in our study are placed at Stage 5, even though their humor shows traits of Stage 4 too – after all, the limits separating different stages are far from categorical. Despite being characterized by considering language as one of the main sources of humor, differences do exist between these two stages. At Stage 4, children cannot understand humor based on logical or conceptual incongruity yet (Lyon 2006: 5), insofar as a merely phonic discordance seems comical to them. Such a comprehension has supposedly been already achieved at Stage 5.

In any case, some studies (cfr. Cunningham 2005; Martin 2007) highlight the fact that this last stage in McGhee's model is excessively wide and heterogeneous, since the notion of fun evolves to a considerable extent during this period of middle childhood and early adolescence. This is directly connected to metapragmatic maturation. Indeed, children at this stage begin to memorize different puns in order to share them with their friends (epipragmatic performance) but, as they become more confident and their metapragmatic competence increases, they actually start to create their own humorous samples. Furthermore, a significant body of research suggests that the usual humorous structure underpinning most jokes for which the incongruity-resolution mechanism serves as a basis (cfr. Suls 1972; Attardo 1994; 2001; 2014; Ruiz Gurillo 2012), is acquired exactly at this Stage 5 (cfr. Martin 2007: 240). Simultaneously, ambiguity-based humor, double meanings, and other sophisticated forms of thought emerge in a progressive manner.

Figure 3 summarizes these developmental stages of humor in relation to other theoretical mainstays supporting this study.

Piaget (1972)	Sensory-Motor Stage				Preoperational Stage				Concrete Operational Stage				Formal Operational Stage					
Gombert (1992)	Acquisition of first skills of language production and comprehension				Epipragmatic control				Metapragmatic awareness				Automation of metapragmatic competence					
	Ages birth through 2				Ages 2 through 7				Ages 7 through 12				Ages 12 through adulthood					
GEM	Phase 1								Phase 2		Phase 3		Phase 4		Phase 5			
MHD	Stage 0		Stage 1		Stage 2		Stage 3		Stage 4		Stage 5				Adult humor			

Figure 3. Humor competence

5. Use of phraseology with humorous purposes in written narratives

The global structure of the experimental part, along with the specific results concerning phraseology utilization by the children who took part in our study, will be set out in the following sections.

5.1 Objectives

After having explained the theoretical framework for the present study on the previous pages, its general aims can be summarized into two:

- To analyze the use of phraseological patterns with humorous purposes in the written discourse of 9-to-10-year-old children; and
- To observe the relationship between such use and humor metapragmatic skills within the age group under examination.

5.2 Participants

This paper shows the results obtained with a set of trials performed during the 2012–2013 academic year. A total of 149 students from 5 different schools – 4 of them state-run, and 1 private – located in the province of Alicante took part in the study. One sample was discarded, as a result of which the final number of narratives analyzed amounted to 148.

The following table shows the basic data about each center together with the distribution of participants.

Center	Type	Area	Linguistic program	No. of participants
DIVINA AURORA (Beneixama)	State-run school	Valencian-speaking	Programa d'ensenyament en valencià (PEV) – Learning and teaching program in Valencian language	13
MARE DE DÉU DEL CARME (La Canyada)	State-run school	Predominantly Valencian-speaking	Programa d'incorporació progressiva (PIP) – Phase-in Valencian language program	10
ANTONIO MACHADO (Elda)	State-run school	Spanish-speaking	Area exempted from Valencian language learning	41
INMACULADA CONCEPCIÓN (Torrevieja)	State-run school	Spanish-speaking	Area exempted from Valencian language learning	48
SAN ALBERTO MAGNO (Monforte del Cid)	Private school	Spanish-speaking	Area exempted from Valencian language learning; Programa para el uso progresivo del inglés como lengua vehicular (PUPILV) - Phasein program for the use of English as a working language; French or German as a second foreign language since the 3rd grade of Primary school	37

Figure 4. Participants

In the light of the preceding table, the trial results can obviously be interpreted with regard to different variables, such as the participant’s sex, the type of school (state-run or private), or the language environment and program (monolingual, bilingual or multilingual) in which students develop their activity.

As far as gender representation is concerned, 75 samples corresponded to girls, whereas 73 were written by boys – or expressed in percentage terms: 50.68% and 49.32% respectively (see Figure 5).

