The Evolution of Humor Caused by Technological Innovation

By TAMUC Graduate Student Abby Diaz

Adviser– Salvatore Attardo

Jokes vs. Memes – Word Count

- In this study, the average word count was found of 100 jokes randomly chosen from the book *The Penguin Book of Australian Jokes*; the same was done with 100 memes taken from two websites:

  - http://www.srune.com/lists/top-100-funny-memes/154/

  - https://www.complex.com/pop-culture/2012/06/the-100-greatest-internet-memes-of-all-time/the-most-interesting-man-in-the-world

Jokes vs. Memes – Word Count

Joke 1	52	Meme 1	18
Joke 2	195	Meme 2	8
Joke 3	125	Meme 3	13
Joke 4	58	Meme 4	0
Joke 5	208	Meme 5	0
Joke 6	91	Meme 6	22
Joke 7	154	Meme 7	25
Joke 8	38	Meme 8	4
Joke 9	55	Meme 9	14
Joke 10	121	Meme 10	3
Joke 11	66	Meme 11	15
Joke 12	221	Meme 12	11
Joke 13	32	Meme 13	16
Joke 14	194	Meme 14	7
Joke 15	48	Meme 15	7
Joke 16	63	Meme 16	10
Joke 17	119	Meme 17	10
Joke 18	73	Meme 18	6
Joke 19	78	Meme 19	12
Joke 20	69	Meme 20	4

Joke 21	73	Meme 21	13
Joke 22	69	Meme 22	5
Joke 23	64	Meme 23	9
Joke 24	74	Meme 24	6
Joke 25	37	Meme 25	8
Joke 26	105	Meme 26	13
Joke 27	302	Meme 27	7
Joke 28	93	Meme 28	13
Joke 29	135	Meme 29	13
Joke 30	180	Meme 30	11
Joke 31	272	Meme 31	8
Joke 32	186	Meme 32	7
Joke 33	217	Meme 33	4
Joke 34	19	Meme 34	7
Joke 35	26	Meme 35	5
Joke 36	116	Meme 36	5
Joke 37	99	Meme 37	6
Joke 38	46	Meme 38	7
Joke 39	24	Meme 39	5
Joke 40	69	Meme 40	4

Joke 41	63	Meme 41	5
Joke 42	13	Meme 42	5
Joke 43	17	Meme 43	5
Joke 44	21	Meme 44	5
Joke 45	18	Meme 45	6
Joke 46	27	Meme 46	1
Joke 47	10	Meme 47	4
Joke 48	71	Meme 48	8
Joke 49	64	Meme 49	5
Joke 50	35	Meme 50	3
Joke 51	55	Meme 51	12
Joke 52	24	Meme 52	13
Joke 53	60	Meme 53	12
Joke 54	17	Meme 54	16
Joke 55	14	Meme 55	8
Joke 56	34	Meme 56	10
Joke 57	20	Meme 57	22
Joke 58	23	Meme 58	14
Joke 59	41	Meme 59	15
Joke 60	23	Meme 60	17

Jokes vs. Memes – Word Count

Joke 61	55	Meme 61	14
Joke 62	15	Meme 62	12
Joke 63	47	Meme 63	10
Joke 64	31	Meme 64	15
Joke 65	27	Meme 65	12
Joke 66	20	Meme 66	8
Joke 67	37	Meme 67	12
Joke 68	41	Meme 68	4
Joke 69	48	Meme 69	6
Joke 70	20	Meme 70	4
Joke 71	15	Meme 71	10
Joke 72	43	Meme 72	14
Joke 73	27	Meme 73	8
Joke 74	37	Meme 74	9
Joke 75	54	Meme 75	20
Joke 76	46	Meme 76	12
Joke 77	49	Meme 77	20
Joke 78	49	Meme 78	5
Joke 79	32	Meme 79	13
Joke 80	32	Meme 80	18

Joke 81	22	Meme 81	10
Joke 82	21	Meme 82	3
Joke 83	23	Meme 83	10
Joke 84	10	Meme 84	8
Joke 85	59	Meme 85	8
Joke 86	43	Meme 86	9
Joke 87	15	Meme 87	3
Joke 88	20	Meme 88	29
Joke 89	15	Meme 89	15
Joke 90	15	Meme 90	6
Joke 91	24	Meme 91	8
Joke 92	15	Meme 92	9
Joke 93	21	Meme 93	8
Joke 94	32	Meme 94	4
Joke 95	12	Meme 95	11
Joke 96	19	Meme 96	12
Joke 97	18	Meme 97	9
Joke 98	15	Meme 98	11
Joke 99	16	Meme 99	17
Joke 100	23	Meme 100	16

Average word count for the 100 jokes – 60.79

Average word count for the 100 memes – 9.79

A Picture is Worth a 1000 Words

- In their paper on jokes as a text type, Attardo and Chabanne (1992) explain how humorous points can be created by the interaction of visuals and text.
- Some visuals are independently humorous, such as the picture on the right.

