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THESIS APPROVAL

The abstract and thesis of William T. Argent for the Master of Arts in TESOL were presented October 2, 1996, and accepted by the thesis committee and the department.

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ABSTRACT

An abstract of the thesis of William T. Argent for the Master of Arts Degree in TESOL: presented October 2, 1996.

Title: Humor Recognition: A Comparative Analysis

There are various approaches to the explanation of humor in the field of humor research. Some of these theories, while providing interesting insight into the phenomenon known as humor, remain limited in their ability to account for how humor is recognized. Others do not even address the issue. This thesis compares five different theories in humor research by analyzing the humorous short story "My Watch" by Mark Twain. These theories are: 1. a typological approach to humor, 2. a social- functional model, 3. incongruity theory, 4. Grice's Cooperative Principle taken from linguistic pragmatics, and 5. the General Theory of Verbal Humor devised by V. Raskin and S. Attardo. The comparative analysis, following an extensive review of the literature, first interprets the humor in the short story in the light of each theoretical model. During the course of the analysis, the limitations inherent in each theories' treatment of humor are illustrated and these argue and provide evidence for the adoption of the General Theory of Verbal Humor because of its greater sophistication in building a model of humor recognition. Furthermore, in analyzing Twain's short story this thesis establishes the generalizability of this more sophisticated theory to at least some types of literary humor, specifically the tall tale. Finally, further research implications and general connections between the theoretical approaches discussed in this thesis and the teaching of the English language to non-native speakers highlight the practicality of applying insights from humor research to the field of teaching.

HUMOR RECOGNITION:
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

by

WILLIAM T. ARGENT

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

TESOL

Portland State University
1996

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Chapter One

Introduction, Proposal and Overview

I. Introduction

Everybody loves a good joke. And good joke tellers are valued conversation partners in many social situations. We describe friends and acquaintances as having good senses of humor and think it a positive thing. Comic strips, political cartoons, jokes and tall tales surround us in daily life. Mostly, they are appreciated and sorely needed, but seldom do we stop to think about how we come to understand humor.

Questions of whether a joke or tale is funny or not involve too many things to determine any specific characteristic that makes it funny. The presentation plays a key role, and the number of times one is exposed to a joke is also a factor. Personal traits such as age, sex, intelligence and education likewise determine if one laughs or not. Finding something funny is often even a matter of overall taste, and an individuals mood at any given moment may be the most influential of all in guiding the response to a joke. Clearly, understanding how we come to understand humor involves more than asking ourselves if something is amusing or not. Rather, when we pause over the funny pages or a comic story, we should asks ourselves how we know it is supposed to be funny in the first place.

II. Proposal

This question is more difficult than it might initially seem. There are various approaches to the explanation of humor in the field of humor research. Some of these theories, while providing interesting insight into the phenomenon known as humor, remain limited in their ability to account for how humor is recognized. Others do not even address the issue. It is the purpose of this thesis to compare five different theories in humor research by analyzing a humorous short story. These theories are: 1. a typological approach to humor, 2. a functional model, 3. incongruity theory, and 4. two opposing theories based on principles taken from linguistic pragmatics. The comparative analysis, which follows an extensive review of the literature, will first interpret the humor contained in the short story in the light of each specific theoretical model as none of the theories discussed in this thesis have been applied to extended pieces of literary humor. During the course of the analysis, this thesis will illustrate the particular limitations inherent in each theory's treatment of humor. Next, the thesis will argue and provide evidence for the adoption of one of these five over the other four because of its greater sophistication in building a model of humor recognition. Most significantly, it will be shown that the model of verbal humor defended by this thesis can indeed be generalized to at least some types of literary humor. Finally, further research implications and general connections between the theoretical approaches discussed in this thesis and the teaching of the English language to non-native speakers will illustrate the practicality of applying insights from humor research to the field of teaching.

III. Typologies of Humor

The first and perhaps most natural approach to investigating humor is to ask what kind of humor it is. The typological approach focuses on this particular question. It asks what category under which a particular instance of humor fits. Bergson (1900) argued that through categorizations and lists of necessary and sufficient features the researcher into the humorous could classify instances of humor and thereby explain the phenomenon. That is to say the humor typologist believed it was possible to use taxonomies to distinguish the humorous from the non-humorous.

Without doubt some knowledge is gained via typing pieces of humor. We describe the Three Stooges as a slapstick troupe, and Monty Python would fit under the category of absurd. Knock-Knock jokes are clearly just that, and there are Shaggy Dog stories and Garden Path jokes. The person familiar with all of these types (there are of course many others) undoubtedly is able to distinguish certain properties particular to these classes. Even though unfamiliar with The Three Stooges, such a person would be able to predict the trips, falls and eye-poking of Moe, Larry and Curly. In the case of the British sextet, one aware of the tendencies of absurd humor would know to predict the unpredictable. The offbeat, silly and wildly satirical are the orders of the day. Likewise, knock-knock jokes contain the established opening phrases, Shaggy Dog stories are very long and drawn out, while Garden Path jokes are supposed to mislead. So even though one is not aware of the specifics of a piece of humor, by knowing the class into which it fits one is able to describe it to a degree. However, this treatment is very limited and has little explanatory value.

The most telling problem is that it is not clear that these categories are distinct. Certainly there are elements characteristic of slapstick, but where does it leave off and absurd humor begin? Monty Python obviously utilizes some of these characteristics, the falling and hitting for example. But this does not make it pure slapstick. The skit involving the department of funny walks illustrates this well. Although typical slapstick falls are used, the humor resides more in the absurdity of a governmental department of funny walks. Therefore, if characteristics can appear across categories, then it is difficult to say exactly what distinguishes one type from another. With classes like knock-knock jokes it would be absurd to claim that the openers, i.e. Knock-knock ! Who's there?, always indicate a joke every time they are used. In the cases of Shaggy Dog stories we also cannot claim that long, drawn out tales are consistently meant to be humorous. Therefore, it is easy to see that an attempt to explain humor via categories cannot be used to explain how humor is recognized vis a vis non-humor.

IV. The Social Nature of Humor

Another approach in humor research that provides interesting insights is social functional in nature. Instead of trying to distinguish one type of humor from another, this treatment investigates what humor does in respect to the structure of a conversation and the social atmosphere it creates or fosters.

Social functionalist depictions of humor concentrate on exactly this. Norrick (1994), in showing the function humor has in society, describes the role joking plays in a conversation and the effect it has on the individuals involved. During the course of many conversations intermittent wisecracks, jokes, and

tales fit smoothly (barring a faux pas) into the overall flow and serve to organize parts of it. The discussion at a dinner party of the latest Seinfeld episode or Letterman's newest 10 worst list influence the people's own comments, and the discussion itself is influenced by their own joking. For two minutes straight two people add their own items to Letterman's list and this joking becomes a mini-conversation in itself. In the process of all this a social rapport is being created. The people are bonding as it were. At the same time some of the joking takes the form of an intelligence test. Witty comments are made to see if others can understand. And the aggressiveness of humor is exposed by targeting people, places and things that are different, thus fostering group identification and inter-group antagonism. By looking at what joking does, socially speaking, we see that it is like other behavior. It is capable of creating power relationships, building up and breaking down social barriers, creating tolerances and intolerances. But a social view of humor does not tell us anything about our ability to recognize it. Just walk up to anyone and tell them the following joke with no preliminaries. *Q.- What do you call a man with no arms and no legs lying in front of your door? A.- Matt.* If they recognize it as a joke, ask them how. The last thing you will hear is a lecture on sensitivity to the handicapped. A social functional approach to humor assumes the recognition of humor as its starting point and therefore does not address the issue of how one recognized the humor in the first place. Clearly, even though such an approach is interesting, it does not look at the intent to be funny.

V. Humor and Incongruity Theory

A third approach to the question of humor recognition is incongruity theory. The crux of this approach is that all jokes, funny stories, riddles, etc., contain paradoxical or incongruous elements. Nerhardt (1975) argues that perceiving incongruity is necessary for perceiving humor. The most easily seen cases of this lie in jokes centered on ambiguity. So elemental does this seem that it is even found in children's jokes. *Q.- What's black and white and red(read) all over? A.- A newspaper.* Even children pick up on the homonym pair and the pun made on the pronunciation and spelling of read and red. Perhaps this is all it takes to know that something is a joke. Find a paradox, pun, opposing pair or ambiguous element, and you will know it is a joke.

Rothbart (1975) found this treatment a bit lacking, and in her studies with children discovered that the way an incongruity is resolved influences how it is recognized. The distinction between perceiving some event as humorous or frightening seems to lie in the probability of it really occurring. Slapstick humor illustrates this well. Moe Howard of The Three Stooges maliciously sticks his finger into Curly's eye and the audience duly laughs. Because we know that Curly is not really hurt we have no problem in resolving the incongruity of acceptable versus unacceptable behavior in terms of a very low likelihood of occurrence. Anyone observing the trio, and not knowing who they are, at first thinks Moe has truly injured his victim. To the viewer the likelihood of occurrence is rather high. Only a sociopath would laugh then. After seeing that it was only pretend, they are likely to become angry. In the horror genre of film and literature, our suspension of disbelief allows us to fool ourselves into

believing that a monster could really be under the bed. We know in reality that no such thing exists, but in order to have the fun of a good (safe) fright we have to assume it could.

Not every type of humor is as easy to explain as slapstick is. Riddles do not seem to need resolving via probabilities of occurrence. These clever, little word-puzzles may be tests that possibly could result in anxiety, but they are not fear inspiring scenarios. It is difficult to imagine what would need to occur, or not occur, in the following riddle to make it or prevent it from being scary. Q.- *What is it that falls often but never gets hurt?* A.- *Snow*. The limitations of the incongruity model of humor are very apparent. Not only does it not account for all types of humor, it also is not very descriptive. It is one thing to say that humor is based on a paradox or opposite pair, but it is another thing entirely to map out such pairs and to explain how their use enables us to recognize humor as such. Many other types of figurative communication use incongruous elements; the horror genre comes quickly to mind, yet we do not interpret their intent as being humorous. Therefore, it is clear that incongruity theory alone cannot distinguish humor from horror, romance literature or science fiction, among others

Linguistic pragmatics offers a good deal more information about how we know a joke to be a joke. Pragmatics deals with such things as meaning in context and it proves to be very useful in investigating humor. It is especially so when you think about times when you mean more than you actually say. All of us can come up with examples where what we said was not at all what we meant. This does not include times of confusion, but rather occasions when it is intentional to all parties involved and everybody understands exactly what is meant. At a dinner party the guests are talking over coffee and one says to another: *"Please pass the sugar!"* Looking down at the two plates in his hands

he answers: "*My hands are full.*" A woman listening in reaches over and passes it instead. The person who asked for the sugar understood the answer to mean " Sorry, I can't." and so did the woman. All three automatically made incredibly fast intuitive leaps from what was said to what was meant. It is really not all that different with humor. Nobody who gets a joke takes it at face value. Otherwise both Henny Youngman and his wife would have had plenty of interesting nights every time he said "Take my wife, please!" during a stand up routine. Clearly humor is also an instance of meaning more than you actually say, and like the request at the dinner party, pragmatics contains principles designed to account for the leap of faith.

