Book of Abstracts

Humor Research Conference (HRC 15)

February 13-16, 2025

Hosted by the
Applied Linguistics Lab
East Texas A&M University

Contents

HRC

2025

The Humor Research Conference is an annual, online, faculty and student-organized, international, multidisciplinary, all-plenary event dedicated to the study of humor in all its facets. It is organized by the Applied Linguistics Lab at East Texas A&M University. All submissions about any topic related to humor studies, including and not limited to literary studies, psychology, folklore, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, computer science, and linguistics, are welcome. The conference is held entirely online. The conference web page is `www.tamuc.edu/humor`

The 15th annual Humor Research Conference (HRC) 2025 will be live-broadcast on the web from February 13th (pre-conference workshops) to February 16th, 2025. Attendance is free but requires registration, via the conference web page.

Organization

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

Organizing committee (2025)

Student organizers: Haomei Meng-Briscoe, Taylor Hill, Hailey O'Hair

Faculty: Shelby Miller, Salvatore Attardo, Christian "Kiki" Hempelmann

List of Abstracts

Discourse Markers in Louis C.K.'s Stand-Up Comedy

Mohammed Alshahrani   Poster

Arizona State University

This study investigates the use of discourse markers (DMs) in Louis C.K.'s stand-up comedy special, *I'm Sorry*. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the research examines the distribution, functions, and roles of DMs in crafting humor, engaging the audience, and addressing sensitive topics. Quantitative analysis reveals a higher prevalence of textual functions (351 occurrences) compared to interpersonal functions (117 occurrences), with humor-related contexts accounting for 48.7% of the latter. The qualitative analysis focuses on selected DMs such as "and, like, alright/right," and "anyway," uncovering their nuanced roles in textual coherence, interactional dynamics, and humor generation. Findings show that DMs serve as narrative tools to structure jokes, manage audience reactions, and navigate controversial themes. For example, "and" aids in elaboration and pacing, while "like" visualizes scenarios to amplify humor. The study also highlights the importance of DMs in maintaining politeness, mitigating face threats, and ensuring fluid transitions within performances. These insights contribute to the linguistic understanding of humor and the performative strategies in stand-up comedy. The paper concludes by advocating for further exploration of DMs in comedic and other interactive genres to uncover additional linguistic functions and cultural nuances.

The Humorous Use of Artificial Intelligence in Foreign Language Teaching: The Fan-Fiction Case of Barış Alper Yılmaz

Kardelen Aslan and Kadri Nazlı

Dicle University

This study investigates the impact of humor in foreign language teaching through the integration of artificial intelligence (AI)-generated fan content featuring fictional characters associated with Barış Alper Yılmaz, a widely celebrated Turkish national soccer team player from EURO 2024. This study employs AI-generated multimedia content shared on fan pages, TikTok, and official team Instagram accounts, examining their potential as humorous instructional tools for young learners. The study contributes to existing literature on AI-enhanced language education by exploring the less examined domain of multimedia-driven learning experiences.

Drawing from previous research on humor's role in reducing learning anxiety and enhancing engagement, the research highlights the dual benefits of AI and humor in creating dynamic, personalized, and motivational learning environments. Ethical considerations, cultural sensitivity, and the limitations of AI tools in meeting diverse learner needs are also addressed, positioning this study within the broader discourse on AI's educational applications.

The study adopts a qualitative case study approach involving six primary and middle school students aged 7-12. Participants engage in 80-minute one-on-one online English lessons featuring AI-generated fan content. Following these lessons, individual interviews are conducted, transcribed, and analyzed thematically. The findings are expected to illuminate the pedagogical potential of leveraging socially popular figures and AI-generated humorous content to enhance language learning. This research aims to provide insights into the integration of AI and humor for engaging and effective foreign language education, while exploring its pedagogical and technological implications.

A new visual logical mechanism

Salvatore Attardo

East Texas A&M University

In this paper, I will examine a case of visual Logical Mechanism that I don't think can be easily (or possibly at all) translated to linguistic signs. I will illustrate this with the work of Tatsuya Tanaka.

The LM here is the scale of the components of the image. In the example, the sushi rolls are placed next to human figurines and railroad tracks in a different scale, thus allowing different visual affordances to be expressed. Sushi rolls don't look much like railroad cars, but a sequence of masses of the same size, in a linear arrangement, with a clock, a station master, and passengers lining up to board, evokes inferentially the script TRAIN.

The reason that these images resist inter semiotic translation is that the scale of the objects is rarely part of what is foregrounded in language. It is part of encyclopedic knowledge that a sushi roll piece is roughly an inch/4 cm in length (after all, they need to fit in the mouth) whereas a railway carriage is roughly 60 feet/20 meters long. These relative sizes are two orders of magnitude apart, which means that their scale is very different. We would seldom say that a railway car is about 720 sushi roll pieces long. Because of this conceptual distance, when the similarities in shape are highlighted, a feeling of "estrangement" occurs.

Functions of Humor in Family Conversations of Saraiki Men and Women

Musarrat Azher

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Humor and gender have been extensively studied in the western countries over the last few decades. However, such studies are really scarce in Asian countries. This study attempts to explore the functions of humor in everyday conversations of Pakistani Saraiki family, and identify how humor is used to foster solidarity and power among same and mixed sex groups comprising of both symmetrical and asymmetrical relations. Data comprises of audio recordings of thirty naturally occurring conversations of varying length among men and women of Saraiki family during their evening leisure sittings. Humor is identified through Attardo's (2012) triangulation method, while Hay's (2000) taxonomy of functions of humor is used to categorize functions of humor as exploited by men and women in their conversations. The results reveal that men largely use humor for power based function to control, tease and dominate women in their interaction of mixed sex groups, regardless of the hierarchical relations. While in the same sex groups they tease one another for competitive and solidarity reasons in their symmetrical relations, whereas, in asymmetrical family conversations they use less humor and mostly humor comes from elders in the form of teasing to control and dominate. Women in the same sex groups, regardless of hierarchical relations, tend to use multiple humor strategies like teasing, sharing their similar stance and personal anecdotes for fostering in-group solidarity and highlighting out-group boundaries.

Idiomatic Creativity in the Humor of Mitch Hedberg and Steven Wright

Carey Benom

Seinan Gakuin University

Idioms are conventional, non-compositional multi-word expressions, ranging from phrasal verbs like "get up" to proverbs like "A stitch in time saves nine." While often deemed "frozen," research shows idioms are frequently used creatively in natural language. This study examines how comedians Mitch Hedberg and Steven Wright creatively employed idioms to generate humor.

Analyzing 493 jokes (275 by Hedberg, 218 by Wright), I identified 79 instances where idioms were used to create humor, representing 16% of the corpus. The primary mechanism was semantic de-idiomatization—using the form of an idiom without invoking its figurative meaning. For instance, Wright's joke, "The problem with the gene pool is that there is no lifeguard," employs the literal meaning of "pool" (as in "swimming pool") rather than the idiomatic "gene pool." This technique accounted for 71 of the 79 cases, underscoring its centrality in humor.

The remaining eight jokes deviated: six (five by Wright, one by Hedberg) preserved idiomatic semantics and critiqued their applicability, such as Wright's "The early bird may get the worm, but the second mouse gets the cheese." The final two, both by Hedberg, employed idiosyncratic creativity, as in "I used to be a hot tar roofer. Yeah, I remember that… day," humorously compressing the expected duration of "used to."

This study highlights idiomatic creativity as a robust comedic tool, with de-idiomatization being the dominant technique. Other forms of creative idiom use warrant further exploration for their unique contributions to humor.

When a Joke is not Funny: Irony or the Uncanny

Chiara Ginevra Berra

Columbia University Teachers College

This essay articulates what I argue is the main reason for Freud's oversight of irony in his works. Freud displayed in his works a rigorous, almost positivistic, albeit always fundamentally dualistic, approach, which privileged a theory of psychic forces concerning the action of libido and pleasure principle. Only in his later production do we find an opening for conceptualising a tendency, a negative force that opposes the pleasure principle. Therefore, I believe Freud could not give a satisfactory account of irony in his theory of humour and the comic developed in JRTU: irony, as we will see, is indeed the experience that primarily deals with negation rather than affirmation. However, after completing Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Freud wrote a peculiar essay that is borderline with the literary, describing the psychogenesis of the feeling of the Uncanny. This analysis reveals a connection to Kierkegaard's notion of irony. Hence, it appears that there is, in fact, a place for irony in Freud's work, an existential opening to the unconscious, even more fundamental and original than that of dreams or jokes. Irony would be, indeed, not a spice of sub-comic, as he writes in JRTU, but the foundation of the possibility of the encounter with the unconscious disruptive drive. I believe it is relevant to clearly explain how Irony and Uncanny are superimposable concepts because they could not be exhaustively analysed in the JRTU before theorising the death drive.

