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Textually Constructed Meaning Shifts in Jokes: A New Stylistic Theory of Jokes

Faye Alice Chambers

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Huddersfield

8th December 2021

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Abstract

This thesis takes a stylistic approach to joke analysis, in order to answer the question of 'what makes a joke text funny?'. According to Simpson et al (2019), humour research is often neglected in stylistics, and research into humour from outside of this discipline lacks a consensus or joined up approach. The three main families of humour research (Attardo, 1994) are introduced, with the suggestion that they can form a unified approach as they are all aspects of foregrounding occurring through deviation from norms at either linguistic, ideational or interpersonal levels of meaning. This leads to the conclusion that foregrounding is a necessary feature of humour, but not sufficient to define a text as humorous.

Raskin's (1985) 'Semantic Script Theory of Humour' (SSTH) has become a mainstay of humour research due to the claims that this theory *does* provide the necessary and sufficient conditions to define a text as joke carrying. The SSTH hypothesis that jokes are constructed using a pair of overlapping and opposing scripts remains unfalsified, though this thesis makes the argument that this is due to an unfalsifiable methodology, and suggests revisions to the SSTH from a stylistic approach. Using Jeffries' (2010b) and Davies' (2012;2013) work on constructed opposition a sample of 80 jokes is analysed, finding that a majority of these joke texts are not based on constructed oppositions which does not offer support to the SSTH approach.

The remainder of the thesis then details the text-based discovery process which was taken to develop a new theoretical framework for joke analysis. In a three-stage process, quantitative and qualitative textual analysis is applied to a total of 645 jokes from the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, to determine what patterns are present in the humorous textual meanings. This leads to the proposal of a new theoretical framework of Textually Constructed Meaning Shifts in Jokes, with a testable hypothesis that joke texts will contain at least one of five foregrounded Textually Constructed Meaning Shifts: bisociation, reinterpretation, asymmetrical comparison, contradiction and performative reinforcement.

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Finally, I am grateful to all the talented comedians and writers whose work features in this thesis for the joy they bring to our lives – especially to James Acaster, for this timeless quote[1] about flapjacks which perfectly encapsulates the experience of writing a doctoral thesis:

'Started making it.

Had a breakdown.

Bon appetite!'

[1] Acaster, J (contestant). (2019). 'The Great Celebrity Bake Off for SU2C' (S2, Ep2) [Television series episode]. In (Love Productions). *The Great British Bake Off.* Channel 4.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis will explore the linguistic choices which are made in order for a text to be perceived as an example of a joke. Jokes are a prototypical form of humour (Dynel, 2009: 1284), and according to Nash (1985: 1) 'Humour is a specifying characteristic of humanity'. Raskin (1985) also considers humour a universal human trait, stating that 'the ability to appreciate and enjoy humor is universal and shared by all people' (Raskin, 1985:2). These assertions raise an important question: just what makes a joke text 'funny'?

This introductory chapter outlines the approach I will take to researching this question, what I aim to achieve and the scope of the thesis (1.1), before rationalising the importance of studying humour, due to the many functions it has in everyday life (1.2). The chapter ends with an overview of the thesis structure (1.3).

1.1 The Thesis

In this thesis I will propose a new theory and framework of 'Textually Constructed Meaning Shifts in Jokes'. This section contextualises this theory development in terms of the approach taken and assumptions made at the start of the process, the aims which I set out to achieve, and the defined scope of the research.

1.1.1 Approach & Basic Assumptions

I began my research with some foundational assumptions about both humour and linguistics. The first assumption made in this thesis is that some texts are humorous, and that this differs somehow from non-humorous discourse. A text is defined in this thesis as a single example of written or spoken language, and humour beyond this defined scope is listed in 1.1.3. Though there is still much debate about how to make this distinction between humour and non-humour, the assumption that there *is* a

difference is widely accepted amongst humour researchers (see chapter 2), and I will argue throughout the thesis that this difference is not at the levels of either linguistic form or function. The language system used in humour texts is the same one that is available to speakers for creating non-humorous discourse, so the humour/non-humour boundary is not purely linguistic; in other words, a linguistic meaning is not inherently funny. By the same token, humour is not defined by its interpersonal functions (see 2.2), as a humorous text can exist without an audience. I will therefore focus my analysis on the 'textual' meaning as defined by Jeffries (2015) (discussed in 2.1.3), and discuss how textual meanings can undergo what I term a 'shift' (5.4).

The focus of my research is jokes, and here it is necessary to set out the distinction between 'jokes', which are a specific humorous 'text-type' (Stockwell, 2002: 137), and references to 'humour' more generally. Jokes are a prototypical form of humour (Dynel, 2009: 1284) defined by Long and Graesser (1988) as examples of textual humour which are highly structured and not bound to context, in contrast with 'wit' which is spontaneous and dependent on context. Although it is arguable that a text can never be fully separated from context, in the sense that it exists in the wider world, it is assumed that a joke text could be produced without the need for the text to engage specifically with contextual surroundings at the time of its production. Wit, on the other hand, depends upon the humour producer's incorporation of *immediate* context, be it social or linguistic. My own research will be limited to the analysis of joke texts, which are easily available real-world examples of humour and provide a short, manageable data set, with the rationale that a model based on a prototypical humour type could eventually be expanded to other types of humour (discussed further in 4.2;12.3).

My work will take a stylistic approach (see 2.1), so the second assumption made in this thesis is an adherence to the axiomatic principles of stylistics regarding language and meaning. I am accepting as a given that language is a system made up of phonological and grammatical structures, and throughout this thesis I will use the surface grammatical descriptions from Quirk & Crystal (1985) - sometimes called 'SPOCA' grammar – as this is the dominant model of grammatical description in stylistics.

The final assumptions I need to state here are regarding meanings and norms. Language is a code used to convey meanings, and speakers of a language will possess shared conceptual knowledge which allows the understanding of real-world counterparts which a text refers to. This also brings an implicit awareness of norms: both in language and society, speakers share an understanding of how things 'usually are', and this is what allows the recognition of textual meanings which deviate from these norms (see 2.1.4).

A text is created through a series of linguistic choices, and stylistics examines how these choices result in a particular style or effect; in the case of this research, how language choices result in humour. A stylistic model of humour should aim to determine what linguistic choices result in a text being humorous. This is noted by Simpson and Bousfield (2017):

> A stylistic perspective on verbal humor argues that while linguistic features of a text do not of themselves constitute a text's "humor," an account of linguistic features nonetheless serves to ground the stylistic interpretation and explain why, for the analyst, certain types of humor are possible.
>
> *(*Simpson & Bousfield, 2017: 159)

Simpson et al (2019: 25) also suggest that humour is an understudied discipline in stylistics, highlighting that there is a knowledge gap in the field which my research could begin to address.

The development of a stylistic joke framework will begin by taking a revisionist approach to Raskin's (1985) Semantic Script Theory of Humour (SSTH), and its later evolution into Attardo & Raskin's (1991) General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH). This is both because the SSTH/GTVH is the most pervasive semantic theory for the descriptive analysis of humour (see chapter 3), and because this approach is unique in its analytical focus at the textual level of meaning in jokes, which I am interested in exploring with this thesis. This rationale is justified further in chapters 2-4. I will highlight the theoretical and methodological problems of the SSTH/GTVH approach, before proposing my own alternative framework of 'Textually Constructed Meaning Shift in Jokes' (TCMSJ).

The TCMSJ framework is initially developed through a discovery process of inductive data analysis on a small sample of jokes (chapter 5), with methods grounded in Jeffries' (2015) theory of textually constructed meaning, examining the text from many different aspects (2.1.3; 5.2) which contribute to constructing meaning. This data-lead approach allows for the gradual building of a framework from the bottom-up, as the research does not begin with a testable hypothesis. An eclectic use of theory was necessary in order to determine which elements of a text were contributing to humour, without the presence of any initial indication or hypothesis, and therefore justified when used in the context of developing a novel framework. In addition to this, limiting a joke analysis to a single feature of language, such as transitivity or modality for example, may ignore other textual features which are essential to constructing the joke meaning. A framework of this kind would only be

able to offer quantitative analysis with little option for interpretative discussion. Jeffries (1989) defends eclecticism in stylistic analysis due to the breadth of interpretative discussion and understanding it can provide.

Whilst the primary basis for this thesis will be to examine the joke text, I do not plan to treat this analysis in isolation from consideration of the producer's intentions, or the potential effects of a joke on hearers/readers. Instead, my aim is to first explore textual meaning, and then recontextualise this analysis in the context of the joke as a real-world entity. Once a framework is proposed for identifying the choices made in creating a joke text, I will use the TCMSJ framework as a basis for textual analysis of how constructed shifts in a joke can reveal producer ideologies (2.1.3), and how these shifts could affect a reader, audience or the wider world. This re-contextualisation is a key part of a Critical Stylistic analysis (Jeffries, 2010a), which is introduced in 2.1.3 and provides the methodological basis for the TCMSJ as a descriptive analytical framework of textual meaning in jokes.

1.1.2 Research Aims

The overarching aim of my research is to provide a stylistic framework for the descriptive analysis of joke texts. This can be broken down into four stages:

1. *To provide a more joined up approach to humour research*
2. *To test the claims of the SSTH hypothesis*
3. *To investigate the patterning which constructs humorous textual meanings in jokes*
4. *To analyse the potential ideational & ideological impacts of the constructed humorous meanings*

Aims 1 & 2 use existing humour theory as a basis for my investigation. Regarding the first aim, a disconnected approach has resulted in separate branches of humour research which I believe can be incorporated into a single theory using a stylistic approach. I will also address research aim 2 by using methods from stylistics, in order to evaluate the SSTH's claims that the necessary and sufficient conditions for a text to be a joke are overlap and opposition (chapters 3 & 4).

Following this background research into existing humour theories, the remainder of the thesis will be dedicated to research aims 3 & 4 by developing a novel stylistic framework for the descriptive textual analysis of jokes. I examine what textual patterning is present in joke data and aim to determine how this results in a meaning which is humorous, as opposed to non-humorous. This is followed by engaging in critical stylistic analysis to understand the text's potential ideational and ideological significance and the potential impact of the constructed textual meaning on the interactional participants.

Completion of these four research aim stages will result in my proposal of a stylistic framework which can be used to describe how textual choices result in a humorous meaning in jokes, and to justify this interpretation with objective textual analysis in line with the aims of stylistics as a science (2.1).

1.1.3 Beyond the scope of my research

Although my aim is to provide a comprehensive analytical framework, inevitably there are some areas of study which are beyond the scope of this thesis. Alongside linguistics, humour is a topic which can be the study of many academic disciplines: biology & physiology; psychology & sociology; literary criticism; drama and

performance studies. These are aspects of study which may be briefly discussed where relevant (particularly in chapter 2 which provides a broad overview of humour research), but will otherwise not feature in my methodology, framework or analysis. The textual focus of my research will also exclude any humour not realised through language, such as slapstick or prop comedy. I will consider the texts analysed in isolation from any performative elements; prosody, paralinguistic features or set design will not contribute to my analysis.

It is important to clarify that this thesis will not be addressing different senses of humour, or the deemed success and/or failure of a joke attempt, which places value judgements on the '(un)funniness' of a text (Ritchie, 2004). The data chosen were all examples from professional comedians which were intended to be and perceived as joke text-types, removing any question as to whether they were valid examples of humour (for rationale of data selection see 4.2 and 5.1).

The main limitation of scope in this thesis is that the proposed theory of textually constructed meaning shifts is only applicable to jokes and not to other forms of textual humour. Restricting my data analysis to joke text types means this thesis will not be able to generalise any conclusions about spontaneous humorous interactions such as wit or non-serious talk. This exclusion of spontaneous interactional humour is due to the possible methodological difficulties it would pose at the early stages of developing a framework: observing participants in a naturalistic setting may not provide guaranteed humour examples, but elicitation of humour could artificially influence participant behaviour and make conclusions drawn from this data invalid. In addition, it would be difficult to objectively identify what was an example of humour in order to analyse it, as opposed to using jokes which were intended to be and received as humorous. Although these types of discourse are therefore not explored

in this thesis, the proposed TCMSJ framework could potentially be expanded in future research to see if it applies to other areas of humorous text (discussed in 12.3). I will also discuss humour in more general terms in the introductory chapters of the thesis in order to provide a rationale for the study of humour and a background into existing humour research, before narrowing to my own analytical focus on jokes specifically.

1.2 Why is it important to study Humour?

In this section I will attempt to justify why it is important to study humour. Humour is a trait unique to the human species (Provine, 2017). Yus (2017: 197) states that 'Humour differs in purpose from most interaction – it is phatic in nature, with a purpose of amusing/entertaining, and is not generally informative.' Initially, then, humour may seem to be less important than 'bonafide' (Raskin, 1985: 100) communication in conveying information or achieving interactional goals beyond the specific genre of entertainment, and this assumption may account for the lack of research and understanding of humour in linguistics. However, Raskin (1985) Mulkay (1988), and Attardo (1994) all claim that humour can be informative, contradicting Yus (2017). I argue below that humour in fact has many functions, from simply entertaining, to positively impacting individuals and their social connections. As well as these benefits, it can offer a social retreat in the form of politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987), or pose a threat through impoliteness (Culpeper, 2011). Humour can be used to influence behaviour, attack the powerful and powerless, disrupt social hierarchies, gain power and assert dominance, and even have relevance in a court of law. Humour's influence is inescapable in human language, and therefore its study is essential.

I will now provide an overview of what I propose to be the grouped functions humour has in our society: Entertaining (1.2.1), Health & Wellbeing (1.2.2), Social Cohesion (1.2.3) and Conflict & Power (1.2.4). I have separated these functions into sections for discussion, but as is often the case with language, there are no clear-cut boundaries and some of the functions overlap as the discussion below will demonstrate.

1.2.1 Entertaining

The most obvious goal of humour is to be entertaining; more specifically *to be funny*. As with other entertainment genres, comedy is widely produced and available for radio, TV, theatre, and cinema broadcast. Between 2018 - 2019, BBC One and BBC Two committed to broadcasting three-hundred hours of comedy television programmes, plus fifty-five hours of comedy on BBC Radio 4 (BBC, 2018). Comparatively, there were only forty-five scheduled hours of arts and music, and one hundred and fifteen hours of religious broadcasting, suggesting that comedy is both more popular and transcends more boundaries than other broadcasting genres. In 2017, Peter Kay's car share attracted over eleven million viewers and critical acclaim, making it one of the most successful TV shows of the year. Naturally, this comedy entertainment industry generates massive revenue for creators and performers of humour content. According to a Spear's WMS article (2017), in 2017 Kay was worth an estimated £43 Million, and Ricky Gervais was the highest grossing comedian, with an estimated net worth of £55million, showing that being a successful comic can be a lucrative profession.

The source of the joke data for my research is the long-running Edinburgh Fringe Festival, which is mainly popular for its comedy shows. Edinburgh Fringe hit a box

office record in 2019 by selling over 3 million tickets for the month-long festival (Chortle, 2019). Despite the huge ticket sales, however, the cost of putting on the festival every year means it is not a hugely profitable event for the performers and businesses involved. According to the Guardian (Gardner, 2015;2017), 'You will almost certainly lose money during your Edinburgh run'. Nevertheless, the festival continues to grow in popularity year on year, suggesting that the value of humour goes beyond a monetary one. Mothersole said to the Guardian (2015) "Going to Edinburgh is painful financially but it's not all about money." Comedy artists will put on the show for little monetary gain because of the potential publicity and exposure the prestigious Edinburgh Festival can provide, but also for the pleasure which comedy brings to them and others. Comedy as entertainment produces a positive mental response in producers and audiences, and the effects of this response on health and wellbeing are discussed below.

1.2.2 Health & Wellbeing

Many studies have noted the beneficial effects of humour on a person's psychological wellbeing. Galloway and Cropley (1999;2009) show that humour can positively impact a subject's mental health. Their experimental research found that participants exposed to humour content perceived negative life events more moderately, and experienced an overall reduction in mental health issues.

Additionally, there have been studies which indicate that humour has physiological benefits. Lefcourt et al (1997) found that women who used humour as a coping strategy during stressful tasks resulted in them experiencing lower systolic blood pressure than those who did not. Martin (2002) also concludes that there is some

limited evidence from experimental studies to show humour benefits physical health, including pain tolerance, blood pressure and possible boosts to the immune system; though he argues that there were some methodological issues with these experiments which could call into question their validity, and further research would be required to verify their claims. The effects of humour on areas of psychological and physiological wellbeing are inextricably linked. The benefits of a reduction in stress and improved mental wellbeing have been shown to influence physical attributes such as heart rate and blood pressure (British Heart Foundation, 2021), so achieving improved mental wellbeing through humour could indirectly lead to a positive impact on physical health.

1.2.3 Social Cohesion

Humour can act as a tool for social bonding, and the ability to produce and/or share in the enjoyment of humour is generally considered an asset in society (Apte, 1985). One real-world example is dating advertisements, where a good sense of humour is an attribute deemed to be desirable in a romantic partner (Frost et al, 2008;Wada et al, 2019: 964-965). Greengross & Miller (2011) state that humour is a factor in sexual selection. Similarly, Wilbur & Campbell (2011) concluded that humour is a mate-seeking behaviour, and that women evaluate humour to be an indicator of 'underlying desirable qualities'. Griskevicius et al (2009) also found that humour dynamics influence romantic chemistry for both women and men, suggesting humour can be used as a relationship-monitoring strategy.

Humans socially value those who produce humour in a platonic, as well as a romantic, capacity (Apte, 1985; Holmes & Marra, 2002). According to Holmes

(2000:160) ‘Shared humour is an important in group vs outgroup boundary marker’. It can indicate to an individual or group that you are on their side, creating community cohesion. Martineau (1972) initially cites humour as a lubricant in social interaction. He conducted experiments in which participants experienced varying types of humour, both as observers and in interactions. They were then asked to perform extraneous tasks, and found that some forms of humour aided social bonds between the group. What Martineau’s (1972) research and a follow up study by Janes & Olson (2015) highlight, is the interesting dichotomy between how humour can function either as a social aid, or an abrasive tool for conflict (see below).

1.2.4 Conflict & Power

Research has found that, in addition to cohesion, humour can also play an abrasive role in social interactions (Martineau, 1972; Janes & Olson, 2015), and the aggressive nature of humour has been widely noted amongst humour researchers (see 2.2.3). Teasing and ridicule can be used to shame and police the behaviour of others, in order to reduce non-compliance or non-conformance with a society’s norms. Janes & Olson (2015) revisited Martineau’s (1972) notion of fluidity between humour’s role as lubricant and aggravator in a chapter for the International Humor Research Journal. They found a wide variety of psychological and sociological effects experienced by experimental participants depending on the type of humour they were exposed to. Targets and observers of ridiculing humour were rendered more likely to be compliant in further related tasks, an effect which they termed ‘jeer-pressure’. But beyond this, they found that merely observing ridiculing humour with an unfamiliar target led to an increased fear of failure in extraneous tasks presented

to the participants afterwards. This shows the powerful scope of the psychological impact of this type of humour. By contrast, they found that observers of self-deprecating humour experienced a decreased sense of apprehension and increased creativity in the extraneous tasks, suggesting this type of humour is a social leveller. They concluded that humour is ubiquitous in daily life and extraordinarily complex in its consequences.

Social conflict is often the result of power struggles, be it peer-to-peer or societal conflict on a larger scale, and humour is no exception. Simpson et al (2019) argue that humour has powerful functions which stylistic research has tended to overlook.

> Our immediate rejoinder to this is that humour, in its myriad linguistic forms & genres, is endemic to all human society and culture, and so cannot be ignored in any serious study of the way language interacts with power. However, we want to go and argue that it has been a marked failing of CDA that it has not recognized the importance of humour as a form of linguistic, social and cultural praxis.

(Simpson et al, 2019: 55)

Historically, the demarcation between powerful and powerless groups was often displayed through comedy which was racist, sexist, homophobic and/or religion-phobic: this is evidenced in joke collections from previous humour studies (Spradley & Mann, 1975; Raskin, 1985). The decline in popularity of this type of humour (Berger, 1997 Perez, 2016) reflects the diachronic change in wider societal attitudes towards minority groups, though there is still some way to go in eradicating these attacks from the realms of comedy, particularly regarding transphobia and ableism (Harrison & O'Connor, 2021; Parsons, 2021).

Humour can also be employed as a power challenge by minority groups, functioning to question and disrupt the status quo. This strategy can be through satire, which is a form of irony used to deploy attacks on the powerful (Simpson, 2003). Constructing this attack in a non-serious mode of communication mitigates the aggressive force, and can aid the subverting of stereotypes and attitudes in a non-threatening way. It also incorporates the function of entertainment, which offers the potential for the message to reach a wider audience, and using the socially desirable guise of humour may help align this audience in favour of the satirist's ideological viewpoint more successfully than if it was done in otherwise serious discourse.

As well as performing a face attack, labelling an utterance as humorous can be used as a means to veil a potentially face-threatening act (Freud, 1905; Brown & Levinson, 1987), providing a retreat from offence with the disclaimer that the utterance was not to be taken seriously. This defence can sometimes even have legal implications. Simpson & Mayr (2009) document a case between Elton John and a UK Newspaper in which he tried to sue them for defamation of character and the case was dismissed as the newspaper were deemed to be using humour and irony. Simpson & Mayr also cite another case where this defence of humour and satire was not accepted, and resulted in a Burmese satirist being imprisoned. They write on these legal implications:

> Clearly, the judicial decision in this case sets an important 'precedent' in law because it records formally (and for legal posterity) that a spoof text should not be taken literally. […] As long as a reasonable reader knows it to be fake,

> and by imputation, assumes that it is insincere, a parody or spoof should not be considered as an actionable wrong in law.

(Simpson & Mayr, 2009; 28).

An important consideration then, is how one would define humour in order to make it an objective defence in law. Defining humour, and the difficulties this poses, is discussed in 2.2.1.

This section has exemplified that humour has many functions in society, and plays an important role in everyday interactions. I believe the prevalence of humour in language use is a justification of why it is important to study, and to ignore it would be a reductionist approach to the study of text in real-world interactions.

1.3 Thesis Structure

I will conclude this introductory chapter by providing an overview of the thesis structure. Chapter 2 will be a review of literature on both stylistics and humour research. It will begin by introducing stylistics (2.1) and key concepts from this field which are relevant to the thesis, such as stylistics in humour research (2.1.2), critical stylistics (2.1.3) and foregrounding (2.1.4). 2.2 will then explore the theoretical background to humour research, examining how humour has been defined (2.2.1) and the three main branches of humour research (2.2.2-2.2.4). Chapter 2 concludes with argument that these three separate approaches can be unified through the stylistic concept of foregrounding (2.2.5). Following this theoretical overview, chapters 3 & 4 will then narrow in scope to discuss existing text-based approaches to humour study, specifically the 'Semantic Script Theory of Humour' (Raskin, 1985). Here I will justify my thesis' focus on this theory, covering its developments and

criticisms from its inception in 1985 to the present state of the model. Chapter 3 will end by highlighting the theoretical and methodological shortcomings of the SSTH/GTVH approach, and the impact stylistics can have in revising the SSTH approach to the textual analysis of jokes, arguing that the SSTH can be collapsed into a single testable hypothesis. Chapter 4 is a pilot study which uses a small set of joke data to test the collapsed SSTH hypothesis, and finds results which do not support the SSTH's claims, therefore necessitating a new framework for how a joke meaning is textually constructed.

Following this, the remainder of the thesis will illustrate and evaluate the initial proposal of my new framework for joke analysis. Chapter 5 begins building this from the bottom-up by applying a critical stylistic approach of textual analysis to the sample of joke data, and identifies patterns in textual meaning which I term 'Textually Constructed Meaning Shifts'. This framework is then tested using a top-down approach on a larger sample of joke data, resulting in the hypothesis that jokes will contain textually constructed meaning shifts.

In chapters 6-11 the finalised 'Textually Constructed Meaning Shift in Jokes' framework (TCMSJ) is presented, providing an in-depth discussion which describes the distinctive features of each proposed type of TCMSJ category, and the resulting styles of each shift. Throughout chapters 5-11 I will provide example textual analysis to exemplify the descriptive capabilities of the TCMSJ framework on a selection of jokes from the data set.

Chapters 12 offers reflection on the framework and analysis, addressing limitations of the thesis, before contextualising the proposed TCMSJ framework in terms of

impact on the wider field of humour studies, as well as any potential for future developments.

Chapter 2: Background on Style and Humour

This chapter will provide a theoretical background in stylistics and humour, reviewing the relevant literature and highlighting knowledge gaps in order to contextualise my own research. The literature review begins (2.1) with an overview of stylistics, illustrating the scope for a stylistic approach to humour research, as well as introducing the concepts of critical stylistics and foregrounding which will both be incorporated into the thesis methodology. Following this will be an outline of existing theoretical approaches for the study of humour (2.2) by discussing varying attempts to define humour, and how this led to the separation of research communities into what have been termed the three humour theory families (Attardo, 1994), concluding that applying key principles from stylistics to humour research could help to provide a more unified approach (2.3).

2.1 Stylistics

This section will illustrate the rationale for grounding my thesis in the field of stylistics, firstly introduce what stylistics is and the aims of a stylistic analysis (2.1.1), followed by a survey of how stylistics has been used in humour research (2.1.2). I then go on to introduce critical stylistics and textual meaning (2.1.3), which provides the framework I will use to develop my own approach for the stylistic analysis of jokes. Also outlined here (2.1.4) is the key stylistic concept of foregrounding, which I will later argue is central to any theory of humour (2.2). The section ends (2.1.5) with

a summary of the salient points which will be adopted throughout the remainder of this thesis as justification for a critical stylistic approach to the analysis of jokes.

2.1.1 What is Stylistics?

Stylistics is a sub-discipline of linguistics which aims to explore how meanings are constructed within a text. Put simply, stylistics investigates the linguistic choices made in a text, and how these choices create meaning, with Jeffries & McIntyre stating that 'There are many different ways of saying essentially the same thing, and [that] this element of choice over how to say something was the proper subject of study for stylistics' (Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010: 25). Often a stylistic analysis will be at the intersection between linguistic analysis and literary criticism (Short, 1996), aiming to systematically examine the linguistic features of a text which result in certain styles, effects and interpretations. Stylistic analysis was originally only applied to literary texts, with the assumptions that these were somehow distinct from non-literary texts in their lexico-grammatical choices, though this assumption has since been rejected through much analysis (Jeffries, 2016). The key defining factor which sets apart stylistics from literary critique more generally is that it aims to take an objective and systematic approach to analysis in order to draw conclusions about the meaning of a text, as opposed to selecting examples for analysis on an ad-hoc basis (Jeffries, 2014a: 11). A stylistician must aim to present analysis which is objective, replicable and falsifiable, in line with the aims of all empirical sciences (Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010).

A stylistic analysis will highlight the relationship between linguistic form and function, showing how one can influence another (Leech, 2008). Whilst interpreting a text is

arguably somewhat subjective, providing a descriptive linguistic analysis serves to explicate how an analyst arrived at an interpretation, whether or not their reader agrees. Though individual experiences and ideologies (see 2.1.3) will inevitably impact upon interpretations of a text, texts do not possess the potential to generate an infinite number of possible meanings; instead, a text's interpretative possibilities are restricted in scope, by both the language used and the wider context of the utterance (Short, 1996). A key factor in determining any possible interpretations of a text is the assumption of established norms in language, be it at a linguistic level, conventions of text type/genre, or interactional norms. Features in a text which do not adhere to these norms are said to be 'foregrounded', a concept which will be explored further in 2.1.4.

The discipline of stylistics does not have one fixed method, and instead encompasses a wide range of analytical approaches, depending on what the researcher is aiming to investigate, but the text will always be at the centre of a stylistic analysis. This is in keeping with an aim of describing textual effects in order to 'elucidate more clearly how meaning happens' (Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010: 3). Stylistics is often eclectic in its use of methods and can take either a bottom-up approach of looking for patterning in a text in order to propose a theory, or a top-down approach, beginning with a linguistic feature and/or theory in mind and examining a text for these defining features (Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010). Whatever method is used, the main concern of a stylistic analysis is that any interpretations are clearly evidenced using textual analysis to justify the conclusions drawn by the analyst, so that another researcher could replicate this and determine whether they arrived at the same conclusions. As I have selected stylistics as the basis for my own research, I must first consider previous work from stylisticians on the language of

humour, and why I feel there is scope for me to add to this body of work. This will be discussed in the next section.

2.1.2 Humour research in Stylistics

According to Simpson et al (2019), stylistic research into humour has been somewhat limited, compared to the study of other literary and non-fictional texts. Humour blurs the boundary between fiction and non-fiction, occurring anywhere from everyday conversational discourse to scripted work for the stage, TV and film. Simpson & Bousfield (2017) argue that stylistic techniques are well suited for the study of humour, but that it is a new area. In their chapter on 'Stylistics and Humour', they assert two principles: firstly, that a humorous text must contain some form of incongruity (for discussion of incongruity see 2.2.4), and secondly that what they term the 'humour mechanism' can occur at any level of language or discourse. They do not provide further confirmation of how to identify what a text's humour mechanism is, but it cannot be explained through incongruity alone, as they state that incongruities can occur in non-humorous texts as well as humorous ones (Simpson & Bousfield, 2017: 159). The chapter concedes that although incongruity is a requirement in humour, incongruity must be combined with some other features to create humour. They follow this with an example of humour analysis using Culpeper's (2011) impoliteness framework, showing how displays of impoliteness in fiction are often used to incite humour. There has been much application of impoliteness theory for the analysis of humour, and this will be discussed further (2.2.3) as an element of hostility in humour, where it will be shown that impoliteness alone is not a sufficient explanation for a text's humour. As with incongruity,

impoliteness can be employed in both serious and humorous discourse, which raises the question of what textual choices distinguish humorous impoliteness from other forms of impoliteness. This theme will be explored throughout the thesis as my own research aims to identify the choices in a text which are unique to humour.

Stylistic analysis of humour often focusses on sub-types of humour (such as satire: Simpson, 2003) or single texts, rather than providing a general humour framework. Analysis of a single humorous text involves pinpointing the linguistic features which result in its interpretation as humorous, such as McIntyre & Culpeper's (2010) article, which examines humour in a piece of dramatic discourse. Undertaking analysis of a Peter Cook comedy sketch entitled 'One Leg Too Few', McIntyre & Culpeper discuss how humour is achieved through character behaviour which conflicts with what is expected in the 'audition' activity type. Analysis of this kind, explaining how humour occurs within a single text, does fulfil the aims of stylistic humour analysis to exemplify 'the relationship between formal patterns in text and the capacity of these patterns to induce a humorous reaction in readers, viewers or listeners' (Simpson & Bousfield, 2017: 171). However, focus on a single text or concept does not provide any kind of useable framework which can be generalised for the analysis of humour beyond the presented text or concept. This means stylistic research into humour has so far fallen short in the scope of its conclusions, and this is something my proposed model will aim to address.

One area of humour research which has received much attention from stylistics is the study of irony, parody and satire (Simpson, 2003; 2011; Stewart, 2013; Jeffries 2018). Simpson (2011) states that verbal irony occurs through 'the perception of a conceptual paradox, planned or unplanned, between two dimensions of the same discursive event' (Simpson 2011: 39), Jeffries (2018) explains that irony occurs

when there is a perceived mismatch between what is said and what is meant, although this reliance on hearer perception as a marker of irony is a problem for analysing humour from a solely textual perspective. Similarly, Simpson's model of Satire (2003) requires the condition of 'Uptake' from an audience. The study of perlocutionary effects on the hearer is beyond the scope of the framework this thesis will aim to provide, as stated in 1.1.3, though example analysis will engage in the possible effects of the 'shifts' (5.4) on an audience.

A restriction of this focus on texts which are ironic or satirical is that the resulting theories are only applicable to a specific humour style, and so do not account for the patterning of textual features in non-ironic humorous texts. Simpson identifies a model which aims to provide the necessary and sufficient textual features of all humour-styles in Raskin's (1985) Semantic Script Theory of Humour (SSTH), calling it 'one linguistic approach to humour which does seek to establish such an overarching model for the language of humour' (Simpson, 2003: 44). For this reason, the SSTH will be given much attention in the thesis (chapters 3-4) as a basis for developing my own framework, along with critiques which explain why I believe the SSTH framework to be ineffective for joke analysis.

At the time of writing, there does not appear to be an appropriate stylistic framework for application to the analysis of jokes, so this is what my own research will aim to provide. I believe that there is patterning in the mechanisms used to construct joke texts, and I wish to provide a framework for descriptive analysis of these mechanisms which is not restricted to a specific style or genre of jokes such as satire or puns. I will base this framework development using the methods of critical stylistics, which is introduced below.

2.1.3 Critical Stylistics and Textual Meaning

I will be proposing a new framework for joke analysis based on Jeffries' Critical Stylistics (Jeffries, 2010a) and Theory of Textual Meaning (Jeffries, 2015), and this section will show the rationale behind this choice. Whilst stylistic analysis broadly focusses on analysing the aesthetic effects of textual features, critical stylistics investigates the ideational and ideological aspects of a text; how linguistic choices can encode a world view and values. The critical stylistic approach builds upon work from critical discourse analysis (CDA), which focusses on how texts are used to exert power and convey ideology, but Jeffries (2010a; 2014a; 2014b) distances her work from CDA by taking a broader view of what is meant by 'critical'. CDA analyses texts to uncover (mainly political) ideologies and their influences, in order to understand how texts can be used to manipulate reader perceptions and assert power with the ideologies they convey, before critiquing this from a left-wing perspective. Critical stylistics, on the other hand, examines how linguistic choices embed both ideational and ideological information in a text, and from this picture 'draw[s] some conclusions about what is seen as acceptable or unacceptable in the world created by the textual features' (Jeffries, 2016: 160), regardless of whether the analyst agrees or disagrees with these ideologies. Through textual analysis I will employ this 'critical' aspect by exploring the how ideologies can be embedded in joke texts, however the majority of my own analysis in this thesis focusses on the ideational aspects of critical stylistics, using the framework to investigate how a humorous textual meaning is constructed in jokes. Jeffries (forthcoming) is also moving away from this ideological focus by applying critical stylistic analysis to poetry.

The critical stylistic framework draws on a systemic-functional linguistic (SFL) model originally developed by Halliday (1985). Halliday proposed that there were three metafunctions of language which he called textual, ideational and interpersonal. What Halliday intended with this SFL model was to understand the effects of 'form-function' pairings. He identified different aspects of language structure and use, and allocated them variously to the metafunctions based on the role they played in utterance meaning. Halliday's SFL metafunctions are briefly outlined below:

Textual – The systematic aspects of language; the 'code'

Ideational – The aspects used to present world view

Interpersonal – The effect the text has on people and how they interact with each other

Metafunctions are used to assign the different kind of work linguistic forms carry out. For example, Modality and/or Speech Act theory analyse how a text impacts the participants in surrounding context, so Halliday would term these forms interpersonal in function. Transitivity choices represent actions and states of being in order to build up a picture of the world, so these are ideational in function. Syntactic structural analysis, such as the clause structure of subject-verb-object (SVO) is at the textual level of meaning function, as it is purely linguistic description with no bearing from context or co-text. Jeffries (2014a; 2014b) adapts Halliday's model for critical stylistics in a few ways, firstly by renaming the textual metafunction as linguistic. This, she argues, is because textual meaning is a specific and dynamic level of meaning which is constructed within a text, and Jeffries' distinction between linguistic and textual meaning is one I will adhere to within this thesis. Jeffries states that between the SFL levels of linguistic and interpersonal, there is a third level

blending these two planes which is the textual meaning; this is how a text-world is constructed, and must be accepted in order to make sense of the text's meaning (Jeffries,2014a: 409). Textual meaning is constructed at the ideational level using a wide range of linguistic features termed Textual Conceptual Functions (TCFs), and Jeffries explanation of these TCFs is presented below:

> The idea of textual-conceptual functions in general is that they try to capture what a text is doing conceptually in presenting the world (or a fictional world in the case of literature) in a particular way. In doing so, they also explain how the resources of the linguistic system are being used to produce this conceptual meaning – this is the textual part of the process and is what defines this approach as essentially stylistic.
>
> (Jeffries, 2014a: 409).

The Textual-Conceptual Functions (TCFs) are briefly listed here, but will be explored more fully in 5.2:

Naming and Describing

Representing States/Actions/Events

Equating and Contrasting

Exemplifying/Enumerating

Prioritizing

Implying and Assuming

Negating

Hypothesizing

Presenting Others' Speech & Thoughts

Representing Time, Space & Society

(Jeffries, 2016: 164)

The second adaptation of the SFL model for critical stylistics is the repositioning of ideational meaning as meaning constructed by language in use, as opposed to ideational meaning being seen as inherent in the language system; textual meaning is more than just the sum of all the individual meanings of the lexemes within the text. This change to Halliday's model allows for analysis of a text's meaning beyond a structuralist level of linguistic description, enabling analysts to determine how meaning is embedded in a specific text, rather than examining fully contextual (pragmatic) or fully decontextualized (semantic) meanings. This textual level of meaning is where I would like to centre my own analysis of jokes: a joke's humour is not inherent in either linguistic form of interpersonal function, and is instead a meaning constructed in the joke texts themselves.

Jeffries also alters the hierarchy of the three language metafunctions - though Halliday presented them as three separate planes, Jeffries (2014a) presents the linguistic metafunction as underlying in all texts, providing a system for the construction of texts with ideational and interpersonal effects. Jeffries explains that these linguistic forms can have many functions:

> If all forms had one and only one function, and all functions only one form, we would live in a clear, but much impoverished world where lying and misleading might be absent, but so too would poetry and comedy. (Jeffries, 2014b: 477)

Ideational and Interpersonal meaning, instead of being viewed as having fixed forms which fulfil each function, are presented as two divisions of meaning which can both be constructed using any of the TCFs. This creates both a primary consensual

meaning, and a secondary level of individual meaning. At a consensual level, the text will construct a world view and have an effect on people which is general and shared. The second 'individual meaning' will differ more depending on an individual's own background knowledge, experiences and ideologies (Jeffries, 2014b).

Critical stylistics mostly accounts for how the consensual level of meaning is constructed, as the presented worldview of a text must be accepted in order to make sense of the text's meaning. This consensual meaning occurs regardless of any individual engagement with argument for or against the world view presented in the text. In terms of humour, this can be equated with suspending disbelief (Nash, 1985): a joke may present a scenario within the constructed text-world which readers/hearers know to be impossible or illogical, but must be accepted to understand the meaning proposed by the text. When developing my own framework I will be primarily concerned with how humour is constructed at this consensual level of meaning, although I believe a stronger focus on individual meaning could be a useful source for any future research (12.3) into 'senses' of humour, or into the reasons why humour is successful or fails, which as I have stated is beyond the scope of this thesis.

A justification for applying a critical stylistic perspective to joke analysis can be found in Jeffries 2014a: '[Two] other areas of development of critical stylistics include the use of the model across all text types and genres, to see whether, despite the apparent uniformity discovered so far, there are variations of practice or differing stylistic tendencies among different types of texts.'(Jeffries, 2014a: 419). I believe that, as a joke's humour is not inherent in either structuralist form or pragmatic function (discussed in 2.2), it must be constructed at the blended *textual* level of meaning, and that the tools of critical stylistic analysis could help to uncover the

choices in a text which create this humour. I will later argue (chapter 3) that the highly influential Semantic Script Theory of Humour (SSTH) (Raskin, 1985) is somewhat textual in its approach to the analysis of joke construction, albeit lacking in the objectivity and rigour required from stylistics.

2.1.4 Foregrounding

Foregrounding theory is a key element of stylistic analysis, as this section will illustrate. The concept of foregrounding originates in the art world, and refers to the idea of something standing out, literally being brought into 'the foreground' (Short, 1996). Mukarovsky (1964) was the first to write about foregrounding in relation to language. The effect of foregrounding is achieved through textual choices which are made in order to draw attention in some way, either through parallelism (repetition and establishing of patterns) or deviation (a break in pattern or expectation). The concept of deviation in language, like much of stylistics, is rooted in Russian formalism (Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010: 31), and is a description of how textual elements can stand out by deviating from some pre-established norms. Deviation can be either internal, deviating from patterns established the co-text, or external, deviating from standard conventions of the language or how language is used within the situational context. The concept of external deviation relies on the assumption of norms in language practice which are established and known by most/all speakers. Both deviation and parallelism can occur at any of the following language levels:

- *Morphology*
- *Graphology*
- *Phonology*

- *Lexis*
- *Semantics*
- *Grammar/Syntax*
- *Discourse*

(Short, 1996: 37-59)

The levels listed above are pertinent to the linguistic metafunction of meaning discussed in 2.1.3, and foregrounding theory in its current form is not extended to cover deviation and parallelism at the ideational or interpersonal meaning levels; Short (1996:11) states that foregrounding is a linguistic phenomenon. To deviate from a norm relies on this norm first being established and defined; in the case of linguistic deviation, this is done through comparison to pre-existing norms, either within a text-type/genre, or those norms present in a language which has undergone a process of standardisation. The English Language has conventions of phonology, orthography, and syntactic structure which, when deviated from, result in these deviant features being foregrounded. One difficulty in expanding foregrounding theory to encompass the ideational and interpersonal levels of meaning is how one could objectively identify established cognitive and/or interactional norms from which deviation is occurring. I will, however, argue that foregrounding effects do occur at the ideational and interpersonal levels (2.2), and through textual analysis suggest how deviation at these levels can be recognised, even if they are more difficult to verify empirically. As previously mentioned (2.1.1), interpretations of a text will always possess a degree of subjectivity, and the aim of stylistics is to mitigate this subjectivity by clearly illustrating how the analyst arrived at these interpretations; I believe this could be the case for any proposed application of foregrounding theory to the ideational and/or interpersonal meaning levels. As will be discussed below

(2.2), though it is not always referred to explicitly, foregrounding is a central component of most theories of humour. I argue that the key concepts presented in all three families of humour research can be assimilated under the umbrella of foregrounding, once foregrounding theory is adapted slightly to incorporate deviation from ideational and interpersonal norms.

2.1.5 Summary of Stylistics

This section has provided the rationale for approaching the study of jokes from a stylistic perspective. Stylistic analysis justifies interpretations of a text through the rigorous and systematic analysis of linguistic choices, in line with the key principles of empirical science (2.1.1). Though there has been some work from stylistics in the field of humour, it is a new and limited area with either focus on individual texts, single element theories or sub-types of humour (2.1.2). There is therefore a knowledge gap which could be addressed by developing a framework for the stylistic analysis of jokes. I have explained (2.1.3) how a critical stylistic approach focusses on the textual level of meaning, showing how textual conceptual functions combine to construct text worlds with ideational and interpersonal effects, and posit that there is scope to use a critical stylistic approach for explaining why texts are interpreted as humorous. Finally, 2.1.4 discussed how foregrounding theory is a key element of stylistic analysis, and proposed that this could be adapted to also analyse foregrounding through deviation at an ideational and interpersonal level, something I will illustrate further throughout this thesis. The proceeding section will argue that foregrounding is an omnipresent factor in the three ‘families’ of humour research and

that assimilation under foregrounding theory could result in a more joined up approach to the study of humour (2.2.5).

2.2 Theoretical Approaches to Humour

This section will explore what constitutes a theory of humour. Although my own research is focussed on jokes specifically, the chapter explores research into humour more generally with the rationale that, if jokes are a prototypical form of humour, then any theory of humour will be assumed to be applicable to jokes. The chapter begins by highlighting many attempts to define humour (2.2.1), along with the problems which arise from each of these definitions. Instead of an agreed universal definition, humour research is branched into three schools of thought: humour as defined by the effect on producer and reader (Release theories, 2.2.2), humour defined as an aggressive intention (Hostility theories, 2.2.3), and cognitive-perceptual theories which define humour as a text containing a resolved incongruity (Incongruity Resolution theories, 2.2.4). Although on the surface these research families appear to be in the realms of psychology and sociology, designated as beyond the scope of this thesis (1.1.3), I will illustrate that there is potential to utilise aspects of all three theoretical families in a textual approach to understand the construction of humorous meaning, in line with the critical stylistic aims of my own research. Throughout the discussion of the humorous research families, I will posit that they are not mutually exclusive, and instead are approaching the same phenomenon from different communicative aspects. From a perspective of stylistics, I attempt to unify these families of humour research using the key stylistic principle of foregrounding (2.2.5). Using existing literature and my own examples, I will argue that foregrounding through deviation is an essential component of textual humour,

and that this foregrounding can occur at the linguistic, ideational and interpersonal levels of meaning. In addition to providing a more cohesive approach to the three schools of humour research, this inclusion of the ideational and interpersonal levels of meaning is a new expansion of foregrounding theory, which is currently applied to analysis at the linguistic level of textual meaning.

2.2.1 Defining Humour

This section will discuss and evaluate the various attempts which have been made to define humour, illustrating that there is no definition which can be universally agreed upon. The first problem any humour researcher is likely to encounter is the difficulty in defining exactly what humour is. In everyday interaction, humour is recognisable by speakers and hearers using intuition without the need for a formal definition. Humans can and do produce and perceive humour without ever being explicitly taught how to do so. This poses a problem for those wishing to study humour, as it would be difficult to implement any testable hypotheses or methods which relied on intuitive identification of an utterance as 'humorous'. This is why a clear and objective definition of humour is desirable in humour research, but as I will show, humour is complex and defies formal definition.

The primary source for a word's definition(s) is a dictionary, so I will begin by presenting a general dictionary definition of humour, which is not specific to any particular branch of humour research. Below is an extract from the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) definition of 'humour'. For clarity, I have only presented the sense(s) of the word humour which are relevant to this thesis. I have therefore omitted the noun or adjectival usage reflecting a person's state of being (to

possess/be in ‘good humour’), the verb ‘to humour’, or any alternative archaic meanings of the noun humour in reference to bodily fluids. The full definition (including all senses not featured below) can be found at www.oed.com.

> ***Humour***
>
> ***a) The ability of a person to appreciate or express what is funny or comical; a sense of what is amusing or ludicrous.***
>
> ***b) With reference to action, speech, writing etc.: the quality of being amusing, the capacity to elicit laughter or amusement. Also: comical or amusing writing, performance, etc.***

(OED, 2021)

A problem with utilising the OED definition of humour for research purposes is that it fails to provide an objective way to explain what humour is when separated from a human actor of the humour. If humour is something which is amusing, and amusement is defined as a response to humour, the definition becomes cyclical. Instead, a researcher needs to define humour in a way that it can be objectively identified in collections of data, and by others wishing to replicate their analysis. A definition should ideally provide the necessary and sufficient conditions for identification (Raskin, 1985; Attardo, 1994), and for some concepts this is an easy process. A mammal, for example, can be defined by its possessing of the physical attributes: warm blooded; gives birth to live young; feeds or is fed by milk-producing mammary glands. These features therefore define the category ‘mammal’, and anything possessing these features can be objectively classed as an example of a mammal. Abstract intangible concepts such as humour are more complex and difficult to define, and there is much debate on how to do so. Attardo & Raskin (2017: 51) state that ‘we have never really defined humor just as love, life, emotion &

society defy concise and universally accepted definitions'. Instead of a universally agreed definition, what is important in humour research is for an analyst to clearly state how they define humour and to justify this decision. Attempts have been made to define humour in terms of speaker intention, hearer response, or textual features, and I will now provide an overview of some of these varying definitions.

Humour is often defined as a stimulus which evokes response of laughter from a recipient. In his chapter entitled 'What is Humor?', Raskin (1985) suggests that humour is simply when 'somebody hears or sees something and laughs'. Archakis and Tsakona state that 'the combination of incongruity [see 2.2.4] and laughter is a relatively safe criterion for identifying humor' (2012: 77-78). However Glenn (2003) and Provine (2017) reject the laughter response as a means of defining humour, as humour does not always elicit laughter, nor is humour the sole cause of laughter production. In her study of workplace discourse, Holmes (2000) also defines humour in terms of hearer response, but broadens the presence of laughter to include any other cues which could indicate that hearers were amused by the utterance:

> Instances of humour included in this analysis are utterances which are identified by the analyst, on the basis of paralinguistic, prosodic and discoursal clues, as intended by the speaker(s) to be amusing and perceived to be amusing by at least some participants.
>
> (Holmes, 2000: 163)

A problem with implementing Holmes' definition is the difficulty for the analyst in understanding speaker intention and hearer perception of an utterance. In her study, Holmes did conduct post-hoc interviews with participants to discuss their feelings, but this debriefing is not always possible in instances where only a text is available

for humour analysis. Additionally, the definitions from Raskin (1985), Holmes (2000), and Archakis & Tsakona (2012) are only applicable to *successful* attempts at humour. This is a reductionist approach which fails to account for any contextual influencing factors on whether a hearer perceives a given utterance as humorous. If a speaker turn does not elicit laughter and/or amusement from a hearer, this does not necessarily mean it was not an example of (or at least, an attempt at) humour. The hearer may have not understood the utterance; they may have understood but not shared the same 'sense' of humour as the speaker; perhaps the hearer was having a terrible day and did not feel in the right frame of mind to enjoy a humorous comment. There are many reasons why humour fails (Bell, 2009), so approaches which are reliant on hearer evaluation do not enable a researcher to identify all examples of humour. Conversely, defining humour by speaker intention alone (Pizzini, 1991) is also limited in scope, as it does not account for instances of 'found humour' – where an utterance with a serious intention is perceived as humorous by a hearer (Simpson, 2003).

Whether focussed on speakers, hearers, or both, defining humour in terms of interactional effects suggests that humour is only manifested at the interpersonal level of meaning (2.1.3) and somehow outside of the text. These definitions suggest that any utterance can become humorous if it is intended to be and/or perceived to be so by interactional participants, using the indicators of prosody and paralinguistic features. This raises a problem for humour researchers, particularly those taking a linguistic approach, where the analyst is only presented with a text which has been separated from interactional cues. The aim of linguistic humour research is to investigate what choices are made within the text to convey an intention of humour

or a perceived humorous meaning, as opposed to non-humorous discourse. Presented below are some text-focussed approaches to the definition of humour.

Lee & Lang (2010) define humour as ‘complex and multifaceted. It [humour] manifests as jokes, puns, funny stories, laughter, banter, teasing, wit, and humorous behaviours like playing the fool. Humor may also take the form of satire, sarcasm, ironic remarks, and ridicules.’ (Lee & Lang, 2010: 46). This proposes a variety of text-types which humour can take, but fails to pinpoint any underlying features which distinguish these forms from other techniques in ‘bonafide’ (Raskin, 1985) or serious (Mulkay, 1988) discourse. This cannot function as a definition of what humour is, and in fact by listing many humour types, Lee & Lang’s definition calls for further defining of these forms they say humour can take. Mulkay (1988) argues that humour functions in an alternative mode of discourse to what he calls the ‘serious mode’, and that the serious and humorous modes possess opposing discourse features (listed below).

> Whereas ambiguity, inconsistency, contradiction and interpretative diversity are often treated as problems during serious discourse, and attempts are regularly made to remove them or to reduce their impact, they are necessary features of the humorous mode. In contrast to the unitary character of serious discourse, humour depends on the discursive display of opposing interpretative possibilities (Mulkay, 1988: 26).

Raskin (1985: 100) also distinguishes between these two modes of communication using the terms bona-fide and non-bona-fide, stating that humour is non-bona-fide communication. A problem with the distinction between serious and humorous modes is that neither Mulkay nor Raskin provide an objective way to determine

which mode an utterance is being performed in. Ambiguity and contradiction are not linguistic features which are exclusive to humorous utterances, and as my analysis will show (chapters 5-11) they may not even be necessary features of humorous utterances. The features Mulkay lists can be present in serious discourse, either intentionally or unintentionally, therefore the presence of these features alone cannot define a text as humorous.

Nash (1985) and Attardo (1997) both present structuralist approaches to the definition of texts as humour. Nash (1985) states that humorous utterances will take the form of a three-part structure of 'Genus, Primer and Locus', which can be summarised as 'extralinguistic situational context', 'background elements which set-up meaning', and 'the word or phrase which 'detonates the humour' (Nash, 1985). Attardo (1997) says that textual humour is formed from a combination of jab-lines and punch-lines. The locus or punch line is said to be the text in the joke final position where the humour is realised, and is therefore indispensable to the joke. The only method given for identifying a locus/punch line is its syntactic positioning within the text. This therefore disregards meaning as a vital component of humour, but as discussed (2.1.3), it is the linguistic choices filling the slots in a text which contribute to their textual meaning. Structuralist approaches are often post-hoc conceptualisations which involving splitting up texts which are identified as humorous into how they fill the relevant slots of the proposed model, taking a top-down approach which is difficult to falsify. The suggestion is that any text which could be broken into either a three-part structure (Nash, 1985) or a selection of jab and punch-lines (Attardo, 1997) is a humorous one, regardless of the textual meaning of the utterance. Defining humour in terms of structure alone contradicts my own aims to provide a framework for how humorous textual meanings are constructed in jokes.

The disagreement amongst researchers as to how humour should be defined, and lack of a general all-encompassing agreed definition of humour, has led to the separation of humour research into three distinct theoretical fields. In what is perhaps the most comprehensive survey of literature on humour, Attardo (1994) describes research trends dating back to the times of the ancient Greeks and Romans, with evidence that the concepts presented by these scholars still dominate humour research today. He presents the three categories which are regarded as the main 'families' of humour research: Psychoanalytical, Social, and Cognitive (Attardo, 1994; Larkin-Gallinanes, 2017). These take the forms of Release, Hostility and Incongruity theories respectively, and will be discussed below (2.2.2-2.2.4). I will debate the merits and drawbacks of each family, and how the lack of a joined-up approach results in three theoretical standpoints which can only account for limited aspects of humour when used alone. Though the three approaches to humour research have developed quite separately, there is argument that they may not be contradictory, and in fact that they may be linked in some way. Larkin-Gallinanes (2017) states that there is much overlap between the three areas of humour research, and that they are just different angles of approach to the same object of study, so they should be seen as complementary rather than mutually exclusive. As an introduction to humour research, Raskin (1985) also points towards an overlap in the theories:

> The three approaches actually characterize the complex phenomenon of humor from very different angles and do not at all contradict each other—rather they seem to supplement each other quite nicely. In our terms, the incongruity -based theories make a statement about the stimulus; the superiority theories characterize the relations or attitudes between the

> speaker and the hearer; and the release/relief theories comment on the feelings and psychology of the hearer only. (Raskin, 1985: 40)

The point at which these theories intersect, however, is not identified. Throughout the remainder of section 2.2. it will be argued that that, in essence, all three families of humour are based on the presence of a 'clash', which can be summed up using the concept of foregrounding through deviation. I will propose that the difference between the theories is whether the perceived clash is at the linguistic, ideational or interpersonal level of meaning, illustrating how I believe this can be assimilated with each of the three humour research families. Whilst any of these three main humour theories used alone are not capable of application to all types of humour, I conclude that foregrounding through deviation is a necessary component of humour and is a way to unify the three separate approaches (2.2.5), before investigating how these foregrounded effects are distinct in humorous discourse in the remainder of the thesis.

2.2.2 Release Theories

Psychoanalytical approaches to humour, known as release and/or relief theories, are rooted in the wider discipline of psychoanalysis which was famously developed by Freud in the early 20th Century. Release theories are based on the assumption that the repression and denial of thoughts and desires to the subconscious mind results in tension, and that humour is a means of release or liberation from these tensions (Freud, 1991 [1905]). Release theories assert that humour allows the conscious expression of thoughts commonly viewed as deviant from societal norms, and that this expression results in pleasure and relaxation.

A problem with explaining humour from the standpoint of release is in its validity with regards to the unconscious mind and repression. Although transgression from norms and discussion of taboos can be identified in a textual analysis, a researcher can never verify what a speaker's unconscious or repressed desires are, as they are, by nature, inaccessible to the conscious mind. This results in a proposition which is, like much of Freud's work, unfalsifiable. Theories of humour need to provide testable hypotheses which can be replicated by other researchers in order to prove them to be true or false, and relief theories are limited in this respect. Another validity issue is that Freud uses the terms humour and laughter interchangeably; as noted in 2.2.1, Glenn (2003) shows that laughter can express many feelings other than amusement, such as anxiety, nerves, or relief. Whilst this does help to corroborate Freud's theory that laughter is employed due to a release of tension, it does not follow that relief is a response to humour per se, and could instead be a resulting manifestation of any other psychological tension or distress.

As discussed in 2.1.4, deviation is a way of achieving foregrounding effects in a text, and deviation from norms permissible within society would result in foregrounding at an interpersonal level of meaning. I would therefore argue that the release theory approach to humour analysis can be explained using foregrounding theory. Release theories of humour are grounded in expression of those subjects and situations which, in serious discourse, are believed to cause the producer and/or receiver tension. Koestler (1989) states that the relief experienced through humour specifically concerns topics which could cause intrapersonal and interpersonal tension, such as sex, anger and fear. Lacan (1997) viewed humor as an important aspect of the individual's developing capacity to address the limitations imposed by society, mortality, and the unspeakable terror of the real, and Zizek (2001a) argued

that comedy is a powerful way to symbolize those aspects of human experience that leave us speechless and horrified. By discussing these difficult topics through humour, interactants are allowed a pleasurable relief from the tension they cause, without a need to confront the emotions with any serious action (such as engaging in violent or sexual behaviours). Berger (1999) also finds that those topics which deviate from societal norms of acceptable discussion – known as taboos - are a common subject of humour. Taboo is defined as 'a social or religious custom prohibiting or restricting a particular practice or forbidding association with a particular person, place or thing' (OED, 2020). Schoemaker & Tetlock (2012) assert that taboos are universal feature of social systems which place restrictions on what is permissible to discuss, or even think about. The fact that taboos exist within speech communities reinforces the claim that speakers have implicitly agreed customs of social practice governing their behaviour and interaction, which is evidence that foregrounding through deviation can occur at the levels of ideational and interpersonal meaning (2.1.4). Holding or expressing ideologies outside of the norm is deviant at an ideational level, whilst the overt expression of taboo(s), and finding humour in them, deviates from expected interactional norms, so is foregrounded at the interpersonal level of language. O'Driscoll (2020:40), defines taboo as 'any use of language deemed transgressive of polite social norms', which is further argument that taboo and/or impoliteness in interaction are foregrounded through deviation. Impoliteness (2.1.2; 2.2.3) is also labelled by Simpson and Bousfield (2017) as a form of relief. They state that 'Impoliteness can be constructed and communicated as a means of socio-cognitive relief (see Bousfield, 2008) from pressure, stress or other perceived tension' (2017: 163). I would expand further and argue that, by expressing taboo or repressed desires through the playful form of

humour, it provides a retreat which would not be available to the speaker if they had uttered these desires explicitly in so-called bona-fide (Raskin, 1985) conversation. This allows the speaker to both liberate themselves from tension, and to plausibly deny anything which may have caused offence and 'save face' (Brown & Levinson, 1987), thereby using humour to aid social cohesion (see 1.2.3). In addition to relief from social and psychological boundaries, an interesting application of release theory by Attardo (1994) is that this concept of liberation could also apply to language conventions. Attardo argues that in breaking the rules of language we are released from the constraints of linguistic norms and thus find pleasure in this relief. Deviating from norms of language use is an example of foregrounding through deviation at the linguistic level of meaning.

There are several theoretical shortcomings when humour is defined in terms of release theory. Firstly, Freud (1905) Koestler (1989) and Berger (1999) assert that humour is achieved through relief from addressing taboos, ignoring and excluding any humour which does not concern taboo or repressed desires from their definition. This is an issue which could be addressed by reframing relief as being achieved through a violation of 'norms' more generally, rather than it being specifically concerned with repressed tensions. I propose that this could be done by incorporating release theories as one aspect of foregrounding within humorous discourse, whereby humour results in relief from restrictions at any of the linguistic, ideational or interpersonal levels of meaning (2.1.3). A second issue is that release theories only define humour in terms of the psychological effect humour has on a speaker or hearer, relying on the experiencing of tension release as a defining feature which identifies a text as humorous. This results in a cyclical definition much like the OED dictionary definition discussed above (2.2.1), where the presence of

relief is used to identify the humour which caused it in the first place. Release theories offer no way to determine how a text is presented 'in a humorous way' in order to produce the relieving effects which would not occur in serious discourse. This results in a humour theory which is focussed on the interpersonal aspect of communication and unable to form the basis for a textual approach to analysis. For this reason, I do not believe release theories provide an appropriate basis for a framework of textual joke analysis which I am aiming to create in this thesis. As their focus is the resulting effects of humour and not the stimulus, they are beyond the scope of what my own framework will hope to achieve, however the concept of relief from tension is still relevant to interpretative analysis and will be referred to during the discussion of joke examples in chapters 5-11.

2.2.3 Hostility Theories

'Hostility' theories define humour by speaker intention, and how this affects recipients and social hierarchies in interaction. They are described by Attardo (1994) as 'social' approaches to humour study; other labels Attardo (1994) uses interchangeably for hostility theories are 'aggression' 'superiority' and 'disparagement'. This contrasts with the psychologically focussed release theories discussed above (2.2.2), which focus on the relieving effects of humour from an internal individualistic perspective. Hostility theories of humour are based on the argument that humorous utterances have a hostile intent, and that amusement is found in the deprecation of a particular individual or social group. The resulting effect is a created pseudo-social hierarchy whereby those partaking in the humour feel superior to the humour's target. This asymmetrical shift in power supposedly results

in enjoyment or pleasure for those on the higher footing (Goffman, 1967), at the expense of those being disparaged.

The aggressive nature of humour was originally noted by the Ancient Greek philosophers (Plato, quoted in Attardo, 1994) but, as humour was also branded as sinful up until well after the Middle Ages, the phenomenon remained understudied. This resulted in a research-gap into humour and aggresion which was not addressed until the work of Descartes and Hobbes in the 17th century (Attardo, 1994; Figueroa-Dorrego & Larkin Galinanes, 2009). More recently, humour research in the field of stylistics has produced work grounded in the hostility approach, as discussed in 2.1.2. Simpson (2003) highlights that satire relies on an aggressive function towards its target, referred to as the 'satired', though as his work is focussed on satire it lacks generalisability to other humorous forms. Humour analysis by Simpson & Bousfield (2017) also employs the hostility approach, identifying textual features of impoliteness (Culpeper, 2011) in various types of discourse that result in humour, and in her thesis entitled 'Feck Off', Cronin (2018) finds a correlation between impoliteness features and audience laughter in three British-Irish sitcoms. This application of impoliteness theory is further evidence to support Bousfield & Locher's (2008) explanation that humour relies on superiority, as the speaker performing the impolite speech act(s) positions themselves as superior to the addressee/group they are directing the utterance towards. Much stylistic analysis of humour has revolved around impoliteness theory, but a limitation of explaining humour using impoliteness is that this is restricted to analysing humour in interaction with multiple speaking participants, offering little insight into humour with no opportunity for interactional turn-taking, such as stand-up comedy or written collections of canned jokes. This is a problem which was discussed with regard to release theory (2.2.2), which also relies

on defining humour through effects on participants, and cannot always be accounted for using only a text. As explained (1.1) my own framework will be for the analysis of the humorous stimulus and not the effect of humour. However, hostility in a situation where there are no participants could be explained by joke texts which disparage others, or when stand-up comedians are self-deprecating and position themselves as inferior to the audience.