The most important pragmatic principle used in humor research is Grice's Cooperative Principle (CP). In 1975 Grice wrote about the leap of intuition that is needed to get from the face value of things people say to the real meaning that they intend. He argued that we all operate under the assumption (until given a good reason not to) that we are cooperating with each other. The crux of the whole cooperative endeavor lies in the maxims of saying what you need to say, when you need to say it and how it needs to be said. You have to provide the correct quantity of information and you have to say only what you think is true. Clarity and brevity are musts, and relevance is probably the most important maxim of all.

Grice knew that we often do not obey the maxims to the letter, and very few problems ever occur because of it. That is because of our ability to leap beyond the letter of cooperation to its spirit. That is how the eavesdropper at the dinner party knew that the man was not going to pass the sugar. She continued to assume that he was cooperating and formed a chain of inferences based on that fact. Her unconscious intuition allowed her to go from the letter to the spirit

of cooperation. Relevance seems to be the sticky point here. She can see with her eyes that the response is true and clear. It also must be sufficient or else she would not pass the sugar herself. On the surface, the answer "My hands are full." may seem irrelevant, but this is where the leap comes into play. The fact that the man's hands are definitely full along with the knowledge that most people most of the time respond to requests leads her on an incredibly fast search for relevance.

VI. The Pragmatics of Humor

Humor researchers like Pratt (1981) and Martinich (1981) seek to explain humor recognition via the Gricean maxims. They separately argue that the author of a piece of literary humor flouts the CP. Grice described several types of disobeying the maxims with flouting being the most interesting. Unlike cases of silently not fulfilling, or violating, a maxim which results in a lie, flouts are deliberate, and the intent of the speaker or writer is that they be immediately obvious. Such is the case with the man at the dinner party. On the surface his answer is so clearly irrelevant that the various listeners will see through it to the deeper, intended relevance. Humor researchers who use the CP in their models believe that this is also the case with a funny story and its author. Pratt discusses this by looking at Lawrence Sterne's Tristram Shandy. Due to the nature of the publishing business, she argues that any non-fulfillment of the maxims would be either unintentional and weeded out in the editing process, meaning that we readers would never get to see them, or else it would be intentional and the author wants us to recognize it. Because Sterne's tale is a piece of fiction, we do not interpret the transgressions as being silent violations.

No one familiar with literature would accuse Sterne of trying to sneak past a lie. Rather, Sterne wants us to know what he is doing and to laugh along with him, and we understand that. According to Pratt he flouts, not violates the CP.

Martinich likewise claims that the author of a literary piece of humor takes liberties with the Gricean maxims. He uses the conversations between Alice and various characters in Carroll's Alice books to illustrate the difference between a character violating a maxim and the author at the same time flouting it. Anyone who has read these stories is familiar with the quirky nature of what the characters say. Alice is frustrated at times, and often confused, by the blatantly uncooperative responses she receives. For Martinich it is clear that the character, say the March Hare, is slyly violating the CP. Their intents are not to make sufficient, true relevant, brief and orderly contributions. Instead they trick, tease and undermine what Alice thinks she knows constantly throughout the works. But from Carroll's perspective that is precisely the point. Without question Carroll wants us to appreciate his tricks with the English language. Some are so clever that perhaps Carroll is testing the reader to see how nimble-minded he is. Still, he is not writing in secret code and he no doubt rejoices every time we find him witty. The March Hare may violate the CP but not Carroll. He is as committed to it as anyone in a normal conversation. Anything in the stories not conforming to the letter of the CP, according to Martinich must obey its spirit and therefore be a flout.

Not everyone in the field agrees with this. Dolitsky (1992) points out the limitations of this interpretation. Rather than humor, in literature or elsewhere, being the product of a flout, she contends that it is in fact a quiet violation of the CP. Even in situations where the audience is forewarned, where they anticipate the humor to come and thereby become more attuned to it, they nevertheless

still do not know the exact shape it will have, and Dolitsky claims this contains the heart of the violation.

Because every time you need to explain a joke, it loses a bit of its humor, Dolitsky believes that it is in the unspoken elements of humor that funniness resides. In most jokes there is a punch line that must in some way come as a surprise, if the joke is to be at all funny. You know a punch line is coming, but as long as you do not know what it is, the potential for humor is there. If you have heard the joke before, you may still think it amusing, but your reaction will not be as strong as when you originally heard it.

A very large amount of the surprise is contained in cultural knowledge. Often jokes will take you down the garden path, only to spring upon you at the end the real path your thoughts should have taken. For example: *Madonna does not have it, the Pope does but doesn't use it. Bush has a short one and Gorbachev a long one. What is it? A.- a last name.* The people who get the joke, regardless of whether they find it funny, understand it because they all share some common background information. Everybody knows to some degree or other what everybody else knows. First, we all know who these people are, and that they are people. Next, we possess cultural knowledge about the Pope and Madonna that allows us to contrast the two in terms of stereotypical promiscuity. We all know what the Pope has but does not use, and the contrast to Madonna who does not have but seems to 'use' a lot highlights this. We also know that Bush and Gorbachev were political rivals and the whole story conjures up a picture of boys comparing things behind barns.

It is precisely such scenarios which the joke forces you to think of. It makes you picture stereotypical patterns and sequences of events (celibates and wanton women) and then, at the very end it throws a monkey wrench into

the picture by showing us a less 'interesting' connection. According to Dolitsky this is a clear violation of the CP, a deliberate infraction against the maxim which involves clarity. There is enough information to get the answer right, but if you get the joke then you obviously got the answer wrong. And if you got it wrong, it must be due to some ambiguity or obscurity in the presentation. This is of course deliberate. A person telling this joke does not want everyone yelling out "Last Name" at the end of it. The listeners are supposed say something a little more risqué. Due then to the teller's intent, the transgression must be a violation and not a flout, because the intent of a violation is to mislead.

Attardo and Raskin (1994) agree with this but think that it does not go far enough. They contend that humor routinely violates the maxim of quality, because the speaker/writer does not believe what she says in any normal sense of the word. The authors argue that not only does humor violate the CP, it is in reality outside the scope of the CP. Humor is non-bona-fide mode of communication, where a bona-fide mode adheres to the mandatory fulfillment of the Gricean maxims in letter or in spirit.

Therefore they posit a non-bona-fide CP for humor with six knowledge resources that inform the piece of humor. 1. Script oppositions, 2. the language, 3. the logical mechanisms, 4. the target, 5. the narrative strategy, and 6. the situation are all parts which make up the funny tale. It is in these knowledge resources that the violation of the Gricean CP is committed by the speaker and recognized by the hearer, thereby signalling non-bona-fide communication. Deliberately creating ambiguities in the language or purposefully causing unrealistic scenarios to be thought of by using certain targets or situations violate Grice's CP, but they adhere to a humor CP which has the following maxims. 1. Give the necessary amount of information for the joke and say only

what is consistent with the joke, and 2. Be relevant to the context of the joke, and tell it efficiently. By investigating the manner in which Gricean violations in the six knowledge resources allow the hearer to backtrack to this CP this thesis will attempt to show that Raskin and Attardo have created a much more sophisticated model of humor recognition than joke typologies, incongruity theory or Grice's maxims alone. Investigations into the role humor plays socially, while providing keen insights into what humor does, neglect its recognizability altogether.

A comparative analysis of these five theories utilizing a piece of humorous prose will illustrate this claim and at the same time show that Raskin and Attardo have created a model which is generalizable to at least some types of literary humor. Any randomly selected funny story should suffice as a vehicle, but because one aspect of this thesis is to connect the research done here to the teaching of the English language, I have chosen the piece "My Watch" by an important figure in American literary history, Mark Twain. However, before this can begin a more complete look at the literature of the field is necessary.

Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

In order to perform an analysis of a work of humorous fictional prose, a review of the pertinent literature on the topic is necessary. As theories of humor begin in antiquity, this discussion will bypass all of these works and commence with a classic piece of humor research written in 1900.

Bergson (1900) states that comic effects are incapable of translation because they refer to customs and ideas of a particular social group. It therefore follows that the comic expressed by language, when translated, would lose the greater portion of its significance when introduced into a society different in manners and above all in associations of ideas. Due to this well acknowledged belief, Bergson argues that any investigation into laughter must involve particular requirements of life in common. That is to say that it must be socially significant. Because of the social nature of humor, any notion of society in terms of the ready-made, stereotypical or inert will potentially be perceived as laughable. Any form or formula is in and of itself a frame for the humorous. Bergson believed that an explanatory account of humor could be achieved through contextualization and categorization. While the former is still today recognized as being of paramount importance in humor research, the latter has been found to be quite insufficient. Typologies focusing exclusively on the targets of humor, such as ethnic group or sex, and the form, as with Garden Path or Knock-Knock jokes, are subject to great proliferation and also fail to look at what makes humor recognizable.

Apte (1985) describes three elements to be considered when researching humor. They are the sources acting as potential stimuli, the cognitive and intellectual activity responsible for the perception and evaluation of these sources, and the behavioral responses to the stimuli. Investigations into the first and third of these research areas lead to descriptions of physiological mechanisms and models of social functions, and these remain outside the focus of this thesis.

In order to examine the cognitive activity that takes place in recognizing humor, one must first view the context of the humorous incident. In terms of linguistic acts, this falls under the realm of pragmatics. Green (1989) defines pragmatics as "the study of actions deliberately undertaken with the intent of causing the addressee to reassess his model of the world; this includes his systems of values, his perceived models of the speaker's belief systems, attitudes, plans and intentions (p. 48)."

As humans, most of us resort to language when we wish to communicate. And a language is comprised of among other things a lexicon, a syntax and a compositional semantics. The conventionality of all these combined with the fact that fully competent speakers are not always able to determine the intended referent argues against a fully semantic account of meaning. Therefore in Green's words, a more realistic assessment of the meaning conveying potential of any utterance is the limit set by the interaction between the principles of pragmatics and Truth-conditional semantics.

In any social discourse, it is obvious that what is said, to a large degree, conveys more meaning than the actual utterance would indicate. It is precisely the principles that speakers make use of in conveying more than they really say, which will play a large role in the analysis of any communicative act. These

principles of pragmatics are based on a long series of assumptions unconsciously made by all parties in the communicative exchange. These assumptions in turn deal with such subjects as knowledge of the world, historical and cultural background, politeness and cooperation. Green uses an example of a drowning man and a would be rescuer to illustrate this claim. Upon seeing the man in trouble the rescuer throws him a life saving ring. He does this without consciously realizing that he is assuming the drowner will recognize the device for what it is, understand that its presence is meant to help him, know what to do with it, react accordingly (if possible), etc. Likewise assumptions about assumptions follow in that the rescuer takes for granted that the drowning man understands that he (the rescuer) understands the need for help, and on and on.