Incorporating Humor and Drama Techniques to Enhance Speaking Skills in EFL Classes: A Case Study

Erika Bertók

J. Selye University

Creative and innovative methods and approaches have become a permanent part of modern language teaching. Looking for ways that help to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning English as a foreign language (EFL) is an essential part of education. The positive effects of drama techniques in EFL classes have been confirmed by various research findings (see e.g. Maley & Duff, 1982; Swale, 2009; van de Water et al., 2015). Humor is a state of mind and most of people intend to be funny. Amusement by humor is an efficient tool of enhancing speaking skills. This can be beneficial for learners. Combining humor with drama techniques (like using stand-up comedy in the classroom) encourages learners to communicate creatively and confidently. Lessons designed on the basis of humor and drama techniques may help learners to practice speaking skills in a positive and supportive environment. The paper investigates the role of humor in the EFL classroom in the higher level of primary school in Slovakia in schools with Hungarian language of instruction and presents the findings of a case study. The purpose of the case study was to suggest practical ideas for EFL teachers or even 45-minute lesson plans. Activities combining humor and drama techniques were designed, tried and tested with the target group. Learners worked in smaller and bigger groups. In the end of each lesson they participated in a short feedback session about the lesson and the activities. The data gathering consisted of regular observation of lessons and a group discussion.

#Humorous Hashtags in Italian Political Tweets: A Corpus-Based Analysis

Antonio Bianco

University of Bergamo and University of Pavia

The study examines the use of hashtags (Zappavigna 2015) for humorous purposes within a corpus of 7.000 tweets – previously annotated based on the parameter: humorous or non-humorous – published by Italian politicians during the 2022 electoral campaign. It is to note that numerous studies (e.g., Sykora et al. 2020) regarding the relationship between humor and hashtags have primarily focused on the use of hashtags, such as #irony, #funny, and #sarcastic, as tools for the automatic classification of humorous tweets. The primary goal of this study is to quantify humorous hashtags within the corpus and to explore whether their frequency correlates with specific communicative traits of the politicians—e.g., a more/less consistent and aware use of X (Twitter), based, for instance, on the number of tweets published by the politician. Furthermore, the study analyzes both qualitatively and quantitatively the types of humorous hashtags, including but not limited to irony (Laukuca 2018), and their various (rhetorical) functions within online political discourse. For example, in (1), the pun (Attardo 1994) #oppofinzione (#oppofiction) [opposition/fiction] serves to ridicule the actions of political opponents. In (2), #Giuseppi (reference to a Trump's speech) is used to mock the political friendship between Giuseppe Conte and Donald Trump. In (3), #sgarbinobel is used for self-deprecating humor: the politician mocks his proposals to address citizens' problems. Additionally, the study examines instances where users of X adopt, for humorous purposes, the same (humorous) hashtags employed by the politicians; such as in (4), where #Gasparritour (used by politician Gasparri) is distorted into #Gasparritourete.

Blogging Belonging

María Celina Bortolotto

Massey University

"New Zealanders are, like, experts in cynicism. We're good observers, because we come from a place where basically nothing happens."
This humorous statement by the prestigious Kiwi filmmaker Taika Waititi on Aotearoa New Zealand culture reflects a key aspect of the tradition of NZ Māori male humour: its reliance on deadpan delivery, awkwardness, and self-deprecation. In the tradition of Billy T. James, Waititi often presents underachievement and low expectations as central themes, reflecting a cultural celebration of the underdog. Their humour critiques stereotypes while celebrating the complexities of ethnicity and identity. As a younger heir to this tradition, Māori YouTube blogger Jimmi Jackson produces satirical and provocative videos that use parody to engage with some of New Zealand's most pressing social issues, including welfare dependence, domestic violence, and gang culture. Jackson, known for his comedic and irreverent approach, is the protagonist of all his videos, personifying a variety of exaggerated stereotypes to highlight and critique complex topics challenging cultural expectations through a lens of irony and observational humour. By addressing sensitive issues Jackson both underscores their pervasive nature within certain communities and offers commentary on certain specific cycles of poverty and disenfranchisement prevalent in Aotearoa NZ. His work offers a recreation of some difficult dynamics within New Zealand's Māori communities, where the impact of systemic inequalities is deeply felt. Jackson's humorous videos, then, "do more than tell jokes" (Goltz 2017), provoking critical reflection on the realities and deep-rooted challenges that shape the experiences of marginalized groups in the country.

Conversational Joking Among Egyptian Youth

Niamh Brown

School of Oriental and African Studies

Egyptians are renowned in the Middle East for their distinct sense of humour, which manifests in both structured jokes and spontaneous conversational exchanges. This project investigates the linguistic features of conversational humour among young Egyptians (ages 20–30) in Cairo. Unlike the sarcasm characteristic of British and American joking, Egyptian conversational humour follows a unique style, blending various humour types in culturally specific ways.

Using a dataset of natural conversations, the study categorises humour into verbal and referential types, as well as structured jokes versus spontaneous banter. It further examines trends in script oppositions, triggers, and the conversational dynamics that lead to humour, such as the number of exchanges required to elicit a joke.

The analysis is grounded in an adapted version of the General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH), modified to isolate linguistic and conceptual elements. Key components, such as logical mechanisms, triggers, disambiguation and script oppositions, are analysed to uncover the interplay of linguistic creativity and shared cultural knowledge in humour production.

This research highlights how conversational humour operates as a complex communal use of language. By examining these patterns, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the cultural and linguistic underpinnings of Egyptian humour and its role in everyday interactions.

An absurd sequence: the role of cooperation in understanding an Italian humorous text.

Roberto Cucurachi

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"Perdersi per strada con l'usucapione" (Getting lost with acquisitive prescription) is a comic article by Alessandro Gori appeared in the Rolling Stone Magazine online version on March 30th,2024. The section here proposed for discussion offers several- hilarious- examples of how the cooperation between the writer and the reader implies a variety of predictions and expectations, and how the revealed anticipations are used to generate a comic response. The analysis is conducted through the lenses of Eco's semiotic theories, highlighting the reader's tendency to look for stable elements such as textual coherence and coordination between common, social and intertextual knowledge and the text content. An important role is also played by the paratextual elements which characterize the first approach to the text: a pop magazine not focused on humorous content, a title suggesting a focus on law-related topics and a picture of an Italian vocabulary are the elements we are given before encountering an absurd sequence of elements that mimics a historical description of Bokassa's dictatorship.

The other media visualities. Humor and press during the Spanish Civil War.

Noemi Díaz Rodríguez

University of Oviedo, Asturias

Within current historiography, the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) is often considered the first local conflict to transcend national media boundaries and generate widespread international interest. This is particularly true in the realm of graphic media, from photography to illustration and newspaper cartoons. Based on this premise, the following communication proposal focuses on the visual analysis carried out by the Asturian press during the conflict. Asturias, a northern region of Spain, was conquered by Francisco Franco's rebel army from the coup d'état (July 1936) until the fall of the Northern Front (October 1937). During this period, its local and clandestine press, the latter still loyal to the Republic, evoked the country's immediate situation through humor. Sometimes in an affable manner, other times more directly or incisively. More specifically, a comprehensive review of the newspapers of those months has been conducted to carry out a comparative study between the rebel and Republican graphic cartoons in the area, from which to analyze the propaganda development of each side. That is, the tools to link, represent, and redirect thoughts and ideology through humor.

From Crime to Canonization: The Memetic Beautification of "San" Luigi Mangione

Anthony Dion Mitzel

University of Bologna

This presentation will introduce the idea of memeiodynamics, a novel framework for analyzing the lifecycle and transformation of internet memes, applied to the recent Luigi Mangione memecycle. This event emerged from the viral discourse surrounding the assassination of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson by the alleged perpetrator Luigi Mangione. The presentation focuses on how this incident triggered a wave of complex and culturally significant memes and brought dormant memes/templates back to life. Central to this analysis is the role of sardonically black humor, Italian ethnicity and cultural stereotypes, as well as Catholic iconography in shaping memetic narratives. Mangione's Italian heritage and religious imagery were used to blend dark humor with cultural critique. This public response also intersected with the ongoing discourse regarding the U.S. healthcare system, using memes to express frustration with said system while criticizing the current state of corporate healthcare practices in the U.S. By examining meme inception, propagation, adaptation, and thematic layering of what we can refer to as unlimited "Luigiosis," the memeplex shines a light on how digital communities continue to use humor and cultural symbols to process and critique real-world events in contemporary times.