Another limitation of hostility theories more generally is their failure to account for humour which does not target aggression towards an individual or group. This is most obvious in punning humour reliant on word play, such as the joke example below from Raskin:

Example 1

> *'He's a man of letters. He works for the post office'*
>
> (Raskin, 1985: 29)

The joke (ex. 1) above does not appear to be produced in order to disparage any particular group; the joke's noun phrase referents are writers and postal workers, but without targeted aggression towards either. There are no evaluative modifiers present which could be interpreted as disparaging to either group, and the amusement in this utterance instead appears to come from the wordplay; the ambiguity of 'letters' is exploited to force a reinterpretation of the text, and therefore the humorous meaning is constructed through *textual* choices, not interpersonal effects. La Fave (1972) rejected hostility as an explanation of humour on the basis that it could not account for a large collection of humorous texts. Similarly, in his 'General Theory of Verbal Humour' (1991;1994;1997) (see 3.2), Attardo labels 'target' as an optional component for humour production, further suggesting that non-

hostile humorous texts do exist. Humour can aid social cohesion and group-bonding, and there is literature to support these claims (Apte, 1985; Holmes, 2000). As discussed in 1.2.3-1.2.4, using humour can be used a way of mitigating a threat, which directly contradicts the idea that humour is inherently aggressive. Larkin-Galinanes (2017) posits that humour is a way of forming social connections, with senses of humour varying between speakers of differentiating societal groups:

> This being so, humor and its appreciation are very largely judged to be a question of social allegiance and identification, because it is nowadays generally recognized that the scope and degree of mutual understanding in humor varies directly with the degree to which the participants share their social backgrounds.

(Larkin-Galinanes, 2017: 9).

Holmes argues that 'Shared humour is an important in-group vs out-group boundary marker' (2000: 160), a point on which Larkin-Galinanes' paper concurs. This poses conflicting positions which suggest that humour is sometimes used to attack and exclude, or at others to behave with friendly inclusivity, and I would argue that humour does not always necessarily perform either of these functions. An explanation for demarcation of in-groups and out-groups in terms of hostility theories is that those participating in the humour bond over their shared disparagement of a target, and by marking this target as an outsider the humour has a hostile function. This, however, does not take into account non-hostile humour being used within a social group, with no 'out-group' being identified. This renders the hostility theories an incomplete explanation of what makes a text humorous.

What is clear from the above literature is that although hostility can account for how some humour is achieved, in its current form it is not a comprehensive explanation which covers all forms of humour, or even of a particular humorous text type such as jokes. I will now argue that hostility is also an example of foregrounding through deviation at an interpersonal level, and that identifying this could help to unify the hostility theories with the release (2.2.2) and incongruity (2.2.4) approaches to humour.

Foregrounding in terms of hostility is not achieved solely through the language used, but instead takes place at an interpersonal level. Humour realised through hostility (which can take the forms of disparagement, impoliteness or aggression) occurs when a speaker deviates from expected interpersonal norms such as politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987) or co-operation (Grice, 1975) and is therefore foregrounded. Below is a thesaurus entry for impoliteness, which is a focus of stylistic humour analysis as discussed throughout this chapter. Though dictionaries and thesauruses do not always capture language and meaning in use, they do illustrate the coded norms of a language system which are assumed to be held by competent speakers. Hostility, disparagement and superiority are all elements of impoliteness.

> *bad manners, boldness, boorishness, brusqueness, coarseness, contempt, contumely, discourtesy, discourteousness, dishonor, disrespect, flippancy, hardihood, impertinence, impiety, impudence, incivility, inurbanity, inconsideration, insolence, insolency, insolentness, irreverence, lack of respect, profanation, rudeness, sacrilege, unmannerliness*
>
> *(http:// thesaurus.reference.com/)*

Considering the above examples of disrespect, dishonour, discourtesy, inconsideration, unmannerliness, what they have in common is that these are all negated forms of what is considered to be polite, or co-operative behaviour in society. They are *deviant* from those interactional norms and expectations, and thus I would suggest they are foregrounded. As with lexico-grammatical rules, native speakers are aware of 'norms of appropriateness' (Locher, 2006: 250), and gain an understanding of what is acceptable to say and do in a given situation (Culpeper, 2011). Any break from these norms is analogous with explanations for how foregrounding effects are achieved through deviation. Leech (1985), Mills (2003) and Cronin (2018) also state that impoliteness is a break from the expected norms of interaction, a point on which Simpson & Bousfield agree:

> 'The appearance and production of situations representing the construction and communication of impoliteness essentially indicate a break from the norms of expectation either within the text world created (in fiction, and drama), or within real life.' (Simpson & Bousfield, 2017: 163)

This literature on impoliteness states that speakers are implicitly aware of interactional norms, and that tactics such as impoliteness deviate from these assumed norms. I therefore propose that this is justification for adapting foregrounding theory to incorporate deviation from norms at this interpersonal level of discourse, and thus label hostility theories of humour as foregrounding achieved through deviation.

The main drawback of hostility theories, even when assimilated into foregrounding theory, is that they do not show how to distinguish hostility which is humorous from hostility which is not humorous. Aggression, impoliteness and disparagement are

intentions and effects which can occur in serious discourse as well as in humour, so these features alone cannot be used to differentiate between humorous and non-humorous texts. This is a problem shared by both the release and hostility humour theory families: they account for the psycho-social functions of performing humour, but, from a textual point of view, offer little scope for analysis. Both schools are focussed on the effect of humour on its producer and their audience *as* it is uttered, rather than how humour can be realised through a text. This leads to the discussion (2.2.4) of what Attardo (1994) refers to as the 'cognitive' family of humour research, Incongruity-Resolution theories.

2.2.4 Incongruity-Resolution Theories

This section will discuss the incongruity-resolution theories of humour. These cognitive approaches argue that humour relies on the presence of a perceived clash – or incongruity – within a text. Although cognition is still a study of psychology, incongruity and its resolution are aspects of communication which are encoded within a text, and so can be analysed from a textual perspective, which is beneficial for a stylistic approach to humour research and more in line with my own research aims (1.1.2).

According to Attardo (1997: 415) 'the investigation and definition of the concept of incongruity has to start from semantics' and 'incongruity is a semantic concept.' Initially, incongruity alone was thought to be a defining feature of humour, but later research developed to include the requirement that the incongruity must be somehow resolved. The general approach of incongruity humour theories is a cognitive-perceptual one, proposing that in a humorous text two or more clashing

concepts are presented at *some level*, and that this clash results in humour. There are several different theoretical stances on the nature of this clashing relationship, which are outlined below, beginning with incongruity before discussing theories which incorporate resolution and different perspectives on how this resolution occurs. I will illustrate that the concept of incongruity is analogous with foregrounding through deviation, and that as this can be deviation at any of the levels of meaning discussed in 2.1.3, this approach subsumes the hostility and release theories underneath the humour achieved through foregrounding umbrella. Incongruity is reliant on deviation from some established norm, and is therefore an example of foregrounding through deviation. This relationship between incongruity and foregrounding has been noted in stylistic humour research (Simpson, 2003; Culpeper & McIntyre 2010). Incongruity can be encoded at a linguistic level by deviating from standardised forms of language use such as grammar or orthography. A clash in logic, or deviant behaviour in situational norms would be incongruous at the ideational and interpersonal levels of discourse, presenting discourse which challenges either what speakers/hearers know the world to be like or their expectations for behaviour and interactions. Henceforth it will be assumed that incongruity and foregrounding through deviation are the same phenomenon and so the terms will be used interchangeably.

It has long been asserted that humour comes from a surprise in expectations. Schopenhauer believed that humour (which he called the ludicrous) is perceived ‘when we are struck by a clash between our initial conceptual interpretation of a word and our perception of another “real” interpretation as activated by the context in which we find it’ (Schopenhauer 1883 in Figueroa-Dorrego & Larkin-Galinanes, 2009: 487). Simpson & Bousfield (2017) also argue that stylistic approaches to

humour rely on the assumption of an incongruity being present in the text, and that this can occur at any level of language/discourse as stated in 2.1.2. However, as with relief and hostility, the presence of incongruity alone cannot account for a text being humorous. Simpson (2003) exemplifies this through the analysis of a joke attempt which employs incongruity, produced by a child.

Example 2

> *Danny: how can an EYE BALL WALK*
>
> *Mother: dunno*
>
> *Danny: by having some (.) mmm ↑ CHAIR LEGS ↓*
>
> (Simpson, 2003: 28)

In this example (2), the speaker 'Danny' has employed the structural question and answer set-up (Nash, 1985) often presented in a pun-style joke (Attardo, 1994). What Danny proposes in the joke's set-up (eyeballs walking) is incongruous because it is impossible; it deviates from our understanding of reality and is thus incongruous. This is an example of foregrounding through deviation at an ideational level. Danny's utterance in the expected punch-line position (Nash, 1985; Attardo, 1997) where he provides the reasoning behind how the eyeballs can walk: 'chair legs' is also incongruous, because it does not provide any reasoning for how chair legs would enable an eyeball to walk and is therefore deviant at an interpersonal level. These incongruities alone do not ensure that the text will function as a joke. In order for the pun to be successfully achieved, there needs to be some sort of link present in the text, a point where a semantic connection is made to realise just how the eyeball is enabled to walk, and this link is absent. Interestingly, the parents do laugh in Simpson's example, but not due to the lexico-semantic content of Danny's joke.

They are amused because what Danny is attempting resembles a joke, but there is no resolution present, which is incongruous within their expectations of a joke text type – I would argue that this is deviation at the interpersonal level of meaning, which is further argument for the expansion of foregrounding theory to be applied to the interpersonal metafunction of language. There is a clash between what is expected from a joke text and what Danny has presented, as well as there being an overlap in the sense that the lexico-grammatical content of Danny's utterance partly resembles a joke. It is this necessary combination of *clash and overlap* that formed the basis for development of incongruity theories into incongruity resolution theories of humour.

The Incongruity-Resolution model (Suls, 1972; 1977) focusses on the cognitive processing of jokes – though it has since been applied to humour more generally - and has two stages. Suls argues that in the first stage something in a text is recognised by the hearer/reader as incongruous. This forces the recipient to search for an alternative, congruous meaning; a 'rule' to apply in order for the incongruity to make sense. When this rule is found, the 'solving' of the puzzle results in speaker amusement, and this is what Suls calls the second 'resolution' stage. This addition of the resolution stage is a step towards distinguishing incongruity in humorous utterances from incongruity more generally, and as discussed above (2.2.2-2.2.3) this is an area where the release and hostility approaches have fallen short. However, as I will explore below, the nature of resolutions in humour remains ill-defined.

A problem with Suls' IR model is that it suggests an utterance only becomes humorous when processed by a recipient. Suls' work accounts for the cognitive-processing of received humour, but does not explain how a joke-text could be produced, incurring the same analytical difficulties as the release and hostility

theories discussed previously. For a hearer to perceive a clash in a text, the producer of the text will have made a series of choices which construct the utterance in such a way that it contains an incongruity, regardless of whether anyone hears/reads the text. According to Ritchie (2004), Suls model is more concerned with funniness than jokehood; it serves to explain how an audience found an utterance funny, which is slightly different to providing a method for distinguishing a text as either a joke or not a joke (or more generally, whether a text is or is not humorous).

Suls' model also fails to account for finding a joke funny more than once, and his emphasis on hearer perception and surprise is a reductionist explanation of humour. If amusement comes from solving the incongruity as Suls suggests, then a second hearing would not require this same puzzle solving, and therefore according to the model would not result in subsequent amusement. Real-world evidence contradicts this, as the same joke can be found humorous more than once; this is something James Acaster acknowledges in his recent Netflix stand-up series 'Repertoire' (Acaster, 2018). Acaster tells the audience he went to Pret a Manger to '*Manger* a banana', and his use of the word '*manger'* elicits laughter (which, in the context of a stand-up comedy show, can be assumed as a positive indicator of humour appreciation). He continues to repeat this phrase in place of the word eat throughout the show, and stops to tell the audience 'funny every time that one, *manger*, still funny'. As Acaster predicts, every substitution of '*manger*' elicits laughter from the audience, and this laughter intensifies the longer the joke is repeated. Acaster's use of 'manger' is an example of foregrounding achieved through linguistic deviation from external linguistic norms, as he is incorporating a word from the French language into an English Language comedy routine for English speakers. I would also highlight that the repetition of the word 'manger' as a

substitution for ‘eat’ in this performance establishes an internal norm within the discourse context, and is therefore an example of foregrounding through lexical parallelism. This suggests that, whilst foregrounding in humour is often achieved through deviation, parallelism can also be used to create humorous effects, and a combination of both deviation and parallelism results in utterances which are highly foregrounded, and in this case considered to be funny.

Ritchie’s (2004) forced reinterpretation model attempts to address the issues of Suls’ recipient focussed IR approach to jokes by suggesting that two possible meanings are ‘set up’[5] within a humorous text, which he calls SU1 and SU2. SU1 is initially more obvious to hearers than the covert meaning SU2. Some element of the latter part of the text forces acknowledgement of SU2, thus forcing a ‘reinterpretation’ of the entire text. An advantage of this adaptation by Ritchie is that it takes a textual approach to identifying the defining features of humour, rather than relying on hearer perceptions as markers of humour. Both Ritchie and Suls’ work, however, suggest a linear processing of humour whereby one meaning is recognised, then discounted in favour of another. As my own analysis will show in more detail (chapters 5-11), this is not always how meaning shifts in jokes, particularly in puns, where multiple meanings are compatible with the whole text and therefore neither interpretation is discounted.

In contrast to the linear processing explanations, Koestler (1989) offers the concept of ‘Bisociation’. Koestler argues that two associative contexts – referred to as ‘frames’ (see 3.1.3) – which are usually incompatible with one another are encoded in a humorous text simultaneously, and that a recipient pivots between these

[5] The phrase ‘set up’ as used by Ritchie (2004) is not the same concept as Nash’s (1985) use of the term ‘set-up’ in relation to joke structure.

meanings, taking enjoyment from the dual-processing. With simple verbal humour (Attardo, 1994), such as puns employing linguistic ambiguity, this theory is highly effective in explaining how the humour is realised, for example the newspaper headline below regarding Tiger Woods' improper ball drop at the 2013 masters:

Example 3

'Tiger puts balls in wrong place again'

New York Post Headline, Sunday 14 April 2013

The linguistic choices made in the construction of this text deliberately offer two possible interpretations of the text meaning:

1) Tiger Woods dropped a golf ball in the wrong place and this is something he has done before.
2) Tiger Woods put his genitals in the wrong place and this is something he has done before.

The lexeme at the core of this bisociative meaning is the noun phrase 'balls', which is an ambiguous referent to both the golf ball and his genitalia. This ambiguous bisociation is achieved by exploiting the contextual knowledge that Woods is a golfer, and that he was involved in an infidelity scandal which was widely publicised in the same year that the article headline was written, so both interpretations of the text are accessible by the author choosing to use the word 'balls'. As Jeffries & McIntyre (2010) explain, ambiguity is considered to be an example of foregrounding through deviation at a linguistic level, and this effect is achieved in example 3. In addition to this, the allusion to infidelity and genitalia could be considered taboo (2.2.3), so the public discussion of this taboo is deviant at an interpersonal level. Also deviant is the derision of Woods in this headline by emphasising his

transgressions and flaws using ‘again’ which presupposes he has made the same mistakes before and results in an interpretation which is a negative judgement on his character; in other words, a face attack (Brown & Levison, 1987). This is another humorous example which can be analysed through the presence of foregrounding at multiple meaning levels. Though this foregrounding can be clearly evidenced in the text, this still does not account for how an analyst marks the foregrounding in this text as humorous, or how it differs from serious discourse. Everyday language use often employs incongruities such as ambiguity to create inferences (Grice, 1975) and these are not always humorous. Even if the generation of implicatures were deemed to be incongruous, the incongruity-resolution family of theories outlined above offer no way to differentiate between incongruity (or its resolution) in the so-called serious and humorous modes (Mulkay, 1988). Metaphors are a prime example of this problem in distinguishing between humorous and serious modes of communication when using an approach of incongruity-resolution. I will exemplify this using the metaphor below:

Example 4

‘Juliet is the Sun’

(Shakespeare, 2000)

In this metaphor, two clashing concepts are presented: a human being cannot be the sun, so the propositional content of the utterance deviates from our own knowledge of the world and is therefore foregrounded at an ideational level. Following the recognition of this incongruity, there is a search for an interpretative rule to make sense of the metaphor. The assumed textually constructed meaning is that the speaker believes Juliet to be in some way *equivalent* to the sun - possibly in beauty, warmth, or necessity for his survival - and this interpretation resolves the initially

perceived incongruity by the hearer/reader as they understand it to be an expression of adoration. Here I will assume that this metaphor is not intended to be, nor generally perceived to be, humorous. As I have shown, the incongruity-resolution approach is still able to explain how the meaning is understood in this non-humorous text, and does not offer a way to differentiate between humorous and non-humorous incongruity resolution. This is a criticism also raised by Simpson (2003: 55).

Oring (2011a) attempts to clarify the difference by making a distinction between pure, resolved and appropriate incongruity. Pure incongruity cannot be rationalised or resolved, and remains solely incongruous, such as Danny's failed joke example (2). Resolved incongruity results in the solving of a puzzle, or in the above case, a metaphor. Oring argues that *appropriate* incongruity, incongruity which is partially resolved, is the type which is present in humour, though he does not provide any means of defining the 'appropriateness' of a resolution (Davies, 2011: 171; Raskin, 2011:224), or how a partial resolution differs from a full one. Oring (2011a) categorises metaphors as possessing a fully resolved incongruity, but in the example above (4) there are elements presented which are not fully compatible with both the literal and metaphorical interpretations of the text, as Juliet cannot literally be the sun; this then appears to be a partial and not a full resolution. I would argue that if a text's incongruity is fully resolved, then it is unclear how this text would ever be perceived as incongruous in the first place. I would also dispute that the term 'appropriate' is helpful when recognising incongruity in a text, as the concept of incongruity relies on the recognition of elements of language, world view or interaction which are somehow considered inappropriate for the surrounding co-text and/or context. Pollio (1996) attempts to define the scope of appropriateness by identifying the boundary between serious and humorous metaphors, stating that it

lies in the domain boundaries of the items being equated. Conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1981) shows that metaphors are created by integrating information from one source domain onto another target domain, in order to construct a relationship of equivalence, such as Juliet and The Sun (ex. 4) quoted above. Brone (2017) suggests that whereas non-humorous metaphor suppresses boundaries between the two domains, a humorous comparison will emphasize the disparity and/or opposition between the two source & target domains. This clash in domain boundaries will be revisited in order to propose the concept of 'Asymmetrical Comparison' (5.3.4; 8), where I will suggest that a greater perceived semantic distance between items being presented as equal through textual construction is one of several meaning shifts which give rise to humour in joke texts.

This section has explored incongruity-resolution theories, and equated incongruity with foregrounding through deviation. Though there are several IR approaches to humour with their own nuances, their central argument is that humour is reliant on a 'clash' between what is expected and what has been presented in a humorous text. Foregrounding is also achieved through a clash or deviation from norms and expectations, which I have suggested can be at a linguistic, ideational or interpersonal level, and therefore I believe there is justification in treating the two concepts as synonymous.

2.2.5. Incorporating and Adapting Foregrounding Theory for Humour Research

Throughout section 2.2, it has been argued that the three approaches to humour research are all aspects of foregrounding, achieved through deviation at different levels of utterance meaning; linguistic, ideational and interpersonal. The aim of this

argument is to provide a more unified approach to the analysis of humour which encompasses all aspects of textual meaning, as opposed to seeing the three theory-families independently, where they each have shortcomings in their ability to account for what is humorous and leave elements of textual meaning unexplained. My proposition to unify the families of humour research in this way necessitates an adaptation of foregrounding theory to how it is currently applied in stylistics, where it is generally only used for analysis of parallelism and deviation at the linguistic level of meaning. I have attempted to justify the labelling of breaks in norms as foregrounding through deviation at the levels of ideational and interpersonal meaning respectively, where these norms relate to assumed knowledge about how the world is and expected behaviour patterns within it. Jeffries (2014b) states that incorporating the meaning metafunctions proposed in Systemic Functional Linguistics into one general approach of explaining textual meaning construction 'allows us to integrate the insights from much of the work of linguistics into a single, unified model' (Jeffries, 2014b: 471), and I believe that incorporating the ideational and interpersonal metafunctions into foregrounding theory results in a more widely applicable tool for describing how textual meanings are created.

In addition to enabling the three families of humour research to be used with a more joined-up approach, other more specific branches of linguistic humour research could be encompassed within this standpoint by their classification as examples of foregrounding. Attardo's (1994) concept of 'Register Humour' states that deviating from expected register for the utterance context results in humour, and this judgement of appropriateness in context implies that breaks of register are foregrounded through deviation at an interpersonal level. Relevance Theoretic approaches (Sperber & Wilson, 1986; Attardo, 1997; Yus, 2017), suggest humour is

created through flouting the Gricean Maxim of Relevance (Grice, 1975), and this flouting is also an example of interpersonal deviation from assumed co-operative interactional strategies, resulting in foregrounding (Mifdal, 2019: 34-35). Sperber & Wilson's discussion of relevance theory even goes as far as to acknowledge that readers and speakers 'pay attention to some phenomena rather than others' (Sperber & Wilson, 1986: 42) which is synonymous with foregrounding.

Based on the literature surveyed in this chapter, I argue that textual humour will always contain deviation from some established norm which has a resulting foregrounded effect, and that these foregrounded elements contribute to the text being humorous. This is a claim which can be supported or contradicted through textual analysis, by examining humorous texts for evidence of foregrounding. If a text is found to have no evidence of foregrounding through deviation from linguistic, ideational or interpersonal norms, but is still regarded to be an example of humour, then this would provide a counter-argument to my claims that foregrounding through deviation is an essential component of humour. Though I argue that foregrounding is a necessary condition for a text to be humorous, I do not conclude that foregrounding analysis provides a sufficient way to define a text as humorous. Deviation from established norms can occur in any text, as stylistic research has shown, and the resulting foregrounded clash does not always result in a text being interpreted as an example of humour.

2.3 Contextualising Stylistics & Humour for My Own Research

The purpose of Chapter 2 has been to present a theoretical introduction to the fields of stylistics (2.1) and humour research (2.2), in order to rationalise my aims of

creating a new stylistic framework for the analysis of jokes which are a prototypical humour form.

I began by stating (2.1.1) that stylistics is a discipline which examines how choices in a text result in a particular style, and I will incorporate this into my own research by investigating what language choices specifically result in joke text-types. In 2.1.2 it was highlighted that there has been some research into humour within the field of stylistics, but that it is limited to sub-types of humour or analysis of specific texts. There is not a stylistic model for joke analysis, and this is a knowledge gap which I will aim to address with my own research. Jeffries work on Critical Stylistics and the Theory of Textual Meaning (2.1.3), was identified as the basis I will use for the initial development of my own framework, based on my argument that a joke meaning is constructed at the textual level, and textual meaning analysis can investigate how this humour is encoded in a text. I have discussed the concept of foregrounding (2.1.4), which is a key element of stylistics, and suggested that a revision of foregrounding theory to include the ideational and interpersonal levels of meaning could be a way to unify the disconnected aspects of humour theory. I have outlined how humour is defined in essentialist and structuralist terms, as well as those approaches which use speaker intentions or hearer perceptions as a method for humour identification (2.2.1), and why I will instead aim to propose a joke analysis framework which is focussed on the text.

Following this I went on to contextualise the dominant theories of humour research within stylistics, proposing that the three families of humour research (2.2) are all aspects of foregrounding through deviation. Through this argument, I have provided a more joined up approach to the textual analysis of humour which accounts for both the foregrounded elements within a text (2.2.5), and offers scope to discuss how this

textual foregrounding has an impact on the wider world. I have stated that, whilst the literature supports my argument that foregrounding is a necessary component of humour, it is not a sufficient explanation for defining a text as humorous. The remainder of this thesis will investigate the specific conditions or textual patterning which distinguish this foregrounding as humorous in joke texts.

Chapter 3: The Semantic Script Theory of Humour

Chapter 2 concluded that a stylistic approach could unify the three families of humour research by noting that they are all examples of foregrounding through deviation, but that this alone could not account for a joke text being humorous. This chapter will move on to focus on the Semantic Script Theory of Humour (Raskin, 1985), a theory which *does* claim to provide these necessary and sufficient conditions for a text to be defined as humorous. The theory's hypothesis and methods are presented (3.1), followed by discussion of the subsequent theoretical developments which have occurred up to the present date (3.2). This will highlight knowledge gaps in the theory and how I believe a stylistic approach could address these issues.

3.1 Introducing the Semantic Script Theory of Humour

This section introduces the Semantic Script Theory of Humour, beginning with a rationale for using this as a basis for my own research (3.1.1). Following this I will discuss the theory's main hypothesis (3.1.2), the key concepts of scripts (3.1.3), overlap (3.1.4) and opposition (3.1.5), and the SSTH methodology (3.1.6).

3.1.1 Rationale for SSTH Focus

The Semantic-Script Theory of Humor (SSTH), and its later development into The General Verbal Theory of Humour (see 3.2.1), have been defined as the 'two most influential linguistic humor theories of the last two decades' (Brône et al, 2006: 203). Simpson highlights that the 1980's saw 'a sustained and progressively heightened interest among language scholars in linguistically based accounts of verbal humour' (Simpson, 2003: 16), and in 1985 two seminal works in this field were published: 'The Language of Humour' (Nash, 1985), and 'Semantic Mechanisms of Humor'

(Raskin, 1985). Nash's work is a structuralist model for humour analysis (see 2.2.1), so I did not feel it could be used as a starting point for my own aims of analysing of humour in jokes at the level of textual meaning. The analytical framework proposed by Nash has also failed to become a mainstay of humour research in the 21st century. For these reasons Nash's (1985) approach to humour analysis is considered to be beyond the scope of my research and will not be discussed further in this thesis. In contrast, Raskin's Semantic Script Theory of Humour is the foundation for much research into the language of humour and has become 'a mainstay of an influential tradition in humorology' (Simpson, 2003: 30). Though initially proposed almost forty years ago, its central argument that joke-carrying texts will contain script opposition and script overlap is still widely accepted and utilised by current scholars of humour research (Attardo & Hemplemann, 2011; Larkin-Galinanes, 2017; Guidi, 2017).

Another reason for focussing on the SSTH specifically is that it is a theory of humour which lends itself to a stylistic approach. Brône & Feyaerts (2004) say that although the SSTH does not present itself in stylistic field, it is situated here in the sense that 'they explore the interface between language and cognition' (Brone & Feyaerts, 2004: 362). This directly corresponds to the textual meaning approach (2.1.3), so cements itself as a basis for my research aims. An additional justification from my research aims is that the SSTH was originally proposed as a theory of jokes before being expanded to other humour types, and the main hypothesis (3.1.2) was developed using a small sample of joke texts. As I am restricting my data sample to jokes in this thesis, a well-established theory of jokes seemed to be the most logical starting point in developing my own framework for joke analysis.

3.1.2 The Main Hypothesis of the SSTH

The Semantic Script Theory of Humour (Raskin, 1985) purports to explain the necessary and sufficient conditions for a text to be classed as a joke, and the theory's main hypothesis is now presented below.

Raskin (1985: 99) argues that a text can be characterised as a 'single joke carrying text' if it can fulfil two conditions:

1) *The text is compatible, fully or in part, with two different scripts*
2) *The two scripts with which the text is compatible are opposite**

**Oppositeness is defined 'in some special sense' within the text (see 3.1.5)*

The aim of a hypothesis is to provide a premise which can be tested, in order to support or contradict that premise (Rasinger, 2013: 12; McKinley, 2020;2019: 6). Disproving a hypothesis is known as falsification, and one of the principles of stylistics is to conduct analysis which is falsifiable (Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010). According to current research (Raskin, 2017; Attardo, 2017; Guidi, 2017), the SSTH hypothesis has not been falsified. The quotes below attest to this claim:

> 'The Semantic-Script Theory of Verbal Humor is the only one individuating two conditions for humor occurrence; because it has not yet been falsified, we can assume the semantic-pragmatic mechanism of Script Opposition […] as a first (and absolute […]) humor universal. (Guidi, 2017:20)

> 'Humor theory, however, is falsified by any joke that is not based on a pair of opposing scripts, and the search for such a pair has been fully on since Raskin (1979)' (Attardo, 2017:53)

> ‘Falsification: a joke that is not based on overlapping and opposed scripts—not yet produced, it appears’ (Raskin 2017: 113)

The SSTH hypothesis remains a core assumption in much current humour research, but I will argue throughout this chapter that this lack of falsification is due to this hypothesis being unfalsifiable, rather than it being a testament to the success of the SSTH. The main elements of the SSTH hypothesis can be separated into three key concepts of scripts, script overlap, and script opposition, discussed respectively below in 3.1.3-3.1.5.

3.1.3 Scripts

The first part of the SSTH hypothesis states that a joke text must contain two or more scripts. Raskin (1985) defines a script as ‘a large chunk of semantic information surrounding the word or evoked by it. The script is a cognitive structure internalized by the native speaker and it represents the native speaker’s knowledge of a small part of the world’ (1985: 81). As discussed in 2.1.3, a speaker’s world view is made up of their stored world-knowledge and beliefs, otherwise known as ideation and ideology (Jeffries: 2010a), suggesting that there are elements of a critical stylistic approach in the SSTH’s use of script analysis. The concept of scripts did not originate in Raskin’s (1985) work, nor was it coined in reference to the language of humour; ‘Script’ in this sense is a term borrowed from previous research into psychology, cognitive linguistics and artificial intelligence (Attardo, 2001), which was adopted in Raskin’s own research into Ontological Semantics (1979). Schank and Ableson (1977) originally positioned scripts as existing within what they term ‘activity types’, which are ‘A structure that describes appropriate sequences of events in a particular context’ and ‘a predetermined, stereotyped sequence of actions that define

a well-known situation' (Schank & Ableson, 1977: 41). Any element in a text which falls outside of these established norms would be foregrounded at an ideational and/or interpersonal level, suggesting that a script-based approach to humour analysis could be compatible with my claims (2.2) that foregrounding is an essential element of humour.

Though Schank and Ableson (1977) utilise scripts in reference to activity type, Raskin's (1979; 1985) definition of scripts has been described as interchangeable with schemas (Attardo, 2008: 1204; Yus, 2016: 84). Short (1996) analogises schemas as a filing cabinet where speakers store relevant knowledge under the appropriate file. Stockwell (2002) says that, as schemas are cognitive, they belong to a speaker/hearer and are not found in a text, but he does argue that aspects of a text can trigger the activation of a schema. Attardo (2001) also states that texts contain lexical handles which activate scripts, a notion which Hoey (2005) calls lexical priming. Semino et al (1997) explains that whilst texts project meaning, readers construct meaning. In other words, texts will contain cues which activate stored background knowledge from a reader, and this knowledge is then used to make sense of the presented text world. This depicts script-based analysis as textual in nature: although they are cognitive knowledge stores, scripts are triggered by the linguistic choices presented in a text, therefore resulting in a textually constructed meaning. This element of the SSTH makes it compatible with a critical stylistic approach, in line with the aims of my research.

According to Raskin (1985), every speaker will possess common sense scripts, which is assumed to be knowledge all native speakers will have about certain concepts or activities and what they involve: this is synonymous with

ideational knowledge. As well as this shared collective knowledge, speakers have individual scripts which are made up from their unique life experiences. There is also a proposed third category of restricted scripts, which speakers may share within a specific limited speech community (such as a family group or friend circle) which the wider speech community marked as an out-group (Holmes, 2000) will not share.

To illustrate what an SSTH script analysis may look like, presented below (fig. 1) is Raskin's (1985) lexical script for 'doctor'. This represents all information which Raskin considers to be activated by the word 'doctor' in a text.

Figure 1 'The Lexical Script for DOCTOR'

Subject: [-»-Human] [-t-Adult] >
Activity: > Study medicine
= Receive patients: Patient comes or Doctor Visits
Doctor Listens to Complaints
Doctor Examines Patient
= Cure Disease: Doctor Diagnoses Disease
Doctor Prescribes Treatment
= (take patients money):
Place: > Medical School
= Hospital or Doctors Office
Time: > Many Years
= Every Day
= Immediately
Condition: Physical Contact
(Raskin, 1985: 85)[6]

This lexical script for 'doctor' (Fig. 1) contains thematic information is assumed to be universally accessible to all speakers in their knowledge of 'doctor', such as carrying

[6] Note that "> " stands for "in the past," and " = " for "in the present."

out examinations, and lexical collocations with disease, patients and treatment. There is also evidence of restricted scripts in fig. 1: the node ‘take patients money’ is not generally applicable to the doctor script of a British-English speaker, as the UK offers free healthcare, although it is common knowledge that other countries do have to pay for a doctor. Individual scripts are not included in fig. 1 and the basis for this is the assumption that, within a joke, both presented scripts must eventually become accessible to hearers for the text to be understood as a joke (Ritchie, 2004). Individual or restricted scripts that were not shared would lead to a joke text not being understood – this is a possible reason for failed humour which has the potential for future research, but will not be explored further here as it is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Script based theories pose the methodological issue of how to identify what a script is, and where the structural boundaries are to be drawn between scripts (Brock, 2004: 357). Due to the intangible nature of cognitive processes, scripts are difficult to define and identify in such a way that can form the basis for any analysis of their presence in a text. Raskin (2017: 110) says that ‘Most find it easy enough to identify the scripts forming a joke, and in the same publication Attardo and Raskin argue that ‘Scripts are intuitively clear entities’ (Attardo & Raskin, 2017:53). The word ‘intuitively’ is a problem in this instance, because as discussed (2.1.1), research cannot be based on intuition. This approach offers no way of replicating another researcher’s (or even one’s own) intuition at a later point in time, meaning any method based on this premise cannot be tested or verified. There is also the idiosyncratic nature of the script itself to consider when employing a script analysis, which could explain why Raskin (2017: 110) goes on to say ‘some [researchers] are stumped’ when trying to identify scripts in a joke text. If scripts reflect an individual’s

world view, each script identification in textual analysis will be personal to the hearer of the joke. This makes it difficult to replicate and falsify this element of the hypothesis, as it always offers the possibility of arguing that any interpreted script was indicative of an individual's world view and therefore a valid conclusion.

Raskin's proposed solution to the subjectivity of a script-based approach lies in Ontological Semantics, an area of computational linguistics which he began work on in 1979, prior to his application of script theory specifically to humour in the SSTH (1985). According to Raskin et al (2009) and Raskin (2017), Ontological Semantic Theory (OST) relies on the creation of a computer database which models how ideational information is stored by speakers. Using the OST, a computer applies combinatorial semantic and syntactic rules to a text to determine the probability of a Textual Meaning Representation (TMR) – in other words, to deduce the most likely meaning of a given text. Raskin chooses not to present the methodology used by the computer for this process, which he says is due to the difficulty for humans to comprehend programming languages and computer. This decision goes against the argued need for methodological transparency in linguistics (Marsden, 2020;2019: 15), making it difficult to replicate and/or falsify the OST modelling. Nevertheless, Raskin (2017) argues that, through this system, the creation of an Ontological Semantic Theory of Humour (OSTH) is theoretically possible. This is based on the assumption that, if ontological semantics can model the cognitive organisation of scripts, then an algorithm could also be used to detect multiple compatible scripts within a text, therefore highlighting the text as a possible joke example. This would be advantageous for quickly and easily identifying jokes in corpora, allowing large

amounts of data to be analysed in order to test the SSTH's claims about the presence of multiple scripts in joke texts in an objective and replicable way.

An obvious drawback of this ontological approach to joke analysis is that it is just a hypothetical at present - the fact that it does not yet exist is due to the current inability to objectively account for what is and isn't compatible with a script, in order to program a computer to recognise it. Oring (2019a: 151) criticises the decades-old promise that an Ontological Semantic Theory of Humour (OSTH) is forthcoming, though he does believe such a theory to be possible, saying 'I cannot at present think of a reason why the knowledge and rules that I employ to produce and recognize jokes could not be successfully modelled and deployed by a machine' (Oring, 2019a: 168). Work to develop the OSTH is beyond the scope of my research and assumed to be ongoing, but even if a computer could be programmed to recognise scripts and incompatibility, the algorithm would still encounter difficulties in distinguishing humorous from non-humorous incompatibilities. The OSTH model may identify incompatible elements in a text which might not necessarily be intentional or for the purposes of humour, such as incoherence or irrelevance. This means additional textual analysis would still need to be undertaken by a researcher to supplement the OSTH, which calls into question how useful it would be for humour research.

I would argue that, instead of relying on the future arrival of the OSTH, a stylistic approach of presenting textual analysis could justify the reasoning behind a script identification in a text. Simpson (2003) believes that script-based theories are advantageous for stylistic analysis because they consider how language functions in context:

> One of the principal benefits of a script-based framework as a tool for explaining human text-processing is that it facilitates a conceptual understanding that operates beyond and without recourse to elements of the lexico-grammar of a text.
>
> (Simpson, 2003:31)

My earlier discussion of Critical Stylistics and theory of textual meaning (2.1.3) showed that examining a text using the framework of Textual Conceptual Functions (TCFs) can offer insight into how meaning is constructed through combinatorial rules of language form, function and background speaker knowledge. Although scripts are fuzzy categories without clearly defined boundaries, it is argued (Attardo & Raskin, 2017) that they will be intuitively recognisable to competent speakers of a language, and so a critical stylistic analysis would help to identify how scripts are embedded within a text to support this intuition. This is not an automatic foolproof method for script identification, but the purpose of a stylistic analysis is to use evidence from the text presented to support why assumptions about text meaning have been made (Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010). Presenting textual evidence for the presence of scripts in a joke text mitigates subjectivity by enabling others to agree with or argue against these conclusions, improving falsifiability. I therefore suggest that the SSTH has the potential to benefit from a stylistic approach to analysis, and could possibly provide a suitable basis for my aims to create a textual framework for joke analysis. This will be explored in 3.2.

Following script identification, Raskin then postulates that these scripts must relate together in two ways: they must overlap and be opposites. These two relationships are discussed below.

3.1.4 Script Overlap

This section continues to focus on the first condition of the SSTH hypothesis, which is reprised below:

1) *The text is compatible, fully or in part, with two different scripts*

3.1.3 introduced the notion of scripts, and I will now discuss the presence of multiple scripts and script compatibility in jokes. Firstly, the SSTH hypothesis assumes that there will be at least two different scripts embedded in a joke text: Script A and Script B. In terms of compatibility, the SSTH assumes that some parts of the joke text will activate Script A, and other parts which are incompatible with Script A will trigger the activation of the minimum of one additional script (B). The recognised incompatible element is known as a 'script switch trigger' (Raskin, 1985: 114), which directs the hearer from one script to another in order to reassess the text's proposed meaning. This switch is described by Coulson (2006) as Frame Shifting. Some elements of a joke text are said to be compatible with *both* Scripts A and B, and this has been termed 'Script Overlap' (Raskin, 1985). Raskin says that this overlap is a necessary feature of joke texts and that it can be either 'full' or 'partial'. The presence of script overlap in joke texts is investigated below, by introducing the famous 'Doctor/Lover joke example which is often quoted in literature surrounding the SSTH:

Example 5

> *"Is the doctor at home?" the patient asked in his bronchial whisper. "No," the doctor's young and pretty wife whispered in reply. "Come right in."*
>
> *(Raskin, 1985: 100)*

The A & B scripts in this joke are referred to interchangeably as either 'Doctor' and 'Lover' or 'Medical' and 'Sexual', and the script switch trigger is the wife's response

to ‘come right in’ despite the doctor not being home, which is not compatible with script A. The overlap occurs because the noun phrase ‘his bronchial whisper’ is argued to be compatible both with the patient’s illness, as sentence one implies, and with the second sexual script which is implied by the wife’s whispered response.

This is said to be partial script overlap (Raskin, 1985; Oring, 2019a), as only a part of the text is compatible with both scripts - Raskin states that full overlaps are really rare in jokes, however no definition or examples of a full overlap are given. A possible explanation for the lack of full overlaps in Raskin’s data is that a full script overlap would mean all elements of the joke are fully compatible with both scripts, and thus not result in the recognition of any incongruity. This would be an absence of foregrounding, and it was argued in chapter 2 that foregrounding is an essential aspect of humour.

Raskin (1985) does not provide a definition for script overlap, and instead illustrates this notion with examples of lexical items in joke text which he labels to be compatible with multiple scripts (Ritchie, 2004; Oring, 2019a). This judgement of compatibility seems to be based in subjective intuition, which poses methodological problems for anyone attempting to conduct an SSTH joke analysis. I would argue, however, that it is possible to illustrate why elements in a joke text have been labelled as overlapping using descriptive textual analysis, but in order to do so a definition of overlap needs to be presented. This can be done in terms of ambiguity: I propose that overlap can be defined as the presence of multiple possible meanings or ambiguities within a text. This is because if some part of a text could be referring to either script A or B it must be semantically ambiguous. This is supported by Attardo & Raskin (1991: 308) who say that a joke text must be ambiguous, as does Yus (2016: 77), and ambiguity has long been regarded an important aspect of

humour more generally (Mulkay, 1988; Attardo, 1994; Veale, 2004) as was noted in 2.2.1.

Ambiguity can be encoded at any of the metafunctional levels of communication: linguistic, ideational or interpersonal (Veale, 2004: 120). A point of overlap at the linguistic level can be identified as ambiguity surrounding the meaning of lexical items within the text. A word or phrase within a joke text which is simultaneously compatible with multiple meanings could be constructed using devices such as homonymy or polysemy, such as in example 1 (reprised below):

> *'He's a man of letters. He works in the post office.'*
> *(Raskin, 1985: 29)*

The noun phrase 'man of letters' is an example of polysemous ambiguity, as it would be a compatible description for either a writer or a postal worker, which Raskin identifies as scripts A and B. Choosing to use another noun phrase such as '*he's a postal worker*' would disambiguate the textual meaning and remove the overlap, thus nullifying the humour in this text.

In non-linguistic overlaps, the ambiguity resides at a higher metafunctional level: the words of a text will have a clear meaning, but the ideational or interpersonal aspects being reported in the joke text are ambiguous. I will exemplify this by returning to the 'Doctor Lover' joke (ex. 5). The two scripts of 'medical' and 'sexual' were found to overlap through the noun phrase 'bronchial whisper' (Raskin, 1985:117; Attardo et al, 2002: 25). The meaning of the word 'whisper' is not ambiguous in this context, clearly referring to the act of speaking in a hushed tone. Instead, the ambiguity is at an interpersonal level, as the reason for the whispering is ambiguous. The man's whisper could be due to his illness restricting his ability to project his voice, or it

could be intentional because of the secretive illicit nature of the affair, as the wife's whispered response suggests. The whisper is therefore functioning duplicitously within the text, overlapping the medical and sexual scripts.

Ambiguity and multiple meaning is not restricted to the humorous mode. The key difference of overlapping scripts in humorous texts then, in line with the SSTH hypothesis, is that multiple meaning is intentionally ambiguous and deliberately maintained. As discussed above (2.1.3), a textual meaning is more than the sum of its parts and speakers/hearers do not treat the words independently of their co-text and context. Co-textual and contextual surroundings are used to decipher the intended meaning of the text and eliminate ambiguity/confusion. The construction of overlap in joke texts makes this process of disambiguation impossible. Referring specifically to puns, Attardo (1994) makes this distinction between ambiguity in the humorous and serious modes:

> If all words are ambiguous, why do puns stand out? In what way are they different from non-punning utterances? In the context of a sentence, the inherent ambiguity of the linguistic units (words, morphemes) is reduced, and if all goes well – that is, the sentence is coherent and cohesive – the ambiguity is eliminated. Puns, however, preserve two senses of a linguistic unit; therefore, puns exist only as a by-product of sentential and/or textual disambiguation.
>
> (Attardo, 1994: 133)

Overlap is therefore comparable to Koestler's (1989 [1964]) Bisociation theory, where two meanings are perceived in tandem in a joke. A point of overlap is also comparable with Nash's (1985) 'locus'; the word or phrase which clinches or

discharges the joke, although Nash's condition that the locus must be at the final position of the joke text is discounted here as multiple meaning can occur anywhere in a joke. Despite making this important distinction between how ambiguity functions differently in the humorous mode compared to non-humorous discourse, overlap is still not a sufficient condition to define a text as a joke, and this is why the SSTH is a two-part hypothesis.

This section has outlined the SSTH concept of script overlap, suggesting that it can be defined as ambiguity which is deliberately constructed within a text, and identified through textual analysis in line with a stylistic approach. I have also highlighted that this part of the SSTH hypothesis is echoic of other work in humour theories which were discussed chapter 2, such as Incongruity-Resolution, Bisociation and Nash's concept of a locus. This shows that there is research to support the claims of the SSTH hypothesis, but that this aspect of the SSTH is not a unique approach. It is the second part of the hypothesis – that these scripts will be defined as opposites – which sets apart the SSTH from previous theories of humour, and this opposition is now discussed below.

3.1.5 Script Opposition

Raskin (1985) states that the overlapping scripts mentioned above must be opposite in 'some special sense', and this relationship of opposition will now be discussed. The second part of the SSTH hypothesis is as follows:

2) *The two scripts with which the text is compatible are opposite*

Raskin (1985) does not provide a formal definition of opposition in the initial proposal of the SSTH, and instead uses example analysis to illustrate what he terms 'script opposition' in jokes.

A list is presented of the oppositions as identified by Raskin in the 32 joke examples which were analysed in order to formulate the SSTH hypothesis (1985: 107). Some of these scripts would be ubiquitously defined by native English speakers as opposites by irrespective of co-text, and these are known as conventional opposites, such as hot/cold, alive/dead. The remaining examples of opposition listed by Raskin are described as being opposed only 'within a particular discourse and solely for the purposes of this discourse' (Raskin, 1985: 108). Raskin cites this phenomenon as what Lyons calls Local Antonymy (Lyons, 1977: 271-279), whereby non-conventional opposites are presented in a way which makes them appear to be opposed within the discourse. I will later discuss (3.2.3) how I believe this is comparable with Davies' (2008) and Jeffries' (2010b) theory of textually constructed opposition.

Disappointingly, Raskin's failure to provide a method for identifying oppositions in the text results in coding of data in SSTH analysis which appears to be based on intuition or common sense. According to Ritchie (2004) and Oring (2011a;2011b;2019a;2019b), opposition is ill-defined in the SSTH or any of its subsequent developments (see 3.2.2), despite being a central component of the theory. Use of conventionally opposed scripts in jokes could justify the assumption that a reader will automatically recognise these as opposites. Other examples, such as '*disease vs money*' or '*writer vs postman*' (Raskin, 1985) seem more challenging to label as opposites, without explaining how this opposition is constructed within the text. Returning to example (1) '*he's a man of letters*' leads to the expected implication that the text's subject is a writer, and this expectation is subverted when

we learn he is actually a postman. The opposition, as Raskin sees it, is between what hearers initially presume the man to be (WRITER) and what he turns out to be (POSTMAN). Oring (2019a) disputes that this is a relationship of opposition, instead suggesting it is merely one of difference, and Hempelmann's (2019) response that writer/postman are opposed due to prestige is a value judgement which is not evident in the joke text.

Raskin supports his claims by stating that there are two opposing 'real and unreal' situations underlying the construction of every joke. 'Each of the jokes describes a certain 'real' situation and evokes another 'unreal' situation which does not take place and which is fully or partially incompatible with the former.' (Raskin, 1985: 111) In this case the argument is that in the 'real' situation the man works in the post office, and the 'unreal' one evoked by the language of the joke is that the man is a writer. From a stylistic perspective, presenting the 'unreal' amounts to a proposition which is untrue and therefore flouts the Gricean Maxim of quality (Grice, 1975) supporting Raskin's (1985) theory that jokes operate using a different co-operative principle and have their own maxims.

Raskin has three situational categories of real/unreal opposition, depending on the elements of the text which Raskin deems to contradict reality. These are:

Actual/non-Actual

Normal/Abnormal

Possible (plausible)/Impossible (implausible)

(Raskin, 1985: 111)

Again, the SSTH fails to provide any methodology or baseline norms of how texts are placed into these categories, or how to distinguish between these three aspects of reality. I would argue that if a text presents the impossible, then this entails it will be non-actual and abnormal, rather than these being on separate planes, as the impossible cannot have actually happened, and presenting it as such would be considered abnormal. Actual/Non-actual reflects the truth conditions of a text, but as discussed above a text does not need to be either true or untrue for it to be a joke. Normality is also a subjective value judgement, and it does not follow that something judged to be abnormal will therefore be unreal. The terminology of 'real/unreal' is problematic in relation to humour, however, because jokes take place in a constructed text world which does not have to be grounded in reality: attributing 'realness' to a joke text suggests that the characters in the anecdote possess real world counterparts. Within any text world, readers are able to suspend disbelief and put aside judgements on whether a text is based in reality or not. Transgression from reality is also not a defining condition for humour, as this would render any text in the fantasy genre humorous. Perhaps 'expected' and 'actual' or 'implied' and 'stated' could more accurately reflect this relationship, but this would result in a framework which is cognitive rather than text-based. It would also result in the SSTH hypothesis being a slightly more specific revision of the Incongruity-Resolution theories of humour (2.2.4).

Raskin then goes on to offer another higher level in his hierarchy of oppositions, stating that joke opposition will always be underlined by the 'binary categories which are essential to human life' (Raskin, 1985: 113). These are:

Real/unreal (true or false)

Good/bad

Life/death

Obscene/not obscene

Money/no money

These categories are highlighted as essential binaries based only on intuition, rather than any past literature on opposition. It also includes real/unreal here as somehow separate from and equal to the other oppositions, despite being identified as the one ubiquitous binary which underpins all jokes, calling into question the hierarchical organisation of the SSTH opposition categories. With the exception of real/unreal, I would argue that the essential opposition of all the remaining categories could be reduced to the conventional binaries good and bad, based on how they are ideologically stigmatised within society (Jeffries, 2010b).

Raskin's SSTH analysis gives much attention to categorising types of opposition, first specifically, then by reducing to base level oppositions. This results in redundant and uninsightful explanations such as the following:

Example 6

'*Paul Bunyan once chopped down a tree so tall that it took two men and a boy to see the top of it*' (Esar, 1952: 162 in Raskin, 1985: 47).

Script a) Two or more people cannot see taller objects than one person can

Script b) Two or more people can see taller objects than one person can

Opposition Type = Possible vs Impossible

Binary Opposition Type = Real vs unreal

Reducing the presented oppositions in a text down to their basic forms and coding them accordingly, as Raskin (1985) does, could be interesting for those investigating the different types of opposition presented in jokes, and the relationships these categories may share. It does seem plausible that all constructed oppositions could have underlying related basic categories and identifying these could give much understanding to our ideologies as a society. As Jeffries (2010b) states, speakers acquire these binaries in their language learning process from a young age, suggesting they are essential to representing a speaker's world view. Specifically for a theory of *humour*, which aims to provide the necessary and sufficient conditions which make a text humorous, these categorisations of opposition seem to be beside the point. Separating joke examples based on whether their oppositions are concerning money/no money or life/death gives little insight into how the opposition was constructed in the first place, how to go about identifying script opposition in a text, or – crucially – how this use of opposition is humorous. This criticism is highlighted by Oring (2011a), who queries the decision to categorise clashing relationships in humorous texts as oppositional ones, and also questions whether the opposition (if present) is responsible for humour being realised at all.

Raskin states that it is 'a matter of common knowledge that a joke is formed by an opposition of two scripts' (2017:110). Many subsequent papers employing an SSTH approach take for granted this assumption of script opposition in humour more generally, either without attempting to define the sense relation of opposition at all (Attardo, 2001; Brock, 2004; Attardo & Raskin (eds), 2017), or as 3.2.2 will show, proposing alternative post-hoc definitions of opposition which I will argue do not adequately describe the form or function of opposition in order to support the SSTH.

A proposed definition and method for identifying oppositions is also discussed in 3.2.3, and this element of the hypothesis will be tested in chapter 4.

3.1.6 Raskin's 'Method'

Following the discussion of the SSTH hypothesis, Raskin's (1985) method for testing this hypothesis - or lack thereof, as I will argue - is outlined below. As discussed in 2.1.1, an analytical method should aim to be replicable, objective, and falsifiable (Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010). Others should be able to follow the SSTH method in order to gain valid results, which can be compared with those from the original work to determine the validity and usefulness of the SSTH.

Raskin's (1985) 5-step method for using the SSTH to identify and explain textual humour is as follows:

1) *List all words in the text and their <u>possible script activations</u> within this context*
2) *<u>Identify</u> words in text that 'evoke the same script'*
3) *<u>Interpret</u> the triggering of inferences*
4) *If there are inconsistencies with the first script, look for a competing one*
5) *<u>Identify</u> the script opposition and script-switch trigger* [7]

(Raskin, 1985: 99-139)

This method was formulated by Raskin through the analysis of 32 joke examples, and I would criticise the basis of a theory of humour as being formed from such a small sample. However, a small pilot study can lead to the discovery of patterns in

[7] Items underlined are for my own emphasis

data (Wong et al, 2017) which would allow for testing of the SSTH on a wider sample of jokes, or other humour types, to further develop the theory, as long as the SSTH provided a clear method to conduct these tests.

Raskin's proposed method is problematic due to a lack of specificity in how one would go about objectively completing the 5 steps of analysis. Step 1 begins with listing all words in the text, treating each lexeme equally, which is an attempt at scientific rigour. This rigour is then abandoned by giving no instruction of how to go about listing 'all their possible script activations within this context'. It would be possible to look up all possible linguistic *meanings* of the individual words in the text, through dictionaries, but due to the intangible nature of the script it is unclear how to then objectively decide what scripts would or would not be activated by these meanings. This is a problem when using script-based analysis in the absence of a formal definition for scripts, which was discussed above (3.1.3). Another issue is the script analysis of grammatical words such as 'it', 'on', as these items construct meaning in combination with the surrounding co-text rather than activating scripts in their own right.

Listing all lexemes and their script activations separately is a study of meaning at the systematic level, rather than of language in use: it seems to ignore the idea of a textually constructed meaning. The limitation of taking this approach is the failure to account for meaning in context, particularly if a lexical item is used in a novel or manipulated way to create humour. As Nash points out, 'still there is no book that can competently demonstrate the polysemic shifting of words as our thought locates and re-locates them in different groupings and perspectives' (Nash, 1985: 133). Hemplemann and Miller also state this:

> The meaning of a text is not simply the combination of the meanings of its individual words, like building blocks. The meaning of a text is rather a much more rich composition created from the words in their interaction and as generated by specific speakers and hearers of the text in a given context.
>
> (Hemplemann & Miller, 2017: 95)

As my own aims are to address the construction of humour from a stylistic perspective to textual meaning, I would criticise Raskin's approach of analysing each word in isolation from co-text, and instead support taking into account the constructed textual meaning as a whole, as Nash (1985) and Hemplemann & Miller (2017) suggest.

In the proceeding four steps of the SSTH method, researchers are told to 'identify', 'interpret', and 'look for' without providing any replicable means of doing so. Above (3.1.3-3.1.4) I suggested that presenting a stylistic analysis could provide support for the identification of scripts and overlap in a text, but there is then a leap to defining these scripts as opposites with no formal discussion of how this sense relation was arrived at in the text. This absence of method for identifying script oppositions renders the second part of the SSTH hypothesis circular, whereby scripts are labelled as opposites because they are presented in a joke text, and the same text is labelled as a joke because it contains script opposition. This is a methodological issue which makes the theory unfalsifiable.

3.1.7 Key Points and Issues with Raskin's SSTH

The creation of the SSTH offered a much-needed text-based approach to the study of humour, in contrast with structuralist perspectives which focus on form only, or function-based approaches which analyse humour solely in terms of its psycho-

social effects. As this section has shown, however, the original SSTH as proposed by Raskin (1985) is methodologically flawed for many reasons: a lack of specificity in defining the SSTH's key concepts of scripts, overlap and opposition; a subjective method for identifying these concepts; a circular post-hoc labelling of opposition. This meant that I could not employ Raskin's (1985) method to fulfil my second research aim of testing the SSTH hypothesis. The next section (3.2) will discuss how developments to the SSTH have tried and failed to address these issues, and continue to argue how I believe a stylistic approach could help fill these knowledge gaps, in order to achieve research aims 1 & 2.

3.2 Theoretical Expansion & Developments

Section 3.1 introduced the Semantic Script Theory of Humour (SSTH), summarising the theory's salient points and the knowledge gaps which needed to be addressed by subsequent research developments. I will now turn to discussion of these developments of the Semantic Script Theory of Humour, beginning (3.2.1) with its initial expansion into the 'General Theory of Verbal Humour'(Attardo & Raskin, 1991) and why I believe this to be a redundant extension of the theory. 3.2.2 will then address the attempts which have been made to better define the SSTH's key concept of Script Opposition, suggesting in 3.2.3 how work from outside of humour research could offer an improved definition and method for identifying script opposition. In 3.2.4 I go on to argue that opposition subsumes the concept of multiple overlapping scripts, and can therefore be homogenised into a single testable hypothesis that jokes will contain textually constructed opposition. 3.2 on the whole will show that whilst there have been many additions, expansions and suggestions for development of the SSTH, the core propositions of the SSTH hypothesis have

remained unchallenged and become a central part of text-based humour analysis. I will suggest that, rather than this being a mark of the SSTH's success, that it is because it remains unfalsifiable in its present state.

3.2.1 The General Theory of Verbal Humour

This section introduces the General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH). Attardo et al (2002:3) describe the GTVH as a revision of the SSTH, but I would call it an expansion as it added to the theory without revising the central hypothesis. Attardo and Raskin's GTVH (Attardo & Raskin, 1991; Attardo, 1994;1997) expanded the SSTH in two ways: firstly in terms of scope, as it is claimed the GTVH could be applied to all humour as opposed to the SSTH's original focus on jokes. Secondly the GTVH lists additional features for analysis which are present in humorous texts (Attardo, 2017: 127). This expansion retained the notion that Script Opposition (SO) was an essential part of humour construction texts, but added that there are also other elements of a text which contribute to the humour: a hierarchy of five additional 'knowledge resources' (KR's), which are said to 'inform' a text's humour along with script opposition. What is meant by 'inform' is not expanded on, but the categories appear to be descriptors of the different information presented within a text. These KR's are now presented below:

- *Script Opposition*
- *Logical Mechanism: The way in which the two scripts are brought together (overlap)*
- *Situation: What the joke is 'about'/ what is happening in it*
- *Target: 'Butt' of the joke/target of the joke's aggression*

- *Narrative Strategy: What form of narrative organisation does the joke take*
- *Language: the exact words used in a text*

(Attardo, 2017: 128)

Although Raskin (1985) and Attardo (1994; 2001) both state that a theory of humour should provide the 'necessary and sufficient conditions' for humour-formulation, which is an essentialist approach, the GTVH as presented more closely resembles a tool for the descriptive analysis of humour. This initially appears to be in line with a stylistic approach to analysis (2.1), but as the discussion below will illustrate, the GTVH suffers from a lack of clarity in both its aims and its method. The main methodological issue with the GTVH is the lack of instruction for how to carry out a GTVH analysis, as was noted by Ritchie (2004), and as I have found to be the case almost two decades later. There is no presentation of a method or full GTVH example analysis in any of the literature. Attardo (2008: 1206; 2017: 137) states that thorough objective textual analysis is carried out when employing the GTVH to draw conclusions, but that it is not presented in the published literature on the GTVH due to space limitations.

In addition to this, it is unclear what the addition of the knowledge resources provides to the theory. Aside from 'Target', the KR's which the GTVH claims are always present in humour could be identified in all texts, regardless of whether they are humorous (Ritchie, 2004: 78): written or spoken discourse must have a situation (be about something) a narrative strategy (be presented in some way) and language (use some code system to convey meaning) to exist, so without specifying characteristics of how these KR's differ in humorous texts to non-humorous ones,

they seem surplus to requirement as conditions of humour specifically. Attardo himself (1994) states that the 'Situation' KR is applicable to all texts, and also concedes that the KR 'Target' is disposable, presumably only being used in disparaging humour. This, combined with the fact that the GTVH fails to identify how language and narrative strategy are unique to humorous texts, leaves only two categories that supposedly distinguish a text as humorous: Script Opposition (SO) and the Logical Mechanism (LM).

What constitutes a logical mechanism is not immediately clear (Oring, 2011b;2019a;2019b). Attardo & Raskin have listed various examples LM taxonomies including mechanisms such as 'juxtaposition', 'figure-ground reversal' 'garden path' (Attardo & Raskin, 1991; Attardo, 1994; 2002), but offer no criteria for identifying LMs in a text, and this is combined with the fact that neither researcher claims their taxonomies of possible LMs to be exhaustive. Paollilo (1998) also elaborates on the types of LMs which can be found in humour, but the LM strategies listed could also be used in serious language, and no distinction between serious and humorous LM usage is given. Davies (2004) believes that attempting to create an exhaustive list of LMs is futile. Davies (2011), along with Oring (2011b), rejects the term logical mechanism entirely, feeling that it leads to misinterpretation that jokes rely on some form of logic, and calls for its removal from the GTVH (Davies, 2004).

It is also unclear whether the Logical Mechanism is intended to be synonymous with the SSTH's condition of script overlap. Oring (2019a: 160) says that script overlap was 'quietly dropped and assimilated with the logical mechanism' in the GTVH, contradicting claims from Attardo (2002) which says that the LM is a new term for presenting *how* scripts overlap. Hempelmann labels the LM as the 'function that playfully motivates this overlap' (Hempelmann, 2004: 303). I would argue that, if the

LM does encompass the condition of script overlap, then the core propositions of the GTVH are that textual humour will be based on a pair of overlapping, opposed scripts. This is therefore identical to Raskin's (1985) SSTH main hypothesis, rendering the supposed expansion into the GTVH redundant.

Though it is presented as a theory of humour, the GTVH aims seem to stray from the purpose of identifying the necessary conditions of humour in favour of a claimed ability to determine 'joke similarity', arguing that competent language speakers will innately code joke texts in terms of similarity (Attardo & Raskin, 1991). In the GTVH, the KR's can be arranged hierarchically (fig. 2, below), and the higher on the hierarchy a changed KR is between two texts, the more the jokes will be judged to differ. Limiting variation in KRs, or variations at lower levels, will result in jokes which are judged to be the most similar to one another.