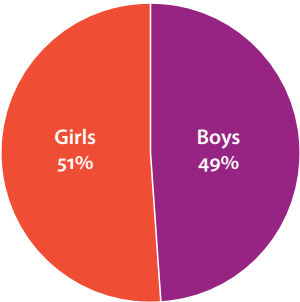


Figure 5. Participants’ distribution by gender

5.3 Method and procedures

Students enrolled in the 4th grade of Primary School had to write a humorous story about the following topic:

Un cuento humorístico

IMAGÍNA TE QUE EN EL MARCO DE UN PROGRAMA DE INTERCAMBIO ESCOLAR TIENES QUE PASAR DOS SEMANAS COMO ALUMNO DE UN COLEGIO EN... ¡MARTE!

Cuéntanos cómo es tu día de colegio, tus asignaturas, tus profesores, tus compañeros, qué hacéis en el patio, cómo te comunicas con tus amigos marcianos, cómo es el idioma en que hablas con ellos... ¡Seguro que es divertido!

'A humorous story

Imagine that, within the framework of a school exchange program, you have to stay for two weeks as a student at a school in ... MARS!

Tell us what your day-to-day at school is like, your subjects, your teachers, your classmates, what you do in the playground, how you communicate with your Martian friends, what the language in which you speak with them is like ... It will sure be fun!

Figure 6. Topic proposed

The exercise was carried out anonymously, children only having to indicate their sex. As shown by the topic heading, the task had constrictions linked to contextual factors (Martian school) and narrative ones (humorous story). The criteria listed below were followed for the topic in question:

- It had to be closely related and familiar to every student, regardless of their center;
- It had to be fairly open to enable participants to show their creativity;
- It had to be suitable for a humorous creation;
- It had to be appropriate so that a metalinguistic and metapragmatic reflection – in this case, about communication with Martians – could be encouraged.

The topic suggested consequently placed children in one of their most familiar contexts, from which a large number of humorous examples had come during their short life experience (cfr. Bergen 2003; Lyon 2006). At the same time, the school world moved to another planet which could be expected to generate incongruent situations that would serve as the basis for the humorous stories of our participants.

5.4 Data processing

All narratives were tagged in accordance with the following code: *Center/Sex/Sequential number*, where A means girl and O, boy. Thus, by way of example, the code SA5 tells us that the narrative was written by a girl from San Alberto Magno School, being sequentially numbered as 5.

The data processed were entered onto an Excel database reflecting various linguistic markers and indicators of humor that children had used in their stories.

5.5 Hypothesis

Bringing together the three theoretical mainstays that underpin this study – namely, metapragmatic, phraseological and humor competence – makes it possible to see that the age band addressed in the present study constitutes a pivotal time in children’s life, insofar as quite a few dramatic changes take place in their cognitive and linguistic development during this period (Figure 7):

Piaget (1972)	Sensory-Motor Stage			Preoperational Stage			Concrete Operational Stage			Formal Operational Stage			
Gombert (1992)	Acquisition of first skills of language production and comprehension			Epipragmatic control			Metapragmatic awareness			Automation of metapragmatic competence			
	Ages birth through 2			Ages 2 through 7			Ages 7 through 12			Ages 12 through adulthood			
GEM	Phase 1						Phase 2		Phase 3		Phase 4		Phase 5
MHD	Stage 0	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5					Adult humor		

Figure 7. Developmental period addressed in the study in relation to metapragmatic, phraseological and humor competence

It should be borne in mind within the general framework for our study that 9-to-10-year-old schoolchildren have already reached the last humor development stage, characterized by the creative use of language in McGhee’s model (2002). However, it should equally be considered that a large degree of variability exists at this stage because humor competence is closely interwoven with metapragmatic maturation (cfr. Gombert 1992: 114–119) – that goes through a strengthening process at this age.

In connection to the specific objectives sought with the present paper, Crespo (2009) and Crespo, Benítez and Pérez (2010) report empirical evidence of the basically epipragmatic behavior shown by 8-year-old children when approaching written production. Crespo, Benítez and Pérez (2010) also underline the almost total absence of figurative language resources – e.g. irony, phraseology, metaphors or hyperboles – in the narratives written by children aged 8, thus revealing that their metapragmatic and phraseological competence is still at an incipient level. Nevertheless, our informants were supposed to have reached a higher developmental level, which suggested an increase of figurative uses and greater evidence of metapragmatic reflection in their written production. Notwithstanding this

hypothesis, and with regard to phraseological competence development, the children in our study were presumed to be unable to express their internal states properly by means of phraseological resources, since this ability is acquired from the age of 10 years onwards (i.e. Phase 3 of the GEM). This suggested that the utilization of phraseology for humorous purposes by our informants was bound to be rather poor and uncommon.