One series of assumptions Grice (1975) first formulated in his Cooperative Principle (CP). The CP is an attempt to explain why the distinctions believed to hold between certain logical operators in the formalisms of logicians and their natural language counterparts were not valid beyond the sentence level. The argument is that natural language is governed by a set of socio-behavioural rules not explained by logical formalisms. The crux of his CP is that the participants in a real conversation should "make their contributions such as is required, at the stage in which they occur, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which they are engaged (p. 45)."

Lakoff (1973) also argues for a pragmatic approach to meaning because only through the context can we account for the unacceptability of some sentences which under other conditions are considered quite normal. Lakoff gives as examples the sentences: "Who wants some beans?" and "Who wants any beans?", whose difference lies in the speaker's assumption as to whether

or not beans are wanted, to illustrate the claim that a sentence that is perfectly acceptable under one set of conditions might be unacceptable under another and therefore the pragmatic content of a speech act must be taken into account in determining its acceptability. In considering the areas of pragmatic behavior Lakoff posits two rules of Pragmatic Competence: 1. Be clear.; and 2. Be polite. She argues that the first of these are formulated in Grice's CP and "when clarity conflicts with politeness, in most cases politeness supersedes (p.297)."

According to Lakoff it is more important to avoid offense than to achieve clarity. For example indirectly asking "May I ask you how much you paid for that watch?" instead of blurting out "How much did that cost?", is explained not by the speaker being interested in clarity but rather the interest in politeness. Yet this does not seem to consider that pure clarity could often jeopardize the CP, as the addressee could take offense at an explicitly clear utterance and walk away. This then represents a clash (see below) between aspects of the CP that must be resolved in a way to rescue the cooperative endeavor. For example, One says the more polite "Would you please lend me a hand?" instead of "Hey, Help me!" because the speaker deems it necessary at this stage of the conversation to be more polite in order to more likely secure the hearer's cooperation. One can envision later stages after the duo has established a less formal but still neutral relationship, where politeness may not be deemed so necessary. That is to say that politeness is itself a contribution required at a necessary stage in the conversation. So while politeness indeed seems to belong in the CP, that does not mean the CP is subservient to it.

Underlying the Cooperative Principle is the fact that humans are social creatures, and as such we have an overpowering and innate need to communicate with one another. In order to accomplish this social goal, we must

assume that other participants in any communicative endeavor are cooperating, until such time as we are proven wrong. If in any speech situation we doubt that the speaker is committed to the CP without having adequate evidence to support this doubt, the only thing that can be inferred is the fact that the speaker spoke.

In searching for an explanation as to how we indeed manage to communicate with each other, it becomes clear that instances of discourse lacking in formal cohesion must be taken into account. It is precisely these that are treated in Grice's CP, which is comprised of four maxims;

1. Quantity - Make the contribution as informative as required.
2. Quality - Do not say what you do not believe, or what you lack evidence for.
3. Manner - Do not be obscure or ambiguous. Be brief and orderly.
4. Relevance - Be relevant.

Grice argues that many instances of conversation containing no formal linkage are interpretable due to the exploitation of these maxims. By exploiting, Grice means the intentional, blatant nonfulfillment of a maxim such that the addressee is forced to recognize the nonfulfillment and thereby interpret it in such a way so that it somehow seems nevertheless to conform to the maxim or is either fulfilled via some other maxim. This then accounts for how we know that Bob doesn't walk to school in the following exchange: A.- Does Bob walk to school? B. He lives in Tigard.

Grice describes four types of intentional nonfulfillment. They are as follows:

1. The speaker may quietly violate a maxim, which in some cases will mislead the addressee. This often generates lies of either commission or omission. 2. A

speaker may 'opt out' of the CP entirely by explicitly indicating a non-willingness to participate. Good examples are found every time a politician says no comment. 3. A speaker may be confronted with a clash. That is to say the fulfillment of one maxim will lead to a violation of another as in when a person masks vital information in clear violation of the Manner sub maxim 'be clear' in order to more readily abide by the maxim of Quality which states do not say that which you lack adequate evidence for. 4. A speaker may flout a maxim, i.e. he may blatantly fail to fulfill it on the assumption that the addressee will recognize the flout and nevertheless interpret it so as to make it conform to the maxim. For example: A man says to his wife " please pick up the kids" and she responds "I'm working". On the surface the answer doesn't relate in any way to the request. Automatically the man then begins to form a chain of inferences such as, I assume she is responding to what I said and is indeed cooperating with me, therefore my wife's utterance was relevant even though it doesn't appear to be. This interpretation is much preferable to me believing that she is nutty and does not understand me, or that she is not interested in cooperating with me. So I can assume she means she doesn't have time and this tells me to make other plans for the children. In generating such a chain of inferences we create what Grice called conversational implicatures and it is through these that we exploit the maxims. However it is not always so easy to see the chain of inferences, choose among possible chains, nor halt the proliferation of chains.

Consider the CP violating nature of the utterance "Nice Day" at a time when a ferocious storm is blowing. According to Grice the hearer will construct an interpretation assuming the maxim of Quality was deliberately flouted, as you can not possibly believe what you are saying and I'm supposed to know that. The intent of the utterance is therefore ironic and you really mean the opposite.

Grice treats irony as instances of pretense with the expectation that the pretense will be recognized.

However, Sperber and Wilson (1981) and (1986) take issue not only with this treatment of irony but also with other aspects of Grice's CP. Their first criticism of the Principle hinges on their interpretation of Grice's meaning of cooperate. When Grice wrote that speakers in a cooperative communicative exchange have the same purpose or goals, Sperber and Wilson read this as narrowly stating that the participants must have mutual access to an almost infinite number of propositions. As this patently can never be the case, they propose to refine the CP with Relevance Theory, based on mutual manifestness, i.e. the weaker set of inferable knowledge possessed by the participants in a given cognitive environment. For example, in a conversation such as: A.- How can I help you? B. Hand me a Hammer!, Sperber and Wilson would argue that a Gricean 'mutual purpose' would entail that both speakers hold together all the same propositions concerning knowledge of how hammers are used, what they are, where to locate one, ad infinitum. All the while propositions about the participants each realizing that the other holds these propositions are likewise entertained. Therefore Sperber and Wilson propose instead of mutual purpose or goal, the concept of mutual manifestness, which pares down the inferable propositions to manageable proportions. Also, Sperber and Wilson view the Gricean maxims as norms that must be learned in order to communicate adequately but which can be violated to achieve particular effects, whereas Relevance Theory applies without exception as every act of communication assumes some degree of relevance.

Another advantage to the principle of relevance is the ability to hierarchically place competing chains of inferences thus allowing for a

description of how one chain is chosen above another. Information in a communicative act is first deemed relevant in a cognitive environment to the degree that contextual effects are present; where a contextual effect is defined as the effect that an assumption has on the context in terms of implications, strengthenings of assumptions or contradictions. The greater the contextual effect, the greater the relevance. For example, in the above exchange about Bob walking to school B's answer is relevant due to the presence of contextual effects. Here the effects are the implications that Bob does not walk to school, and that Tigard is too far away for just about anybody to walk. Effects are also present in the strengthening or contradicting of any assumption A might have had about the likelihood of Bob walking (anyplace) or Tigard being near or far. The degree of relevance of B's answer not only lies in the presence of these effects, but also in their degree of presence. Should B's answer be shockingly new to A, then the effect and relevance is greater than if B is confirming a suspicion A already entertained.

However, the presence of these effects must be weighed against the processing effort involved in accessing and choosing amongst them. To utilize the example above with the husband and wife, the chain of inferences chosen, i.e. that my wife is cooperating and the utterance is relevant, which means that she does not have time to pick up the kids, is chosen because any other inferential chain would contain fewer contextual effects. For example, to infer that the wife were merely commenting on her present activity and desiring only that her husband know what she is doing at the moment would cause a cognitive reorganization of the husband's world to the extent that he would now picture his wife as working at that moment, but that is the end of the reorganization, or in Sperber and Wilson's words, the contextual effects. The

inferences leading the husband to believe that his wife does not have time to fulfill his request create far more contextual effects. As for processing effort it seems that the initial chain of inferences requires greater effort to process, but only on the surface. If the husband chooses the second interpretation, i. e. that her response is only for information, he is forced to process further inferences such as his wife either didn't hear him properly or didn't understand his request for what it was. Even further effort would be required to conclude that his wife is mad. With this in mind it is clear why the first interpretation is the most appropriate. Therefore, Sperber and Wilson argue that all else being equal the greater the contextual effect, the greater the relevance and all else being equal the smaller the processing effort, the greater the relevance. This then leads to the idea of optimal relevance; the point where these two conditions intersect. Thus when a speaker strives to understand inferential communication, he/she is in reality searching for optimal relevance.

Utilizing this one is now able to explain the problem of disambiguation.

Sperber and Wilson use as an example the following :

"A. Ozzy Osborne is coming to dinner.

B. I'll bring a bat. (p. 60)"

Here background knowledge, including context, to the extent that Osborne is a rock singer who once bit the head off of a bat while onstage, is necessary to choose from the two meanings of the ambiguous word bat. This knowledge allows for less processing effort in determining which of the two meanings is more relevant. In applying this to humor, it seems that in resolving whether something is a joke, a lie or a simple non-sequitor, the number of contextual effects along with the processing effort allow the hearer of an utterance to choose the correct interpretation in situations where there is some doubt.

Likewise, when the listener lacks the appropriate background knowledge and is therefore unable to either access one of the interpretations or to choose between them because the processing effort is the same, then the ambiguity goes unresolved. In the case of humor, you do not get the joke.

Lastly, the principle of relevance also serves to explain cases of apparent violations of the Gricean maxims where no implicature is intended. The example given is the utterance "I have no brothers or sisters." instead of the ostensibly simpler "I have no siblings." The claim is that this violates the maxim of Manner, a part of which contends that we should be brief. Yet a more accurate interpretation would be that the word sibling is more unusual, the processing effort is greater and therefore the longer more common phrase is more optimally relevant.

Green (1990) however in pointing out that this is a refinement in the interpretation of the CP argues for a broader view, where the CP is the governing mechanism of all rational behavior and the maxims are merely instantiations of cooperative behavior and not corollaries to be learned. In her opinion Grice also never intended the meaning of cooperate to include the concept of mutual knowledge as Sperber and Wilson describe it.. Rather it is meant only in a very general sense. Therefore the concept of mutual manifestness should be seen not as a replacement for a cooperative condition, but as a more precise definition of what cooperation can be based upon. Likewise, the above example of apparent violation in the Manner maxim simply illustrates a better explanation of that sub maxim. Instead of 'Be brief' it should read 'make the contribution as easily processable as possible'. Finally, Green argues that the Principle of Relevance " is not effectively distinct from the claim, consistent with the CP, that the maxim of relevance is always assumed to be

observed (p. 414)" This is not to say that it should replace the CP, but instead it should be looked at as being a more precise account of the CP maxim of Relevance. This more exact description will prove useful when the problems of humor and incongruity are discussed. First a return to the problem of irony is necessary.