Figure 2 'Hierachical Organisation of Knowledge Resources'

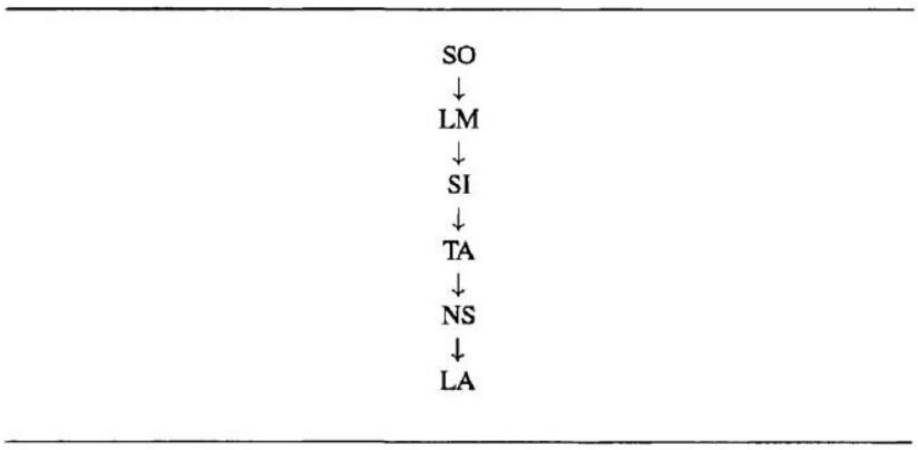


Table 1.2: *Hierarchical Organization of the KRs*

Attardo (2001: 28)

There are claims that this hierarchy has been 'empirically verified' by Ruch et. Al (1993) by showing a selection of anchor jokes with 6 variations to 534 participants

and asking them to determine which jokes were most similar, though Oring (2011b) has questioned the validity of this study. Ritchie (2004: 77) also criticises this hierarchical structuring of the KR's as ill-defined, with no clarity on how one KR restricts or impacts upon another in the order presented by the GTVH, other than a set of logical propositions in Attardo & Raskin (1991), which they themselves refer to as 'a slow, complex and painful procedure' (Attardo & Raskin, 1991: 294), such as fig.3 below:

Figure 3 'The Rosanne Barr Rule'

Principle 1. The Roseanne Barr rule, or the wider you are, the higher up you go. **If KR-X and KR-Y relate in such a way that a choice made within the former limits the choices within the latter, then X precedes Y in the hierarchy. Formally, it can be represented as follows:**

KR-X choices:	**{a,b,c ...}**
KR-Y choices:	**a1,a2,a3,...; b1,b2,b3,...; c1,c2,c3,...; ...}**
Interlevel dependencies:	**a→a1,a2,a3,...**
	b→b1,b2,b3,...
	c→c1,c2,c3,...
	...

(Attardo & Raskin, 1991: 315)

Abstract equations of this kind only have a theoretical purpose in linguistics (or indeed in any research) if the symbols are attributed to a tangible value (Ritchie, 2004) and the GTVH does not display how this equation forms the basis for the analysis of humorous texts.

I would add that this exploration of 'joke similarity' appears to be yet another redundant development for what Attardo and Raskin state are the aims of a theory of humour: to provide the necessary and sufficient conditions for a text to be identified

as humorous. Potentially research into joke similarity could give way to study in ‘senses of humour’, and whether certain societal groups did or did not enjoy similar types of jokes, but whether the jokes are similar is irrelevant if a researcher is unable to determine what makes them humorous in the first place. This is also a restriction of the theory to jokes, despite the GTVH’s claimed ability to account for all humour types. For this reason, I believe that the GTVH was developed without identifying clear aims of its purpose as a theory of humour.

3.1.1 showed that the SSTH and GTVH have become pervasive in text-based humour research, with the SSTH hypothesis being treated as a basic assumption, but there has been some critique of the SSTH and GTVH approaches, most of which has come from Ritchie (2004;2011) and Oring (2011a;2011b;2019a;2019b). Oring (2011b) criticises the usefulness for the GTVH in the analysis of humour, but Raskin (2011) retaliates by saying Oring has simply not understood the theory. This is a common criticism from defenders of the SSTH/GTVH towards any literature which challenges the theory (most recently Taylor Rayz, 2019; Hemplemann, 2019, in response to Oring 2019a). Here I will take the opportunity to argue that, if the theory has been so frequently and readily misunderstood by academic researchers, this is a failing on the part of the SSTH and GTVH to provide clear and transparent methods and conclusions. Ritchie (2004) argues that the issues of unfalsifiability in the first presentation of the SSTH (Raskin, 1985) should have been addressed by the developments which followed, but that these issues still remain in later iterations of the SSTH and GTVH, and at the current time of writing I argue that this is still the case.

The development of the GTVH resulted in a model which was vastly more complex in its claims and scope than the original SSTH, without actually offering any

additional insight into the defining features of a humorous text. Most of the developments are surplus to the requirements of what Raskin & Attardo claim are essential for a theory of humour – to provide the necessary and sufficient conditions of a humorous text – and can therefore be stripped back to the original SSTH hypothesis. In addition to this, the GTVH did not address the main developments which were vital to make the SSTH into a workable theory of humour: clarifying how the key concepts of scripts, overlap and opposition should be objectively defined. For this reason, I will not be focussing my own research on any of the additional GTVH developments in the remainder of this thesis, instead moving on to examine other developments to the SSTH below.

3.2.2 Opposition

This section focusses on developments to the opposition condition of the SSTH hypothesis for two reasons: it is identified as the element of the SSTH which makes it unique from other theories of humour, and it has also been the least adequately defined. According to the SSTH hypothesis, there are three essential components to textual humour: scripts, overlap and opposition. In 3.1 I argued that, whilst the presence of scripts and overlap could be identified and justified through textual analysis, opposition was never adequately defined by the SSTH and thus resulted in a hypothesis which was both circular and unfalsifiable. Opposition is also the element which sets the SSTH hypothesis apart from other humour theories, as without this part of the hypothesis the ‘overlap’ is just another way of describing incongruity-resolution (2.2.4; 3.1.4). The core assumption that was carried from the SSTH to the GTVH is that of Script Opposition (SO), but the GTVH offered no further

clarification of how to define script opposition; it was simply taken as a basic assumption that humorous texts did contain this constructed script opposition.

This section will show that, despite the SSTH being widely adopted as a textual theory of humour, currently the presence of script opposition remains inadequately defined, despite Attardo saying that 'the concept of local antonymy needs further work' (Attardo, 2001: 208). Research either takes the SSTH hypothesis as a basic assumption (Dževerdanovic-Pejović, 2018; Mifdal, 2019; Moalla & Amor, 2021) or, where revised definitions have been proposed, they fail to capture the sense relation of opposition.

Though it is not explicitly defined as such, Raskin's own example analysis in the SSTH (1985: 114) appears to categorise opposition at the abstract level using negation, presenting baseline oppositions such as 'SEX/NO SEX', 'MONEY/NO MONEY'. This is an approach which has been adopted by many researchers since then (Attardo 2001; Hempelmann, 2004:385) In the 'Doctor/Lover' joke (ex. 5), the basic script opposition is labelled as 'sex/no sex'. This reduces the experience of visiting either a doctor or lover to the binary distinction that one situation involves sex and one does not, which does not capture the myriad of other differences between these situations. Defining opposition through the presence or absence of a single characteristic using negation, with no other defining conditions, would yield infinite oppositions. The result is that any two things could be argued to be opposite, regardless of co-text or context, something which was noted by Oring (2019b). Defining opposition through negation also does not illustrate the relationship constructed between the scripts in a joke text, or why this opposition is humorous:

based on this logic a visit to a doctor script and a visit to a dentist script could be labelled as overlapping (medical, professional, examination) and being opposed through teeth/not teeth, but this relationship is not humorous. This therefore relies on the negated situations being presented in a joke text in order to be labelled opposites, which is still a circular definition of opposition, and for this reason I reject this definition.

Attardo (1997) states that ‘At the lowest level, the definition of Opposition is based on the concept of negation’ (Attardo, 1997: 399), however he goes on to say that ‘a stronger, more specific notion of Opposition should have been used’ in the SSTH (Attardo, 1997: 400), drawing on work from both pragmatics (Depalma and Weiner: 1990) and the study of irony (Giora, 1995) to present a revised definition of opposition. Attardo defines opposition within the SSTH as ‘the presence of a second script which is both low in accessibility and high in informativeness’ (Attardo 1997: 402).

Accessibility describes the proposition that one script will be more obvious from reading the text than the other, and therefore more easily accessible to a reader – Giora (2003) labels this as ‘Salience’. Attardo argues that ‘This account improves the SSTH's "oppositeness" requirement by making it more specific (high vs. low accessibility, neutral vs. specific context) and by dispensing with the list of "hardwired" oppositions.’ (Attardo, 1997: 402). Informative scripts are those that are less accessible upon reading a text and therefore marked as incongruous. According to Attardo (1997) ‘those [scripts] that occur first will inevitably become part of the context and therefore establish a framework of expectations against which the scripts that occur afterwards will have to be processed.’ (Attardo, 1997: 403), and breaking from a framework of established norms in a text is an example of

foregrounding through internal deviation. Viana (2010) also says that the asymmetrical positioning of a foregrounded script against a background script is a property of script opposition, and Hemplemann & Attardo (2011) say that humour comes from foregrounded incongruities. This development by Attardo (1997) does therefore support my argument (2.2.5) that foregrounding is an essential component of humour, which is also suggested by Ritchie (2004;2011) and Raskin (2017), but does not help to define opposition within the SSTH.

I would argue that this revised definition is less successful at capturing the relationship of opposition than earlier definitions using negation. Despite my earlier rejection of negation as an adequate definition for opposition, negation is a binary relationship which can at least be objectively identified in a text. By contrast, accessibility and informativeness are value judgements based on cognitive expectations, making them both subjective and non-textual. Evidence from the text could be used to back up claims of which script is high or low in accessibility and informativeness, but these qualities still do not qualify the scripts as opposites: instead, the recognition of a second foregrounded script seems to be comparable with the Incongruity-Resolution (IR) theories (2.2.4).

Comparisons have been drawn previously between the SSTH and Incongruity-Resolution theories. Attardo has explicitly described the SSTH on the whole as belonging to the IR family of theories ‘The incongruity phase is found to correspond to the script Opposition knowledge resource’ (Attardo, 1997: 395), and many others have used incongruity as a synonym for Script Opposition (Davies, 2004: 375; Hempelmann, 2004: 386; Miczo, 2014:461, 465). The claimed presence of script opposition in jokes is an additional development which sets the SSTH apart from other humour theories, so to then recategorize opposition as merely an incongruity

undermines the need for the SSTH – this is noted by Morreal, who says that 'The script theory seems to add theoretical baggage to a simple incongruity theory without adding any explanatory power.' (Morreal, 2004: 397). I therefore also reject Attardo's (1997) revised definition of opposition in the SSTH.

A follow up paper from Attardo et al (2002) attempted to address this issue by proposing that, rather than opposition being synonymous with incongruity, opposition can be cast as 'logically prior' to the IR theories, despite them predating the concept of script opposition. Attardo et al (2002) assimilates 'opposition' with incongruity by bringing in foregrounding and backgrounding elements of the scripts, which he says can be 'formally modelled' using graph set theory:

> *'We are now in the position to provide a set-theoretic definition of script opposition: two overlapping scripts (A and B) are opposed when within the complementary sets of the intersection we can locate two subsets (C and D) such that the member(s) of the subset C are the (local) antonyms (i.e., the negation) of the member(s) of the subset D. Or to put it more formally: AC, D with C((A7(AlB)), D((B7(AlB)).' (Attardo et al, 2002: 24-25).*

My criticism of this formal modelling is the same one which was raised in relation to the GTVH hierarchy principles (3.2.1), in that a definition rooted in logic and mathematics offers little interpretative insight for a textual model. It is a symbolic paraphrasing of the same post-hoc argument that two scripts in a joke text are opposites, without describing how this opposition is constructed. Attardo et al (2002) make this point themselves, stating that 'what we have done here is merely recasting the concept of opposition in set-theoretic terms. We claim no additional insight in the semantic nature of opposition.' (Attardo et al, 2002: 25). It is therefore not possible to

use this formalised definition of opposition to fulfil my second research aim (1.1.2) to test the SSTH.

According to Raskin & Attardo (2017), a joke that does not contain script opposition is yet to be found. I believe this is both because the definitions presented above do not adequately define opposition, and also because any examples which are not found to contain script opposition are reclassified by analysts as ‘non-jokes’. An example of this is Hempelmann (2004), who suggests a lack of opposition as a distinguishing factor between ‘jokes’ and ‘wordplay’.

Example 7

> *Knock Knock. Who’s there? Cantaloupe. Cantaloupe who? Can’t elope tonight— Dad’s got the car.*
>
> *(Hempelmann, 2004: 387 [from Pepicello and Weisberg 1983: 67])*

This example (7) is labelled by Hempelmann (2004: 387) as wordplay because no local antonymy of cantaloupe and the inability to elope can be found, making it too ‘weak’ to be a joke. The example is a parosemic pun which overlaps the noun phrase ‘cantaloupe’ with the modally negated verb phrase ‘can’t elope’. Attardo (1994) labels puns as a type of joke, so as defined by the SSTH there should be a script opposition identified. I would also argue that the pun is framed in a ‘knock knock’ joke, which is an archetypal joke form (Nash, 1985), and that it fits with Long & Graesser’s (1988) definition of a joke as a structured, context-free example of textual humour (1.1.1). I therefore agree with Hempelmann (2004) that there does not appear to be any opposition in this example, but I disagree with his assertion that this means it is not a joke.

This section has presented my argument that the SSTH condition of opposition remains an assumed but ill-defined aspect in humour research. As I have rejected the definitions of opposition which were outlined above, the next section will discuss how opposition is defined in other areas of linguistics.

3.2.3 Redefining Opposition

This section attempts to define opposition in order to enable me to fulfil my second research aim (1.1.2) of testing of the SSTH hypothesis, as above I have argued that the current SSTH definitions of opposition are either too vague or a description of incongruity, rather than antonymy. The SSTH defines opposition with a focus on the differences between scripts, but opposition cannot be assimilated with 'different from' – these definitions omit the shared relationship which is essential to opposition. Taylor-Rayz (2019) describes opposition as 'different points along the same semantic axis/plain', and Davies (2012) says opposites share 'maximal semantic similarity, differing usually on only one plane of difference' (Davies, 2012: 43), quoting the example of hot and cold as being measurements of temperature which differ only in degrees. Jeffries (2010b) writes that 'words stigmatized as opposites in a language are usually close in meaning, by whatever means this proximity is measured' (Jeffries, 2010b: 17). Here I am accepting that the sense relation of opposition requires a meaning difference along the same semantic cline.

Opposition can be categorised depending on the type of relationship which is shared between entities. There are several categorisation frameworks (Izutsu, 2008: 647), but below I will present the four oppositional types outlined in Jeffries (2010b) as this

is part of the textually constructed opposition framework which will be introduced later in this section. Jeffries (2010b) oppositional categories are as follows:

- *Complementary: Binary oppositions which are mutually exclusive e.g. dead/alive*
- *Gradable: Oppositions which could be shown on a scale with increments in between them e.g. hot/cold (boiling, warm, tepid, cold, freezing), big/small (huge, big, medium, small, tiny, miniscule)*
- *Directional: Representing oppositions in time and space e.g. up/down, east/west. Can also be social representations (us/them)*
- *Converse: where the existence of one entity entails the existence of its opposite number e.g. husband/wife, father/son, buyer/seller (Jeffries, 2010:59-60)*

The examples given above to illustrate the various types of oppositional relationship, such as ‘dead/alive’, ‘wife/husband’, are known as conventional (Jeffries, 2010b) or canonical (Murphy, 2003; Davies, 2008; 2012) opposites; their relationship is intrinsically one of opposition, irrespective of co-text or context. They are assumed to be accessible and recognisable to competent language speakers as opposites, and they are taught to speakers from early childhood (Jeffries, 2010b:2). Looking at these categories, it is difficult to see how items such as ‘writer/postman’ (ex.1) could be considered opposites – one neither entails nor excludes the existence of the other, but they are not obviously on an incremental scale or a measure of direction. Though they are not conventional opposites, opposition can be constructed within a text, and I propose that this is the kind of opposition which the SSTH hypothesis is referring to.

The SSTH hypothesis does not propose conventional opposition as a condition of humour, instead arguing that the scripts in joke texts are 'local antonyms' (Raskin, 1985:108), and that opposition is constructed 'in a specially defined sense within the joke text' (Raskin, 1985:108). As previously stated (3.1.5; 3.2.2), Raskin's specially defined sense of opposition remains undefined throughout the 1985 book, resulting in a circular hypothesis whereby scripts are opposite because they are in a joke, and the text is a joke because it contains script opposition. Attardo (1997) elaborates on the concept of local antonymy, stating that 'normally compatible qualities or predicates may be turned into contextually dichotomous/ complementary antonyms by the pressure of context' (Attardo, 1997: 400), and that this constructs 'a context in which being a doctor is the opposite of (i.e., is not) being a lover.' Raskin & Attardo's argument that script opposition is constructed solely within the text therefore appears to be the same argument as Jeffries (2010b) theory of textually constructed opposition, in which a textual meaning is constructed which positions non-conventional opposites in a relationship of opposition. Jeffries defines constructed opposites as 'pairs of words whose oppositional relationship arises specifically from their textual surroundings' (Jeffries, 2010b: 1), building on Murphy's (2003) suggestion that unrelated adjectives such as 'smooth' and 'red' can be seen as opposites if they are placed 'in complementary distribution in some context' (Murphy, 2003: 174). Despite presenting similar assertions, textually constructed opposition in stylistics has developed separately from the SSTH concept of local antonymy and not in relation to humour research.

A crucial difference between the treatment of textually constructed opposition compared to the SSTH is that Jeffries (2010b) and Davies (2008; 2012) examine *how* the opposition is constructed in a text, providing a methodology which can be

followed to identify oppositional relationships within a text, rather than the SSTH's circular definition of opposition being constructed due to a scripts' presence within a joke text type. Their work compiled a list of semantic and syntactic triggers (see 4.2.1) which can be used to construct a relationship of opposition within a text. This method also retains the integrity of the definition of opposition as different points on the same semantic plane to underpin the theory, unlike the SSTH approach which has offered manipulated definitions to support their claims. I therefore suggest it could be an appropriate methodology to use to test the claims of the SSTH hypothesis.

Although the SSTH specifies that opposition is between scripts which are cognitive concepts, I am making the assumption that scripts are realised within the text using language, and are therefore textual, as it was illustrated how elements of the text triggered the 'medical' and 'sexual' scripts in the doctor/lover joke (ex. 5). Simpson (2003) states that script-based models lend themselves to stylistic analysis for this reason. As SSTH script oppositions are non-canonical opposites they must be constructed within the text, so it follows that for this to be true there will be identifiable triggers of textually constructed opposition evident within joke texts. Examining a text for these triggers offers a more objective and replicable method for testing the SSTH hypothesis on opposition than anything that has thus far been offered from the field of humour research. I therefore selected this method for identifying textually constructed oppositions in a sample of jokes to test the SSTH hypothesis, and this will be done in chapter 4. This incorporates work from stylistics to supplement existing humour theory in line with my research aims (1.1).

Following my selection of a definition of opposition and method for identifying it within a text, I argue below (3.2.4) that opposition subsumes the first SSTH

hypothesis condition of multiple overlapping scripts, so that the hypothesis can be collapsed before I go on to test it.

3.2.4 Collapsing the SSTH Hypothesis

Based on the definition of opposition presented in 3.2.3, this section will present the argument that the presence of multiple scripts which overlap is entailed by a relationship of opposition, and therefore that the SSTH's two-part hypothesis can be collapsed into one single testable hypothesis: 'All joke texts must contain evidence of a textually constructed opposition'.

The SSTH Hypothesis (3.1.2) is separated into two parts, with the first part grouping together the elements of two or more scripts which overlap, and separated from part two which states that they must be opposed. This can be simplified into three conditions as below:

For a text to be joke-carrying it must contain:

1) Two or more scripts
2) Scripts must overlap
3) These overlapping scripts are opposites

I argue that this separation is unnecessary, beginning with the presence of multiple scripts. Considering the nature of opposition which was outlined in (3.2.3), it is impossible for a single entity to be 'opposite'. This is because opposition describes an entity in relation to another thing, whether this relationship is physical or conceptual. Overlap also presupposes the presence of more than one script, as overlap requires two parts in order for them to have a shared aspect. This seems like

an obvious point to make, but it does enable a simplification of the SSTH hypothesis, so that it becomes:

Figure 4 'First Stage Collapse of SSTH Hypothesis'

For a text to be joke carrying it must contain:

1) Jokes contain overlapping scripts
2) These overlapping scripts are opposites within the text

I believe that this (fig. 4) can be collapsed further, as I argue that overlap is an entailed element of opposition. This is because the presence of a shared conceptual plane – arguably, an overlap – is an essential component of opposition. If two things are simply different, with no overlapping characteristics between them, then they cannot be labelled as opposites. Jeffries (2010b) says that constructed opposites must have 'one clear semantic component which can act as the dimension along which these novice opposites may contrast' (Jeffries, 2010b:111). Izutsu (2008: 673) emphasises the importance of a 'shared domain' within opposition of all kinds, and Davies (2012) states that opposites will have a 'plane of equivalence' (Davies, 2012: 43). As 3.2.2-3.2.3 showed, SSTH definitions of opposition have consistently failed to recognise the importance of an overlapping component in a constructed oppositional relationship, which could explain why the conditions of overlap and opposition have always remained separate in the SSTH hypothesis.

If opposition is a necessary condition in all jokes as proposed, then I would argue that this subsumes the first stage of the SSTH hypothesis, and the two-pronged hypothesis can be collapsed into one, presented below (fig. 5). As discussed (3.2.3), the caveat of opposition being created 'in some special sense within the text' can be

defined as textually constructed opposition, so I have also made this explicit in my reframed hypothesis.

Figure 5 'Second Stage Collapse of the SSTH Hypothesis'

A joke carrying text will contain textually constructed opposition.

Although I have presented a revised hypothesis, this collapse does not change the essential premise of the SSTH: instead, it is instead a reframing which reflects how the condition of opposition entails the presence of two or more scripts which overlap in some way, so these do not need to be listed as separate defining features. Defining the 'special sense' (Raskin, 1985) of opposition as textually constructed has also enabled the hypothesis to be tested using methods from stylistics in order to fulfil my research aim 2 (1.1.2). For this reason, the next chapter (4) will be dedicated to falsifying this newly collapsed version of the SSTH hypothesis, to determine whether it is a suitable basis for defining a text as joke carrying.

3.3 Chapter Conclusions & Next Steps

This chapter has focussed on the Semantic Script Theory of Humour, due to claims that it *does* provide the necessary and sufficient conditions to define a joke-carrying text. The SSTH (3.1) and its subsequent theoretical expansions (3.2) take a text-focussed approach to humour analysis which is in line with the aims of my own research. These theories have provided a basis for the majority of linguistic humour research undertaken between 1985 and the present day. Developments to the SSTH have continued to assume the core proposition that textual humour relies on script overlap and script opposition, and asserted that these claims are yet to be falsified.

Attardo & Raskin (2017) believe their work in refining a theory for the analysis of textual humour to be ongoing, but in a paper from 2017, Raskin describes the Semantic Script Theory of Humour in its current state as fulfilling the following conditions which are necessary for a theoretical framework:

- *Body: the main hypothesis that the text of a (potential) joke is compatible, in full or in part, with two opposing scripts;*
- *Purview: textual humor, most easily applicable to short, canned jokes;*
- *Premises: mostly that a text can be recognized as humor-carrying in the process of normal linguistic semantic analysis within a certain approach and understood the way humans do;*
- *Goals: mostly to account for how each joke works, which amounts to understanding it the way people do and going beyond that to a full explanation, the way people don't;*
- *Falsification: a joke that is not based on overlapping and opposed scripts—not yet produced, it appears;*
- *Justification: see Ruch et al. (1993) on a successful psychological experiment that bore out most of the GTVH claims.*

(Raskin, 2017: 113)

Throughout this chapter I have illustrated the methodological problems inherent in the 'body' of the SSTH and GTVH. The SSTH and GTVH therefore succeed in their 'goal' to understand the joke 'in the way most people do' through presumption and intuition, but fail in the 'goal' to provide thorough textual analysis accounting for the interpretation of the text as a joke. This second goal is vital for a stylistic theory of humour, as interpretations must be backed up with objective textual analysis (2.1). Neither the SSTH nor the GTVH is able to function as a method for the stylistic

analysis of jokes which this thesis aims to provide. I have also critiqued the key concepts of the SSTH hypothesis for their lack of definitions, contradicting Hemplemann (2019) who says that these have been adequately defined. In 2017, Raskin conceded that the definitions still require some tightening up and that this work is ongoing, but Oring (2019b) responds by saying that the whole SSTH needs to be torn down and rebuilt from scratch. I have argued for a revisionist approach to the SSTH in line with Oring (2019b), suggesting that the lack of definitions and replicable methodology results in theories which have not been falsified because they are unfalsifiable in their current form.

In this chapter I have made some original contributions by incorporating a stylistic approach to the SSTH, in line with my research aims. I have suggested a revised definition of opposition for the SSTH hypothesis which captures the sense relation more accurately than previous attempts by Raskin & Attardo. I have also proposed that the SSTH concept of 'local antonymy' is equivalent to textually constructed opposition, and can thus be identified through textual analysis using an established stylistic framework, removing the problem of a circular hypothesis. Finally, I have shown how the three key elements of the SSTH hypothesis can be unified into one single hypothesis that jokes will contain textually constructed opposition, allowing me to proceed with testing this hypothesis to fulfil my second research aim. The next chapter will therefore test the collapsed SSTH hypothesis on a small sample of joke texts using the framework for identifying textually constructed opposition.

Chapter 4: Testing the Collapsed SSTH Hypothesis

This chapter details a pilot study which I carried out in order to test the collapsed SSTH hypothesis that constructed opposition is an essential component of joke texts. Quantitative and qualitative analysis of 80 jokes (4.3-4.4) will show that, whilst textually constructed opposition is sometimes utilised to create a joking text, many of the joking examples analysed do not conform to the assumptions made by the SSTH. This chapter concludes that the findings do not support the collapsed SSTH hypothesis, and that the assumed presence of textually constructed opposition is an unsuitable basis for the analysis of jokes.

4.1 Why Conduct a Pilot Study?

A pilot study is a small-scale study which can be used to evaluate a novel idea or method (Wong et al, 2017: 2). The purpose of conducting a pilot study in the current research was to test the revised SSTH hypothesis (fig. 5) using a framework for identifying textually constructed opposition (see 4.2.1), to determine if and how opposition is constructed in jokes. The next two subsections detail my aims and expectations going into the pilot study.

4.1.1 Research questions & Aims of Pilot Study

Chapter 3 highlighted that the SSTH hypothesis that jokes will be based on a pair of opposing scripts is taken as a basic assumption in the humour research community which has remained unfalsified, and I have argued that that this is due to it being both circular and unfalsifiable. To address these issues, I proposed the following revisions:

1) Collapsing the SSTH hypothesis into a single, testable condition of opposition
2) Defining this condition of the SSTH hypothesis as textually constructed opposition

The main aim of the pilot study was to test whether jokes do contain evidence of textually constructed opposition in a more objective way than the SSTH has previously, therefore the methodology was taken from stylistic research at the forefront of textually constructed opposition (see 4.2.1), in order to identify where opposition was constructed in joke texts. A secondary aim of this pilot study was to determine whether there was any patterning in the types of oppositional triggers (if any) found in the joke text. As previously stated, opposition can be constructed in any text-type, so although the identification of textually constructed opposition in the jokes analysed for the pilot study would support the hypothesis that opposition is a necessary condition of jokes, it is still insufficient as a means of distinguishing jokes from non-jokes. An investigation of *how* opposition functions specifically in joke texts would allow further understanding of any relationship between opposition and humour more generally.

The pilot study therefore began with this research question:

RQ 4.1. Do the joke texts all contain textually constructed opposition?

Answering this research question is an essential step to falsifying the reframed SSTH hypothesis that a presence of textually constructed opposition is a necessary and sufficient condition for defining a text as joke-carrying.

4.1.2 Predictions & Hypotheses

The collapsed SSTH hypothesis which will be tested is reprised below:

'Second Stage Collapse of the SSTH Hypothesis'

> *A joke carrying text will contain textually constructed opposition.*

Although the reframing of the SSTH hypothesis (fig. 5) into a single testable condition is an original development within this thesis, the claim that opposition is a necessary condition of joke-carrying texts is not my own. This claim is retained from the original SSTH hypothesis, which makes a predictive judgement prior to data analysis – in this case, the SSTH predicts that jokes *will* contain textually constructed opposition.

A risk of beginning with a predictive hypothesis is that opposition will be identified because a researcher is expecting to see it – this is known as confirmation bias. To avoid this issue, the current pilot study did not begin with any predictions of my own regarding whether the jokes would contain evidence of constructed opposition, as either outcome would have implications for the SSTH hypothesis. As Rasinger puts it, 'even if we show that something is not the case, we still contribute to the accumulation of knowledge.' (Rasinger, 2013: 12). I instead present here a new conditional hypothesis which does not predict any analytical outcome:

> *If textually constructed opposition is a necessary and sufficient condition for a text to be defined as joke carrying, then analysis of the data (4.2.2) will find triggers of textually constructed opposition in all joke examples.*

If textually constructed opposition was identified in all 80 joke examples, then this would offer support to both the original SSTH claims that opposition is a necessary defining feature of joke texts, and my own proposed revisions to the hypothesis and methodology (3.2.4), making it a suitable basis for joke analysis. If examples were found in the data which did not construct opposition, then this would falsify the revised SSTH hypothesis and suggest that opposition is not a necessary and sufficient condition for a text to be defined as joke carrying. The outcomes of this pilot study dictated how my own framework of humour would be developed. Support for the collapsed SSTH hypothesis would have resulted in me continuing with a revisionist approach to the framework, taking the stance that opposition is an essential feature of joke texts and incorporating a stylistic methodology for analysing this condition. On the other hand, results which contradict the hypothesis that opposition is an essential feature of jokes would favour Oring's (2019b) suggestion that the SSTH should be abandoned and replaced with an entirely new framework.

4.2 Data & Methodology

This section introduces the data and methodology used in the pilot study, providing a rationale for these choices, and considering possible limitations.

4.2.1 Identifying Triggers of Textually Constructed Opposition

Methods for identifying textually constructed opposition have been proposed by Davies (2008; 2012; 2013) and Jeffries (2010a; 2010b) to investigate how lexico-semantic triggers can influence a reading of opposition from a text, with Davies (2008) stating that common frames and structures for processing conventional oppositions will force an interpretation of anything placed in these frames as opposites. This construction of non-conventional opposition is temporary and does

not influence semantic relationships outside of the text (Davies, 2013). Through inductive analysis Davies (2008) & Jeffries (2010b) found that there are patterns of textual cues for constructing non-conventional opposites, which Jeffries refers to as 'the different manifestations of this phenomenon [contextual opposition] and the basis of their meaning-making'. (Jeffries, 2010b: 28).

The presented triggers for constructing opposition have remained broadly similar throughout the literature from Davies & Jeffries, but there are slight differences in the way they are categorised. Davies (2008: 103-140) first formed a typology of oppositional triggers based on syntactic frames identified in relation to conventional opposition (Jones, 2002), and Jeffries (2010a: 55) presents this typology (below) as a list of 'the common syntactic triggers of opposition'.

- *Negated*
- *Transitional*
- *Comparative*
- *Replacive*
- *Concessive*
- *Explicit*
- *Parallelism*
- *Contrastives*

More recent typologies of syntactic triggers presented by Davies (2012: 49-52; 2013: 60-62) are almost identical to the list above, with the exception of the 'contrastive' category which is renamed as 'binarised opposition', as Davies felt that the label

‘contrastive’ opposition was tautological and did not accurately reflect the binary relationship of this oppositional type (Davies, 2021).

Jeffries (2010b: 33-53) distinguishes between ‘structural’ and ‘lexical’ triggers of opposition, placing the typology triggers under their appropriate heading. Although Davies (2012; 2013) does also note the importance of semantics in constructing opposition throughout, semantic triggers are not explicitly presented in his categories of oppositional triggers. Through comparing Jeffries (2010b) with Davies (2012; 2013) I found difficulty in pinpointing where the line between structural and semantic triggers should be drawn. Change of state verbs, for example, are labelled as a syntactic frame of transitional opposition in Davies (2013), but Jeffries (2010b) identifies verbs such as ‘change’ and ‘transform’ as a form of explicit lexical contrast. Similarly, explicit oppositional marker ‘as opposed to’ is coded as a syntactic trigger by Davies (2013) but a lexical opposition in Jeffries (2010b). This distinction is beyond the scope of my research and not an argument I will be able to engage in further in this thesis – whether triggers are considered to be structural or semantic is not relevant to whether they could be identified in the joke texts. I therefore collated Jeffries (2010a; 2010b) and Davies (2012; 2013) triggers below (table 1) under the generic heading ‘the textual triggers of constructed opposition’ as a means of analysing the joke data.

Table 1 'The Textual Triggers of Opposition'

Trigger Type	**Description**	**Example**
Negation	*A categorical difference between the pair*	X not Y

Transitional	*A change of state from one thing to another*	X becomes Y X changed into Y
Comparative	A measurable difference between two things	More X than Y
Replacive	A proposed alternative to what has come before	X instead of Y
Concessive	*An opposite outcome to what was expected using subordinating conjunctions*	Despite X, Y
Explicit	Explicitly stating a relationship of opposition	X as opposed to Y
Parallelism	Parallel structures resulting in a perceived relationship	X was A, Y was B
Contrastive/ Binarized Option	Structuring a mutually exclusive relationship using co-ordinating conjunctions	X, but Y Whether X or Y
Lexico-semantic	Either implicit or explicit reference to conventional opposition	X was hot, Y was cold

Opposition can be constructed using more than one of these triggers (Davies, 2012: 68), and the categories are not considered to be discrete – some categories will have elements which overlap, and some are more prototypical triggers of opposition than others (Jeffries, 2010b: 32). It is also possible that additional syntactic or semantic triggers of opposition which do not feature in this typology could be

identified during analysis. Davies applied a mixed-method of top-down categorisation using a pre-established framework, and combined this with 'the simultaneous logging of frames which it was hypothesised might also act as oppositional triggers' (Davies, 2008: 40), and this was the approach taken in my own analysis (see 4.2.3 for treatment of data).

4.2.2 Data Selection

The data selected for the pilot study was a collection of 80 short verbal jokes[8] published in an online newspaper article entitled 'The 80 Best Jokes from The Edinburgh Fringe 2015' (Appendix 1). Ritchie (2004: 15) favours short joke examples as a manageable starting point for humour analysis, and jokes have been described as the 'prototypical form of verbal humour' (Dynel, 2009: 1284), making them an ideal form to test the claims of the SSTH. As the examples are all short jokes, I understand that any conclusions drawn will only be generalisable to this particular humorous text-type and not to humour more generally.

It is difficult to define exactly what is 'humorous' (2.2.1), and this lack of specificity can result in subjective judgements when selecting data for humour research. I chose to mitigate this issue of validity by selecting jokes which had been externally evaluated as examples which were both intended to be and judged to be successful: comedy performers at the Fringe Festival intended their jokes to be humorous, and the Telegraph critics have accepted these as successful examples of the humorous form. This is an example of successful intentional joking – where a speaker means to be funny, and is perceived as funny (Simpson, 2003). I do accept

[8] A definition for jokes was provided in 1.1.1

that the judgement of the examples as the ‘best’ 80 examples of jokes from the festival could be biased, both in terms of the article’s contributing authors and the demographic being targeted by the Telegraph newspaper, so there is a chance that some styles of joke are absent from this sample. This limitation is mitigated by the fact that the article is credited to ‘telegraph reporters’, suggesting a panel of journalists have reached a consensus that these 80 examples are examples of successful jokes.

An advantage of this data set is that it is an easily available[9] real-world sample which was collected across the month-long Edinburgh fringe festival. The sample is also broadly representative, as jokes all came from a variety of performers who differ in age, gender, ethnicity, sexuality and other character variables. Tannen (2005) found in her analysis of humour in group conversation that individuals have unique and distinctive styles of humour. I therefore rationalised that using jokes from only one performer may only reflect a single comedian’s stylistic idiosyncrasies and render any theoretical conclusions drawn from the analysis invalid. An example would be the performer Stewart Francis, who is well known for almost exclusively using puns.

The sample size in a pilot study is relatively small, which could be regarded as a limitation, and any patterning identified would need to be investigated on a larger sample before any findings about how opposition functions in jokes, or humour more widely can be generalised. I argue however that the sample of 80 jokes offers enough scope to test the SSTH claim that opposition is an essential feature of jokes, as finding even a small number of jokes which do not contain textually constructed

[9] At the time of data collection the article was freely available, but as of 2021 it is behind a subscription paywall

opposition would contradict Raskin & Attardo's (2017) assurance that a single joke which does not conform to the SSTH hypothesis has never been found.

4.2.3 Treatment of Data

Each of the 80 jokes were analysed on an individual basis using a top-down approach. Using the typology of oppositional triggers (table 1), I identified any of the triggers of opposition present in the text, as well as any other linguistic features which I believed were being used to construct opposition. These findings were noted in the table (2) format below:

Table 2 'Annotating Opposition in Jokes'

Triggers	
Negation	
Transitional	
Comparative	
Replacive	
Concessive	
Explicit	
Parallelism	
Contrastive/Binarized	
Lexico-semantic	
Other	
Is opposition constructed?	

Any linguistic categorisation is susceptible to some subjectivity and researcher error, however the method of examining texts for the triggers listed in table 2 is clear and replicable, allowing findings to be tested should another researcher need to validate them. This addresses the criticisms of the SSTH methodology being subjective and vague, which were aired in chapter 3. Another advantage of this approach is that the identified oppositions can be grouped in terms of the triggers used, rather than proposing an infinite taxonomy of unique unrelated oppositions (such as the one in Raskin, 1985), and this could be a step towards identifying patterns in how jokes use textually constructed opposition. The identification of oppositional triggers was supplemented with qualitative textual analysis, through which I tried to understand how the constructed opposition did or did not function in each joke example, and addressed any other relevant textual cues which contributed to the textual meaning. This is inspired by Davies (2008), who discussed the effects of the constructed oppositional relationships which he identified. Applying this approach to joke data could explain how joke texts construct a humorous textual meaning.

Following the individual textual analysis, I conducted quantitative analysis of how frequently textually constructed opposition was identified in the sample as a whole. Quantitative analysis is useful when trying to prove that two variables are related (Rasinger, 2013) - such as discovering whether when there is opposition, there is humour, and taking away the opposition takes away the humour - so could be used to test the collapsed SSTH hypothesis (fig. 5).

The texts were coded into one of three categories: jokes containing textually constructed opposition, jokes that did not contain textually constructed opposition,

and jokes which were unable to be classified. Any examples which I was unable to clearly categorise as either containing or not containing constructed opposition were placed into an unsure category (explored in 4.3.3).

4.3 Example analysis

This section will present example analysis in order to illustrate the methodology and provide a qualitative discussion of the jokes. An important aspect of stylistics is analytical discussion of choices made in a text, and the effects of these choices, so this is in line with the aims of my research.

4.3.1 Jokes with Constructed Opposition

The joke below (ex. 8) was found to contain triggers of textually constructed opposition:

Example 8

'[On ISIS] They're like all villains in history – great at PR, shit at HR'

Table 3 'Oppositional Triggers in the PR/HR Joke'

Triggers	
Negation	None
Transitional	None
Comparative	None
Replacive	None
Concessive	None
Explicit	None

Parallelism	Phonological & Syntactic
Contrastive/Binarized	None
Semantic	Evaluatives of great and shit – positive/negative Pronoun 'they' – implied us/them
Other	None
Is opposition constructed?	**Yes**

This joke text uses several triggers to construct opposition between the two concepts of 'PR' and 'HR'. There is phonological parallelism of 'PR/HR', with the repeated two-syllabled initials ending in /ɑː/ sounds.

PR - /piːjɑː/

HR - /heɪtʃɑː/

Syntactic parallelism is also utilised in the repeated structure used in the phrases 'great at PR, shit at HR', exemplified below:

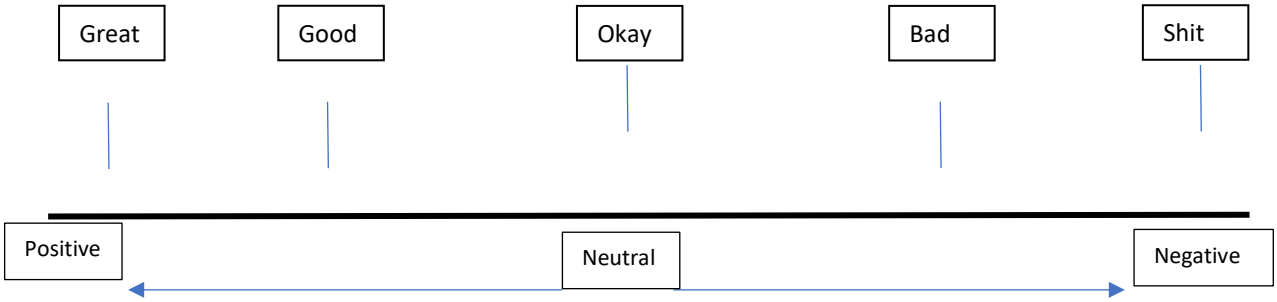
[Evaluative adjective] [Preposition] [Initialled workplace department]

[Great] [at] [PR]

[Shit] [at] [HR]

There is also a semantic influence of opposition through the use of evaluative adjectives 'great' and 'shit', which are presented within the text as existing at opposite ends of a conceptual scale of evaluation, where 'great' is a positive evaluation and 'shit' is a negative one (see fig 6 below).

Figure 6 'Gradable Oppositions of Great and Shit'



Though they are not conventional opposites, in this joke 'great/shit' can be considered to be analogous with the more conventional binary relationship of 'good/bad'. This example of 'conventional oppositional concepts being presented in a non-conventional way' (Jeffries, 2010b: 34), leads to the assumption that the other items in the syntactically parallel frame, 'PR/HR', are also opposites. Although the scale (fig. 6) appears to be a gradable one, PR and HR are presented as discrete categories more akin to complementary opposition. This is supported by the argument that PR and HR can be conceptually opposed, in the sense that one is a creative and dynamic occupation, and the other is a procedural role with responsibility for mundane tasks such as recruitment and wages.

The identification of oppositional triggers in the text could be considered to support the SSTH, as it conforms to the hypothesis (fig. 5) that jokes will contain textually constructed opposition, however further qualitative analysis of textual meaning led me to question whether this constructed opposition is in fact a necessary and sufficient explanation of the text's humour.

In this text, PR is used to represent the public-facing actions which ‘villains’ are considered to be ‘great’ at: for ISIS, this could include media which is used to radicalise and recruit followers, or videos communications to the outside world, both of which are well known features of a terrorist group. HR is assumed to represent the ethical aspects of an organisation such as employee wellness, equality, safety and dispute resolutions, and stating that ISIS are ‘shit’ at these sorts of activities triggers background knowledge of the widespread violence and oppression which has led to the ideological condemnation of ISIS as terrorists. The text therefore functions as a conceptual metaphor that maps the actions of a terrorist organisation onto the domain of a business environment. It is an over-simplification of a complex ideological issue which results in villainy being judged on the basis of competence in an office role, painting terrorist groups as nothing more than a poorly run business.

Arguably the scripts of ‘business’ and ‘terror’ can be conceptualised as opposites on the grounds of their categorisation as ‘everyday/unusual’ or ‘civilised order/uncivilised chaos’, but this relationship is not constructed in the text – in contrast, the text is presenting the actions of a business and a terrorist cell as equivalent. I would therefore argue that the humour in this example comes from the scripts of ‘terrorism’ and ‘business’ being equated, due to this being foregrounded at an ideational level. The constructed relationship of equivalence between disparate concepts is discussed later (see chapters 5 & 8) under the heading of Asymmetrical Comparisons.

Analysis of this text has shown that the joke’s textual meaning can be characterised as a constructed plane of equivalence between the two distinct scripts of terrorism and

business, both involving performing tasks which can be attributed to either PR or HR, and that on this basis PR and HR are presented as complementary opposites within the text. Textually constructed opposition therefore contributes to constructing a humorous textual meaning in this example, but I have proposed that it is the constructed equivalence between the two scripts which gives rise to the text's interpretation as humorous, rather than it being solely based on opposition.

4.3.2 Jokes without Constructed Opposition

The joke below (ex. 9) was not found to construct opposition.

Example 9

'Clowns Divorce. Custardy Battle'

Table 4 'Oppositional Triggers in Custody/Custardy Joke'

Triggers	
Negation	None
Transitional	None
Comparative	None
Replacive	None
Concessive	None
Explicit	None
Parallelism	None
Contrastive/ Binarized	None
Lexico-semantic	None
Other	None

Is opposition constructed?	**No**

As the table above shows, no triggers of opposition were identified in this text. There is no semantic relationship conventionally found between the two homophones 'custody' and 'custardy', they share an arbitrary phonological similarity, and the absence of oppositional triggers in the text meant that the qualitative textual analysis explored other features which might have been contributing to humour in the text.

The text constructs a relationship between the scripts of 'divorce' and 'clowns', through use of the homophonic pun custody/custardy battle, with the different meanings of this homophone pair triggered by the noun phrase 'clown' (custardy) and verb phrase 'divorce' (custody).[10] All elements of text could be compatible with both scripts, so this is arguably an example of full overlap which Raskin (1985) said was rare in jokes. The resulting textual meaning is to present a hypothetical situation where clowns battle for custody using a custard pie fight, which is foregrounded in multiple ways. There may be a custody battle involved in a divorce, but this action would not involve custard, so this element is incongruous with the script of a courtroom. The image of a serious court proceeding such as a divorce is also incongruous in tone when juxtaposed with clowns and custard pie fights, which are generally considered silly and humorous, however, in the context of the joke, there is no evidence to suggest these two different scripts share a relationship of opposition.

[10] Although the written form of this text indicates a preference for one form over the other, the joke was delivered in a spoken context with no means of selecting which was the intended meaning.

Opposition *could* be constructed if the situation was framed by a syntactic trigger of opposition, such as in the invented example (10) below:

Example 10

'The clowns court case wasn't a custody battle, it was a custardy battle!'

Table 5 'Oppositional Triggers in Modified Custody/Custardy Joke'

Triggers	
Negation	Wasn't X, was Y
Transitional	None
Comparative	None
Replacive	None
Concessive	None
Explicit	None
Parallelism	Phonological & Syntactic
Contrastive/ Binarized	None
Lexico-semantic	None
Other	None
Is opposition constructed?	**Yes**

Framing the text using constructed opposition does not change its nature as a homophonic pun. The incongruous proposition of the text also remains unchanged by the addition and/or removal of constructed opposition. The key difference is that both the serious script of a custody battle and the incongruous alternative of a custardy battle are both explicitly proposed in the text, and the negation structure presents them as mutually exclusive situations, thereby constructing opposition

between the different imagery of the serious and the silly. This analysis has illustrated that, whilst constructed opposition can be used to achieve humorous effects in jokes, some jokes can convey the same textual meaning and function as humour without the presence of opposition.

4.3.3 Difficult to Classify Example

Some examples were difficult to classify, because although they appeared to contain some of the commonly used triggers for constructing opposition, the resulting effects of the text did not feel like a constructed opposition.

Example 11

> *I was vegan for a while. I lost 6lb, but most of that was personality.*

Table 6 'Oppositional Triggers in Vegan Joke'

Triggers	
Negation	None
Transitional	Lost?
Comparative	Most?
Replacive	None
Concessive	But?
Explicit	None
Parallelism	None
Contrastive/ Binarized	None
Lexico-semantic	None
Other	None

Is opposition constructed?	**Unsure**

The example above (11) contains some textual elements which were identified as possible triggers for opposition. ‘Lost’ is a change of state verb which could indicate transitional opposition, but here I believe it is functioning as a presuppositional trigger rather than an oppositional one, as for 6lb to be ‘lost’ presupposes there was a previous time when the 6lb was still present. Use in combination with past tense markers ‘I was’ and ‘for a while’ presupposes that the speaker is no longer vegan, positioning this aspect of their character as temporally distant from the present moment. I do not categorise this as opposition but do accept that an oppositional relationship could be argued based on the implied binaries of ‘then/now’ and ‘lost/had’.

The most likely indicator of constructed opposition in this text is use of the co-ordinating ‘but’, which Izutsu (2008: 648) states can construct opposition with any of the three functions outlined below:

Contrastive – ‘Jack is a Conservative, but Emma is a Socialist’.

Concessive – ‘Jack is a Conservative, but you can trust him’.

Corrective – ‘Jack is not English, but Welsh’.

In example 11, the use of ‘but’ appeared to be most closely aligned with the concessive function, as it was marking an unexpected concession with regards to the preceding clause ‘I lost 6lb’, rather than contradicting or denying the proposition. The concession in this example is a clarification that the loss experienced was

actually one of personality rather than weight, with the result being a textual meaning which equates being a vegan with losing a personality, so I am unsure whether the 'but' is constructing opposition at all or is simply functioning as a co-ordinating conjunction in the same way that '*and*' would join the two clauses together.

A limitation of any text-based analysis is that language does not conform to fixed meanings and functions, so there will always be scope for uncertainty when trying to categorise textual data. Whilst this can make quantitative analysis more difficult, it does provide an opportunity for wider debate and discussion, so as long as any analysis is objectively presented and justified, it is not a failing to contribute to the field of study. What this example has also shown is that relying on feature spotting in a text is not sufficient to draw conclusions from, so enriching this with qualitative analysis is essential for any stylistic framework.

4.4 Findings of Pilot Study

This section will present quantitative findings, illustrating the percentage of jokes which were found to contain triggers of textually constructed opposition, and discussing this in relation to the SSTH and the collapsed hypothesis.

4.4.1 Results

The aim of this pilot study was to answer the research question below:

RQ 4.1. Do the joke texts all contain textually constructed opposition?

This question is answered with the quantitative analysis presented below, finding that overwhelmingly the data did not contain textually constructed opposition, therefore the answer to the research question ‘RQ 4.1’ is ‘no’.

Table 7 'Frequency of Textually Constructed Opposition Found in Jokes'

Constructed Opposition	*No Constructed Opposition*	*Unsure*
27	*51*	*2*

Table 7 shows that at least 51 of the jokes analysed were not identified as examples of textually constructed opposition, and thus did not support the collapsed SSTH hypothesis (fig 5). In terms of the assertion that jokes rely on the presence of a constructed opposition, around 33% did. These findings are important because they contradict the large volume of humour research which emerged as a result of the SSTH which still assumes the principle that opposition is omnipresent in jokes.

Of the 80 joke examples analysed, 27 were judged to contain textually constructed opposition – this contradicts the SSTH’s assertion that opposition is a necessary condition of joke texts, but does offer a possible explanation as to why opposition has been identified as a feature of jokes in past literature. This means oppositional analysis is a useful tool for some jokes and, in terms of a stylistic approach, opposition is a textually constructed choice which can result in a humorous effect. This concurs with Dževerdanovic-Pejović’s (2018) findings that jokes texts used opposition to display political ideologies.

The qualitative analysis provided above (4.3) also considered whether those jokes which did construct opposition were reliant on this feature to be jokes, and found that other aspects of textual meaning were also necessary, concluding that even in those examples where opposition was a necessary condition of jokes it was not deemed to be a sufficient condition for creating humorous meaning.

A theme which was discovered through much of the qualitative analysis was the presence of a novel semantic relationship in joke texts. Each of the three presented examples showed how interpretations were shifted to a foregrounded semantic proposition, either through mitigated seriousness (terror > business/divorce > clowns), or bending the rules of reality (weight loss > personality loss). These relationships are found to be constructed between things that are different, but as discussed, (3.2) difference does not equal a relationship of opposition. This suggests that there are a wider variety of textual elements involved in creating humorous foregrounding in joke texts, rather than a sole reliance on opposition as claimed by the SSTH.

4.4.2 Evaluating the Pilot Study

Research question RQ 4.1 was successfully answered using the quantitative analysis presented in table 7 (above), finding that around two thirds of the jokes analysed did not contain textually constructed opposition. An advantage of this quantitative analysis is that it provides an easy way to test a hypothesis. The conditional hypothesis which I formulated in 4.1.2 was:

If textually constructed opposition is a necessary and sufficient condition for a text to be defined as joke carrying, then analysis of the data (4.2.2) will find triggers of textually constructed opposition in all joke examples.

In finding that there were a large proportion of jokes in the data which did not contain oppositional triggers, I am able to assert the conclusion that textually constructed opposition is not a necessary and sufficient condition of all joke texts. These findings therefore falsify the collapsed SSTH hypothesis (fig 5) which is reprised below:

'Second Stage Collapse of the SSTH Hypothesis'

A joke carrying text will contain textually constructed opposition.

As this collapse is a reframing of Raskin's original hypothesis, the results I have found are limited and cannot be said to falsify the SSTH. However, the pilot study findings do still contradict an essential element of the original SSTH hypothesis that opposition is a necessary condition for a text to be joke-carrying, and on this basis feel justified in not incorporating a revisionist approach to the SSTH any further in the development of my own joke framework.

In this study I have also shown that the typology of textually constructed opposition triggers can be used to objectively analyse opposition in jokes, and that this can inform explanations of how humour is constructed in some joke texts. Work on textually constructed opposition thus far has been applied to non-humorous discourse, divided between literary and non-literary texts, and prior studies of canonical opposition also seemed to ignore humour (Mettinger, 1994; Jones, 2002).

This is therefore a novel application of the theory of textually constructed opposition, in addition to being a methodological revision of the SSTH.

4.4.3 Next Steps for Building a Framework

The findings of this pilot study have not supported the claims of the SSTH hypothesis, indicating that the methodological revisions suggested in 3.2 are insufficient, and that changes are required at a theoretical level in order to propose my own stylistic framework for the analysis of jokes. Initial qualitative analysis has highlighted the importance of some constructed 'relationship' in jokes, of which opposition is only one kind. The remainder of this thesis will therefore take a more holistic approach to investigating what other semantic relationships are constructing humour within a joke text, and this begins (chapter 5) with a bottom-up discovery process.

Chapter 5: Developing a New Framework of Humour

This chapter will illustrate the developmental process of my own theoretical framework for joke analysis, beginning by outlining a data-led discovery process (5.1-5.3) which results in the proposal that five types of 'textually constructed meaning shifts' occur in jokes (5.3-5.4). I then test this proposed framework on a larger sample of jokes (5.5), presenting quantitative results and evaluation of this testing (5.6) which ultimately results in the construction of 'The Theory of Textually Constructed Meaning Shifts in Jokes'.

5.1 Basis for Research

The primary aim of this chapter is to develop an original theoretical framework to analyse how humour is constructed in joke texts, as it was shown above (chapters 3-4) that the Semantic Script Theory of Humour is not able to fulfil this role.

5.1.1 Assumptions & Aims

Based on the findings so far in this thesis, I am beginning the process with two assumptions: the first is that humour is constructed at the textual level of meaning, and is not inherent in either language form or function; the second is that this humorous meaning is foregrounded in some way, but as foregrounding occurs throughout language this is not sufficient as an explanation of what makes a joke humorous.

I aim to investigate whether there is any patterning in these foregrounded textual meanings which makes them funny, in order to propose a new framework of joke analysis.

5.1.2 Data

I chose to begin framework development using the 80 joke examples which were presented in 4.2.2, where I provided justification for using this sample of jokes for humour analysis. Many humour theories have begun with the bottom-up analysis of a small sample of jokes as they are a prototypical humour form (Raskin, 1985; Long & Graesser, 1988; Ritchie, 2004). The rationale for sticking to this small sample of jokes for my own framework development is that it allows gradual theory building on a prototypical humour form, which can later be expanded, whereas beginning with too much data or too broad a sample can result in overgeneralisations with no testable hypothesis (Ritchie, 2004:8). I recognise here that this sample size is not sufficient to generalise theoretical conclusions from (Wong et al, 2017), so any initial findings from this analysis will need to be tested on a wider set of data (5.5-5.6). Although this sample of jokes was previously used in chapter 4 to test whether they contained textually constructed opposition, the analytical approach taken in this chapter is different (see 5.1.3), so I feel that reuse of the same sample is justified in this case.

5.1.3 Approach

Thus far in the thesis I have examined humour in terms of other theories which are mainstays of this research field, and evaluated them, particularly with regards to the SSTH. I have illustrated the knowledge gaps within these approaches, and arrived at the decision to develop a new approach for joke analysis which aims to address these knowledge gaps. As my aim is to formulate a novel framework, I chose to take the approach of building this from the bottom upwards through a data-led discovery

process. This is also known as Grounded Theory Method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which was developed as a means of original theory building in social science research in response to the prevalence of top-down analysis using established theories.

Hadley (2019) describes the process of a Grounded Theory Method (GTM) as follows:

> ‘Essentially, one enters a particular social arena in a spirit of intellectual humility, and stays open to all possibilities as one asks questions. The theorist breaks down and then classifies the answers. Grounded theorists constantly and critically assess their developing ideas to both clarify and define the limits of what eventually becomes a plausible explanation (theory) of what is happening in the field.’
>
> (Hadley, 2019: 266)

In practice, this means beginning qualitative analysis without any specific assumptions or hypothesis about what will be found in the data. Building a new theory is a multiphase process (Hashemi, 2019: 43), and according to GTM can be split into three research phases: open exploration, focussed investigation, and theory construction (Hadley, 2019: 266), which is the pathway I will follow for framework development. The first stage of open exploration is a qualitative analysis of data (5.2) followed by proposing conceptual categories of patterning which emerge from this data analysis (5.3), which requires some engagement with established literature and concepts in the field of study, but ultimately ‘The goal is to construct new insights and discoveries rather than validating pre-existing knowledge’ (Hadley, 2019: 266). The conceptual categories are examined for a common concept which relates them

all, and this is the start of the focussed investigation (5.3), which also includes analysis of a larger data set: developing a new framework or theory requires an ongoing process of refinement through application to new sets of data (Hadley, 2019: 265). The final stage is the construction of a theory based on the patterns which have been identified in the data (5.4-5.6).

Beginning with an open-minded approach does not mean that the development is entirely separated from the context of an academic discipline, as this would make conducting analysis an endless and impossible task. The introduction to this thesis stated that my chosen discipline is stylistics, so this defines the scope of my open exploration. A means of conducting the qualitative analysis is also needed, even in the exploration phase, in order to maintain methodological transparency (Marsden, 2019) and produce a manageable set of findings (Hadley, 2019), and Hashemi (2019) notes that incorporating other analytical methods is useful when constructing a new theory using a discovery approach (Hashemi, 2019: 43). I have argued that humour is a foregrounded meaning constructed at a textual level, and I therefore chose to use the analytical framework from Jeffries theory of textual meaning (5.2) as my method for qualitative joke analysis in the open exploration stage of research. I rationalised that, by analysing textually constructed meaning in jokes, I could identify patterns in the text which were contributing to the construction of this humorous meaning.

5.2 Open Exploration of Textual Meaning in Jokes

The theory of textual meaning (Jeffries, 2014a; 2014b; 2015; 2016) forms the basis for my own approach to joke analysis in this open exploration stage of research. The

theoretical aspects of textual meaning were discussed in 2.1.3, but this section will introduce the theory's analytical framework, which I used to identify how meanings are constructed in joke texts.

5.2.1 Analysing Textual Meanings: Why and How?

The analytical framework for investigating textual meaning was first proposed in Jeffries (2010a) for the critical stylistic purpose of understanding how ideologies are embedded in texts, but its application has been expanded (Jeffries, 2014a; 2014b; 2015; 2016) to provide a method for the descriptive analysis of meaning-making more generally in texts. There are many aspects of choice which result in the construction of a textual meaning, and these are labelled by Jeffries (2010a) as the 'Textual Conceptual Functions' (TCFs).

- *Naming and Describing*
- *Representing States/Actions/Events*
- *Equating and Contrasting*
- *Exemplifying/Enumerating*
- *Prioritizing*
- *Implying and Assuming*
- *Negating*
- *Hypothesizing*
- *Presenting Others' Speech & Thoughts*
- *Representing Time, Space & Society*

The TCFs are introduced below (5.2.2-11), using excerpts from my sample of joke data[11] (4.2.2) to illustrate each TCFs key concepts and provide some example analysis. The theory of textual meaning is relatively new, and work is ongoing to develop the analytical framework, with the potential for including additional TCFs (Jeffries, forthcoming). As these additional TCFs are not yet defined within the framework, I chose to only use the TCFs presented above for conducting my analysis.

I conducted a descriptive textual analysis of each joke using the TCFs framework, in order to determine what the textual meaning of each text was, and how this was constructed, in order to go on to identify any patterns in these meanings (5.3). The advantage of analysing jokes using all of the TCFs is that it provides a multi-perspective approach to qualitative textual analysis, which Paltridge (2019: 29) says allows for a broader understanding and new perspectives on types of data which have been frequently analysed (such as jokes). Textual meaning analysis is rigorous, text-driven, and provides a holistic overview of the many different elements which contribute to a text's meaning (Wang, 2019: 461-462), in contrast with other approaches to humour analysis (discussed in 2.2;3), which focus on identifying a single feature or concept as being responsible for a text's humour. The elements of choice made within each TCF combine to construct a textual meaning which is humorous, and it is not the TCF itself that is inherently funny.

5.2.2 Naming and Describing

[11] Generic text examples are used to explain TCF concepts which were not found in the joke sample

The TCF of ‘Naming and Describing’ concerns how entities are represented, most obviously through the choice of nouns and adjectives which are selected to name and describe things (Jeffries, 2014a: 413), though the inclusion of pre- and post-modifiers within a noun phrase can also impact on how an entity is depicted in a text, as can nominalisation, which repositions actions as entities. These techniques are illustrated in the example (12) below:

Example 12

‘I did a gig in a fertility clinic. I got a standing ovulation’.

The underlined noun phrases in this text construct two distinct thematic strands: gigging and fertility. The situation of performing a gig in a fertility clinic is incongruous and seems unlikely to have happened, but it must be assumed to exist, in order to understand the meaning of the text. The text also nominalises two conventionally unrelated verb processes of ‘standing’ and ‘ovulating’, resulting in the construction of a compound neologism ‘standing ovulation’. As the two themes of gigging and fertility have been primed (Hoey, 2005) in the first sentence, the neologism is understood to be a parosemic pun based on the blending of two existing nouns within these respective themes: ‘standing ovation’ and ‘ovulation’. Both of these meanings must be recognised and processed simultaneously in order to understand the pun. The naming and describing in this text therefore constructs a foregrounded textual meaning, presenting the incongruous situation of a gig at a fertility clinic, in which the audience showed their appreciation by standing up and ovulating en masse – an action which is not only unlikely, but impossible.

5.2.3 Representing States/Actions/Events

Verbs are the primary elements of a text which represent actions, events and states of being, and the way that these processes are reported can affect how the action is perceived. Simpson's (1993) modification of Halliday's (1985) transitivity model is used to analyse the representation of verb processes, which can be categorised as Material, Verbal, Mental or Relational.