Another relevant variable should be taken into account according to the aforesaid predictions. Mihill (2012: 247-249) reminds us that the task of producing a written text in a limited time¹ often becomes an 'ordeal' for young writers, since metatextual competence is acquired much later (cfr. Gombert 1992: 121-173) and is still under development at the age band examined. This would lead to a significant burden of orality in the written production, or expressed differently, that children still write in a similar way to how they speak, with no adaptation whatsoever to the written mode (cfr. Crespo, Benítez and Perez 2010). Moreover, when facing a writing exercise, children have to carry out a mental representation of the rhetorical situation described in their story, that is, its topic, its potential addressee(s) and its aim(s). Such mental representation allows them to compensate for the lack of the empirical, real context that is typical of oral interaction (cfr. Crespo, Benítez and Pérez 2010: 185).

As for this study, the fact that they had been provided by the researchers made it possible to control rhetorical situation components such as narrative topic and aim to a certain extent (see 5.3.). This allowed us not only to gain certain narrative homogeneity but also to avoid the influence of every child's choice over the ultimate impact of humor.

Conversely, the 'addressee factor' appears as the most difficult one to manage (cfr. Crespo, Benítez and Cáceres 2007: 35; Kuo and Anderson 2008; Myhill 2012). Children have to draw a mental picture of their potential reader, because this largely determines their lexical or stylistic choices, amongst others. The different discursive strategies that our informants adopt can also serve as indicators of their metapragmatic maturity.

On the whole, and given that our trials embraced 9-to-10-year-old school-children, epipragmatic procedures were presumably going to be still frequent. Furthermore, and taking into account the non-systematic nature of metapragmatic competence, both epipragmatic and metapragmatic mechanisms were expected to be used by young writers in their narratives. In this respect, the range of phraseological procedures that our informants drew on should include both transparent and opaque items, although the former were supposed to be more

1. Teachers had freedom to manage the time devoted to the narrative writing process as they deemed appropriate. They reported that between 1 and 2 hours were spent on average, though.

common. This feature may also be construed as an indicator of the developmental position of our informants in relation to their phraseological and metapragmatic competence.

Along this line of reasoning, the analysis should focus not only on quantitative aspects but also on qualitative ones, which means that, beyond frequency data, the reflection on how phraseological procedures are used in children's narratives can provide a reliable depiction of phraseological and metapragmatic maturation patterns.

Two groups of phraseological phenomena were more closely analyzed in the narratives of the 9-to-10-year-olds involved in our study: phrasal compounds, and idioms. Thus, the utilization of phrasal compounds and idioms marks the passage from a mainly epipragmatic communication to a more metapragmatic one. Spanish phrasal compounds additionally tend to have a rather transparent meaning, and they often constitute the most common way of building new complex lexemes. All these facts suggest that the children in our trial would most probably use a higher number of phrasal compounds than that of idioms.

The unexpected result of our analysis referred to the use of manipulated phraseological strings (Timofeeva 2009) in children's narratives, since this is a common linguistic mechanism in adult humor performance that entails a high level of metapragmatic awareness (see 5.6. and 5.7.).

Therefore, the hypotheses posed in this study can be summarized as follows:

- Children aged 9-to-10 are expected to provide evidence of a gradual shift from epipragmatic to metapragmatic verbal performance. Hence, epipragmatic procedures will presumably be still common, although signs of metapragmatic may become increasingly visible.
- Despite the fact that this metapragmatic 'growth' also entails an increased use of figurative resources, their immaturity when it comes to expressing internal and emotional states by means of phraseological procedures will limit these 9-to-10-year-old children's ability to utilize such linguistic mechanisms with humorous purposes in their written production.
- The children in our trials can be expected to prefer transparent phraseological units, even though some semantically opaque strings may appear too. Accordingly, phrasal compounds will probably be used more often than idioms.