Sperber and Wilson's argument for a different account of irony centers on the notion that the types of conversational implicature found in 'standard' instances are not the same as those found in ironical utterances. The difference is that in a normal instance of conversational implicature the speaker conveys information in addition to the literal sense of the utterance. For example consider the following conversation: A. Do you walk to school? B. I live in the suburbs. Here A learns not only the B does not walk to school but additionally that her home in the suburbs is too far away to walk to school. In cases of irony the speaker does not convey additional information, rather information is substituted for the literal sense. Saying "Nice Day!" during a storm does not give any extra information, instead it replaces the literal sense of a declaration like "What horrible weather!".

A further problem with Grice's account of irony according to Sperber and Wilson lies in the reasons for choosing the ironical substitute for the literal sense. These reasons are contained in the distinction between the Use and Mention of an utterance. The use of an expression involves reference to what the expression refers to, along with making an assertion, asking a question, etc. For example saying "Nice Day" on a nice day is a use of the expression as it refers to the nice day outside. Mention on the other hand involves reference only to the expression itself, as in the sentence - The above paragraph contains the words 'nice day'. In the case of irony when I say such during a storm I am

not referring to the day at hand. Rather I am mentioning the expression, i.e. the referent for this utterance is another utterance, either explicit as when my wife said five minutes earlier "I hope the weather is nice." or implicit as when I merely thought the same thing at the same time. Either way the utterance is an ironic echo of an earlier expression and it is the earlier expression which is being commented on, not the state of the world or some possible world. The concepts of mention theory will return when instances of humorous discourse are viewed, but for now it is pertinent to move on as neither Grice, Green nor Sperber and Wilson treat the relation of these principles and theories to humor.

Norrick (1994) on the other hand specifically raises the question of humorous intent in the communicative exchange. The ultimate purpose Norrick has with this work is to further the description of the semantics and syntax of humor by investigating its interpersonal and social dimensions in real life contexts. He believes that close attention to humor in everyday talk will lead to a description of humorous interaction accounting for its position in the organization of conversation. In his view this must relate humor to social discourse in light of the principles of politeness and cooperation. Norrick ties humor intimately to the context of utterance. That means that the physical setting, the participants, and their reasons for being together are all a part of the process. The interaction of humor and context also extends into the spheres of social roles, history (of locale and participants), cultural knowledge, etc.

Norrick's discourse analysis illustrates humor's effect on the organization of conversations. He concludes that humor is often involved in the very basis of micro-organization, as in spontaneous puns in an utterance pair. This involvement is seen to often progress to higher levels of organization in such areas as openings, closings, topic shifts and the alignment of participants.

Humor can even become the primary organizational principle in conversation, as in bantering and joke telling sessions.

On the function of humor in conversation, Norrick (1993) shows how humor can establish rapport via anecdote swapping and joking relationships. Humor's capacity to produce animosity through mocking, sarcasm and personal attack is also treated.

Though Norrick's descriptions of humor in social interaction are very thorough, they do not attempt to resolve the issues involved in how we are able to interpret humor in the light of its placement in the overall discourse. That is to say the insertion of humorous dialogue in the fabric of an otherwise serious conversation is very often an instance in which there is no formal cohesion between the overall context and the humorous piece. This is easily seen whenever someone spontaneously utters a pun. In order to account for the recognizability and interpretability of cases of humorous use, other aspects of humor research are necessary.

Gruner (1978) points out that theorists have long believed that the establishment of a 'play frame' is necessary for the maximum reception and enjoyment of humor. That is to say the humorous instance must be preceded by the explicit setting aside of the piece in question from the remainder of the overall context at hand. Several of the numerous empirical studies cited in his work support exactly this claim. For example, Kennedy tested this proposition with a series of speeches given at the University of Michigan to various groups of students. In instances where a speech was explicitly given a 'play frame' (by warning the students that many jokes were coming their way and that they should be sure to laugh) the humor ratings as assessed by the students in questionnaires were considerably higher than in those case without an explicit

'play frame' having been created. However, as Gruner states, no attempt was made to describe how the humorous speeches given without explicitly demarking the situation as a 'play frame' were received as humorous at all. All that can be said is that the students found the other speeches more amusing, not that these were unfunny.

Another study investigating the reception of humor was conducted by H. Giles et. al. (1975). Its purpose was to determine whether and in what ways the linguistic strategies a person employs differ from encoding a serious and a humorous message. 25 British male students aged between 18 and 28 were judged by three volunteer undergraduate students on their style of speaking when reading three texts all of the same length and written by the same author. The three texts comprised 2 serious and one humorous piece. The results showed that when relating the humorous piece more non-standard language, less precise enunciation and more fluency in tempo and pitch were evidenced. Unlike Kennedy's above mentioned study, no explicit play frame was established to guide the judges in their assessments. This would seem to indicate that even when no explicit play frame is created, the relater of a humorous piece unconsciously creates a frame in order to enhance the receptivity of the humorous piece.

While such studies are convincing in supporting the argument that the creation of a 'play frame' considerably affects the reception (i.e. understanding) of humor, they are not sufficient for describing how we are able to correctly interpret an utterance as humorous when no such 'play frame' has recognizably been established, for example in a dead pan delivery. The comedy of performers like Bob Newhart serves as a good example. In his sitcom of the early 80's there is an episode where three very backwoods brothers are

introduced to the characters and the audience. The lead brother introduces the trio in a stone face with the words "*Hi! My name's Larry and this is my brother Darrell and this is my other brother Darrell.* " , resulting in a very funny moment. Even though the audience knows that the show is supposed to be funny, on first airing they do not know when the jokes will come, nor from whom. How then do we understand when to laugh?

To account for the recognition of humorous utterances as such, it seems necessary to look into further aspects of humor research. Bateson, (1969) like many others, argues that the conventions of communication, not only humorous types, differ from culture to culture. He states that the informational content of a joke is to be found on the surface, whereas other types of content are implicit in the background. When the point of a joke is reached this background material is brought into attention touching off a paradox or contradiction. An excellent example of background information being brought to the fore, is the joke concerning partner swapping. Two young couples who have known each other for a while breach the subject and decide to try it. The next weekend after a wild night of love making one of the wives turns to her new partner and says / *wonder how the boys are doing.* When the teller first begins to relate the joke the background information which is brought to the fore is something to the effect of 'swinging couples' trading partners on a heterosexual basis. However as the joke finishes a contradiction to our common, stereotyped background belief is thrown upon us. Bateson argues that such paradoxes are the prototypic paradigm of humor. In the psychology of humor what Bateson terms paradox or contradiction, others choose to name incongruity.

Nerhardt (1975) sees incongruity as a necessary ingredient for perceiving an utterance as an attempt at humor. One must be able to infer the

presence of incongruous elements in order to designate an instance of discourse as humorous. According to the author in such an instance expectations based on experience are tied to the perception of the discourse and the greater the divergence of the discourse piece from the expectation, the funnier the piece is perceived to be.

Oring (1989) in probing the differences between jokes and humorous tales also argues that humor is dependent on the discernment of an appropriate incongruity. He describes the conditions necessary for humor recognition as being a compatibility, full or in part, of two differing scripts which in some way are opposites. In perceiving this incongruity the listener is forced to make a cognitive reorganization, be it abrupt as caused by punch lines in jokes or less so in the case of humorous tales. In both, however, a fine line is drawn between too overtly displaying the incongruity and masking it so much that the listener becomes unable to discover it.

Shultz (1975) agrees in part with these assessments but believes that they do not go far enough. Incongruity does indeed account for the most obvious structural feature of jokes, i.e. the punch line, but in contrast to simple nonsense the incongruity of humor must be resolvable. Of course, one must first recognize the incongruity, but then the information containing the resolution must also be processed and processable. Arguing that much of the incongruity responsible for humor lies in linguistic ambiguity, Shultz gives two examples, one of lexical and the other of phonological ambiguity. Again in order to perceive these as humorous one must first recognize the ambiguity. Ex 1: Attributed to Groucho Marx: "I ought to join a club, and beat you over the head with it (p. 13)." Here the ambiguity lies in the two meanings of the word club. Ex 2: "Teacher to student: Make a sentence using the phrase 'bitter end'. Student:

A dog chased a cat and bitter end (p. 13).” In this example the pronunciation of the phrase as written and as ‘bit her end’ illustrate the ambiguity.

Shultz continues by arguing that linguistic ambiguity often goes unnoticed unless one happens to be looking for it. This claim supports Gruner’s belief that the establishment of a play frame enhances the receptivity of humor.

Following up on this line of reasoning, Rothbart (1975) also argues that it is not incongruity itself which leads to humor, but rather the manner in which it is resolved. In a study with children of kindergarten age, the author shows how the same incongruous actions used by different people in different contexts can lead not only to humor but also to fear. This she argues is partially due to the suddenness and intensity of the stimulus. According to her a true humor response requires: 1. a concept, 2. awareness that the stimulus violates the concept and 3. confidence in the impossibility or improbability of the stimulus occurring as depicted. It is this last requirement which separates humor from fear. Slapstick is an excellent example of the fine line between a humorous and fearful response. Upon seeing a person take a nasty spill on the street we laugh when we realize that the individual has incurred no injury. If on the other hand it looks as if the person has indeed hurt themselves then only the sociopath would find this funny.

Agreeing with Rothbart’s interpretation, Forobosco (1992) defines incongruity as divergence from the cognitive model of reference, and resolution as cognitive mastery, both of which are essential to the humor process. This definition is more than reminiscent of the CP and Sperber and Wilson’s search for optimal relevance. For what is incongruity in these terms but the recognition of a flout or violation of the CP generating implicature and resolution the attainment of optimal relevance.

Pepicello (1987) likewise explores ambiguity as a source of humor. His claim is that in riddles and jokes an ambiguous word or phrase can be seen as belonging to two or more frames of reference simultaneously, depending on the interpretation forced upon it. The listener is deprived of the necessary information to correctly choose the context which focuses on the 'right' meaning. This is done consciously by the speaker, who in the case of riddles most often covertly provides the necessary link, but in the case of jokes withholds it altogether. This withholding or masking of pertinent information can be described as a violation of the Gricean Maxim of Quantity and/or Manner. The children's riddle "What's black and white and read all over?" is a good illustration of this masking of vital information. When spoken the listener is led to understand that the color red is meant and only upon hearing the answer to the riddle is the listener made aware of the real interpretation. As mentioned previously the concepts of incongruity and resolution are more precisely described in relation to the CP. Therefore it is necessary to return to Grice's CP, the role it plays in the recognition of humor and its place in literary humor.