Fall Into Place: LLMs make sense of idioms in Marathi

Pratibha Dongare

The EFL University

Large Language Models (LLMs), such as GPT-4-o, have demonstrated impressive capabilities in natural language processing across various domains. However, their performance in languages other than English, especially for creative and figurative tasks, remains underexplored. Idioms, which are multi-word expressions whose meaning cannot be inferred from the individual words, pose a unique challenge for language models. This exploratory study investigates GPT-4-o's ability to generate and interpret idiomatic expressions in Marathi, an Indo-Aryan language spoken in India. The experimental findings reveal a striking dichotomy: while the model excels in comprehending and translating idiomatic expressions, it often struggles to generate culturally relevant or meaningful idioms. In some cases, the generated outputs included offensive or nonsensical language when tasked with generating idioms. These limitations stem from the non-compositional nature of idioms, which require deep cultural, semantic, and contextual understanding. Additionally, it highlights the sparse representation of Marathi idioms in its dataset. Conversely, the model's success in interpreting idioms demonstrates its ability to leverage linguistic patterns and semantic frameworks present in its training data. This study highlights the broader challenges LLMs face in processing humour and figurative language. It advocates for targeted fine-tuning and the development of customized datasets to address these gaps. Enhancing these capabilities would enable LLMs to better support and perform multilingual creative tasks and engage more effectively with the figurative and humorous dimensions of natural language.

Literary Criticism and Linguistic Analysis of the poem *Niente dissi* (from *Fendenti fonici*, 1982) by Jolanda Insana

Giorgia Esposito

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The book *Fendenti fonici* by poet and classicist Jolanda Insana (recently translated into English, thanks to Catherine Theis under the title *Slashing Sounds*) is one of the most interesting verse satires of 20th century Italian literary field. The plurality of linguistic strategies employed by Insana (from semantic layering to syntax, from mixing registers to parody) suggests the adoption of an interdisciplinary perspective. The analysis of *Niente dissi* (I Said Nothing) thus aims to combine the tools of the GTVH (General Theory of Verbal Humor; Attardo-Raskin 1991; Attardo 2001; 2020). with the implications (aesthetic, historical, ideological) activated by the literary text as a whole. As Italian critic Gian Luca Picconi argues, humor takes on a certain specificity depending on the textual forms in which the humoristic effect is produced (Picconi 2014), but this does not preclude the possibility of adapting the GTVH to any type of text. Despite its high descriptive potential, the GTVH has been rarely used in the field of Literary Studies, including those focused more on text analysis (an exception is Vincent 2010). The proposal aims to examine the humor of a sophisticated poetic text through the tools offered by the GTVH and so provide both a contribution to our understanding of humorous 20th century poetry and of further extending the tools of the GTVH.

Membership categories and the construction of humor in Nigerian stand-up comedy

Ibukun Filani

University of Massachusetts Amherst

This study examines how Nigerian stand-up comedians position themselves and their audiences in relationship to each other in developing the interactional space for humor. Specifically, it explores the use of membership categories and the discursive significance of instantiated category devices in the performance. Preliminary findings reveal that Nigerian comedians instantiate three basic forms of category devices: professional, performance/interactional, and social class-relevant categories like gender. In the profession-relevant category, performers orient audiences toward the hierarchical structure of the stand-up comedy industry in the country. The performance/interactional category is used to divide the audience into different identity groups and set one up as the target of humor. In the social class category, comedians use common cultural framings in popular culture like gender and ethnic stereotypes to evoke humour. In any case, the performer uses shared knowledge with the audience in creating locally situated categories like female comedian vs male comedian, comedy concert host vs invited performer, veteran comedian vs emerging comedian, etc.

To each their own, and to each 'albur' its own representation: Semantic conception and associations of the components of the Mexican 'albur'

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Universidad Autónoma de Querétaro

The Mexican albur is a linguistic phenomenon consisting of figurative sexual allusions, which display high-level of complexity and verbal humor, and are made up of the pairing of an alburema with a triggering verb. This paper studies the properties of nine alburemas and explains the characteristics related to their conceptual representations, semantic motivations, core features, productivity, and allusive tendencies. The findings reveal that the alburemas behave as representatives of their prototypes through either primary semantic associations, where they replace the prototypes in order to make a direct sexual association, or secondary associations, where the alburemas replace prototypes which are then interpreted as semantic extensions of an assumed sexual activity. The conclusion is that the level of specificity of each alburema allows or limits the capability and tendency of the sexual allusion that will be developed within the verbal and humoristic game of the Mexican albur.

Are jokes funnier when they are more authentic?

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Authenticity enhances enjoyment in many domains of entertainment and consumption. However, its role in comedy, where exaggeration and fictional premises are common, remains unexplored. We conducted three experiments to examine the causal influence of perceived authenticity on humor appreciation. Participants listened to or read story-based jokes from different standup comedians and rated how funny they were. Before reading or hearing different comedians' jokes, participants read a brief snippet about each comedian that served as a manipulation of authenticity. The comedians were introduced as either writing jokes based on true (vs. fictional) experiences (Experiment 1), picking jokes they liked (vs. jokes they thought others would like) (Experiment 2), or writing their own jokes (vs. using other human writers or A.I. to write the jokes) (Experiment 3). Across all three experiments and authenticity manipulations, comedians' jokes were rated as funnier when presented as more authentic. The higher appreciation of authentic jokes was also reflected in a greater interest in sharing the clips of the comedians with friends and requesting the link to the comedians' full performances.

Challenging and Chortling: A Philosophical Account of Humour's Antagonistic Nature

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Lithuanian Culture Research Institute

As the brilliant humor theorist Michael Billig (2005) famously argued in "Laughter and Ridicule: Towards a Social Critique of Humour", "Why not be anti-humour? There are worse crimes." In a similar vein, I will, in this presentation, suspend the often unquestioned glorification of comedy, humor, and "the funny" by invoking philosophical methods. My goal is to explore the antagonistic nature of humor, demonstrating how it resists definitive categorization.

In contemporary neoliberal discourse, humor is almost exclusively seen in a positive light, as a celebrated individual, communal, and societal trait. Those who are perceived to lack a "sense of humor" are often silently treated as inferior.

By drawing on the works of philosophers like Alenka Zupančič, Todd McGowan, and, implicitly, Slavoj Žižek, I will attempt to uncover the "unnamed" and "unexpressed" side of humor, which offers a deeper understanding of this complex phenomenon. Governed by neoliberal ideologies, humor has evolved into a tool of enslavement, shaping our perceptions in ways that limit critical engagement. This shift has profound implications, particularly in the political sphere, where humor is increasingly weaponized.

While progressive humor is often assumed to promote freedom and critical thought, I will argue that it can, in fact, foster an ironic detachment. Slovenian philosopher Mladen Dolar's critical insight, suggesting that laughter has become "a condition of ideology [which] provides us with the distance, the very space in which ideology can take its full swing" (Dolar, 1986, as cited in Zupančič, 2008, p. 307), will be crucial to understanding this dynamic.

When Less is More: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Minimalist Persian Comedy

Mohammad Ali Heidari-Shahreza

Azad University

Minimalism in art often amplifies subtleties, encouraging viewers to engage deeply with what is left unsaid. This paper explores the understated yet impactful humor in the works of the acclaimed Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami. Employing a revised Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework integrated with a stepwise reflexive thematic analysis, the study examines how Kiarostami's minimalist comedic elements navigate and reflect complex socio-cultural narratives and individual psychological dimensions. The analysis highlights how Kiarostami's humor, often rooted in silence, everyday life, and indirect dialogues, provides a lens to explore themes of identity, societal norms, and personal struggles. By focusing on the interplay between simplicity and depth, this study demonstrates how minimalist comedy becomes a medium to subtly challenge prevailing discourses, engage with cultural particularities, and evoke introspection among audiences. This research contributes to the growing body of literature on humor studies and minimalist cinema, shedding light on the broader implications of "less is more" in comedic storytelling.

Humor weaponized for evil, for good? Not really.

Christian "Kiki" Hempelmann

East Texas A&M University

TBA

Are Women Allowed to Be Ironic or Do They Have to Lie? Metalinguistic Reflections of Adolescents Aged 12 and 15

Karina Hess Zimmermann

Universidad Autónoma de Querétaro

Verbal irony is the type of non-literal language acquired at the latest developmental stage (Airenti, 2017), as it involves highly complex communicative, linguistic, cognitive, and social skills (Tolchinsky and Berman, 2023). Verbal irony is characterized by an utterance that expresses a discrepancy or contradiction in relation to the context in which it occurs (Giora and Attardo, 2014). Prosocial lying is a type of lie whose intention is not to harm the interlocutor but to provide them with a benefit (Hess Zimmermann et al., 2022). One factor identified in the interpretation of irony as prosocial lying is the gender of the interlocutors in the communicative event (Hess Zimmermann et al., 2024).

The aim of this study was to analyze adolescents' metalinguistic reflections on the influence of interlocutors' gender on the interpretation of irony as prosocial lying. The study involved 20 Mexican adolescents aged 12 and 17 youths aged 15 (half of them female), who were presented with various written communicative scenarios ending with an ironic statement made by either a man or a woman. These scenarios were framed within a male or female audience. Using a question-based script, participants' reflections were elicited, as well as the types of knowledge they relied on when formulating their responses. The results of participants' metalinguistic reflections reveal a statistically significant relationship between the interpretation of irony as prosocial lying and the gender of the interlocutors involved in the ironic event.