5.6 Results

The quantitative outcomes of our study can be found in Figure 8. Out of 148 narratives, 27 cases show the utilization of phrasal compounds – which accounts for 18.24% of the total. With regard to idioms, they were found in 25 samples, thus

representing 16.89% of the total. Finally, an unexpected result came from the use of manipulated phraseological units in 9 cases (6.08% of the total).

Type of phraseological unit	No. items	%
Phrasal compounds	27	18.24%
Idioms	25	16.89 %
Manipulated phraseological units	9	6.08 %

Figure 8. Phraseology for humorous purposes: quantitative results

Figure 9 reflects this situation graphically. The levels of use corresponding to phrasal compounds and idioms are noticeably similar, which clearly seems to contradict the hypothesis posed above.

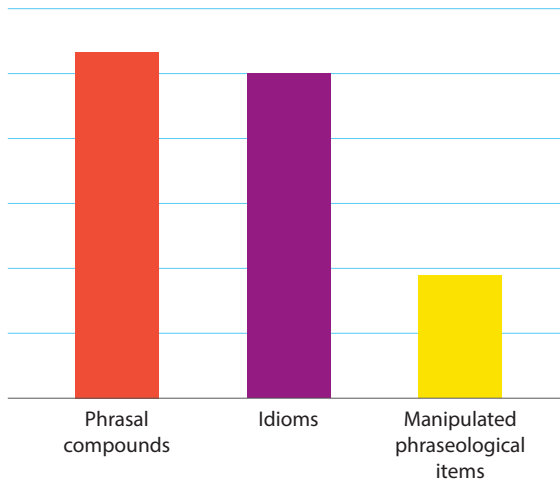


Figure 9. Phraseology for humorous purposes: graphical representation

The data about phraseological item utilization result in the following distribution by sex (Figure 10):

Type of phraseological unit	No. of items	Girls	Boys
Phrasal compounds	27	12	15
Idioms	25	16	9
Manipulated phraseological items	9	6	3

Figure 10. Phraseology for humorous purposes: gender distribution

Figure 11 below provides a graphical illustration of this distribution, showing that boys are more capable in the use of phraseological compounds, whereas girls seem more skillful at managing idioms.

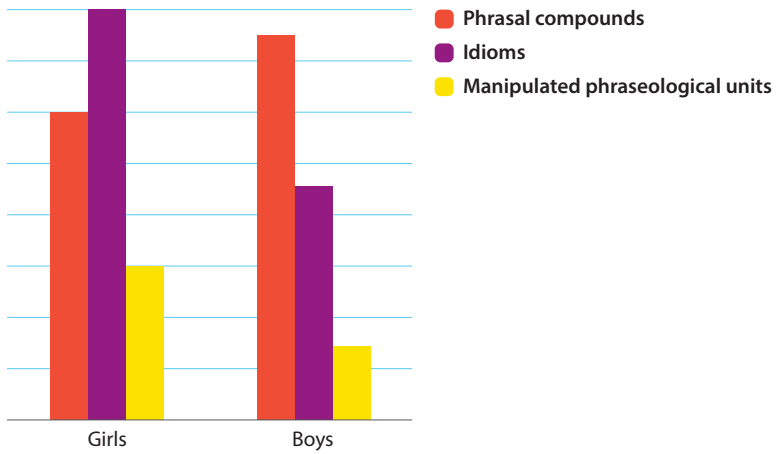


Figure 11. Phraseology for humorous purposes: graphical representation of gender distribution

Figure 11 additionally reflects quite a few uses of manipulated phraseological items as an unexpected result of this study. This is an interesting phenomenon which implies a high level of metapragmatic awareness, and girls seem to draw on this mechanism twice as often as boys.

5.7 Discussion

The analysis of such quantitative results leads us to make a number of qualitative considerations. The age of 9-to-10 years addressed in this study is a crucial developmental period during which metapragmatic, humor and phraseological competence come closer to adult performance. However, children of this age are still unskilled at carrying out a complete metapragmatic reflection about their humorous and phraseological behavior, which is why their written production remains significantly epipragmatic until then.

The initial design of our experimental part did not consider any tools to measure participants' metapragmatic competence level. Therefore, this deficiency should be remedied in future studies. Notwithstanding, the researchers who undertook narrative analysis shared the perception that girls show a slightly higher level of metapragmatic maturation and that their language presents a broader range of resources. This information should be empirically confirmed in upcoming studies, though.