Material actions will have an at least an actor (subject) and a process (predicator), and may also have a goal. The three kinds of material processes are:

Table 8 'Material Actions'

Type of Material Action	Description	Joke Example
Material Action Intention (MAI)	The actor intends the process to happen and plays an active role	*Example 13* *'I'm voting UKIP, just to see where they send me back to'*
Material Action Supervention (MAS)	The process happens to the actor without their intent	*Example 14* *'My dad said always leave them wanting more. Ironically, that's how he lost his job in disaster relief'*
Material Action Event (MAE)	The actor of a process is inanimate	*Example 15* *The wind blew*[12]

[12] This type of process was not identified in the joke data

Verbalisations represent the act of speaking, with the minimum of a sayer and a process. The verbiage (what is said) and/or a target (who it is said to) of the utterance may also be presented:

Example 16

'I saw Arnold Schwarzenegger eating a chocolate egg. I said "I bet I know what your favourite Christian Festival is". He said "You have to love Easter, baby".'

Table 9 'Verbalisations'

Sayer	Process	[Verbiage]	[Target]
He	*Said*	*'You have to love easter baby'*	*[to me]*

Mental processes are psychological or physiological experiences, presented in terms of senser, process and phenomenon.

Table 10 'Mental Processes'

Type of Mental Process	Description	Example
Mental Cognition	Cognitive thought processes	*Example 17* *'My childhood has been like an episode of Peppa Pig where she realises she's been born on a farm in Denmark'*

Mental Reaction	Emotional thought processes	*Example 18* *'I feel sorry for Islamic Terrorists. How many heads do they have to chop off before people in the west accept that Islam is a religion of peace?'*
Mental Perception	Sensory perception processes	*Example 19* *'I had a drinking problem. Southern Comfort tasted alright. Ordinary Comfort tasted like fabric softener.'*

Relational verbs represent static relationships or carrier attributes, rather than dynamic processes. They construct a representation of states of being, either through intensive, possessive or circumstantial verbs.

Table 11 'Relational Processes'

Type of Relational Process	Description	Example
Intensive	Represents permanent states of being using copula auxiliary 'to be'	*Example 20* *'I am both ethnic and a woman – which gives me double the chances of being booked on a BBC panel show'*

Possessive	Represents possession or belonging using auxiliary 'to have'	*Example 21* *'You have to be careful in my country because we have bad cars and good wine, a dangerous combination.'*
Circumstantial	Represents temporary states of being or locations through auxiliary 'to be' + temporal or spatial deixis	*Example 22* *'When my wife and I argue, we are like a band in a concert. We start off with some new stuff, then roll out our greatest hits.'*

It is not always clear how to categorise actions using the transitivity model, as illustrated in the example (23) below:

Example 23

'My cat is recovering from a massive stroke'.

The verb phrase in this text is the underlined 'is recovering'. Presenting this as a present progressive action means it is understood to be a process which is ongoing for an unspecified but substantial length of time. Recovery could be considered as something that happens organically which would indicate material supervention. Recovering is also temporary state of existence, so could reflect a relational circumstantial process, or be a mental process describing the cat's current experiential state. This highlights a potential difficulty in applying transitivity analysis

to a short text with the absence of any further clarification of how a process is occurring.

5.2.4 Equating and Contrasting

This TCF describes the construction of meaning relationships (Jeffries, 2010a: 53) which results in conventionally unrelated entities being viewed as equals or opposites. Chapter 4 investigated how texts construct opposition in detail, so that will not be reprised here (see 4.2.1 for the typology of oppositional triggers). Analysis in 4.3 also briefly introduced how equivalence was constructed between unrelated concepts in some jokes, and the textual triggers which construct an equating relationship are introduced here (table 12).

Table 12 Triggers of Equating

Equating Trigger	*Example*
X is like Y	*Example 24* *'Patience is a bit like a toilet roll. The bigger the arsehole you're dealing with, the quicker it runs out'.*
X is Y	*Example 25* *'Surely every car is a people carrier?'*
Parallelism	*Example 26* *'The past is another country. Property is cheaper there.'* *[repeated parallel structure of 'X is Y']*

The result of this constructed equivalence is that it draws attention to a previously unnoticed relationship between different entities, and this novel relationship is foregrounded.

5.2.5 Exemplifying/Enumerating

Exemplifying and enumerating describes the presentation of lists within a text, and these lists may or may not be comprehensive depending on whether the text is exemplifying or enumerating. Use of enumerating does indicate that all possible examples have been captured in the text's list, such as in the text below (ex. 27), which reduces the 'only four things you can be' to various states of inebriation. This offers an insight into the speaker's world view, which is centred around alcohol consumption and therefore foregrounded:

Example 27

> *'There are only four things you can be in life: sober, tipsy, drunk and hungover. Tipsy is the only one where you don't cry when you're doing it'.*

Exemplifying provides a selection of examples, and is explicitly marked using adverbial triggers: 'for example' or 'such as', so it is understood that there are other possible examples which are not referenced in the text. Exemplifying can also occur without any lists or markers through apposition (Jeffries, 2010a), such as in the below example:

Example 28

> *'I'm very traditional. On Christmas eve my uncle terry hung himself above the fireplace and we didn't take him down until the 6th of January.'*

The second sentence is given as an example of what it means to be ‘traditional’, despite there being no evidence of listing or explicit markers of exemplifying in the text, and this exemplifying illustrates a foregrounded view of what being ‘traditional’ represents. I therefore suggest an adaptation to Jeffries (2010a) work, which treats ‘exemplifying and enumerating’ as synonymous with listing.

5.2.6 Prioritizing

The order in which a text presents information, and the depth of grammatical structure this information is placed in, can impact on the constructed meaning. Conventionally, aspects of textual meaning can be split into either given or new information, and new salient information will occur towards the end of the text (Giora, 2003), so presenting information earlier on in a text indicates that it should be interpreted as a given assumption. Information can also be prioritised through subordination, such as the use of optional adverbial clauses in the text (ex. 29) below:

Example 29

> *‘Like most liberals, I will do anything for the working classes, anything, apart from mix with them’.*

The main proposition of this text is that the speaker ‘will do anything for the working classes’, and this is pre-modified by an optional adverbial clause ‘like most liberals’, which constructs the given assumption that being liberal means helping the working classes, and is reinforced by repetition of ‘anything’. This is followed by a subordinate clause beginning with ‘apart from’. Presenting this information in an optional adverbial clause leads to the assumption that it is a minor exception to what

has come before which can be discarded without impacting upon the text's meaning, but instead the content directly contradicts the main proposition. By prioritising the order of information in this way the joke sets up an expectation which is then broken through internal deviation, and this is ideologically foregrounded as it contradicts the liberal attitude the speaker claims to have.

5.2.7 Implying and Assuming

Analysis of this TCF encompasses the two pragmatic theories of presupposition and Gricean implicatures.

Presupposition describes how assumptions are encoded within a text. All texts implicitly presuppose some information, as referring to concepts or processes assumes that hearers will conceptually acknowledge their existence. Beyond this, some texts contain other 'presupposition triggers' (Stockwell, 2002) such as change of state verbs (ex. 30) or past tense conjugations (ex. 31):

Example 30

> *'Giving up smoking is like wrestling a polar bear in that it can make you quite tense.'*

Example 31

> *'I used to think an ocean of soda existed but it was just a fanta sea.'*

These triggers make assumptions about what has occurred in order for the textual meaning to be true, for example 'giving up smoking' presupposes that smoking has occurred in the first place.

Whilst presupposition concerns assumptions triggered within a text, Grice's maxims make assumptions about interpersonal co-operation. According to the co-operative principle (Grice, 1975), contributions must be maximally appropriate in terms of quality, quantity, relation and manner. Intentionally flouting these maxims constructs an implicature, such as in the example (32) below:

Example 32

> *'My skin is the biggest organ of my body, despite what stereotypes may lead you to believe.'*

In this example, I argue that the speaker overtly breaks three of the four maxims: quantity, relation and manner. The proposition that the skin is the biggest organ of the speaker's body specifically is an unnecessary contribution, as this is true for every human being. The speaker then references stereotypes, which seem irrelevant to a discussion of medical facts. This flout prompts a search for a connection between the two clauses, and the fact that this relationship is not explicitly stated flouts the maxim of manner which concerns being clear and unambiguous. The inference from these flouts is that the speaker is alluding to the racial stereotype that black men have large penises.

5.2.8 Negating

Negating was introduced in 4.2.1 as a means of triggering opposition, but can have an impact on textual meaning beyond the construction of opposites. In addition to explicit use of the negative particle 'not', negation can be constructed using the following lexico-semantic triggers:

Table 13 Textual Triggers of Negation

Trigger	Joke Example
Nouns	*Example 33* *'There are very few people at the Fringe festival doing Roman Numeral jokes. I is one.*
Verbs	*Example 34* *'Most of my life has been spent avoiding conflict. I hardly ever visit Syria'*
Adjectives	*Example 35* *'Much as few people want to watch a right-wing comedian, even fewer want to see a left-wing action movie'*
Negating Morphemes	*Example 36* *'After 50 you stop seeing your heart as a muscle and more as an unexploded bomb.'*
Adverbs	*Example 37* *'The reason I was never scared of the enemy fighters in Star Wars is that they look essentially like flying brackets'*

The effect of presenting a negated proposition in a text is that it forces a conceptualised hypothetical existence of the un-negated alternative, in order to understand the effect of the negation (Nahajec, 2009).

5.2.9 Hypothesizing

Simpson's (1993) modality framework is used to identify elements in a text which indicate a judgement surrounding a hypothetical outcome, and can be constructed using modal auxiliary verbs, lexical verbs, modal adverbs, adjectives and conditional syntactic structures. The three types of modality are illustrated in the table below:

Table 14 Simpson's Modality Framework

Category	Type	Example
Epistemic Modality	Likelihood	*Example 38* *'If your homing pigeon doesn't come back, then what you've lost is a pigeon.'*
Deontic Modality	Obligation	*Example 39* *'Saw the Theory of Everything, loved it. Should have been called 'Look Who's Hawking, that's my only criticism.'*
Boloumaic Modality	Desirability	*Example 40* *'Joan Rivers got exactly what she wanted from that final surgery'*

Modality constructs humorous meanings in the examples above because the presented hypothetical proposition is deviant in some way from naturalised ideational

assumptions, and therefore foregrounded, for example the suggestion (ex. 39) that 'The Theory of Everything' – described as a heartfelt biopic of Stephen Hawking which was produced with 'scrupulous ethics and fresh-scrubbed compassion' (Shoard, 2014) – should be given the alliterative parody name 'Look Who's Hawking'.

5.2.10 Presenting Others' Speech & Thoughts

Texts do not always present the speech and thoughts of others without intervention – Short (1996) devised a framework for the analysis of how speech and thoughts are presented in texts:

Table 15 Speech & Thought Presentation

Category	Description	Example
Narrator representation of speech/thought	Indicates that speech or thought occurred, without any presentation of tone or content	*Example 41* *'I did a gig in a fertility clinic. I got a standing ovulation.'*
Narrator representation of speech/thought act	Indicates the type of speech/thought act that occurred, but with no lexical content	*Example 42* *'When my wife and I argue, we're like a band in concert. We start with some new stuff, and then we roll out our greatest hits.'*

Indirect speech/thought	Reporting roughly what was said/thought, but could be a paraphrase	*Example 43* *'I've run this joke past all my black and ethnic minority friends and she said it was fine.'*
Free indirect speech/thought	No quotation marks but a flavour of what was actually said or thought by the original speaker	*Example 44* *'I'm Clive Anderson, in case you were thinking so that's what happened to William Hague these past years.'*
Direct speech/thought	Speech or thought presented as verbatim in quotation marks with a reporting clause	*Example 45* *'I said "I bet I know what your favourite Christian Festival is".'*

The technique chosen for speech and thought presentation can affect how faithful the representation is compared to the original speech or thought act, with direct speech being considered to be the most accurate portrayal, however as the data I am analysing is a transcript of spoken jokes, it can be more difficult to differentiate between indirect, free indirect and direct speech/thought than in written texts. This is something my analysis will need to take into account.

5.2.11 Representing Time, Space & Society

Location in time, space and society is indicated through the form of *Deixis,* and the four proposed types of deixis (Jeffries, 2010a) and their triggers are listed in the table below.

Table 16 Types of Deixis

Deixis Type	*Triggers*	*Example*
Place	Adverbs Demonstratives Prepositions	*Example 46* *'The past is another country. Property is cheaper there.'*
Time	Tense Markers Adverbs Demonstratives	*Example 47* *'Abortion wasn't legalised in Ireland until 3075.'*
Personal	Personal Pronouns	*Example 48* *'They're like all villains in history. Great at PR, shit at HR.'*
Social	Titles Forms of address Naming strategies	*Example 49* *'That's why I let my female workers work longer hours than the men.'*

Deictic choices made in a text can construct a text world with 'the capacity to bring the reader into your point of view' (Jeffries, 2010a: 147), and if this constructed point

of view is deviant from naturalised ideational or ideological views then there is a potential for the construction of humour.

5.2.12 Conclusions of Textual Meaning Exploration

The analytical framework of textual meaning outlined in this section provides me with a method for conducting qualitative textual analysis of jokes, in order to identify foregrounded aspects of a text and understand *how* humorous meanings are constructed on an individual basis, but does not function alone as a framework for identifying *why* these meanings are judged to be funny (Redfern, 1984:5), and this is what I am aiming to achieve in this thesis. This meant that textual meaning analysis was the first step in building my framework for the analysis of jokes. Once each text had been analysed individually, I began the 'focussed investigation' stage of research, taking an inductive approach to discovering if these meanings were patterned in any way and could be grouped into categories. This categorisation process is detailed below

5.3. Focussed Investigation: Coding and Categorising Joke Meanings

This section details the focussed investigation stage of framework development, outlining my chosen approach to categorisation (5.3.1), and the resulting five categories of textual meaning which were identified in the joke data (5.3.2-5.3.6).

5.3.1 Categorisation Process

Following the open exploration of textual meanings (5.2), the next step in a discovery process is open coding, which involves categorisation based on patterns of textual

meanings which were identified in the data. This is known as grouping into ‘conceptual categories’ (Hadley, 2019: 267), and does not begin with any established or predetermined rules for classification, in the way that top-down research does. Instead, coding in GTM is ‘an interplay between the researcher and the data that begins descriptively, and through successive stages, becomes increasingly abstract to construct a theory’ (Hadley, 2019: 272). This data-led approach to categorisation was used by Gold & McIntyre (2019), who identified five different communicative functions of the word ‘fuck’ and its variants in a scene from ‘The Wire’. Gold & McIntyre’s (2019) categorisation system adopts elements from previous work in their area of study, but is ultimately their own framework, and I will show how I also took this approach by incorporating some aspects of existing humour theory into the identified categories of textually constructed meaning (5.4; 12.1.1).

In order to code jokes into these categories, I also had to decide on which categorisation approach to take in terms of classifying ‘the relationships that connect and are shared between the conceptual categories.’ (Hadley, 2019: 268): these approaches to category classifications can be either classical or polythetic (Taylor, 2004). According to Taylor (2004: 22), a classical approach to categorisation constructs a typology of categories with clear, discrete boundaries, and a list of necessary and sufficient features for category membership. Features are binary, so data cannot be coded into more than one category, and all members of a category will have equal status.

This approach contrasts with Rosch’s (1973; 1975) work on prototype theory, which contradicts the classical assertion that categories are clear binaries, most

notably using the language of colours. Colours do not have clear boundaries, and instead are a gradable hue, with more prototypical examples at the centre of their proposed category. Rosch (1973; 1975) found that categories have fuzzy boundaries with varying membership criteria, confirming that some category members are considered to be more 'prototypical' than others. According to Taylor (2004:7), 'There will be regions between adjacent colour categories where unambiguous categorization will be difficult', so sky blue may be judged a more salient example of blue than teal, which also contains elements belonging to the category of green. Taylor (2004: 44) also writes about Labov's experiment testing the categorisation of household objects, summarising that 'no one single attribute, or set of attributes, is essential for distinguishing the one category from the other.'

When investigating textual meaning, which is a dynamic and context dependent construction, examples don't always fit neatly into one category - this was illustrated in 5.2.3 in relation to transitivity, where one verb form could have been classed as several different types of transitivity process. This was also an issue which I noted in my undergraduate research project: when coding conversational humour data into mutually exclusive categories of topic, I found that this restrictive categorisation process gave an inaccurate picture of how frequently topics occurred in sexual joking between colleagues, and suggested taking an polythetic approach in any future humour research (Chambers, 2016: 50). The approach taken to categorisation in this thesis' research was therefore in line with Rosch's polythetic view of category membership, meaning jokes were coded into more than one category where they exhibited features of more than one constructed meaning type, and some examples

were considered to be more prototypical category members than others (see chapter 6 for discussion of prototypical category membership).

Based on observed patterns of the textually constructed meanings found in the data analysis, five emerging categories of textually constructed meanings were proposed: Bisociation, Reinterpretation, Asymmetrical Comparison, Contradiction and Performative Reinforcement. These concepts are defined in the table (17) below:

Table 17 The Emerging Categories of Textual Meanings in Jokes

Category	**Description**
Bisociation	The simultaneous construction of multiple meanings attributed to one text.
Reinterpretation	Constructing a change of meaning within the text.
Asymmetrical Comparison	Constructing equivalence or comparability of ideationally dissonant concepts within the text.
Contradiction	Constructing contradictory propositions within the text.
Performative Reinforcement	Language/behaviour within the text which reinforces/performs what is proposed by the text.

5.3.2-5.3.6 discusses the categories with example analysis to illustrate how each type of textual meaning was constructed within the joke data.

5.3.2 Bisociation

Bisociation is defined as the simultaneous construction of multiple meanings attributed to one text. Texts have the power to construct multiple potential meanings for the same linguistic form (Redfern, 1984; Jeffries, 2014a), particularly in the case of lexical items with shared sense relations such as homonymy and homophony, but bisociation specifically occurs when multiple meanings are simultaneously evoked in one text, with no way to disambiguate which sense is the intended meaning. The term bisociation was taken from Koestler's (1989) label of the simultaneous assertion of two different meanings, as the jokes in this category appeared to match this description. Bisociation is always constructed around a locus (Nash, 1985), which is the point in the text which is simultaneously compatible with multiple meanings, and this resulting ambiguity entails that bisociation is a flout of the Gricean (1975) maxim of manner at an interpersonal level.

I found that jokes containing bisociation were always puns. Puns are defined by Redfern as meaning constructions with two or more levels 'in some kind of co-existence, sequence, alteration or tension' (Redfern, 1984: 23), and according to Attardo, puns occur when 'at the end of the disambiguation process, the hearer is confronted with the fact of having two senses for the same text' and 'that the two senses are supposed to co-exist' (Attardo, 1994; 131). Brone separates puns from other jokes due to them constructing the 'simultaneous activation of multiple meanings' (Brone, 2017: 254), and my categorisation of joke texts supports this. 18 of the 80 examples analysed contained textually constructed bisociation only, with a

further 16 containing bisociation along with other shifts. A prototypical example of bisociation is analysed below (ex. 50), using TCF analysis to illustrate how this textual meaning is constructed.

Example 50

"My cat is recovering from a massive stroke."

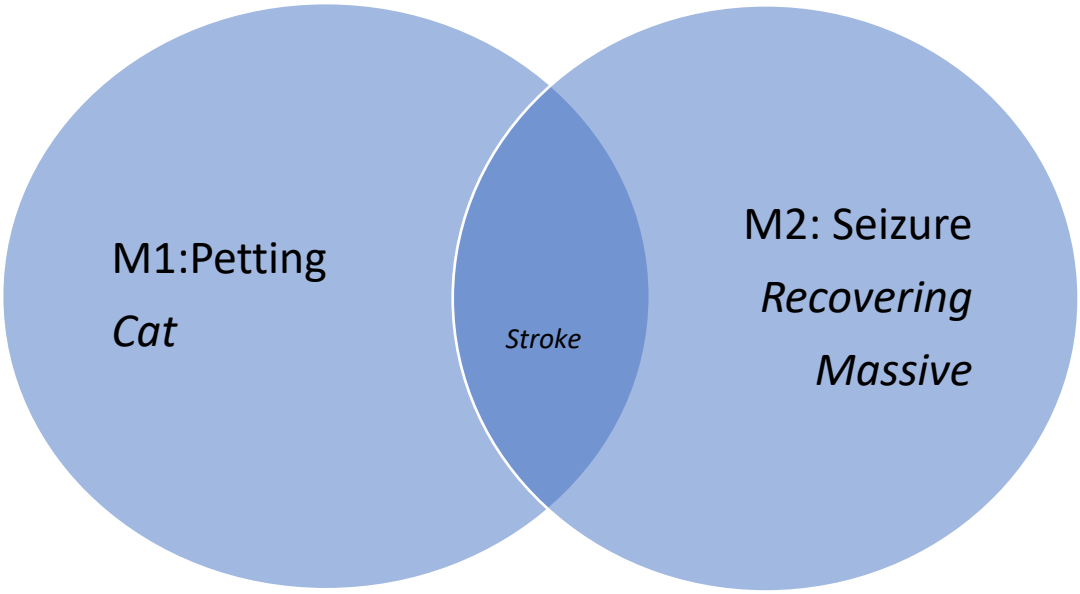
This joke is a homonymic pun on the word ‘stroke’, which presents two possible meaning interpretations:

Meaning 1) My cat is recovering from [being petted too vigorously]

Meaning 2) My cat is recovering from [a serious medical seizure]

Both M1 & M2 are constructed in the text, with ‘stroke’ acting as the locus point (Nash, 1985) for a bisociative meaning, as it is simultaneously compatible with both meanings and cannot be disambiguated (see fig. 7):

Figure 7 Bisociation in Cat/Stroke Joke



Cursino-Guimaraes (2014) also uses venn diagrams (such as fig 7) to model bisociation in humour, although he argues that bisociation is omnipresent in jokes, which is contradicted by my own findings that bisociation is only constructed in puns. TCF analysis is presented below to show how bisociation is constructed within this text.

Naming & Describing

The noun choice of ‘stroke’ as a locus is imperative to constructing bisociation in this text, as it is a homonym used to trigger both possible meanings (M1 & M2). An alternative noun choice such as ‘pet/fuss’ for M1, or ‘seizure/attack’ for M2, would disambiguate the noun’s intended sense and remove the bisociative shift. The other aspects of the text can be split into triggering either M1 or M2.

The pre-modifier ‘massive’ suggests M2, as it indicates a gradable severity or seriousness which is not applicable to evaluate the process of ‘stroking’ a pet, and conversely an alternative adjective such as ‘firm’ or ‘hard’ may have indicated M1. The chosen subject noun ‘cat’ is what legitimises the activation of M1: an alternative animal which didn’t have ‘can be stroked’ as a prototypical defining feature, such as a snake, may minimise the activation of this meaning, and a human subject would almost certainly have indicated M2 with no alternatives. M1 also necessitates a nominalisation of the process ‘to stroke’ in order to be understood, which is a more ambiguous description than presenting it as a main verb, whereas the medical reference of M2 usually describes strokes using a noun phrase.

Representing States/Actions/Events

The main verb in this text is ‘recovering’, and 5.2.3 highlighted how this verb phrase can be difficult to categorise in terms of transitivity. Regardless of the transitivity type in this joke, ‘recovering’ is most often associated with M2, as the process of stroking a pet triggered by M1 is a positive action which does not require recovery. This is further emphasised through use of the present tense with progressive aspect, which suggests that the recovery is an ongoing, possibly lengthy, process which would not be expected from M1. The actor of the process conflicts with this interpretation of M2 because it is a cat. This results in a conflicting representation of actions in the text, with the actor of the process indicating M1, but the process itself indicating M2.

Implying & Assuming

The change of state verb ‘recovering’ presupposes that whatever the cat is recovering from took place at some point in the past and had a negative effect, which is most likely indicative of M2, but could plausibly describe either scenario in this text. This ambiguity is therefore flouting the maxim of manner, as I identified to be the case in all bisociative shifts (6.1).

The resulting effect of these textual choices is a constructed textually constructed meaning which pivots between the two possible senses of ‘stroke’, with no ability to arrive at a single preferred interpretation: this pivoting describes the dynamic shift of bisociation.

5.3.3 Reinterpretation

Reinterpretation is defined as a constructed change of meaning within the text.

This can be constructed through semantic transformations such as narrowing/widening, or amelioration/pejoration, or by attributing a new meaning to a word or phrase. Reinterpretation can also occur at the ideational and interpersonal levels of language, through constructing shifts in world view, or altering the perceived meaning of gestures and behaviours. Whilst these changes can occur in a non-humorous way over time, the meaning category of reinterpretation is defined here as a swift and temporary change within the text which results in a foregrounded meaning, such as in the example (51) below:

Example 51

> *Joan Rivers got exactly what she wanted from that final surgery – <u>to stop ageing</u>. Finally she nailed it.*

The above joke relies on a constructed reinterpretation of the phrase 'to stop ageing', which is used in this context as a euphemism for the death of Joan Rivers.

Naming & Describing

Referring to comedian Joan Rivers as the subject of the sentence triggers ideational knowledge of the celebrity, whose use of plastic surgery to retain an appearance of youthfulness has been well documented by the media (Sydney Morning Herald, 2014). This triggering of external knowledge through a text is known as thematic intertextuality (Chun, 2019: 202). Describing the procedure that led to death as 'surgery' also helps to trigger the mental schema of plastic surgery, in a way that a more specifically medical noun choice such as 'endoscopy' would have excluded.

Representing Actions/Events/States

The action represented in this text is the death of Joan Rivers, but the text deviates from the conventional transitivity construction of death as a material action supervention – as in ‘she died’ - which happens to the actor without their consent or control. Instead, agency is implied through material action intentional verb choices in ‘to stop ageing’ and ‘she nailed it’. This is reinforced through the relational possessive ‘got’, suggesting Rivers somehow gained something from her death, which is foregrounded as her death was unintentional. The description of death as ‘to stop ageing’ is also foregrounded as it is an impossible action – ageing is an unstoppable process.

Equating and Contrasting

There are no explicit triggers of equivalence or opposition in this example, however there is an aspect of semantic opposition ‘Young/Old’ implied through the references to ageing. The text equates these opposites through a constructed reinterpretation of ‘to stop ageing’ – the phrase is framed as a desirable retention of youthfulness, but actually refers to death, which is the final (and arguably undesirable) part of the ageing process for Joan Rivers.

Prioritizing

Packaging propositions into a subordinate object noun phrase ‘exactly what she wanted from that final surgery – to stop ageing’ makes them undeniable statements which must be accepted to process the textual meaning, despite the ideationally

foregrounded assertion that Joan Rivers death was either a halting of the ageing process or a desirable outcome.

Implying and Assuming

Multiple use of the adverb ‘final[ly]’ presupposes that Rivers has been trying to stop the ageing process through surgery for some time, and this interpretation is supplemented by ideational knowledge of her character. In addition to this, referring to death in a euphemistic fashion ‘to stop ageing’ and ‘that final surgery’ is ambiguous and unclear, and therefore a flout of manner, which forces a search for a reinterpretation of the phrases.

Negating

‘Stop’ negates the process of ageing, which is foregrounded in reference to death, as this is paradoxical – death is the final part in the ageing process, rather than a negating of the process.

Hypothesising

Use of the boloumaic modal verb ‘wanted’ suggests that what happened to Rivers (death) was a desirable outcome for her, which is foregrounded through deviation as her death was accidental.

Representing Others’ Speech & Thoughts

Asserting that Rivers wanted to stop ageing is a narrator's representation of her thought, which implies an omniscient insight into her desires on the part of the narrator.

Representing Time, Space and Society

Use of the deictic demonstrative pronoun 'that' suggests that the surgery occurred in the past and is a matter of common knowledge, and also marks it as a specific surgery which stands out from the others that Joan Rivers received.

The result of these choices is to construct two foregrounded reinterpretations in the text. The process 'to stop ageing' undergoes a pejorative shift, from describing a desirable aesthetic youthful quality to the negative outcome of death. This type of semantic transformation could be indicative of the 'downward shift' in humour proposed by Aharoni (2018) and Kant (1951) (explored in 5.4.1). The second foregrounded meaning is a re-evaluation of Joan Rivers death as a positive and desirable outcome for her, which deviates from the naturalised ideology that death is a negative outcome.

Reinterpretations of behaviour can also be constructed in jokes, illustrated through a more brief analysis of the example [52] below:

Example 52

"Dogs don't love you. They're just glad they don't live in China."

It is a naturalised assumption in Western cultures that dogs are loving, loyal creatures, and through negating this proposition the text becomes ideationally foregrounded. This text proposes that the behaviour of dogs, which appears to be loving, can be attributed to an expression of relief that ‘they don’t live in China’, alluding to the stereotype that dogs are eaten in China. This results in a foregrounded textually constructed meaning that the behaviour of dogs can be reinterpreted as relief, rather than love.

5.3.4 Asymmetrical Comparison

Asymmetrical Comparison is defined as the constructed equivalence or comparability of ideationally dissonant concepts within the text. This type of meaning is always foregrounded at the ideational level of language, as it is impossible to label what is ‘asymmetrical’ without referencing cognition and value judgement. The category relies on the assumption made by cognitive script/schema based theories (3.1.3) that conceptual knowledge is stored in terms of relationships, with some concepts being recognised as similar and others being categorised as ‘strikingly unrelated in existing understanding’ (Stockwell, 2002: 32).

Constructing an asymmetrical comparison is similar to the process of source/domain mapping in metaphor construction (discussed in 2.2.4), however, comparisons in the source and target domains of non-humorous metaphors are justified as equals in the basis of the text world: the proposed equivalence between ‘Juliet’ and ‘The Sun’ (ex. 4) conveys that to Romeo’s character, these two concepts are equally radiant, or at the centre of his world, which is in line with ideational knowledge built throughout

reading the text. The difference which I found in humorous comparisons constructed within the joke data was the maintained perception of cognitive dissonance between the equated items, which I have labelled 'asymmetry'. The proposed equivalence within the text clashes with naturalised ideational assumptions, such as in the example (53) below:

Example 53

> *'Jesus fed 5000 people with five loaves and two fishes. That's not a miracle. That's tapas.'*

Here, the text proposes equivalence between the feeding of the five thousand and tapas, and this combination of concepts results in 'one taking on the characteristics of the other' (Stockwell, 2002: 32), beyond what is asserted in the text. The text constructs a meaning whereby the concept of miracles - assumed to be unusual, revered religious experiences - takes on the connotational features of tapas, which is assumed to be an easily accessible aspect of everyday life, mitigating the importance and status of miracles in a way which is foregrounded.

An example of a joke text (54) which constructs an asymmetrical comparison is now analysed below:

Example 54

> *'Miley Cyrus. You know when she was born? 1992. I've got condiments in my cupboard older than that.'*

The asymmetry in this joke is the comparison of the age of Miley Cyrus to the age of condiments in the speaker's cupboard.

Naming & Describing

Miley Cyrus is a celebrity who first attained success as a child star, so youth is a key component of the ideational knowledge triggered by this noun choice, and is further emphasised by including the year ‘1992’ and the comparative adjective ‘older’. The noun choice of ‘condiments’ by contrast seems archaic & formal, clashing with the theme of youth and thus becoming foregrounded through internal deviation.

Equating & Contrasting

The comparison is constructed in the text using the comparative adjectival phrase ‘older than’, and results in triggering the conventional gradable opposition ‘Young/Old’. This use of gradable opposition is unconventional in the text, however, because the age comparison is between a person and a condiment, rather than two people. Foodstuffs are not generally thought of as experiencing the ageing process, or lasting for long periods of time, due to their limited shelf life for safe consumption.

Implying and Assuming

The reference to a condiment in the discussion of a persons’ age flouts the maxim of relevance, as it is an overly specific focus on a seemingly irrelevant object. Instead of comparing Miley’s age with her own, the speaker compares it with the length of time she has had condiments in her cupboard. The implication of this flout is that, if the speaker has had items in her cupboard prior to 1992, then she must be older than these items, and have been an adult responsible for the shopping when they were purchased. This implies that the speaker is *considerably* older than Miley

Cyrus, but in reality she is only 9 years older, so this is a flout of quality which constructs a vastly exaggeration of the age gap between the two women.

Representing Time, Space & Society

Older than, was born and 1992 are all examples of temporal deictic markers which reinforce the text's thematic focus on age.

The TCFs above construct a meaning which both highlights and exaggerates the actual age gap between the speaker and Miley Cyrus. This is an example of self-deprecating humour, as the speaker is inviting the audience to find humour in her age, but I argue that the ideationally foregrounded asymmetrical element of the comparison between 'person' and 'condiment' is crucial to constructing the humour in this example, as the statement 'Miley Cyrus was born in 1992. I am older than that.' conveys the same propositional content, but without the resulting humour.

5.3.5 Contradiction

Contradiction is defined as the construction of contradictory propositions within the text. Here I wish to make the distinction between my own proposed definition of 'contradiction' within the conceptual categories of textually constructed meaning, and what a contradiction refers to in general language use. Contradictions are common in everyday life; a person may change their mind and/or behaviour over time, and this can be evident in their language use. Contradictory meanings identified in joke

analysis were found to be textually constructed in the same text at, the same time, by the same speaker.

Jokes in this category appear to be examples of irony, supporting Simpson's definition of ironic humour as 'the perception of a conceptual paradox' (Simpson 2011: 39), and Jeffries (2018), which defines ironic texts as containing a mismatch between what is said and what is meant. This mismatch can be within or between any of the linguistic, ideational and interpersonal levels of meaning, as well as a fourth level of 'situational' irony (see 9.2). Below is an example analysis of a joke (55) which contains the textually constructed meaning relationship of contradiction:

Example 55

"Abortion wasn't legalised in Ireland until 3075"

The constructed meaning in this text is that abortion in Ireland has been legalised, but at a date over 1000 years in the future, and the simultaneous assertion of these propositions is contradictory because it is logically impossible.

Naming & Describing

Use of the noun 'abortion' in the joke text is foregrounded initially due to its taboo nature, and combined with 'Ireland' activates the naturalised knowledge of Ireland's extremely strict abortion laws, which prohibited terminations in almost all circumstances at the time the joke was produced.

Representing Actions/States/Events

The represented process of legalising abortion in Ireland is foregrounded in the sense that it is an impossible proposition, due to the contradictory tenses used to represent the process, but conjugation is a form of deixis, discussed under the heading of ‘Representing Time, Space & Society’ (below). This shows that although they are separated, elements of TCFs intertwine and overlap in textual meaning analysis.

Implying and Assuming

The change of state verb ‘legalised’ presupposes that abortion was once illegal in Ireland, and entails that it is no longer illegal. The adverb of entailment ‘until’ also suggests that this legalisation has already taken place in the past, which clashes when presented with the future date of ‘3075’. This text therefore flouts the maxims of manner and quality: the joke example is taken from 2015, which was before the 2018 ‘Health (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) Act 2018’ legalising abortion was passed in Ireland, so the proposed meaning could not be true. This flout of quality could have been expressed simply by stating ‘abortion is legal in Ireland’, but as this removes the contradiction constructed within the text it ceases to be a humorous clash.

Representing Time, Space & Society

The temporal deixis in this text is contradictory, through the use of clashing tense makers. The past tense verb conjugations ‘wasn’t’ and ‘legalised’ mean that legalisation took place in the past, but the date of ‘3075’ is located in a future time, and therefore incompatible with the rest of the sentence. The selected date of ‘3075’

is also integral to the constructed textual meaning, as positioning the legalisation so far in the future constructs an imperceptibly huge temporal distance which indicates the view that legalising abortion in Ireland in the near future is an unachievable goal.

The contradictions in the example above were both linguistic and ideational, but the example below (56) constructs an interpersonal contradiction:

Example 56

If I could take just one thing to a desert island I probably wouldn't go.

This joke begins by imagining a hypothetical scenario of being stranded on a desert island, and the naturalised assumption is that this conditional structure will reveal what item the speaker would take in this imaginary situation. This is a performative utterance (see 5.3.6 for a discussion of performativity), as by saying 'if I could take one thing to a desert island' the speaker is partaking in the hypothetical scenario. However, by subsequently stating they 'wouldn't go' as a response, they are refusing to partake in the essential premise of a hypothetical world in which they go to the island, contradicting the purpose of the utterance. This contradiction is therefore an example of irony achieved through 'interpersonal vs situational' incongruity (Jeffries, 2018). The assertion is a contradiction of the performative utterance, and this paradox results in humour. In addition to its use as a means of contradiction, performativity was also found to reinforce meaning in some joke examples, and this is discussed below.

5.3.6 Performative Reinforcement

The final identified category of performative reinforcement is defined as the construction of language/behaviour within the text which reinforces/performs what is proposed by the text. Performativity (Austin et al, 1963) is a pragmatic concept to describe language which performs an action, and contrasts with 'constative' language, which conveys information. According to Robinson, in a performative utterance 'it is the words themselves that perform the action. The action is verbal' (Robinson, 2003: 23). Performativity can be explicit, such as 'I declare' or 'I sentence' which perform the actions of declaring and sentencing, or implicit, for example 'I'm sorry' which performs the act of apologising.

According to Zwagerman (2010), performativity in humour has largely been ignored compared to other types of performative utterances. Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) refer to humour as a parasitic type of discourse which is neither true nor formal, and use this as a justification for the exclusion of humour from their research. This labelling of humour as a parasite describes how jokes and witticisms occupy a blurry realm between fiction and non-fiction, but Zwagerman (2010) says that the exclusion of humour from performativity studies on this basis is not justified, particularly in the case of jokes: 'it is wrong to say that joke-telling is not performative speech…the comedian has committed to perform in the capacity of a comedian, and the performance fulfils that promise.' (Zwagerman, 2010: 28). I disagree with Zwagerman's (2010) assertion that all jokes are performative in this sense, as classifying all comedy performances as performative does not account for how the humour is constructed in particular joke texts, or determine any elements in the text which are performative beyond the general aims of performing 'as a comedian', but I

still found interesting aspects of performativity being used within some of the joke texts which I analysed.

Performative Reinforcement is identified in my research as a specific type of performativity which was found in three joke texts, constructed when a presented textual element performs another aspect of the texts meaning, and therefore reinforces it. In other words, it is the textual meaning itself which is reinforced through the performativity, such as in the example (57) below:

Example 57

> *'There are very few people at the Fringe these days doing Roman Numeral jokes. I is one.'*

The clause 'I is one' is a bisociative pun which simultaneously constructs both constative and performative meanings in this text, firstly by asserting that the speaker is one of the people at the Fringe doing Roman numeral jokes, and then making this assertion true by the text itself being a performance of a Roman numeral joke. TCF analysis (below) shows the aspects of the text (57) which construct this performative reinforcement.

Naming & Describing

The noun choice of 'Roman Numeral Jokes' primes thematic ideational knowledge of Roman numerals, in order to trigger this meaning when combined with 'I/One'.

Representing Actions, Events and States

The verb phrase ‘I is one’ is initially presumed to be a circumstantial relational verb which states that the speaker is one of the people doing roman numeral jokes, however the correct conjugation of copula ‘to be’ for the first-person singular pronoun would be ‘I am one’, so use of ‘is’ in this context is foregrounded. Relational verb ‘is’ usually attaches with third-person pronouns, so triggers a second possible meaning where the verb acts as a relational intensive description of what ‘I’ represents in Roman numerals.

Equating and Contrasting

Use of the equating trigger ‘X is Y’ asserts a relationship of equivalence between ‘I’ and ‘One’, and in Roman numerals this is the case, as one is signified by I.

Prioritising

The first sentence uses a dummy subject ‘there are’, which enables the anaphoric referencing in sentence two, so that ‘I is one’ is understood to refer back to the object noun clause of sentence one. This anaphora signifies that the speaker is one of the ‘few people at the fringe these days doing roman numeral jokes.’

Implying and Assuming

Arguably, there is a flout of quantity in the anaphoric reference ‘I is one’, as it is missing the clarifying prepositional phrase ‘of them’ which would disambiguate the text’s intended meaning and thus nullify the performative alternative meaning. This lack of clarity also flouts of the maxim of manner.

The result of these choices is a textually constructed meaning which performs a Roman numeral joke through asserting that the speaker is a performer of Roman numeral jokes.

It is difficult to make generalisations about this category as it was only found in three joke examples, highlighting the need for further expansion and testing of the framework (see 5.5 & 10).

5.3.7 Results of Classification

The table below shows the frequency at which each textual meaning category was identified in the data:

Table 18 Frequency of Occurrences in Constructed Meaning Categories Using an 80-joke Sample

Category	**Number of Examples**
Bisociation	37
Reinterpretation	46
Asymmetrical Comparison	36
Contradiction	14
Performative Reinforcement	3
Difficult to Classify	2

5.3.1 stated that I took a polythetic approach to categorisation, so where jokes appeared to construct more than one of these meaning types they were coded in

each relevant category, resulting in the identification of 135 tokens in total. 57 out of the 80 examples analysed were coded into multiple categories: Some categories were more commonly occurring than others, with Contradiction and Performative Reinforcement in particular being the least identified in this sample: testing a larger data sample will examine whether this is specific to this set of data or reflective of jokes more generally.

Two examples were difficult to categorise as containing a textually constructed meaning shift, and the reasons for this are discussed with example analysis (below).

Example 58

> *'I've got nothing against teachers now. I've got friends that went to schools that were full of teachers.'*

Example 59

> *'You have to be careful in my country because we have bad cars and good wine, a dangerous combination.'*

Both of these jokes (ex. 58 & 59) utilise textual triggers of asymmetrical comparison through the TCF equating and opposing, so the temptation would be to categorise them accordingly, however it was unclear whether that best described the constructed foregrounded meanings in the text. This highlights the importance of conducting qualitative textual analysis, rather than taking a feature spotting quantitative approach to categorisation.

Joke (58) uses lexical and syntactic parallelism using the structure ‘I’ve got X/Y’ which indicates a relationship of equivalence between the object noun position of both sentences:

I’ve	*got*	*X [nothing against teachers now]*
I’ve	*got*	*Y [friends that went to schools that were full of teachers]*

This constructs the assumption that the reason for the improved feeling towards X ‘teachers’ is the ‘friends’ in position Y, however this is foregrounded because in Y ‘teachers’ and ‘friends’ are separated by three levels of subordination. This means that the speaker changed their opinion of teachers on the basis that they are friends with some people who happened to have been around teachers at some time in the past, which is an example of what Attardo (1991) would term ‘faulty logic/reasoning’. Arguably, the text constructs equivalence through this foregrounded construction of causality, but this does not force an ideational re-evaluation in the same way that equating miracles with tapas does in a relationship of asymmetrical comparison (5.3.4). It could also be a reinterpretation, in the sense that the expected reason for the speaker’s opinion change is that they have friends who are teachers, rather than friends who used to know teachers, but this reinterpretation relies on deviation from expectations which are not established in the text. For this reason I was not certain enough to code this joke example in either category of textually constructed meaning.

Example (59) was particularly difficult to classify because it did not appear to construct any kind of foregrounded meaning, even outside of the five category types.

There is a constructed relationship in the text between ‘bad cars and good wine’, which are described as ‘a dangerous combination’: this potentially forces a pejorative reinterpretation of ‘good wine’ by characterising it as a dangerous thing to be wary of, rather than something to be enjoyed, but the joke’s implied meaning is an observation which reinforces the naturalised assumption that drink driving is dangerous, so is not a reinterpretative meaning. The reliance on stereotypes in this joke may account for the difficulty, as Yus (2017) found that jokes reliant on stereotypes were difficult to classify in terms of an incongruity. I argue that this is because stereotypes rely on the maintenance of established ideologies, whereas foregrounding means that deviation from naturalised assumptions is essential – this will be revisited in 11.3.3.

The difficulties in classifying these examples does not necessarily contradict my proposed categorisation of these five textually constructed meanings in jokes, as some features of reinterpretation and asymmetrical comparison were still identified in the texts. In line with Rosch’s approach to categorisation (5.3.1), some category members are deemed to be more prototypical that others, so examples 58 & 59 could be non-prototypical examples which can be argued to belong to the categories in some way. Analysis of a larger sample will help to determine whether this is the case. According to Glaser & Strauss, when developing a theory or framework from the bottom up, the ‘job is not to provide a perfect description of an area, but to develop a theory that accounts for much of the relevant behavior’ (Glaser & Strauss, 1967: 30), and these five categories fulfil that role. The next step in theory building is to discuss what links these categories together, and this is explored in 5.4 (below).

5.4 Theory Construction: Textually Constructed Meaning Shifts in Jokes

This section will present the core concept of a textually constructed meaning shift (5.4.1), discussing how this links the five proposed categories of joke meaning identified in the focussed investigation above. I will evaluate the proposed theory in terms of its relationship to existing concepts in humour research (5.4.2), and present the next steps for testing the newly constructed theory of 'Textually Constructed Meaning Shifts in Jokes'.

5.4.1 Introducing Textually Constructed Meaning Shifts

Analysis of the joke texts led to the introduction of five categories of textually constructed meaning: Bisociation, Reinterpretation, Asymmetrical Comparison, Contradiction and Performative Reinforcement (see table 18 above). The next step in theory construction is to 'identify a core category, phenomenon, or ongoing process that ties together the conceptual categories' (Hadley, 2019: 268), so my aim was to identify a linking factor or concept which could describe all five categories at a more abstract level. The key elements throughout these five categories are foregrounded meaning relationships which are constructed within the text, and these relationships involve a kind of conceptual dynamic processing (which will be modelled in chapters 6-11): for example bisociation pivots between meanings, and asymmetrical comparison rebalances meaning relationships. The term I have chosen to describe these dynamic categories is a 'Textually Constructed Meaning Shift'.

A shift is an element of semantic change, with Chun stating that 'thematic content takes on different meanings from a shift' (Chun, 2019: 202), but meaning change is not restricted to jokes. Taylor writes that:

> Semantic change typically involves a shift in the relative frequency and relative salience of different readings. What might start out as a one-off, context-dependent extension acquires, through time, and with repeated use, the status of an established sense, perhaps even the prototypical sense, whereby the original sense(s) may get pushed to the periphery, and eventually fall into disuse.
>
> (Taylor, 2004: 164).

The constructed shift of meaning in the joke texts I analysed appears to be the 'one-off, context dependent kind', as it is a foregrounded meaning constructed in a single text, as opposed to a gradual diachronic change which is subsequently adopted into wider language use (and thus ceases to be foregrounded). Simpson et al (2019) state that humorous texts construct unconventional meaning relationships, saying that 'verbal play inheres in a mismatch between the conventional meanings of speech and the suggested meaning that those utterances have in a particular context' (Simpson et al 2019: 29). Labelling this as a 'mismatch' also supports my argument that these textually constructed relationships are incongruous, and therefore foregrounded.

I selected the term 'meaning shift' rather than 'meaning change', as I feel it more accurately captures the range of dynamic foregrounded relationships constructed in joke texts: example analysis (5.3) has shown that reinterpretation and contradiction

involve an explicit meaning change, but bisociation and asymmetrical comparison force a shift in the conceptual positioning of meaning relationships, rather than transforming the meanings themselves, and performative reinforcement involves a performative aspect which pushes in the same direction as the proposed textual meaning.

5.4.2 Context and Evaluation

An important part of the theory development process is to acknowledge existing research and use this to contextualise the proposed new theory (Hadley, 2019), so this section will discuss how the theory of Textually Constructed Meaning Shifts in jokes incorporates other humour research.

Firstly, the idea that humour comes from a 'shift' has been previously noted by Aharoni (2018), who argues that incongruity alone cannot account for humour, and that a meaning shift or change of some kind takes place. Aharoni then attributes a hierarchy to these shifts and says the meaning shift in humour must be 'downwards', concurring with philosopher Kant (1951), who also theorised that humour was a shift from high to low - although this perceived directionality remains undefined, and lacks applicable grounding in linguistics. Potential labelling of directionality in shifts is therefore not considered to be a part of my proposed framework, though it offers the potential to form part of a future discussion of humour's ideological effects (12.3.3). Aharoni (2018) introduces the notion of humorous shifts, but says there is much further to be researched from this point of view:

> Should we pursue this direction further, and look for shifts of weight in other types of humour as well? It may be worth trying. A very preliminary step in this direction is taken in the paper itself, in the form of sporadic examples of jokes following this pattern. […] Whether this is indeed the case, it is safer to withhold judgement. The aim of this paper is not to offer a general theory of humour, but to present a direction and stimulate discussion.

(Aharoni, 2018: 27)

This provides rationale for pursuing my own framework with a basis of textually constructed meaning shifts, grounding Aharoni's philosophical perspectives on humour with textual analysis to justify how shifts are identified.

The proposal of these five shifts is an original contribution which resulted from my own joke analysis, but I have incorporated some elements of established humour theory into the categorisation framework: bisociation and reinterpretation are adopted from the incongruity resolution approaches to humour (discussed in 2.2.4), and asymmetrical comparison also supports the IR theories' claims that humour relies on a kind of perceived clash or mismatch. The concepts of asymmetry and contradiction are also evocative of the SSTH principle that opposition is an important part of humour. Both Davies (2012; 2013) and Gold & McIntyre (2019) built categorisation frameworks which incorporated elements of established work in their field of study, and taking this approach ensures that the framework is constructed with an awareness of academic context, and does not ignore the contribution to knowledge which has been made by others. Hashemi (2019: 41) says mixed methods research can help to interconnect relevant theories, which is in line with my

first research aim (1.1.2) to provide a more joined-up approach for joke analysis. The framework also includes some other elements, such as performativity (5.3.6), which have been hitherto ignored in humour research (Zwagerman, 2010), allowing me to address those jokes which could not be explained through existing approaches to humour analysis.

Incorporating principles from both stylistics and humour research is an interdisciplinary approach, which Pun (2019: 108) defends for their ability to draw on and integrate existing research in order to seek new knowledge. Applying Jeffries' analytical framework of textual meaning (5.2) to jokes is also a novel application of TCF analysis, and I have shown how this holistic approach to analysis can illustrate how meaning shifts are constructed in joke texts and justify their categorisation. Identifying these patterns of shift in the textual meaning of jokes is a positive step towards my aim of providing a stylistic theory of humour, and the fact that they are constructed temporarily within the joke text supports my argument that humour in jokes is a textually constructed phenomenon, rather than being inherent in either form or function as other work has suggested. I have shown how disconnected aspects of humour research can be joined up through the use of a stylistic, text-based approach, which fulfils my first research aim of providing a more unified framework for joke analysis (1.1.2), and also addresses the need for a stylistic approach that Simpson et al (2019) argue is absent in humour studies.

5.4.3 Conclusions and Next Steps

The first stage of research which I have presented above (5.1-5.4) has successfully identified five categories of textually constructed meaning shifts which can account for humorous meaning construction in almost all of the analysed joke examples, but developing a new theory or framework requires several stages of testing and analysis (Hadley, 2019). A sample of 80 jokes is not enough data to draw theoretical conclusions from, and any patterns identified in terms of textual meaning could be unique to this data set, so the next step is to expand my analysis of textually constructed meaning shifts to a larger sample of jokes. This is a measure of the framework's 'transferability', which Miyahara (2019: 57) describes as checking whether findings can be generalised in different contexts, and an essential part of qualitative linguistic research. The remainder of this chapter will detail the second stage of testing a larger sample for Textually Constructed Meaning Shifts in Jokes (TCMSJ).

5.5 Testing for Textually Constructed Meaning Shifts in Jokes

This section presents the methodological approach to the next stage in the process of developing my theory of Textually Constructed Meaning Shift in Jokes (TCMSJ), which is testing the initial findings from 5.3-5.4. I begin (5.5.1) by setting out the aims of this testing, and formulating two research questions. 5.5.2 introduces the data which was used, followed by details of how data was treated and coded (5.5.3).

5.5.1 Aims & Hypothesis

The primary purpose of testing the TCMSJ framework on a larger data sample is to support or contradict my proposal that jokes will contain at least one of the five

textually constructed meaning shifts introduced in 5.3. This analysis will determine whether the theory of textually constructed meaning shifts is transferable, and therefore generalisable (Miyahara, 2019) as a theory of jokes, or if the shift categories I identified are unique to the 80-joke sample (4.2.2). Testing from the top down on a larger sample of jokes also allows me to evaluate how the framework functions for the analysis of humour, and how easy it is to categorise jokes in terms of their constructed meaning shifts. More in-depth category descriptions can be provided, with details of prototypical triggers and resulting joke types within each shift: this refinement of the framework will improve its replicability, which is an essential part of a stylistic approach (Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010).

There were two research questions which needed to be answered in order to test the TCMSJ framework:

R1) Are textually constructed meaning shifts present within the data?

R2) If so, how are these shifts of meaning constructed within the text?

The remainder of 5.5 details the steps which were taken to answer these questions.

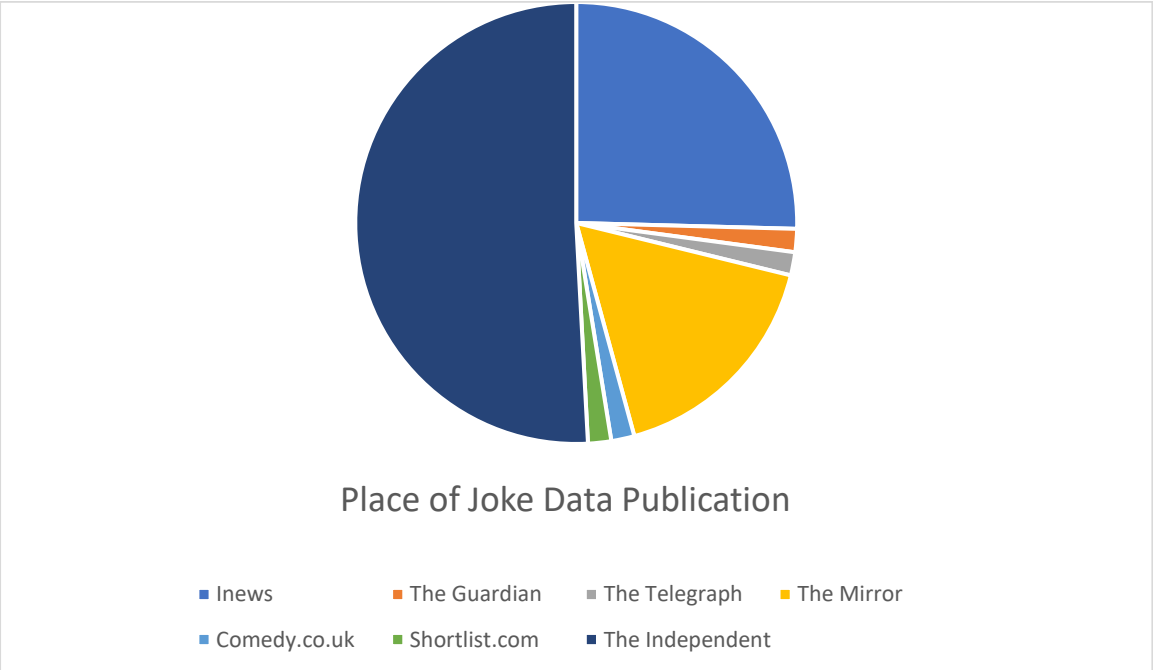
5.5.2 Data for Testing TCMSJ

For this research phase of theory testing, I chose to collect a larger sample of short jokes from real-world comedy performances, which were similar to the 80-joke sample introduced in 4.2.2. I therefore searched for more collections of 'The Best Jokes from the Edinburgh Fringe Festival', based on the rationale that these were a broadly representative range of intended, successful joking, and gathered as many

different joke examples as I could find. To find these collections, I used the search engine Google and the search term 'The Best Jokes from the Edinburgh Fringe Festival' followed by the required year, beginning with the 2019 festival[13], and working backwards in time to the year 2000. The earliest collection I found online was from 2004, and I believe this is due to the limited presence of online newspaper publishing before this time.

All the included articles were published by either a UK national news or entertainment website: the distribution across publications in the sample is detailed in the graph below (Fig. 8):

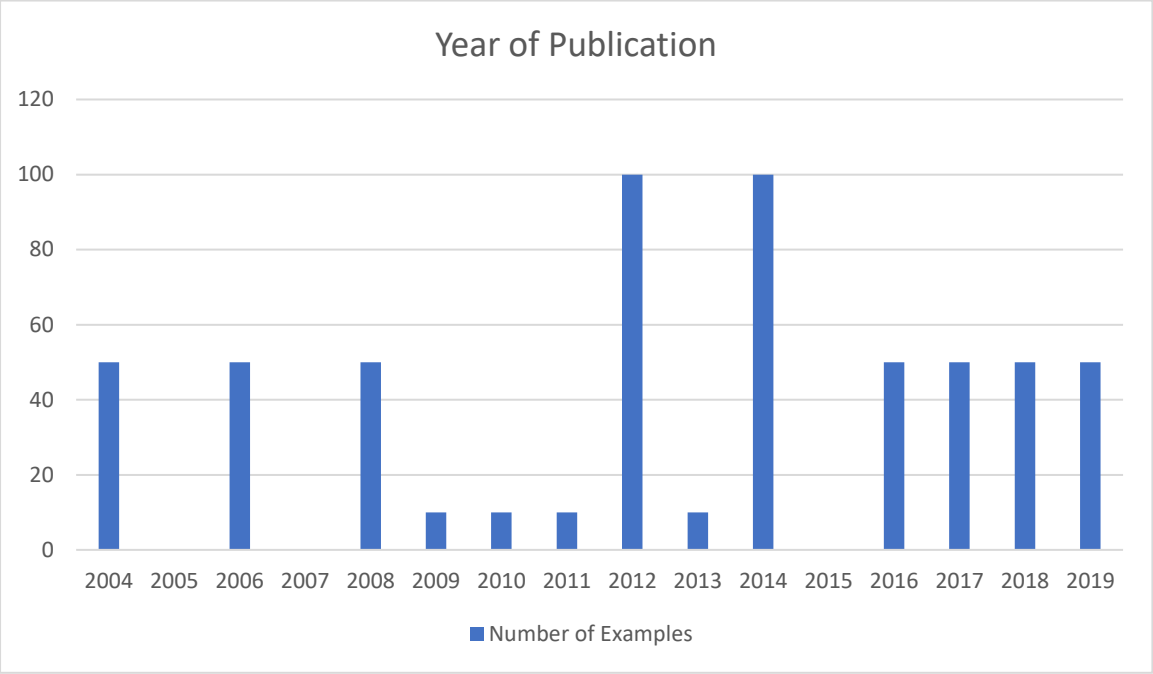
Figure 8 Place of Joke Data Publication



[13] 2019 was the most recent Edinburgh Festival at the time of data collection

Only one article was selected for each festival year, in order to minimise duplication of the same jokes being collected in the overall sample. Where more than one article was present for the same year, I selected the article which contained the largest number of joke examples, in order to gather the largest sample possible from the available sources. I collated thirteen different articles spanning the period from 2004-2019, with the exception of 2005 and 2007 as I could not find any ‘Best Jokes from the Edinburgh Fringe Festival’ articles available from these years. This sample also excluded the 80 jokes from the 2015 festival (4.2.2) as these were used to formulate the proposed categories, so their inclusion may bias the results by re-identifying the same shifts. The available joke collections varied in size, from the smallest being 10 jokes up to the largest containing 100 examples. Any duplicates of the same joke example from different years were removed so that the same joke could only be analysed once. This was in order to avoid false patterning in the data through finding the same phenomenon in multiple examples because they were textually identical, rather than it being indicative of a wider trend in joke texts. Figure 9 (below) shows the distribution of data across the year of publication:

Figure 9 Year of Joke Data Publication



Whilst an ideal sample would have equal representation across each year and source of publication to minimise extraneous variables, this is not always possible with real-world data sampling. As I was not investigating senses of humour or diachronic humour trends, I feel that the slightly uneven representation of places and dates of publication will have a negligible impact on the validity of my research - the most important criteria for inclusion is that the examples are all jokes, in order to be suitable for the purpose of testing a joke-based framework.

The resulting data set was a real-world sample of 565 jokes which were deemed to be ‘the best jokes from the Edinburgh Fringe Festival’ in the years 2004-2019 (Appendix 2).

5.5.3 Treatment of data

This section will detail the processes which were used for data analysis. As I am formulating a new framework, there was not a formal methodology to follow, and instead a combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis was used in order to build the framework.

I began by conducting qualitative textual analysis of each of the 565 jokes individually, using Jeffries TCF framework (5.2), to identify their textual meanings. The next step was to determine whether these meanings could be coded in terms of the five textually constructed meaning shift categories (5.3), which is a top-down or 'deductive' (McKinley, 2019: 6) approach. I annotated each joke example which was found to contain any of the five proposed meaning shifts, using checkboxes on an Excel spreadsheet to quantify which shifts were found in which jokes. Where jokes contained more than one shift, a tick was put in each box and they were classed as containing multiple shifts. Any jokes where a meaning shift could not be identified were placed in a 'difficult to classify' category (see 11.3). This coding provided quantitative results (see 5.6) of the frequency at which meaning shifts occurred throughout the sample of 565 jokes, in order to answer research question 1 'Are textually constructed meaning shifts present in jokes?'.

Qualitative textual analysis was also used to address research question 2:

'how are these meaning shifts constructed within a joke text?'

Proposing a new theory requires constant evolution of proposed concepts as the testing and theory building take place, and in the case of my own joke analysis this involved refining category descriptions and identifying the prototypical textual

features of each shift category. Once the jokes had been coded into categories, textual meaning analysis allowed me to examine whether there were prototypical markers of how/where a particular meaning shift was being constructed, and any resulting patterns of joke 'style' within each category group (see chapters 6-10). This approach was taken by Davies (2012; 2013) who constructed a typology of opposition types which was followed by qualitative analysis of the different ways each opposition type could occur in texts. Hashemi (2019: 43) supports this mixed-methods approach to theory construction, as quantitative results can assess the generalisability of a proposed theory, whilst qualitative research provides 'in-depth understandings of a particular context'.

5.6 Results and Discussion of Framework Testing

This section presents an answer to the research question (R1):

'Are textually constructed meaning shifts present in jokes?'

I will provide quantitative results (5.6.1) of the textually constructed meaning shifts identified in joke analysis, and discuss how these findings support my theory that jokes will contain at least one of the five textually constructed meaning shifts (5.6.2). I conclude that quantitative analysis is suitable for answering the first research question of whether meaning shifts are constructed in joke texts, but that qualitative descriptive analysis is necessary to illustrate how these shifts are constructed in a text (5.6.3).