Lewis (1989) delves into the application of humor research to the field of literary interpretation. It is his contention that no single formula will ever be found to describe the myriad interactions of factors found in humor. And for humor criticism to continue to speak of a single, overarching social or psychological view of humor is anachronistic because of the modern multidisciplinary nature of the modern field of humor research. He points to the established insights gained in the last two decades in order to convince critics of literary humor to broaden their approaches toward humor in literature. According to Lewis the established insights are: 1. Humor originates in the perception of an incongruity. 2. Humor appreciation is a two stage process;

perception then resolution of incongruity. 3. Humor is a non-serious response to an incongruous stimulus. 4. The perception of humor is subjective, relying on the perciever's background knowledge, expectations, values and norms and it is also variable within the same person over time. 5. the creation of humor and its use are based on perceptions of social power.

O'Neill (1987) also deals with humor in literature but from the perspective that any literary text is to be viewed as a game affording both author and reader the possibility of producing endless meanings and relationships. This impulse he claims is inherent to fiction as a play frame is established by the fictive world projection necessary to literature. As every piece of fiction establishes a play frame, therefore all fiction is potentially humorous. His argument is that this is due to the fact that in every nascent humor situation there is a given world of discourse in which a certain order obtains. A possible world is then superimposed on or juxtaposed to this world leading to potentially actualizable humor. This possible world projection allows the receiver to play along and concentrate on the incongruities thereby creating not only a play text but also a humor text.

With Pratt (1981) the discussion now turns to the specific role that the CP plays in literature. In her argument for using the CP to reconstruct our model of the world when reading a piece of literature, Pratt states that the only type of non-fulfillment which can take place from the writer's perspective is intentional. Moreover, the only type of intentional non-fulfillment taking place in literary situations is flouting.

Her argument begins with unintentional failures in conversation. Speakers violate the maxim of quantity by getting carried away. And making mistakes, becoming confused and babbling all violate the maxim of quality. The

manner maxim is violated every time someone utters an unintentional pun and relevance falls with every non-sequitor that is said. These do not jeopardize the CP as the speaker is still trying to make the contribution pertinent to the exchange. Due to turn taking rules in conversation this is not all that serious and most infractions can be cleared up.

In writing, however, this is not the case. Pratt contends that it also is not that serious. Unintentional failures are weeded out in the writing, editing and publishing processes behind a work of fiction. Intentional failures, other than floutings, are likewise not to be found in written discourse. Simply by writing the author 'opts in' and a quiet violation that might mislead could never be discovered, unless it were part of the plot of a mystery and then in a good mystery there should be enough clues for the observant reader to uncover it. Clashes also are not possible. Any clash that might have taken place the author has resolved in the mere act of writing. Of course any character in a fictional piece may unintentionally fail to observe a maxim. It is also quite possible that a character would 'opt out', quietly violate or find a clash in the CP. Nevertheless, Pratt argues that from the point of view of the writer, these are all intentional floutings of the CP.

For one example Pratt uses the third and fourth sentences of Sterne's Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy (1760).

Believe me, good folks, this is not so inconsiderable a thing as many of you may think it; - you have all, I dare say, heard of the animal spirits, as how they are transferred from father to son, &c., &c., - and a great deal to that purpose: - Well, you may take my word, that nine parts in ten of a man's sense or his nonsense, his successes and miscarriages in this world depend on their motions and activity, and the different tracks and trains you put them on, so that when they are once set a-going, whether right or wrong, 'tis not a halfpenny matter, - away they go clattering like hey-go-mad; and by making a road of it, as plain and as smooth as a garden walk, which, when they are once used to, the

Devil himself sometimes shall not be able to drive them off it. Pray, my dear, quoth my mother, have you not forgot to wind up the clock? (p. 385).

The reader knows that this is a piece of fiction. Therefore, he brings with him the knowledge of the rules of narration and written discourse only to encounter violations of the maxims of Manner and Quantity. In respect to Manner, the text is full of colloquialisms and other expressions of spoken discourse, and due to the large amount of repeated phrases (the many couplets), the maxim of quantity is abused.

However, as Pratt points out, the reader of Tristram Shandy does not for one moment believe that Sterne is not cooperating. Rather the contrast between what the reader expects in regard to manner and quantity and what he gets, is related to Sterne's display-producing intent. That is to say that the reader at this stage is unclear as to whether the character Shandy is intentionally failing to fulfill the maxims or no, but from the point of view of Sterne, the reader recognizes the intent as an attempt at humor. The fictional Shandy could be quietly violating the CP, but according to Pratt, Sterne cannot.

Hancher (1983) also investigates the role of the CP in literature. Utilizing Carroll's Alice in Wonderland, Hancher, like many others, argues that humor is a matter of breaking the rules, whatever those rules might be. And many instances of humor turn on the rules of pragmatics. He claims that among pragmatic principles, Grice's CP is a useful model and that all of the maxims come to play in this text. Hancher merely outlines a Gricean model of humor in literature, while Martinich in treating the same text does a much more extensive job.

Martinich (1981) begins with Alice's well known run-in with Humpty Dumpty to illustrate the notion that saying and meaning are not the same thing.

He goes on to discuss Grice's division of conversation into 1. what the speaker says, 2. what he/she conventionally implies, and 3. what he/she conversationally implies, claiming that much humor trades on the distinction between these three. The tea party segment is then viewed in order to illustrate this claim.

"March Hare - Take some more tea!
 Alice - I've had nothing yet, so I can't take more.
 Mad Hatter - You mean you can't take 'less'. It's very easy to take more than nothing (p. 28)."

The humor of the sequence resides in the Hare's 'saying' that Alice should take more tea than she has, but 'conversationally implying' that she has already had some. This is a blatant violation of the maxim of Quality, but it is done on the part of a character not the author, as Carroll obviously means his audience to recognize the infraction.

Dolitsky (1992) however, convincingly argues that it is the very nature of humor to violate the CP. Beginning her argument with the truism that humor is lost when explained, she postulates that the funniness of humor resides in the unsaid aspects of humorous communication. There are two main aspects of the unsaid in humor: "1. The rules for felicitous communication governing the choice and interpretation of the said, such that the unsaid will also be transmitted. Clear example of this are any cases of ordinary conversational implicature. and 2. The societal rules governing the behavior of its members (pg.34)." Once these rules have been learned they are internalized, becoming part of the common knowledge of a community. Humor, however, treats all rules as made to be broken. Though recognizing Grice's CP as the basis for communication, the author goes on to discuss that in any instance of humorous discourse the speaker leads the listener on to invoke the rules of pertinence

knowing all the while that they do not apply to the discourse at hand. The humorous effect comes when the listener realizes this.

One method of achieving this is through shared world knowledge. Scripts, according to Green (1989), are standard, predetermined, stereotyped sequences of events defining a well known situation, are part of any person's world knowledge. In humor scripts are often called up only later to be shown not to apply. For example: Two friends are chatting and one tells the other that he has joined a choral society. When asked where they practice the man replies that they practice singing after they go out drinking when they wander back home. A good joke teller would first describe this situation such that the listeners would conjure up a picture of 'choral societies' far removed from drunks returning home only to finally show that such a picture does not apply to this story at all. Dolitsky concludes by stating that humor transgresses the CP by leading the listener towards the wrong interpretation, as in any punch line, the laws of how we believe the world to be, seen every time we suspend our disbelief and societal rules, for example in sexual humor where taboos are circumvented.

Attardo (1993) theorizes how humor violates the CP, resulting in an apparent loss of inferential possibilities. He argues that the connections between humor and the violations of the conversational maxims support the claim that humor suspends the communicative presumption. In showing how this is the case, he uses examples of violations of all the maxims which conceivably could result in humor. One particularly good example is the violation of the maxim of manner attributed to W.C. Fields during an interview. It is as follows: *Do you believe in clubs for young men? Only when kindness fails.* This example violates the sub maxim 'avoid ambiguity' by deliberately playing

on just that to make a pun. Attardo contends that such an infraction is not an instance of flouting a maxim, nor is it the fulfilling of one maxim in order to avoid a clash with another. There is no way to interpret the retort, through a series of inferences common to “normal” implicature, into somehow conforming to the maxim. Neither can an interpretation come from a clash with another maxim. Compare the above pun with the following example of conversational implicature generated in an instance of non-humorous discourse.

What time did Bob get home?

The bars had already closed.

Through inferences such as, the person is still cooperating, the seeming irrelevancy is deliberate and intended to be recognized, and the irrelevancy somehow really does conform to the maxim of relevance, we consequently interpret that Bob got home late. No “normal” series of inferences can account for the humorous interpretation of Field’s retort. How would one go? Field is indeed cooperating and though his remark on the surface seems irrelevant it truly is not. Still it is not an answer to the question so Fields must have misunderstood the intent of the interviewer. This chain and any like it leads anywhere but to a humorous response.

Nevertheless, humor does work in interpersonal exchanges. In order to better describe this Attardo treats the problem via three theories in humor research. 1. a strong mention theory, 2. a weak mention theory and 3. a separate CP for humor. The first two directly address the distinction in inference types between humorous and non-humorous utterances

The mention theory of humor, as outlined by Attardo, hinges on the argument that the violation of the CP is not actual, but only an enactment

performed by the instigator of the humorous utterance. Therefore is it necessary to return to mention theory and its advocates in order to determine whether it can account for the recognition of an utterance as humorous.

As previously discussed Sperber and Wilson describe the mentioning of an expression as involving a reference to the expression itself. For example mention theory is used to distinguish an utterance like "the dog runs" from the mention thereof as in "this example contains the word *dog*". And as already seen it is this type of mention which accounts for the echoic reference in irony.

Yamaguchi (1987) uses mention theory to propose that the narrator of a humorous text avoids violating the CP by passing on any such violation to one of the characters in the text, thereby granting the character great freedom in transgressing the maxims of the CP. Thus the narrator merely mentions a violation as it is in reality only a representation of the true violation committed by the character. Or in other words the narrator's violation is an echo of the character's. A good illustration for this is the previously seen analysis of Alice in Wonderland done by Martinich. The March Hare's offer to Alice of 'more' tea, when she has had none, is a clear violation of the maxim of Quality. However, the violation is attributed to the character, and Carroll merely mentions it.

This position however is untenable as Dolitsky has convincingly shown that the narrator is indeed responsible for violating at least the maxim of Quantity by withholding needed information, or Quality by having the listener invoke scripts for the purpose of deliberately leading said listeners to the wrong interpretation. In the March Hare and Alice example, if the Hare's last line were omitted, then the reader would be unable to interpret the exchange as Carroll intends. And this would in turn be tantamount to a joke without a punch line. It seems less easy to see than in cases of non-literary humor, but the author is

leading us down the wrong path. It is not until the scene is played out in full that we get the joke. That is to say that Carroll withholds vital information. He also has us invoke a stereotypical, normal tea party scenario for the purpose of showing that this is anything but normal. This is how incongruity/CP violations are generated in humor. To achieve its intended effect humor must often keep something back until the end. Otherwise there would be no punch lines nor surprise endings to stories and riddles would not exist.

