Book of Abstracts

Humor Research Conference

HRC 13 (2023)

Hosted by the
Applied Linguistics Lab
Texas A&M University-Commerce

Contents

HRC

The Humor Research Conference is an online student-organized international multidisciplinary all-plenary event dedicated to the study of humor in all its facets. All submissions about any topic related to humor studies, including and not limited to literary studies, psychology, folklore, sociology, computer science, and linguistics, are welcome. The conference is held entirely online. The conference web page is `www.tamuc.edu/humor`

The 13th annual Humor Research Conference (HRC) 2023 will be live-broadcast on the web (March 31st - April 1st).

Organization

HRC is organized by the Applied Linguistics Laboratory at Texas A&M University-Commerce, Department of Literature and Languages.

Organizing committee (2023)

Student organizers:	Yu Lei	Gouda Taha
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List of Abstracts

What Makes Russian Words Funny

Arseny D. Anisimov   Poster

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Humor prediction is a complicated task. Previous studies based on English analyzed single non-words and words — the entities having as less variables as possible [Westbury et al. 2016; Westbury & Hollis 2019]. We used experimental and statistical methods to find the factors of the meaning, form, and perception which make Russian words funny for Russian speakers.

We asked ˜ 300 Russian speakers to write down Russian words which they consider funny. 40 the most frequent answers from the list we used as the stimuli for the semantic differential. Every participant read a list of 20 words (10 stimuli and 10 fillers). After every word they estimated its funniness, clarity and subjective frequency from 1 'not at all' to 5 'very'. 128 native Russian speakers (M = 18.7, SD = 8.64) took part in the experiment. Participants tended to evaluate a word as funny if it appeared less clear and less frequent for them. All correlations are significant at p-value < 0.05.

Other features were found in the list of all answers (596 words). These features are: belonging to any of 10 semantic categories (e.g. 'ridiculous or dismissive', 'animals', 'food'), having diminutive suffixes, containing syllable reduplication (e.g. imbi'bitsia), consisting of less frequent letters.

Comparing to the results of the English studies, similar features which predicted humorous effect were semantics and lower letter frequency, but diminutive suffixes and syllable reduplication seem to be less significant for the humorous effect of English words.

Discourse Analysis of COVID-19 Humorous Tweets

Bageshree Ramdas Bageshwar, Shahila Zafar   Poster

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Twitter has emerged as a significant platform for the humorous discussion of various facets of COVID-19 pandemic. Analysing this humorous discourse might help understand some of the ways in which individuals conceptualise, react to, and cope with global crises. This article presents an analysis of COVID-19 humorous discourse on Twitter using the framework of discourse analysis proposed by James Paul Gee (Gee, 2011). Using the hashtag '#covidhumour', 54 tweets were selected, and later analysed using 42 questions provided by Gee. The researchers investigated how six tools of inquiry, namely 'social languages', 'situated meanings', 'figured worlds', 'intertextuality', 'Discourses', and 'Conversations', were used to build seven different tasks, viz., 'significance', 'identities', 'practices', 'relationships', 'politics', 'connections', and 'sign systems and knowledge' in the selected tweets in a given context. The results revealed that in most of the tweets, users employed an everyday informal variety of social language, building significance for the intrusion of COVID-19 in everyday life and enacting the practice of casually discussing the serious crisis. Moreover, all the tools were used collectively to build the identities of the authors as aware individuals discussing COVID-19 on a social media platform to build social relationships between aware individuals and the audience on Twitter, thereby increasing social awareness and solidarity. Overall, it was found that almost all the tweets used discourse to create a social good – 'healthcare', and to privilege the sign system of adapting to a difficult situation with the help of humour.

The Mexican Albur: Juicy Banter as a Form of Social Engagement

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The Mexican albur is a popular type of humor based on interpersonal interaction. It is so common in Mexico, that any person, local or foreign, runs the risk of becoming the butt of the albur, if caught unawares. However, the many attempts at defining this cultural phenomenon precisely have, in my opinion, fallen short. While many authors agree that the Mexican albur is a kind of word play based on a double entendre with sexual connotations (e.g., Ramírez Rosas, 1997; Lavertue, 1998; Tomczak-Boczko, 2020; Lundqvist, 2021), the underlying mechanism of how the albur actually works, and how this mechanism separates the albur from other forms of verbal humor, is not as clear. I therefore propose the use of the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH; Attardo, 2008) to analyze representative samples of the Mexican albur in order to reach a more comprehensive explanation of the phenomenon. Arguing that the Mexican albur plays such a vital role in Mexico, gaining a better understanding of this particular kind of verbal humor also allows deeper insight into Mexican culture in general.

The presentation will begin with a brief discussion of the origins of the term 'albur', followed by an overview of the available literature attempting to define and explain the Mexican albur. The third section provides a very brief introduction to the GTVH (for audience members not familiar with the theory) and then analyzes sample albures using the theory. The presentation concludes with summarizing remarks about how the present study will be continued.

Venit ad me videndum socrus tua. Mothers-in-Law and Unwelcome Guests in Petrarch's Epistles

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This paper aims at analyzing humour in one of Petrarch's Epistles, namely the Sen. IV, 4, addressed to Pietro da Moglio, a Humanist from Bologna, whose mother-in-law had tried to visit Petrarch in 1365, but the poet could not (or would not) attend her. In our contemporary culture, in which the stereotype of the mother-in-law has become inherently a source of humour, it would cost us great effort not to laugh at Petrarch's – rather clumsy – attempt at apologizing to his Bolognese friend for not having received his mother-in-law who wanted to pay him a visit. Nevertheless, one of the questions that the present paper intends to address is whether this letter should actually be read in such a way, that is, in an ironic-satirical key, or whether our modern stereotypes might project a contemporary understanding upon a piece of writing whose original purpose was very different.

The linguistic analysis we intend to perform on Petrarch's Latin text also approaches the cognitive metaphors therein – understood as conceptual mappings between a source domain and a target domain, as proposed by the Cognitivist school (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) – which will cast some light on the writer's intentions and will allow us to determine some of the underlying ideas and conceptions that the text provides. The analysis will also confront Petrarch's letter to some other significant pieces of Latin-language literature addressing concepts like mothers-in-law and unwelcome guests- such as Cicero's De Oratore II. 276 (also known as the domi non sum anecdote) or parts of Apuleius' Asinus aureus (namely, the story of Cupid and Psyche).

Obscenities and Insults in Nahuatl, or How the Aztec Made Fun of Their Peers and Their Enemies

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Even though humor and laughter are frequently associated with leisure, amusement, and entertainment, they are never innocent, as they operate like a double-edged weapon, always at someone else's expense. It is not the same to laugh with and at somebody. The misfortunes of others or their deficiencies are a common source of laughter, and the cruelty and violence are, implicitly or explicitly, at their roots. Hence, more often than not, only one side ends up laughing. In this sense, satire, mockery, or ridicule are powerful tools in establishing and shaping political relations, instrumental in combating rivals and humiliating enemies. More than that, mockery and ridicule can constitute a discursive strategy in constructing the memory of past events and remodeling it according to the current need. Consequently, they allow for discrediting those in power and those on the opposite side of the barricade, turning some rulers into villains and tyrants and their subjects into laughing stock.