A Picture is Worth a 1000 Words

"Fools! They made me into a free-range chicken ... and man, I never looked back."
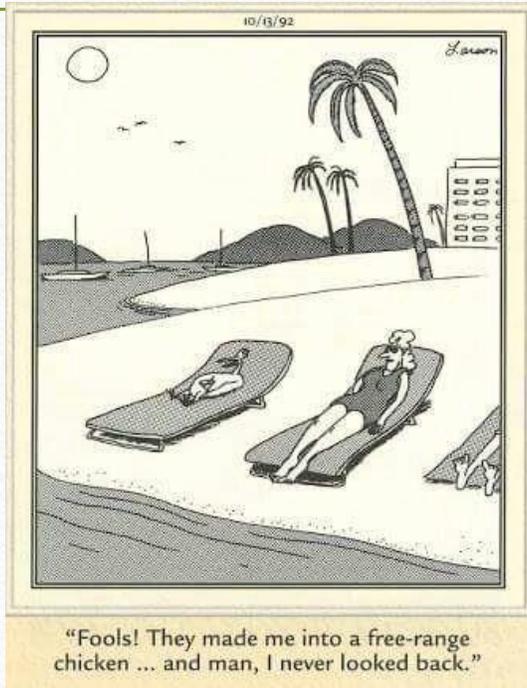
- In other cases, the visual requires the accompaniment of humorous text.

- Take, for example, the *Far Side* cartoon to the left. If the text were removed, the cartoon would no longer be humorous (strange, perhaps, but now humorous). In cases like this, the visual serves as an introduction to the situation.

A Picture is Worth a 1000 Words

The opposite can occur as well. Humor can be created by a normal caption that is accompanied with an incongruent visual.
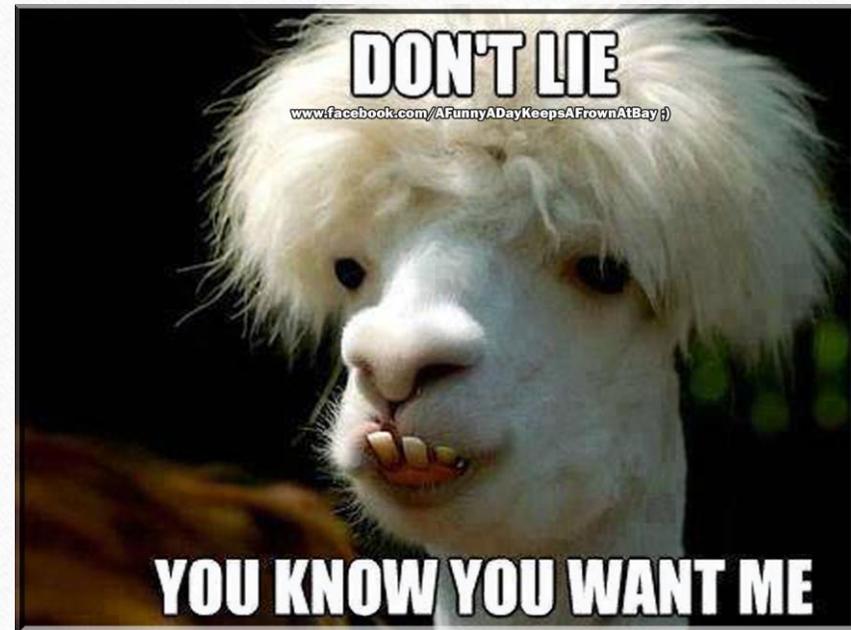
A Picture is Worth a 1000 Words

- In her book, *The Language of Jokes in the Digital Age*, Delia Chiaro (2018) claims that we have shifted from slow humor to fast humor, saying that we live in a fast moving, online world that quickly grows tired of yesterday's news.

- I propose that this is related to the finding that memes tend to be strikingly shorter than more traditional jokes. With an abundance of sources of humor at one's finger tips, it is plausible that the current generation does not want to spend much time on any one source.