Attardo (1994) outlines another argument which a proponent of mention theory would be likely to make in the case of humor. The position would claim that jokes are texts representing a violation of one or more of the Gricean maxims which in reality are not, as the 'violation' occurs at the metalinguistic level thus making it acceptable. The argument here is that when viewed metalinguistically the 'violation' is no longer problematic much the same way that a normally unacceptable sentence such as *Colorless green ideas sleep furiously* when viewed in this manner is also not problematic. Even though this allows for the possibility of infinite regression, Attardo's criticism is that it simply does not account for all types of humor. In his opinion the most telling problem is in cases of surprise punch lines. For example consider a weak joke like: "Have you heard the latest news? (slight pause) No? Well, neither have I." In such instances it cannot really be argued that the speaker is mentioning the utterance, as the sole purpose is to fool the listener into believing that a 'normal' non-humorous mode of discourse is in operation. Therefore Attardo continues, if violations of the CP are responsible for some types of humor even in the framework of mention theory and since an account of humor can be derived without mention theory, then there is no need to postulate its operation in the realm of humor.

Attardo proposes a hierarchy of CP's as an acceptable account of how humorous utterances are recognizably perceived as such even though they violate the CP. Though one would expect a violation of the CP to render any utterance non-cooperative or be perceived as a lie, in truth humor is usually understood for what it is, namely a non-serious mode of communication. In order to explain how this can be the case Attardo argues that after a listener realizes that he/she has been misled (i.e. a violation of a Gricean maxim has taken place) that person will backtrack, reinterpret the information via 'humor maxims', change to a non-serious mode of communication and then react accordingly. It is necessary to distinguish between the first and second interpretations of the piece of humor, as it is the latter through the 'humor' CP which allows for the suspension of disbelief.

Raskin and Attardo (1994) in contending that humor does not follow Grice's CP, define three attitudes toward the CP: 1. an utterance may both superficially and essentially abide by the maxims, 2. it may only essentially honor the maxims, i.e. it may flout one conspicuously in order to honor another more strongly, and 3. it may be devoid of cooperation altogether, as in cases of lying. The authors argue that instances of humor, none of these conditions apply, because humor routinely violates the maxim of quality. The speaker does not say what he believes in any normal sense of the word; instead the speaker is engaged in non-bona-fide communication, where bona-fide communication is the mandatory fulfillment of the maxims of the CP. When a speaker abandons bona-fide discourse and the hearer recognizes it, then it would seem that the hearer is limited to processing only the literal meaning and is barred from making any inferences pertaining to the truth value of the statement.

Nevertheless, non-bona-fide communication is successful on a massive scale in instances of humor. Raskin and Attardo state that this is possible only because humor is ruled by a CP of its own.

Humor occurs in four settings created by the combination of the possibilities contained in 1. and 2. below.

- 1a. The speaker makes the joke unintentionally.
- 1b. The speaker makes the joke intentionally.
- 2a. The hearer doesn't expect the joke.
- 2b. The hearer expects the joke.

In the case of 1a the speaker intends bona-fide communication and is unaware of the humorous interpretation, whereas in 1b the humor is known and intended. In 2a the hearer, not expecting a joke, will initially try to interpret the utterance as bona-fide and only upon failing will he activate a non-bona-fide mode. In 2b the hearer will initially utilize a non-bona-fide mode of interpretation without first having to activate the bona-fide mode. This accounts for the higher rate of reception and enjoyment of humor when a play frame has been established.

Raskin and Attardo claim that non-bona-fide communication must involve a CP distinct from Grice's. Their CP for humor contains the following maxims:

- 1. Quantity - Give as much information as is necessary for the joke.
- 2. Quality - Say only what is consistent with the world of the joke.
- 3. Relation - Say only what is relevant to the joke.
- 4. Manner - Tell the joke efficiently.

In situations where the both the speaker and hearer are attuned to the joke, a play frame exists, the parties abide by these maxims immediately. When the pair is not in congruence, i.e. the joke is either unintended or unexpected, the speaker and/or hearer must switch to a non-bona-fide mode of

communication, and as humor is a more easily processable realignment of a model of the world, than say lying or insanity is, the participants choose the maxims of the humor CP.

Next, the authors investigate relevant features of jokes in their General Theory of Verbal Humor. This expands their earlier semantic script theory of humor, whose main hypothesis was that a text can be characterized as a joke carrying text if it is compatible, fully or in part, with two different opposing scripts. For example, if script one is normal, possible or good, then script two is abnormal, impossible or bad. This can be easily seen in what are called Light Bulb Jokes, e. g. *How many sorority girls does it take to screw in a light bulb?* *Answer - 5, four to stand around scratching their heads and one to call daddy.* Here the script oppositions are normal/abnormal smart/dumb.

In expanding this theory the authors argue that script oppositions (SO) are but one of the six knowledge resources (KR) which inform a joke. The second is language (LA), the actual wording of a text. This determines not only the particular phrasing, but also the placement of functional elements in the joke, for example the punch line. In this resource paraphrasing accounts for the type of variation, as the above light bulb joke could essentially be told in many different ways. Another resource is the logical mechanism (LM), the playful logic that doesn't hold outside of the world of the joke and triggers the non-bona-fide mode. The LM accounts for the manner of linking the scripts together. This can be a juxtaposition, false analogy or a garden-path joke. Raskin and Attardo give the following joke to illustrate.

"Madonna does not have it, the Pope has it but doesn't use it, Bush has a short one, Gorbachev has a long one. What is it? Not what you think - shame on you! A Last name (p. 52)."

This joke leads us deliberately to an interpretation which ultimately proves to be wrong. But such is the logic of the joke that we are forced to reach the interpretation intended.

Fourthly, there is the target (TA), or butt of the joke. Sometimes this seems to be an empty category, as in cases of riddles or where there is no aggression. For example, it is difficult to find a target in the following children's joke. *What's big, red and eats rocks? Answer - A big, red rock-eater.* But with ethnic, race and sex jokes, the targets are obvious. Other jokes find humanity itself a proper butt for their humor, and it is perhaps these which have greater resonance. Great literary humorists, such as Twain and Thurber, are great due to their ability to sense and invoke the funny, inherent to the human condition.

The next knowledge resource is the narrative strategy (NS) of the joke. This is the vehicle of the joke and it can be rigid, as with knock-knock jokes (it's not a knock-knock joke without the knocks), or as flexible as the rules of literary license allow. Lastly, there is the situation (SI), the activity in the joke. Changing light bulbs and crossing roads are two good examples.

To better illustrate the mapping out of a joke via these knowledge resources, consider the above light bulb joke. For the resource LA - the wording as above, NS - question/answer, SI - changing a light bulb, LM - independence/appeal to authority, TA - sorority girls, SO - normal/ abnormal or more specifically smart/dumb. This model anchors humor outside of Grice's CP. The creation of deliberate ambiguities in LA, the activation of unrealistic scripts in TA, SI, and SO, and deliberate deception in NS and LM cause humor to be viewed as being non-bona-fide. And that is to say that humor abuses not only the letter but also the spirit of Grice's CP.

Taking this general theory of humor, one is able to analyze our capacity to recognize humor in literary works with much more sophistication than with incongruity theory or with Grice's maxims alone. A detailed comparative analysis of a short story by Mark Twain will illustrate the greater dimensions of Raskin and Attardo's theory.

Chapter 3

A Comparative Analysis of Twain's "My Watch"

I. Twain and Typology

One of the earlier trends in humor research was the classification of certain types of humor. This was not without merit as we routinely partition the general term humor into jokes, riddles, puns, bon mots, funny tales and so on. One problem with this is that the properties or features of each type are not unique to that type. Riddles often take the form of a question, but they need not. And although jokes are not normally questions, there is no rule that they cannot be. Puns are based on ambiguity, but jokes and riddles both can also revolve around ambiguous items. Often classificatory schemes would demarcate humor in terms of the target of the funny piece. There are ethnic jokes and sexist jokes, and with some of these it is easy to type by targets. But what of the limerick:

*There once was a Senator from Mass.,
Who wanted a fine piece of ass.
He lucked up and found her,
Then f---ed up and drowned her,
And now his fine future is past.*

This clearly is political, aimed at a well known Democratic politician. Also it is very sexist from a feminist point of view. So just as overlapping features are a problem for creating neat sets of well-defined specific types, particular targets are also unable to serve as unique features that categorize humor instances.

Precisely this is the problem one runs into when typologically analyzing Twain's story "My Watch" . Literarily, it is easily a short story and a tall tale, or yarn, at the same time. But this hardly exhausts the explanation as to how we first find it funny. When told that this is a tall tale, we do learn that what is to come is some narrative prose piece of fiction with an amusing element or twist. Twain's tale of having his watch repaired, ordinarily not something intrinsically funny, requires a funny element in order for it to fit into this category. Therefore it is necessary to see what elements there are that allow this story to be classified amusing.

"My beautiful new watch had run eighteen months without losing or gaining (p. 64)" with these words Twain first describes his trusty watch and its faithful workings only to tell that finally this flawless piece of machinery had been let to run down. With foreboding he enters a jeweler's to set the watch to the correct time. Up to this point the story seems no more than a usual occurrence, albeit somewhat overdrawn. But the humorous element begins as the chief jeweler insists on repairing the unbroken watch and of course simply makes things worse. "Next day I stepped into the chief jeweler's to set it...and the head of the establishment proceeded to set it for me. Then he said, "She is four minutes slow - regulator wants pushing up (p. 65)". The watch starts to gain time to such an extent that it "entered into November while the October leaves are still turning. It hurried up time, bills payable and generally leaves all other time pieces behind (p. 65)." Here Twain introduces elements of absurd humor, with absurd intended loosely. Without delving into an exact definition, absurd humor is that which is based on gross or extreme exaggeration of ordinary events. The extreme claims made by Twain concerning the watch's power to 'control' time typify this category. Along with this are the increasingly inept and

bizarre attempts made by various watch/jewelry experts to correct the problem. The culmination of all these attempts to repair the watch occurs when Twain enters a watchmaker's only to find that the owner is an old steamship acquaintance, who was somewhat of a failure as an engineer. His solution is to reduce the amount of steam the watch makes by hanging a monkey wrench onto the safety valve. Twain, by this time completely exasperated, simply brains the man. "He examined all the parts carefully, just as the other watchmakers had done, and then ...with the same confidence of manner he said: "She makes too much steam - you want to hang the monkey-wrench on the safety-valve!" I brained him on the spot, and had him buried at my own expense (p. 66-7)."

In all of these descriptions, the watch's abilities as well as the repairmen's inabilities, extreme exaggeration is utilized to create a humorous effect. Nevertheless, the presence of this one feature hardly makes this tale an example of absurd humor. Exaggeration of characteristics, while certainly contained in absurd humor, is also found in other types of humor. Take for example any "Polack" joke. The crux of these jokes is to highlight the stupidity of this group by exaggerating the depths of dumbness. Saying it takes four Polacks to screw in a light bulb, three to turn the one holding the bulb, exaggerates in two ways. First, the difficulty in actually accomplishing the task is exaggerated. In real life it is naturally a one person job. This leads to the second exaggeration, the reason why the question is 'pertinant' regarding 'Polacks', namely that they are stupid people. Just how dumb these people are becomes clear when hearing the answer. Nobody could be that dumb, so we describe them as dumber than the dumb. That is to say we call them stupid by exaggerating what stupid is.