Based on the GEM (Levorato and Cacciari 2002) classification, our approach highlighted that our informants were still unable to make an extensive use of phraseology for humorous purposes in their written narratives, since it implied the competence to utilize phraseological items to express emotional states. Nevertheless, the trial results prove that 9-to-10-year-olds resort to phraseological procedures quite actively in order to convey humor, although that use seems to be mainly epipragmatic. By way of example, such an epipragmatic performance becomes visible in the humor based only on phonic incongruity that characterizes Stage 4 in the classification developed by McGhee (2002), as shown by example (1):²

- (1) "En el comedor se come *hutirina con extra de riquitolasmenterque* o ha veces *ricochico relleno de quisquormaniquio*, para los vegetarianos *remoldersem y ricosquicormorquefera*" IO4
 'In the canteen they eat *hutirina with an extra of riquitolasmenterque* or sometimes *ricochico filled with quisquormaniquio*, for the vegetarians *remoldersem and ricosquicormorquefera*'

The child in (1) coins several phrasal compounds to describe the peculiarities of Martian cuisine. Despite the repetition of the syllable *rico-* in some cases (presumably an allusion to the Spanish word *rico* ['delicious']), on the whole, no regular creative patterns are followed. This child apparently seeks the humorous effects merely through phonic incongruity. The absence of inferable morphological rules in the informant's usage actually suggests that he still shows a more epipragmatic behavior although the written format might become a suitable context for reflection of a markedly metalinguistic nature.

The case of (2) is slightly different:

- (2) "Para ir al colegio llevan mochilas coete asi es como las llamo yo porque en marciano es: *mrmaques chuques*. ¡A que esa palabra es rarísima!" IA5
 'They come to school with (their) rocket bags that is how I call them because, in Martian, it is: *mrmaques chuques*. *What a really weird word, isn't it?!*'

2. The original spelling has been preserved in all the examples. Likewise, the English translation attempts to reflect such spelling mistakes whenever possible.

The Martian denomination of schoolbags *mrmaques chuques* seems to follow the same patterns as in (1), since the humorous effects of this phrasal compound once again rely on phonic incongruity. Nonetheless, the girl closes her sentence with a metalinguistic reflection about the oddity of her phrasal creation. This is a clear indicator of metapragmatic maturation; in other words, the girl does not feel confident and skillful enough in relation to her metapragmatic abilities yet, although she is becoming increasingly capable of reflecting on her linguistic performance. Such metapragmatic self-doubt is reflected in the rhetorical question by means of which the girl seeks to ensure that her reader grasps and construes the humorous nature of the sentence correctly. Furthermore, this question acts as a metatextual strategy meant to compensate for the lack of a clearly identified addressee that is associated with the metatextual maturation process which takes place at this age.

As for the type of phraseological units preferred by the children in our study, phrasal compounds with a more transparent meaning were expected to be more frequent than idioms. This hypothesis was not confirmed in view of the statistical results, though, which suggests that the utilization of both procedures is quite similar in both groups. However, boys appear to use fewer idioms than girls; this seems to be consistent with the researchers' perception about the higher metapragmatic competence of girls. To which must be added that after analyzing the narratives, girls adopt a more reflective type of processing, even when it comes to use syntagmatic compounding. This creative play with language clearly fits Stage 5 in McGhee's classification of humor development (2002). The following examples will illustrate this idea:

- (3) "[...] las *babosas espaciales* para comer no me gustaron mucho" SA9
'I didn't quite like *space slugs* for lunch'
- (4) "Aquí sólo comen cada dos días [...] Hoy toca comer, yo estaba emocionada y hambrienta. Pero habían *botas de astronauta con salsa ultravioleta, ensalada de cráter* y, de postre, *huevo a la marciana*" SA2
'Here they eat only every other day. Today, there is lunch, I was excited and hungry. But there were *astronaut boots with ultraviolet sauce, crater salad* and, for dessert, *Martian-style egg*'

Both examples refer to singular Martian dishes once more, but unlike what happens in (1), the phrasal compounds created here look for the conceptual incongruity that needs to be resolved in order to achieve humorous effects. Furthermore, lexemes from the 'space' semantic field – *space, astronaut, ultraviolet, crater* – play their role as humor indicators (cfr. Ruiz Gurillo 2012: 78–86) which guide the reader towards a humorous interpretation. It is worth highlighting that the informants in (3) and (4) show more confidence at using phraseological procedures for

humorous purposes, and they show a greater degree of ‘familiarity’ with the conceptual and logical processes underlying humor as well. Thus, for instance, they are aware that the incongruity-resolution mechanism will be triggered by the introduction of ‘space’ terms in the names of dishes. Their metapragmatic maturity is also reflected in their confidence that the reader will be able to interpret their phraseological creations properly – unlike those in example (2).