5.6.1 Quantitative Results and Discussion

In this section, I will illustrate the frequency at which each type of textually constructed meaning shift occurred within the sample of 565 jokes. Analysis of a larger data set of jokes using a top-down approach (5.5.3) allowed me to test the premise that jokes will contain one of the five identified textually constructed meaning shifts, in order to determine whether this could be generalised as a theory of jokes. The results of this quantitative analysis are presented in the table (19) below:

Table 19 Frequency of Textually Constructed Meaning Shift occurrence in Jokes

Type of TCMSJ	**Number of Examples**
Bisociation	*299*
Reinterpretation	*315*
Asymmetrical Comparison	*194*
Contradiction	*30*
Performative Reinforcement	*23*
Difficult to Classify	*8*

The first important finding to note from these quantitative results is that a total of 861 textually constructed meaning shifts were identified across 565 joke texts, and only 8 joke examples (less than 2%) were difficult to classify using this category framework (see 11.3 for discussion of these examples). This supports my proposal that joke texts contain at least one of the five textually constructed meaning shifts.

The most commonly occurring shift was Reinterpretation, defined as ‘Constructing a change of meaning within the text’, which was present in 315 examples. This shift category is the one which is most closely linked to Incongruity-Resolution (IR) theories (2.2.4), where an initial interpretation of textual meaning is changed to a second alternative meaning, due to aspects of the text which are incompatible with the first interpretation. Reinterpretation occurred in more than half of the joke examples in my analysis (56%), which could account for the prevalence of incongruity-resolution theories as explanations of how humour is constructed. These results also illustrate, however, that reinterpretation was not present in *all* of the analysed jokes, with 250/565 which could not be explained in terms of a change from one meaning to another as proposed by IR theories. This supports my argument that incongruity-resolution theories are insufficient as a standalone approach for the analysis of humour.

Bisociation was also constructed in over half of the data (53%), where it was identified in 299 joke examples. The prevalence of bisociation in the analysis findings may be because the data sample is a compilation of short or one-liner jokes: in order to be reprinted in collections outside of their original context and co-text, joke texts must make sense as standalone examples. Puns are a type of humour which play on the language within the text, so can function without restrictions of context or co-text (Redfern, 1984) and jokes with a constructed meaning shift of bisociation were found to almost exclusively be puns (6.1). Analysis of other types of humour, as opposed to collections of short jokes, may yield different frequencies of shifts. Bisociation is often included under the umbrella of incongruity-resolution theories (see 2.2.4) which would mean 614 out of the 860 textually constructed meaning shifts identified were

examples of incongruity-resolution, further supporting their pervasiveness as a theory of humour. Conversely, I argue that bisociation is not a type of incongruity-resolution, as it relies on the maintenance of an incongruity in the form of an ambiguous locus point. As I will show (chapters 6-7) there is much similarity between bisociation and reinterpretation as defined by the TCMSJ, in that both shifts are constructed through encoding two or more different meanings within a single text. The key difference between the two shifts is found in the relationship between the joke's multiple constructed meanings. Reinterpretation relies on the construction of an initial presumed meaning, which is then discounted in favour of an alternative meaning constructed by the text. This settling on a second interpretation, which I have termed a textually constructed meaning shift of reinterpretation, is synonymous with the 'resolution' phase of incongruity-resolution theories. This resolution phase is absent in the shift of bisociation, which instead offers no way to disambiguate between the multiple proposed meanings, forcing both interpretations of the text to be accepted simultaneously. This lack of indication of preferred meaning is what separates bisociative shifts from reinterpretative ones.

Asymmetrical Comparisons were found to be constructed in 194 joke examples. This shows that just over a third of the jokes analysed (34%) were reliant on deviation at the ideational level of language, exploiting a shift in naturalised schematic knowledge. The different ways that elements of a joke text were judged to be asymmetrical are discussed in 8.3. Contradiction and Performative Reinforcement were constructed far less frequently than the other three kinds of shift, with each of these two categories accounting for less than 5% of shifts identified within the data. Nevertheless, I feel that their inclusion as shift categories in the TCMSJ framework is

justified, as I identified jokes in the data which constructed a humorous meaning solely through either performative reinforcement or contradiction. This indicates that the construction of either of these shifts is sufficient to result in a joke being realised. Instead, I argue that the scarcity of these types of shift compared to the other three categories reflects their status as particular pragmatic aspects of communication which would be equally rare in non-joking discourse.

Contradiction relies on the speaker asserting clashing propositions within the same utterance, specifically a clash of opposition at some level of meaning. The sense relation of antonymy offers less possibilities for linguistic choice than a broader relationship such as polysemy or asymmetry may offer when constructing a joking text. A shift of contradiction often results in the construction of irony (9.2), a type of humour which can be presented in many different ways and is not always suited to the format of one-liner joke examples. Analysis of a different data set, such as satirical panel shows ‘Mock the Week’ or ‘Have I got News for You’ may yield more examples which create humour through the constructed shift of contradiction. Performative reinforcement is a pragmatic phenomenon which occurs when the language used ‘performs’ the concept which is described by the text. Performativity is found infrequently in language use generally, so this is reflected in the lower frequency of performatively reinforced humorous utterances. My aim in developing a theoretical framework of jokes is not to only account for the most commonly constructed shifts of meaning in jokes, but to provide a comprehensive list of ways in which this humorous shift can be achieved, and this is the justification I used for the inclusion of contradiction and performative reinforcement in the TCMSJ framework.

5.6.2 Constructed Theory and Hypothesis

The quantitative testing of the category framework above has been shown to support the idea of a textually constructed meaning shift in jokes. On this basis, I propose the hypothesis that jokes will contain at least one of the following foregrounded textually constructed meaning shifts: Bisociation; Reinterpretation; Asymmetrical Comparison; Contradiction; Performative Reinforcement.

Providing a testable hypothesis is what constitutes a theory (Miyahara, 2019: 53), and is therefore the final step in a discovery process or grounded theory method of theory construction (5.1.3). The theoretical claim that jokes are achieved through textually constructed meaning shifts is built upon a descriptive framework to identify the shifts through textual analysis (modelled in chapter 11). Formulating a hypothesis also ensures the falsifiability of the TCMSJ theory, as it provides a claim which can be tested on other texts to either support or disprove the presence of meaning shifts in joke texts. To make it possible for others to replicate and falsify the TCMSJ hypothesis, I first need to provide clear refined category descriptions with example analysis, and these are presented in chapters 6-10.

5.6.3 Conclusions of Framework Testing

This section of quantitative analysis of the TCMSJ framework has supported my initial claims that jokes will contain a textually constructed meaning shift. These findings support the development of the TCMSJ framework as a tool for the descriptive analysis of jokes, and have allowed me to construct a joke theory with a testable a hypothesis. Quantitative analysis has also provided an overview of the

distribution of meaning shifts across the five categories, finding that the categories of bisociation, reinterpretation and asymmetrical comparison were the most prevalent amongst my data sample, but that all five shift categories were found to be present in the data. The discussion above suggests possible reasoning for some shifts occurring more frequently than others, and ultimately argues that all five proposed categories of textually constructed meaning shift are valid for inclusion in the framework. Further quantitative analysis using the TCMSJ framework on other data sets could yield different frequencies of each type of shift and begin to build a picture of how each shift creates varying styles of joke, though this is beyond the scope of my research in this thesis.

Beyond these findings, quantitative analysis does not offer much insight for the development of the TCMSJ framework. Quantitative analysis reveals *if* meaning shifts are constructed in jokes, but qualitative analysis can build a picture of *how* these shifts are constructed. Chapters 6-10 will present the findings of the qualitative portion of analysis by examining the textual patterning which was found to construct each shift type, in order to answer the research question (R2):

'how are meaning shifts constructed within joke texts?'

Qualitative analysis of the jokes in each category of meaning shift allowed me to provide refined category descriptions, including the textual choices which were identified to be prototypical triggers of each shift - some triggers are labelled as 'fixed', meaning they are essential to constructing a particular meaning shift, but there are also a range of triggers which were found to be optional as a means of shift

construction. The second element of category descriptions presented below (6-10) is an exploration of the meaning patterning within each category, so that sub-types of each shift can be identified, and will also highlight interesting patterns which were identified when multiple meaning shifts are combined. The identified triggers and types in each shift category will be explained through presenting example analysis of joke texts from both samples (4.2.2 & 5.1.2). This analysis will also consider the how the joke text is foregrounded in terms of ideational or ideological meanings, in order to show how the framework can account for why certain texts are perceived to be funny. This locates the TCMSJ framework in the context of both stylistics and humour theory, in line with my research aims (1.1.2).

This enables me to provide a refined framework for categorising textually constructed meaning shifts in jokes (chapter 11), concluding by presenting a model which illustrates how my proposed theory and framework of Textually Constructed Meaning Shifts in Jokes can function as a means of joke analysis.

Chapter 6: Bisociation

This chapter will discuss the shift of bisociation, which is defined as 'the simultaneous construction of multiple meanings attributed to one text'. The first phase of categorisation (5.3.2) found that bisociation was always constructed around

a locus in the text, and that this meaning construction always resulted in a flout of manner, concluding that jokes containing bisociation were always puns. I analysed the larger sample of jokes (5.5.2) to discover whether any other triggers of bisociation were present, and whether there were different types of bisociation which could be divided into sub-categories. The table (20) below details the prototypical triggers and types of bisociation which were found in my data analysis:

Table 20 Bisociation

Bisociation	
Category **Definition**	The simultaneous construction of multiple meanings attributed to one text
Textual Triggers	*Fixed Triggers* - Locus - Flout of manner (ambiguity)
	Optional Triggers n/a
Types	*Linguistic Bisociation* - Graphological - Morphological - Phonological - Lexico-Semantic - Referential - Grammatical/Syntactic

	Non-Linguistic Bisociation - Ideational - Situational

Bisociation was found to be constructed through the use of the two fixed triggers (6.1) which had previously been identified in 5.3.2, and the resulting bisociation types were either linguistic (6.2) or non-linguistic (6.3). I will illustrate this through textual analysis below.

6.1. Textual Triggers of Bisociation

There were two triggers which were found to construct bisociation in my data sample:

- A Flout of Manner
- A Locus

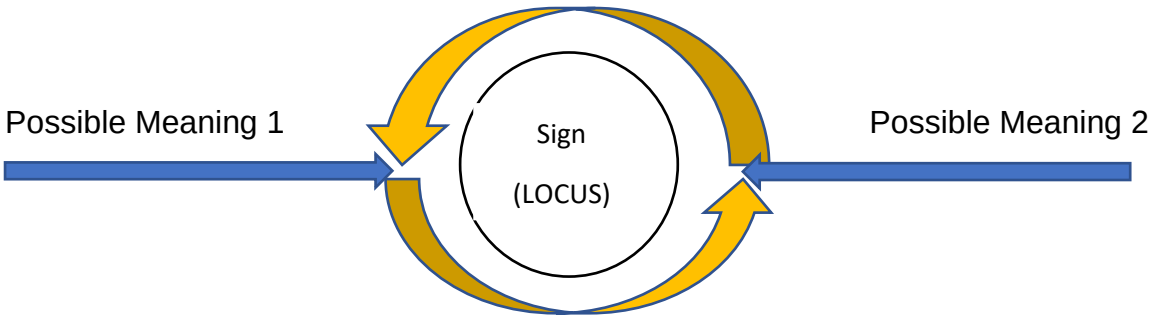
I have stated that these triggers are fixed, meaning they were found in every joke which was categorised as containing a textually constructed meaning shift of bisociation, and are therefore essential to constructing bisociative meanings. These are the same two triggers which were identified as constructing bisociation in the earlier analysis of a smaller sample of jokes (5.3.2), which means these findings support my aims of the TCMSJ framework being generalisable to other joke samples.

In relation to textual meaning, the first trigger ‘a flout of manner’ is always achieved through foregrounding within the textual conceptual function of Implying & Assuming

(5.2.7). In order to adhere to the co-operative maxim of manner (Grice, 1975), texts should avoid ambiguity and be a clear expression of intended meaning. Bisociation exploits the exact opposite principle, necessitating the presence of ambiguity, which flouts the maxim of manner as per Grice's (1975) co-operative principle. This deviation from co-operative norms is foregrounded at an interpersonal level, as I argued in chapter 2.

The ambiguity in bisociation is built around a 'locus', which is the second fixed trigger of this shift category. A locus is defined as the point of overlap which is compatible with both senses of meaning within a text. Below (fig. 10) is a diagram to illustrate how a locus works in bisociation:

Figure 10 Locus Function



The circle in the centre represents the part of a text which is carrying multiple meanings, and is therefore the centre point, or locus, of the bisociation. The straight blue arrows represent the possible interpretations of the locus constructed within the text, with either being compatible interpretations depending on the chosen viewpoint. There is no indication of preferred meaning that can be deduced based on co-textual

cues, and therefore the text forces a dual perception of, or pivot between, both meanings simultaneously. This pivot is signified using the yellow arrows. The locus of bisociation is also not restricted to being constructed using a particular textual conceptual function (TCF), unlike the flout of manner discussed above, but textual meaning analysis can show how the multiple possible meanings are encoded in the text's locus, and this will be exemplified in 6.2 and 6.3.

I found that the locus of the jokes were usually constructed at a linguistic level within the text (6.2), but there were some examples of bisociation using a locus which was non-linguistic (6.3), and this is how I distinguished between the two 'types' of bisociation which are introduced below.

6.2 Linguistic Bisociation

The most commonly constructed form of bisociation found in my analysis was with a linguistic locus point, meaning it was a part of the language of the text which carried multiple meanings. A linguistic locus point was not always a single word; instead it was found that multiple meanings could be attributed to any smaller unit of meaning, such as morphemes and phonemes, or larger phrasal and/or syntactic structures:

Linguistic Levels Where Bisociation was Found in Main Analysis

- *Graphology*
- *Morphology*
- *Phonology*
- *Lexico-Semantic*
- *Referential*
- *Grammar & Syntax*

This shows that the framework is capable of identifying humorous meaning construction from the smallest units of meaning up to the higher levels of discourse structure, and thus can account for a wide variety of joke texts. Often the jokes analysed did not only construct bisociation at a single meaning level: as discussed (5.3), language does not conform well to discrete categorisation and often boundaries can be fuzzy. For clarity, where example joke analysis is presented below, it will be to illustrate the type of bisociation which that sub-heading is discussing, but this is in no way a suggestion that the joke example only uses this linguistic level to construct a bisociative meaning shift. In addition to this, the jokes presented as examples of bisociation may also contain other meaning shifts, which will be highlighted where relevant to the analysis.

6.2.1 Graphological Bisociation

Graphological bisociation is constructed when graphemes are used as a locus point to convey two or more potential signified meanings in a text. Textual analysis in this section will show how symbols, acronyms/initialisms and anagrams can function as a graphological locus.

The example below (60) exploits Roman Numeral symbol 'X' to construct bisociation:

Example 60

'Remember when X Factor was just Roman sun cream?'

The locus in this example is the whole noun phrase 'X Factor', but the graphological bisociation in this text is constructed through the grapheme 'X', which signifies the number 10 in roman numerals. The noun 'factor' and pre-modifying adjective 'Roman', combined with this graphological bisociation, construct a false translation of

‘X Factor’ into ‘Factor 10’. This results in the X being perceived as signifying two meanings simultaneously: as the letter X, and as the number 10. I found that Roman numerals were graphemes used to construct bisociation in several other jokes, such as the two examples below:

Example 61

‘Fun fact: HIV is roman numerals for High Five…’

Example 62

‘There are very few people at the Fringe doing roman numeral jokes. I is one.’

In addition to symbols, initialisms were also used as a graphological locus point, where multiple meanings were attributed to initials in a text:

Example 63

‘The other day I went to KFC. I didn’t realise Kentucky had a Football Club.’

The initialism KFC carries two possible meanings in this text:

Meaning 1 [M1]: *Kentucky Fried Chicken*

Meaning 2 [M2]: *Kentucky Football Club*

M1 is not explicitly constructed in the text, but is the naturalised meaning of the initialism so will be understood from this alone, and the noun phrase ‘Kentucky’ reinforces this assumed meaning. The temporal deictic marker of ‘the other day’, also leads to the assumption of M1, as it implies the journey to KFC was a short trip which took a single day. This temporal deixis is plausible for visiting Kentucky Fried Chicken, but not Kentucky Football Club, particularly in the context of the joke being

performed at the Edinburgh Festival as it is a month-long residency which requires performers to be in Scotland for the duration of their run.

The key to triggering M2 in this text is the knowledge that FC is also an initialism for 'football club', and this is constructed through additional aspects of textual meaning. The second sentence uses prioritisation to present the proposal that 'KFC' stands for 'Kentucky Football Club' as given, rather than new, information:

'I didn't know Kentucky had a football club'

This prioritisation forces an acceptance of the proposal that KFC could stand for either M1 or M2, in order to process the propositional content of the utterance. Although there are also elements of reinterpretation in this text, because the meaning of KFC shifts from M1 to M2, both meanings need to be activated for the joke text to work, and this illustrates how bisociation and reinterpretation are closely linked shift categories.

The initialism KFC (ex. 63) is fully compatible with either Kentucky fried chicken or Kentucky football club, but there were also examples of partially overlapping graphological bisociations, such as in the joke (64) below:

Example 64

'A woman in America has had the largest ever boob job to increase her breasts to 38KKK. That is one dedicated racist.'

The bisociation in this example is built around the locus of 'KKK', which is used as both a code for a large bra size, and an initialised reference to the Ku Klux Klan. The resemblance to a bra size is constructed by the nouns 'breasts' and 'boob job', as

well as by the actor of this process being a woman. This naming and describing combined with comparative adjective ‘the largest’ activates schematic knowledge that bra sizes are symbolised through ascending letters in the alphabet, with double or triple letters indicating an even larger size. The prepositional phrase ‘in America’ helps to construct the second interpretation of KKK as a reference to the Ku Klux Klan, as they are an American based white supremacy group, along with the object noun phrase ‘one dedicated racist’. This equates the woman’s actions with a dedication to racism, using the syntactic trigger ‘X is Y’, and appears to be a flout of relevance: the implication is that somehow the boob job is an act of racism, despite there being no conventional relationship between bra size and racial ideology. Unlike the examples above (60-63) which use bisociation and reinterpretation to change from one meaning to another in a linear fashion, this example maintains both possible meanings of 38KKK rather than selecting one sense: this means it was only coded into the TCMS category of bisociation, and illustrates how bisociation without reinterpretation functions. The resulting textually constructed meaning suggests that the reasoning behind the chosen size of boob job was a graphological resemblance of bra size to the Ku Klux Klan anagram, which is deviant behaviour and therefore foregrounded. I also argue that this meaning construction relies on stereotypes by characterising Americans as both stupid and racist, therefore making it an example of ‘ethnic humour’ (Raskin, 1985) which illustrates humour’s potential for hostile function (2.2.3).

I suggest anagrams are also an example of graphological bisociation, as anagrams rely on the same graphemes being rearranged into a different textual meaning. This

results in these graphological signs being viewed as representative of two meanings, such as in the anagram (65) below:

Example 65

> *'I met Osama Bin Laden once. I said 'did you know, your name is an anagram of A Lesbian Nomad'.*

Attardo (1994) categorises anagrams as a form of pun for this reason, though this example also constructs humour through an asymmetrical comparison, as the referent of the anagrammatic 'a lesbian nomad' is a wandering unaccompanied gay woman, which would not be deemed acceptable to the other referent Osama Bin Laden's ideology, so it is not clear from this stage of analysis whether an anagram alone is sufficient to construct humour. Further research into anagrams would be needed to determine whether they are all considered to be funny, or if an additional shift is needed to result in a humorous anagram.

Despite graphology being the study of written linguistic signs, the jokes used for this analysis were all performed verbally prior to their publication in written form. This could indicate that there is some conceptualisation of the written form in the mind when processing spoken language, so that bisociative graphemes are understood even when not written down.

6.2.2 Phonological Bisociation

Phonological bisociation occurs through exploiting the sounds of a language to trigger multiple meanings which share the same phonemic representation. This can be achieved through either homophony or parosemy. Homophones are phonetically

identical, whereas parosemes share a phonetic similarity with marginal variations, but these boundaries are not always clearly cut and can be affected by variables such as accent. Different examples of homophonic and parosemic bisociations are illustrated in the table below, with the locus underlined:

Table 21 Phonological Bisociation

Type of Phonological Bisociation	**Joke Example**
Homophony	*Example 66* *'I was quite an upbeat child, I used to think CCTV was a very, very positive Spanish television channel.'*
Parosemy	*Example 67* *'A headline last year, after the death of Saddam Hussein, read: 'Tyrant is hanged'. My auntie looked at the newspaper and sobbed, 'Who's going to present "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?'*
Both Homophony & Parosemy	*Example 68* *'A new eco-opera, Rainforest Ocean Blue, is a disaster. The tenor in particular is dreadful. An aria - The Sighs of Whales - is being destroyed every night...'*
Accent Dependent: Homophony OR Parosemy	*Example 69* *'People who like trance music are very persistent. They don't techno for an answer.'*

Although the written form of these jokes disambiguates which sense is being used, the jokes were performed as spoken language, so this disambiguation would not have been possible in the performance context. This justifies my classification of phonological bisociations.

The locus point in example 66 is the phonemes /si: si:/, which can represent both the letter C in ‘CCTV’, and the Spanish word ‘Si’ meaning ‘yes’. The adjectival descriptors ‘upbeat’, ‘positive’ and ‘Spanish’ assist the construction of this second Spanish meaning, whilst the use of the initialism CCTV alone is enough to trigger the meaning ‘closed circuit television’ without a need for additional cues in the co-text. These bisociative meanings are unrelated, so the locus is a homophonic one.

The bisociation in example 67 is achieved through parosemy, exploiting the phonological similarity between ‘Tyrant’ and ‘Tarrant’, which only differ phonologically in terms of their first vowel sound. These two meanings are illustrated using the IPA transcription below:

M1: Tyrant - /’taɪ:rənt/

M2: Tarrant - /’taerənt/

This example is interesting because the multiple meanings occur at different levels of narratorial discourse (Short, 1996), which is a complex narrative structure for a short joke example. M1 ‘*tyrant*’ is understood by the speaker and the audience, and M2 ‘*Tarrant*’ is constructed through a misunderstanding between the characters in the presented text world.

The text names ‘Saddam Hussein’ before presenting the headline, enabling the inference of M1 that Saddam Hussein is the intended reference of ‘*Tyrant*’ and

eliminating any ambiguity at the highest speaker – addressee level of discourse. The text then presents direct speech which occurred within the text world from the character '*aunt*', which seems to flout the maxim of relevance, leading to a search for how a gameshow presenter could relate to the death of Saddam Hussein. The implied meaning is that the character of the aunt, within the text world, has misunderstood the referent of '*Tyrant*' to be TV presenter Chris Tarrant, due to their parosemic relationship, and results in humour through disparagement (2.2.3), as the joke is made at the expense of the Aunt's interpretative mistake.

The example 68 employs both parosemic and homophonic bisociation using the phrasal locus 'an aria – the sighs of whales'. Homophony results in ambiguity using the phonemic string below, which can signify either of two possible meanings:

IPA: /ðə saɪːz əv weɪːlz/

M1: *'the sighs of whales'*

M2: *'the size of Wales'*

In addition to the homophony, this text (68) also includes parosemy within the same noun phrase, substituting the dipthong /eə/ in the word 'area' for a long open back vowel / ɑː/ to create the word 'aria'. This constructs the following two meanings:

M1: /ɑːriːjə/ - *'an <u>aria</u> the sighs of whales'*

M2: /eəriːjə/ - *'an <u>area</u> the size of Wales'*

The bisociation constructed in this example exploits the common usage of this expression by blending the semantic fields of climate change with the usually

unrelated field of opera. M1 is suggests that an aria named ‘the sighs of whales’ is a part of the eco-opera which is being performed terribly every night, whilst M2 constructs a reference to the hypothetical content of the eco-opera, commenting on the literal destruction caused by climate change. Often the ecological impact of climate change is quantified in terms of comparative equating, so the utterance ‘an aria the size of Wales is being destroyed every night’ could be interpreted as a reference to climate change in the form of an echoic mention. Simpson (2011) states that echoic mention is a trigger for irony, but this text does not appear to be ironic despite the use of an echoic mention, due to it lacking a contradictory or paradoxical element.

Accent can also determine whether phonological bisociations are perceived to be homophones or parosemes, such as in example 69. In northern regional British accents (such as my own), ‘techno’ and ‘take no’ carry the same phonemic representation /tɛkno:/, resulting in a bisociative relationship which is achieved through homophony. In other British accents, however, the vowel sounds of ‘tech’ and ‘take’ differ (see transcription below), so the trigger of bisociation is parosemic ambiguity.

Techno – /tɛkno:/

Take no - /teɪkno:/

Whether homophony or parosemy is used in this example does not impact on the textual construction of bisociation and the resulting propositional content of the text as a joke, however it could be a point of interest for further analysis of phonological bisociation on a different sample of jokes.

A phonological feature which I struggled to incorporate into the TCMSJ framework was alliteration. I was unsure if this example of phonological parallelism was constructing humour through bisociation, or whether alliteration belonged within a framework of jokes. Alliterative texts were not common in the data I analysed, but the example below (70) was included in the collection, and therefore had been judged to be intended as and perceived as a joke:

Example 70

> *'Dodo died, Dodi died, Di died, Dando died... Surely Dido's looking a bit worried.'*

Attardo (1994) classes alliteration as an example of punning, which would indicate that it should be included as a feature of bisociation, but I did not code example 70 into the category of bisociation. The text presents a list of parosemic nouns with the voiced alveolar plosive /d/ phoneme, which is an example of phonological parallelism, and this is continued in the verb 'died'. The parallelism in this example suggests a link between women with names which contain the /d/ phoneme and the fact that they have all died, but this is the only meaning constructed within the text, and there is no evidence of a second bisociative construction: this led me to classify this example as an asymmetrical comparison, which will be discussed in chapter 8. This was the only alliterative example in the data so further analysis of alliteration would be needed to determine whether it could be used to construct phonological bisociation.

6.2.3 Morphological Bisociation

Morphemes are units of meaning made up of clusters of graphemes and/or phonemes, which can either be free or bound. Morphological constructions can be

exploited for bisociation in jokes by attributing multiple meanings to a single morpheme. The joke below (71) separates the single morpheme word ‘umbrella’ into two morphemes to attribute multiple meanings to the morpheme ‘um’:

Example 71

> *‘I like to think the guy who invented the umbrella was going to call it the ‘brella’ but he hesitated.’*

The text’s separation of the noun umbrella into two morphemes deviates from standard English, where ‘brella’ cannot operate as a single unit of meaning. The newly separated morpheme ‘um’, however, is recognisable as a unit of conversational meaning, as a slot filler which marks speaker hesitation. The text therefore constructs two meanings for the morpheme ‘um’, as both a free morpheme to indicate hesitancy and a first morpheme in the word ‘umbrella’. The result is the word ‘umbrella’ being viewed simultaneously as a single morpheme and two deconstructed morpheme parts in this text. I found that morphological deconstruction was used in other bisociative joke examples in my data (below):

Example 72

> *‘Hedgehogs - why can't they just share the hedge?’*

Example 73

> *‘Even the word misogyny is misogynistic. It should be ms-ogyny.’*

Example 74

> *‘So your name is Ham-ISH: You don't seem very sure.’*

The morphological deconstruction which takes place in these examples also necessitates a reinterpretation of what the words signify; by separating words made

of a single root morpheme into multiple morphemes, new meanings are attributed to these lexemes. Morphological bisociation was therefore found to always co-occur with a textually constructed meaning shift of reinterpretation.

6.2.4 Lexico-Semantic Bisociation

Lexico-semantic bisociation describes a locus point the text which is a whole word or phrase. There are several ways that multiple meanings can be encoded at this level of discourse, and discussed below are examples of bisociation constructed using the sense relations of both homonymy and polysemy, along with jokes which exploit the blurred boundaries between literal and figurative language.

The sense relation of homonymy describes unrelated meanings which share the same linguistic sign, such as ‘cool’ in the example (75) below:

Example 75

> *‘Geologists love rocks, but I liked magma before it was <u>cool</u>.’*

The text constructs two possible interpretations:

> *M1: I liked magma before it was* [trendy]
>
> *M2: I liked magma before it was* [cooled in temperature and changed state from molten liquid to solid rock]

Both of these possible interpretations could make sense with every aspect of the text and there is no ability to disambiguate which sense is intended by the speaker, thus constructing a bisociation which makes sense selection impossible for the hearer.

In the text below, the bisociation is constructed as a misunderstanding within the character > character level of discourse (like the one seen in the example 67 in 6.2.3):

Example 76

> *'I was very naive sexually. My first boyfriend asked me to do missionary and I buggered off to Africa for six months.'*

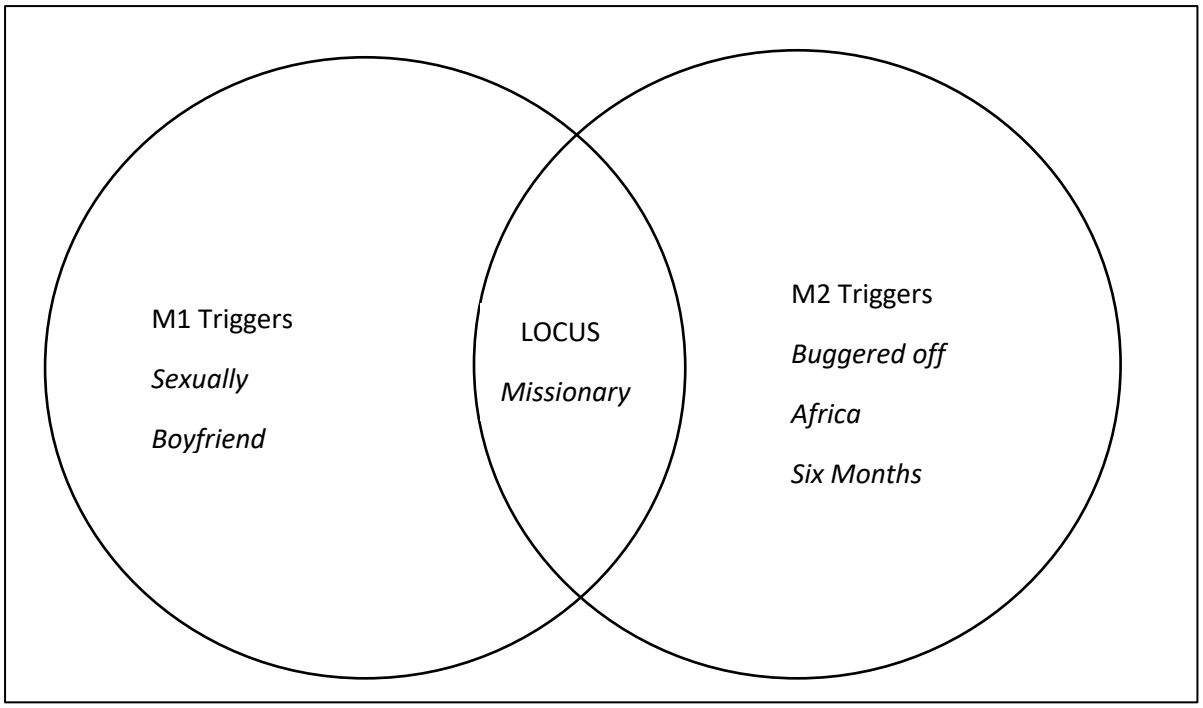
This constructs bisociation between the intended and understood meanings of 'missionary':

M1: Missionary = sexual position

M2: Missionary = religious charitable work

Although these meanings share the same etymology, the modern-day usage of both senses is unrelated, and they have therefore become homonyms. The choices in the text which construct each meaning are illustrated in the diagram (fig. 11) below:

Figure 11 Locus Point of 'Missionary'



Naming and describing is used in the construction of both possible meanings of ‘missionary’, with noun ‘boyfriend’ and post-modifying adverb ‘sexually’ indicating M1, but noun ‘Africa’ not fitting with this sense and therefore suggesting M2. The verb phrase ‘buggered off to Africa for six months’ includes both spatial and temporal deixis, which are also incompatible with the interpretation of missionary as a sexual position, as this action puts the speaker a large distance away from her boyfriend for a long period of time. The implication is that the speaker was unaware of M1 and therefore interpreted missionary as being indicative of M2, believing her boyfriend was asking her to do missionary work in Africa. This plausibility of this misunderstanding is reinforced by the first sentence in which the speaker describes herself as ‘naïve’. The result is a joke in which the bisociation is constructed through the hearer selecting one ‘correct’ sense, and the speaker selecting a different ‘incorrect’ sense, so is a combined shift of bisociation and reinterpretation (chapter 7) which constructs humour in the speaker’s unfortunate mistake.

The sense relation of polysemy differs from homonymy in terms of the relationship between the multiple meanings - polysemous meanings are related to each other, but used in a slightly different sense, such as the meaning of 'protection' in this example:

Example 77

> *'Does my hair act as protection? Well I guess it must because since I've been growing a beard I haven't cut myself shaving once, or been approached for sexual intercourse.'*

A relationship of polysemous bisociation is constructed between a beard acting as physical 'protection' against cuts when shaving, and in the euphemistic sense of sexual 'protection', which generally refers to the use of condoms to prevent against pregnancy and/or sexually transmitted infections, although the use of a beard to perform either of these protective functions is a foregrounded behaviour. The co-ordination of these two types of protection in the text constructs the interpretation that they are equally desirable outcomes which occur as a result of growing a beard, but this deviates from naturalised ideological assumptions in western society that the goal of grooming is to attract a sexual partner, and a lack of sexual intercourse is an undesirable outcome. This is another example of a joke which constructs humour that disparages the speaker for not having sex, but as I noted in 2.2.3 not all jokes have a target and disparagement is not a sufficient explanation for the construction of humour. The example below (78) is a form of non-disparaging bisociation:

Example 78

> *'A bloke arrives at a nightclub door and the bouncers say he can't come in without a tie, so he goes to the boot of his car and gets a pair of jump leads,*

wraps them around his neck and goes back to the doormen. "Can I come in now", he says to the bouncers. "Yeah, but don't start anything".'

This joke uses the phrase 'don't start anything' as a locus through semantic ambiguity between the two meanings below:

M1: *Don't start* [any violence or problems in the club]

M2: *Don't start* [any vehicles with the jump leads]

The majority of nouns in the text are in the semantic field of nightclubs: 'nightclub door' 'bouncers' 'doormen' 'tie', and this, combined with the use of negation and deontic modality within the presented speech from the bouncers, constructs the recognisable situation where a bouncer has denied someone entry to a nightclub, indicating M1. The only part of the text which appears to construct M2 is the noun phrase 'jump leads'. This illustrates the importance of textual choices in constructing humorous meaning shifts: the particular noun choice of 'jump leads' is the one that offers bisociative potential for the phrase 'don't start anything', and selecting another item found in a car boot to use as a tie (e.g. a scarf, map, hazard triangle) would not construct the ambiguity necessary for bisociation, so would be an example of 'killing the joke' (Jodolowiec, 2019). There is also a non-linguistic bisociation constructed in the visualised construction of this text world, whereby the jump leads in the text are seen simultaneously as being jump leads and as resembling a tie. Non-linguistic bisociations are discussed further in 6.3.

Some jokes employed both polysemy and homonymy to construct bisociation, and it can be difficult to distinguish which type of sense relation was being exploited for bisociation:

Example 79

'Never date a tennis player. Love means nothing to them.'

The two unrelated senses of the word 'love' in this example are homonyms, referring to both the abstract emotional concept of affection, evoked by the word 'date', and the score of zero in a tennis match, constructed using 'tennis player'. The locus in this text is phrasal 'love means nothing', with 'nothing' acting as a polyseme which refers to an absence, either of scored points or of emotional significance. This shows how different sense relations can be used in combination to construct lexico-semantic bisociation.

Many of the joke examples analysed exploited the potential for ambiguity between metaphorical and literal meanings of words and phrases to construct bisociation:

Example 80

'Have you noticed the way that burns victims stick together?'

Example 81

'My mate came second in a Winston Churchill lookalike competition. He was close, but no cigar.'

Example 80 uses the phrase 'stick together' as a locus for bisociation with two potential meanings, and the text does not construct a way to disambiguate whether this phrase represents physical or emotional bonding. When combined with a human actor, the verb process 'stick together' is generally used as a figurative reference to describe emotional bonds formed between groups of people, and this is compatible with 'victims', who often form a support network to overcome adversity. Including the specific detail that these people are '*burns victims*' also allows the construction of a

possible second literal interpretation of ‘stick together’: this is a sense usually reserved to describe non-human entities ‘the newspaper pages always stick together’, but the text exploits the ideational knowledge that burns makes the skin sticky. This enables the possible interpretation that the burns victims within this text-world literally ‘stick together’, in the sense that their skin becomes sticky and fuses together due to the healing process of their burns. This constructed meaning is foregrounded through deviation at an ideational level, due to both the implausibility of the situation and the taboo topical content.

Selecting an injury such as burns, which has connotations with stickiness, is essential to constructing bisociation between literal and figurative meanings in example 80, and the resulting constructed meaning shift converts a naturalised figurative expression into a literal meaning, which is recognised as foregrounding through deviation from naturalised semantics. Similarly, example 81 is reliant on the inclusion of noun choice ‘*Winston Churchill*’ as the subject of the look-alike competition in order to trigger both the literal and figurative meanings of the idiom ‘*close, but no cigar*’:

M1: *He was close, but* [was not quite successful enough]

M2: *He was close, but* [was not holding a cigar]

The construction relies on the ideational knowledge that Churchill is often pictured with a cigar, and that this was one of his distinguishing attributes. An article in the Gentleman’s Journal (Somper, 2020) names Churchill one of the five most iconic cigar smokers of all time. A different name could have been selected in the construction of this text, but in order to construct the bisociative shift, the choice of

name would have been limited to a person who is also famously associated with cigars such as Cuban politician Fidel Castro, or TV detective Columbo. As idioms, dead metaphors and commonly used figurative phrases are naturalised within a lexicon, their deconstruction into literal components is also an example of reinterpretation, therefore jokes which exploit multiple meanings of a commonly used phrase are examples which combine the textually constructed meaning shifts of bisociation and reinterpretation.

6.2.5 Referential Bisociation

Referencing in language is a naming strategy; it is how nouns or pronouns refer to a corresponding entity in the text world, for example the noun phrase '*50 Cent*' from the text below (82) is a textual reference which has a real-world counterpart in the form of a famous rap artist. Referential bisociation occurs when this textual reference is deliberately ambiguous and can be attributed to multiple entities.

Example 82

> *'50 Cent, or as he's called over here, approximately 29p.'*

Example 82 uses the noun phrase '*50 Cent*' as the locus for referential bisociation, referring to both a person and a unit of currency. The noun phrase 50 cent is assumed to be enough to trigger the schematic pop culture knowledge that this refers to the musician named 50 Cent without the need for explanation, regardless of context, although the pronoun usage '*he*' also constructs the interpretation that the text is referring to a human male and not a currency (which would take the inanimate pronoun '*it*'), as does the use of singular '*cent*' rather than the plural '*cents*'. Spatial deixis and equating are combined in the phrase '*he's called over here*', indicating that a shift from America to the UK impacts on 50 Cent's name, and noun phrase

‘*approximately 29p*’ activates the second referential meaning of currency, with cent and pence both being amounts of money, and 29p being roughly equivalent to 50 cents using the exchange rate at the time the text was produced. This second possible reference to the monetary value of ‘*50 cent*’ is constructed in an optional adverbial clause which follows the head noun phrase, and this packaging of the proposition that rapper ‘*50 cent’* is ‘*called approximately 29p*’ in the UK must be accepted in order to understand the text’s constructed meaning, despite being untrue and therefore a flout of quality. This bisociation constructs a textual meaning which presents the flawed logic that names are converted over transatlantic borders in the same way that currency is exchanged, and this ideational deviation is foregrounded, therefore humorous. The equating between person and currency is also a constructed shift of asymmetrical comparison (see chapter 8).

6.2.6 Grammatical & Syntactical Bisociation

I found that bisociative meanings could be constructed through the deliberately ambiguous use of syntactic structures or word classes, illustrated in the discussion below.

Example 83

> *‘I was struggling to make friends so I bought a book called ‘How to Make People Like You’. Turned out it was all about cloning.’*

The ambiguity in this text is constructed through transitivity choices, presenting a locus verb phrase ‘*how to make people like you*’ which can be interpreted as either describing the mental reaction process of positive social evaluations, or the relational attribute of similarity. This is achieved through the omission of the copula ‘to be’,

which would signal that 'like' is functioning as an adjective to mean '*people [who are] like you*' and not a verb to describe people's feelings.

The textual conceptual function of representing actions, events and states can also be sued to construct bisociation through ambiguous phrasal verbs:

Example 84

> *'As a kid I was made to walk the plank. We couldn't afford a dog.'*

The above example (84) constructs bisociation through the ambiguity in the phrasal verb '*walk the plank*', which is conventionally used to refer to walking the plank of a ship. Initially it is assumed that the plank is stationary, and the speaker was walking on top of it, due to the absence of any deixis to locate the speaker in relation to the plank, but the second sentence '*we couldn't afford a dog*' is incompatible as an explanation for why they were walking the plank and therefore a flout of relevance. The resulting implied meaning is that the plank was alongside the speaker being taken for a walk, in the same way that a dog would be walked. This is both ideationally foregrounded, as planks are not pets and do not require exercise, but also results in humour through disparagement as the text invites laughter on the subject of childhood poverty.

Ambiguous deixis can also construct bisociation, such as through use of prepositional phrases in the text below:

Example 85

> *'They declared a war on drugs? That's awful. I know people can do stupid things on drugs, but that's too much.'*

The constructed bisociation offers two interpretative possibilities, depending on whether the prepositional phrase ‘on drugs’ is attributed to ‘they’ or ‘a war’:

M1: *They declared a war* [to tackle drug use]

M2: *They declared a war* [whilst under the influence of drugs]

The bisociation in this example is achieved through the constructed misunderstanding by the speaker of the phrase as M2, as opposed to the naturalised usage of the phrase ‘declared a war on drugs’ which is a metaphor employed by politicians to represent their fight against drug use in society. The same technique is employed in example 86 (below), which exploits the ambiguity of the prepositional phrase ‘*in my pyjamas*’ to make it unclear whether the speaker or the Elephant was in the pyjamas.

Example 86

‘I got up this morning and I shot an elephant in my pyjamas, I don't know what he was doing in my pyjamas but I shot him anyway.’

All of the above examples of grammatical bisociation include a second explanatory clause to clarify which meaning was intended in the text, meaning they are combined examples of bisociation and reinterpretation.

6.3 Non-Linguistic Bisociation

Some joke examples in the data were identified as constructing bisociation with a locus which was not at the linguistic level of meaning, which was a surprise, as bisociation was usually found to be constructed in puns which are often defined as ‘wordplay’ (Tanaka, 1994). Jeffries (2018) describes non-linguistic aspects of

meaning as semiotic but not realised through language. Non-linguistic types of bisociation rely on the perception of dual meanings in ideational and/or interpersonal elements of meaning, rather than attributing the bisociation to a particular word or phrase in the text: this can be through noting visual similarities and situational parallels, and as the entity which carries two meanings is never explicitly referenced in the text, jokes in this category could possibly be labelled as implied bisociation. These jokes were difficult to classify in terms of a textual framework as it involves describing a non-linguistic meaning, but textual meaning analysis helps to explain how this bisociation was found to be constructed at the ideational and situational levels of meaning.

6.3.1 Ideational Bisociation

Ideational bisociation describes how the conceptual picture of a text world, which is cognitively constructed, can be perceived in two ways.

Example 87

> *'If I ever saw an amputee being hanged, I'd just yell out letters.'*

In order to understand the textual meaning constructed above, '*an amputee being hanged*' needs to be interpreted as a visual representation of the game 'hangman', as well as the actual process of hanging which is described by the text. Although the locus in this text is not a linguistic one, linguistic choices still construct the textual meaning shift of bisociation, and the TCFs which were used to create this textual meaning are presented in the table below:

Table 22 TCF Analysis of Hangman Joke

TCF	

Naming & Describing	NP packaging '*an amputee being hanged*' Noun choice '*amputee*'
Representing Actions Events and States	Verb choice '*Hanged*'
Equating & Opposing	If X then Y
Hypothesising	If; Would; Probably
Implying & Assuming	Flout of Relevance Flout of Quantity Flout of Manner
Representing Time, Space & Society	Temporal Deixis: '*Being hanged*'
Speech Presentation	NRSA: Yelling out letters

This joke text presents a hypothetical situation using the triggers '*if*', '*probably*' and '*would*', to suggest how the speaker would act if presented with the events described in the text. The verb phrase '*being hanged*' alludes to the game of hangman, partly due to the specificity of the verb choice '*hang*', rather than representing the action using another cause of death or a more general verb of '*executed/murdered*'. The

use of the present progressive tense also constructs an image of the process as being ongoing for a period of time, so that the speaker can interrupt, using a Narrators Representation of a Speech Act (NRSA) to present this interruption as '*yell out letters*'. This presented speech flouts the maxim of relation, as yelling out letters is suggested to be an appropriate response to seeing an amputee being hanged, despite the lack of an obvious relationship between the two events. The implication is a suggested visual equivalence between the image of a half-finished game of hangman and a hanging amputee, which is foregrounded through deviation, as in reality these two events are not similar at all. The tonal difference between the two bisociative meanings of hangman and a real-life hanging is also an example of asymmetrical comparison (see chapter 8), through equating a game to the trauma of witnessing an execution.

The joke above (87) is understood to be referencing 'hangman' without this word ever being presented in the text, and this is also the case in the joke below (88), which implicitly uses '*spooning*' as a locus point:

Example 88

> *'My friend slept with Uri Geller. Afterwards he laid on his side and she laid on her side snuggling into him. Then her head fell off.'*

This joke (88) exploits the pop-culture knowledge that Uri Geller is a performer who claims to have telekinetic powers which allow him to bend spoons. The deictic descriptions of how both the joke's characters were positioned in bed depicts them in a position which is commonly referred to as '*spooning*'. This description in itself is a non-linguistic bisociation, as it results in the dual-processing of the visual concept as both people cuddling and spoons in a drawer, but labelling this action as spooning is

naturalised in British and American English, and therefore not foregrounded or humorous. Describing the characters as being in a spooning position, whilst deliberately avoiding the word spoon, is a flout of manner and quantity. The final sentence '*then her head fell off*' is also a flout of quality; people's heads cannot just 'fall off', so this is deviant at an ideational level. Suspending disbelief in the presented text world is necessary to process the textual meaning, so these flouts lead to a search for the reasoning as to why snuggling in this position with Uri Geller would lead to a character's head falling off. Once the characters are understood to be spooning, the knowledge of Uri Geller bending spoons is activated, and the constructed textual meaning is surmised as Uri Geller telekinetically bent the lady in a spooning position, which caused her head to fall off. The point of multiple meaning, 'spooning' is never uttered within the text and is therefore the implied locus of bisociation in this example, which results in the joke character being viewed as both a metaphorical and literal spoon.

6.3.2 Situational Bisociation

Texts which constructed situational bisociation conveyed propositional meaning which was evocative of a second situation, so the bisociation occurs through the simultaneous perception of one text with multiple perlocutionary forces/propositions, such as in the two examples (89-90) below:

Example 89

> *'Got a phone call today to do a gig at a fire station. Went along. Turned out it was a bloody hoax.'*

Example 90

'I know you didn't come here today to hear a rape joke but you've all come here dressed like you want to hear one so it's not my fault.'

The relationship of bisociation in the examples above is constructed through situational parallelism, involving a pivot between the situation which is explicitly presented in the text and the situation which the texts are alluding to. Both of the above examples rely on the assumption of shared ideational knowledge which will allow them to understand the constructed bisociative meaning. Joke 89 exploits the knowledge that fire brigades often experience hoax calls, and alludes to this through a hoax call for a gig at a fire station, allowing humour at the expense of the speaker who was the receiver of the prank call.

Example 90 uses an echoic mention of the criticism often levelled at women that the way they dress could invite sexual assault, and the associated victim blaming that is inherent in this ideology. In this case the use of echoic mention does seem to support Simpson's (2011) argument that this textual device constructs irony, as this text is employing humour to critique an anti-feminist ideology which unfairly holds victims responsible for the actions of a rapist. Attacking an ideological standpoint through humour is the form of irony defined as satire (Simpson, 2003).

6.4 Category Conclusions

This chapter has illustrated how multiple meanings can be encoded in a joke text to construct a meaning shift of bisociation, using the two fixed textual triggers of a locus and a flout of manner. This locus point can be constructed in aspects which range from the smallest units of linguistic meaning (morphemes and phonemes) up to grammatical structures, and even be constructed at a non-linguistic level, though linguistic bisociation was far more common in my sample of jokes. Analysis has

shown that bisociation can be constructed alone to create humour, or occur alongside other shifts to create particular joke types. I have stated that bisociation was often found to co-occur in texts which also constructed a shift of reinterpretation, because the two shift categories are closely linked - for a meaning to be reinterpreted, both the initial and novel meanings must be processed. This is illustrated further in the chapter on reinterpretation which is presented below.

Chapter 7: Reinterpretation

Reinterpretation occurs when a text constructs a shift from one meaning to another - either internally (ex. 91), by shifting perceived meanings within a joke text, or externally (ex. 92), by constructing a textual meaning which is deviant from linguistic, ideational or interpersonal norms.

Example 91

> Internal: *I needed a password eight characters long so I picked Snow White and the Seven Dwarves.*

This example forces a reinterpretation of the noun '*characters*', from 'computer keys' to 'fictional people'. Both of these meanings for '*characters*' are established in the English lexicon, so the reinterpretation in this case occurs by constructing a shift from one to the other.

Example 92

> External: *'My mum always asks for 'bath stuff' for Christmas so this year I bought her a toaster.'*

The noun phrase '*bath stuff*' is a collective term used for soaps or bubble baths, and a toaster is not usually considered to be a part of this group, so the textually

constructed reinterpretation in this example is externally deviant at an ideational level.

Table 23 (below) presents the textual triggers of reinterpretation (7.1) and types of reinterpretative shift (7.2) which were found in the joke data.

Table 23 Reinterpretation

Reinterpretation	
Description	Constructing a change of signified meaning within the text.
Textual Triggers	*Fixed* N/A
	Optional - Temporal Deixis - Opposing (including Negation) - Equating - Semantic (other/different)
Types	-Widening - Narrowing - Pejoration - Amelioration - Literalisation - Novel Meaning Attribution

These triggers and types are discussed below using example joke analysis.

7.1 Textual Triggers of Reinterpretation

This section will present a list of the prototypical textual features which were found to construct reinterpretation. Unlike the two triggers of bisociation (6.1), triggers of reinterpretation were not 'fixed' - instead a range of textual features were found to construct a meaning change, and it is possible that reinterpretation could be constructed using other triggers in a different data sample. These can be separated into grammatical/syntactic triggers (7.1.1-4), and semantic triggers (7.1.5).

7.1.1 Temporal Deictic Triggers

A change of meaning can be indicated through markers of change over time, and this is achieved through deixis. Temporal deictic markers presuppose that a reinterpretation has taken place between the past and the present, and I found that this meaning was often constructed through past tense conjugations of mental cognition verbs, used to indicate a shift in viewpoint:

Example 93

> *I got asked the other day if I Liked the music of Ariana Grande, which surprised me as I thought that was a type of coffee.*

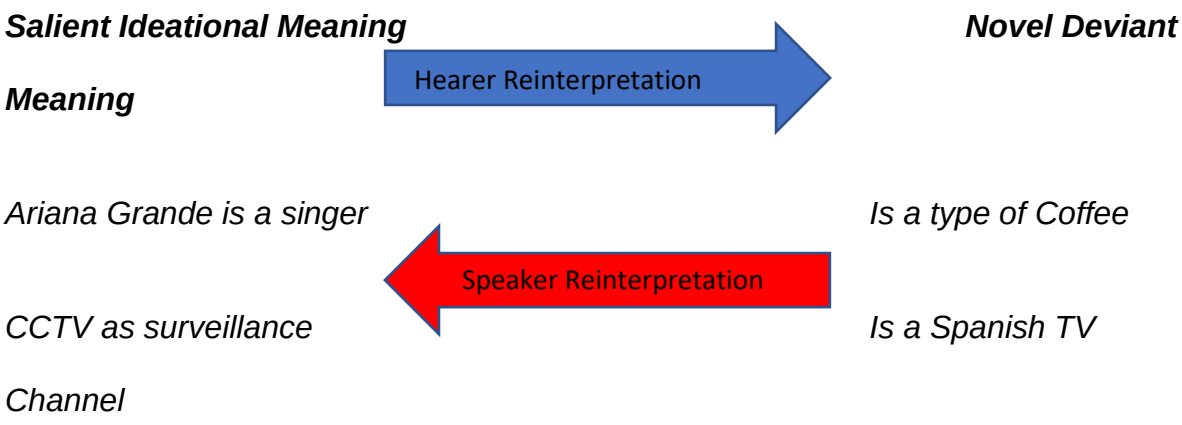
Example 94

> *I was quite an upbeat child, I used to think CCTV was a very, very positive Spanish television channel.*

In these examples the proper nouns '*Ariana Grande*' and '*CCTV*' are enough to activate the salient meaning of these referents, without needing to explicate them in

the joke text. Instead, the text only presents what the speaker thought these nouns referred to in a past time, using the past tense deictic temporal markers '*thought*' or '*used to think*', followed by indirect thought presentation which attributes an externally deviant meaning to the NPs. This constructs a reinterpretative shift which happens in different ways, depending on whether point of view is aligned with the speaker or the hearer (fig 12). This dual-direction of reinterpretation is illustrated below:

Figure 12 Modelling Reinterpretation



Through the logical presupposition of past tense conjugated processes of 'think' constructs a textual meaning that the speakers have discarded their past interpretations in favour of the 'correct' referents of Ariana Grande and CCTV (signified by the arrow in red). In order to process this textual meaning, recognition of these deviant meaning possibilities needs to take place, so the constructed reinterpretation for hearers of this text involves giving novel, semantically deviant meaning to familiar referents (signified with the blue arrow).

7.1.2 Oppositional Triggers

A comprehensive list of triggers of opposition was presented in 4.2.1, but identified in the table below are the oppositional triggers which were found to construct reinterpretative meaning shifts in the jokes I analysed:

Table 24 Oppositional Triggers of Reinterpretation

Type	**Example**
Contrastive	*Example 95* *I like Jesus, but he loves me, so it's awkward*
Negation	*Example 96* *I don't need Viagra, I need a woman*
Comparative	*Example 97* *I bought my parents a house. Unfortunately it was worse than the one they had before.*
Concessive	*Example 98* *I read that during the war the English referred to Adolf Hilter as badger man, although it might have said bad German.*
Parallelism	*Example 99* *Hearing voices in your head is ok. It's when you hear them in your feet you should worry.*

Semantic	*Example 100* *I believe in gay marriage so that gay people can be as miserable as straight people.*

Example 95 uses the triggers of contrastive opposition '*X but Y*', and syntactic parallelism '*I feel X, he feels Y*' to construct a gradable opposition between like and love, resulting in a textually constructed reinterpretation of Jesus' love as romantic and personal to the speaker, which deviates from naturalised assumptions about Christianity. This also forces a shift of Jesus' love from a positive, omnibenevolent act to a negative form of unrequited love which makes the speaker feel '*awkward*' (positive to negative reinterpretations will be discussed in 7.2.3). Concessive opposition is the trigger in example 98, as the negative hypothetical construction '*although it might have said*' forces reinterpretation at a linguistic level of '*badgerman*' as '*bad german*'. This example also relies on graphological bisociation to construct the reinterpretation, as it is an anagram (see 6.2.1).

Example 96 uses negation within parallel structures '*I don't need X, I need Y*' to construct opposition between '*viagra*' and '*a woman*'. This forces a reinterpretation at an ideational level of the reasoning behind the speaker's sexual dysfunction, shifting it from a medical problem to being caused by a lack of female sexual attention, resulting in humour through self-deprecation. Negating as a trigger of reinterpretation is discussed below.

7.1.3 Negational Triggers

The different types of negation which were found to construct reinterpretation in the data analysis included:

Table 25 Negational Triggers of Reinterpretation

Type	**Example**
Negative Particle	*Example 101* *Laughter is the best medicine, though it tends not to work in the case of impotence.*
Verb Choices	*Example 102* *A quick way to lose weight: subtract your birth weight, because you haven't gained that part.*
Adverbs	*Example 103* *I've just been on a once-in-a-lifetime holiday. I'll tell you what, never again.*
Morphological	*Example 104* *So much for Taylor Swift. She sent back my trousers unmended!*

Negating can construct opposition, so it can be difficult to separate the triggers of negation and opposition, and a combination of negation and other oppositional triggers were used to create reinterpretative shifts in some joke examples. Joke text

101 uses both concessive opposition '*though*' and negation '*not to work*' to construct a reinterpretation of the phrase '*laughter is the best medicine'* from a figurative to literal meaning (see 7.2.5).

I have chosen to discuss negation as a trigger in its own right, as it was not clear whether negation was always constructing an opposition in joke texts. In example 103 the negating adverbial phrase '*never again*' forces a reinterpretation of the phrase '*once in a lifetime holiday*', shifting its meaning from a positive to a negative evaluation (see 7.2.3), so it could be argued that this is a conventional gradable opposition used to create a humorous meaning shift. With examples such as 102, there is also a conventional gradable opposition between '*lost*' and '*gained*', however instead the negation forces a reinterpreted perspective of what it means to '*lose weight*', proposing that weight loss can occur through a shifted viewpoint, rather than a change of body mass. Similarly, the morphological negation of the process '*unmended*' leads to a hypothetical conceptualisation of why Taylor Swift would mend trousers, and leads to a reinterpretation of this noun phrase as '*Tailor Swift*', but the opposition between '*mended/unmended*' is not what results in the humour. Both of these jokes rely on a reinterpretation of a familiar concept or entity, and for this reason the reinterpretative shift is also accompanied by bisociation.

7.1.4 Equating Triggers

Equating constructs a meaning shift of reinterpretation by constructing a novel proposition of what something is or means. The types of equating which were found to construct reinterpretation are presented in the table (26) below:

Table 26 Equating Triggers of Reinterpretation

Equating Trigger	**Examples**
X is Y	*Example 105* *Period drama is essentially a drama that is on on Sunday nights* *A problem shared is attention gained*
X, [which] means Y	*Example 106* *I was the first to reach the summit. Apparently this means I am not a team player.*
X so Y	*Example 107* *An American girl hit on me in a club and asked me to make her an Egyptian princess. So I threw a sheet over her head and told her to be quiet.* *Example 108* *I believe in gay marriage so that gay people can be as miserable as straight people.*

It is easy to identify relationships of equivalence constructed through the relational verbs 'X is Y' or 'X means Y', such as in example 105. This joke equates being '*the first to reach the summit'* with not being '*a team player*', forcing an ideational reinterpretation of this action from a successful achievement to a character flaw. It is less clear whether causal adverbs '*so*' or '*because*' construct equivalence, and they are not included in Jeffries TCF of equating (5.2.4). Causality was not found to assert equivalence in the sense of synonymy, however it was used to construct a

relationship of cause and effect which can indicate an ideology of perceived equivalence. According to Hartshorne, 'causality is driven primarily by linguistic structure and only minimally by general knowledge and non-linguistic cognition (Hartshorne, 2014: 804)', so joke texts can construct relationships of cause and effect which are deviate from assumptions or expectations and therefore foregrounded.

In example 107, the action '*I threw a sheet over her head and asked her to be quiet'* is presented as a way to make someone '*an Egyptian Princess*' using the causal structure 'X so Y', constructing a reinterpretation at the ideational level of what it means to be an '*Egyptian Princess*', which deviates from attributes associated with princesses such as decadence, wealth and power. This reinterpretative shift employs humours attacking function to acknowledge the oppression and power struggles of women in both the middle east and royal families, and is therefore an example of satire (Simpson, 2003), which is a use of humour to critique power structures.

Reinterpretation through equating in the data often took the form of an 'explanatory clause' (Hartshorne, 2014), which occurs in the final element of a text in order to explain the initial proposition which precedes it. Illustrated below are examples of jokes with the explanatory clause highlighted in bold, and the trigger of equating underlined.

Example 109

> *Growing up I took after my mum...* ***and <u>by that i mean</u> i had large breasts and was sexually attracted to my dad.***

This example (109) presents the phrase '*took after my mum*', which is initially assumed to mean that as a child the speaker was more similar to her mother than her father, though the text constructs a novel meaning of the phrase. The optional co-ordinated clause (highlighted in bold) forms the joke's explanatory clause, showing that the speaker equates the qualities of '*large breasts*' and being '*sexually attracted to my dad'* with taking after her mum; qualities which are both physically and psychologically deviant for a child. This reinterpretation is therefore foregrounded at an ideational and interpersonal level and thus results in humour.

The explanatory element of reinterpretation can also take the form of an appositional phrase or clause, such as in the example below:

Example 110

*'My friend died doing what he loved…**Heroin**.'*

In this example (110) the explanatory part of the clause is implicit, with the verbs omitted from the clause:

'My friend died doing what he loved [which was/what he loved was] ***heroin**.'*

The initial assumption is that '*what he loved*' refers to a positive aspect of the character's life, and is used to console others in a time of grief. In example 110, however, '*what he loved'* is revealed to be '*heroin*', resulting in the implication that the joke's character died of a heroin overdose. Heroin addiction has been reframed in this text as both a free choice and a positive desirable attribute, rather than the cause of a friend's death, which is a deviant and therefore foregrounded reinterpretation. Joking about death is a commonly employed strategy which was found to occur in many of the joke examples I analysed – Blank (2013: 42) says that

this strategy can help reduce anxiety or process the tragic events, in line with perspectives on humour as a release from tension (2.2.2), though further investigation of this is beyond the scope of my thesis.

7.1.5 Semantic Triggers

Semantic triggers of reinterpretation were less common in the joke data than the structural and grammatical triggers which I have discussed above. Constructing a meaning change through semantics necessitates the explicit proposition of difference or otherness in reference to meaning, such as in the example below:

Example 111

'Act your age, not your shoe size. That means something different on the continent.'

The text explicitly states that the phrasal meaning is 'different' somewhere else. This shifts the interpreted meaning of the phrase 'act your age, not your shoe size' from A to B:

A: Stop acting like a child when you are an adult

B: Stop acting like a 30-40 year old

Meaning A is intended as a chastisement, used as a means of criticising someone for behaving immaturely. By contrast, Meaning B does not carry this perlocutionary force of chastisement, as there are not the same negative connotations for acting like a 30-40 year old (maturely) in commonly naturalised ideology. Although a hearer may have issues at an individual level with behaviour which is deemed 'middle-aged', the reinterpretation of this text at a consensual level (Jeffries 2015) is that the

phrase ceases to function as a scolding remark. This is an example of foregrounding through deviation, as the reinterpreted phrasal meaning deviates from its usual function, resulting in humour.