Instant Gratification

With less or nothing at all to read (or hear), is this type of humor simply a result of a fast-paced environment that is geared toward instant gratification? (An environment that has been largely created by the internet) Has the modern mind been trained to expect things instantly, and with minimal effort? If so, does it stand to reason that the current generation simply does not want to wait or put forth effort for more than a few seconds to enjoy their humor? Or is it that humans have typically always preferred visuals over text when it comes to humor, and that the current technology is simply enabling a manifestation of this preference?
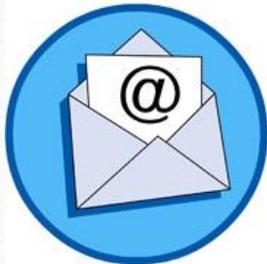
A Return to a Pre-literate Culture?

According to an article published by the University of Texas at Arlington (2015), there was a 10% drop in the U.S. literacy rate between the years 1982 and 2002. They go on to say that many researchers cite the rapid increase of other types of entertainment media as the cause (in addition to educators failing to encourage students to develop a daily habit of reading.)

# A Return to a Pre-literate Culture?

With phenomena such as the joke/meme word count ratio of about 6 to 1 found in this study; a decrease in literacy rates due partially to advances in technology; and inventions such as Siri and Alexis that are verbally activated, is it reasonable to speculate that our current technological innovation is generating, at least in part, a return to a pre-literate, visual culture in regards to both humor and the culture as a whole?
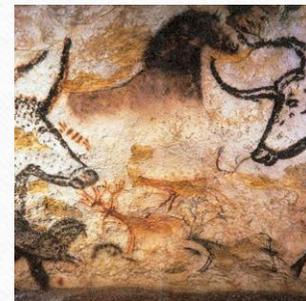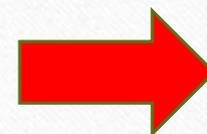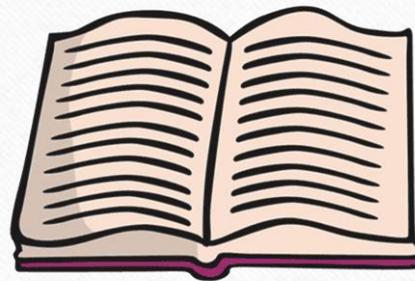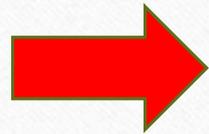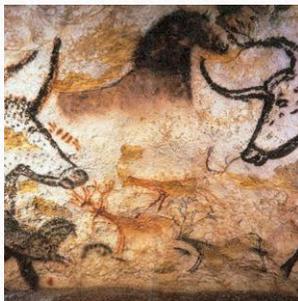
Or Progress to a Tertiary Orality?

- According to Turner and Allen (2013) we may be on the verge of a "tertiary orality" (an interdependence with technology.)

- They point out that our secondary orality (literacy) brought about major changes such as the Industrial Revolution.

- If we do reach a tertiary orality, what changes might it bring to our daily lives? Will the language of humor be completely different than it was just 30 years ago?
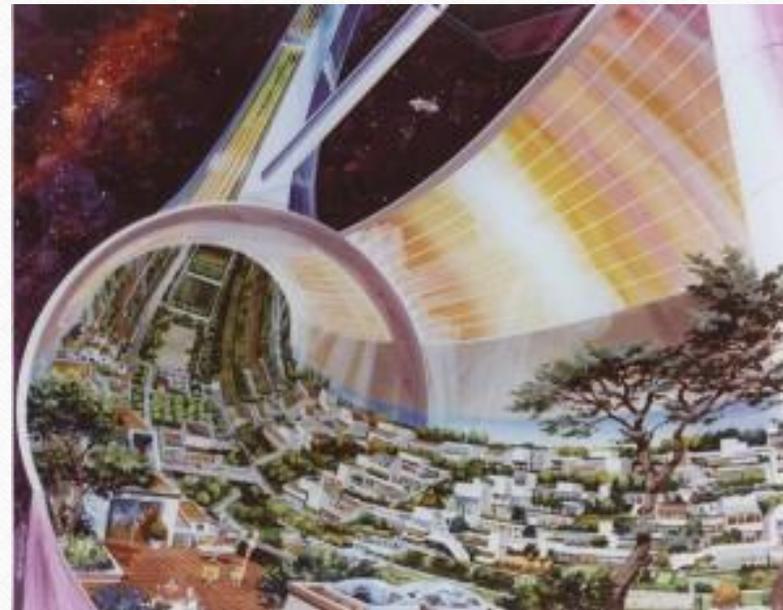
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