This paper focuses on the "dark side" of laughter and humor among the pre-Hispanic and early colonial Nahua from Central Mexico. By presenting some examples of verbal insults and performative mockeries, it aims to uncover the process of creation and reconfiguration of social networks and political alliances in the Valley of Mexico in the pre-Hispanic period, and the role the ridicule played in the construction of historical discourse during the first century of the colony.

The Translation of Taboos: Audiovisual Comedy Products in the Age of Streaming

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2021 marked the twenty-year anniversary since the first episode of the TV series Six Feet Under (SFU) – a critically acclaimed, quirky mix of drama, dark humour, and surreal dream sequences – was aired on the US premium cable channel HBO (June 3rd, 2001). Previous analyses (Bucaria, 2010) of the Italian dubbed and subtitled versions of SFU available on DVD have brought attention to the significant discrepancies between the two, with the Italian dubbed version majorly downplaying or even completely eliminating most instances of taboo language and content (including dark humour), and the subtitled version mostly retaining those elements, thus keeping closer to the original English version. Later analyses of audiovisual humor based on taboos (e.g. Diaz Cintas, 2012; Bucaria 2018) have consistently shown how Italian adaptations have traditionally toned down or completely deleted such instances.

With the advent of streaming and on-demand video platforms, one might wonder what, if anything, has changed in the policies and conventions that dictate the rendering of humor anchored in taboo language and content in audiovisual products when they are transposed interculturally (e.g. Valdeon, 2020). This paper will take the case of SFU as a starting point to reflect on the evolution of the adaptation of taboo language and content in the last twenty years as concerns the dubbing and subtitling of Anglo-American comedy content into Italian. Particular attention will be paid to factors such as (potential) differences between free to air and subscription-based platforms and to the increasingly higher audience expectations as far as the quality of audiovisual translation is concerned.

Who's Laughing Now? An Exploration of Humour in the Book of Genesis

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The connection between Chapters 17, 18, and 21 of the Book of Genesis has long been noted; themes of promise, annunciation, and laughter are common to all three episodes. There is much ambiguity, however, surrounding the meaning of 'laughter' in such texts; namely, exactly what kind of laughter is operating, and for what purpose? Along with biblical commentators, both classical and contemporary, the earliest critics of the Abraham-Sarah traditions– that is to say, Second Temple and Rabbinic writers– contended with such questions in their writings.

Due to the sacralisation of Scripture, it is popularly assumed that the biblical text lacks humour. At the other extreme, one must be aware not to read humour into a text in which it is not explicitly intended. The common reader and the scholar must approach the text with caution; that is to say, an awareness of textual nuances, historical context, and, often, the original biblical language, is required.

An examination of the Abraham and Sarah-cycle of Genesis provides an interesting analysis of how biblical humour operates. The following paper utilises three pericopes – 17:15-22; 18:1-15; and 21:1-12 – as case studies for interpreting ancient humour. Comical features in the text and examples of humour will first be identified. Then, utilising modern literary theory on the comic, its function will be established. Finally, the extent to which contemporary audiences can appreciate ancient humour will be explored. It will be found that, with some guiding principles, biblical humour can be identified, and even enjoyed, by modern readers.

From Fairy Tales to Humoristic Stories: The Common Fate of Three Palestinian Folk Characters

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In the first half of the twentieth century, collecting tales directly from the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Littmann (1954) noted the richness of the local narrative heritage. At the center of the millenary trade routes between three continents and two seas and home to holy places for many religious currents, Palestinians preserve in their folklore an astonishing living museum of narrative motifs (Muhawi and Kanaana 1989). Fable seems to have been a very popular genre in traditional Palestinian folk culture. With the traditional pattern of the 'hero's journey' (Propp 1968 [1928]), Palestinian folk tales revolve around the tests that the female or male protagonists must pass in the initiation rite into adulthood. Here, I focus on two male protagonists, Ğūha and Nuss Nsīs (Half-a-Halfling), and a female one, Jbēne (Cheese-White). Ğūha features in stories in which he eventually reveals himself as 'the wise fool' (Grigore 2014). Nuss Nsīs faces challenges from a child's perspective, as in "Hansel and Gretel" or "Tom Thumb." Jbēne passes tests by disguising herself and eventually marries a prince. These characters have stepped outside children's fiction to become protagonists of humorous stories that circulate among adults. I present firsthand fieldwork data from different Palestinian areas on the humorous development of these three characters and its connection to the original story. Since humorous developments of fable characters have emerged in other traditions (Kloke 2006), I will seek to shed light on why this is the fate of some characters and not others.

Humour Beyond Borders: A Comparison of Selected Stories by P. G. Wodehouse and Shibram Chakraborty

Monali Chatterjee   Poster

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P. G.Wodehouse's (1881-1975) distinct approaches to achieve comic effects in writing have created an iconic body of humorous literature. His indelible characters, Jeeves and Wooster, have become very popular subjects of literary research. It is crucial to understand such comic literature, primarily through the traits and behaviour of the characters as well as the absurdity of the situations. Wodehouse's strategies for comic effects in his short stories may be aptly compared with those of Shibram Chakraborty (1903–1980) in Bengali literature. Both the humorists have a large corpus comic literature that inspires creativity even in the present day. Chakraborty has been credited with the creation of seamlessly plausible characters and relatable situations that rewards readers with the joy of puns in the language and the playful subversion of ideas.

The theories of humour like incongruity, superiority, relief and ambivalence by the theorists like Sully, Munro, Bergson, Kant and Freud among others have proposed a systematic reading of humour. Supported by such theories, this paper aims to compare the works of the two authors and examine the strategies of writing farces that make them humourists par excellence in their respective languages. For this research, selected short stories by each writer have been compared to gain deep insights about comic literature.

(smile) w (grass): An Examination of Three Japanese Laughter-marking Particles and their Formality in CMC

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Japanese is a language with multiple levels of formality or politeness structures that are heavily utilized and carry significant social importance in nearly every interaction. Although many online communities have more relaxed social rules regarding the use of polite or formal language, such structures are still present. In online communication in Japanese, 笑, w, and 草 are evolutionarily related pragmatic particles which are used to, among other things, mark laughter. In order to understand the usage of these particles relative to the politeness structures present in Japanese, a dataset was constructed from messages containing these particles that were collected from Twitter, Youtube, and from synchronous chats associated with video livestreams. The messages in the dataset were then analyzed based on the politeness environment in which they appeared. These particles may have some perceived levels of formality or politeness to users (Kuusisto, 2019), but in synchronous and asynchronous online communication, the rules of politeness in Japanese do not appear to play a deciding role in dictating which particles are used. Instead, user preference, community culture, and mode of communication (synchronous vs. asynchronous) appear to have a much larger impact on particle choice.