7.2 Types of Reinterpretative Meaning Shift

When analysing jokes placed in the category of reinterpretation, I identified shifts in terms of scope, tone, or even changes to a completely unrelated new meaning. The types of reinterpretative meaning shift which I found are presented in the table below:

Table 27 Types of Reinterpretative Meaning Shift

Type	
Semantic Widening	The new meaning becomes less specific
Semantic Narrowing	The new meaning becomes more specific
Pejoration	The new meaning becomes less positive
Amelioration	The new meaning becomes more positive
Literalisation	The deconstruction of a figurative or metaphorical expression into a new literal meaning
Novel Meaning Attribution	Attributing an unrelated new meaning

This section will use textual analysis to provide examples of how each of these types of reinterpretation were present within the data.

7.2.1 Semantic Widening

Semantic widening describes when the meaning of a sign is widened in scope to become less specific, such as the internally deviant semantic widening of '*remains*' in the example below:

Example 112

> *After my grandfather's funeral, I scattered his remains over the garden, which was horrible because he hadn't been cremated.*

The text begins by constructing the assumed meaning of '*remains*' as '*ashes*', using the MAI verb '*scattered*', which suggests that the object being scattered is made up of many small pieces or particles, rather than a single whole piece (such as a human body). The actor '*I*' and prepositional phrase '*over the garden*' also makes ashes the more likely interpretation, as non-cremated corpses are usually buried in private cemeteries by professionals, not in family gardens. Use of the noun '*remains*' also has a dehumanising effect, implying a kind of transformative process which is the case with ashes, but not corpses.

The choices made in textual construction point consistently towards the assumption that '*remains*' is synonymous with '*ashes*', until the explanatory clause beginning '*which*' presents contradictory information. This optional adverbial clause '*wasn't cremated*' negates the assumed meaning of '*ashes*', and along with the descriptive adjective '*horrible*', forces a reinterpretation of '*remains*' as '*dead body parts*' in order to process the textual meaning. Though '*remains*' can be used to refer to corpses as well ashes, a shift from one meaning to another is constructed within this text so it is an example of internal semantic deviation. The textual meaning also deviates from external norms at an ideational level, constructing a macabre text-world in which the

speaker has covered her garden with various dismembered limbs of her dead grandfather.

7.2.2 Semantic Narrowing

Semantic narrowing describes a textually constructed shift to a more specific meaning:

Example 113

> *I saw a poster for Mission Impossible III the other day. I thought to myself: "It's not really impossible if he's already done it twice".*

The joke above forces a narrowed meaning of film title '*Mission Impossible*' which deviates from its use outside of the text. The phrase describes a mission that it seems to be impossible because it is so difficult, thus emphasising the protagonist's success and skill when he is able to complete the mission. I acknowledge here that in doing so, the film franchise have widened the meaning scope of 'impossible' to include 'difficult', but this type of hyperbole is commonplace and therefore not foregrounded. The presented reinterpretation of '*Mission Impossible*' in this text narrows to a description of the mission as categorically impossible, evidenced using the presentation of the speaker's direct thoughts, which contain negation '*it's not impossible*' and hypothesising '*if he's already done it twice*.' The text constructs a narrowed viewpoint which is externally deviant from the hearer's ideational knowledge of the Mission Impossible film franchise, and this clash results in humour which could either be at the expense of the speaker's misunderstanding, or at the proposed contradictory assertions of the film title.

Semantic narrowing can also involve the focal point of the text becoming more specific than originally realised, such as in the following example from 2016:

Example 114

> *A hotel mini-bar allows you to see into the future and what a can of Pepsi will cost in 2020.*

This example narrows the scope of noun phrase '*the future*' – usually a broad reference to an unknown situation which is temporally distant from the present - to the specific '*what a can of pepsi wil cost in 2020*'. The resulting reinterpretation can be inferred as a criticism of the expensive cost of drinks from a hotel mini-bar, therefore using humour's hostile function (2.2.3).

7.2.3 Pejoration

Pejoration, along with amelioration (7.2.4), describes a change in the contextual attitudes which surround a meaning: pejorative reinterpretation shifts to a more negatively perceived meaning, such as the phrase '*looked a million dollars*' in the text (115) below:

Example 115

> *I saw Lee Majors the bionic man the other day on the Royal Mile. He looked a million dollars... he's really let himself go...*

'*He looked a million dollars*' is commonly used as a description meaning attractive or expensive, but in example 115, this phrase undergoes a pejorative reinterpretation to describe its subject as looking bad, explicitly signalled by the phrase '*he's really let himself go*'. This meaning shift is an example of external deviation at a lexico-semantic level, and makes the character who is named & described in the text

crucial to the shift construction. The object of the first sentence '*Lee Majors the Bionic Man*' enables the pejorative shift to a negative evaluation, through the assumption that a bionic man would have cost more than a million dollars, and so looking a million dollars was a step down.

The example below (116) also pejorates the meaning of a commonly used phrase:

Example 116

I live every day like it's my last. Devastated.

The phrase '*live every day like it's your last*' has positive connotations of living life to the full, but this text forces a reinterpretative shift of the phrase to the sadness which would come before death, and therefore the speaker lives every day devastated. This shift is foregrounded as it deviates from the usual phrasal semantics, but is also an example of self-deprecation. Through the constructed meaning shift, the speaker is telling the audience that they are perpetually unhappy so that they can take pleasure in this, and this is an example of humour achieved through superiority (discussed in 2.2.3).

7.2.4 Amelioration

Amelioration is a shift towards a more positive meaning, for example the joke below (117) which involves a positive reframing of alcoholism:

Example 117

You have to think positively, for example, I don't have a drink problem. I have a drink opportunity.

Example 117 (above) constructs an ameliorative reinterpretation at an ideational level by forcing a shift from a negative evaluation of a '*problem*' to a positive '*opportunity*'. Opposition between '*a drink problem*' and '*a drink opportunity*' is constructed through syntactic triggers of negation and parallelism, as well as the semantic opposition between positive and negative implied by '*problem*' and '*opportunity*'. In addition to amelioration, the use of exemplifying in the text through the explicit marker '*for example*' also forces a reinterpretation of '*think positively*'. The text constructs a narrowed meaning of this phrase by specifically focussing on alcohol intake as an example of positive thinking, which reveals that drinking is central to the speaker's world view – this indicates that they do in fact have a drink problem, despite their negation of this proposition. The ameliorative shift from '*drink problem*' to '*drink opportunity*' only occurs within the speaker's mind, revealing to the audience that they are an alcoholic.

Both amelioration and pejoration were sometimes constructed in the same text, such as the example below:

Example 118

My girlfriend worries about me cheating on a night out, but I always try to reassure her and say to her: 'Why would I go out and have a burger when I have steak at home?' The only problem is, when you are drunk, burgers are well nice

This text exploits an analogy which objectifies women by positioning them as meats on a gradable scale of desirability, where '*girlfriend*' is equated with '*steak*', and superior to other women who are equated to '*burgers*'. The assumed intention of this analogy is to reassure a jealous partner, but the text explicitly signals a reinterpretation of this phrase through negating it with '*the only problem is'*, indicating that the assertion of the second sentence will oppose the first. Firstly, the text constructs a deviant ameliorative shift of '*burgers*' as being more desirable than '*steak*', constructed using the positive evaluative adjectival phrase '*well nice*', along with references to '*a night out*' and being '*drunk*', which have associations with eating fast food. There is also an element of pejorative reinterpretation at an interpersonal level, as the text constructs a shift of the analogy's function from a reassurance '*I won't cheat on you on a night out*' to a warning '*I might cheat on you if I'm drunk'*.

7.2.5 Literalisation

Literalisation was introduced in 7.2 as a term I have chosen to use to describe when a figurative word or phrase is deconstructed into the literal meaning of its components, which is always a combination of the shifts of bisociation and reinterpretation, such as the following:

Example 119

> *I remember my first date with my wife. She gave me butterflies, which was an odd gift.*

'*Gave me butterflies'* is a dead metaphor in English, indicating a feeling of excitement or nerves which is manifested as a feeling in the stomach. This is the assumed meaning of the phrase, with the object noun phrase '*my first date with my*

wife' supporting this figurative interpretation, as it is a situation which would cause nerves and excitement. The literalisation is constructed through the subordinate clause '*which was an odd gift*', forcing a reinterpretation of the phrase as a literal one. This is an explanatory clause which triggers reinterpretation through equating:

'X was Y'

'Butterflies [which] was an odd gift'

This constructed reinterpretative shift from a figurative to literal interpretation in a proposed textual meaning which is foregrounded through deviation at an ideational level, as the proposed literal textual meaning of the phrase deviates from its naturalised figurative usage in context. Giving butterflies as a gift is also foregrounded through deviation at an interpersonal level as it is an unusual gift to give to a date, as is noted by the speaker in the NP 'an odd gift'.

The literalisation of naturalised figurative meanings supports the argument that dead metaphors are not fixed in this state, and can be reawakened depending on both context and intention (Muller, 2008) – in the case of jokes, this reawakening is humour constructed through ideationally foregrounded reinterpretations.

7.2.6 Novel Meaning Attribution

This type of reinterpretation occurs when a text constructs a shift to new, unrelated meaning, which can be attributed to linguistic signs, or at an ideational or interpersonal level, as the textual analysis below will show.

The following example (120) constructs reinterpretation through attributing a new linguistic meaning to the noun phrase '*prima donna*'.

Example 120

> *I didn't realise pre-drinks meant before drinking. Because I used to get offended on a night out when my friends called me a prima donna, but now I realise it's just before I get a kebab.*

The naturalised meaning of '*prima don*na' is a diva, commonly used to describe an individual as high maintenance and/or stroppy. The new meaning attributed to this noun phrase in the text above (120) is before a kebab. This is constructed using the triggers in the table below:

Table 28 Reinterpreting Prima Donna

Trigger	**Example**
Temporal Deictic	• *I used to* • *Now*
Negation	• *I didn't realise*
Equating	• X means Y: *Predrinks meant before drinking* • X is Y: *It[i]s just before I get a kebab*

	• Phonological parallelism: *Predrinks/Prima Donna* • Lexical Parallelism: *Before* x 2 • Syntactic Parallelism: X is Y = *Predrinks means before drinking = it is just before I get a kebab*
Opposition	• X but Y: *I used to […] but now […]*

This reinterpreted meaning of the noun phrase '*prima donna*' is therefore a construction of a novel meaning which is unrelated to the naturalised meaning of the noun phrase, apart from a parosemic relationship with '*pre- my donner*' which can be understood to mean '*before I get a kebab*'. This means the joke is a combined shift of bisociation and reinterpretation.

The following three examples show how novel meaning attribution can occur at the ideational and interpersonal levels of text meaning, when the signified meaning of an entity, behaviour or reasoning for doing something is shifted to a new interpretation.

Example 121

> *A dog goes into a hardware store and says: "I'd like a job please". The hardware store owner says: "We don't hire dogs, why don't you go join the circus?" The dog replies: "Well, what would the circus want with a plumber".*

The naming strategies in this text force a shift in viewpoint, which reinterprets 'a dog' as 'a plumber'. The reinterpretation constructed in this joke shifts from being initially aligned with a human viewpoint, to with the viewpoint of the dog who presents an ideology where he sees nothing incongruous about him looking for gainful

employment as a plumber. This is an example of how different naming strategies can encode ideological viewpoints (Jeffries, 2010a).

Example 122

> *A lot of my friends put up their baby scans on Facebook – if they get more than 30 likes, they'll keep it.*

This text constructs reinterpretation of the reason for a behaviour. The naturalised assumption is that the goal of putting '*baby scans on Facebook*' is to share the news of a pregnancy with family and friends and signifies that, whether it was planned or not, the person announcing it intends to go ahead with the pregnancy. In the example above, the reason given for sharing the scan picture is to decide whether or not to go through with the pregnancy, which is a novel attribution of meaning to this action. The hypothetical situation presented constructs a text world where it is common practice to have an abortion if a baby scan gets less than 30 likes on a Facebook picture, signified by the plural noun phrase '*a lot of my friends*'. This reinterpreted meaning of the gesture is both ideationally deviant, as it contradicts ideational knowledge of what occurs on social media, and interpersonally deviant, by attributing a life-or-death judgement onto a Facebook like. The textually constructed meaning shift in this joke is also foregrounded because it concerns the ideologically sensitive subject of abortion.

7.3 Category Conclusions

This chapter has provided an overview of how reinterpretation occurred in joke texts. Reinterpretation is a constructed change of meaning which can either deviate internally, from meanings established earlier in the text, or externally, shifting from

naturalised semantic norms. A range of textual elements can trigger reinterpretation in different texts, and the resulting constructions can either involve a change of scope, connotations, or generate new meanings at the linguistic, ideational and interpersonal levels of meaning. Analysis has shown how reinterpretation usually entails that a bisociation will be present in the text, as to construct a new meaning, there must first be an initial interpretation evoked which can be discarded. This is an aspect of categorisation which I found difficult and will be evaluated in 12.2.

Chapter 8: Asymmetrical Comparison

This chapter will discuss the shift of asymmetrical comparison, which was defined as a constructed equivalence or comparison between dissonant concepts, temporarily altering their perceived ideational distance. The table below introduces the textual triggers and types of asymmetrical comparison which were found through textual meaning analysis. This category also has a fixed conceptual trigger* which will be discussed in 8.2.

Table 29 Asymmetrical Comparison

Asymmetrical Comparison	
Description	Constructing equivalence or comparability of ideationally dissonant concepts within the text.
Textual Triggers	*Fixed* - Equating & Opposing
Conceptual Triggers*	*Fixed* - Conceptual Ideational Distance
Types	- Character Asymmetry

	- Situational Asymmetry - Tonal Asymmetry - Temporal-Spatial Asymmetry

This section begins by examining the textual triggers which construct the 'comparative' aspect of this shift category (8.1). Following this, I will discuss the 'asymmetrical' aspects in the text, exploring how the ideational concept of asymmetry is uniquely essential to this shift category (8.2) and the different types of asymmetry which were found to be constructed in the data (8.3).

8.1 Textual Triggers of Asymmetrical Comparison

The textual conceptual function of equating and opposing is an essential textual element of Asymmetrical Comparison, due to the reliance of a constructed comparison and/or equivalence between concepts in this type of meaning shift. This section will illustrate the different ways in which equating and opposing were found to be constructed in the joke data sample. This addresses the 'comparison' aspect of the shift, which can be constructed within the text, but asymmetry is an ideational concept which will be addressed in 8.2.

8.1.1 Constructing Equivalence

The triggers of equating (see 5.2.4) which were found in the data are presented in the table below, showing degrees of equivalence constructed which proposed them to be exactly the same, or as similar in either a conceptual or sensory way. As outlined in 7.1.4, I have included adverbs of cause as a proposed trigger of

equivalence. I also argue below that both exemplifying and conditional modal structures can trigger conceptual equivalence, despite not being included in Jeffries' (2014a) linguistic model of equivalence.

Table 30 Equating in Asymmetrical Comparison

Equivalence Type	**Trigger**	**Example**
Proposed to be the same	Relational Verbs *X is Y*	*Example 123* *Surgery is just stabbing in a courteous environment*
Proposed relationship of similarity	Relational verbs *X is like Y*	*Example 124* *My mom called my bullies my friends, which is like the police calling the rapist your fuck buddy*
	X have a lot in common with Y	*Example 125* *Turns out us Muslims have a lot in common with vampires*
	Parallelism *X is A, Y is A, Z is A*	*Example 126* *Dodo died, Dodi died, Di died, Dando died... Surely Dido's looking a bit*

		worried. [phonological, lexical & syntactic]
	Relational + sensory perception verb *X [looks/tastes] like Y*	*Example 127* *I don't sun tan. My sunburn <u>looks like</u> a 1950s propaganda poster of the spread of communism.*
Proposed relationship of causality	Causal Adverbs *X so Y*	*Example 128* *Bethnal Green is half-Islamic and half-student, <u>so</u> basically everyone's walking around in their pyjamas all day long.*
	X because Y	*Example 129* *I had my boobs measured and bought a new bra. Now I call them Joe Cocker and Jennifer Warnes <u>because</u> they're up where they belong.*
Exemplifying and Enumerating	Apposition	*Example 130* *The world is a <u>dangerous</u> place; only yesterday <u>I went into Boots and punched someone in the face.</u>*

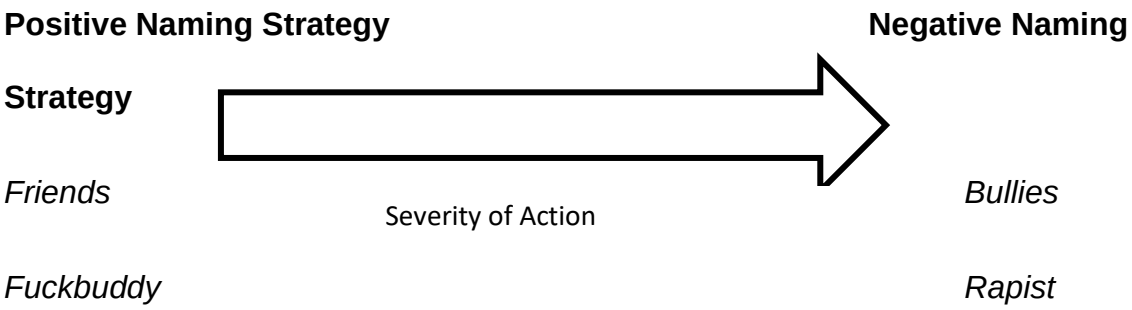
		Example 131 *I'm very traditional. On Christmas eve my uncle terry hung himself above the fireplace and we didn't take him down until the 6th of January.*
	Listing *[lexical & syntactic parallelism]*	*Example 132* *I am a triple threat. I am disabled, I'm gay, and I'm a prick. The BBC love me.*
Proposed conditional entailment	Conditional modal structure *If X then Y*	*Example 133* *'If windolene cleans windows then would a trampoline clean the homeless?'*

In example 123, the syntactic structure '*X is Y'* and relational verb '*is*' are used to construct the proposition that '*surgery*' and '*stabbing*' are exactly the same process, differing only in spatial context of '*a courteous environment*'. The acts of '*surgery*' and '*stabbing*' both involve penetrating a human with a sharp object, but a proposed equivalence on this basis contradicts ideational knowledge of the differing goals of each action: stabbing to cause deliberate harm, and surgery to prevent or mitigate harm. This results in a constructed meaning of equivalence which is perceived as asymmetrical, and therefore ideationally foregrounded. This text also involves a shift of Reinterpretation, as to understand the textual meaning a hearer is forced to re-evaluate their understanding of surgery. The '*X is Y*' structure often constructed

jokes where shifts of both Reinterpretation and Asymmetrical Comparison co-occurred.

Some joke texts constructed a relationship of proposed similarity using the relational verb structure '*X is like Y*' such as in example 124 (above), which asserts that parents labelling childhood '*bullies*' as '*friends*' is equivalent to '*the police calling the rapist your fuckbuddy*'. This joke text constructs what I will call tonal asymmetry, which is discussed in 8.3.3. The actions represented in this joke do both employ renaming strategies which function in a similar way, by choosing a more positive naming strategy for a perpetrator which mitigates the perceived severity of their negative actions (Fig. 13).

Figure 13 Asymmetrical Naming Strategies



The asymmetry in this example instead comes from the potential impact this renaming can have on the affected victim: playground teasing is recognised as something most children will experience and recover from quickly, but rape is a serious and traumatic criminal act with life-altering consequences for a victim, and so an authority figure mitigating this is an inappropriate response, thus foregrounded through deviation.

Similarity can also be asserted in terms of sensory equivalence, using verbs of mental perception to propose a likeness: either in looks, sound, feel, smell or taste. Example 127 uses MP verb '*looks like*' to construct equivalence between the unrelated concepts of '*sunburn*' and '*propaganda posters*' through the implied shared feature that they are both '*red*', and this identification of a novel relationship is foregrounded, resulting in humour. In addition to similarity, I found that relationships of causality, conditional modality, or exemplifying could all be constructed to convey a deviant ideational perception of equivalence, suggesting a possible development within the textual conceptual function of equating, such as in the examples (129 & 133) below:

Example 129

> *I had my boobs measured and bought a new bra. Now I call them Joe Cocker and Jennifer Warnes* ***<u>because</u> they're up where they belong.***

The explanatory clause (7.1.4) in bold explains why the speaker has equated their breasts with '*Joe Cocker and Jennifer Warnes*' following the purchase of a new bra, exploiting the ambiguity of *'up where they belong'* both as a literal deictic reference to her breasts and as an echoic mention of the song lyrics. Equating body parts with people will be discussed in 8.3.1 as a form of 'Character Asymmetry'.

I included the conditional modal structure 'If X, then Y' under the subheading of equating as, although this fulfils the function of hypothesising, it suggests that the presented hypotheticals can be viewed as a reason for perceived equivalence. The example below (133) utilises conditional modality to construct equivalence between

‘*windolene*’ and *‘trampoline’,* suggesting this relationship is entailed by their phonological similarity.

Example 133

> *‘If windolene cleans windows then would a trampoline clean the homeless?’*

The constructed asymmetrical comparison in this text is twofold: firstly, it suggests that the nouns ‘*Windolene*’ and ‘*trampoline*’ are equivalent, which contradicts ideational knowledge that they are unrelated. The text also proposes the existence of items with a purpose of cleaning ‘*the homeless*’, as though they were an inanimate concrete object such as a window: comparisons between humans and objects are discussed as an aspect of ‘character asymmetry’ (8.3.1).

Exemplifying is included within the function of equating in texts because it showed a deviant ideational belief of what constituted as an example of a particular concept. This was noted in example 131:

> *I’m very traditional. On Christmas eve my uncle terry hung himself above the fireplace and we didn’t take him down until the 6th of January.*

Here, exemplifying is used to propose that leaving a relative’s body hanging is an example of what it means to be traditional. This is similar to example 130 (below) which gives punching a stranger whilst out shopping as an example of danger.

> *The world is a dangerous place; only yesterday I went into Boots and punched someone in the face.*

Exemplifying is used in both texts to indicate that the speaker sees these actions as equivalent to the concepts they are describing, which is a foregrounded, deviant world view.

8.1.2 Constructing Opposition

The table below shows the triggers of opposition which were found to construct asymmetrical comparison. I have included conditional modals as an oppositional trigger in line with Davies (2013: 83), who notes that conditional '*if*' can be used to construct concessive opposition.

Table 31 Opposing in Asymmetrical Comparison

Opposition	**Trigger**	**Example**
Negation	X not Y	*Example 134* *I don't do Crossfit. I have a personality.*
Comparative	X is less than Y	*Example 135* *The right to bear arms is slightly less ludicrous than the right to arm bears.*

Concessive	X unless Y	*Example 136* *Drugs are not allowed at the Olympics. Unless you're in charge of thinking up the Opening Ceremony, in which case they're mandatory.*
	X except for Y	*Example 137* *I'm a classic example of a champagne socialist, except that I don't actually like champagne, and I do agree with quite a lot of Conservative policy.*
	How can X when Y?	*Example 138* *How can the Catholic Church be against gay marriage when there are colours in the Sistine Chapel that straight people can't even see?*
	If X then Y?	*Example 139* *If a dogs tail is still wagging then how can it be rape?*
Semantic	Conventional Opposites	*Example 140* *Employee of the month is a good example of how somebody can be both a winner and a loser at the same time.*

The negation in example 134 constructs a relationship of complementary opposition between doing '*crossfit*' and having '*a personality*', positioning the two as mutually exclusive. It is impossible for a person to not have a personality, so the implied

meaning of this text is that people who do crossfit are boring, therefore using the shift of asymmetrical comparison to disparage anyone who engages in this activity.

Comparative triggers were also found to construct a gradable opposition, and in example 135 this gradability positions bearing arms and arming bears on a scale of how ludicrous the concept is deemed to be. '*The right to bear arms*' is a controversial element of the American constitution, but remains protected by law and deeply valued by many, with lobby groups such as the NRA arguing that gun control would be an infringement on the freedom and liberty of US citizens. By contrast, '*the right to arm bears*' is not written into any constitutional law: bears do not have the need, nor the physical and psychological capacity, to operate guns, so is assumed that the right to arm bears would be universally viewed as '*ludicrous*', regardless of a person's ideological standpoint on guns. The textually constructed positioning of '*the right to bear arms*' as only '*slightly less ludicrous*' is therefore a constructed mitigation of the conceptual difference between the two propositions, which uses humour to criticise those with pro-gun ideologies.

I found that conditional modals were used to construct concessive opposition between hypothetical situations, such as in example 139 (below), where '*if*' was used to construct opposition between '*tail wagging*' and '*rape*' as a means of hypothetically justifying bestiality.

<u>If</u> a dogs tail is still wagging <u>then how</u> can it be rape?

Tail wagging is an action which indicates a dog's happiness, and this knowledge is used to construct the foregrounded proposition that tail wagging can be understood as a dog's consent, negating the possibility of rape. The constructed opposition is

foregrounded through deviation both in terms of semantics and because the topics of rape and bestiality are taboo, making it an example of 'sick humour' (Mindess et al, 1985).

Example 140 takes the semantic opposites of '*winner*' and '*loser*' and constructs the deviant proposition that an employee of the month can be both of these things at the same time. Rather than creating a textually constructed opposition, this text shifts conventional opposites into a foregrounded relationship of equivalence to suggest that anyone who has won the prize of employee of the month has also lost in terms of social status. This shows that the boundaries between equivalence and opposition are fuzzy and not always clear cut.

8.2 Conceptual Triggers of Asymmetry

Above I have presented the textual triggers of asymmetrical comparison, but this category of textually constructed meaning shift is unique in that it also requires a fixed conceptual trigger which reflects the 'asymmetry'. Asymmetrical comparisons rely on a conceptualised ideational distance or clash which cannot be constructed through linguistic structures alone, and instead draws on a 'system of conceptual knowledge that lies behind lexical concepts and their associated linguistic units' (Evans & Green, 2006: 207). According to Croft & Cruse, 'we have to bring to bear our full knowledge of the way the world is or, more accurately, the way we expect the world to be, in order to describe the precise meaning of an utterance' (Croft & Cruse, 2004: 30) and judging a text up against this knowledge determines whether the proposed textual meaning is compatible with naturalised ideational assumptions. This relies on engaging with the cognitive aspects of language, such as scripts,

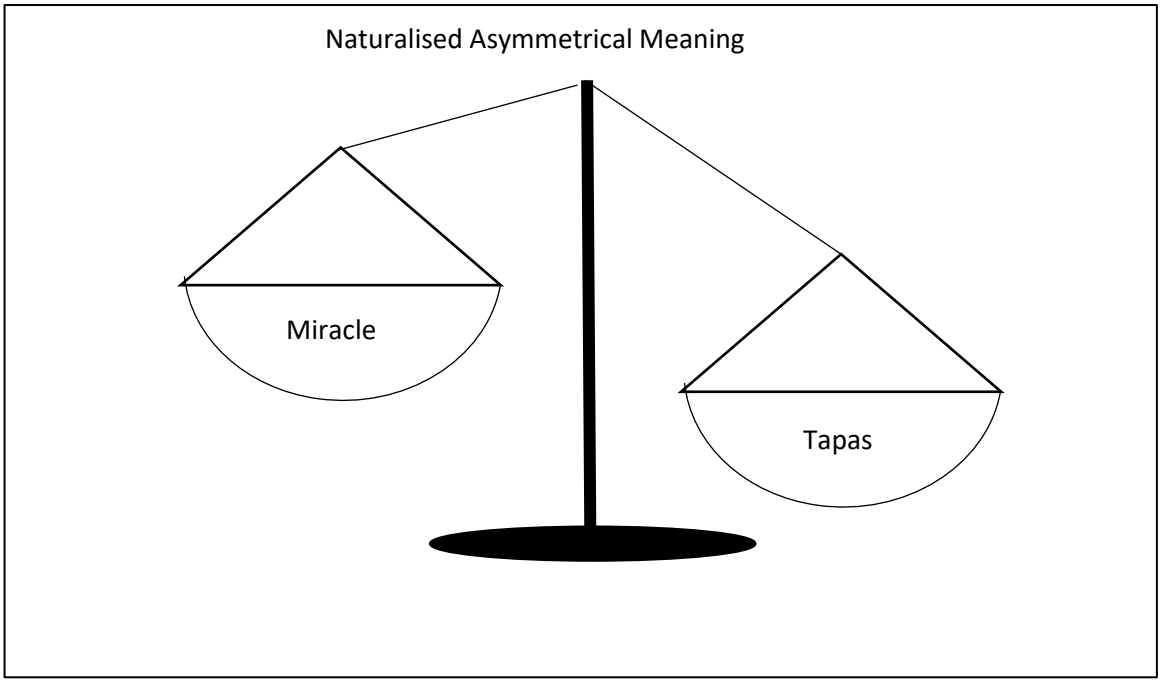
schemas and activity types (see 3.1.3), which are bodies of stored knowledge which are activated by a word or concept (Croft & Cruse, 2004).

Viana (2010) defines asymmetry as ‘a perceptual difference between the two scripts that usually participate in humour understanding (Viana, 2010: 506)’. I will exemplify this conceptual trigger by returning to the example (53) below which proposed equivalence between ‘*miracle*’ and ‘*tapas*’:

> *Jesus fed 5000 people with five loaves and two fishes. That’s not a miracle. That’s tapas.*

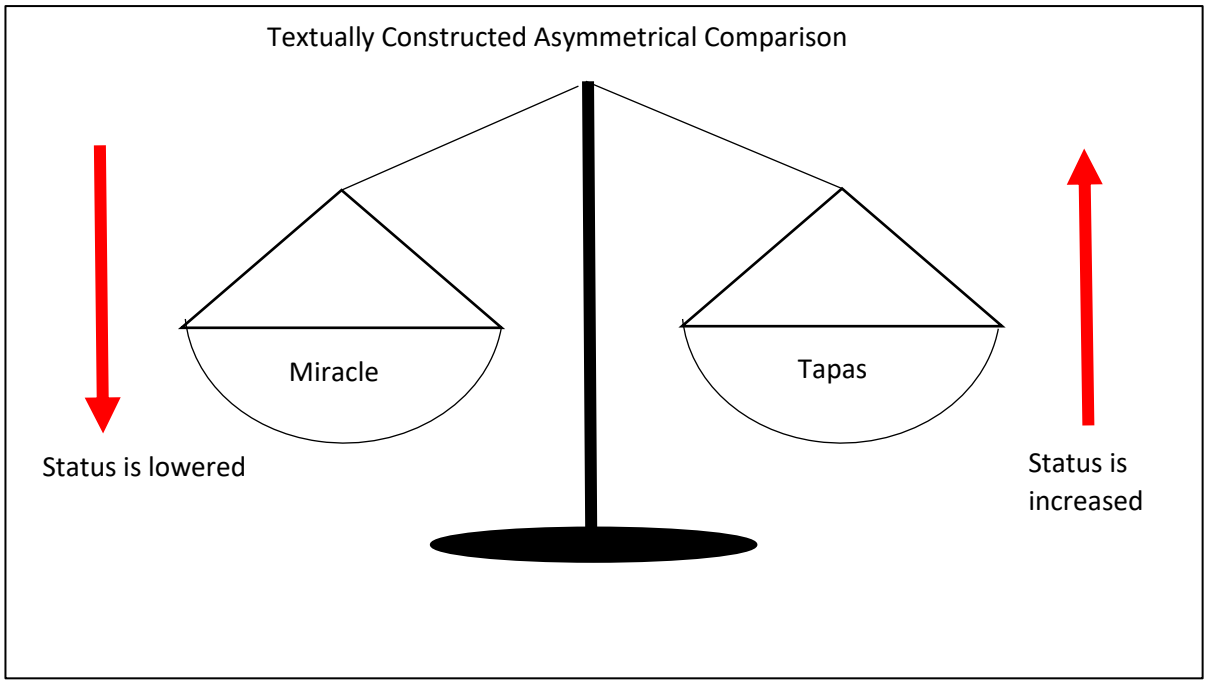
Figure 14 (below) represents the naturalised ideational asymmetry which was identified (5.3.4) between the concepts of miracles and tapas, in terms of their status and accessibility. Regardless of whether a hearer believes this to be true at an individual level, it is assumed that it will be stored as schematic knowledge of societal norms.

Figure 14 Modelling Asymmetry



The second figure below (15) represents the meaning shift of Asymmetrical Comparison that is constructed in the joke text, which proposes that miracles and tapas share a relationship of equivalence.

Figure 15 Modelling a Shift of Asymmetrical Comparison



The arrows in red represent the perceptual ‘shift’ which the concepts of miracles and tapas must undergo in order to be accepted as equal in the joke text, but in order for this shift to take place, they must be conceptualised as asymmetrical in the first place. A textually constructed equating or comparison between non-asymmetrical concepts would not be foregrounded, and therefore not humorous (Giora & Schwartz, 1998). Asymmetry can be identified through ideational knowledge of the prototypical features or ‘base profiles’ which are central to a concept. Items which share a base profile are understood to be closely related, and not sharing this feature would result in them being conceptualised as asymmetrical. 8.3 (below) will discuss the four different ways in which I propose asymmetry can manifest.

8.3 Types of Asymmetrical Comparison

I found that the constructed asymmetrical comparisons found in joke texts could be divided into four types of asymmetry: Character, Situational, Tonal and Temporal-Spatial. These types of clash are discussed below using example joke analysis, with the asymmetrical aspects of the text highlighted in bold.

8.3.1 Character Asymmetry

Character asymmetry describes a conceptual clash of the characters which are being compared and/or equated within the text. This was sometimes achieved through the equating of a human with either an animal or an inanimate object, often with a result of dehumanising the human character in the comparison:

Example 141

> ***My Nan*** *had a plastic hip put in, but I thought she should have replaced it with* ***a Slinky****, 'cause if she fell down the stairs again...*

Example 142

> *If* ***50 Cent*** *was shot nine times, why doesn't he sound like* ***a flute****?*

Example 143

> *I like* ***my men*** *how I like* ***my tea****. Strong, loose and from Yorkshire*

This dehumanisation process can also be constructed through the body parts of a person being compared to non-human entities:

Example 144

> ***My husband's penis*** *is like* ***a semi colon****. I can't remember what it's for and I never use it anyway.*

This example (144) uses the equating trigger '*X is like Y*' to equate human genitalia '*penis*' with a punctuation mark '*semi colon*' through a shared lack of use, resulting in a joke which disparages both the speaker and her husband's penis. The joke below (145) is also an asymmetrical comparison which is used to construct a negative evaluation of genitalia:

Example 145

> ***Every vagina*** *is* ***a unique snowflake... made of gammon****.*

The initial description '*a unique snowflake*' appears to be a body-positive statement about female genitalia, as this has positive connotations of elegance and beauty. The post-modifying adjectival phrase '*made of gammon*' forcing a conceptualisation of the sensory perceptive elements of '*gammon*' (taste, texture and appearance) being mapped onto the domain of '*vagina*', which is ideationally foregrounded, and understood to be a negative evaluation of vaginas.

As well as dehumanisation, equating human and non-human entities can cause an inanimate object to be anthropomorphised, such as in the below example:

Example 146

> *They tell us coconut oil is good for* ***our hair****. It doesn't seem to have done that well for* ***the coconut hair****.*

Here a coconut husk is proposed to be the coconut's '*hair*', presenting packaged noun phrase '*the coconut hair*' as given information which cannot be contradicted. This comparison is also achieved using oppositional triggers of parallelism, through the repetition of '*hair*', negation in the phrase '*doesn't seem to have done that well*',

and the semantic gradable opposition between '*good*' and '*not very well'*. The result is a constructed image of a coconut as a sentient being with bad hair, which is ideationally foregrounded.

Character asymmetry can also be constructed when one human party is equated with another. This could be someone with a different occupational or social role, or a fictional/supernatural being, all of which are exemplified in the texts below:

Example 147

> ***My dad*** *is like* ***a black James Bond****: it'd be great to see him, but he's unlikely to make an appearance.*

Example 148

> ***My father*** *was* ***a magician****. Well, not a magician, he just disappeared a lot when we were younger.*

Example 149

> *Turns out* ***us Muslims*** *have a lot in common with* ***vampires****. We can't eat between the hours of sunrise and sunset (during ramadan) we wear burqas to keep the sun from burning us and we flinch when we see crucifixes.*

Each of these examples (147-149) constructs a proposition of equivalence between the characters in bold using triggers of equating, followed by an explanatory clause which qualifies why they can be viewed as equivalent. The fact that these shared similarities are peripheral aspects of the characters, rather than their central defining

features, is why the comparison is judged to be asymmetrical and therefore foregrounded.

8.3.2 Situational Asymmetry

Situational asymmetry describes dissonance between the activities or situations which are being equated within the joke. This relates to Shank and Ableson's concept of 'activity types' (see 3.1.3), which is schematic knowledge of what certain activities involve, enabling cognitive judgements regarding the similarities or differences between two activities. Some examples of this type of asymmetry are provided below:

Example 150

> *I suppose **lesbian sex** is a bit like **cricket**, in that it goes on forever and there's a lot of men watching it at home, alone, on the internet.*

Example 151

> ***Sleeping with prostitutes** is like **making your cat dance with you on its hind legs**. You know it's wrong, but you try to convince yourself that they're enjoying it as well.*

These examples both use the same syntactic triggers to construct an asymmetrical comparison: the equating structure of '*X is like Y*', followed by an explanatory clause to justify the proposed equivalence. In example 150, the shared features listed below are proposed as reasons why '*lesbian sex*' can be equated with '*cricket*':

1. Goes on forever
2. Lots of men watching at home on the internet

Neither of these conditions are essential in order for either cricket or lesbian sex to take place, and the core conditions of each activity clash with eachother. To equate the two, this joke relies on the ideological knowledge that '*lesbian sex*' is a pervasive trope of pornography targeted at heterosexual men, as well as the assumption (whether grounded in truth or not) that lesbian sex can last longer than heterosexual intercourse, due to women not requiring a post-orgasm refractory period (Masters & Johnson, 1966). These non-salient features are used as a point of similarity which justifies the two activities being textually constructed as equal, despite the apparent differences in all other situational features, resulting in a textual meaning which is ideationally foregrounded.

8.3.3 Tonal Asymmetry

This type asymmetry was the most difficult type to label, and other options I considered to name the category were asymmetrical appropriateness, mood, seriousness or severity. When a text constructs a tonal asymmetrical comparison, it means that a relationship is constructed between two or more concepts which vary in terms of their physical or psychological impact. Blank (2013: 41) says that we attribute different metaphorical weights to coded ideational knowledge, with severe concepts such as death and disaster considered as 'heavier' than other aspects of life.

The joke below (152) is asymmetrical in tone due to the differing severity of the consequences:

Example 152

> *For me **dying** is a lot like **going camping**. I don't want to do it.*

Death is a serious, permanent and irreversible consequence, unlike camping which is a temporary and avoidable activity. This is evidenced through transitivity; '*dying*' is a material action supervention process which is unintentional and happens to the actor, whereas '*going camping*' is a material action intentional process, showing that the actor has agency in whether or not they perform this action. '*Going camping*' might not be considered enjoyable, but does allow a return to normal life once the trip is over, in contrast with '*dying*'. The text constructs a meaning which exaggerates how much the speaker dislikes camping, resulting in the disproportionately negative assessment that going camping is as bad as death.

Tonal asymmetry can also be constructed through the equating of taboo and non-taboo entities:

Example 153

> **Love** is like **a fart**. If you have to force it it's probably shit.

This joke equates '*love*', ideologically regarded as a desirable aspect of life, and equates it with the taboo scatological functions of a '*fart*' and '*shit*'. This is a foregrounded perceptual shift down for the concept of love from desirable and

positive to negative and triggering disgust, which is often intertwined with humour (Chiaro, 2018: 27).

Register mixing is also a form of tonal asymmetry, when clashing linguistic codes are used in one text:

Example 154

*'I'm mixing **beats that are phat and ill**, <u>like</u> **Pavarotti**.'*

The action of '*mixing beats*' and evaluative adjectives '*phat*' '*ill*' are associated with urban/hip-hop artists and musical styles, clashing with '*Pavarotti*', who is associated with classical operatic music which is perceived to be more high-brow.

A meaning shift achieved through tonal asymmetry can be modelled on a vertical axis, with the textual meaning forcing a conceptual downward shift of one of the compared elements. Expressions in English such as 'lowering the tone' or 'gutter humour' denote this perceived directionality of taboo references as a downward shift.

8.3.4 Temporal-Spatial Asymmetry

Temporal-Spatial asymmetry relates to the deictic aspects of the text: when and where. In jokes using this type of asymmetry, there is an equating between places or times which are distant from one another. These conceptualised deictic relations are what Croft & Cruse call 'situatedness' (Croft & Cruse, 2004), which include epistemic and cultural context as well as temporal and spatial locations.

The temporal asymmetry in the example below (155) is between the underlined noun phrases of ‘summer’ and ‘Thursday’.

Example 155

Did you enjoy summer this year? It was on a Thursday.

This example presents the clashing temporal deictic markers of ‘*summer*’ which usually lasts for several months, and ‘*on a Thursday*’, which is a short period of a single day, constructing a proposed textual meaning that summer lasted for a single day. The resulting implication is that there was a limited amount of summery weather that particular year, rather than that the season was shortened to one day. This exaggeration evokes the naturalised stereotype of bad British weather, so that the audience can find humour in their collective shared misfortune.

One example of spatial asymmetry is the comparison of a real place to a fictional one, such as in the following joke text:

Example 156

The average life expectancy of people in EastEnders is 42 – that's lower than Kabul.

This example constructs a comparison between a fictional London suburb and a middle-Eastern warzone ‘*Kabul*’. The comparative oppositional trigger ‘*lower than’* constructs average life expectancy on a gradable scale, and the naturalised assumption is that in war-torn areas this would be lower than London suburbs. This text subverts these assumptions by placing the fictional town in ‘*Eastenders*’ as lower on the life expectancy scale than Kabul. This deviation from expectations

highlights the exaggerated drama of soap operas and implies a critique from the speaker that they do not regard the program's high death rates to be believable.

Another aspect of spatial asymmetry is in terms of culture clashes, such as the text below (157) which constructs a comparison between British and African politics:

Example 157

> *I have no idea what's going on with **Brexit**, I had to go back to Africa to see what **a stable government** looks like.*

The deictic markers of '*go back to Africa*' and the noun phrase '*Brexit*' in this example construct an implied spatial opposition between 'here' (Britain) and 'there' (Africa), which are two places with many cultural and political differences. The opposition explicitly constructed in this example is between '*Brexit*' and '*a stable government*', suggesting that the British government was less stable than an African government as a result of Brexit, despite factors such as the Gambian constitutional crisis involving claims of election fraud, a military coup and the subsequent exile of the former president, which were occurring at the time the text was produced. This constructed textual meaning that Brexit is more unstable that African politics reveals the speaker's anti-Brexit ideology, and is an example of 'transgressive humour' which attacks established authorities (Saroglou & Anciaux, 2004: 2).

8.3.5 Multiple Asymmetries

The presented clashing concepts in a joke text can be asymmetrical in more than one of these ways at the same time. Often, situations that clash will also contain

characters or settings which are asymmetrical. I would argue that the joke example below (158) is asymmetrical in all four of the proposed ways:

Example 158

> *Why don't Africans go on cruises? That's exactly how they got us the last time.*

This joke constructs an implied equivalence between cruise ships and slave ships. The table below details the naturalised ideational asymmetry between these concepts within each type:

Figure 16 Jokes with Multiple Asymmetries

	Cruise Ships	**Slave Ships**
Character	Free African citizens going on holiday	Africans trafficked into slavery
Situational	Holidaying	Human Trafficking
Tonal	Everyday, Positive, Relatable	Global Atrocity, Negative, Unrelatable
Temporal-Spatial	Modern Day[14]	Colonial Era

There are differences between slave ships and cruise ships in almost every possible conceptual aspect as listed in the figure (16) above, yet they are equated in the joke text through the shared vessel of a '*ship*'. Use of the interrogative '*Why don't*

[14] I do not intend to dismiss the existence of modern slavery through this analysis, only to acknowledge that this is no longer legally or overtly practised in the current time

Africans go on cruises' means that it is given, unquestionable information that Africans don't go on cruises, and the only point which needs to be answered is the reasoning why: this is because of the proposed equivalence between slave and cruise ships. The text constructs this equivalence from the ideological perspective of '*Africans*', using the inclusive pronoun '*us*' in anaphoric reference to Africans, and exclusive pronoun '*they*' to implicitly refer to non-African (presumably white) people on boats, so is an example of transgressive humour being used to criticise the history of slavery, and successfully received as humorous, highlighting the importance of ideological power balances in reference to humours outcomes: jokes about slavery can be used to attack those with established power, which is a foregrounded shift of social relationships, resulting in humour. The attempted use of this type of humour by those historically in the role of powerful oppressors is a reinforcement of the systematic oppression faced by the joke's target, and can be interpreted as an indicator of a more widely held racist ideology outside of the joke's context. The result can be a failure (Bell, 2014) of the humour through rejection, such as a joke in 'Coronation Street' comparing a white character's hair to a fictional slave - which received 278 Ofcom complaints (Dyke, 2016) - or a New Zealand shopkeeper who made a slavery joke about a Maori customer (Hope 2020).

8.4 Category Conclusions

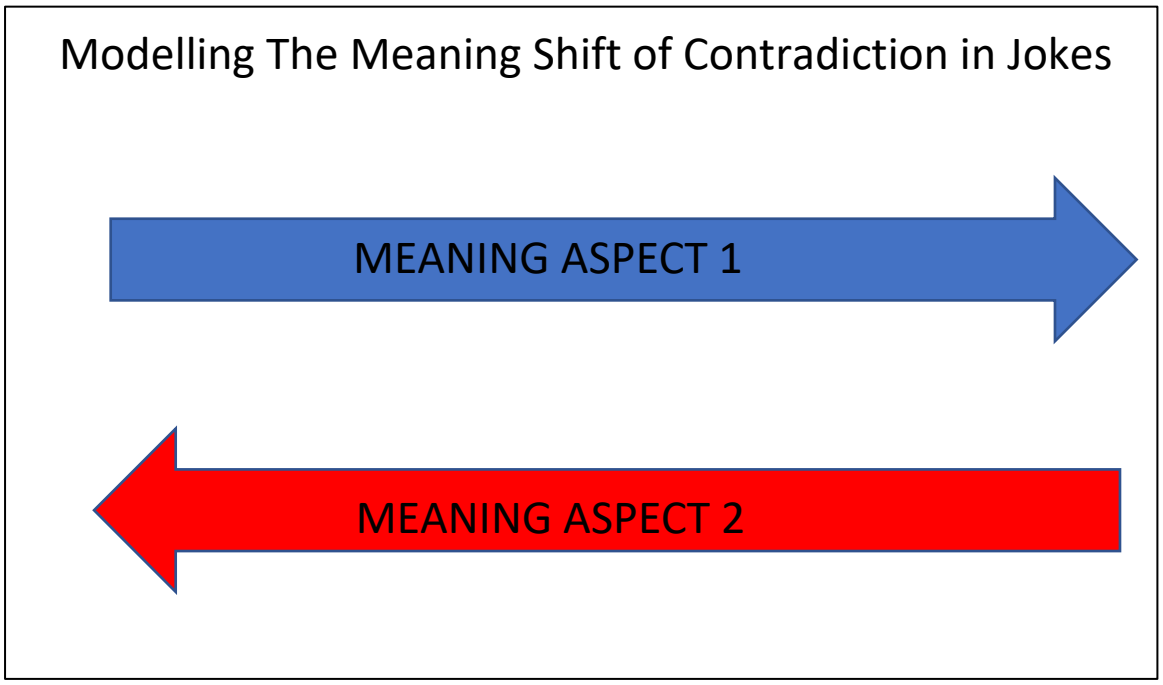
This chapter has shown how asymmetrical comparisons rely on both textual triggers and ideational conceptual knowledge to be constructed, with the textual conceptual function of equating and opposing performing the comparative aspect of the shift, and asymmetry being recognised through naturalised schematic knowledge of the world. Asymmetry is a subjective concept, but I have attempted to define clashing

relationships in terms of four aspects: characters, situations, tone and temporal-spatial context. This analytical process of showing how ideational aspects are encoded within a text, and how the resulting presented world view can deviate from naturalised assumptions about the world is what makes the model one based in critical stylistics, in line with my aims (1.1). There is much scope to continue research into the cognitive-linguistic aspects of conceptual asymmetry (see 12.2.1).

Chapter 9: Contradiction

This chapter will discuss the meaning shift of 'contradiction'. Contradiction occurs when opposing or contradictory meaning aspects are constructed within the same text, which can be labelled as meaning aspect 1 (MA1) and meaning aspect 2 (MA2) (see fig 17). The resulting construction is a text with meaning aspects which simultaneously pull in opposite directions, modelled below:

Figure 17 Modelling The Meaning Shift of Contradiction in Jokes



5.3.5 suggested that this always resulted in irony, as the simultaneous proposition of opposing meanings appeared synonymous with definitions of irony as ‘a conceptual paradox’ (Simpson, 2011) or a clash between elements of textual meaning (Jeffries, 2018), however example analysis will show that, whilst irony necessitates the presence of a contradiction, not every joke with an identified contradiction seemed ironic (9.2). The triggers and types of contradiction found in the joke data are summarised in the table below:

Table 32 Contradiction

Contradiction	
Description	Constructing opposing contradictory propositions within the text.
Textual Triggers	*Fixed* - Equating and/or Opposing - Flout of Manner
	Optional - n/a
Types	- Textual vs Textual - Textual vs Interpersonal - Textual vs Situational - Interpersonal vs Interpersonal - Interpersonal vs Situational - Situational vs Situational

	- Linguistic vs Linguistic

The sections below will provide example analysis of the textual triggers (9.1) and resulting types (9.2) of contradiction which were found in the data, showing that contradictory clashes can be constructed at and between the four levels of meaning identified by Jeffries (2018): linguistic, textual (ideational), interpersonal and situational.

9.1 Textual Triggers of Contradiction

This section will present the textual features which were found to construct Contradiction, with two fixed triggers: the textual conceptional function of equating and opposing (9.1.1-2), and a flout of manner (9.1.3).

9.1.1 Opposition

Opposing constructed contradictions much more frequently in the joke texts than equating. The different types of opposition identified which constructed contradictions in the joke data are presented in the table below:

Table 33 Opposition in Contradictions

Opposition Type	**Example**

Negation	*Example 159* *I bought one of those anti-bullying wristbands when they first came out. I say 'bought' - I actually stole it off a short, fat ginger kid.*
Lexico-semantic	*Example 160* *I'm a classic example of a champagne socialist, except that I don't actually like champagne, and I do agree with quite a lot of Conservative policy.*
Concessive	*Example 161* *No seriously, I am a feminist, just a lusty, ogling feminist. I'm a lesbian, in fact*
Contrastive	*Example 162* *I wanted to do a show about feminism. But my husband wouldn't let me.*
Parallelism	*Example 163* *Masculinity isn't toxic, masculinity is great and I will fight anyone who disagrees with me.*

Negating is used in shifts of contradiction to both present and negate the same proposition within the same text, such as example 159 (below):

> *I bought one of those anti-bullying wristbands when they first came out. I say 'bought' - I actually stole it off a short, fat ginger kid.*

The bound morpheme '*anti*' negates the action of bullying, so buying an anti-bullying wristband is an action which supports the anti-bullying ideology. This is contradicted by the naming and describing choices '*short, fat ginger kid*', as the pre-modifying adjectives are understood to be performing the act of bullying, therefore contradicting the '*anti-bullying*' message. The change of representation of this action from '*bought*' to '*stole*' is also an example of semantic opposition, as these actions are conventional complementary opposites, and one excludes the existence of another. Conventional semantic opposition and negating is combined with concessive opposition to construct a contradiction in the example 160 (below):

> *I'm a classic example of a champagne socialist, except that I don't actually like champagne, and I do agree with quite a lot of Conservative policy.*

Concessive opposition indicates that whatever text that follows will be exempt from the assertions which were made prior to the concession, and usually this is expected to be a minor concession which upholds the propositional content of a text with minor exemptions. In joke texts this was exploited so that the concessive element of the text undermines the whole textual meaning. The noun phrase '*a classic example of a champagne socialist*' triggers schematic knowledge of the liberal elite: a person whose political ideologies are left of centre, but with '*champagne*' indicating a socio-economic status of middle-to-upper class due to its connotations of luxury and expense. The concessive opposition marker '*except that*' indicates that the proceeding relational clause will describe a minor non-prototypical feature of this liberal elitism, and the negated construction '*I don't actually like champagne*' conforms with this expectation, but the second part of the coordinated clause '*I do agree with quite a lot of conservative policy'* is contradictory because conservatism is

semantically opposed to '*socialism*' in British politics. This is therefore constructing contrastive or binarised opposition using concessive triggers.

I argue that a break in the maxim of quality can also be a form of constructed opposition through lexico-semantics. This did not involve imposing judgements on whether all of the joke texts were true or not, as being untrue did not entail that a text would contain a shift of contradiction. Instead, here I refer only to breaks in the maxim of quality which were exploited to construct contradiction by presenting both the truth and the falsehood simultaneously in the textual meaning. This could be achieved either through accidental, covert or intentional breaks, as I will show below.

Phrases such as '*I'm lying*' or '*I'm kidding*' can explicitly signify a break in the maxim of quality, such as the examples (164-165) below:

Example 164

> *I once buggered a man unconscious. I'm lying, he was already unconscious when I found him.*

Example 165

> *I really wanted kids when I was in my early 20s but I could just never... lure them into my car. No, I'm kidding... I don't have a licence.*

These texts signal that everything preceding the 'lie' marker is to be discarded as untrue, and that a contradictory proposition will follow, therefore constructing mutually exclusive opposites through the admission of a flout of quality. Lies are usually classified as covert violations of the maxim of quality (Grice, 1975), but these texts explicitly acknowledge that it is a lie, therefore constructing a flout, not a

violation. Violations of the quality maxim were identified in some joke texts, where logically impossible propositions were presented, such as:

Example 166

> *Edinburgh is the only city that I have walked completely around and only gone uphill*

The contradictory propositions of walking a circular route and only going uphill are physically impossible, so it follows that the textual meaning must be a lie, despite the speaker's assertion that this is the truth. This textual meaning is understood to be an exaggeration of how hilly Edinburgh is.

There were also examples of constructed maxim infringement, where a speaker appears to accidentally break a maxim. I use the word 'appears' because this analysis involves taking the textual meaning at its surface level, and ignoring the awareness of the text's meta-communicative function as a joke which has been deliberately constructed to amuse. These faux-infringements of quality occurred when a text undermined its own premise, without constructing explicit awareness or acknowledgement of this contradiction, such as the example below:

Example 167

> *I despise cliquishness, for reasons only my four closest friends will ever properly understand*

The audience is aware that the speaker is performing the act of cliquishness through restricting access to their ideological reasoning to a closed peer group, despite their assertion that this is something they despise. This constructs a hypocritical contradiction which the speaker is unaware of, allowing the audience to find humour

in the stupidity of their self-contradiction. This is an example of dramatic irony which will be discussed in 9.2.

I expected opposition to be a fixed trigger of contradictions, due to the binary nature of this meaning shift, however there were some contradictory shifts in joke texts which did not seem to use textually constructed opposition and instead used equating, which is now discussed below.

9.1.2 Equating

The use of equating as a trigger to construct contradictions in texts was less common than opposition, and analysis in this section will show that it is difficult to determine whether this equating can be wholly separated from opposition, which is why I chose to use the combined TCF 'equating and opposing' as a fixed trigger of contradictions.

The identified aspects of equating were relational verb structure 'is' (ex. 168) and causal adverbials (ex. 169).

Example 168

> *I'm a card-carrying feminist - and the best thing about that is, it gives you a discount on your salary*

This example states that the '*best thing*' about being a '*card-carrying feminist*' is '*a discount on your salary*', which is contradictory because it proposes that lower pay for women is a positive aspect of feminism, when in fact the text is criticising the gender pay gap. Although there is an underlying conceptual aspect of opposition

between feminism and praising the gender pay gap, this is not explicitly constructed or acknowledged within the text, so I felt unable to classify this as containing opposition. The example below (169) also uses the equating of implied conceptual opposites:

Example 169

> *I got married recently, and it is genuinely an exciting time in our relationship <u>because</u> I'm expecting to have an affair.*

This example proposes that 'expecting to have an affair' is a reason for excitement in a new marriage, which contradicts what is assumed to be a successful relationship: it deviates from the naturalised ideological assumptions that affairs mark a troubled period in a relationship, and are possibly sought out when the marriage itself has become unexciting. This contradiction is an example of self-deprecating humour as it implies that the speaker's marriage is in fact not going very well, and humour is found through their misfortune.

The examples in this section have shown that it is difficult to separate contradiction from opposition, and that although it is not presented in the text, the equating of conceptual opposites is what constructs contradiction.

9.1.3 Flout of Manner

The only fixed textual feature identified in examples of contradiction was a flout of manner (see 5.2.7). This is because asserting contradictory propositions always results in a textual meaning which is unclear, such as in the following example:

Example 170

'My wife and I can never agree on holidays. I want to fly to exotic places and stay in five-star hotels. And she wants to come with me.'

The negated modal '*can never agree*' constructs the assumption that what '*I want*' will be opposed to the parallel clause '*what she wants*', in order to explicate the reason for their disagreement. This assumption is contradicted by the boloumaic modality '*she wants to come with me'*, which suggests an agreement, and therefore contradicts the proposition that they can never agree. The result is a confusing textual meaning, which is therefore a flout of manner, creating the implicature that in fact the disagreement is not about the type of holiday the couple should go on, but that the speaker wishes he could go on holiday without his wife.

9.2 Types of Contradiction

This section attempts to describe the levels of meaning at which it was possible for shifts of contradiction to take place, and discuss the differing effects of these types, particularly in relation to the concept of irony. My initial assumption was that a constructed contradiction would always result in irony. This is because contradiction as defined within my framework is almost synonymous with Simpson's (2011) description of irony as a conceptual paradox, considering that it is reliant on the maintenance of two contradictory meaning aspects within the text. Giora (1995) also labels irony as a form of indirect negation, where both clashing meaning aspects are processed in order to perceive the conceptual difference between them. Despite this, I encountered some joke examples (presented in the analysis below) which did contain textually constructed contradictions, but did not 'feel' ironic. Although this judgement lacks objectivity, this instinctive recognition of what is and is not ironic does at least support the idea of the existence and conceptual awareness of irony.

Jobert & Sorlin (2018) state that irony remains inadequately defined, despite large volumes of academic work on the subject, and say that this in itself is ironic. Work to define irony is understood to be ongoing and beyond the scope of this thesis, but this section will show that my framework is a step towards enabling the analysis of irony within the larger domain of jokes more generally, through showing that ironic jokes are always constructed using a contradiction, even if not all examples of contradiction are judged to be ironic.

Jeffries (2018) proposes that a clash can be at either the textual [ideational] or interpersonal levels of meaning, as well as incorporating an additional situational level which encompasses the non-linguistic elements of an ironic clash: an example of situational irony is the sea captain John Kendrick, who was killed by one of the cannons which was fired to salute him in honour. These possible levels of clash are presented in table 34 below:

Table 34 Clashes in a Theory of Textual Meaning

	Textual	Interpersonal	Situational
Textual	Text/Text		
Interpersonal	Text/Interpersonal	Interpersonal/Interpersonal	
Situational	Text/Situational	Interpersonal/Situational	Situational/Situational

Although this approach was formulated to describe Irony in a Theory of Textual Meaning (Jeffries, 2018), I found that not all clashes appeared to be ironic. I will therefore discuss the types of contradictory clash in terms of the level of meaning they occur at, highlighting whether or not this clash is an ironic one on an individual basis through textual analysis.

A difficulty in applying this approach to jokes is separating what is and is not 'textual', as technically all of the contradictions are realised through text in the sense that they are meanings made up of spoken language. Jeffries (2018) acknowledges that non-linguistic aspects of clashing can be reported in a text, and this can be recognised as a form of situational irony at a higher level of discourse – this is the approach I will take in the analysis below. I have also included a section on clashes at the 'linguistic' meaning level, which Jeffries (2018) did not identify, and the rationale for this is provided in 9.2.7.

9.2.1 Textual vs Textual

Textual contradictions occur when ideational or ideological aspects of meaning contradict each other, with Jeffries (2018) giving the oxymoronic examples of 'friendly fire' or 'deafening silence' in this category. The joke below constructs a contradictory clash at this textual level:

Example 171

> *No seriously, I am a feminist, just a lusty, ogling feminist. I'm a lesbian, in fact.*

The qualities of '*lusty, ogling*' contradict the core principles of feminism, so this text is constructing a meaning which is ideologically contradictory, and thus results in foregrounding through deviation. The text below (172) also constructs a contradiction through deviating from naturalised ideational knowledge:

Example 172

Dominatrixes certainly are some rude people. You'd think for that price they could afford a little kindness.

Expecting kindness from '*dominatrixes*' contradicts schematic knowledge of what this role involves, so this is an ideational contradiction. This text also implies a situational contradiction, by implying that the speaker has visited a dominatrix, only to be surprised that they are being rude to them and wishing instead for kindness. This is reported behaviour which defeats the object of visiting a dominatrix, and these behaviours are 'semiotic, but not linguistic' (Jeffries, 2018: 41). Situational contradictions are explored further in 9.2.6.

Both examples (171-172) above are examples of irony, but by contrast the two texts below did not feel ironic. These texts were included in the category of contradiction as they explicitly mark this constructed contradiction through metalinguistic function (Grundy, 2000: 202), by using '*I'm lying/kidding*' to reflexively comment upon their own speech acts in the text.

Example 173

I once buggered a man unconscious. I'm lying, he was already unconscious when I found him

Example 174

I really wanted kids when I was in my early 20s but I could just never... lure them into my car. No, I'm kidding... I don't have a licence.

Using the definition of a textual vs textual meaning clash, these jokes would fit the criteria of irony, so it is difficult to determine what makes these contradictions feel non-ironic. It could be because the contradiction is resolved by selecting a preferred

meaning, through discarding the lie for the truth which follows, so the clashing statements are not simultaneously upheld. However, this clashes with Jeffries (2018) distinction that selecting a preferred meaning from the clash is a defining feature of irony, separating it from paradox which relies on the maintenance of an unresolved clash.

9.2.2 Textual vs Interpersonal

This type of contradiction occurs when the meaning asserted by the text is contradicted by some aspect of pragmatics, such as in the examples below:

Example 175

> *Never Apologise! Never Explain! – Sorry, that's my motto.*

Example 176

> *Whenever someone says 'I don't believe in coincidences'. I say 'Oh my god! Me neither!'*

Both of these texts construct meanings which are contradicted by the function of their speech acts. This can occur in a linear fashion using separate structures, such as example 175 when the textual meaning of '*never apologise, never explain*' is contradicted by '*sorry that's my motto*', as this performs the acts of apologising and explaining which were negated in the text. Alternatively, the contradiction can be in the same syntactic structure, such as the phrase '*Oh my God! Me neither*' in example 176 - the surface textual meaning of this utterance is opposed to its illocutionary force. The speaker is negating their belief in coincidences using adverb 'neither', but the exclamative 'oh my god!' expresses excitement and surprise at holding the same belief as somebody else, which is a response associated with

recognising a coincidence. This means the speaker is claiming both agreement and disagreement at the same time through different aspects of textual meaning, which cannot logically co-occur and therefore construct a contradictory paradox which is perceived as ironic.