High Price Toupee: Bald Men as Butt of the Joke in Contemporary Film Comedy

Matthew Hilborn

University College Dublin

"This is all very well and good, but I'm still bald," said Larry David upon winning his Emmy in 1993. This paper explores the cultural significance of baldness in contemporary screen comedy, arguing that hair loss exemplifies anxieties surrounding masculinities, ageing, and power. Since hair is integral to the 'male appearance ideal' (mesomorphic, tall, young [Jankowski et al. 2021]), articulating identity and 'corporealiz[ing] the passage of time' (Deluca 2021: 1), baldness is widely stigmatised as emasculating and unattractive (Razum & Hlupic 2021).

Yet, while qualitative researchers have examined perceptions of baldness (Ibid, Kranz 2011), portrayals in screen media, particularly comedic, remain underexplored. First, this paper traces evolutions in bald men – both 'straight' and spoofed – from heroic leaders (Picard) to hypermasculine action-men (The Rock, Jason Statham) or villains (Voldemort, Thanos), arguing that popular film harmfully frames ba(l)dness as alien, nigh-skeletal, and emotionless. Amid the paradoxical normalisation of both alopecia and its treatments/cures (Bourne & Barnes 2024), it argues that such representations medicalise baldness – despite its prevalence, and non-existent health risks (Trueb 2021) – as a disease.

Second, it analyses how Spanish comedy Very Bald Trip (Nacho G. Velilla, 2022), despite ostensible sympathy, ironically reinforces reactionary 'musculinity' (Tasker 1993) by casting full-maned, hulking actors as bald men seeking transplants. Through relentless gerascophobia and bromantic, heteropatriarchal fearmongering, the film portrays baldness intervention as necessary 'aesthetic labour' (Nickson et al. 2001). Ultimately, this paper argues that baldies remain the socially-acceptable laughingstock, paradoxically privileged (predominantly affecting Caucasian men [NHS 2024]) and disadvantaged (Schielien 2020).

Cartoons as a Cultural Critique on Body Shaming

Humaira Jehangir and Musarrat Azher

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Cartoons - a unique blend of visuals and verbal humor - serve as powerful tools for a commentary on social issues, often critiquing cultural norms and behaviors. This paper investigates how cartoonists use humor to address body shaming – focusing on weight, color, and height – and examines how such cartoons reinforce or challenge societal stereotypes about body image. Drawing on Attardo's (2017) General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) and Samson and Huber's (2007) cartoon categorization, this study examines the dual role of cartoons as a mechanism of critique and as potential reinforcers of societal stereotypes. For the analysis purpose, 200 cartoons depicting different aspects of body shaming from multiple web resources (e.g., CartoonStock) are taken as data. This cartoon data is categorized using Samson and Huber's classification to systematically identify thematic trends in the portrayal of body shaming. The selected cartoons are then analyzed through the application of six knowledge resources (i.e., script opposition, logical mechanisms, narrative strategy, language, situation, and target) outlined by Attardo (2017). The analysis demonstrates how humor mechanisms within the GTVH framework interact with visual elements to either enhance or weaken the critique of body shaming. By examining these dynamics, this paper highlights the dual role of humor in both challenging social biases and reinforcing harmful stereotypes, offering insights into how cartoons influence societal attitudes and promote inclusivity.

The Allure of Humour in Dark Academia

Cyntia Kálmánová

J. Selye University

Dark Academia, a cultural, literary and aesthetic movement, is characterised by an intense admiration for classical literature, philosophy and academic pursuits, often associated with intellectualism, Gothic imagery and existentialism. At its core, Dark Academia frequently explores themes of melancholy, dejection, mortality, and the pursuit of knowledge. The employment of humour, most notably dark humour, serves to ease the weight of these themes, offering a lighter, inflated tone to help process complex ideas, and to confront academic validation and existential dread with wit and satire. Essentially, humour plays an important role in shaping the identity of this subculture, particularly through social media content such as memes and posts. Within the literary realm of Dark Academia, humour is intertwined with a form of intellectualism typified by literary allusions, philosophical reflection, and arcane knowledge. The present paper aims to explore the potential and context of the presence of humour, particularly dark humour, in Dark Academia. It will investigate the role of humour as a form of social critique, addressing themes such as elitism and absurd competitiveness that are associated with Dark Academia identity. The function of dark humour in the subcultural and the literary context of Dark Academia will be examined, where the pursuit of academic excellence and aesthetic appreciation coexist in the romanticisation of complex intellectual issues. To illustrate this, the paper will focus on the depiction of the exaggerated, stereotypical lifestyle of Dark Academia and the juxtaposition of overly obsessive academic pursuits and their absurdity within the context of everyday life.

Parliamentary debates, unparliamentary humour: The Cultural Politics of Humour in the Indian Parliament.

Apoorv Katoch

South Asian University

Humour in parliamentary proceedings is often dismissed as a mere diversion from serious deliberations. However, this paper argues that such humour is far from incidental; it reveals a cultural politics that warrants a closer analysis. Understanding why certain utterances or actions are perceived as humorous requires us to reflect on the colonial legacy of disciplining native populations. The imposition of a regime of propriety, alien to indigenous cultural practices, established norms of "serious" political engagement. Against this backdrop, any deviation from these norms appears humorous, exposing the tensions between imposed decorum and native cultural expressions.

Moreover, parliamentary humour operates as more than a linguistic device; it reveals contestations of power and identity within the space of deliberation. As politicians seek public recognition, humour becomes a performative act—a rhetorical strategy to claim representation and resonate with their constituencies. Through witty remarks, ridicule, or outright absurdity, humour allows parliamentarians to navigate the norms of respectful address while simultaneously appealing to the watching public.

This paper situates humour in the Indian parliamentary context, tracing its historical trajectory alongside the transformations in the political culture of India and the increasing diversity of voices in the Lok Sabha (the lower house of the Parliament of India). Using primary data from uncorrected parliamentary debates and televised proceedings, the essay analyses select instances of humorous performances. By detangling social stratification markers, cultural symbols, and audience framing, it contextualizes humour within the evolving relationship between the public sphere and the parliament.

Theory's Winter? Computational Humor from Symbolic to Statistical AI

Rob King

Columbia University

This paper considers the prominent role played by theory in the earliest implementations of computational humor from the 1990s and 2000s. Two broad camps are defined: on the one hand, joke generators that sought to implement Victor Raskin's Semantic Script Theory of Humor in top-down fashion (e.g., Christian Hempelmann's Ynperfect Pun Simulator; Oliviero Stock's HAHAcronym, both 2002); on the other, generators that worked bottom-up from more local theories of textual forms like Tom Swifties (Greg Lessard and Tom Levison, 1992) and "what do you call?" jokes (Kim Binsted's JAPE, 1996).

This history is then contrasted with contemporary generative AI, whose textual output is theory-agnostic with respect to humor. Whereas the earlier implementations were always conceived as "proof-in-the-pudding" style demonstrations of their underlying theories, contemporary humor generators are black boxes even to their creators (e.g., Joe Toplyn's Witscript, 2021). The paper concludes by tying this situation to the profusion of Potemkin AI humor in the present, in media forms like the recent "AI-generated" George Carlin special and the bot-script humor of Keaton Patti.

Pedagogy of the Playful and the Humorous

Chris A. Kramer

Santa Barbara City College

A virtue educators seek to instill in students is an openness to recognize that there are multiple points of view on any and all theoretical and practical matters, and also the inclination to genuinely shift perspectives among them. Aristotle, in part, encapsulates this notion: "It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain an idea without believing it." I will focus on Aristotle's conception of "entertain", looking at synonyms like "consider", "imagine", "suppose", commonly found prefacing thought experiments, or playing with thought in the laboratory of our minds. For students to sincerely take on alternative perspectives without starting from their own view from which all others are assessed, something more is needed than the mere capacity and inclination toward perspective taking. A playful humorous attitude can provide a unique, instrumentally and intrinsically valuable approach, in which we take on different world views for the sheer pleasure of it. We might playfully adopt vastly divergent belief systems from what we currently take to be true, and in doing so, serendipitously discover a possible truth that might have remained concealed by our very serious goal of truth-seeking. The sense of "playful" I will be using in the context of education is a commingling of John Dewey, Paulo Freire, bell hooks, Maria Lugones, and especially philosopher of games and play, C. Thi Nguyen. This will be coupled with an analysis of a humorous attitude espoused by philosophers of humor such as John Morreall, Robert Roberts, and Samy Basu.