Therefore, both (1)–(2) and (3)–(4) illustrate how the progressive metapragmatic maturation is reflected in the use of phrasal compounds for humorous purposes. As seen above, idioms appear quite often in children’s narratives too. The quantitative outcomes refute the hypothesis about the predominance of phrasal compounds over idioms, as could be expected on the basis of the GEM approach and taking into account the expected level of metapragmatic and humor competence of our informants. Furthermore, the qualitative analysis reveals that the 9-to-10-year-olds under examination in our study use idioms to express their emotions, thus contradicting our initial hypothesis as well. An explanation is likely to be provided by the humorous nature of the task. Actually, as stressed by Ruiz-Gurillo (2015), humor development has a lot to do with a child’s emotional maturation, since humor often becomes an instrument to face new, unknown or disconcerting situations. Moreover, the most frequent humor marker in our corpus is noticeably exclamation marks, which appear in 87 cases (58.78% of the total). This reinforces the idea that the humorous context of our trial promotes the expression of emotions through different linguistic tools, favoring the use of idioms too.

The analysis of examples reveals that the children involved in our study resort to idioms when describing a range of incongruous situations related to linguistic incomprehension, the physical appearance of Martians or some aspects of their behavior. The examples below illustrate such situations:

- (5) “Porque es que es *como si me hablaras en chino* no entiendo nada”. BA11
‘Because it is as if you *talked to me in Chinese*, I don’t understand anything’
- (6) “*No entendiamos ni papa* de lo que decian los marcianos!” BA13
‘We *didn’t understand a word* of what the Martians were saying’

The girls in (5) and (6) use the idioms *hablar en chino* ‘speak Greek’ (literally, ‘speak in Chinese’) and *no entender ni papa* ‘not to understand a word,’ which allow them to emphasize the notion of communicative astonishment. Note that the intensifier assessment forms part of the meaning of both idioms (Timofeeva 2012: 205–244) through which these children seek to highlight their linguistic bewilderment and create a probably humorous situation.

Example (7) shows a young writer perplexedly facing the fact that the Martians see her as an odd being. The idiom *quedarse de piedra* ‘be stunned/flabbergasted

[literally, “turned to stone”]’ helps her emphasize the amazement (together with the exclamation marks) and achieve a humorous effect which is ‘sealed’ in the next sentence – *¡Pero si ellos eran los raritos!* ‘Wasn’t it them that were the freaky ones?!’ – which serves to resolve the ‘incongruent’ Martians’ beliefs.

- (7) “Los marcianitos dijeron que pensaban que ablabamos raro, no como ellos.
¡Me quedé de piedra! ¡Pero si ellos eran los raritos!” SA9
 ‘The little Martians said that they thought we spoke strangely, not like them.
I was stunned/flabbergasted! Wasn’t it them that were the freaky ones?!’

The physical appearance of Martians causes a laugh reaction in (8).

- (8) “La profesora tenia ¡un ojo cuatro brazo y treinta piernas tenian tres dedos
 cuando hablaba decia hablahablabla [*no*] *nos podiamos aguantar la risa*”
 IO11
 ‘The teacher had one eye four arm(s) and thirty legs [they] had three fingers
 when she spoke she said *speakspeakeak we couldn’t stop ourselves from
 laughing*’

In this case, the idiom *no poder aguantarse la risa* ‘not to be able to stop oneself from laughing’ serves as a humor indicator, since it points to the incongruent nature of the Martian teacher’s appearance which is bound to be considered hilarious, at least from an earthling’s point of view.

The analysis of these examples reveals that the 9-to-10-year-olds who took part in our study use idioms for the expression of their internal states with regard to a humorous context. This does not necessarily contradict Levorato and Cacciari’s GEM hypothesis, insofar as this model also implies that emotions and feelings are more prone to be expressed using figurative language. Therefore, the humorous nature of the task proposed encourages children to draw on figurativeness – where idioms play an outstanding role.