Jocular Self-deprecation in Japanese Initial Interactions

Chilmeg Elden

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Jocular self-deprecation, which is also referred to as self-deprecating humour (e.g. Hay, 2001), self-denigrating humour (e.g. Schnurr & Chen, 2011), and jocular self-mockery (e.g. Haugh, 2011), has been investigated in a limited body of studies. While this type of humour is perceived as a relatively 'safe' way of practising humour as it targets the speaker themselves, it may pose challenges to the hearer in responding and dealing with the underlying serious component involving the speaker's negative characteristics (Hay, 2001; Schnurr & Chan, 2011). This study draws on a collection of jocular self-deprecations identified from a dataset of twenty face-to-face initial interactions between previously unacquainted Japanese university students (approximately 6.5 hours of audio recordings) retrieved from BTSJ Corpus (Usami, 2022). Using the framework of interactional pragmatics, this study investigates the sequential features, design features, as well as the response features of jocular self-deprecations in Japanese initial interactions. The results suggest that Japanese interactants employ jocular self-deprecations in orienting to a range of preference principles, including avoiding self-praise and 'humble' self-presentation during initial interactions. The findings also suggest that the hearers often orient to not only the speaker's humorous intent, but also to the serious component of jocular self-deprecation, which reflects the Japanese cultural norms and contrasts with previous study findings in English-speaking contexts.

Humour in Generation Z's Digital Body Language

Dagmara Gałajda   Poster

University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland

It is said that it is impossible to suppress emotions selectively (Lamott, 2017). By shutting out sadness, we extinguish our joy and other positive emotions that are the basis of well-being. By denying anger, we forget that this emotion speaks, among other things, of overstepping our boundaries. Hence the importance of noticing, recognising and understanding one's emotions. Language and communication are great tools for exploring this area of our lives. Generation Z, who started university not long ago, have (and loudly manifest) problems with emotional management and achieving/maintaining well-being (McKnight, 2021). Their strategies for coping with different emotional states and attempts to achieve flow (Csíkszentmihályi, 2008) can best be observed in their online activities. The data I have collected on Generation Z's digital body language (Dhawan, 2021) indicate that humour is the primary, most frequently used coping mechanism in this generation's functioning. In my presentation, I will focus on the manifestations, understanding and interpretation of humour in Generation Z's digital body language and online communication and the role that digital humour plays in building this generation's well-being. I will present all this using the example of a group of Polish Gen Z students attending university.

Humor in Spanish as a Heritage Language: Types, Themes, and Nonverbal Features from the Multimodal Corpus of Heritage Spanish (MCHS)

Elisa Gironzetti

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The MCHS is an annotated, bilingual, multimodal corpus of oral discourse produced by heritage speakers of Spanish in the Greater Washington area (mostly of Salvadoran origins, see also Tseng, 2019) designed to document and promote the study of underrepresented varieties of SHL across sociolinguistics generations (Lacorte et al., 2020) and allow researchers to focus on understudied aspects of SHL, such as non-verbal elements and pragmatic discourse features (Gironzetti, 2021). The corpus comprises audio and video recordings of dyadic semi-structured interviews, transcriptions, and annotations of a variety of verbal and nonverbal discourse features, such as the use of discourse markers or the smiling behavior of participants. Among the focal types of discourse targeted by these interviews is humor, which is present in the data as (a) spontaneous humorous comments made by any speaker at any point during the interview, or (b) elicited instances of humor prompted by the interviewer's questions as part of the data collection protocol.

After presenting the corpus and the sociolinguistic profile of its participants, this talk will focus on discussing sample analyses of spontaneous and elicited instances of humor considering their themes and their nonverbal features, namely, the presence of smiling as well as the smiling intensity displayed by any participant (Gironzetti, Pickering, Huang, Zhang, Menjo, & Attardo, 2016). Although we know that bilingual children are exposed to multimodal (i.e., syntax, lexical, but also gestural) language input as they grow up (Clark & Estigarribia, 2011; Goldin-Meadow, 2013), heritage languages have traditionally been approached from a linguocentric perspective that mostly ignored non-verbal elements and privileged the study of syntactical and lexical characteristics over others (Gironzetti, 2021). To date, only one study (Azar et al., 2020) has looked at nonverbal features of HL discourse by second-generation heritage speakers of Turkish. This project is the second to look at non-verbal features of heritage speakers, and the first to focus specifically on heritage speakers of Spanish and humorous discourse.

Joke Generation Using Masked Language Infilling on Automatically Extracted Templates

Mayank Goel, Abhijit Manatkar   Poster

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A joke can be divided into its content and style. Content is the set of keywords, the relation between which is what creates the Incongruity necessary for the joke, and we use the word style here to represent the phrasing and presentation which lends to the tone and template for the joke. Existing works on Humor Generation use a predefined template and attempt to fill it to form jokes. We use this conceptualization and divide the generation process into two parts - template extraction, and infilling. We use the grammatical role of a word to identify keywords and rank them on the basis of semantic salience to the joke - calculated using contextual word embeddings. We then mask the top ranked words/phrases and to obtain templates which we then fill in using fine tuned masked language models. We consider infilling using two types of fine tuned models: (1) Fine tuned on a joke corpus, (2) Fine tuned on domain-specific corpora (eg. programming, music, etc.) for generating in-domain jokes. We report examples and results from a human evaluation using the current state of the art in Natural Language Understanding to understand the current state of Humor Generation through NLP methods.

Bustling Contexts and Rhyming Punchlines: Fluency Effects on Humor Appreciation

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Most people assume that they would find a comedy performance funnier if the venue were bustling rather than really quiet. In contrast to this majority prediction, adding the acoustics of a bustling venue background to the recording of a comedic performance decreased participants' funniness ratings of the comedians and their jokes. The influence was sufficient to reverse the majority preference between comedians, depending on which comedian was paired with a bustling vs. quiet context. People also found jokes with rhyming and alliterating punchlines funnier than substantively equivalent non-rhyming and non-alliterating punchlines. This effect emerged for all 20 punchlines tested. Both sets of findings indicate that easy processing increases perceived funniness. Theoretical implications are discussed.

Making Fascism Funny Again: The Unintentional Kitsch Comedy of Jon McNaughton's MAGA Propaganda

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For many culture vultures and aficionados of the American art world, the name Jon McNaughton probably does not ring any museum bells, however, within the aesthetic gaze of the Neoconservative Christian Right, McNaughton is hailed as "America's painter" for "Making Art Great Again" in post-truth Trumpist America. Indeed, of all propaganda artists working in contemporary America today, few, if any, compare to this Conservative Mormon painter known affectionately as "the Picasso of Provo," "the Thomas Kinkade of Mormonism," "Glenn Beck with a paintbrush," and "Mormon Rockwell," amongst other unflattering terms of endearment. As the Trump Administration's unofficial court painter and the country's "most famous pro-Trump mass-market painter of the twenty-first century," (Hess) this purveyor of propaganda refers to himself as a "political painter" (Weist).

And while many artists have their muses to explore the aesthetic expanse of their imaginations, for example, Picasso had his Dora Maar, Dali had Gala Diakonova, and Francis Bacon had George Dyer, Jon McNaughton draws his inspiration from Donald Trump, Jesus, and devout MAGA followers. Behind the kitsch façade of identity politics, however, lies a more sinister message than the shambolic propaganda conveys through perception and reception. Owing to Jon McNaughton's obsessive support for Trump's authoritarian populism and unbounded American exceptionalism, the painter's propaganda has been described as "dangerous MAGA kitsch" (Wilson).

This paper will explore how the artist's propaganda mirrors the aesthetic path of the former president's own "entertainment kitsch," in the pursuit of profit through deceit. While Donald J. Trump is the poster boy for the kitschiest American president ever, given his clownish physical appearance, "the skin, trying too hard for gold it becomes orange; the hair — that goldilocks swoop; the dark suits and shiny ties; the golden letters on buildings named after him" (Coffelt), appearances aside, however, McNaughton's fascist kitsch portrayals of this aspiring autocrat and his adoring MAGA cult, are no laughing matter.