Affective Shifts in Political Comedy: The Move to Seriousness in Late Night Television

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University of Innsbruck

In the wake of major moments of crisis, the tone of political comedy often undergoes dramatic shifts, with comedians showing genuine emotion as part of their performance. This paper explores the characteristics and function of such affective shifts, conceptualising this phenomenon in political comedy by both empirical and theoretical means, utilising qualitative content analysis with data from political comedy programmes in the aftermath of crisis situations. The paper then reexamines the role of political comedians in light of increasing appeals to ethos, arguing that affective shifts should not be seen as evidence of limitations to the art form, but rather as expanding the ability of political comedy to tackle emotionally salient issues. The contribution concludes by briefly discussing implications for the future role and relevance of political comedy, contributing to the evolving understanding of the function political comedy assumes in the contemporary media system.

Being a Funny Woman in Academia: The Lived Experience

Walker Ladd

Saybrook University

Empirical research reflects positivist assumptions regarding objective measures of humor, gender, and the workplace. The interpretivist paradigm, however, seeks to reveal the subjective nature of the lived experience to understand being human. Given the plethora of quantitative research regarding the historically gendered academic culture and socially prescribed norms of humor in the workplace, this qualitative research sought to begin an exploration of what it's like to be a funny woman in academia from a hermeneutic phenomenological perspective. This paper presents recent qualitative research on the lived experience of being a funny woman employed in academia. Following IRB approval, a purposive sample of 6 women self-identifying as funny and engaged in academia was recruited. In alignment with interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) methods, each woman participated in two 60-minute recorded Zoom interviews. The first interview was transcribed and shared with the participant for member checking. A second interview was conducted to discuss additional emerging reflections. Seven steps of IPA data analysis were followed, providing an in-depth analysis of personal experiential themes (PETs) and the connections between themes for each participant before moving to the next case. Finally, interpretative analysis of commonalities across all cases revealed the nature of being funny: Laughter is an act of generosity, humor is a professional tool, and being funny is like being my whole self. Ultimately, women experience being funny in academia as a paradox between authenticity and academic respect. Further implications for the phenomenological exploration of being-and-funny as applied to the human sciences are explored.

Humor in Schindler's List

Chris Land

Independent scholar

The 1993 movie Schindler's List is not Comedy. In fact, it could reasonably be considered as comedy's opposite. Despite this, the film is filled with humor of many different kinds that serve many distinct cinematic purposes. Audiences witness the humor and experience it, but the memory of this experience is more or less immediately discarded.

The talk is a survey of a variety of examples from the film, including brief humor analysis of each as well as a larger examination of why it's present. The underlining theme is that humor and comedy are not synonyms. The talk also hopes to inspire people to see the film again, or perhaps for the first time.

Anonymous Bullet Comments and Regular Comments on Stand-up Comedy in China

Yu Lei   Poster

East Texas A&M University

Bullet comments are anonymous comments superimposed on videos, which synchronize with the scenes and scroll along the videos. The bullet comment is a recent genre of technology-mediated communication displaying commenters' active viewership. This research aims to compare anonymous bullet comments and non-anonymous regular comments. This research employs content analysis to compare communication among comment users between 188 bullet comments on a prerecorded video and 245 regular comments below the video. This video is one from the series Rock & Roast Selected, consisting of 14 videos. These videos include selected Stand-up comedy performances from four seasons of Rock & Roast (2018-2021).

The results show that bullet comments have more self-disclosing comments and questions about other audience's existence to find a feeling of company. Bullet comments have no direct responses like regular comments, which explains that less bullet comments are comments showing communication among users. Bullet comments are superimposed on the video and are tied to the scenes of the specific video, while regular comments are on all 14 videos in the series. The novel appearance of bullet comments explains that they engaged more with the video content rather than having more general questions about Rock & Roast or variety show in general in regular comments. More bullet comments are answers to questions in previous bullet comments, but with more repetitive responses. This may be because responses and the question may not show at the same time on the screen as they are scrolling.

Heine's Humorous Images – On Humorous Imagery in Late-Romanticist Poetry

Anthony Manu

Vrije Universiteit Brussel

This paper has two objectives. Firstly, it aims to develop a model for the analysis of humorous images in late-romanticist and Biedermeier-era poetry. Secondly, by applying that model, it explores the characteristics and functions of humorous images in the early poetry of German poet Heinrich Heine (1797-1856). The proposed model describes how certain textual properties of humorous images can contribute to a work's poetic meaning. It combines insights from contemporary humour theories – most notably the SSTH-GTVH paradigm (Raskin 1985; Attardo & Raskin 1991; Attardo 2001) and cognitive linguistic approaches (Brône, Feyaerts, & Veale 2006) – with insights from the frameworks of cognitive poetics (Stockwell 2019; Freeman 2020) and fictional worlds theory (Doležel 1998). The former insights allow me to describe the properties of humorous images expressed through text; the latter let me analyse which poetic and literary functions those properties serve. Inspired by the six Knowledge Resources of the GTVH, the model distinguishes between four types of properties of humorous images: semantic, situational, thematic, and discursive properties. I apply the model to texts from Heine's poetry collection *Buch der Lieder* ("Book of Songs", 1827). Adding to the existing research on Heine's humour, I argue that the poem's humorous images express complex emotional attitudes towards idealising modes of thinking. Building on Michael Drescher's (2016) idea of "mythological resignification" in Heine's works, I furthermore claim that the humorous approach to mythological imagery adapts the imagery for a cultural context in which a high-romanticist attitude towards the Ideal has become difficult to maintain affectively.

Animals on the Brain: Humor Through Metaphors and Similes in Tunisian Sitcoms, "Nsibti Laaziza as a Case Study"

Manel Mefteh

University of Sfax

Animal-human similes and metaphors are considered a common device used across various forms of communication, often being a source of humor by juxtaposing human traits with animal characteristics. This study addresses how similes and metaphors function as cognitive tools to create humor, blending the familiar with the absurd to evoke laughter. Drawing on Conceptual Metaphor Theory and the Incongruity Theory of Humor, it analyzes randomly selected animal-human similes and metaphors in contemporary Tunisian media, specifically the sitcom "Nsibti Laaziza" (translated as My Dear Mother-in-law). The findings reflect that humor arises from the deliberate dehumanization implied in these comparisons, often stressing incongruities in behavior, appearance, or social norms. Additionally, the study reveals the cultural specificity of animal associations, highlighting how certain animals are linked to particular traits in different societies, which influences the effectiveness of humor. By bridging cognitive linguistics and humor studies, this research foregrounds the role of animal-human similes and metaphors in shaping humorous narratives and their potential impact on audience engagement and cultural criticism.

Dálābēngba as an example of a memetic Vocaloid song on the Internet

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This study analyzes the linguistic features of Vocaloid songs, with a focus on the case study of Dálābēngba. Vocaloid songs are created using the voice synthesis software Vocaloid and performed by virtual singers associated with ACNG (Anime, Comic, Game, and Novel) characters. As a memetic phenomenon, Dálābēngba gained widespread popularity online (Jiang, 2020). This study examines the linguistic factors behind the popularity of Dálābēngba. Key features include (1) wordplay by lengthy, repetitive, and nonsensical names; (2) virtual game terminology (e.g., "monsters," "level up," "gold coin," "treasure box", etc.); (3) a stock plot involving a warrior battling a dragon to save a princess; (4) catchy rhymes including alliteration and end rhyme; and (5) unique prosodic elements. The latter includes unusually high vocal pitches and lengthy phrases (up to 30 seconds) achievable only through speech synthesis, surpassing human physical capabilities. These elements driveDálābēngba's viral appeal first within and later beyond the ACNG community. However, Vocaloid songs like Dálābēngba remain niche phenomena due to the general public's unfamiliarity with Vocaloid and their perception of such content as curiosities (Zhao, 2019). Dálābēngba blends traditional and innovative elements. It humorously subverts a clichéd plot with absurdly long, meaningless names, and meanwhile employs voice synthesis software to generate an artificial voice (Dálābēngba, n.d.). This contrast with natural human speech creates a surreal auditory effect, expanding the scope of humor analysis (Jia, n.d.).

Personality Traits and Humor Styles: A Linguistic Replication

Shelby Miller

East Texas A&M University

This study conducts a linguistics replication of prior research on the Big Five personality traits and four humor styles (Martin et al., 2003): self-enhancing, affiliative, self-defeating, and aggressive. Previous studies measured these humor styles using the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) and have found, for example, that self-enhancing humor is linked to high extraversion, low neuroticism, and high openness; affiliative humor to high extraversion and openness; self-defeating humor to high neuroticism, low agreeableness, and low conscientiousness; and aggressive humor to high neuroticism, low agreeableness, and low conscientiousness (e.g., Martin et al., 2003; Plessen et al., 2020).

In this study, I aimed to replicate these findings using discourse analysis rather than the HSQ to identify humor style. Thirty-two participants were recorded working in pairs on a Tetris-like puzzle. Afterward, each participant completed the Big Five personality assessment. The data were transcribed and annotated for instances of the four humor styles.