Nevertheless, the presence of exaggeration does not make this an example of absurd humor. The typologist would more readily call this an example of an ethnic joke. Here the target seems the more likely means of classifying this piece of humor, which raises the question of which of the features comprising a type should be used as a type name. Even though this seems an ethnic joke, if one substitutes other targets, for example feminists, then it could be called a sexist joke. Yet, the form obviously remains the same and exaggeration is still the primary means of focusing the humor. Therefore this feature, central to the humor of "My Watch", overlaps with other humor types, thereby preventing neat categories from being created.

Using one feature such as target, to define humorous types is likewise problematic. If Twain had chosen another target, say newspaper editors, the reader would not be tempted to categorize this story as a different humor type. This contrasts sharply with pieces of humor such as the Polack joke, whose very type is defined via the target.

Although some case can be made for reclassifying the Polack joke as a sexist one with the simple change of targets, ultimately this argument fails when analyzing Twain's short story. There is more to "My Watch" than the target alone. Twain's tale resonates far beyond the particular target, watch repairmen. It is clear to all that Twain's humor does not just deal with watches and repairmen, but rather technology and technological experts in general are poked fun at. Twain's story revolves around the dangers of blindly placing faith in authority or expert figures. Therefore the changing of targets in reality only serves to shift the focus of the humor without in actuality altering the humor itself. No, there is more to humor than simply typing it via its target. Even though some insight may be gained from typologies, typing something does not

explain what it is. Knowing that a piece of humor contains certain features, not unique and not altogether necessary to that type, cannot account for how we recognize it as a piece of humor. We do not call "My Watch" funny only because of the use of exaggeration, the targeting of technical experts or the story format.

II. The Social Nature of "My Watch"

As seen in chapters one and two, Norrick (1974) analyzes the social nature of humor, and describes the mechanisms by which humor affects group identification. As alluded to previously, both the Polack joke and Twain's tale contain social/functional elements that help to inform the humor. This theoretical approach attempts to describe what humor does rather than what it is. Because "My Watch" pokes fun at watch repairmen in particular and technical experts in general, the reader quickly sees that two differing social groups are being defined, namely experts and the laity. This serves to highlight society's ever increasing need to appeal to authority figures in our daily lives. Some 300 years after the birth of science, the increasing demand for technical expertise was not lost on Twain. Twain was also equally aware of ordinary men and women coming to allow techno-gadgets to rule our lives. These two points seem to be the main thrust of the story. Twain uses humor to describe a society that has become and is continuing to become more reliant on technological advancements, the workings of which it itself is ignorant. This in turn has led to a partitioning of that self-same society into those who understand and those who do not.

After the initial 'repair' of the watch, Twain's depiction of its crazy working and its power over time illustrate the degree to which we have allowed

technology to rule our lives. By running so fast, "it hurried up house rent....in such a ruinous way that I couldn't abide it (p. 65)" the watch becomes an absurd creation, thus illustrating just how far removed society is from the rhythms of nature. In Twain's time, as well as in our own, the reader easily appreciates the absurdity of allowing artificial time to govern our existence. By exaggerating the amount of control clock time actually has over us, Twain makes us realize the degree of control we have given the clock.

The portrayal of the repairmen equals the absurd workings of the watch. Twain begins with a not unrealistic picture of a technical expert. His first jeweler sees Twain and immediately begins to diagnose problems without ever consulting Twain. Every reader should recognize in this some similar incident from their own lives when a so-called expert never even bothered to ask what the problem was. We all also remember occasions when these experts botched the job far worse than the original problem. Twain quickly introduces other repairmen each significantly more inept than the previous one. This culminates in the ex-steamboat engineer who Twain kills. His final frustrating encounter speaks as loudly today as it did when it was written.

Although we can identify with Twain, the story also reminds us of the depth of our dependence on those who are in the know. One hundred years after the advent of the industrial revolution, Twain recognized how deep this dependence ran. The ease that technological advancement brings a society is soon taken for granted. Nameless people create, produce and yes repair these wonders, and we never even question the origin of these things nor the nature and knowledge of this separate people. That is until something goes wrong with one of our gadgets. It is at this point that we become aware of our ignorance of artificial objects which have become necessities. There are others

possessing the required knowledge whom we must seek out. And we are at their mercy. They have their own language that we cannot understand. Twain illustrates this many times, for example “He said the king-bolt. was broken. I said I was glad it was nothing more serious. To tell the plain truth, I had no idea what a king bolt was, but I did not choose to appear ignorant to a stranger (p.66).” Twain must trust his judgment, as we all do when we appeal to an authority who we believe has more knowledge and expertise than we possess.

This actual separation of groups in real society is laughed at in the story. By smiling at Twain’s helplessness at the hands of his experts, we come to see more clearly our own helplessness. At the end of the tale Twain finally asserts himself, he takes action. In clubbing his old engineer buddy he is telling the reader to symbolically do the same. Rather than blindly placing trust in experts, we should break down the division of the two groups by breaking down the knowledge barrier and trusting unto ourselves.

Clearly a social functionalist viewing of the humor contained in this story has much to offer the humor researcher. However, it is equally clear that this theoretical approach makes no attempt at explaining what humor is, or how we recognize it for what it is. The whole basis of such an analysis begins by taking the humor for granted. The question asked is more to the tune of: *this is a funny story, so what does the humor do?* not *how do we know this is intended as humorous?* Concentrating solely (at the macro-level) on the identification of social group formation and on the power interactions at play between differing groups necessitates the narrowing of focus to the point where humor recognition is almost completely beyond its scope. Thus, even though a social-functional interpretation of the humor in this story will offer much insight into the role humor plays in society, like typologies it will not account for humor.

III. "My Watch" and the Incongruous

Incongruity theory has attempted to address the lack of focusing on recognition by concentrating on the perceived presence of two opposing scripts or paradoxical pairs. As Nerhardt (1975) argues, the perception of incongruity is necessary for the perception of humor. Unfortunately, this is as far as Nerhardt goes. However, Rothbart (1975) claims that the manner of incongruity's resolution is equally significant when perceiving humor. Although her focus was on young children in their perception of an event as either humorous or frightening, her central point that the way we resolve incongruity greatly influences our reaction seems valid. Not only might we resolve incongruity in terms of fright, but anger could also be our reaction. And of course one must actually be able to resolve the incongruity. It seems that to get a joke it is necessary not only to see the pieces that do not fit but one must make them fit together anyway. There are even jokes that revolve around the need for resolvability. In the mid 1980's in West Germany the Anti-Witz or anti-joke was making its rounds among the high schools. One example translated into English is: *I went to the bakery yesterday and the baker asked me if I wanted white or wheat bread. I said it didn't matter, because I rode my bike.* The incongruous elements of buying bread and riding bikes are completely unresolvable as the latter simply does not connect to the former. However, 15 year old German girls would erupt in laughter as this utter lack of connection, or unresolvability, was the entire point.

An analysis of Twain's story in the light of incongruity theory focuses on the opposition between the watch of the story controlling time and actual

watches measuring it. Equally stressed is the ability of real-life technical experts to generally do their jobs well versus Twain's incompetent repairmen. No less significant remains the need to resolve these incongruities in a manner that leads to humor. Lastly, the reader must recognize and resolve the actions of Twain the character in contrast to the actions of real-life people in similar situations.

None of these three incongruities are all that difficult to spot. "After being cleaned and oiled, and regulated, my watch slowed down to that degree that it ticked like a tolling bell. ...I gradually drifted back into yesterday, then day before, then into last week (p. 65)." Twain's wild portrayal of the watch after the first repair and its increasingly insane functioning with each subsequent repair is automatically compared with the workings of ordinary watches and clocks. They may run down, run fast or slow, or stop running altogether, but they certainly never "wheeze and bark and kick back like muskets (p. 65)." They do not control the passage of real time and cannot literally speed up bills payable. The reader needs no special clues to recognize the differing nature of Twain's watch from that of all real ones. This opposing pair could well be placed under the rubric normal/abnormal.

Also very easy to recognize is the incongruous nature of Twain's experts with respect to real world technicians. Even though everyone has some story about a so-called expert who proved to be inept, we nonetheless routinely seek out experts to correct problems for us when our own abilities are insufficient. Were experts in the real world so thoroughly and routinely incompetent as Twain's are, we would never dream of looking to them for solutions to our problems. "I went to a watchmaker again. He took it all to pieces... After this the watch averaged well, but nothing more (p. 65)." The exaggerated inability of the

story's experts forces the reader to bring forth memories of real-life encounters to act as a counterweight in our understanding of Twain's story. Here the opposing pair seems to be expertise/ineptitude or good/bad.

The last incongruous pair contained in the story centers on the actions of Twain the character. For fear of appearing ignorant he silently observes as each jeweler ruins his time piece even more. In real life many of us have also meekly looked on the repair jobs and said nothing because we did not want the depths of our ignorance known. Still, unlike Twain in the story, it is clear that the limits to our trust and patience would have ended much sooner. The contrast in the degree of faith in authority appears to fit well under the heading active/passive or blind trust/ critical trust.

As Rothbart has shown, for incongruity theory to account for humor recognition, the fact that an incongruity be resolvable and resolved correctly must occupy a central position. For Rothbart the nature of this resolvability revolves around the possibility of occurrence. For a joke or narrative story to be perceived as humorous, Rothbart argues that our beliefs pertaining to the events of the joke/story actually coming to pass are negative. That is to say, that if we believe anything at all about the story in terms of truth value, we believe that they are not true. If we entertained thoughts that the events in Twain's story could possibly come about, the effect of the story and our reaction to it would be much different. Instead of laughing at the descriptions we would react subdued, taking them as a warning or an omen. We do not believe that Twain is relating a true story. Not only are we sure that neither the watch nor the repairmen did the things Twain says, we are equally positive that Twain did not kill his old steamship buddy. Because we recognize the opposing pairs and resolve them in terms of very low probability of occurrence, we interpret the story as funny.

There are several problems with this explanation, the most damaging being that it is not very explanatory. Equating humor recognition with the belief that events are unlikely does not address the question why we believe them unlikely. Also many unlikely events are not humorous. Neither does it attempt to differentiate between dissimilar types of unlikely events. It is true that the reader does not believe that Twain has described some true story, but not believing is obviously not the same as understanding humorous intent. This is doubly so when one remembers that this is a piece of prose fiction.

In speech we can disbelieve something for many reasons. We reserve judgment when there is too little information and we judge negatively when there is contradictory information. But in the case of prose fiction we actively suspend disbelief and do not even attempt to judge actions, characters and events in terms of real world occurrences. Occupying a world of its own, the events in Twain's story are automatically deemed improbable in their relation to the real world. Incongruity theory would then of necessity have to call all fictional works humorous as they are all improbable.