Representation of Socio-Cultural Gender Norms through Indo Pak Subcontinent Online Cartoons

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Cartoons are the visual representation of social or political issues in any region. The targeted audiences of these cartoons are adults and therefore, these are condensed forms of language and images that may be interpreted in context. One of the social issues that though rarely raised in cartoons, and hence seldom analyzed is gender discrimination. This study is an attempt to present a multimodal analysis of online cartoons from physiographical region of Indo Pak sub-continent (specifically India and Pakistan) to explain how cartoonists in this region, depict sociocultural norms via cartoons. For this study, a corpus of 900 online cartoons by both male and female cartoonists (150 by each cartoonist) was developed. Of these 900 cartoons, only those cartoons were selected for analysis that are on gender issues and categorized them according to Samson and Huber's (2007) three categories of cartoons. The study utilizes Attardo's (2017) General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) and Raskin's (1984) Semantic Script Theory of Humor (SSTH) approaches to identify the visual and verbal elements used as humor strategies. This study also answers how gender (in)equality and perceptions about women are portrayed by communicating the message cognitively/pragmatically through a shared background knowledge of gender norms. Instead of disturbing images, these cartoonists have subtly invoked humor to present a very sensitive and serious issue of treatment of, expectations from, and assumptions about the weaker sex that have become an accepted truth in this region. Thus, this study explores how effectively cartoonists communicate their message to their intended audience through humor manifest in visual illustrations and verbal text. The key finding is that cartoonists have successfully utilized visual literacy and pragmatic shared background knowledge to create opposite script transmitting humorous but undeniably gendered manipulation of women in our societies.

Humorous Words, Sentiment and Emotion in Spanish Tweets

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This paper presents results of a case study investigating the use of humorous words in Spanish tweets, carried out in the context of a research cooperation with the Laboratoire d'Informatique de Paris Nord (France). The case study analyzes a set of 18 (potentially) humorous words of the Spanish language, combining a qualitative linguistic approach with tools and methods of Natural Language Processing.

The study is based on a corpus composed of tweets containing the potentially humorous items in question. Using the python module Pysentimiento (Perez et al., 2021) and the model RoBERTuito (Perez et al., 2022), scores are calculated for positive, negative, and neutral overall sentiment, but also for several individual emotions detectable in the tweets. The study aims to identify possible correlations between these scores on the one, and linguistic features of the lexical items (internal features such as word meaning, the type of word formation, etc., but also context features accompanying the lexical items in question) on the other hand.

Prosody of Rhetorical Questions in a Humorous Context

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Despite the vast amount of literature on irony and sarcasm, there is no consensus on whether these concepts can be used interchangeably (Attardo, 2000; Attardo, et al., 2003) or should be differentiated (Dynel, 2018). However, many scholars classify rhetorical questions (RQs) as humorous and in relation to sarcasm (Frank, 1990; Kreuz, 2020; Tabacaru, 2019; Frenda, et al., 2022). By nature, these utterances convey criticism (with a potential face attack (see e.g. Culpeper, 1996; Bousfield, 2005), are humorous not for the victim but for the audience (Dynel, 2014).

The acoustic features of RQs have gained recent scholarly attention in various languages (Beyssade & Delais-Roussarie, 2022; Dehé & Braun, 2019; Zahner-Ritteret al., 2022; Miura & Hara, 1995; Dehé & Braun, 2020), with only one acknowledging how the pitch accent reflects the speaker's sarcastic attitude (Braun et al. 2019).

This research aims to analyse RQs in a humorous context of a Turkish comedy show (Tolgshow) with the following research questions: 1. Are the prosodic features (mean F0, min F0, max F0, SD, CoV, amplitude) of rhetorical questions different from information-seeking questions? 2. How is sarcasm performed for different audiences in terms of Relational Work (Locher & Watts, 2005; 2008)? 4 episodes are transcribed on ELAN to create a small corpus. Prosodic analyses are carried out using Praat. Exploratory analyses are carried out using conditional inference trees on R. Results indicate that addressee is a significant effect for CoV, max F0 and SD. Interestingly, the main character designs his audience (Bell, 1984) through his F0 choices in RQs.

Playing with Power and Vulnerability in Autobiographical Works of Bill Cosby and Richard Pryor

Tuula Kolehmainen   Poster

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The careers of Richard Pryor and Bill Cosby, two famous Black American stand-up comedians, form a sort of continuity in that Pryor started by imitating Cosby's style of comedy. Soon Pryor found his own voice on stage and started talking about his childhood spent in the brothel run by his grandmother (Watkins 1999). Cosby, however, became a subject of tens of sex crime allegations during the 2000s and 2010s. This is a fact that, for many of us, brought about a moral crisis and changed the way we view American comedy, perhaps permanently. Cosby's reputation as "America's Dad," Pryor's reputation as a "crazy Black man," and the flip sides of these images, which were ultimately closer to the truth, create interesting points of comparison. Not in any way accepting the heinous crimes Cosby is accused of and the abuse Pryor experienced as a child, but accepting them as part of reality, it is important to analyze these comedians with the knowledge we have today.

This paper explores the connection between power and vulnerability in the autobiographical works of Cosby and Pryor. While Cosby's books, Time Flies (1987) and Childhood (1991), can be now questioned in many ways, Pryor's official autobiography, Pryor Convictions and Other Life Sentences (1995), has been praised for its openness and honesty. Moving beyond and consciously resisting stereotypical narratives such as "from rags to riches" and "rise and fall," I show how, in these works, humor both masks and unmasks the tension between power and vulnerability.

Cynicism as Hong Kong Identity: Dayo Wong's Stand-up Comedy

Charles Lam

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This study traces the themes in the performances of Hong Kong comedian Dayo Wong 黃子華 in 1990-2018 and analyzes how his popularity reflects a cynical view towards Hongkongers' mentality. Wong's comedy style is primarily observational humor anchored in the city of Hong Kong. His routines often include self-mockery of what is perceived as the typical Hong Kong mentality. Since stand-up comedy reflects the zeitgeist of a particular culture and concerns of the community, often in the form of cultural critique (Gilbert 2004, Lindfors 2019), this study aims to elucidate how Wong's comedy embodies the cynical and self-aware qualities of the Hong Kong identity. The common themes in Wong's performances range from the mundane reactions in everyday life, to larger issues of one's life purpose and dilemmas. The more well-known examples include the "fishball theory" on fairness (when a Hong Kong customer feels treated unfairly, they would demand to take away other customers' extra perks, rather than gaining more to make it equal), Hong Kong men's "three no's" towards romantic relationships ("does not initiate, exercises no self-control, takes no responsibility"), and responding to all critical comments with "I'm just trying to make a living!" and "Is it against the law?" to justify all immoral choices. Given the huge popularity of Wong, the thorough analysis of his comedic works will enhance the understanding of the collective identity and positioning of Hong Kong in the period of sociopolitical transition around the 1997 handover.