The humor that characterizes the narrative is also ‘guilty’ of the research surprise found in our study – which has to do with the manipulated use of phraseological items. This interesting phenomenon consists in the deliberate and clearly recognizable modification of phraseological units at a syntactic, lexical or pragmatic level seeking various discursive effects. Humor is one of its most common consequences, since the alteration of a fixed string at any level causes an apparent incongruity that should be resolved apart from the original conventional meaning (Timofeeva 2009).

In the case of adults, phraseological manipulation constitutes a common procedure to generate humorous effects. However, such an intentional modification for certain discursive purposes is obviously a clear example of metapragmatic performance, since it rests on a reflective monitoring of discourse. Therefore, and

taking into account the rather incipient metapragmatic competence of our informants, the presence of phraseological manipulation in the written production of 9-to-10-year-old children becomes an unexpected result of the present study.

Although this procedure is not very remarkable from a quantitative point of view, its qualitative analysis turns out to be interesting insofar as it provides further evidence of metapragmatic maturation during the age band examined. Thus, the analysis reveals that the children in our study had already achieved a sufficient degree of metapragmatic control to grasp the discursive efficiency of phraseological manipulation – for humor purposes in this case. It deserves to be highlighted that girls apparently show a higher degree of competence in this respect, which would be consistent with the researchers' intuition about the higher metapragmatic development level of girls. Nonetheless, both girls and boys still undergo difficulties when they try to properly adjust their modified creations to the context. Our study actually identified several cases where phraseological manipulation followed rather epipragmatic patterns. Example (9) can prove illustrative:

- (9) “- Tranquilo que no cunda el pánico tenemos *el helado oscuro!*” SA11
 ‘Don’t worry there’s no need to panic we have *the Dark ice cream*’

This girl draws on a meme which consists in the manipulation of the famous Star Wars ‘concept’ *El Lado Oscuro [de la Fuerza]* ‘the Dark Side [of the Force]’ and is based on the paronymous relationship between *el lado* ‘the side’ and *el helado* ‘ice cream’ in Spanish. This meme became popular on the Internet more or less at the time of our trials, and to our knowledge, it was actively circulating within some groups of participants. In this case, the girl knows that this is a humorous sample, but she does not ‘fit’ it adequately in the context yet because the manipulated item turns out to be strange and discursively ineffective. This discursive performance is actually in tune with the epipragmatic behavior that largely characterizes the age band examined – as seen above.

Curiously enough, the same reasoning can apply to example (10), which was written by the same author. The manipulated version of the Spanish saying *Víteme despacio, que tengo prisa* ‘Haste makes waste’ (literally, “Dress me slowly because I am in a hurry”) presents what we could call *centripetal incongruity* concentrated on the actual modified unit – but with no reflexive contextual adjustment.

- (10) “Me hice amigo de el muy pronto – le dije el refrán que me habían contado mis compañeros del año pasado. – “*Víteme despacio que sino te voy a dar una torta que te mando a china*” SA11
 ‘I became friends with him very quickly – I told him the saying that my (class)mates from last year had taught me. – *Dress me slowly, or else I’ll give you such a slap that I’ll send you to China*’

Together with such examples of a rather epipragmatic use, the analysis of narratives provides instances of quite a mature metapragmatic competence. Examples (11) and (12) illustrate how some 9-to-10-year-olds demonstrate a reflexive awareness of context and show good metapragmatic skills.

- (11) Aparte como en marte no teníamos casa los profes nos habían dejado en un *hotel cinco meteoritos*, ¡era una pasada! SA9
 ‘Besides, since we didn’t have a house in Mars, teachers had left us in a *five-meteorite hotel*, it was awesome!’

The young writer here modifies the fixed string *hotel de cinco estrellas* ‘five -star hotel’ replacing *stars* for another ‘space’ lexeme, namely: *meteorite*. She thus consciously seeks to create an unexpected – and consequently incongruous – combination which triggers a humorous effect.

Example (12) equally provides interesting samples of phraseological manipulation where even a proper noun can be altered in order to create humor.