Dynel (2014) says that ironic constructions must be evaluative, but this did not seem to be the case in the jokes I found with a text vs interpersonal contradiction, such as in example 177 below:

Example 177

> *The first rule of Fight Club is that you don't talk about how Brad Pitt and Edward Norton turn out to be the same guy at the end.*

In this text there is a contradiction between what the text presents as '*the first rule of fight club'*, and what the actual first rule of fight club is known to be: '*you don't talk about fight club*' (Palahniuk, 1996). Despite the negation of '*don't talk about*' being identical to the original rule of Fight Club, the proceeding text flouts the maxim of quantity by providing the information which is supposed to be suppressed by this negation, thus defeating the point of the utterance. This text does not contain any textual features of evaluating such as adjectives or gradable comparisons, but does still feel ironic because the text proposes simultaneous meanings which are conceptually paradoxical. I argue instead that evaluative irony in jokes is specifically used to construct sarcasm, and this type of clash is discussed in 9.2.4.

9.2.3 Textual vs Situational

Texts can clash with the context in which they are produced, and I found that this was the case in the example below:

Example 178

> *My uncle told me it doesn't matter what you achieve in life, as long as you're happy and you can afford your own bed. That's the last thing he told me on his deathchair.*

The advice of the only necessity in life as being able to 'afford your own bed' is being passed down by an uncle who is situated in a 'deathchair', indicating that he has failed to follow his own advice. Although this is reported in the text, it is a non-linguistic action which clashes with the uncle's reported speech, resulting in a shift of the advice from a reassurance that he has all he needs to a warning not to repeat his mistakes, and this allows humour to be found in the uncle's misfortune.

9.2.4 Interpersonal vs Interpersonal

This type of contradiction occurred when the purpose of the speech act is at odds with what it is actually doing, for example in the text below (168), which was identified in 9.1.2 as simultaneously praising and criticising the gender pay gap:

> *I'm a card carrying feminist - and the best thing about that is, it gives you a discount on your salary*

This constructs an ironic, evaluative contradiction and therefore results in sarcasm, where the speaker is saying the opposite of what they mean. In this case it is transgressive humour being used to highlight and critique the gender pay gap, conveying the feminist ideology which the speaker proposed to have in the first sentence.

9.2.5 Interpersonal vs Situational

This type of contradiction was difficult to identify due to the fuzzy boundaries between interpersonal and situational meaning, particularly when being reported through a text. The only example I identified in my sample of jokes was the one below:

Example 179

> *People say I've got no willpower. But I've quit smoking loads of times.*

I argue that the contradiction here is between the intended assertion that the speaker does have '*willpower*' constructed through contrastive opposition as a contradiction to what '*people say*'. The reported situation which is given as a form of evidence for willpower actually betrays that, as the act of quitting '*loads of times*' presupposes that the speaker has also repeatedly resumed smoking, so this action contradicts their intention. As this action is represented through the text, it is also an example of a textual vs interpersonal clash.

9.2.6 Situational vs Situational

Situational contradictions were identified in my data when the clashing aspects of meaning were semiotic but not realised through language (Jeffries, 2018). As the jokes are all texts, this type of contradiction concerned the situations which were represented through text, such as the example below:

Example 180

> *My uncle Cleetus is illiterate and ambidextrous. Which is a double tragedy. He is unable to write, with both hands*

The contradictory elements of this text are the situations of being '*ambidextrous*' and '*illiterate*', which are conceptually paradoxical – the humour comes from recognising the ironic misfortune that the character Cleetus has the rare physical ability to write with both hands, which is undermined by illiteracy.

The joke below (181) also presents contradictory situations, though I will argue this does not result in irony, which is particularly interesting because the joke makes explicit reference to irony within the text:

Example 181

Americans only re-elected George Bush to prove they had a sense of irony.

The contradictory actions reported in this text are the ones carried out by '*Americans*', and the clash is between voting for someone and the implication that they do not support that person politically. The act of voting or offering political support is semiotic, as a cross on a ballot paper carries meaning, but this is not realised through language. The contradictory behaviour of voting for someone who you disagree with is a non-ironic clash, but there is another contradiction embedded in this text – the act of voting for the purposes of irony, but it not actually being considered ironic. This joke therefore alludes to the naturalised stereotype (usually levelled by Brits) that Americans do not 'get' irony,

9.2.7 Linguistic vs Linguistic

Linguistic contradictions are where clashing aspects of the linguistic system were simultaneously presented. These aspects were only counted as a contradiction if these meaning aspects were mutually exclusive (such as combining past and future tenses), so incongruities such as homonyms were not included in this type of clash

as they could co-occur without a conceptual paradox (see bisociation 6.1). Only two examples of linguistic contradiction were identified, and this was in the 80-joke sample (4.2.2).

Example 55

> *Abortion wasn't legalised in Ireland until 3075.*

The contradiction in this text is constructed through the use of clashing temporal deixis, suggesting that an act with a future date '*3075*' occurred in the past, which is logically impossible, but I am unsure whether this is an example of irony. Jeffries (2018) does not include linguistic level contradictions in the types of irony in textual meaning, citing this argument as a boundary marker between ironic clashes and other kinds of clashes: 'some kind of a clash between two aspects of the linguistic structure of a text might produce puns (phonology/lexis) or structural ambiguity (syntax), but these would not usually be seen as being ironic'. The other joke which contained linguistic contradiction did seem to be ironic, but as my analysis will show it also contained an additional contradiction at a higher level of meaning:

Example 182

> *I've run this joke past all my black and ethnic minority friends, and she said it was fine.*

Joke example 182 mixes contradictory uses of plural and singular nouns and pronouns, with '*All*' and '*Friends*' indicating a collective group, but the singular pronoun '*she*' contradicting this constructed meaning. As well as the identified linguistic opposition between singular and plural, the constructed text consists of the speaker trying to assure her audience that she is behaving in a way that is inclusive and conscious of racial bias, whilst simultaneously revealing that she does not have

relationships with many non-white people: through trying to appear conscientious she has inadvertently displayed her own ignorance, and this is perceived to be ironic. This shows that linguistic contradictions can help to construct irony, but only where another contradiction was constructed at a higher level of meaning, supporting Jeffries (2018) distinction between linguistic clashes and ironic texts.

9.3 Category Conclusions

This chapter has shown that contradiction is a textual construction of two meaning aspects, achieved through two fixed triggers: a flout of manner, and equating or opposing (9.1). I have illustrated the fuzzy boundaries between equating and opposing in constructed contradictions, and put forward a possible argument that the few examples which constructed contradiction through equating were reliant on the exploitation of a conceptual opposition, so further research is needed to determine whether this can be subsumed under the trigger of opposing. 9.2 detailed how different types of contradiction can occur between the linguistic, textual, interpersonal and situational levels of meaning, and that often there is overlap between these levels with jokes constructing multi-level contradictory meanings. Finally, this section has highlighted the difficulty in defining whether a contradiction is ironic, showing through textual analysis that all ironic jokes used a contradiction, but that not all identified contradictions in my data felt ironic. As there were only 30 examples of Contradiction found in the data, more joke texts with this shift would need to be analysed in order to provide a comprehensive picture of the ways Contradiction is constructed in joke texts, particularly in relation to irony, and this is another avenue for further research and development of the TCMSJ framework (12.3.5).

Chapter 10: Performative Reinforcement

This chapter will discuss the shift of Performative Reinforcement. This is structured slightly differently to the other shift chapters above (6-9), due to it only having one fixed trigger: the pragmatic aspect of performativity (introduced in 5.3.6). 10.1 will therefore be a brief reprisal of what performative reinforcement means, and a discussion of how this is different to non-humorous performative language. I will use example textual analysis to show how texts were identified to construct performances which reinforced the textual meaning. It was also difficult to identify patterns or sub-types within this shift category because there were only 23 examples of performative reinforcement identified in the 565-joke sample, however I was able to divide jokes in terms of whether the performer was constructed to be the speaker, a third party, or the audience (table 35) and 10.2 will discuss these three types.

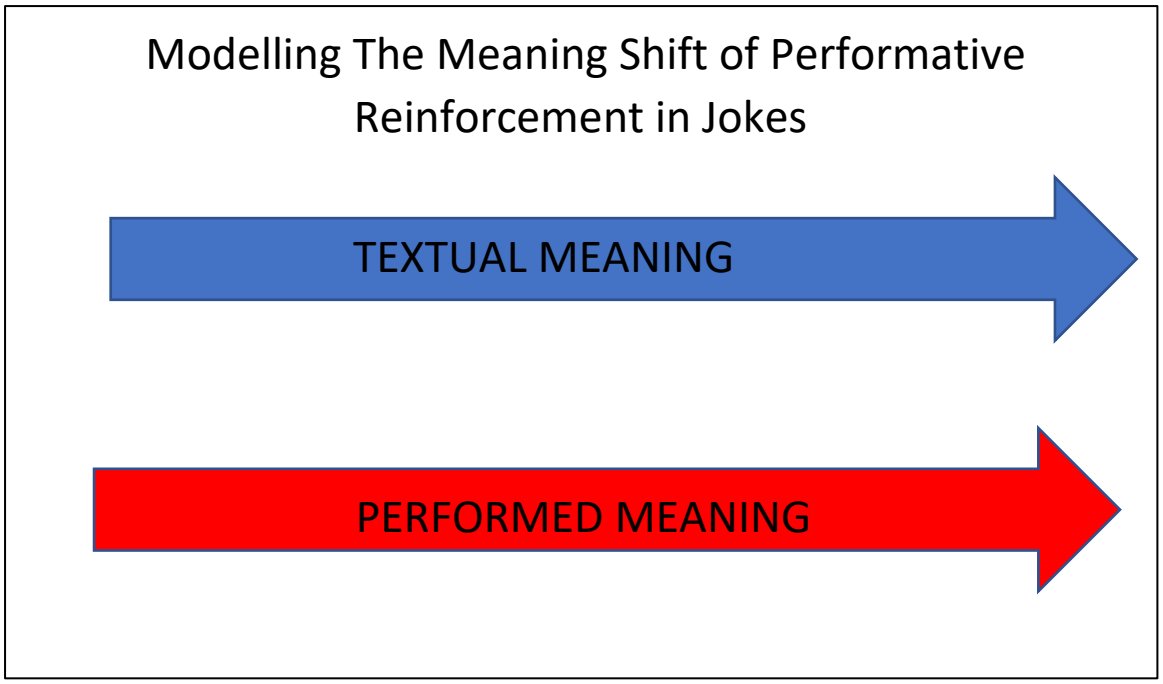
Table 35 Performative Reinforcement

Performative Reinforcement	
Description	Language/behaviour within the text which reinforces/performs what is proposed by the text.
Textual Triggers	Performativity (fixed)
Types	- Speaker as the Performer - Third Party Performer - Audience as the Performer

10.1 Triggering Performative Reinforcement

Performative reinforcement is identified through the presence of language/behaviour within the text which reinforces/performs what is proposed by the text. To construct humour, the performance must reinforce some aspect of the textually constructed meaning in order to achieve foregrounding. Unlike the rest of the proposed shift categories within the TCMSJ framework, which rely on clashes between some elements of the texts and are therefore foregrounded through deviation, performative reinforcement has two aspects of meaning which are 'pushing' in the same direction. I would therefore argue that the phenomenon of performative reinforcement is a kind of foregrounding through parallelism between the textual and interpersonal levels of meaning, and this is what results in humour. This is modelled below (fig. 18):

Figure 18 Modelling Performative Reinforcement



This shift is inevitably triggered, in all cases, through performativity, which was introduced in 5.3.6 as language which performs an action. Although this is a fixed trigger of performative reinforcement, the presence of performativity alone cannot be said to construct humour, as otherwise texts like ‘thank you’ would be perceived as humorous. Based on limited data, I propose two conditions for how the 23 joke examples of performative reinforcement could be distinguished from non-humorous performativity.

The first difference I found in performative reinforcement jokes was that they performed concepts, rather than actions or goals in the way that speech acts perform the functions of thanking, praising, declaring. I am hesitantly labelling these as ‘conventional non-performables’, though a much larger set of data would be needed

to determine whether this is always the case with performative reinforcement. The table below contains examples of these conventional non-performables.

Table 36 Conventional Non-Performables

Performed Concept	**Joke Example**
Virtue Signalling	*Example 183* *It's really hard to define 'virtue signalling', as I was saying the other day to some of my Muslim friends over a fair-trade coffee in our local feminist bookshop.*
ADHD	*Example 184* *What do we want!? More research into a cure for ADHD!* *When do we want it!? Let's play swingball!*
Shoehorning	*Example 185* *I wonder if the inventor of the shoehorn ever tries to bring it up in conversation?*
Vagueness	*Example 186* *I've only got two weaknesses: being vague, and another weakness.*
Pretentiousness	*Example 187* *Someone once said to me 'Billie you are so pretentious' - I think it was Jean Paul Sartre. Or it could've been the Dalai Lama, I forget.*

By breaking with conventional norms of language performativity, these texts are not only foregrounded through parallelism, but also deviation at an interpersonal level. Another way in which humorous performativity deviates from communicative norms is in seeing both the textual meaning and the interpersonal meaning as separate entities simultaneously. Language is usually divided up into being either constative or performative, but constructed performative reinforcement sees a text as a duplicitous construction of both constative and performative, such as in the joke below:

Example 188

> *I don't trust anyone with no self doubt. I'm 90% self doubt, or 80%, I've probably done the maths wrong.*

The second sentence in this joke constructs a surface textual meaning, which is understood to be fulfilling the role of telling the audience about themselves, but through this description the speaker is 'doing' self-doubt, therefore performing the information they are trying to convey. For this reason it could possibly be argued that performative reinforcement is a sub-type of bisociation, with the textual and interpersonal meaning being processed in tandem, but I am still unsure on this point, as bisociation is pivot between two separate meanings, but performative reinforcement is constructed around meanings which are inextricably linked. This is not something I could draw a conclusion on in this thesis and further examples of performative reinforcement will need to be explored to refine this aspect of the framework (12.2.1).

Although performativity is the only fixed trigger of this shift type, textual analysis can explain the elements in a text which support this shift construction, so example analysis of PR in terms of TCFs is provided below:

10.1.1 Naming & Describing

Choosing how to name and describe within a joke text is important to constructing Performative Reinforcement as only certain noun and adjective choices would result in meaning performance. The analysis below will explore these choices, and how alternative naming or describing could 'kill the joke' (Jodlowiec, 2019), rendering it no longer humorous.

Example 187

> *Someone once said to me 'Billie you are so pretentious' - I think it was Jean Paul Sartre. Or it could've been the Dalai Lama, I forget.*

The people named in this joke as potential producers of the quoted direct speech are regarded to be high-brow, philosophical figures, so referencing them in this text performs the act of pretentiousness. The alternative names which could fill those noun phrase slots and still construct a performance of pretentiousness are therefore restricted to other similarly regarded figures. A change to names which did not have the same ideological connotations, such as '*my mum*' or '*my friend Kate*' would not change the constative textual meaning that '*someone*' once called the speaker '*so pretentious*' and she does not remember who. These alternative noun choices would not perform the concept of '*pretentiousness*', however, and therefore remove the

joke element of the text. The same is true in the naming and describing in example (183) below:

> *It's really hard to define 'virtue signalling', as I was saying the other day to some of my Muslim friends over a fair-trade coffee in our local feminist bookshop.*

The Performative Reinforcement in this example is constructed through the naming and describing in the text. 'Virtue Signalling' is the only noun in the main clause of the text. The proposition that it is hard to define will prime the audience to search for their own definition, and this will trigger their ideational knowledge of what virtue signalling is. The noun phrase is defined by the Cambridge Dictionary (2020) as 'an attempt to show other people that you are a good person, for example by expressing opinions that will be acceptable to them', and tends to be used as a pejorative slur to attack those on the left in political discourse (Stollznow, 2020; Waterson, 2020). The noun phrase *'some of my* ***Muslim friends*** *over a* ***fair-trade coffee*** *in our* ***local feminist*** *bookshop'* performs the act of virtue signalling by providing a list of the virtuous things the speaker has done in the past to an audience in the present discourse context. The performativity in this text is specifically encoded through the premodifiers (in bold) due to their ideological connotations of ethics and diversity, and a choice of different pre-modifying adjectives, or omitting them altogether, would deconstruct the performative reinforcement as the invented example (189) below shows:

Example 189

> *It's really hard to define 'virtue signalling', as I was saying the other day to some of my [**male]** friends over a [**delicious]** coffee in a [**large]** bookshop.*

10.1.2 Hypothesising

Hypothesising was found to construct a shift of Performative Reinforcement by presenting a hypothetical performance of an element of text, illustrated in example (185) below:

> *I wonder if the inventor of the shoehorn ever tries to bring it up in conversation?*

Through use of mental cognition verb ‘wonder’ and the modal ‘if’, this text constructs a hypothetical situation in which the inventor of the shoehorn tries to bring their invention up in conversation. This hypothesised behaviour would perform the action of ‘shoehorning’, which is a metaphorical description of forcing an irrelevant proposition into a conversation. This Performative Reinforcement also relies on the dual-meaning of the word ‘shoehorn’, with one as a literal concrete noun (the shoehorn) and the other as a metaphorical verb (to shoehorn), so this is joke constructs an additional shift of Bisociation.

10.1.3 Implying & Assuming

The TCF of Implying and Assuming constructed Performative Reinforcement in the two examples below (184 & 186) by using the breaking of Gricean maxims as a means of performance.

Example 184

> *What do we want!? More research into a cure for ADHD! When do we want it!? Let's play swingball!*

Example 186

I've only got two weaknesses: being vague, and another weakness.

Example 186 flouts the maxim of quantity in order to perform vagueness. This flout is achieved through deviation from the expectation that, following the constructed enumerating of '*two weaknesses*', both weaknesses will be identified. Instead, the text identifies one weakness '*being vague*' and does not provide a sufficient quantity of information on what the second weakness is. This leads to the implication that the flout is a performance of the speaker's first weakness, as they are being vague.

The other example (184) is a break of the maxim of relation, by deviating from the expected last line of the activist chant '*now'* with unrelated request to '*play swingball*'. This break in relevance performs the behaviour associated with ADHD, which is characterised by becoming easily distracted and an inability to remain focussed on a single topic. This is another example of 'faux-infringement' which was introduced in section 7.1: the speaker could have accidentally added an irrelevant utterance, due to them being distracted because of ADHD, but jokes have a second meta-level of communicative intention, in that they are pre-written texts produced with the intention to amuse, and from this perspective '*lets play swingball*' is a deliberately constructed flout of relevance. This highlights how jokes can collapse the author/character dichotomy of a text by being written and performed in the first person by one text producer, and the difficulty this poses in classifying them as either fictional or non-fictional texts.

10.2 Types of Performative Reinforcement

The small amount of jokes containing Performative Reinforcement made it difficult to identify patterns or themes, and further analysis of a larger sample would be needed to draw any firm conclusions about this type of humorous meaning shift. The example analysis in this section shows the emerging distinctions between types of performativity that were present in the texts analysed, and this was based on who enacted the performative action: the speaker, the audience, or a third party.

10.2.1 The Speaker as the Performer

In these jokes, the speaker is themself the performer of the reinforcing action, either by performing within the present discourse, or through the reporting of a past reinforcing action.

Example 190 (below) constructs their Performative Reinforcement in the present discourse context:

Example 190

> *I'm a creature of ego. I think we all are. But especially me.*

The adverbial phrase 'especially me' reinforces that the speaker is a creature of ego, by being a textual performance of egoism. In the joke below (191), the speaker instead reports a past action in order to reinforce the proposition that they are dyslexic:

Example 191

> *I realised I was dyslexic when I went to a toga party dressed as a goat.*

The past tense mental cognition verb '*realised*' in this text means that there is no way to question the speaker's dyslexia, as for them to realise they have dyslexia, the logical presupposition is that they are dyslexic. The behaviour they report which caused this realisation is initially foregrounded through deviation at an ideational level, because '*going to a toga party dressed as a goat*' is not a prototypical feature of dyslexia. The resulting implication is that the speaker misread the party invitation due to their dyslexia, and therefore this behaviour is a reported performance of the proposition that they are dyslexic. This also relies on the co-construction of graphological bisociation, through the anagrams of '*toga*' and '*goat*'.

10.2.2 The Third-Party Performer

Some examples of performative reinforcement were constructed through texts reporting the actions of others, such as the example below, where the speaker makes an assertion about their mother which is reinforced through a hypothetical performance:

Example 192

> *My mother is so pessimistic. If there were an Olympics of pessimism, she wouldn't fancy her chances.*

This text begins by describing the speaker's mother as pessimistic, followed by a reported hypothetical situation in which the mother takes part in the '*Olympics of pessimism*', constructed using the conditional modal structure '*if X, then Y*'. The Olympics are a platform for elite competitors to determine who is the best within a certain field, so the expectation is that for an Olympics of pessimism, someone who is a very pessimistic person would win. This expectation is subverted through the indirect reporting of his mother's thoughts, which indicate that she '*wouldn't fancy her*

chances', performing the behaviour of pessimism, thus reinforcing the assertion that she is pessimistic. This example is interesting because the text constructs both performative reinforcement and contradiction, despite these category descriptions seeming to be mutually exclusive, with meanings either pushing in the same or opposite directions. The mother's thoughts perform her pessimism, but this performed pessimism would result in success at the '*olympics of pessimism*' and conflicts with the negative evaluative quality of '***wouldn't fancy her chances***', resulting in a paradoxical contradiction.

10.2.3 The Audience as the Performer

This type of Performative Reinforcement is constructed when a speaker attempts to get the audience to perform the reinforcing action, such as in this example:

Example 193

> *How many people here are psychic? Raise my hand!*

This joke relies on hypothetical performativity on the part of the addressee, in order to reinforce the proposition that they are psychic. The first sentence is an interrogative, asking for those in the audience who are psychic to identify themselves. In audience participations this would usually be done by either calling out or raising their own hands. In this particular example the speaker asks instead for any psychics in the audience to '*raise my hand*', and this deviation from normal communicative practice is foregrounded at an ideational and interpersonal level. An addressee raising the speaker's hand would be a performance of the psychic powers of telekinesis, thus confirming that they are psychic through their performance. This proposed action is also foregrounded at an ideational level. Raise is generally a MAI applied to a person's own body parts 'I raise my leg', and for an actor to raise

something other than themselves they also need to be proximal to the object so that they can touch it ‘I raise this glass’. In example 193, the request of the audience members to raise someone else’s hand without applying physical force is deviant from logical possibility, and this can only be reconciled by interpreting the gesture as a performance of their psychic abilities, as well as an indication that they wish to be counted in the group of psychics.

Not all requested audience performances were for impossible acts. Other examples of attempting to get the audience to perform included *‘applause’ (194)* and *‘raising their own hands’ (195)*:

Example 194

Let's have a round of applause for those who are easily led...

Example 195

Pop up your hand if you like participating in market research.

Example 194 would result in those applauding performing the act of being easily led, and raising a hand to signify enjoyment of market research would perform the act of participating in market research. These types of jokes are restricted to the performance context of a stand-up comedy show with audience members, and cannot function as a joke without multiple addressees, which I would argue makes them unique compared to any other jokes analysed in the current research.

10.3 Category Conclusions

This chapter has discussed the shift of performative reinforcement, concluding that it is constructed through the fixed trigger of performativity which differs from non-humorous performative texts by being applied to non-performables, and results in a

dual-perception of constative and performative meanings. As this shift type was rare in my data further analysis is needed to formalise patterns and types within this shift, but I was able to identify three emerging types based on the textually constructed identity of the performer. In particular further research is needed to determine the relationship of this category with bisociation which also constructs simultaneous dual-meanings (12.2).

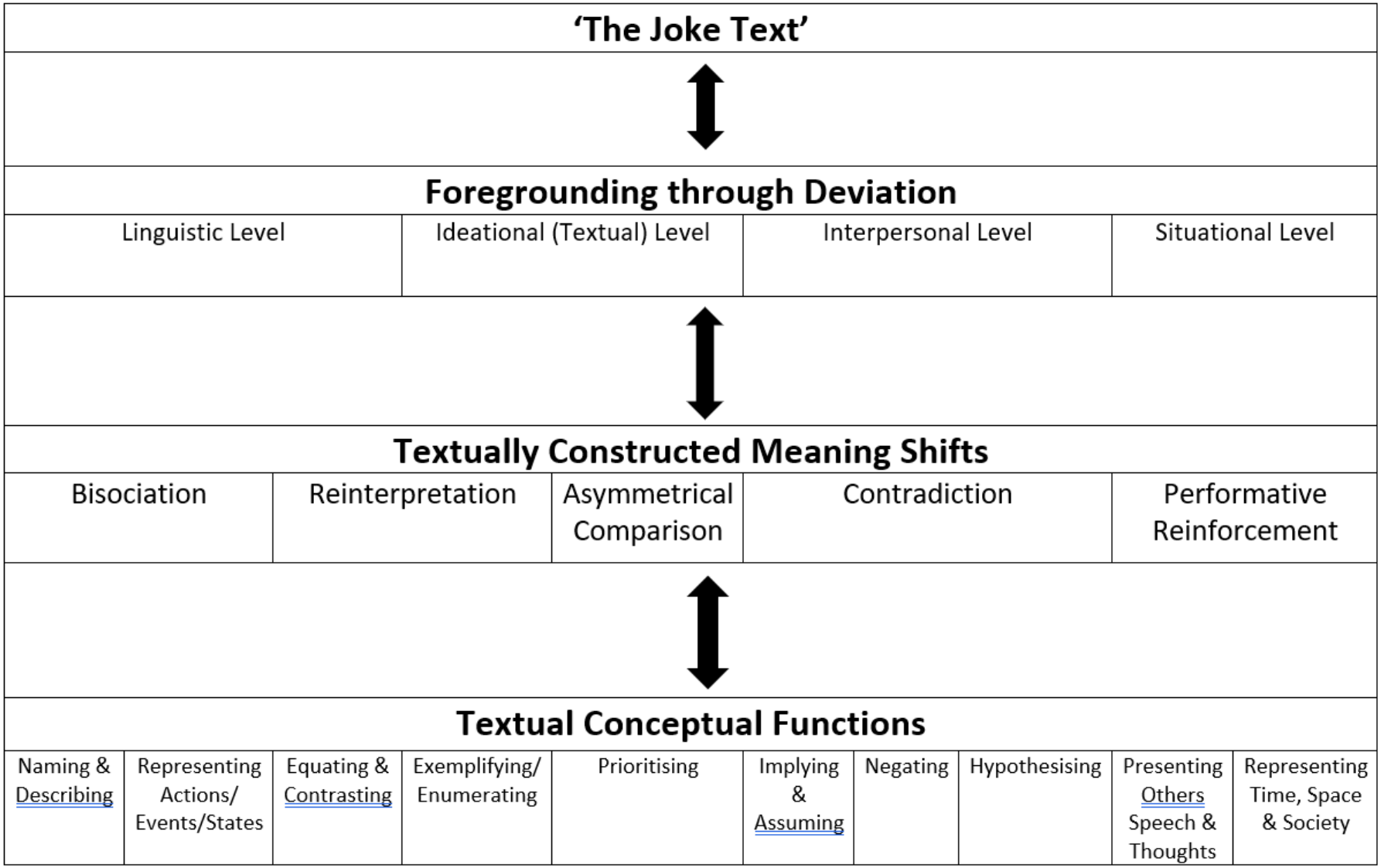
Chapter 11: Bringing The Framework Together

The TCMSJ is a proposed theoretical framework for the analysis of jokes, which aims to explain how humorous textual meanings are constructed. Chapters 6-10 have discussed the five categories of meaning shift individually, but this chapter presents the framework as a whole, in order to show what an analysis of Textually Constructed Meaning Shifts in Jokes would look like. The modelled structure of the framework and its relationship to the theory of textual meaning is illustrated below (11.1), followed by example analysis (11.2) to illustrate how the framework functions in use. Finally, 11.3 discusses examples in the data which the TCMSJ could not account for and considers possible explanations for why those examples of humour proved to be problematic.

11.1 Modelling the TCMSJ Framework

Joke analysis using the TCMSJ framework is a multi-step process which is modelled below (fig. 19), showing the different elements which can combine to construct a humorous textual meaning:

Figure 19 Modelling the Theoretical Framework of Textually Constructed Meaning Shifts in Jokes


'The Joke Text'
Foregrounding through Deviation
Linguistic Level
Ideational (Textual) Level
Interpersonal Level
Situational Level
Textually Constructed Meaning Shifts
Bisociation
Reinterpretation
Asymmetrical Comparison
Contradiction
Performative Reinforcement
Textual Conceptual Functions
Naming & Describing
Representing Actions/ Events/States
Equating & Contrasting
Exemplifying/ Enumerating
Prioritising
Implying & Assuming
Negating
Hypothesising
Presenting Others Speech & Thoughts
Representing Time, Space & Society

The bottom level of fig. 19 contains the textual conceptual functions which are the elements used to construct any textual meaning. Choices made within each TCF in a joke text will contain both meaning shift triggers and supporting aspects in order to construct a meaning shift, and this shift will be recognised as being foregrounded at either the linguistic, ideational, interpersonal or situational levels. Recognition of this foregrounded textual meaning shift accounts for appreciation of the humour, as in 2.2 I concluded that foregrounding is synonymous with incongruity, and that incongruity is essential for creating a humorous meaning. The arrows on the model are bi-directional because I believe TCMSJ analysis can begin from either a top-down or a bottom-up approach. When used from the top down, analysis would begin with a text which was pre-judged to be a joke, and identify which textually constructed meaning shifts are present, followed by TCF analysis to determine how these shifts are constructed within the joke text. Conversely, the framework could be used form the bottom up to determine whether a text could be categorised as a joke or not, beginning with TCF analysis to determine whether any aspects of the textual meaning constructed a foregrounded shift of meaning. As well as use for categorising texts as jokes or non-jokes, the bottom-up approach could also be used on a new sample of joke data, to test my hypothesis that all jokes contain a textually constructed meaning shift.

11.2 Example TCMSJ Analysis

This section provides an example of a full TCMSJ analysis, using the joke text below:

Example 196

Aged rum is a sophisticated spirit that should be sipped neat and savoured.

Not drowned in Coke like Whitney Houston.

The table (37) below details how the textual meaning is constructed:

Table 37 Textual Meaning Analysis of Coke Joke

TCF	**Text**	**Analysis Notes**
Naming & Describing	*Aged Rum* *Neat* *A sophisticated spirit*	Trigger the interpretation of 'Coke' as the drink, due to the semantic field of drinking rum & coke. Positive evaluative adjectives 'sophisticated'.
	Whitney Houston	Trigger of second meaning of 'Coke'
	Coke	Locus point with two meanings
Representing Actions/States/ Events	*Sipped neat & savoured*	Actions associated with drinking, material action intention and/or mental perception
	Drowned in Coke	Drowned also associated with liquid, not compatible with the drug 'coke' as it is a powder. 'Drowned' usually used as a material action supervention, but in relation to pouring a drink would be a material action intention

Equating & Contrasting	*'Aged rum is…'*	Relational very structure 'X is Y' constructing a relationship of what the speaker sees 'aged rum' as
	'Not…'	Negative particle constructs 'X not Y' opposition between rum that is either savoured neat or drowned in coke
	…like Whitney Houston'	'X is like Y' shows that the speaker believes rum and Whitney Houston were both drowned in coke
Prioritising	*'Drowned in Coke like Whitney Houston'*	Saving Whitney Houston to the end sets up the pattern of a text discussing drinks then breaks it. Subordinate clause makes it unquestionable given info that Whitney did drown in coke
Negating	*'Not…'*	Negation constructs the X not Y opposition
Hypothesising	*'Should be'*	Deontic modality indicating speaker viewpoint on drinks
Implying & Assuming	*'like Whitney Houston'*	Flout of relevance as Whitney Houston has nothing to do with a discussion of mixing beverages

		Flout of manner
Representing Time, Space & Society	*'drowned in Coke'*	Preposition 'in' coke suggests the liquid, as the conventional preposition for the drug is 'on' not 'in'

The table above shows how aspects within many different textual conceptual functions combine to construct the joke text above, which compares Whitney Houston's death to a badly mixed Rum cocktail. I identified three textually constructed meaning shifts in this joke: bisociation, reinterpretation and asymmetrical comparison.

The text attributes a bisociative double meaning to the phrase 'drowned in coke' referring to both rum which has been diluted with a lot of coca-cola (M1), or to Whitney Houston's death, as the singer drowned in a bath after a cocaine binge (M2): this is identified through the fixed bisociative triggers of a locus point and a flout of manner. I would argue that this dual-meaning attribution to the phrase is also an example of reinterpretation, because the text sets up an expectation of M1 indicated through descriptions and actions associated with drinks '*rum*' '*sipped neat*' '*savoured*', then deviates from these expectations by referencing '*Whitney Houston*'. This internal deviation forces a shift from M1 to M2 in order to process the equating between '*rum*' and '*Whitney Houston*' both being '*drowned in coke*', from metaphorical to literal drowning. The constructed equivalence in this text is what results in the shift of asymmetrical comparison: comparing a person to a drink is an

example of character asymmetry, whilst comparing the activities of drink mixing with the tragic death of a celebrity is tonally asymmetrical.

The joke text constructs three meaning shifts and the result is a textual meaning which is foregrounded through deviation in different ways at several levels of meaning. Bisociation is linguistically foregrounded, because the simultaneous attribution of multiple meanings to one sign in a single text does not follow established semantic norms. There is ideational foregrounding through the asymmetrical comparisons between 'person:object' or 'drink mixing:death', as conventional schematic knowledge places these as conceptually disparate, and there are also aspects of ideological foregrounding through a text which mentions the topics of death and drugs, as these are considered to be taboo. In particular joking about someone's death could be considered an attack on or disparagement of their character, and is therefore interpersonally foregrounded. This shows how, through bottom-up textual analysis, the TCMSJ framework can present conclusions about how a joke's textual meaning is constructed, and contextualise this with discussions of ideational, ideological and interpersonal norms, in order to explain why the text might be considered 'funny' in a way that can incorporate the three families of humour research – release, hostility and incongruity – which have up until this point remained disconnected (2.2).

11.3 Difficult to classify examples

There were eight joke examples which I found difficult to classify using the TCMSJ categories, and in this section I suggest the three possible reasons for this difficulty:

reliance on contextual factors not captured by the text; reliance on stereotypes alone to construct humour; non-joke text-types.

11.3.1 Contextual Aspects

The three texts below were included in the articles of 'best jokes' (Appendix 2), but in addition to reporting the content of the joke utterance, the author of the article had included extra contextual information provided in brackets to give context to the text.

Example 197

> *No one can stare out of a window like Sarah Lund. [in character as Scandinavian detective Moomin Mama]*

I am unable to find a textually constructed meaning shift, or even a point of foregrounded meaning in this joke (197). If some earlier co-text had praised Sarah Lund's acting skills and then followed with this utterance, it could be an asymmetrical comparison through equating an actor's craft with '*staring out of a window*', but as this is not presented, I cannot make a judgement and categorise this joke. Alternatively, perhaps the speaker being in character as a Scandinavian detective '*moomin mama*' was relevant to the set-up of this joke – this was also the case in the example (198) below:

Example 198

> *I love being touched sexually by an ecologist – [in character as a dolphin]*

Prosodic features may have given a clearer indication as to whether the speaker's 'love' was genuine or sarcastic, which the audience would have access to when the spoken text was produced, but which are not accounted for the written transcription. It could be argued that this text is an example of sarcasm and therefore a

contradiction, but that involves making assumptions about the dolphin's feelings and intentions without any indication from the text, so I did not feel able to categorise it as a contradiction.

Example 199

Keep digging you'll find one eventually. [on edinburgh trams]

In searching for extra information to try and understand the meaning of this joke, I found that Edinburgh had faced years of widespread disruption caused by '*digging*' up the streets, in order to construct a new tram system (BBC News, 2014). With this information I suggest that this text is a constructed reinterpretation of the reason for the digging – the speaker is suggesting that the workers are digging to find a missing tram, rather than to build a tram network. This shows that the TCMSJ framework has the potential to account for the meaning shift in this joke, but without presenting the surrounding context and co-text, the information needed to identify this reinterpretative shift is absent.

The analysis above shows that, once the relevant contextual information is given, the TCMSJ framework does have the potential to handle these types of jokes. This leads me to suggest that the flaw is not within the framework, but an issue with sampling written transcripts of stand-up comedy performances, where texts are separated from their original context.

11.3.2 Non-joke text-types

The data I selected was pre-judged to be a collection of 'jokes' (4.2.2; 5.5.2), but it was unclear whether the three texts below were joke text-types.

Example 200

I never know the right thing to say, especially during sex. After my first time, I said to the girl, 'That's it, I'm afraid'

This text is an example of self-deprecating humour, with the speaker reporting an unfortunate action so that the audience can find humour in their misfortune, but I am unsure whether this makes it a joke, or just a funny story.

Example 201

To the people who've got iPhones: you just bought one, you didn't invent it!

The text above directly addresses '*people who've got iPhones*', constructing an opposition between '*buying*' and '*inventing*'. Opposition often constructs asymmetrical comparison, but I argue that in this text there is no conceptual asymmetry or foregrounding in noticing a relationship between buying and inventing. Instead, this constructed oppositional relationship functions as a face attack which chastises smug iPhone users: this is an example of how humour can be achieved through impoliteness (Culpeper, 2011). The joke below (202) is also a performance of impoliteness towards '*Scotland*':

Example 202

I'm here at the Edinburgh festival, because Scotland is where the most depressed – and depressing – people come from.

Although this text uses the relational structure 'X is Y', which I have identified as a possible trigger for either reinterpretation or asymmetrical comparison, I could not find a meaning change or comparison which was being forced in this example. This could be because it reinforces the stereotype of Scottish people as dour, so familiar

ideational knowledge is being activated rather than changed. This concept is discussed further in the section below (6.6.3).

11.3.3 Reliance on Stereotypes

In 5.3.7 it was noted that jokes reliant on stereotypes were difficult to classify, due to the absence of foregrounding (Yus, 2016). Allusion to stereotypes maintains and upholds ideological knowledge of them, as whether or not a hearer agrees, they must acknowledge the stereotype in order to process the meaning of the joke text – this is an example of a consensual meaning (Jeffries, 2014b). I found it difficult to identify a foregrounded meaning shift in the two jokes below, which are examples of 'Jewish' jokes (Raskin, 1985: 209-221).

Example 203

> *A man robs a bank wearing a balaclava. 'Did you see my face?' he says to the teller. 'Just a little bit.' Bang. He shoots her. 'Did you see my face' he says to another teller. 'Only briefly' he says. Bang. He shoots him. He turns to a Jewish man who is standing beside him. 'Did you see my face?' he says 'No. I didn't,' says the Jewish man 'But my wife, she saw your face.'*

Example 204

> *A waiter approaches a table of Jewish diners as they finish their meal and says: 'Was anything right?'*

There is some element of foregrounding in the reported speech and actions from the characters in both of these texts: the act of a man putting his wife's life at risk, or the

waiter asking '*is anything right*' rather than '*is everything right*'. The implied resolution to this incongruity is through negative stereotypes of 'Jewishness', which are complex multifaceted, but in this case can be specified as the following:

a) Jewish men hate their wives (or conversely, Jewish women are intolerable)
b) Jewish diners are overly critical and rude

This difficulty does not mean the TCMSJ excludes jokes which utilise stereotypes to construct textual meaning – stereotypes are common sources of humour (Raskin, 1985) and there were many other joke examples within my data which did allude to stereotypes, but were found to contain a foregrounded meaning shift. These jokes could be categorised using the TCMSJ framework because it was the shift rather than the stereotype which was the source of the joke's humour, such as the example (52) reprised below:

'Dogs don't love you, they're just glad they don't live in China'

This text relies on acknowledgement of the negative racial stereotype that Chinese people eat dogs, however this stereotype is not the proposed source of the text's humour: the joke's 'funniness' lies in a constructed reinterpretation of dogs behaviour, achieved through referring to this stereotype.

In the 'Jewish humour' examples above, the maintenance of Jewish stereotypes is constructed as the essence of the text's humour - this felt more like an example of 'racist humour'[16], than joking, and it was for this reason that I found it difficult to account for them within the TCMSJ framework. These types of stereotype-reliant

[16] Weaver (2010: 537) defines racist humour as 'humour [that] draws on dichotomous stereotypes of race and/or seeks to inferiorise an ethnic or racial minority'.

texts work through perpetuating negative ideological beliefs surrounding a particular (usually minority) social group, and I argue that this results in a textual meaning which begins to blur an uncomfortable boundary between the functions of joking and oppressing. According to Perez (2016) racism in humour has gone under-criticised compared to other aspects of social discourse, and that ‘in a society where overt racist discourse in public has become unacceptable, race-based humor once again plays an active role in strengthening dominant racial ideologies.’ (Perez, 2016: 933).

Chapter 12: Discussion and Conclusions

This chapter concludes the thesis by evaluating the contributions of my research. I begin (12.1) by relating the work back to the research aims which were established in 1.1, followed by acknowledging the areas of my research which could be improved and the limitations of this study in terms of theoretical scope (12.2). I suggest the potential for future research projects which have arisen as a result of this thesis (12.3), both to develop and to test the proposed TCMSJ theory and framework. Finally, I will evaluate my work in terms of its original contributions to knowledge and contextualise its potential impact within the research fields of both stylistics and humour studies (12.4), concluding that I have successfully achieved my aim of creating a novel, text-based theory of jokes.

12.1 Discussion of Research Aims

This thesis began with the overall goal of proposing a 'stylistic framework for the descriptive analysis of joke texts' (1.1.2), and that this process could be broken down into four research aims:

1. *To provide a more joined up approach to humour research*
2. *To test the claims of the SSTH hypothesis*
3. *To investigate the patterning which constructs humorous textual meanings in jokes*
4. *To analyse the potential ideational & ideological impacts of the constructed humorous meanings*

This section will highlight how I have addressed each of these aims through the research I have carried out. These aims are discussed individually below, but some

aspects of the research will have fulfilled more than one aim, and the separation is purely aimed to provide clarity and structure to the discussion.

12.1.1 Providing a Joined-Up Approach

This first research aim was proposed in response to the lack of a connection between approaches to humour research. I identified (chapter 2) that there are three main families of humour research, all with different arguments as to what makes something funny, and also discussed how any of the three release, hostility or incongruity approaches used alone could not account for the necessary and sufficient conditions of humour. The first step in providing a joined-up approach was to recognise that all three schools of humour research could be unified through the stylistic concept of foregrounding – I have argued that release and hostility are examples of foregrounding through at the ideational and interpersonal levels of meaning, and can therefore be subsumed by incongruity approaches to humour, which had already been recognised as another name for foregrounding (McIntyre & Culpeper, 2010).

Uniting these three approaches was not the only way my research provided more connection within humour research. I proposed that, although foregrounding was a necessary part of joke construction, this alone was not sufficient to explain why a text would be considered humorous (2.2.5), and this led to me testing a theory which did claim to provide both the necessary and sufficient conditions for defining humour – the SSTH (chapters 3-4). This testing is discussed further in relation to research aim 2 (12.1.2). Despite my rejecting the claims of the SSTH, there are aspects of the TCMSJ framework which can explain why the principles of opposition and overlap in humour have been accepted as correct for many years. The analysis of textual

triggers has shown that the shifts of reinterpretation, asymmetrical comparison and contradiction can all be constructed through opposition at both a textual and conceptual level, whilst bisociation and performative reinforcement construct dual meanings which could be described in terms of an overlap. The TCMSJ framework is also able to incorporate disconnected aspects from other humour theories: I have highlighted how reinterpretation can account for comedy through incongruity-resolution, and the concepts of bisociation and a locus (6.1) are adapted into the framework directly from previous work in humour studies.

In addition to unifying disparate concepts from humour research, my work has connected the disciplines of humour studies and stylistics, which Simpson et al (2019) said needed to be addressed. Areas of humour research which have received attention in stylistics such as irony can be accounted for using the TCMSJ as a constructed shift of contradiction, even if this does require further research (see 12.3). Using the textual conceptual functions (which were introduced in 5.2) to analyse jokes is a new application of Jeffries' framework, which situates my work within the theory of textual meaning, and has supported my argument that humour is constructed at a textual level, rather than being inherent in either form or function.

12.1.2 Testing the SSTH

The rationale for a focus on testing the SSTH was that it is a text-based theory of humour which claimed to provide the necessary and sufficient conditions for a text to be joke carrying, and that this theory is widely accepted to be correct and unfalsified by the humour research community. In chapter 3, I presented the core principles of the SSTH, that jokes are based on a pair of overlapping scripts which are opposed in

some special sense, and engaged in a systematic critique of the theoretical and methodological issues in Raskin's approach (3.1) and subsequent developments to the theory (3.2). I argued that the SSTH hypothesis has not been falsified because it is unfalsifiable, rather than because it is necessarily correct.

By incorporating theories from stylistics, I was able to argue that the hypothesis could be collapsed into a single condition that joke texts will contain opposition, and that the 'special sense' Raskin (1985) referred to was an example of textually constructed opposition (3.2.3). This enabled me to test the collapsed SSTH hypothesis in an objective and replicable way, in line with the aims of stylistic analysis (2.1.1), using Jeffries (2010b) and Davies (2012; 2013) typology to examine a sample of joke data for triggers of textually constructed opposition. Ultimately this testing found that constructed opposition was only found in some of the joke data, and was neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for a text to be a joke, so these findings did not support the SSTH hypothesis or subsequent developments in humour theory which treat opposition as a ubiquitous presence in joke texts. Based on my findings, I rejected the SSTH at both a theoretical and methodological level as a means of joke analysis (4.4).

Here I acknowledge that, by incorporating a stylistic methodology and reframing the original hypothesis, it could be argued the pilot study tested these revisions rather than testing the SSTH itself, and was therefore unsuccessful in addressing research aim 2. I would counter this by highlighting that the collapsed hypothesis (fig. 5) retained the original premise from Raskin (1985) that overlap and opposition are the necessary and sufficient conditions of joke texts, only reframing them as a single condition through my argument that overlap is entailed by a presence of opposition. In addition to this, the methodological revisions I made were offered as solutions to

both ill-defined key concepts and the absence of a clear method in the SSTH's present state, which made it unfalsifiable; in order to fulfil my aims to test the SSTH, I had to first select a replicable means of doing so. This enabled me to make important decisions regarding whether or not a revisionist approach to the SSTH was a suitable starting point for my own framework, so I feel on this basis that my aim of testing the SSTH was fulfilled.

12.1.3 Textual Patterning in Jokes

After deducing that the SSTH was unsuitable for the analysis of joke texts, I engaged in a discovery process in order to propose my own framework for this purpose (chapter 5). I began this process with the baseline assumptions outlined in chapters 1 & 2, that humour is constructed through textual meaning, and that this meaning will be foregrounded in some way. Beyond these assumptions, I took an open approach, using textual meaning analysis to discover patterns in a small sample of joke data (5.1-5.4).

My initial findings were that the foregrounded meanings in joke texts can be categorised in terms of a swift, impermanent, dynamic meaning relationship, which I have chosen to label 'textually constructed meaning shifts'. The five types of shift were identified as: bisociation, reinterpretation, asymmetrical comparison, contradiction, and performative reinforcement. Following the proposal of categories, I analysed a larger sample of jokes in order to test these categories, and found that this supported my claims, resulting in the proposal of a theory with a testable hypothesis: that jokes will contain at least one of the five textually constructed meaning shifts. I also used qualitative textual analysis to explore what textual

triggers were used to construct each shift type, and any patterning within the types of joke different shifts constructed. The result is a theoretical framework for joke analysis, which was modelled in chapter 11.

12.1.4 Ideational/Ideological Engagement

Through use of a text-based approach, the TCMSJ provides a means of analysing how joke meanings are constructed in context, rather than attempting to describe all humour through a single feature of form or function. This enables qualitative textual meaning analysis, such as the example which was provided in 11.2. By engaging with joke texts on an individual level, TCMSJ analysis allows for interpretative discussions of why textual meanings could be considered humorous: through the assumption that these meanings will be foregrounded, this analysis must engage in the concepts of ideational, ideological and interpersonal norms, and how the text deviates from these norms. Particularly the shift category of asymmetrical comparison shows how jokes rely on speaker's and hearer's conceptualisations of concepts as 'different' – in terms of character, situation, tone or temporo-spatial location – in order to manipulate these assumptions for humour construction.

Analysis of joke examples throughout chapters 5-11 has shown how jokes have the communicative potential for encoding world view, and that this can function to attack the self or others, reinforce or refresh naturalised assumptions and stereotypes, or even to laugh at taboo topics such as death or sex. I believe this research aim is the one that I did not address as successfully as I had hoped for: there was the potential to include an additional chapter regarding this aim, with discussions including: the perceived directional shifting of schematic knowledge as a result of reinterpretation and asymmetrical comparison; taboo topical content of jokes; schema reinforcement

and refreshment; humour's social functions of conflict and cohesion. Due to limitations of space and scope, I was not able to explore these areas further in this thesis, but I feel this does provide potential avenues for future research into humour in a theory of textual meaning (see 12.3).

12.2 Issues & Limitations

This section will discuss the issues within my own research, highlighting the areas of the framework which need further development and acknowledging the theoretical limitations of the claims I have made about jokes.

12.2.1 Issues Within The Framework

I have proposed a new theory and framework for joke analysis in this thesis, but developing a theory is an ongoing process, and the TCMSJ still has issues which will need to be addressed in order to improve its functionality for humour analysis.

The main area for development is a tightening up of the category definitions. I have stated that the categories are polythetic and can overlap, but at the moment, it is difficult to determine where a line should be drawn between bisociation and reinterpretation, due to the reliance of accessing two meanings for both shifts to take place. Based on the framework descriptions above (chapters 6-7), bisociation can occur without reinterpretation, but reinterpretation at a linguistic level (such as using a word or phrase) relies on the presence of bisociation. A possible solution to this could be separating the categories in terms of whether the intended meaning of the two can be understood from the joke text, or whether both meanings are simultaneously upheld – this could be done either through incorporating reinterpretation within the category of bisociation and making a distinction of

‘resolved’ and ‘unresolved’ dual-meanings, or through maintaining category separation and labelling resolved shifts as the boundary marker for reinterpretation rather than bisociation. Similarly, I stated in chapter 10 that performative reinforcement felt like it had aspects of bisociation, so further testing is needed to determine whether this shift is unique, or a sub-type of a bisociative shift.

I would also like to provide a more formal typology of shift triggers and resulting joke styles. The framework discussion presented in chapters 6-10 proposed groupings based on the joke data I have analysed, but with no quantification of which triggers and types were more prototypical of each shift, or if triggers were more specific constructions than just ‘opposing’. The patterns noticed in this research could be tested through the analysis of a larger sample (see 12.3) to refine my category descriptions.

The shift of contradiction posed a problem in terms of defining whether this shift always constructed irony. Chapter 9 provided example analysis of jokes which contained contradictions but did not ‘feel’ ironic, despite the definition of a contradictory meaning shift aligning with the definition of irony as a conceptual paradox (Simpson, 2011). Classification of irony based on instinctive judgements is not sufficient as a scientific method, so further investigation of irony and its relationship to the TCMSJ shift of contradiction is needed (12.3.5).

Another problem to acknowledge is that the TCMSJ relies on making assumptions about ideational and interpersonal norms, particularly in asymmetrical comparison, which relies on a conceptual judgement of ‘asymmetry’ as a trigger for the shift. Until cognitive-linguistic research can find a way to objectively model how schematic

knowledge is stored, all discussions of norms carry with them a degree of subjectivity. My aim is to mitigate this as much as possible through clear and rigorous text-based analysis, justifying any assumptions I make through evidence from the text, and providing opportunity for others to question my own judgements. This is in line with the aims of all stylistic analysis (2.1).

12.2.2 Theoretical Limitations

This section is used to acknowledge the limit in scope and generalisability of my research: it is not possible for me to test a small sample of jokes and claim that the resulting theory can account for all aspects of humour.

Selecting a sample comprised entirely of jokes means that any conclusions about textually constructed meaning shifts can only be applied to other joke texts at this stage, and as these were all short one-liner type texts, this is restricted further and can make no claims about extended joking narratives or excerpts of stand-up comedy. The sample is also a collection of jokes produced for a modern-day British audience, by English-speaking performers, and therefore may have overlooked aspects of joke construction from other cultures, languages or time periods – further testing (see 12.3) could address these issues in order to improve the generalisability of the TCMSJ framework.

12.3 Potential for Future Research

This section explores avenues for further research which have been opened up as a result of my research, and how these could be used to test and develop the theoretical framework of TCMSJ.

12.3.1 Testing the framework

It is essential that any proposed theory or hypothesis has the ability to be falsified, and I suggest that the logical next step following this thesis is to test the hypothesis that humour is constructed through meaning shifts on new data. Other researchers could attempt to conduct TCMSJ analysis of joke texts, in order to evaluate the useability of the framework, as well as test my hypothesis. I could also test this approach on other sets of jokes to improve and refine category descriptions, or apply TCMSJ principles to other types of humorous texts to determine whether meaning shifts occur outside of jokes. In addition to this, a comparative study between humorous and non-humorous texts could be done to check that foregrounded meaning shifts are unique to humour.

12.3.2 Overlapping Categories

My approach to shift categorisation was polythetic, and so many jokes in the data were found to contain multiple shifts. Example analysis has discussed category overlap on an individual basis, but I was not able to explore whether shift combinations could result in specific joke types, and this is an area I would like to explore further.

12.3.3 Ideological Impacts of Each shift

In 12.1.4 I explained that there were interesting ideological aspects within the sample of joke data which I did not have space to address in this thesis. In 1.2.3 and 1.2.4 it was stated that humour can function as both a lubricant for social cohesion and a means for attack or conflict. I would like to examine the potential for meaning shifts, which are defined as temporary constructs within a specific text, to have a wider social and ideological impact outside of the joking discourse. This would bring a

critical stylistic (2.1.3) element to my analysis, and applying critical stylistic analysis to humour would be a new development for an approach which has tended to focus on the 'serious' discourse of politics and the media.

12.3.4 Funniness

In this thesis I have avoided engaging with evaluative judgements of joke 'funniness', aiming to answer the question of *why* a text is funny, not *whether* it is funny or not. It would be possible to conduct experimental research using a TCMSJ approach to measure senses of humour or funniness judgements, by informant testing a sample of jokes with different types of shift, and asking participants to rate their amusement. This would reveal if different shift combinations result in jokes which are 'more funny' than others. Texts without a textually constructed meaning shift could also be included, to investigate whether shift removal 'kills' the joke (Jodolowiec, 2019) and can account for why humour fails.

12.3.5 Irony

I stated above (9.3; 12.2) that during this research project I found it difficult to define the difference between ironic and non-ironic contradictions. Due to the limited amount of contradictory shifts present in my data sample (30 texts) it was difficult to identify patterns which could answer this question, and further research could provide a distinction which leads to an improved definition of irony.

12.4 Contribution & Impact of My Research

In this section I conclude my thesis by evaluating how my proposal of the TCMSJ framework will have an academic impact, discussing what it could mean for existing theories of humour and how I feel I have successfully made an original contribution to knowledge in the field of stylistics and humour research.

12.4.1 Impact on Existing Theories

I stated that my research would take a stylistic approach (2.1), due to the fact that humour was an aspect of language which had been understudied in the discipline of stylistics (Simpson et al, 2019). Throughout this thesis I have used key principles from stylistics, such as foregrounding, constructed opposition and textual meaning, and shown that they can be successfully applied to humour analysis. This is through both incorporating them into my own theoretical framework, and showing that a stylistic approach can help to test theories from other disciplines. In 2.1.4 I proposed an adaptation of foregrounding theory to include the ideational and interpersonal levels of meaning, and this is what allowed me to incorporate deviation from non-linguistic norms into the TCMSJ framework.

I argue that the most important impact upon existing theories comes from chapters 3-4, in which I found that the presence of textually constructed opposition is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for a text to be defined as joke carrying, which does not support the claims made by the Semantic Script Theory of Humour. These findings have the potential for inducing a paradigm shift in humour research, because as recently as 2017, Raskin & Attardo have produced '*The Routledge Handbook of Humour Research*' which is a collection of chapters from many humour researchers, all of which take the SSTH hypothesis principles as a baseline assumption. This assumption was also the case for many presentations at the 2019 CIVH conference of humour research which I attended in 2019. My findings provide a first step for testing the claims of the SSTH, and further contradictory evidence could undermine the theoretical foundations of joke analysis which have been established for almost four decades.

12.4.2 Original Contributions to Knowledge

The research and findings of this thesis have resulted in me achieving my overall aim of a new, stylistic approach to joke analysis. Based on my own research, I have concluded that joke texts achieve humorous meaning through constructing at least one of five meaning shifts, providing both a theory with a testable hypothesis, and a framework for conducting joke analysis. This work is situated in a theory of textual meaning, which is advantageous because it provides a holistic approach to the multifaceted aspects of both language and world knowledge which combine to construct humorous meaning, and provides a means of analysis which is rooted and justified using evidence within the text, rather than at an abstract conceptual level. I could not find evidence of an alternative existing framework which was suitable for fulfilling these aims, so this is an original contribution which addresses existing knowledge gaps.

This research has been the first step in developing a new theory of humour, but I have discussed how this can be taken forward using both top-down and bottom-up research (12.3) to test my claims on other samples of data and refine the theory, ensuring it adheres to the principles of stylistics as a scientific discipline (2.1). In conclusion, I argue that I have fulfilled my research aims, and that the theoretical framework of 'Textually Constructed Meaning Shifts in Jokes' succeeds in providing an original, stylistic approach to joke analysis, in order to improve vital understanding of a unique and complex humanising characteristic: humour.

Chapter 13: References

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Chapter 14: Appendices

Appendix 1: Joke Data for the Pilot Study

1. "I did a gig in a fertility clinic. I got a standing ovulation."

Tim Vine: Timtiminee Timtiminee Tim Tim to You

(Pleasance Courtyard, One)

2. "Dogs don't love you. They're just glad they don't live in China."

Romesh Ranganathan: Rom Wasn't Built in a Day

(Pleasance Courtyard, Beneath)

3. "Miley Cyrus. You know when she was born? 1992. I've got condiments in my cupboard older than that."

Lucy Beaumont: We Can Twerk It Out

(Pleasance Courtyard, That)

4. "I lost my virginity very late. When it finally happened, I wasn't so much deflowered as deadheaded."

Holly Walsh: Never Had It

(Assembly George Square Studios, Five)

5. "The past is another country. Property is cheaper there."

John-Luke Roberts: Stnad-Up

(Voodoo Rooms, Free Fringe)

6. "I used to think an ocean of soda existed, but it was just a Fanta sea."

Bec Hill in... Ellipses

(Gilded Balloon, Turret)

7. "There are very few people at the Fringe these days doing Roman-numeral jokes. I is one."

Chris Turner: Pretty Fly

(Pleasance Courtyard, Bunker Two)

8. "Most of my life is spent avoiding conflict. I hardly ever visit Syria."

Alex Horne: Monsieur Butterfly

(Pleasance Courtyard, Two)

9. “I’m not sexist – I’m not! That’s why I let my female workers work longer than the men so they can make the same money.”

Al Murray: The Pub Landlord’s Late Lock In

(One-off gig)

10. “Fun fact: did you know that HIV is actually Roman for “high five”? Pass it on – or, rather, don’t.”

Rhys James: Begins

(Pleasance Below)

11. “The other day, I went to KFC. I didn’t know Kentucky had a football club.”

Nick Helm’s Two Night Stand at the Grand

(Pleasance Grand)

12. “I’ve got nothing against teachers now. I’ve got friends that went to schools that were full of teachers.”

Dane Baptiste: Citizen Dane

(Pleasance Courtyard, Bunker Two)

13. “Wetherspoons? They’ve all got character. They’ve all got the same character.”

Liam Williams: Capitalism

(Free Fringe: Laughing Horse@The Cellar Monkey)

14. “You can’t lose a homing pigeon. If your homing pigeon doesn’t come back, then what you’ve lost is a pigeon.”

Sara Pascoe vs History

(Assembly George Square, Studio Two)

15. “I thought Benefits Street was a budget box of chocolates that you could buy at Lidl.”

Imran Yusuf: Roar of the Underdog

(Underbelly, Wee Coo)

16. “Giving up smoking for 27 years is like wrestling a polar bear, in that it can make you quite tense.”

Dylan Moran, in Comedy Sans Frontières

(Pleasance Grand, one-off gig)

17. “You have to be careful in my country because we have bad cars and good wine, a dangerous combination.”

Francesco De Carlo: Italians do it Later

(Pleasance Courtyard, Bunker One)

18. “I’m Clive Anderson, in case you were thinking so that’s what happened to William Hague these past years...”

Clive Anderson, in What Does the Title Matter Anyway?

(Underbelly, McEwan Hall)

19. “The reason I was never that scared of the enemy fighters in Star Wars is they look essentially like flying brackets.”

Will Adamsdale: Borders

(Underbelly, Belly Button)

20. “In advertisements, there are just two types of women: wanton, gagging for it; or vacuous. We’re either coming on a window-pane, or laughing at salads.”

Bridget Christie: An Ungrateful Woman

(Stand One)

21. “That song ends flatly. It’s like a sniper at Riverdance.”

Chris Turner: Pretty Fly

(Pleasance Courtyard, Bunker Two)

22. “A funny German comedian? For you, that’s like a Russian human-rights commission.”

Michael Mittermeier: Das Blackout

(Gilded Balloon, Nightclub)

23. “There’s only four things you can be in life: sober, tipsy, drunk and hungover. Tipsy is the only one where you don’t cry when you’re doing it.”

James Acaster: Recognise

(Pleasance Courtyard, Cabaret Bar)

24. “Like most liberals, I will do anything for the working classes, anything - apart from mix with them.”

Kevin Day: Standy Uppy

(Gilded Balloon, Billiard Room)

25. “I’ve got type 1 diabetes. Diabetes is the only disease where I’ve had to stop half way through having sex to have a Kit Kat.”

Ed Gamble: Gambletron 5000

(Pleasance Courtyard, Cabaret Bar)

26. “I saw Arnold Schwarzenegger eating a chocolate egg. I said, I bet I know what your favourite Christian festival is. He said, You have to love Easter, baby.”

Tim Vine: Timtiminee Timtiminee Tim Tim to You

(Pleasance Courtyard, One)

27. “Due to the size of my social circle, a lads' holiday would resemble a romantic getaway.”

Phil Wang: Mellow Yellow

(Pleasance Courtyard, Bunker One)

28. “My dad said, always leave them wanting more. Ironically, that’s how he lost his job in disaster relief.”

Mark Watson: Flaws

(Pleasance Courtyard, One)

29. “There’s only one thing I can’t do that white people can do, and that’s play pranks at international airports.”