Manipulating Vocalization and Timing of Shared Laughter to Manage Relationship Work Against Humor in Multiparty Peer Interaction

Yanyan Li

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Yanyan.Liwarwick.ac.uk Humor triggers laughter, which can be leveraged by participants to establish relationships with others (Bell and Pomerantz, 2015; 2019). Humor speakers first laugh to invite recipients' laugh as affiliation (Stivers at al., 2011) to the humor, given the shared nature of laughter. However, when the recipient shares the speaker's laugh with humor, there are occasions where shared laughter falls in the middle of a continuum between affiliation and disaffiliation (e.g. Drew, 1987; Clayman 1992; Romaniuk, 2013). This indicates that shared laughter potentially relates to serious treatments and delicate relationship work to the humor. Therefore, using multimodal conversation analysis, this study explores the interactional processes where peers share laughter to undertake relationship work around humor in multiparty interactions. Video and audio recordings (see Figure 1 and 2 for placements of cameras and audio recorder) of six groups of four Chinese 17-year-old Senior Two students who learned English as a second language in a China's senior high school were collected. With silence timed by the software ELAN, data was transcribed according to Jefferson's (2004) transcription convention with adjustment of Goodwin's (1984) transcribing methods for gaze. Preliminary findings illuminate that recipients can share laughter in a delayed manner or with downgraded and silent laugh to manipulate a transitional place from affiliation to disaffiliation to temporarily attend to relationships without overtly resisting delicate speakers' humorous teasing (e.g. negative self-assessment). This research also shows different group members' orientations of tasks and the humor irrelevant to tasks while doing group activities in second language classrooms.

"There is no time like the pleasant." Various Mechanisms and Humor Devices Used in Anti-proverbs about Time

Anna T. Litovkina

J. Selye University, Slovakia

The focus of the present paper is on different mechanisms and humor devices used in Anglo-American anti-proverbs (or proverb transformations) about time. At first, I will list the proverbs containing the word "time" and numbers of their transformations (13 proverbs and 117 anti-proverbs). Then, I will treat different mechanisms of proverb variation in Anglo-American anti-proverbs about time. Although proverb transformations arise in a variety of forms, several types (which are by no means mutually exclusive) stand out, e.g., replacing a single word, punning, adding new words, substituting two or more words, changing the second part of the proverb, repeating words, melding two proverbs, word order reversal, etc.

The Anglo-American anti-proverbs discussed in the present paper were taken primarily from American and British written sources. The texts of anti-proverbs were drawn from hundreds of books and articles on puns, one-liners, toasts, wisecracks, quotations, aphorisms, maxims, quips, epigrams, and graffiti the vast majority of which have been published in two dictionaries of anti-proverbs compiled by Wolfgang Mieder and Anna Tóthné Litovkina: "Twisted Wisdom: Modern Anti-Proverbs" (Mieder and Tóthné Litovkina 1999) and "Old Proverbs Never Die, They Just Diversify: A Collection of Anti-Proverbs" (T. Litovkina and Mieder 2006).

Rushdie's Comedies of Errors: "Satiric medleys" about Serious Times

Bootheina Majoul

ISLT, University of Carthage, Tunisia

"What is freedom of expression? Without the freedom to offend, it ceases to exist"

"I am writing a sort of modern fairy-tale. So that's all right. Nobody needs get upset"

Salman Rushdie is a satirist par excellence; he writes to offend and he is convinced that the very role of a writer is to unveil the errors/sins of his time. His novels are "satiric medleys" putting fiction into a new receptacle, blending serious criticism with laughter and providing a literary genre of Rushdie's own. He mixes Muslim religious stories with Indian mythological forces, blending the whole with his satirical legacy to finally write marvellous postmodern magic realist tales.

His carnivalesque universes attempt to portray and degurgitate violence, corruption, oblivion and social hypocrisy. Most of his characters are ridiculous buffoons whose symbolic representation is tragic rather than farcical. Indeed, Sufia Zinobia in Shame, Saleem Sinai in Midnight's Children, Rashid Khalifa in Haroun and the Sea of Stories, Ibn Rushd, Al Ghazali, the Jins and Eifrits in Two Years Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights all of them incarnate Rushdie/the puppeteers' tools to craft tales for all times that narrate human sins, sensibilities, frailty and loss within a vast universe of (im)possibilities. He crafts stories that defamiliarize and destabilize his readers. He aims to shake and shock them, and make them laugh at their own imperfections. By means of satire, he attempts to make them think, see sight then become aware of the fragility of Truth; as the storyteller puts it in Two Years Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights: "How treacherous history is! Half-truths, ignorance, deceptions, false trails, errors and lies, and buried somewhere in between all of that, the truth, in which it is easy to lose faith, of which it is consequently easy to say, it's a chimera, there's no such thing, everything is relative, one man's absolute belief is another man's fairy tale" (220).

Silliness from Script to Screen: An Analysis of Comedic Media Production Techniques

Matthew McKeague   Poster

Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania, USA

Mtm342lockhaven.edu   While comedy writers may spend significant time creating humorous jokes, characters, and stories on the page, comedic media producers must interpret the written word and execute this material visually. Such producers have devised a 'toolkit' of reliable and commonly used techniques to produce laughs through visual means. In this presentation, the researcher will examine multiple production techniques used within comedic media such as The Comic Triple, The Reveal, Implications Off Camera, Gilligan Cuts, and Ironic Echo Cuts. Grounding this presentation, the researcher will also incorporate classic humor theories such as Incongruity Theory and Superiority Theory as a connection to every production technique. By synthesizing humor theory with media production terminology and tactics, this discussion provides valuable insight to the comedic media production field, using examples spanning the history of our popular culture. More than joke enhancers, these production techniques not only add humor to the written word, but also help tell captivating stories using aesthetics in a funny way.

Satire, Humor and establishment of Identities: An assiduous Study of Mac Flecknoe.

Aditi Mishra   Poster

Chaudhary Charan Singh University Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, India

"Satire is traditionally the weapon of the powerless against the powerful" Molly Ivins. Literature, satire and humor shares robust tie-in. Literarians and literature, with the assistance of satire draws up social commentary by bringing into play heterogeneous literary devices, to poke fun of a specific leader or social figure that engender humor as after effect. The paper in hand centres its attention toward in-Depth analysis of John Dryden's Mock heroic poem Mac Flecknoe in light of Humor studies. Mac Flecknoe tackles with a tug of war between literature versus humor, Dryden perceives himself as proponent of wit, whereas he recognises Shad Well as someone caught up in extolling humor in poetry. Dryden unfailingly solicitude wit and saw humor as akin to farce and he found the characters embroiled in humor. Dryden being a cynic of humor has hypocritically manoeuvre humor and it's all four theories in Mac Flecknoe, one of the key ways in which John Dryden had employed humor is through the use of witty and often irreverent language. For instance, he mocks the pretentiousness of his contemporaries by referring to them as "spunges," "dunces," and "scribblers," and he pokes fun at their inflated egos by describing them in hyperbolic terms. The researcher has tried to Evaluate how humor plays preeminent role in satire made by Dryden and how Dryden had been a humbug and implemented the superiority theory of humor in his satire which is the lowest of all and ridiculed by Plato and Aristotle. Dryden tried to establish the identity of Shadwell though the satire but ends up being establishing the one for his own. The paper also investigates other elements of humor present in Mac Flecknoe that describes about the psychology of Dryden.