Several preliminary results align with prior research, such as openness to experience being linked to more self-enhancing and affiliative humor, low conscientiousness producing more aggressive and self-defeating humor, and high neuroticism leading to more self-defeating humor. However, some findings challenge previous studies, including low extraversion and high neuroticism being associated with more self-enhancing humor, low extraversion producing more affiliative humor, and high agreeableness linked to more self-defeating humor. These discrepancies suggest that humor styles may vary depending on the context in which personality traits are expressed, particularly in cognitively demanding tasks. Additionally, the study highlights that humor observed in real-time discourse may differ from self-reported humor styles, reflecting potential limitations of self-report measures like the HSQ.

The Promotion of the Intercultural Speaker through Humor in the Classroom

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Faculty of Arts and Humanities of Sfax, Tunisia

The paper investigates the way the Intercultural Speaker, someone who has knowledge of one or preferably more cultures and has a capacity to relate to new people (Byram and Fleming, 1998), is promoted through humor exchanges in the classroom. It is based on the assumption that direct intercultural contacts can foster the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes of openness, and skills of curiosity and interpreting. These intercultural contacts are used to introduce learners to appropriate use of language in appropriate social contexts. Humor, or non-serious language, is part of classroom talk and is a sophisticated speech activity. It is even more complex when engaging in a humorous exchange with someone from a different culture. The study targeted 29 post-foundation students who took credited English courses in their academic programs. While all the students were local Omani, the teachers were from the United States of America and South Africa. The recorded conversations generated 35 naturally-occurring humor sequences. Follow-up interviews were administered to teachers to comment on the identified humorous exchanges and the functions they served. The data are analyzed following Byram's (1997) Intercultural Communicative Competence, Sercu's (2000) Intercultural Contacts, Hay's (2001) humor support strategies, Kottohf's (2009) joint fantasies in fictitious conversations, and Attardo's (2009) General Theory of Verbal Humor. The analysis revealed that the operation of humor teacher-student classroom discourse serves as a locus to foster the promotion of the intercultural speaker, as maintaining cohesive relationships is a strong indicator of reaching intercultural growth.

"Press F in the Chat": How the Intrinsic Desire to Connect Has Helped Us Transcend Communities

Hailey O'Hair

East Texas A&M University

Using the popularized meme "Press F in the Chat" as a basis for analysis, this paper explores how memes evolve into broader linguistic phenomena that resonate with human communication and connectivity, while simultaneously provoking reflection on the notion of escapism. By arguing that the meme's longevity and cultural relevance are driven by its ability to connect individuals through the framework first conceptualized in McCulloch's 2019 work *Because the Internet*, the paper demonstrates how digital language trends, fueled by the universal need for connection and empathy, can serve as enduring symbols of collective experience and emotional expression. Conversely, the same memes that facilitate genuine interaction also reflect a deeper trend of digital escapism, prompting the critical question: what are we running from, or what are we running to? This paper concludes that answering these questions is essential to understanding the phenomenon of "running" in the first place—and why the analysis of linguistic phenomena in memes provides a valuable starting point.

Unlocking Possibilities: Preposterous Humor as a Catalyst for Speculative Design

Eun Sun Park and Hyunjae Daniel Shin

Yonsei University

Preposterous humor, often dismissed as mere entertainment, holds significant potential to spark creativity, subvert entrenched assumptions, and foster deeper public engagement. By examining how humor-driven disruption of conventional norms contributes to Speculative Design (Dunne & Raby, 2013), this paper redefines preposterous humor as a systematic approach that broadens critical and imaginative possibilities. Specifically, this study examines how a humorous preposterous perspective can manifest as abductive thinking, retroduction, and critical engagement, all of which are essential for generating novel insights within design practice.

To substantiate these claims, two case studies are presented: KIKservice, Korean YouTube comedy creators whose "Future Series" employs exaggerated satire to confront societal norms, and Idea82people, an Instagram-based creators who employs humorous speculative product ideas and comic-style storytelling to reinterpret daily experiences. Both cases showcase preposterous humor's ability to spark unforeseen inquiries, disrupt everyday logic, and envision counterfactual scenarios, fueling "What if?" explorations (Encinas et al., 2023). Simultaneously, retroduction develops from the processes of prototyping and storytelling, as humorous observations transform into engaging narratives that effectively depict future technological scenarios while incorporating recognizable elements (Auger, 2013). Lastly, preposterousness facilitates reflection on deeper sociocultural and technological dilemmas, enabling broader stakeholder discourse and promoting critical engagement.

This paper demonstrates that preposterous humor serves a function beyond mere amusement; it is a powerful force for reexamining deeply held norms. By emphasizing how the comedic approach can be intentionally integrated into Speculative Design, this research encourages transformative visions of the future and demonstrates how a humorous perspective can reshape the design's potential.

Alla faccia dell'Incongruity Theory: An idiomatic marker of humor in Italian

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University of Siena

The use of "all faccia d*" [lit: to the face of] to mark and/or produce humor is primarily found in Southern Italian and is informal. This is well attested by the Neapolitan proverb "A fàccia d' 'a càpa d' 'o casecavàllo" [lit: to the face of the head of the caciocavallo cheese], or the famous actor Totò's "alla faccia del bicarbonato di sodio" [lit: to the face of baking soda]. In most cases, the expression seems to derive from "fare X alla faccia di Y" i.e., in full view, openly and therefore defiantly (in other words, if I don't need to hide my activities from you, I don't fear you). Despite the extensive use of this expression both in spoken and written Italian, its pragmalinguistic characteristics do not seem to have been studied, with very few exceptions. In this paper, we explore the complex semantics of the expression as well as the sociopragmatics of its use. In order to do this, we analyze 50,000 occurrences of the expression in the Italian Web 2020 SketchEngine corpus. The analysis shows frequent patterns of co-textual features; moreover the qualitative investigation elicits a restricted number of textual functions of the expression that can be categorized to express contrast, opposition, exaggeration, surprise, and mild contempt. Finally, reflections are carried out on issues related to the translation of the instances into American English.

Correlational Study on the Sense of Humor and Positive Mental Health in Mental Health Professionals

Sergi Piñar, Dolors Rodríguez, David Corcoles, Diana Tolosa, and Miriam Leñero y Montse Puig
Poster

Hospital del Mar, Barcelona, Spain

Introduction: Mental health professionals require exceptional communication skills and the ability to maintain an empathetic, authentic attitude in therapeutic relationships. Achieving a balance in physical, mental, and social well-being is crucial for optimal performance. This study focuses on assessing Positive Mental Health (PMH) and Sense of Humor (SH) among these professionals.

Objective: To evaluate SH and PMH levels and analyze their relationships with sociodemographic, occupational, and educational characteristics of mental health professionals in hospital and community settings.

Methods: An observational, descriptive, cross-sectional study was conducted with 130 mental health professionals. Validated questionnaires measured SH and PMH, and relationships between these constructs and sociodemographic, occupational, and educational characteristics were analyzed according to STROBE guidelines.

Results: Participants were predominantly women (71.5%), with a mean age of 41.4 years. Most were nurses (45.4%) with varied work experience and education levels. The PMHQ questionnaire yielded a mean score of 102.6, showing no significant relationships with sociodemographic or occupational variables, though trends were observed for age and autonomy. The Multidimensional SH Questionnaire had a mean score of 67.3, similarly lacking significant correlations. While no positive relationship was observed between overall PMHQ and SH scores, a correlation was found between humor use and situational control.

Conclusions: The study suggests potential links between autonomy, humor use, and certain characteristics. However, these relationships are complex and require further investigation to better understand their implications for mental health professionals' well-being and therapeutic effectiveness.

Laughing at Ourselves: Humour as a Reflection of Indian Identity

Rituparna Prasoon

IMM Business School

Humor is a dynamic cultural expression that transcends entertainment, serving as a lens through which societies examine themselves. In India, a nation rich in diverse languages, histories, and traditions, humor reflects and shapes collective identity through various mediums. This paper investigates the pivotal role of humor by analyzing its manifestations in folklore, popular culture, and contemporary digital media. Drawing from classical narratives like the Panchatantra and Folk tales, as well as modern stand-up comedy, memes, and satire, the study explores how humour critiques societal norms, celebrates diversity, and provides a platform for navigating contradictions and challenges. Central to this analysis is the prominence of self-deprecating humor, a distinctive aspect of Indian comedic traditions. By laughing at its own imperfections—be it through caste critiques, political satire, or commentary on gender roles—India demonstrates resilience and an ability to adapt. This form of humor serves not just as a coping mechanism but as a tool for fostering dialogue and challenging stereotypes in a culturally diverse and hierarchical society. The paper juxtaposes traditional forms of humor with the rise of digital expressions, where young Indians, through memes and viral content, redefine belonging in a rapidly globalizing world. Through this multifaceted approach, the research highlights the significance of humor as a mode of dissent, an instrument for fostering inclusivity, and a mirror of India's evolving ethos. This paper argues that laughter not only reflects India's identity but also actively shapes it, fostering a nuanced understanding of a nation in transformation.