Nish Kumar: Ruminations on the Nature of Subjectivity

(Pleasance Courtyard, Beside)

30. “When my wife and I argue, we’re like a band in concert: we start with some new stuff, and then we roll out our greatest hits.”

Frank Skinner: Man in a Suit

(Assembly George Square, Theatre)

31. “Dubai is what would happen if you gave a 12-year-old a trillion dollars to redecorate his bedroom.”

Dane Baptiste: Reasonable Doubts

(Pleasance Beside)

32. "I am the one in my family who does all the driving, because my husband never learnt to drive - in my opinion."

Jo Brand

(Gilded Balloon Debating Hall)

33. "Abortion wasn't legalised in Ireland until 3075."

Aisling Bea, Plan Bea

(Gilded Balloon Dining Room)

34. “There’s no anti-Semitism in New York. You’d be tired.”

Alex Edelman: Everything Handed to You

(Pleasance Beside)

35. “I’ve run this joke past all my black and ethnic-minority friends, and she said it was fine.”

Bridget Christie: A Book for Her

(Stand 1)

36. "Much as few people want to watch a right-wing comedian, even fewer want to see a left-wing action movie."

Nish Kumar: Long Word... Long Word...Blah Blah Blah... I'm so Clever

(Pleasance Upstairs)

37. "My cat is recovering from a massive stroke."

Darren Walsh: Punderbolt

(Pleasance Courtyard)

38. “I’m both ethnic and a woman - which gives me double the chances of being booked on a BBC panel show”

Shazia Mirza

(Stand 4)

39. “It’s the sort of club where men in Ben Sherman shirts down pints and then hit each other with them.”

Brett Goldstein: Burning Man

(Pleasance Beneath)

40. “Whenever I get to Edinburgh, I’m reminided of the definition of a gentleman. It’s someone who knows how to play the bagpipes, but doesn’t.”

Gyles Brandreth: Word Power!

(Pleasance One, 4pm)

41. “My father grew up in this really racist part of Boston, called Boston.”

Alex Edelman: Everything Handed to You

(Pleasance Beside)

42. "Joan Rivers got exactly what she wanted from that final surgery – to stop ageing. Finally she nailed it."

Katherine Ryan: Kathbum

(Stand 3)

43. “Victorians would have been great on social media. They’d have had their own emojis. Open brackets/close brackets means ‘I’ve got Rickets”

Hal Cruttenden: Straight Outta Cruttenden

(Pleasance Two)

44. "I just don’t have lesbian genes – which are dungarees."

Aisling Bea, Plan Bea

(Gilded Balloon)

45. "My childhood has been like an episode of Peppa Pig where she realises she's been born on a farm in Denmark."

Sara Callaghan: Elephant

(Pleasance Bunker One)

46. On ISIS: “They’re like all villains in history: great at PR; s--t at HR.”

Andrew Maxwell – Yo Contraire

(Assembly George Square Theatre)

47. “My mother wears the burka – mainly because she doesn’t want to be seen with my dad.”

Shazia Mirza

(Stand 4)

48. “After 50, you have to stop seeing your heart as a muscle and more as an unexploded bomb.”

Hal Cruttenden: Straight Outta Cruttenden

(Pleasance Two)

49. “Patience is a bit like a toilet-roll – the bigger the arsehole you’re dealing with, the quicker it runs out.”

Andrew Lawrence – Uncensored

(Assembly Roxy)

50. "Umbro is named after what your friends say to you if they see you wearing it."

Rhys James: Remains

(Pleasance Courtyard)

51. "I did have a drinking problem: Southern Comfort tasted quite nice; ordinary Comfort tasted like fabric softener."

Milton Jones: Milton Jones and the Temple of Daft

(Assembly Hall)

52. “My skin is the biggest organ of my body, despite what stereotypes would lead you to believe.”

Dane Baptiste: Reasonable Doubts

(Pleasance Beside)

53. "I've gone full-blown Bruce Jenner. I've always wanted to look like one of the Kardashians... I'm not even mad it's the Dad."

Katherine Ryan: Kathbum

(The Stand 3)

54. “Eddie Izzard is a straight man who identifies as a man, who likes to dress as a female estate agent from the Eighties.”

Bridget Christie: A Book for Her

(Stand 1)

55. “I feel sorry for Islamic terrorists. How many heads do they have to chop off before people in the West accept that Islam is a religion of peace?”

Andrew Lawrence – Uncensored

(Assembly Roxy)

56. “Operation Yewtree, it seems to me, is where the police sit around with a s*** load of box sets from the 1970s and ’80s and just tick off the cast lists one by one.”

Brett Goldstein: Burning Man

(Pleasance Beneath)

57. “My girlfriend said: ‘Andrew is there anything you want to see at Glastonbury this year?’ Yeah. An Ebola outbreak.”

Andrew Lawrence – Uncensored

(Assembly Roxy)

58. “[At the next election] I’m voting Ukip, just to see where they send me back to.”

Phil Wang: Philth

(Pleasance Upstairs)

59. “Recently in court, I was found guilty of being egotistical. I am appealing.”

Stewart Francis: Pun Gent

(Assembly Rooms Ballroom)

60. "I was vegan for a while. I lost 6lb, but most of that was personality."

Pippa Evans: There Are No Guilty Pleasures

(Bannermans)

61. “Jesus fed 5,000 people with two fishes and a loaf of bread. That’s not a miracle. That’s tapas.”

Mark Nelson: Older Than Jesus

(Gilded Balloon Sportsman)

62. “You ever seen a picture of Silvio Berlusconi? He looks like a thumb with a face drawn on.”

Glenn Wool: Creator, I Am but a Pawn

(Assembly George Square Studio Three)

63. “I’m proper Anglo-Welsh. My parents burnt down their own cottage.”

Gyles Brandreth: Word Power!

(Pleasance One)

64. “I reckon porn gives kids an unrealistic idea of what it’s like to be a plumber.”

Lee Nelson: Suited & Booted

(Pleasance Cabaret Bar)

65. "If you want to to feel less intimidated by a bouncer, do what I do and imagine their ear piece is just a motivational tape going: 'You’re a soft, strong individual.'"

Chris Martin: This Show Has a Soundtrack

Free Sisters

66. "I just deleted all the German names off my phone. It's Hans free."

Darren Walsh

67. "Kim Kardashian is saddled with a huge arse... but enough about Kanye West."

Stewart Francis

68. "Surely every car is a people carrier?"

Adam Hess

69. "What's the difference between a 'hippo' and a 'Zippo'? One is really heavy, the other is a little lighter."

Masai Graham

70. "If I could take just one thing to a desert island I probably wouldn't go."

Dave Green

71. "Red sky at night. Shepherd's delight. Blue sky at night. Day."

Tom Parry

72. "The first time I met my wife, I knew she was a keeper. She was wearing massive gloves."

Alun Cochrane

73. "Clowns divorce. Custardy battle."

Simon Munnery

74. "They're always telling me to live my dreams. But I don't want to be naked in an exam I haven't revised for..."

Grace The Child

75. "I never lie on my CV… because it creases it."

Jenny Collier

76. "If you don't know what introspection is you need to take a long, hard look at yourself."

Ian Smith

77. "I usually meet my girlfriend at 12:59 because I like that one to one time."

Tom Ward

78. "Let me tell you a little about myself. It's a reflexive pronoun that means 'me'."

Ally Houston

79. "Earlier this year I saw The Theory of Everything – loved it. Should've been called Look Who's Hawking, that's my only criticism."

James Acaster

80. "I've decided to sell my Hoover... well, it was just collecting dust."

Tim Vine

Appendix 2: 565-Joke Sample for Main Analysis

- 50 Cent, or as he's called over here, approximately 29p.
- A bloke arrives at a nightclub door and the bouncers say he can't come in without a tie, so he goes to the boot of his car and gets a pair of jump leads, wraps them around his neck and goes back to the doormen. "Can I come in now,' he says to the bouncers. 'Yeah, but don't start anything''.
- A cowboy asked me if I could help him round up 18 cows. I said, ‘Yes, of course, that’s 20 cows’.
- A dog goes into a hardware store and says: "I'd like a job please". The hardware store owner says: "We don't hire dogs, why don't you go join the circus?" The dog replies: "Well, what would the circus want with a plumber".
- A headline last year, after the death of Saddam Hussein, read: 'Tyrant is hanged'. My auntie looked at the newspaper and sobbed, 'Who's going to present "Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?’
- A hotel mini-bar allows you to see into the future and what a can of Pepsi will cost in 2020.
- A lady with a clipboard stopped me in the street the other day.. She said, "Can you spare a few minutes for cancer research?" I said, "All right, but we won't get much done."
- A lot of my friends put up their baby scans on Facebook – if they get more than 30 likes, they'll keep it
- A lot of older people wonder if there will be life after death. There is, of course - it just won’t involve them.

- A man robs a bank wearing a balaclava. 'Did you see my face?' he says to the teller. 'Just a little bit.' Bang. He shoots her. 'Did you see my face' he says to another teller. 'Only briefly' he says. Bang. He shoots him. He turns to a Jewish man who is standing beside him. 'Did you see my face?' he says 'No. I didn't,' says the Jewish man 'But my wife, she saw your face.'
- A new eco-opera, Rainforest Ocean Blue, is a disaster. The tenor in particular is dreadful. An aria - The Sighs of Whales - is being destroyed every night...
- A problem shared is attention gained
- A quick way to lose weight: subtract your birth weight, because you haven't gained that part.
- A spa hotel? It's like a normal hotel, only in reception there's a picture of a pebble".
- A Tory and a Lib Dem stand on top of a cliff – which one should you push off first? The Tory. Business before pleasure."
- A waiter approaches a table of Jewish diners as they finish their meal and says: 'Was anything right?'
- A woman in America has had the largest ever boob job to increase her breasts to 38KKK. That is one dedicated racist."
- Act your age, not your shoe size ... that means something different on the Continent.
- After my grandfather’s funeral, I scattered his remains over the garden, which was horrible because he hadn’t been cremated.

- Aged rum is a sophisticated spirit that should be sipped neat and savoured. Not drowned in Coke like Whitney Houston."

- Alex Salmond says he's proud of Scolympians. I presume he means Scottish Olympians? What a Scarsehole."

- Although I've been called a slut many, many times: my mum's definition of a slut is different to everyone else's."

- Am I really the brains behind The Office? Put it this way, I was signing copies of the script in Waterstones the other day. They threw me out. It appears that you're meant to get permission first.
- Americans only re-elected George Bush to prove they had a sense of irony.
- An American girl hit on me in a club and asked me to make her an Egyptian princess. So I threw a sheet over her head and told her to be quiet.
- Apparently smoking cannabis can affect your short term memory. Well if that's true, what do you think smoking cannabis does?

- Apparently Take Me Out is shot in front of a live audience but then again so was Col Gaddafi and that was way more entertaining television."

- Apparently the average price of a slave worldwide is less than the average price of an iPod. Fair enough, but you try teaching your slave 12,000 songs."

- As a gay man I hate the Rainbow flag, all the colours clash. I have nothing that goes with it!

- As a kid I was made to walk the plank. We couldn't afford a dog.

- As a short man, I'm annoyed by the stereotype that all short people are funny. So I'll be disproving that over the next 5 minutes..."

- As of last month we have gay bishops, official. I wonder if this will filter down into the game of chess? Those bishops can make all the same moves, but can only be taken from behind.
- Ask people about God nowadays and they usually reply, "I'm not religious, but deep down, I'm a very spiritual person." What this phrase really means is: "I'm afraid of dying, but I can't be arsed going to church."

- Being a lawyer just made up for being a lesbian."

- Being an England supporter is like being the over-optimistic parents of the fat kid on sports day.

- Bethnal Green is half-Islamic and half-student, so basically everyone's walking around in their pyjamas all day long."

- Bonsai lovers are very tolerant people: they hate bigotry.

- British people are like coconuts. Hard on the outside but sweet once you crack us. Also often found full of alcohol and holding an umbrella.
- Carpe Phallum
- Cats have nine lives. Which makes them ideal for experimentation.
- Channel 4 just cuts out bits from 'heat' magazine and throws them on the floor"

- Cher Lloyd: looks like Cheryl Cole if she had been at the bottom of the sea for a week."

- Children are like sponges - in that they smell weird and they're always a bit damp.
- Christmases were terrible, not like nowadays when kids get everything. My sister got a miniature set of perfumes called Ample. It was tiny, but even I could see where my dad had scraped off the S ...
- Colin had his neck brace fitted years ago and since then he’s never looked back.
- Crime in multi-storey car parks. That is wrong on so many different levels.”

- Dave drowned. So at the funeral we got him a wreath in the shape of a lifebelt. Well, it's what he would have wanted.

- Did you enjoy summer this year? It was on a Thursday.
- Did you hear about the flea that went to the moon. Lunatic.

- Did you know if you count the number of stars in the universe and compare that to the number of grains of sand on a beach, you can ruin a holiday?

- Did you know Kinder Surprise is German for “unwanted pregnancy?”

- Did you know the word 'Ikea' is actually made up of two Swedish words? "Ika", meaning "Sunday", and "Keya", meaning "f***ing ruined.”

- Do I enjoy randomly appointing people to judicial positions? I’ll let you be the judge of that.

- Dodo died, Dodi died, Di died, Dando died... Surely Dido's looking a bit worried.

- Does my hair act as protection? Well I guess it must because since I've been growing a beard I haven't cut myself shaving once, or been approached for sexual intercourse.

- Dominatrixes certainly are some rude people. You'd think for that price they could afford a little kindness.

- Drive Thru McDonalds was more expensive than I thought ... once you've hired the car ..."

- Drugs are not allowed at the Olympics. Unless you're in charge of thinking up the Opening Ceremony, in which case they're mandatory."

- During the World Cup I wanted a ticket for Germany versus Iran. The ultimate dilemma for the Jewish soccer fan

- Each year the Humility Award recognises that individual who does not recognise recognition. Indeed, the very act of receiving the Humility Award is something that the recipient of the Humility Award could never do. Therefore, ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to announce that nobody can ever receive this award. So we'll just put it away.

- Edinburgh is the only city that I have walked completely around and only gone uphill.

- Elections are like police line-ups, only with elections you pick the person before they rob you and screw you. It's like a game of choose your mugger."

- Elton John hates talking about Indian clothing. Sari seems to be the hardest word.
- Employee of the month is a good example of how somebody can be both a winner and a loser at the same time.
- Even the word misogyny is misogynistic. It should be ms-ogyny.

- Ever hated yourself so much that your apartment wants you to move out?"

- Every older generation hates the younger generation, but it used to be that they said the young were getting more and more deviant. "If we wanted fun then we went to a barn dance," they'd say. We're the first generation of old people bitching that the young are so tame. Look at these kids - we used to do crack. These pussies just drink Red Bull and go on the patio to smoke. The closest they've come to a fist fight is in a chatroom. "You looking at my girlfriend? Well I'm going to delete you from my MySpace friends list".
- Every vagina is a unique snowflake... made of gammon.
- Feminism is not a fad. It’s not like Angry Birds. Although it does involve a lot of angry birds. Bad example.

- Fifty Shades of Grey; the new Farrow and Ball Catalogue. Or so my wife assures me that's what it is."

- For me dying is a lot like going camping. I don’t want to do it.

- For Vanessa Feltz, life is like a box of chocolates - empty.

- Gay conversion camps try to make gay people into straight people using theatre. That's like a fat camp using Korean Barbecue.

- Geologists love rocks, but I liked magma before it was cool.
- Glasgow has its own version of Monopoly – just one big square that reads: Go To Jail"
- Glass half empty or glass half full, there's still exactly the same amount of water in each one."
- God Save the Queen: someone who doesn't exist saving someone who shouldn't – like Super Ted saving Gary Glitter."
- Going to Starbucks for coffee is like going to prison for sex. You know you're going to get it, but it's going to be rough."
- Gok Wan has a programme telling us what to wear, now what to eat. I feel like I'm in an abusive relationship with Channel 4."
- Google is like religion – you choose the answer that is right for you."
- Got a phone call today to do a gig at a fire station. Went along. Turned out it was a bloody hoax.
- Growing up I took after my mum... and by that i mean i had large breasts and was sexually attracted to my dad
- Have you heard the saying, "she's been around the block." Well my ex was like a Sat-Nav.
- Have you noticed the way that burns victims stick together?
- He was the kind of man who would shoot first and ask questions later: basically a terrible Trivial Pursuits partner.

- Hearing voices in your head is ok. It's when you hear them in your feet you should worry.

- Hedgehogs - why can't they just share the hedge?"

- Hey - you want to feel really handsome? Go shopping at Asda.
- How can the Catholic Church be against gay marriage when there are colours in the Sistine Chapel that straight people can't even see?

- How did Captain Kirk ruin all his old vinyl records? He played them at warp speed."

- How many members of U2 does it take to change a light bulb? Just Bono... he holds it and the world revolves around him.

- How many people here are psychic? Raise my hand!

- How many philosophers does it take to change a lightbulb?.... none. They're not really into that sort of thing. If it's that dark, light a candle.
- I admire these phone hackers. I think they have a lot of patience. I can't even be bothered to check my OWN voicemails."
- I always thought Trojan was a bad name for a condom brand because of course the Trojans were a people who's lives were ruined when a vessel containing little warriors unexpectedly exploded inside their city walls.
- I am a professional psychic medium... and at the moment I am sensing that people have died in this room.
- I am a triple threat. I am disabled, I'm gay, and I'm a prick. The BBC love me.

- I am tired of hearing discrimination against Americans. Everybody hates Americans until they need to watch a good film, listen to some decent hip hop or go to war. What do you get when you add sunshine and personal space to a Brit? An American. Add health care and education and you get a Canadian."

- I believe in gay marriage so that gay people can be as miserable as straight people.

- I bought a muzzle for my pet duck. Nothing flashy, but it fits the bill.

- I bought a pack of bees from a dodgy looking bloke in my local. When I got home I discovered one of them was dead - I'd obviously been stung.
- I bought my parents a house. Unfortunately it was worse than the one they had before.
- I bought myself some glasses. My observational comedy improved.

- I bought one of those anti-bullying wristbands when they first came out. I say 'bought' - I actually stole it off a short, fat ginger kid.

- I bought some bread this morning. Ciabatta? No, it was a fixed price.
- I broke up with my first girlfriend because she didn't believe in me. Which was ridiculous, because she was the imaginary one.

- I can give you the cause of anaphylactic shock in a nutshell."

- I can't believe that with all their money, The Spice Girls turned up to that concert in taxis!"

- I can't find a woman anywhere who will touch me with a shitty stick. Fair enough. It is a bit of an unusual request.
- I come from a very musical family, even the sewing machine’s a Singer.
- I come from a very traditional family. When I was seven, my Uncle Terry hanged himself on Christmas Eve. My family didn't take his body down until the sixth of January.

- I decided to lose weight as I have learned obesity is the leading cause of heart disease, stroke and your flirting at work being construed as harassment"

- I despise cliquishness, for reasons only my four closest friends will ever properly understand"
- I didn’t get involved in the incident outside the kebab shop. I thought ‘let the chips fall where they may’.
- I didn’t realise pre-drinks meant before drinking. Because I used to get offended on a night out when my friends called me a prima donna, but now I realise it’s just before I get a kebab.

- I didn't get both ears pierced because I don't like to prescribe to gender roles and because it hurt."

- I do love Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen. He always looks so... clean. But if you went out dressed like that round our way, you'd get the MDF kicked out of you"

- I do think a lot about other people. Usually I'm thinking – I wonder what they think about me."

- I don’t do Crossfit. I have a personality.
- I don’t live too far from here. As the crow flies it’s between 400 and 24000 miles. Depending on which direction the crow flies off in.
- I don’t trust anyone with no self doubt. I’m 90% self doubt, or 80%, I’ve probably done the maths wrong.
- I don’t watch RuPaul’s Drag Race. When I came out of the closet, I wanted to kiss boys, I didn’t know there’d be so much homework.
- I don't hate the Germans, I just miss my grandparents"
- I don't like light bulbs. Because they look like the ghosts of dead pears.
- I don't mind when my jokes die because they go to heaven and get 72 virgin jokes.
- I don't need Viagra. I need a woman.
- I don't sun tan. My sunburn looks like a 1950s propaganda poster of the spread of communism."
- I enjoy using the comedy technique of self-deprecation - but I'm not very good at it.
- I find that ants over-praise me. Sycophants? Yes I am."
- I got an odd-job man in. He was useless. Gave him a list of eight things to do and he only did numbers one, three, five and seven. Had to get an even-man in to finish it off.
- I got asked the other day if I Liked the music of Ariana Grande, which surprised me as I thought that was a type of coffee.

- I got involved with an animal charity recently and adopted a whale and a monkey, which is all very well, but sooner or later, I'm gonna have to be the one who has to explain to them why they don't look like each other."

- I got married recently, and it is genuinely an exciting time in our relationship because I'm expecting to have an affair.

- I got up this morning and I shot an elephant in my pyjamas, I don't know what he was doing in my pyjamas but I shot him anyway
- I grew up in Braintree, the most ironically named town in Britain - there being neither a brain nor a tree for miles around. In Braintree, they think irony comes from elephants.

- I had a dead bee in my sink so I rang my mother and said 'what do I do?' She said, 'Get a spoon and flush it down the toilet.' I said, 'I've done that, now what about the bee?'

- I had a good day today. Went swimming, did some painting, met my friends for lunch. Textbook day… French textbook day.
- I had a great business plan ... I was going to build bungalows for dwarfs ... there was only one tiny flaw ...
- I had an argument with one of the seven dwarfs. He wasn't happy.

- I had my boobs measured and bought a new bra. Now I call them Joe Cocker and Jennifer Warnes because they're up where they belong."

- I hate it when I’m trying to tell people about my cool new smart watch and they just keep shouting “Doctor, for the last time, please just tell us the time of death!”

- I hate this new term to describe racists as ‘Alt-Right’. Cif used to be called Jif - but like Alt-right politics - it’s still mainly white and toxic if ingested.

- I have a smart fridge. I pin its homework on my children.

- I have no idea what's going on with Brexit, I had to go back to Africa to see what a stable government looks like.

- I heard a rumour that Cadbury is bringing out an oriental chocolate bar. Could be a Chinese Wispa."

- I hit the gym recently, admittedly with my car.

- I invented the self-fulfilling prophecy. It probably won’t go anywhere but still.

- I joined a dating agency and went out on a load of dates that didn't work out. And I went back to the woman who ran the agency and said: "Have you not got somebody on your books who doesn't care about how I look or what job I have and has a nice big pair of boobs?" And she checked on her computer and said: "Actually, we have one, but unfortunately, it's you."
- I keep writing letters to myself. Dear me.

- I knew the UK would do well at the Olympics, because thanks to last year's riots, most of our young folk have sportswear."

- I know someone whose dream is to be an actor but they're not that good – they got mugged, and had to audition for the part of themselves on 'Crimewatch'. They got Passer-by No 2"
- I know that the English always say that Irish pubs are so friendly. Let me tell you something: we don't even know you're there."
- I know you didn't come here today to hear a rape joke but you've all come here dressed like you want to hear one so it's not my fault.
- I like David Beckham. Most of us have skeletons in our closet. But he takes his out in public"
- I like Jesus, but he loves me, so it's awkward"
- I like my men how I like my tea. Strong, loose and from Yorkshire."
- I like the Ten Commandments but I have a problem with the ninth. It should be: "Thou shalt not covet they neighbour's ox, except in Scrabble".
- I like to call my penis Brexit, because it can be hard or soft and it's torn this great nation in half.
- I like to go into the Body Shop and shout out really loud "I've already got one!"
- I like to think the guy who invented the umbrella was going to call it the 'brella' but he hesitated.
- I live every day like it's my last. Devastated.
- I live in a bungalow, which is nice but it does have one major flaw.

- I live in London, my kids live in Southampton. I'm surprised more people don't do it like this. Sending them to their room is a real threat when it involves hitch-hiking down the M3."

- I love being touched sexually by an ecologist" – [in character as a dolphin]
- I love dogs. If you don't like dogs, that's a red flag. You're a criminal and you're afraid a dog can smell your crimes on you. And if you're allergic to dogs, well you shouldn't have been such a shitty person in your past life.
- I love making love on a bed of nails, but can I go on top?"
- I love paying tax so much, the sight of a gritter lorry gives me an erection"
- I met Osama Bin Laden once. I said 'did you know, your name is an anagram of A Lesbian Nomad'
- I moved from Malaysia to the UK mainly for comedy and so I can drink tap water and not shit myself.
- I needed a password eight characters long so I picked Snow White and the Seven Dwarves."
- I never know the right thing to say, especially during sex. After my first time, I said to the girl, 'That's it, I'm afraid'"
- I now know that sales is just about helping people realise there's a problem and letting them know that you've got a way to fix it. So for example if I wanted to sell a jacket to Patricia I might look at the weather outside and say "Patricia, you're hideous. Maybe this jacket will help."
- I once buggered a man unconscious. I'm lying, he was already unconscious when I found him"
- I once took to the stage as Hamlet, which really annoyed the rest of the cast of *Mamma Mia*.

- I picked up a hitchhiker. You gotta when you hit them.
- I put my phone on Airplane setting and it told me not to call it Shirley."
- I read a book called The Secret Life of Adolf Hitler. It told me things that I never knew. For instance, when Hitler was having sex he liked to pee on people. That put me right off him.
- I read that during the war the English referred to Adolf Hilter as badger man, although it might have said bad German.
- I realised I was dyslexic when I went to a toga party dressed as a goat.
- I really fancy Ed Miliband. Mainly because he looks like David Miliband reflected in a spoon."
- I really wanted kids when I was in my early 20s but I could just never... lure them into my car. No, I'm kidding... I don't have a licence."
- I recently found out that I am genetically connected to a Native American tribe. The first thing I thought was “How?”
- I regret rubbing ketchup in my eyes, but that’s Heinz sight.
- I remember doing security at the Brits a few years back when it all kicked off between Steps and Jamiroquai. I was the only thing between H and JK.
- I remember my first date with my wife. She gave me butterflies, which was an odd gift
- I saw a poster for Mission Impossible III the other day. I thought to myself: "It's not really impossible if he's already done it twice".

- I saw a woman in a t-shirt with ‘SMASHING PATRIARCHY’ on it. Nice to see that some of them appreciate the hard work we put in.

- I saw Lee Majors the bionic man the other day on the Royal Mile. He looked a million dollars... he's really let himself go...
- I saw that show, 50 Things To Do Before You Die. I would have thought the obvious one was "Shout For Help".

- I see these signs on the back of trucks which say, IF YOU CANNOT SEE MY MIRRORS. I CANNOT SEE YOU. Whenever I see those signs I immediately run up behind the truck and if I can't see his mirrors, I start unloading/stealing his stuff."

- I seen an article online asking if Scottish people are as tight as people say we are, but unfortunately it was behind a paywall. I'll never know.
- I sent my daughter to a private school. That's 73 grand's worth of education, and now she wants to be an actor? So I've asked her to do porn and give me the money back.
- I sold my guitar to a bloke with no arms recently. I asked him how it was going to work, he replied, 'I'm going to play it by ear'."

- I spent the last three days, alone, trying to learn escapology. I need to get out more.

- I started so many fights at my school - I had that attention-deficit disorder. So I didn't finish a lot of them."

- I suppose lesbian sex is a bit like cricket, in that it goes on forever and there's a lot of men watching it at home, alone, on the internet.
- I tell my friends I'm here for them 24/7 because it sounds better than saying I'm only here for them on the 24th of July.
- I think the most tragic thing about Jesus' life is that he probably never got to go swimming

- I threw my hands in the air, which was a shame because I had nothing to catch them with on the way down.

- I told the ambulance men the wrong blood type for my ex, so he knows what rejection feels like"

- I took my nephew on the swings, he kept complaining that it goes up too high. I said "Shut up and push".

- I used to be in a very tidy rock band. OC/DC."

- I used to be obsessed with Posh Spice. It cost me a fortune in saffron. –
- I used to go out with Christopher Reeve, but I just had to keep standing him up"
- I used to live next to a farm and every time I passed the cows in the field I used to inexplicably shout abuse at them. Turns out I'm dairy intolerant.
- I used to love sitting in shopping trolleys. Mum would shout at me: 'Christopher, get out... of the canal'.
- I used to prank call the RSPCA. 'My cat's trapped in a box.' 'Is he alive?' 'I don't know, I haven't opened the box...' 'Name?' 'Schroedinger.' 'Is this some kind of joke? Because it's not funny.' 'In some universes it is...'

- I used to want to be star but now I just like hot darkness."
- I used to work in a shoe-recycling shop. It was sole-destroying."
- I want a fun funeral - so the invite is going to say 'Hawaiian themed'. But, I'm only going to send that invite to one guest.
- I wanted to do a show about feminism. But my husband wouldn't let me.
- I was a lazy kid. When I was twelve my parents entered me in a national apathy contest. I came second. I wasn't that bothered. The kid that beat me didn't even turn up.
- I was adopted at birth and have never met my mum. That makes it very difficult to enjoy any lapdance."
- I was arguing with someone until we came across a smiling fortune teller - I think we found a happy medium.
- I was brought up a very strict muslim... no, don't be scared, there aren't enough of you to make it worthwhile.
- I was buying a dishwasher online, so I searched by price lowest to highest – the top result was a sponge.
- I was going to scatter my father's ashes but he was a big cricket fan so I thought I'd retain them.
- I was in a band which we called The Prevention, because we hoped people would say we were better than The Cure."
- I was in Halifax one Friday night in July, and I thought they were having an 'idiots and whores' theme party, but no – that's just Halifax on a Friday night"

- I was playing chess with my friend and he said, 'Let's make this interesting'. So we stopped playing chess."

- I was quite an upbeat child, I used to think CCTV was a very, very positive Spanish television channel.

- I was really disappointed that Kayne West and Kim Kardashian didn't call their new kid Wicky Wicky Wicky Wild Wild.

- I was struggling to make friends so I bought a book called 'How to Make People Like You'. Turned out it was all about cloning.
- I was surprised how British Muslims reacted to the Danish cartoons. I thought: "How can you get this worked up about a cartoon?" But then I remembered how angry I was when they gave Scooby Doo a cousin.
- I was talking to my friend from New York yesterday, and I used the expression, 'You can't polish a turd'. He looked at me, disgusted, and said, 'No, you can't, but you can roll it in glitter'. He's a lovely guy but I wouldn't want to go to a craft fair with him"

- I was the first to reach the summit. Apparently this means I am not a team player."

- I was very naive sexually. My first boyfriend asked me to do missionary and I buggered off to Africa for six months."

- I was very proud of my dad when I was at primary school and told everyone I went to school with that my dad was a soldier, a fireman and a policeman. Turns out, he was just a stripper.

- I was walking the streets of Glasgow the other week and I saw this sign: "This door is alarmed." I said to myself: "How do you think I feel?"

- I was watching the London Marathon and saw one runner dressed as a chicken and another runner dressed as an egg. I thought: 'This could be interesting.'

- I wasn’t sure about this beard at first but it’s grown on me.

- I went on a girl's night out recently. The invitation said 'dress to kill.' I went as Rose West."

- I went out with an Irish Catholic. Very frustrating. You can take the girl out of Cork...
- I went to a Pretenders concert. It was a tribute act.
- I went to a really rough inner-city school. The kind where chances of being bullied grew exponentially every time you use the word ‘exponentially’.
- I went to the airport to check in and they asked what I did because I looked like a terrorist. I said I was a comedian. They said, "Say something funny then." I told them I had just graduated from flying school

- I went to the hospital with my psoriasis. They gave me a DVD of The Singing Detective and said 'Good luck with your life.'"

- I went to the JobCentre for an interview. I said: "I ain't got no qualifications, no skills and as for my customer service, sod off." She said: "You're exactly what they're after at Dixons".

- I went to Waterstones and asked the woman for a book about turtles. She asked: “Hardback?” and I was like: “Yeah, and little heads.”

- I wish people would stop being superstitious and start calling the Scottish Parliament, “Macbeth’s Parliament”.

- I wonder if the inventor of the shoehorn ever tries to bring it up in conversation?

- I wonder what would happen if Franz Ferdinand were assassinated?"
- I worked out that on average I sleep with a little over three people every week. You could say I'm Pi-sexual.

- I wouldn't recommend tai chi for self defence, unless you're getting mugged by a mime artist. Which happens a surprising amount in Edinburgh during August. They're skint."

- I’d like to reassure you - I'm too tall, not too near.
- I’ll tell you what separates the men from the boys. Operation Yewtree. –

- I’m a card carrying feminist - and the best thing about that is, it gives you a discount on your salary

- I’m a classic example of a champagne socialist, except that I don’t actually like champagne, and I do agree with quite a lot of Conservative policy.

- I’m a creature of ego. I think we all are. But especially me.

- I’m all for an independent Scotland but I don't think you can be properly independent and have pandas in the zoo. It's cheating. An independent

Scotland should just have Scottish animals in the zoo. Like midges. A grouse. And that mad bloke that screams at tourists on Waverly Bridge.

- I'm allergic to dogs and peanuts. I've never made it through an episode of Snoopy without having an asthma attack.

- I'm allergic to nuts, which means that if I ever want to commit suicide I can do it by Ferrero Rocher.

- I'm dating a PE teacher at the moment. So I am literally embracing my childhood fears.

- I'm entering the worlds tightest hat competition. Just hope I can pull it off.

- I'm getting on a bit, but I've still got it. Just can't quite remember where I put it...
- I'm learning the hokey cokey. Not all of it. But I've got the ins and outs.
- I'm not a fan of colonisation. Sounds too much like colonoscopy. And they're both kinda the same thing: both involve some old rich dudes, who invade your space and steal all your shit

- I'm not rich and I need a solicitor, so if you know any pro bono lawyers you can introduce me to that would be great. If you know any anti-Bono ones that's even better.

- I'm not sure if I'm ready to be an uncle. Mainly because I insist on saying "uncle" rather than "father".

- I'm pretty sure Jesus is Gay because every time I go to God's house he's got pictures of him on the wall with 12 hot guys having brunch.

- I’m selling my old tennis equipment but I can’t work out what’s the net worth.
- I’m super competitive which is like being competitive but better.
- I’m very good friends with 25 letters of the alphabet. I don’t know why. –
- I’m White and Chinese. I’m both majorities, bitch. I’m Pepsi and Coke.
- I’ve always been something of a problem solver. When my uncle drowned my whole family panicked, but I just popped him in a bag of rice and he was right as rain the next day.
- I’ve been feeling suicidal so my therapist suggested I do CBT. Now I can ride a motorbike, how’s that going to help?
- I’ve been married for 10 years. I haven’t made a decision for seven.
- I’ve been on Mock the Week – a non-speaking role.”
- I’ve got very sensitive teeth. They’ll probably be upset I’ve told you.
- I’ve just come back from a Club 18-30 holiday. It lasted 12 years!
- I’ve now moved into my mum and dad's shed, some people call a spade a spade, I call it that thing I hang my hoodie on.
- I’ve only got two weaknesses: being vague, and another weakness.
- If 50 Cent was shot nine times, why doesn't he sound like a flute?"
- If a dog's tail is still wagging, then how can that be rape?"
- If Britons were left to tax themselves, there would be no schools, no hospitals, just a 500-mile-high statue of Diana, Princess of Wales"
- If I ever saw an amputee being hanged, I'd just yell out letters.

- If I had a pound for every time someone accused me of having body dysmorphia I’d have enough to buy the new nose I need.
- If I went on Desert Island Discs I’d choose the Desert Island Discs theme tune eight times. Just so listeners would think: ‘What’s wrong with my radio?’
- If I’m ever feeling down I just type: ‘Yo are the best’ into Google. Then it responds: ‘I think you mean: “You are the best”’ and I feel much better.
- If it's gone abroad, it must be fraud" [on the mindset of the high-street banks]
- If these crime syndicates were as good at crime as they say, they wouldn’t have to keep buying lottery tickets.

- If Windolene cleans windows would a trampolene clean the homeless?"

- If you arrive fashionably late in crocs you're just late

- If you want to give someone a back-handed compliment, just tell them they have really nice knuckles."

- If you're being chased by a police dog, try not to go through a tunnel, then on to a little seesaw, then jump through a hoop of fire. They're trained for that
- If you've half a mind to vote UKIP, don't worry, it's all you need.

- I'll never forget the day when I got a rear-view mirror installed for the car. I never looked back after that!"

- I'm a big Bono fan, but the man can't count. On "Vertigo", he begins with 'uno, dos, tres, catorce' which is 'one, two, three, 14' in Spanish. So maybe there isn't a crisis in Africa. Bono's just miscounted.
- I'm a Jew, by the way. It was my agent's idea.

- I'm currently dating a couple of anorexics. Two birds, one stone.

- I'm dating now, because I ran out of hooker money"
- I'm glad they invented emoticons, otherwise I wouldn't know what my dad was thinking"

- I'm here at the Edinburgh festival, because Scotland is where the most depressed – and depressing – people come from."

- I'm in a same-sex marriage ... the sex is always the same."

- I'm mixing beats that are phat and ill, like Pavarotti.
- I'm still making love at 71, which is handy for me because I live at number 63.

- I'm sure wherever my dad is; he's looking down on us. He's not dead, just very condescending."

- I'm the eldest of five children. My parents aren't Catholic, just reckless"

- I'm trying to read Karma Sutra on the train but it has put the other passengers in an awkward position."

- In America it is so hard for white women to go to jail. So they made a whole television show about the one time it happened.

- In his job my dad's never lost a case. That makes him Gatwick's top baggage handler.

- In school I had the nickname “the human calculator”, which meant bullies would come up to me, say the number five million, three hundred and

eighteen thousand and eight, lift me upside down and not let me go until I said the word “boobies”.

- In the Bible, God made it rain for 40 days and 40 nights. That's a pretty good summer for us in Wales. That's a hosepipe ban waiting to happen. I was eight before I realised you could take a kagoule off.
- In working class areas in the really rough parts we call it a “No Go area” in the posh areas they call it a “Greggs or Wilko”.

- In your thirties your friends just disappear. I don't mean they die, they all move to Birmingham – which is worse."

- Irish people love Muslims. They have taken a lot of heat off us. Before, we were "the terrorists" but now, we're "the Riverdance people".
- Is it fair to say that there'd be less litter in Britain if blind people were given pointed sticks?

- It’s really hard to define ‘virtue signalling’, as I was saying the other day to some of my Muslim friends over a fair-trade coffee in our local feminist bookshop.

- It’s so weird that Americans say ‘eggplant’ when they’re called chickens.
- It's easy to distract fat people. It's a piece of cake.
- It's often said that Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus.Hmmm, that’s the wrong way ‘round, surely? As Mars is a chocolate company and Venus is a lap-dancing club in East London.

- I've been keeping a count of the prostitutes I've been sleeping with. Tally ho."

- I've been reading the news about there being a civil war in Madagascar. Well, I've seen it six times and there isn't."
- I've got no problem buying tampons. I'm a modern man. But apparently, they're not a "proper present".
- I've got nothing against disabled people, I've even got one of their stickers on my car"

- I've had a good marketing idea. My show next year is going to be called 'John Bishop'."
- I've just become a lesbian. At first I wasn't sure if I was gay or bi but I'm definitely vegan so I'm moving in the right direction.
- I've just been on a once-in-a-lifetime holiday. I'll tell you what, never again.
- I've not seen such a guilty face since I finished my jigsaw of O J Simpson.
- I've tried online dating. If you told me a year ago I'd be on a dating app, my wedding planner would've been furious.
- Jennifer Aniston goes to Malibu to shout at the sea. I drink Malibu and shout at pigeons.
- Just had a near death experience. I was metres away when this dude got hit by a train."
- Kanye West deleted all of his tweets about Trump so if you still want to hear him defend an egotistical narcissist, you'll just have to listen to his music.

- Keep digging you'll find one eventually." [on edinburgh trams]
- Ken Dodd is one of my favourite comics, and one of the richest in showbusiness – he has Swiss money in Irish banks"
- Kim Kardashian got robbed in Paris and her former bodyguard blamed it on Karma. Which Kardashian is that?
- Lately my husband has started pissing with the door open. No modesty, no decorum. Pissing with the door open. Do you have any idea how disgusting that is when you're trying to drive."
- Laughter is the best medicine, though it tends not to work in the case of impotence.
- Let me tell you what blasphemy is. It's the idea there's a superior being who can make the mountains, the oceans and the skies, but who still gets upset about something I said. He's an all-powerful being, he's just got self-esteem issues.
- Let's have a round of applause for those who are easily led...
- Life is like a box of chocolates. It doesn't last long if you're fat.
- Like watching two football teams that never quite score." [on weather watching] "
- Looking at my face is like reading in the car. It's all right for 10 minutes, then you start to feel sick"

- Lord Grantham: Things aren't going very well up here Carson. How's it all going downstairs? Carson: it's all cleared up now my lord. Dr Clarkson gave me some cream.
- Love is like a fart. If you have to force it it's probably sh*t.
- Many woman find big tall men more attractive than shorty wimpy ones (like myself). It makes sense in evolutionary terms, after all a big man is better able to protect you. However, these days you're actually more likely to be attacked by your own partner than a stranger, so if anything you're safer off with a man you can physically overpower. Who's looking like a good catch now?"
- Masculinity isn’t toxic, masculinity is great and I will fight anyone who disagrees with me.
- Maybe Hitler wouldn’t have been so grumpy if people hadn’t left him hanging for high-fives all the time.
- Me hot water heaters packed up so I had to fill the bath using a kettle and a load of saucepans... Mind, it was effing uncomfortable when I got in.
- Men who blow themselves up are promised 72 virgins in paradise. That's a high price to pay for a shag. In real life you'd be hard pushed to find one virgin. It begs the question: what on earth do they all look like? That's a lot of hairy women.
- Michael Phelps did well at the Olympics. Now he's gone back to his day job – he's a milkman in Venice."

- Money can’t buy you happiness? Well, check this out, I bought myself a Happy Meal.

- Mr Cumcision refused his knighthood

- My best friend got in touch to ask if I’d be usher at his wedding, I said I’ll learn some of his songs, but I’m not blacking up

- My body has changed so much since I have been here. My stomach is fat from the food and booze, my legs are skinny from walking up all the hills. I've decided ET wasn't from out of space, he was from Edinburgh!

- My boyfriend and I used to argue over the duvet. I liked to sleep all stretched out like a starfish and he liked to sleep with a blonde lady called Leanne.

- My boyfriend likes role play. He likes to pretend we're married. He waits until I go to bed, then he looks at porn and has a wank"
- My brother and friends spend all of their time floating out at sea. Well, boys will be buoys.
- My careers advisor used to say, ‘Don’t dress for the job you’ve got, dress for the job you want.’ I say he was a careers advisor - I later found out he was a mechanic dressed up as a careers advisor.

- My dad got me a pair of tickets to see Celine Dion. And I really enjoyed it. Both times.

- My dad is Irish and my mum is Iranian, which meant that we spent most of our family holidays in Customs.

- My dad is like a black James Bond: it'd be great to see him, but he's unlikely to make an appearance.

- My dad loves his dog more than us, he makes it a roast chicken seasoned in herbs every Sunday which is stupid as dogs have no concept of Thyme.

- My dad's a real family man – he's got three of them.

- My Dad's advice when I was younger about women was 'Treat 'em mean keep 'em keen'. I guess that's why they had that divorce."

- My dad's dying wish was to have his family around him. I can't help thinking he would have been better off with more oxygen.
- My father was a magician. Well, not a magician, he just disappeared a lot when we were younger.
- My friend asked me, 'If you could have any superpower in the world, what would it be? I said Cold War Russia.
- My friend died doing what he loved ... Heroin."
- My friend got a personal trainer a year before his wedding. I thought: 'Bloody hell. How long's the aisle going to be?'
- My friend is Irish. - Oh really? O'Reilly actually.
- My friend Kim is on every single dating website. She refers to them all as the "husband directory" but behind her back we call it the Screwfix catalogue. –
- My friend said she was giving up drinking from Monday to Friday. I'm just worried she's going to dehydrate"
- My friend said to me: "You must be more American," so I went to have botox. The surgeon said to me: "That's $8,000." I couldn't even look shocked.

- My friend slept with Uri Geller. Afterwards he laid on his side and she laid on her side snuggling into him. Then her head fell off.

- My friend told me he was going to a fancy dress party as an Italian island. I said to him 'Don't be Sicily'."

- My girlfriend got really angry because I used one of her posh wine glasses to trap a spider. My argument was ... he's a guest!

- My girlfriend is Irish Catholic and my family are Jewish. When she first told her mum that I was Jewish her response was ‘well you know, Jesus was a Jew’ and I thought, f*ck, she’s set the bar high.

- My girlfriend survived cancer in 2014, really hard year for both of us, I didn't know her at the time but I was between jobs.

- My girlfriend worries about me cheating on a night out, but I always try to reassure her and say to her: 'Why would I go out and have a burger when I have steak at home?' The only problem is, when you are drunk, burgers are well nice."

- My grandma died at the age of 91 not knowing how to drive. Apparently.

- My grandmother covered my grandfather's back in lard. After that he went downhill quickly.
- My granny was recently beaten to death by my granddad. Not as in, with a stick – he just died first"
- My husband is white, I am black, our children are grey.

- My husband's penis is like a semi colon. I can't remember what it's for and I never use it anyway."

- My kids, despite living their whole life in London, see themselves as Northern Irish because of their mum. To be honest, I see them as Northern Irish too because they’re always arguing and economically it makes no sense to keep them.

- My mate and I were in a pub debating where the barman originates from. I said he was an Eskimo. He said Native American. Turns out he was an Eskimo. Inuit all along.

- My mate came second in a Winston Churchill lookalike competition. He was close, but no cigar.
- My mom called my bullies my friends, which is like the police calling the rapist your f*** buddy

- My mother is so pessimistic. If there were an Olympics of pessimism, she wouldn't fancy her chances."

- My mother told me, you don’t have to put anything in your mouth you don’t want to. Then she made me eat broccoli, which felt like double standards.”
- My mum always asks for ‘bath stuff’ for Christmas so this year I bought her a toaster.
- My mum and dad are Scottish but they moved down to Wolverhampton when I was two, 'cause they wanted me to sound like a twat.

- My Mum is always saying I need to take better care of myself, her biggest concern is to bury her only daughter. My dad’s biggest concern is being left with me as his primary carer.
- My name is Eshaan Akbar, which is a Muslim name. In Islam, Akbar means “The Greatest” and Eshaan means “Not”.
- My name is Fin, which means it’s very hard for me to end emails without sounding pretentious.
- My name is Sukh, which is short for Sukhjeet, which is Sanskrit for you're never going to find it on a fucking keyring in a gift shop.
- My Nan had a plastic hip put in, but I thought she should have replaced it with a Slinky, 'cause if she fell down the stairs again..."
- My paper manufacturing business has folded seven times so I’m pretty sure it can’t happen again.
- My parents are from Glasgow which means they're incredibly hard, but I was never smacked as a child ... well maybe one or two grams to get me to sleep at night.
- My parents have been married 40 years. I don’t know how they do it, they make it look so hard.
- My personal trainer said I’m a secret eater. I thought look at the size of me! That is not a well-kept secret!
- My similes are like pasta just before you eat it: strained.
- My sister just had a baby – she's called it Tiff, because it's a girl. If it was a boy if would have been Jpeg."

- My sister’s boyfriend has a heart tattooed on his bicep with the word ‘grandad’ in it which looks good now but one day he’ll just look like a very arrogant grandad
- My uncle Cleetus is illiterate and ambidextrous. Which is a double tragedy. He is unable to write, with both hands"
- My uncle told me it doesn’t matter what you achieve in life, as long as you’re happy and you can afford your own bed. That’s the last thing he told me on his deathchair.

- My wife and I can never agree on holidays. I want to fly to exotic places and stay in five-star hotels. And she wants to come with me.

- My wife and I can’t have children. We don’t like them.”

- My wife bought me a Fitbit to count steps. I said, ‘There’s still five of them, but H is looking a bit peaky.’

- My wife is always saying to me that we should be more spontaneous. I say: 'Fine! When?"'

- My wife said: ‘Did you know butterflies only live for one day?’ I said: ‘That’s a myth.’ She said: ‘No, it’s definitely a butterfly.’
- My wife told me: “Sex is better on holiday.” That wasn’t a very nice postcard to receive.

- Never Apologise! Never Explain!” – Sorry, that’s my motto.

- Never date a tennis player. Love means nothing to them.

- Never say to an autistic person, you do the maths"
- No good at talking to women. I’m 28 and recently my Grandmother and I had the “are you gay conversation”. She isn’t.
- No one can stare out of a window like Sarah Lund." [in character as Scandinavian detective Moomin Mama]
- No seriously, I am a feminist, just a lusty, ogling feminist. I'm a lesbian, in fact
- No wonder Bob Geldof is such an expert on famine. He's been feeding off "I Don't Like Mondays" for 30 years.
- Nobody starts something hoping it will fail – maybe a suicide bombing."
- Nobody thought Mel Gibson could play a Scot but look at him now! Alcoholic and a racist!
- Now kids are not stupid, they simply cannot tell the difference between vertical and horizontal which is why it’s okay to push them over.
- Now there’s a female lead in Doctor Who, I’d love to play it next, it’d be amazing to be the very first ever Asian doctor.
- Oh my god, mega drama the other day: my dishwasher stopped working! Yuh, his visa expired.
- Old people don't like swearing, because a lot of the words weren't invented in their day, so they feel left out"
- On having sex with men in their thirties: "Generally much better, but you've got to rub their legs afterwards for cramp"

- One of my friends had twins with IVF. Two old ladies that she knew came up to her, and one got the term wrong. In a very sweet voice, she said, 'Oh, would you look at those beautiful twins! Did you get those on the HIV?"'
- One thing you'll never hear a Hindu say... "Ah well, you only live once."
- One-armed butlers, they can take it but they can't dish it out"
- Paintballing: I find it too emulsional.

- Patriarchy is putting Jane Austen on £10 notes the same time as bringing in contactless.

- Paying for 'priority boarding' on a Ryanair flight is about as futile as being part of David Cameron's cabinet. Yes, you may well get ahead quicker in life but you'll still have to sit next to an utter twat".

- PC World - you've got to be careful what you say in there.
- People say 'I'm taking it one day at a time.' You know what? So is everybody. That's how time works."
- People say having kids is the best thing in the world, but you only ever hear that from the victims.
- People say I've got no willpower. But I've quit smoking loads of times.

- People who like trance music are very persistent. They don't techno for an answer."

- People who process expired passports are so lazy, they're always cutting corners.

- People who say they don't swear haven't had the right sex or food.

- Period drama is essentially a drama that is on on Sunday nights."
- Playing poker online is like being mugged without the company.
- Politicians are like God. No one believes in them, they haven't done anything for ages, and they give jobs to their immediate family"
- Pop up your hand if you like participating in market research.
- Princess Kate is a PILF, if you will. I won't. I suspect you can get hanged for that."
- Prison governor: "Ladies, I am going to turn this place into Midnight Express. Prisoner: 'Oh, in which case, I think I should tell you now, I'm no good on roller-skates'.
- Q: Who are the most decent people in the hospital? A: The ultrasound people.
- Recently I was accused of being homophobic. I'm definitely not. Most of the men I've slept with have been gay.
- Recently we got a new child in the family – my new stepmom.
- Relationships are like mobile phones. You look at your iPhone 5 and think ‘It used to be a lot quicker to turn this thing on’.
- Sadness is just happiness that has passed.
- Scotland announce the slogan for their ambitious Winter Olympics bid: GLASGOW 2022: WHEN HELL FREEZES OVER."
- Seeing these three elderly ladies fall about laughing at a fart joke was an act of human defiance for me - they might not be here on Tuesday.

- Sleep like a baby? My kids sleep like caffeinated meerkats promised a trip to Disney in the morning."

- Sleeping with prostitutes is like making your cat dance with you on its hind legs. You know it's wrong, but you try to convince yourself that they're enjoying it as well.

- So I had this threesome at this swinging party. I fell asleep on a bed under a pile of coats and two people came in and had sex. That counts, right?"

- So much for Taylor Swift. She sent back my trousers unmended!
- So your name is Ham-ISH: You don't seem very sure."
- Social media constantly creates new forms of online trauma like Dragging, Ghosting or Haunting. It's pretty damning that the friendliest sounding one is online grooming.
- Some people hear my voice and just assume I'm thick. I told a guy my name over the phone today and I swear to God he asked me if I could spell it.
- Some people think being working class is a negative thing but I think there's loads of benefits. I've claimed them all.
- Someone asked me recently – what would I rather give up, food or sex. Neither! I'm not falling for that one again, wife."
- Someone once said to me 'Billie you are so pretentious' - I think it was Jean Paul Sartre. Or it could've been the Dalai Lama, I forget.

- Son, I don't think you're cut out to be a mime." "Was it something I said?" asks the son. "Yes."

- Southern Rail aren’t really running a train service at all any more. It’s an experiment to see how much anger you can hold in a tube.

- St Anthony is the patron saint of lost things. Because he famously coined the phrase ‘Where did you have it last?”

- Stephen Hawking had his first date for 10 years last week. He came back, his glasses were smashed, he had a broken wrist, a twisted ankle and grazed knees; apparently, she stood him up.
- Surgery is just stabbing in a courteous environment"
- Sushi is so healthy, even the food is on a treadmill.
- The anti-aging advert that I would like to see is a baby covered in cream saying, 'Aah, I've used too much'"
- The Australian government treats Aboriginal people much like you would your finest set of silverware... Like, if you have special guests, especially international ones, shine it up and show it off! Otherwise... Just lock it up.

- The average life expectancy of people in EastEnders is 42 – that's lower than Kabul."

- The best musical to go and see at the moment is Ghost. Apparently it's still starring Patrick Swayze."

- The best way to get the government to pay for your abortion in America is by sleeping with a married Republican. You may not even want an abortion but if one of those guys get you pregnant, watch your drink.

- The Bible would have been so different if Adam and Eve had simply decided to buy a PC instead.

- The Butler Report is the political equivalent of saying, "Leave it out lads, we've all had a drink".
- The definition of bipolar? A sexually curious bear"
- The early bird gets the worm but the late worm gets to live...

- The finest Rioja comes from Fife. Meanwhile Spain is on fire."

- The first rule of Fight Club is that you don't talk about how Brad Pitt and Edward Norton turn out to be the same guy at the end.

- The good thing about lending someone your time machine is that you basically get it back immediately."

- The internet says pigeons can fly at 65mph. They can, just not necessarily in a straight line. This is a myth created by crows."

- The key to a happy marriage is in a bowl with a bunch of other keys.
- The last guy I dated didn't fart in front of me for two years and always had this very intense expression on his face whenever we talked. After two years he started farting rampantly. The whole time I thought he was a great listener, turns out he was just holding in farts.
- The Olympics are for everyone, not just someone who happens to own a dancing horse"
- The only legitimate reason for smoking an electronic cigarette is if you are a robot that has just had sex with another robot.

- The Only Way Is Essex's popularity is mystifying . Nothing happens in it. It's like a never ending hen night mixed with Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot."

- The other day my girlfriend asked me whether I would take a bullet for her. Obviously I said yes but the security staff in Ann Summers are very vigilant so I had to give it back.

- The Pope is a lot like Doctor Who. He never dies, just keeps being replaced by white men."

- The Pursuit of 'Stars' by comedians at the Edinburgh Fringe is very reminiscent of the McDonalds employment ladder, but without the hairnets.
- The right to bear arms is slightly less ludicrous than the right to arm bears.
- The Scots invented hypnosis, chloroform and the hypodermic syringe. Wouldn't it just be easier to talk to a woman?"

- The sound of a baby screaming is like hearing all four Loose Women talk at once."

- The tattooist said to me that she didn't believe in anaesthetic. I said: 'I assure you, it does exist."

- The traffic light warning system on supermarket foods means nothing to me – I'm a cyclist."

- The universe implodes. No matter."

- The wedding invite said: ‘Simon Feilder +1’. So I turned up an hour late.

- The world is a dangerous place; only yesterday I went into Boots and punched someone in the face.
- Then there’s my chiropodist, Siobhan, who reminds me that no matter how many times I fail, I will always be her son.

- There are so many drugs in my system that I could be on the Chinese Olympic swimming team."

- They declared a war on drugs? That’s awful. I know people can do stupid things on drugs, but that’s too much.

- They say being a hostage is difficult. But I could do that with my hands tied behind my back.

- They say children give you something money can’t buy. Yes, poverty.

- They say some people 'inhale books'. I know someone who injects books right into his veins. Particularly ones with female protagonists. He's a heroine addict.
- They sent flowers to the funeral. And I couldn't help thinking, if you'd sent them before, she'd have pulled through her illness.
- They tell us coconut oil is good for our hair. It doesn't seem to have done that well for the coconut hair.

- Thing is, we all just want to belong. But some of us are short.

- This bloke said to me: ‘I’m going to attack you with the neck of a guitar.’ I said: ‘Is that a fret?’

- This show is about perception and perspective. But it depends how you look at it.
- To the people who've got iPhones: you just bought one, you didn't invent it!"
- Today... I did seven press ups: not in a row."
- Tory Education Minister goes into a bar, orders a whiskey.Bartender says: "Teachers OK?".Minister says: "Do I look like I give a shit?"
- Turns out us Muslims have a lot in common with vampires. We can't eat between the hours of sunrise and sunset (during ramadan) we wear burqas to keep the sun from burning us and we flinch when we see crucifixes..."
- Two aerials on a roof fell in love and got married. The wedding wasn't great but the reception was fantastic.
- Two blind fellows walk into a wall.
- Two flies are playing football in a saucer. One says to the other, "Make an effort, we're playing in the cup tomorrow."
- Two guys came knocking at my door once and said: "We want to talk to you about Jesus." I said: "Oh, no, what's he done now?"
- Victoria Beckham? Does this tampon make me look fat?"
- Waiter waiter, do you have frogs legs? No, I was born with a congenital spinal condition. But since this government have cut disability allowance, I've been forced back into work.

- Walking down Princes Street, soaking up the atmosphere, I saw a big sign that said: "Bus tours, ten quid." So I thought I'd give it a try... What a rip off. Ten quid to have a look round a bus!

- Walking down the Royal Mile is like scrolling through the mind of a failed actor."

- Watching porn on the internet is like witnessing a crime scene – I feel like I need to call the police."

- Watson! I've overdosed on Immodium!" "No s***, Sherlock."

- We did well in the Olympics. We were snatching gold off other countries like we had an empire again."

- We have our own local version of Big Brother round my way. It's called jail.

- Weird how so many of my dates claim to be looking for a "partner in crime" but won't go halfsies on my pyramid scheme??

- Welcome to the Rosa Parks VIP area... where nobody feels special."

- Well if it was called a 'teethbrush' I wouldn't have been doing it wrong all these years!

- Went to my allotment and found that there was twice as much soil as there was the week before. The plot thickens.

- What did the male shepherd say to the female shepherd? You herd!"

- What do colour-blind people eat when they're told to eat their greens?

- What do we want!? More research into a cure for ADHD! When do we want it!? Let's play swingball!"
- What do you call a kid with no arms and an eyepatch? Names.
- What do you call a skinny Aussie girl with chalk on her head? A Barbie-cue
- What do you call a video of two toads having sex? Frogspawn.
- What do you say to your adopted African child if you want them to eat up their dinner? 'There are people starving in Africa right now, like your parents'"
- What happens in the Bermuda Triangle stays in the Bermuda Triangle."
- What Iran needs now is a more modern leader - a mullah lite.
- What should you say if Bono gives you flowers? I love U2."
- What's a couple?' I asked my mum. She said, 'Two or three'. Which probably explains why her marriage collapsed"
- Whats the difference between inlaws and outlaws... Outlaws are wanted.
- When I die I want my remains to go to my iPod, my iPhone and my laptop. I want to be left to my own devices."
- When I found out the amusement park was taking photos of me on their rides without my permission I was fluming
- When I look at myself naked, the idea of white supremacy seems pretty inconceivable.
- When I realised I'd never be able to talk again I was speechless.

- When I see Donald Trump I get the same thought in my head as I get after a particularly painful bikini wax. Bush wasn’t that bad.

- When I was 12 I found a dominatrix porn mag on a train, I took it home and put it under my bed. My parents found it, but they never spanked me again.
- When I was a kid, I worried about weird stuff like getting trapped in a painting, though I don’t worry about that now as Jacob Rees-Mogg shows that you can get out of them again.
- When I was in prison I played football for the stalkers. We weren't bad players but when one of us would go for the ball, we'd all go. There was no one looking for space.
- When I was little my grandfather said I couldn't eat bacon because I'm Jewish. I said "then I don't want to be Jewish." And he replied, "That's the most Jewish thing you could say."

- When I was younger I felt like a man trapped inside a woman’s body. Then I was born.

- When Jesus went to heaven, was that not essentially 'moving back in with your parents'?"

- Whenever I see a man with a beard, moustache and glasses, I think, 'There's a man who has taken every precaution to avoid people doodling on photographs of him"

- Whenever I’m on a date with a girl I tell her she has an amazing laugh to trick her into thinking she’s been laughing a lot.

- Whenever someone says ‘I don’t believe in coincidences’. I say ‘Oh my god! Me neither!’

- Where does Mark Antony get his hair cut? In-a-barbus.

- Where I'm from, people aren't quick. A girl once asked her mum, 'Can I have a Cadbury's Creme Egg?' The mum said, 'No, you can't Danielle, I've already told you, darling – bird flu!'"
- Who remembers when X Factor was just Roman suncream?

- Why are disabled toilets big enough to run around in?

- Why are they calling it Brexit when they could be calling it The Great British Break Off?

- Why do women insist on asking men what they're thinking? We're thinking: "Fuck, better think of something to say." Either that or we're imagining that we're spies.
- Why don't Africans go on cruises? That's exactly how they got us the last time

- With my comedy I’m trying to lift the lid on anti-depressants, but it’s hard because first you have to squash it down and click it round.

- Women want men in uniforms. In fact when you actually get down to it, all women really want are fascists. Hey, you can say what you like about the Nazis but those guys knew how to turn heads.

- Wooden spoons are great. You can either use them to prepare food, or if you can't be bothered with that, just write a number on one and walk into a pub.

- Words can’t express how much I hate World Emoji Day.
- You are hereby charged with wearing an unnecessarily tropical shirt in a intemperate climate how do you plead?
- You can keep paying us and we'll keep waving from the balcony."
- You cannot 'complete' the gym: it's like Tetris, but the music is not as good."
- You ever hate your job with the passion that your boss claims you lack?
- You have to remember all the trivia that your girlfriend tells you, because eventually you get tested. She'll go: "What's my favourite flower?" And you murmur to yourself: "Shit, I wasn't listening ... Self-raising?"
- You have to think positively, for example, I don’t have a drink problem. I have a drink opportunity.
- You know you are fat when you hug a child and it gets lost."
- You let me write numbers on your hands. I knew I could count on you.
- You should never take the mick out of a nightclub bouncer. These guys put themselves in the line of fire to protect us on a nightly basis. When they kiss their wives goodbye in the morning they don't know if they'll ever see their sisters again."