An Unlimited Memeiosis of the Let's Go Fuck Joe Brandon Memecycle

Anthony Dion Mitzel

Università di Bologna, Italy

In early September 2021, upon stepping onto the podium to accept his trophy for winning the Sparks 300 NASCAR, American driver Brandon Brown had no idea his name would be forever tethered to the current US president Joseph R. Biden. While conducting an interview with Brown, a sports reporter incorrectly assumed the crowd was chanting "Let's Go Brandon", while what the crowd was really chanting was "Fuck Joe Biden" (FJB). Due to this miscomprehension, a "critical mass" event happened initiating the novel "Let's Go Brandon" (LGB) memecycle (Attardo, 2020) thus creating humor on all sides of the political spectrum and leading to the memecycle's virality (Shifman, 2014). This presentation will look at a selection of humorous memetic content and cultural artefacts which provide ancillary context to the underlying mechanism of the unlimited memeiosis (Mitzel, 2021) of the to the "Let's Go Brandon" meme-cycle.

The Effect of Jokes on Foreign Language Speaking ability: An Experimental Approach

Mohammed NAOUA   Poster

University of El Oued, Algeria

The main aim of this research is to measure the extent of incorporating joke-telling techniques on improving learners' speaking performance. Despite the fact that this skill is the most highly prized, and though it is taught at the undergraduation and graduation levels, students' achievement has not yet met the expectations of teachers and syllabus designers. However, as an attempt to reinforce learners' speaking ability, the researcher implemented the technique of telling jokes as a method for teaching oral expression. The investigation was conducted on experimental and control groups. After a ten-hour course of teaching the results revealed that the treatment group demonstrated significant improvement in their verbal interaction. This implies that the humorous content of jokes has engaged their communication strategies to interact with the external context to create oral discourse. Conversely, the participants of the control group revealed no significant progress in speaking. Accordingly, the study recommends the incorporation of jokes as a technique for maximizing oral interaction in the English language classes.

The Humor Didactical Approach to Enhance the Reading Comprehension

Asma Nesba   Poster

University of El Oued

This study aims at evaluating the utility of incorporating humor in reading comprehension assignments devoted to EFL contexts to teach young learners. A study was conducted during the academic year 2022/2023 in which six middle school teachers of English were interviewed to inquire about the possible outcomes resulted from the adoption of humor in the selected reading texts assigned to middle school pupils. Results reveal that the participants have a positive attitude towards the humor-based texts. They consider humor as an efficient didactical approach to motivate the pupils to learn foreign languages. The participants noticed a considerable engagement and involvement of the pupils with the different activities related to the reading comprehension texts that contain humor. The pupils responded to the tasks in a more rapid way with an increasing attention and mass participation to answer the questions. The participants agreed that humor in the reading passages is maintained through two devices. The first one is a linguistic device which is represented by words, phrases, idioms or irony. The second one is a typographical device in a form of caricature aiming at creating a comic or grotesque effect. The caricature can occupy the totality of the reading passage accompanied with summarizing captions. It can also be incorporated in a long text as a facilitating visual material reinforcing the message conveyed by the reading text. Recommendations were provided to teachers to exploit the children's tendencies to humor to further include it in acquiring other language skills such as speaking and writing.

Turkish as a Second Language Learners' Comprehension Levels of Universal, Cultural, and Linguistic Humor

Hamdiye Hale Özcan, Nuray Alagözlü

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Learners' familiarity with the humor perception and humorous genres in L2 will enable them to improve their social experiences positively. Integrating the learning process with humor may require first identifying what type of humorous context is more comprehensible for L2 speakers. In this regard, the present study determines which of the universal, cultural, and linguistic humor types (Raphaelson-West, 1989; Schmitz, 2002) is better comprehended by L2 speakers. In the study, the Humor Comprehension Test was administered to 25 participants at B2 and higher levels in Turkish as the experimental group and 25 L1 speakers of Turkish as the control group. The test consisted of 7 caricatures for each type of humor and 2 questions for each caricature. In this way, comprehension is examined through a two-step model derived from Suls's (1972) and Hay's (2001) approaches that explain humor comprehension to more than one degree.

In the first step of the test, participants stated their comprehension level, and further, they were asked to resolve the incongruity or the punchline of the caricatures. Thus, the relationship between the humor types, and comprehension levels, the relationship between being an L1 or L2 speaker and humor comprehension and lastly, the difference between the first and second-step comprehension questions among L2 Turkish are observed by using varied descriptive statistics such as analysis of variance, chi-square test and Pearson correlation analysis.

Political Correctness, Social Stereotypes and Humor: Attitudes of Greek-speaking Female and Male Students towards Humorous Discourse

Sophia Papavasileiou, Roula Kitsiou

University of Thessaly, Greece

Political Correctness (PC) is a term that has been placed in the center of political, sociological and language studies especially in the 21st century (Bush, 1995; Hughes, 2011). It is considered to be a quite controversial phenomenon, perceived both as a violation of speech and expression freedom, and as a way of protecting historically disfavored groups from potentially offensive linguistic choices. Recently, it has been a research object of Humor Studies problematizing for example the ethics of humorous speech (see Wilson, 1990; Eyssel, 2007; Strauts & Blanton, 2015). In the Greek context, Humor Studies and specifically political correctness in relation to humorous discourse are quite underdeveloped. Therefore, inspired by the ongoing debate on the role and functions of political correctness, and focusing on the genre of stand-up comedy as practiced by Greek comedians, this study explores the attitudes of 15 Greek-speaking undergraduate female and male students towards humorous discourse, who have participated in three 5-membered focus groups. Specifically, we investigate what they perceive as "humorous" and/or "politically in-/correct" in stand-up comedy examples and how they comment on the comedians' language and content choices, as well as on their freedom to make these choices. We come up with some important conclusions about how political correctness is debated in the Greek context and we shed light on aspects of humorous discourse experienced and approached as a matter of negotiation, controversy and division.

A Self-paced Reading Study on Modalizing Quotational Constructions

Natascha Raue

University of Kassel, Germany

Quotational constructions as in the direct quote in (1a) point to linguistic shapes and inform the addressee about the name of a lexical concept, here the noun wine connoisseur.

(1) a. The owner of the wine cellar explains the difference between the kinds of wine. Someone like that is called "wine connoisseur", says Anna.

b. Kim writes in her e-mail about a meeting with a colleague who served bottled wine. Someone like that is called "wine connoisseur", says Tom.

Name-mentioning constructions (NMCs) can give rise to either a name-informing interpretation when the agent (x) and the event variable (e) are bound generically. On the other hand, an ironic, modalizing interpretation of an existential closure of the two arguments is entailed as represented in (1b) (Härtl 2018). In contrast to the literal interpretation of the nominal wine connoisseur in (1a), the speakers of (1b) express a specific modality, i.e. a negative or evaluative component of the lexicalized expression when making use of verbal irony.

The current study aims to provide evidence on the processing of irony using a self-paced reading design, and NMCs giving rise to either a literal or modalized reading. The experiment was conducted in E-Prime 3 (Psychology Software Tools 2016) and analysed in R (R Core Team 2022). The analysis for the target nominal, proved that despite showing a longer mean reaction time in non-literal conditions, there was no significant difference between the interpretation being modalizing or literal.