Finding a Plumber on a Sunday: Postmodern Humour in Woody Allen's Side Effects

Andrea Puskás

J. Selye University

Woody Allan has been one of the most significant figures of American culture and literature. His short story collection "Side Effects", first published in 1980, include short stories such as the award-winning "The Kugelmass Episode", "The Diet", "The Condemned" or "The Lunatic's Tale", which are all great examples of the author's excellent style, innovative technique and provocative humour. The paper focuses on the characteristics and driving mechanisms of postmodern humour and investigates how these elements and phenomena appear and operate in Allen's short stories. Based on the theoretical framework of Ihab Hassan (1992) and Paul McDonald (2010), the paper examines how the postmodern humour of the selected short stories subverts and even ridicules literary tradition and conventions, undermines literary criticism and how the author of these stories juxtaposes the serious and the frivolous, the intellectual and the banal, which results in absurdity, laughter and playfulness. Elements of stand-up comedy and their incorporation in the selected short stories will be highlighted and discussed.

Rethinking the Comic Gaze: Nanette

Lucía Robisco   Poster

Universidad Complutense de Madrid

In her 2023 article "Pensar la mirada, un reto antropológico pendiente" (Rethinking the Gaze: An Unresolved Anthropological Challenge), anthropologist Lourdes Méndez Pérez highlights a significant gap in the field: the lack of critical reflection on the gaze and "ways of seeing" within anthropology. This omission, she argues, carries profound social and epistemological consequences. Interestingly, the world of stand-up comedy emphasizes the importance of a unique, personal perspective on the subject of humor (Carter, 1989; 2001). In this context, how a topic is approached often outweighs the significance of what is being addressed. It is thus not surprising that parallels have been drawn between the stand-up comedian and the cultural anthropologist. Although their methods differ, both professions demand keen observation skills and cultural analysis (Koziski, 1984). Building on these assumptions, this presentation critically examines the gaze of the comedian and explores the possibilities that emerge from problematizing this gaze. By doing so, we shift away from the well-trodden debate on the boundaries of humor and delve into the mechanisms of comedic practice itself. The discussion will unfold in two parts:

1. Theoretical Framework: This segment will employ the metaphor of the gaze and consider philosophical contributions like José Medina's (2013) concepts of epistemic lucidity and blindness.

2. Case Study: The second part will ground the theoretical exploration in practice by analyzing Nanette, a groundbreaking stand-up performance by Hannah Gadsby, as a case of self-reflection and critique of the comedian's own gaze.

A Mam, a Plalp, a Snans: a Phonological Analysis of YouTube Poop

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Stony Brook University

"YouTube Poop" (YTP) is a genre of comedic online content wherein existing video footage is carefully altered with editing software to make it sound and/or look funny. From the perspective of a linguist, YTP presents a very different source of language information, where sonic strangeness can be the goal and communication a side effect. As it turns out, there is phonological regularity to the patterns of speech sounds that English speakers find funny, both on a segmental level, e.g. a preference for messing with more sonorant sounds, and on a structural level, flouting unspoken constraints on English words.

There is one particular set of such constraints that has resisted satisfying linguistic analysis for decades, sometimes called Onset-Coda Constraints. Typically, syllabaries for languages are constructed on the assumption that knowing which consonant sequences can start and end syllables is sufficient to know how to combine them into every possible syllable. But in fact, research has shown that, at least in English, certain syllable onsets cannot co-occur with certain syllable codas (for rigorous experimental evidence of this, see Grammaticality and Ungrammaticality in Phonology, Coetzee 2008). The full extent of this phenomenon, and equally importantly, its cause, has remained largely mysterious.

This paper aims to show that studying the artificially funny-sounding memetic constructions in YTP can actually give real insight into Onset-Coda Constraints and how the type of careful yet unconscious line-toeing of phonotactic grammaticality practiced by YTP creators serves as a fantastic lens for the study of linguistic phenomena.

Laughing across Borders: Translating Indian Comedy in The Great Indian Kapil Show into French Subtitles

Payal Sharma

English and Foreign Languages University

The Indian comedy is a dynamic blend of many regional languages, cultural subtleties, and local idioms and slang. It is characterized by its sharp puns, vibrant burlesque, and clever wordplay, all deeply ingrained in its unique linguistic and cultural backdrop. One of the most telecasted comedy shows, running in every Indian household, *Kapil Sharma Show*, has become a cornerstone of comedy on Indian television which deeply resonates with the Indian audience. Despite this, *The Great Indian Kapil Show* is now available globally on Netflix with subtitles making it crucial for viewers from other countries and for French-speaking audiences as well. The humor found in subtitling poses specific challenges, especially when dealing with colloquial phrases rich in cultural allusions and idiomatic subtleties. This study analyses the subtitling techniques employed in *The Great Indian Kapil Show* in Hindi with French Subtitles (Hahaha to MDR), concentrating on how translators tackle the complex job of maintaining essential comedic aspects like puns, word play and slapstick humor. Generally, Indian humor is influenced by its local language and diverse cultural experiences, which might lead to losing its comedic impact when translated for non-native audience. With the help of detailed analysis of specific examples from the French subtitles of a Hindi show, this study explores whether subtitlers can preserve the original comedic timing with an Indian touch, cultural significance, and overall humor. Finally, we will assess how effectively subtitling enables Indian comedy to cross linguistic and cultural boundaries, promoting engagement for a worldwide audience.

Chill, It's a Joke! A Sociolinguistic Exploration of Humor and Malayalam Taboos

Anupama T.

The English and Foreign Languages University

Laughter helps you increase your life span and cracking a joke in between conversations helps to build a connection and make serious conversations lighter. But what happens when the jokes you crack lead to someone question their identity? Words that might be perceived as inappropriate in formal and occasionally informal contexts are referred to as taboo words. Many Indian cultures include taboo terms, which have been making their way into day-to-day conversations while also losing their connotations in the process. The majority of taboo terms in Indian society are closely linked to the oppressed groups within society, whether they be women, members of the third gender, or members of lower castes or lower social classes. This is a sociolinguistics investigation to understand the intersection of humor and language through the perspective of Malayalam taboos. This paper examines how the humorous expressions that evoke laughter are sometimes not humorous to an individual, a group of individuals, or a community and might evoke unpleasant memories. The paper looks into the social dynamics of taboo usage, focusing on how individuals and groups navigate an identity crisis arising from the duality of humor and offense.

Some aspects of punning in Anglo-American anti-proverbs about money

Anna T. Litovkina

J. Selye University

For centuries, proverbs have provided a framework for endless transformation. In recent decades, the modification of proverbs has taken such proportions that sometimes we can even meet more proverb transformations than traditional proverbs. Wolfgang Mieder has invented a term anti-proverb (or in German Antisprichwort) for such deliberate proverb innovations, also known as alterations, parodies, transformations, variations, wisecracks, mutations, or fractured proverbs. The present paper focuses on one of the most popular techniques of proverb variation, punning. In the first part of the paper I address the background of anti-proverb and pun research and terminology. I touch upon the background of pun research and terminology, including ambiguity in puns, the choice of a word for punning, and, 'good' and 'bad' puns. The second part of this paper is devoted to the discussion of various aspects of punning in Anglo-American anti-proverbs about money. Various types of punning in the Anglo-American anti-proverbs about money (such as paronyms, homonyms, homophones, repetitive puns, double and triple puns) are listed and exemplified. 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 (Mieder and Tóthné Litovkina 1999; T. Litovkina and Mieder 2006).

The character of the "joke killer" as a source of humor. A case study from Hungary

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In my paper, I would like to introduce a character from Hungarian jokes, whose main attribute is that he ruins the punchline of every joke he tells. Papjancsi jokes first became popular in Hungary in the 1920s, inspired by János Papp (1879–1944), a popular singer-actor. His character as a notorious "joke killer" is captured in anecdotes, caricatures, and a regular joke column in the humorous weekly, "Az Ojság". At the same time 'papjancsi' became a common noun, and to this day is part of the Hungarian vernacular as a synonym for "joke killer". Papjancsi jokes are typically made up of two consecutive episodes. In the first, someone tells a joke correctly; in the second, Papp Jancsi tries to reproduce the same joke but ruins it by messing up the punchline. Because of the double structure, these texts can also be read as meta-jokes, contrasting the correct and incorrect way of telling a (canned) joke. His character is still regularly referred to in online humor forums, where calling another forum user a 'papjancsi' is a more sophisticated way of calling him a bad joke-teller. In my paper, I will examine this character's popularity and endurance, focusing on its use and function in online discourse. My main sources for the analysis are the Hungarian digital periodical database Arcanum Newspapers and two popular online humor forums.