- (12) Así que me entro a clase a hacer música. Vamos a cantar “*La Milésima Sinfonía*”. Son notas sin sentido durante toda la canción. Hecha por *Lucky one Desafinohven* SA2
 ‘So, I go into the classroom to do music. We are going to sing the “*Thousandth Symphony*.” It is senseless notes throughout the song. Made by *Lucky one Outoftune-ohven*’

It becomes obvious that this girl uses a hyperbole to modify the title of a famous symphony by Beethoven. Apparently, the exaggeration is more consistent with epipragmatic humor patterns since the incongruity of *Milésima Sinfonía* ‘Thousandth Symphony’ is once again centered on the manipulated item itself. However, the analysis of the whole sentence allows us to see that the new creation actually has a connection with the context and the author is consciously aware of it. Incongruity-building continues throughout the sentence and concludes with another manipulated unit, the proper name Ludwig Van Beethoven, which is transformed into *Lucky one Desafinohven* ‘Lucky one Outoftune-ohven’.

In fact, this curious alteration makes the whole sentence meaningful, creating a humorous context supported on the incongruent situation of a music class where an incongruent song (because of the exaggeration explained above) formed by a senseless sequence of sounds is performed. Furthermore, the composer’s name, *Lucky one Desafinohven* ‘Lucky one Outoftune-ohven’, acts as a useful element to resolve the opposition between a serious script (a music class where Beethoven’s symphony is studied from its condition of a masterpiece) and a humorous one (a music class where an absurd piece of an out-of-tune composer is performed). All these elements give the text a humorous flavor.

6. Conclusions

The utilization of phraseological resources for humorous purposes by 9-to-10-year-olds in their written narratives is analyzed in this study with regard to metapragmatic competence development. The quantitative as well as qualitative research work carried out enables us to draw the conclusions listed below.

The hypotheses posed have been only partially confirmed. Thus, the children aged 9-to-10 who participated in our trials still show a rather epipragmatic behavior when faced with humorous written production, although their metapragmatic competence increases noticeably. Girls seem to show a higher level of metapragmatic control over their written discourse, albeit this piece of information should be statistically confirmed in further research.

Metapragmatic maturation becomes visible in a significantly active use of different phraseological procedures to generate humorous effects. Notwithstanding our initial hypothesis, the children involved in our study can express their emotional and internal states by means of phraseological mechanisms. As pointed out above, the humorous nature of the task proposed encourages children to see figurative language as the most appropriate tool to build an imaginative world for their story.

The hypothesis concerning a possible preference for transparent phrasal compounds over more opaque idioms was not confirmed in our trials. Both procedures present a very similar frequency of use. Girls seem more skillful at using idioms than boys, and their utilization of phrasal compounds is indicative of a higher degree of reflexive control over the text.

The unexpected outcome of our study came from the use of manipulated phraseological items in order to achieve humorous effects. Despite not being very significant quantitatively speaking within our informants' written production, the qualitative analysis of this procedure can enlighten us about the process of metapragmatic maturation occurring at the age band examined. Thus, phraseological manipulation entails a high level of metapragmatic competence, which explains its regular presence in adult humorous discourse. As far as children aged 9-to-10 are concerned, they know how effective this procedure can prove when it comes to creating an incongruous result that will most probably trigger humor. Nonetheless, they are still not skillful enough to monitor the incorporation of that manipulated result into the context, which often generates a sort of *centripetal* incongruity exclusively focused on the manipulated item that has no contextual consequences whatsoever. As for gender distribution, girls showed better skills in the utilization of manipulated phraseology, which again reinforces our perception about their higher level of reflexive control over discourse.

The present analysis has also outlined new lines of research. Amongst other things, the corpus obtained in this study should be extended to samples from other Spanish regions. Likewise, our results should be contrasted with the immediately previous (7-to-8-year-olds) and subsequent (11-to-12-year-olds) period. Finally, a need exists to develop some linguistic tools that can be used for measuring the metapragmatic development level of participants. Tasks like these must definitely be undertaken in future research works.

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Metapragmatics of Humor: Current research trends contributes to a new area in the pragmatics of humor: its conception as a metapragmatic ability. The book collects thirteen chapters organized into three parts: Revisions and applications of General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) in a metapragmatic context; Metapragmatic awareness of humor across textual modes; and Metapragmatic practices within the acquisition of humor. Thus, this book provides an up-to-date panorama of this field, where metapragmatic abilities are described in adults as well as in children, on humorous and non-humorous genres – jokes, cartoons, humorous monologues, parodies, conversation, Twitter – and using several approaches, such as GTVH, multimodality, conversational analysis, eye-tracking methodology, etc.

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