"Will You Destroy My Life? OMG, Yes!": A Thematic and Multimodal Analysis of MGTOW Memes

Giuseppina Scotto di Carlo

Università di Napoli 'L'Orientale', Italy

This study investigates the content and rhetorical functions of memes circulated among MGTOW (Men Going Their Own Way), a male-separatist group of the Manosphere aiming at men's self-empowerment, detachment from women, and hostility towards feminism. Through a Thematic and Multimodal Analysis of a corpus of memes posted on Tumblr, the analysis documents how this multimodal form of communication is used by MGTOW to construct their passive-aggressive discourse, persuade new members to join them, and crystalise their views on women, men, society, Feminism, marriage, and divorce, in an easily shareable form that combines visual and textual elements. By using memes as cultural siphons for their bitter humour, MGTOW disseminate their essentialist and deterministic views on genders and society in a way that is detrimental to the well-being of men and women alike. While some of the memes rightfully denounce various forms of social discrimination and especially inequality of treatment in divorce processes, most MGTOW memes simply convey generalised expressions of hatred against women instead of taking action towards social injustice, eventually contributing to the dissemination of misogyny and distorted views on women and real Feminism, along with a subculture of resentment, loneliness, and detachment from love, marriage, and family, risking to groom radicalists through platforms used by evermore younger generations.

On the Discourse of Satire: Then and Now

Paul Simpson   Keynote Paper

The University of Liverpool, UK

This short presentation sketches some of the central tenets of the speaker's monograph On the Discourse of Satire which was first published in 2003. This is followed by a review of the changing profile of satire as a discursive practice, in terms of its status, influence and linguistic conformation, over the twenty years since the book's publication. This changing profile, it is argued, needs to be situated in the context of law, politics and changes in the make-up of the public sphere (including the rise of global populism). The presentation concludes with a call for a broader academic assessment of the legal and social consequences of humour, especially irony and satire, in late modernity. The presentation is illustrated throughout with case studies involving satirical discourse, serving to illustrate the palpable political and legal outcomes that satire, and resistance to satire, has for real people in real social contexts.

The Comic Perspective of Preston Sturges' Sullivan's Travels

Hugo Sousa Simões   Poster

The Catholic University of Portugal

In 1950, film critic Siegfried Kracauer wrote a critical piece on Preston Sturges' Sullivan's Travels (1941) titled "Preston Sturges, or Laughter Betrayed" where he suggests that the film betrays the social and political possibilities of the medium and promotes a conformist attitude (cf. Kracauer, 2012). In this paper I argue that in Sullivan's Travels something much more nuanced is at stake: a complex object that allows a glimpse into several realities, as well as an indictment of the instrumentalization of film for ideological purposes and a defense of laughter. The film does not argue for conformism, nor does it smooth over the unseemly side of life, but instead illustrates the limitations of the medium's ability to provoke social change and to accurately represent disenfranchisement, particularly within the Hollywood studio system of the 30s and 40s. In so doing it becomes a meditation on the possibilities of film and a tribute to the very act of laughter itself, as well as to the power of art to reach individuals in times of crisis.

Reading Humoristic Literature in a Class of English as a Foreign Language

Anna V. Sokolova G.   Poster

Metropolitan Autonomous University, Mexico City, Mexico

This paper examines various advantages of including humorous texts in a course of English as a foreign language. In fact, humor helps capture and keep the learners' attention on classroom tasks, decrease their stress, establish positive relationships between students and their teacher, and engage shy and introvert learners in course activities. Reading humoristic texts is a valuable way to study both linguistic and cultural and pragmatic aspects of the target language. With the aim of exploring the effectiveness of using humorous literature for pedagogical purposes, a study was conducted among Mexican college students enrolled in an English language course. At the beginning, the learners were asked to respond to a questionnaire on their knowledge of English-speaking comic writers and actors, their preferences related to humor, etc. During the course, the learners discussed the linguistic features of some texts from "Chicken Soup for the College Soul: Inspiring and Humorous Stories about College " (Canfield et al.,1999) linked to humor. Special emphasis was placed on developing the students' intercultural competence regarding the premise that humor is perceived differently in diverse cultures. At the end of the course the students responded to another questionnaire on their feedback on reading comic texts in their classes. Their answers to both questionnaires were submitted to a qualitative analysis. The purpose of this research is to contribute to increasing the students' motivation to learn the English language.

The Laugh-Makers: How Language Shapes Stand-up Comedy (and Ethnography)

Joana Solipa Batista   Poster

CRIA NOVA FCSH, Portugal

a25363campus.fcsh.unl.pt This contribution intends to discuss the influence of language in humor and research on humor through the example of an ethnography of the stand-up comedy nights in Lisbon (Portugal). Humor – both as a cultural product, produced intentionally by comedians to cause laughter in an audience, and as a social tool, embedded informally in interpersonal relations from early socialization processes – is omnipresent and deeply linked to language and its cultural variations (Attardo, 1994). Simultaneously, is rooted in language and subverts language. To laugh at a joke requires a cognitive interpretation of linguistic, cultural, and comic codes, an interpretation often so quick that the laughter itself is perceived as involuntary, physiological, not rational. But jokes are often complex plays on words and meanings, relying on figure of speeches, double entendres, irony, sarcasm, metaphors, or idiomatic expressions (Bergson, 2019 [1900]). Humor is contextual language employed with an intention to cause a laugh. Jokes deconstruct, contest, reformulate and devolve an image of reality expressed through (oral and body). Often understanding humor is considered a sign of a native or close to native language level, specially because it requires an understanding of the cultural context where the joke was produced and told and of the permissions and subtleties of speech and expression (Apte, 1985; Davies, 1998). These are requirements also for the researchers studying humor. To these one must add the requirement to learn another type of language, the "language of comedy", a dialect of terms, concepts, expressions that comedians use with one another to talk about what they do.

Is Humor a Socially Conditioned Reflex: A Survey Analysis

Anupama Thekkadavan   Poster

The English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU), Hyderabad, India

This research survey looks into the idea of whether our sense of humor is a socially conditioned reflex. We borrow the concept of Benign Violation Theory (BVT) to understand the psychology of, the speaker of a joke and the listener of a joke to understand how puns work in a developing country where one has to place themselves in the social hierarchy and their existence revolve around their social status. The power struggle between the speaker and the listener is realized via the psychological distance between the two and that of the joke and them. An online survey was conducted among various age groups and gender groups of Indian citizens consisting of multiple choice and multiple selected questions spread to its participants via the various online social media platforms. The survey acknowledges various proposals revolving around jokes, including their types, when would a humor become aggressive, the language around jokes, the evolution of language concerning jokes, and how language tools can be used to manipulate jokes. India is a land of multi-diversity in its every nook and turn, how would it be able to incorporate puns into its society without harming any individual or identity? With stand-up comedies and other comedy reality shows emerging in the new media platforms, would the people of the country be able to address the concerns of humor irrespective of the social status and power asymmetry of the speaker and the audience? Would humor perception be able to integrate itself into Indian culture?

Witscript 3: A Hybrid AI System for Improvising Jokes in a Conversation

Joe Toplyn

Twenty Lane Media, LLC; Rye, New York, USA

Previous papers presented Witscript and Witscript 2, AI systems for improvising jokes in a conversation. Witscript generates jokes that rely on wordplay, whereas the jokes generated by Witscript 2 rely on common sense. This paper extends that earlier work by presenting Witscript 3, which generates joke candidates using three joke production mechanisms and then selects the best candidate to output. Like Witscript and Witscript 2, Witscript 3 is based on humor algorithms created by an expert comedy writer. Human evaluators judged Witscript 3's responses to input sentences to be jokes 44% of the time. This is evidence that Witscript 3 represents another step toward giving a chatbot a humanlike sense of humor.