Multimodal Analysis of a TikTok POV Video: a Case Study

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Video-based social media platforms like TikTok present unique challenges and opportunities for multimodal analysis, combining visual, textual, aural, and temporal modes through editing techniques, captions, hashtags, and audio. Within TikTok's digital platform, humor emerges as a significant sociocultural phenomenon characterized by intricate multimodal interactions. Despite its growing cultural significance, humor in TikTok content remains underexplored, particularly regarding the interplay of verbal and non-verbal modalities. This case study examines a representative POV (point-of-view) TikTok video leveraging the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) and Systemic-Functional Multimodal Discourse Analysis (SF-MDA). The GTVH framework provides a theoretical lens for examining script oppositions, logical mechanisms, and narrative structures, while SF-MDA facilitates coding of multimodal resources and their contextual significance, revealing how meaning emerges through the complex interplay of speech, text, gestures, sound, and metadata. Through detailed multimodal transcription and qualitative analysis, this research investigates how TikTok's distinctive format and participatory affordances shape humor creation. The study aims to establish a replicable framework for analyzing multimodal humor, contributing to broader discussions of digital communication and creative practices on social media platforms.

How to become Camba: Imagining inclusiveness in a lowlands Bolivian comedy series

Anita Zandstra

Grand Valley State University

Humor scholars have long signaled the paradoxical capacity of humor to unite people and to divide (Lowe 1986; Davies 1996; Kessel & Merziger 2012). In Bolivia, lines drawn on the basis of race, gender, social class, political views, and regional origin, have been at the heart of some of the country's most heated conflicts. During the first two decades of the 21st century, longstanding conflicts erupted between Bolivian highlanders and lowlanders as supporters of Evo Morales, Bolivia's first Indigenous president, clashed with opposition leaders from the lowlands over the legacy of colonialism and the direction of Bolivia's future. The burgeoning lowlands department of Santa Cruz captured national and international attention as lowlanders, or "Cambas," attacked migrants from the Bolivian highlands physically and through racist rhetoric. Humorous media productions by Santa Cruz-based comedians, cartoonists, and satirical writers were primary sites for the circulation of harmful stereotypes about highlanders (Swinehart 2018).

In this presentation I examine the made-for-YouTube comedy series El Camba Chuturubí (2016-2020), which departs from much of this period's humorous media production by imagining lowlands social identity as inclusive and open to newcomers. I explore how the series' protagonist, performed by Santa Cruz-based comedian Bruno Ferrante, invites recent arrivals to adopt Camba identity by learning to speak like locals. I also examine viewer comments on these videos and point out the limitations of this invitation to take on Camba identity, given the polarized political climate of the early 2000s and lowlanders' long history of seeing and hearing Andeans as "others."

The Super Bowl of Humorous Ads (introduction)

Patrice Oppliger   Panel 1

Boston University

With the Humor Research Conference taking place the week after Super Bowl LIX, we argue that it is fitting to focus our upper-level undergraduate/graduate course in media effects on the use and influence of humor in the advertisements. Past studies have addressed the effects of humor in advertising on audiences such as attention, mood, comprehension, distraction, brand image, and source likeability. Factors that may moderate these effects include level of product involvement, relatedness of humor, and appropriateness of content. In this case, we are particularly interested in audiences seeing the ads during Super Bowl social gatherings. Even though most of the commercials can be seen online prior to the game, the collective experience of watching the ads in real time is an important element to be explored as many of the viewers are tuning in for the ads rather than the football game.

Panelists will analyze the content (e.g., type of humor, target of humor) and potential influence of the ads. The focus will include gender aspects of the ads, celebrity appearances, and ads specific to insurance brands. Groups will present their preliminary findings and explain how they will continue to refine their studies throughout the rest of the semester.

The Title IX of Ads: Gender Representation in Humorous Super Bowl Commercials.

Mia Galante, Bee Almaguer, and Jenieke Calloway   Panel 1

Boston University

According to the *Sports Business Journal*, Super Bowl LVIII in 2024 set a record 123.7 million viewers in the U.S. More interestingly, the game drew the most female viewers in its history, making up 47.5% of the total viewing audience. Increasingly, ads use female spokespersons, girl empowerment themes, and feature gendered products. This presentation explores how advertisers target audience members' gender and how different humor strategies are employed.

Famous and Funny: The Influence of Celebrities in Super Bowl Ads.

Carolina Shiguti, Zhangviyang, Zou, Nina Pena, and Emma Young   Panel 1

Boston University

Celebrities have appeared in a significant number of ads in recent Super Bowls. Meyers (2024) notes that A-list celebrities can give a brand "instant relevance." In addition, social media influencers are included to appeal to younger generations. Ads feature celebrities associated with football (e.g., coach Andy Reid, current and former quarterbacks Patrick Mahomes and Payton Manning) as well as actors playing comical versions of themselves (e.g., Will Farrell, Ryan Reynolds). This study will explore the most recent use of celebrities and their potential influence on persuasion and audience's perceptions of brand likeability.

From Premiums to Punchlines: The Humor of Insurance in Super Bowl Ads.

Anushka LNU, Mengfei Li, and Andy Nguyen   Panel 1

Boston University

A rather unexpected product or service to use humor in their ads are insurance companies (see Kaufman, 2017). Since the introduction of GEICO's "gecko" in 1999, there has been a surprising number of the humorous ads in the industry. Insurance mascots have become household names such as Flo, Jake from State Farm, Dr. Rick, LiMu Emu, the Caveman, and the Aflac duck. The character Mayhem stands out as the ads include reenactments of disasters, unlike the other ads that tend to rely on parodies and word play. While Ed Faruolo from Prager Creative argues that the insurance industry has hit a saturation point, this presentation explores how these companies continue to use humor in creative ways.

A Gentle Introduction to the General Theory of Verbal Humor

Salvatore Attardo   Workshop

East Texas A&M University

In this workshop the General Theory of Verbal Humor, introduced by Attardo and Raskin (1991) is introduced in a step-by-step format, that assumes no prior knowledge. The various Knowledge Resources are explained, along with the more general scope and aims of the theory. Some attention will also be dedicated to recent developments of the GTVH (such as multimodality) and to applications outside of a strict linguistic domain (e.g., memes). The workshop is suitable for beginning and intermediate learners.

Tickle Me, Teach Me, Touch Me: The Health and Wellness Impact of Humor

Steven Sultanoff   Workshop

Pepperdine University

We "know" that humor is great medicine, but do you know why? Can you explain how humor promotes health and wellness? Most humor professionals discuss the physiological benefits of humor associated with the physical act of laughter. These benefits include stress reduction, pain reduction, lower blood pressure, an increase in specific antibodies, and some other physiological changes. However, these changes are fleeting and may or may not have long-term benefits. Beyond these physiological benefits of humor are the psychological benefits that are often overlooked. These benefits include the long-term effects which include emotional management, cognitive management, and social bonding.

In this lively workshop filled with anecdotes, videos, and clinical illustrations, we will explore the theoretical underpinnings, research, clinical rationale, and practical application of the conscious and purposeful use of humor to promote health and wellness.

Integrating humor into one's fabric is more than simply sharing humor with others. Humor can be consciously and intentionally utilized to improve health outcomes for oneself and others. It can create healthy changes in emotions, cognitions, social relationships, and physiology.

The benefits of humor include "mirth" (the emotional experience of humor); "wit" (the cognitive experience of humor); "laughter" (the physical experience of humor), and relational fusion (the social/interpersonal experience of humor).

This workshop will include a model that provides a solid rationale and guide for the use of healthful humor as well as practical strategies on how to expand one's "sense of humor" so that it might be integrated to the fabric of one's being.

Humor in professional coaching: a literature review and research agenda

Adélka Vendl, Cristina Alvarado, and Martin Euwema   Workshop

KULeuven

Introduction: Extensive research has explored the incorporation of humor in therapy, revealing its potential positive effects on clients' mental well-being and personal growth. However, limited research exists on how coaching could benefit from humor as an intervention and how its utilization impacts the interaction processes and outcomes for both the coachee and coach. Therefore, our research focuses on the use and effects of spontaneous humor within professional dialogues. This paper aims to extract insights from academic literature on humor in adjacent fields and apply these insights to the context of coaching.

Methods: This paper offers implications for coaching theory and practice, alongside a proposed research agenda. The initial phase involves analyzing reviews on humor in professional contexts, and coaching. Secondly, following the PRISMA guidelines for review, we identified 13 empirical studies, which address the role of humor in counseling, psychotherapy, and mentoring.

Results and discussion: Our findings suggest that humor serves as a valuable tool for establishing and deepening the working alliance, fostering adaptive coping mechanisms in clients, and enhancing the cognitive and behavioral process. Moreover, humor is shown to be advantageous for professionals in navigating challenging client relationships. These findings hold significance for the realm of coaching practice as well. In light of these insights, we propose the integration of humor use in education toolkits for coaching professionals.

Useful Information

HRC is held annually, as an online conference, over two or three 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`

HRC is affiliated with the International Society for Humor Studies (ISHS). For information on the previous and future ISHS conferences, please refer to `https://www.humorstudies.org`.

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