Humor, Memes, and Metapragmatic Debates on Loanword Translation

Villy Tsakona   Keynote paper

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece

Internet memes constitute ideological texts (Wiggins 2019) often conveying speakers' views and values concerning '(in)correct' and/or '(in)appropriate' language use. White-Farnham (2019) proposes a distinction between traditionalist grammar memes, which support 'correct' language use often through extreme expressions of strictness; and backlash memes, which oppose traditionalist grammar ones and criticize and parody those who support 'correct' language use. Via such memes, speakers participate in metapragmatic debates and convey their (often opposing) metapragmatic stereotypes, namely their culture-dependent and context-specific internalized models on how language should (not) be used (Agha 2007). The study investigates a corpus of Greek backlash memes collected during 2020-2021 and referring to a proposal for translating specific English loanwords into Greek. The analysis concentrates on the humor attested in these memes, which expresses participants' conflicting views about, and resistance to, loanword translation. More specifically, it is shown that humor is employed to frame the proposed translation practices and equivalents as incongruous. The analysis of memetic humor also brings to the surface participants' metapragmatic stereotypes concerning when a translation equivalent is deemed (un)successful, (un)usuable, stylistically (in)appropriate, etc.

Black Humor in Indian Films: A Critique of Slum Dog Millionaire By Danny Boyle

Maria Jose Vani   Poster

Sree Sabareesa College Murukkumvayal, Kerala

Black humor or dark comedy is a style of comedy which makes a implicit discussion on subjects which are usually considered taboo. Film is the best medium to convey the black humor latent in the society.The film Slum Dog Millionaire ,film adaptation of Q&A by Vikas Swarup was a bone of contention even in the international discourse. The film directed by Danny Boyle, starring the Indian duo Dev Patil and Frieda Pinto delved deep into the glittering façade of the Indian society. The film which won 8 Academy awards left the International media flabbergasted. The occidental has always considered India as the exotic Other. This film unravelled the dark secrets that India had been keeping latent since the pre colonial times. This research paper tries is an attempt to excavate the subtle elements of black humor in the Indian film. What is black humor? How is it portrayed in the film Slum Dog Millionaire? Being directed by an English director ,what kind of politics operate in this film? What were the responses of the Indian and Western audience to the film? The paper tries to answer these questions, through the qualitative analysis of the film.

Media References and Humour: Interdiscursive Alignment in Celebrity Tutors' Teaching

Vincent Wai Sum Tse

Monash University, Australia & The University of Warwick, UK

waisum.tsemonash.edu, Vincent-Wai-Sum.Tsewarwick.ac.uk In Hong Kong, celebrity tutors are famous individuals who teach in shadow education, the fee-paying supplementary tutoring of school subjects outside school hours (Bray, 2010). Some research (e.g., Yung & Yuan, 2020) has examined celebrity tutors' highly visible, promotional discourse (i.e., their advertising materials); however, the main component of their work – teaching – has not been examined. In this paper, I present findings from a larger project that explores how celebrity tutors do expertise in teaching. I adopt an overall critical discourse analytic perspective. I draw on a YouTube tutoring talent show as data. Following Goffman (1974), I ask "what is it that's going on here?" in analysing teaching demonstrations from the show. Three layered frames (see Dayter & Rüdiger, 2016) are identified: the exam-oriented teaching frame, the problem-solution frame, and the edutainment frame. In establishing the edutainment frame, tutors utilise two types of playful discursive strategy, namely, the use of media references and self-denigrating humour. They reference a popular Cantopop boy group Mirror as a means of making their teaching entertaining and humorous. They also mock themselves. For example, one tutor makes fun of his own chubby physique to explain a specific exam skill. I argue that the use of media references and (self-denigrating) humour reinforces celebrity tutors' competence face and affective face (Partington, 2008). Maintaining these two sorts of positive face, and more broadly performing entertaining teaching, can be interpreted in terms of what Mautner (2010) called "interdiscursive alignment" in the market society.

My Interest in You is Not a Joke: The Role of Humor in Short-Term Romantic Interactions

Jennifer A. Wade

Chesnut Hill College, USA

wadejchc.edu A conceptualization of the role of humor in short-term romantic interactions will be introduced, emphasizing the role of a socio-behavioral psychological perspective. The current paper extends Wade's (2018) original conceptualization of flirtation to include an emphasis upon humor. The role of humor will be discussed in analysis of data from researcher sponsored speed-dating events. Speed-dating events included five-minute interactions between male-female dyads (participants indicated heterosexual orientation), consenting to video and audio recording of interactions and ratings of the experience via questionnaire. Specifically, discussion includes an observational analysis of participant ratings of "yes" (an indicator of wanting to talk with an individual again following the speed date) and participant mutual matches (both participants indicating "yes" following the speed date). Of emphasis, is the role of conversational humor as consistent with verbal operants, specifically, as autoclitics (Skinner, 1957). Discussion will include specific examples of humor in addition to humor's association with matches and mutual matches in speed-dating. Additionally, the role of humor in online interactions will be considered as supported by an online adaptation of speed-dating.

Croatian Bolivians, Polish Spaniards, and Proud Deplorables: Comic Incongruity and Contestatory Identity Positioning in a Bolivian Meme Cycle

Anita Zandstra

Western Michigan University, USA

In November 2022, amid anti-government protests in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, a novel meme cycle proclaimed the birth of a surprising new hybrid identity: the "Croaceños," a fusion of the Spanish terms croatas ("Croatians") and cruceños, or residents of Santa Cruz. These memes were a mocking response to the words of a prominent supporter of Bolivia's national government, who had recently issued an ultimatum to Santa Cruz-based opposition leaders, calling them "Croatians" and "Yugoslavians" and accusing them of promoting separatism in the Bolivian lowlands.

In this presentation I argue that the Croaceños memes contribute to the construction of a contestatory identity position that people from Santa Cruz mobilize in ongoing political debates. I call this identity position contestatory because it responds (Spanish: contestar) to a political provocation by contesting its logic. By tracing the history of talk about foreigners from the Balkans in Bolivian political discourse, I show how memes representing Santa Cruz residents as closet Croatians point to and participate in longstanding fractures in Bolivian society. I also draw parallels between the Croaceños memes and other political slurs that were proudly embraced by their targets, such as the "polacos" ("Polish") epithet aimed at Catalans by other Spaniards, and Hillary Clinton's characterization of Trump supporters as a "basket of deplorables." In this way I show how, by framing an opponent's attack as a comic incongruity, the Croaceños memes allow supporters of the Cruceño leaders to consolidate support for their own political movement while discrediting the other side's arguments as laughable.

Useful Information

HRC is held annually, as an online conference, over two days during the period between mid-February and early April.

The conference web page is `www.tamuc.edu/humor`. Submissions are encouraged in any discipline and any aspect of humor studies. Submissions by graduate students and early-career scholars are particularly encouraged.

To subscribe to the mailing list please email `HRC@tamuc.edu`

Certificates of attendance and/or presentation are available upon request.