A related drawback to this theory is its unaccountability in differentiating improbable events into categories other than humorous. "King Lear" is certainly unlikely ever to have happen and it is by no means humorous. In fact every literary genre from romance to science fiction and horror to the historical novel all contain incongruities when viewed against the real world. Therefore a deeper analysis into the issue of humor recognition is necessary as incongruity theory remains too limited.

IV. “My Watch” According to the CP

In order to better explain the nature of humor other researchers have adopted principles found in linguistic pragmatics, specifically the Cooperative Principle. As mentioned in Chapter One and more thoroughly discussed in Chapter Two, the CP involves the recognition of implied meaning. Crucial to this is the distinction between a violation of the maxims of the CP and a mere flout. In the case of a violation there is an intentional non-abidance of at least one of the four maxims (quantity, quality, manner, and relevance). Flouts also possess this characteristic but what separates the two is the masking or covering up of a violation so that it is not readily apparent. When someone violates the CP they do not intend it to be recognized. A flout on the other hand is supposed to be extremely apparent and thus easily recognized for what it is. The author of a flout does not intend to mislead.

When there is a flout, the originator is supplying information without directly stating it. As already discussed, any conversation like the following involves what Grice called conversational implicature. *A - Do you walk to school? B - I live in the suburbs.* B does not directly give an answer to the question but A assumes that B is cooperating and therefore recognizes the implied meaning of the answer as “No it is too far”. This process of conveying inferential meaning has been utilized by researchers such as Pratt (1981) and Martinich (1981) to explain implied meaning in literature. Both discuss the role of the CP in classic works of humorous fiction. Pratt in Sterne’s Tristram Shandy and Martinich in Carroll’s Alice in Wonderland see the respective authors of these as engaging in repeated flouts of the CP’s maxims.

Pratt first argues that any and all unintentional non-compliance with the maxims are weeded out in the editing and publishing process. Therefore all instances of non-compliance must necessarily be intentional. Among the types of intentional non-fulfillment Pratt asserts that only flouts are possible because fictional works simply cannot be construed as lies and by writing at all the author 'opts in' to the CP.

Martinich likewise uses the CP to explain the humor in Carroll's work. Using the conversations between Alice and other characters, he argues that the instances of non-fulfillment contained in the work should be attributed to the characters and not to the author, thereby stating that all non-fulfillment is a flout in respect to the author. His contention is that Carroll means for the reader to recognize the surface infraction and see to the deeper implied meaning which does indeed abide by the CP.

An analysis of Twain's story from the perspective of these two researchers would similarly describe the humor as being the product of a flout of the CP. Initially, such a portrayal of the story argues that in the process of writing, editing and publishing Twain and his editor caught and eliminated all instances of unintentional non-compliance. Every occasion where Twain had neglected to give enough information, or provided too much, every time he did not have enough evidence for his statements or did not believe them, every time he was not concise, precise and clear, all these possible infractions were eliminated before the story ever went to press. Therefore with Twain's story, just as with Sterne and Carroll, the reader is supposed to infer figurative meaning and interpret the story in terms of a chain of inferences leading the reader to the author's desired conclusion, here humorous intent. The descriptions of the watch's workings and the ineptitude of the repairmen are clearly not accurate

vis a vis the real world. But the reader should recognize this and infer that Twain is using exaggeration for the purpose of amusement. In the process of this Martinich would argue that Twain the character is indeed violating the maxim of quality, but Twain the writer, because we are supposed to understand the story, only commits a flout. Pratt would similarly claim that Twain is guilty of flouting the CP but rather because that is the only type of non-compliance that is found in prose fiction.

One of the great weaknesses with this account is precisely this contention by Pratt. To claim that editors, proofreaders and publishers are capable of spotting and correcting every inadvertent non-fulfillment is to frankly give them too much credit. When one considers all of the minor spelling and grammar errors that find their way into many publications, then it is naive to think that more difficultly spotted errors like those involved with unintentional non-fulfillment of the CP are all removed. This places far too much trust in expert figures and Twain's story itself points out the dangers in that.

Equally damaging is Pratt's belief that in prose fiction all non-fulfillments are flouts and that none are violations of the CP. Again this is somewhat naive and Pratt does not seem to have ever considered propaganda. A look into the field of literature more closely shows that there are numerous examples of fictional works whose primary intent is to convince the reader of some political or philosophical point held by the writer. Ayn Rand comes quickly to mind. Her books The Fountainhead and Atlas Shrugged are excellent examples of fictional works espousing a political ideology, specifically conservative capitalism. Twain's story can hardly be called propagandistic, yet from a sociological perspective one can certainly argue that he is trying to convince the reader of some point, namely do not blindly trust experts. It can also be argued

that in his exaggerated descriptions he is guilty of not giving accurate information, thus violating the CP maxim of quality. To argue that Twain does not commit a violation of the CP in this story because writers of fiction simply do not do that is to seriously beg the question of how one can be so sure of that.

Martinich's argument is that the author may distance himself from a violation by placing the onus on a character. Perhaps some claim can be made for a surface distancing as Martinich argues that Carroll wants the readers to recognize what he is doing. Twain likewise wishes his readers to comprehend the conversations and events that take place in his story. The old steamship buddy recommending hanging a monkey-wrench onto the safety-valve to correct the problem is an obvious violation of the maxim of quality as he certainly does not have evidence for what he is saying. Martinich would say that Twain on the other hand wants the reader to recognize this and that therefore makes it a flout from his perspective. This seems initially plausible since everyone knows watches do not run on steam.

Others in the field of humor research have argued the same position as Martinich. Yamaguchi (1988) uses the ideas found in mention theory to claim that the author may only flout the CP but is free to allow his/her characters to violate it at will. As seen in chapter 2, mention theory has been used to account for irony by positing an echoic referent for the ironic utterance. That is to say that the referent of the expression is some earlier implicit or explicit expression and it is this echoic referent that distinguishes the Use of an expression from its Mention. Yamaguchi takes this idea and argues that in any instance of humorous writing the author merely mentions a violation committed in reality by a character. The writer echoes the violation and thus tacitly does not violate him/herself. In Twain's story this would mean that the final repairman indeed

violates the maxim of quality, yet Twain counting on the reader recognizing this, mentions this and thus only flouts the CP. Nevertheless it should be clear by now that the primary difference between a flout and a violation is the subject's intent and it is simply impossible to posit real world intent for a fictional creation with no mind of its own. Ultimately all responsibility regarding the CP must reside with the author.

Dolitsky (1992) points out a central problem with the flout analysis of humor when she convincingly argues that in any intentionally humorous endeavor the originator must necessarily mislead the receiver and thereby violate the CP. This misleading is done by forcing upon the recipient stereotypical real world scripts and scenarios that do not normally result in humor and later showing them to be not applicable. In the case of Twain's story the initial description of the watch seems intended to make the reader first activate scenarios of events concerning the normal workings of a good watch. Twain walking into a jeweler's to set it to the correct time also creates very normal non-humorous visions of the real world. Likewise the jeweler's actions of trying to repair an unbroken watch bring up memories when experts only made matters worse, often to decidedly unfunny consequences. By the time Twain has left this first shop the reader has succeeded in activating a stereotypical sequence of events and predicts that the events to follow will continue to conform to the activated script. Once this has taken place Twain turns it all on its head by wildly exaggerating the effects and the events resulting from these effects. Twain initially misleads the reader in order to set him/her up for the humor to follow.

Dolitsky's argument that humor violates the CP through such a misleading strategy contrasts sharply with the arguments of Pratt, Martinich and

Yamaguchi. As the entire debate revolves around author intent it seems that Dolitsky is correct and that humor must necessarily mislead, i.e. violate the CP. Because the scenario forced upon the reader of "My Watch" is normally not humorous, no humor is initially expected. Of course one could argue that this is Twain who is being discussed and that fact automatically attunes the reader to humor. As Gruner (1978) would claim, the notoriety of Twain as a humorist clearly establishes a play frame and no reader would be surprised at the humor to follow.

Nevertheless, the establishing of a play frame is neither necessary nor sufficient to account for recognizing this as a humorous story. To simply say that because this is Twain we know that there will be some humor first begs the question of how we recognized his humor the first time we encountered it and secondly it is not an accurate statement. Twain's best known works, Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn, while containing some amusing elements are not essentially humorous novels. Likewise Puddin' Head Wilson and Connecticut Yankee. Obviously we do not see the humor of "My Watch" just because it is Twain.

Dolitsky's account of the CP violating nature of humor seems a more accurate model of humor than does the flout or mention theory arguments. It essentially eliminates any claim that an author may distance him/herself from and intentional violation of the CP by placing the onus on a character. Still, an account of humor basing recognition on a violation of the CP must explain how we are able to recognize the intent to be funny in light of the originator's intent to initially mislead. This is where Dolitsky's model falls short and it is precisely where Attardo and Raskin begin.

V. A Humor CP, the GTVH and Twain

Taking up where Dolitsky left off, Attardo (1993) argues for the CP violating nature of humor and posits an alternate humor CP which would account for humor recognition. It is his contention that a joke is recognized when the hearer grasps that he/she has been misled, as in the case of false script activation, and then backtracks to a humor CP, the maxims of which are 1. Quantity - Give as much information as is necessary for the joke. 2. Quality - Say only what is consistent with the world of the joke. 3. Relation - Say only what is relevant to the joke. 4. Manner - Tell the joke efficiently. Attardo claims that the humor CP is a more readily chosen option by the listener in cases of doubt concerning violations of Grice's CP because humorous exchange is more socially acceptable than lying is.

The ability to backtrack to this CP is accomplished by an understanding that the speaker has abandoned a bona-fide mode of communication, where bona-fide is the obligatory fulfillment of Grice's maxims. Raskin and Attardo (1994) argue that in the case of humor none of the normal attitudes toward Grice's CP apply, namely 1. an utterance may both superficially and essentially abide by the maxims, 2. it may only essentially honor the maxims, e.g. it may flout one conspicuously in order to honor another more strongly, and 3. it may be devoid of cooperation altogether, as in cases of lying. The authors argue that instances of humor, none of these are pertinent. The originator of a piece of humor can in no way be said to believe what they are saying, also the case in lying. The difference lies in the humorist's intent to have the joke eventually gotten whereas the liar hopes for the misleading to continue. Humor being

more socially acceptable, it is often the first choice of hearers when confronted with not readily apparent jokes or lies. According to Raskin and Attardo humor can occur in one of four settings: 1a. The speaker makes the joke unintentionally. 1b. The speaker makes the joke intentionally. 2a. The hearer doesn't expect the joke. 2b. The hearer expects the joke. The focus of this investigation is in instances where 1b and 2b intersect. In such cases the parties involved in the humorous discourse are quickly attuned to the maxims of the humor CP. This of course does not necessitate immediate and automatic activation of this CP on the part of the receiver. First the violation must be recognized and should this occur too easily the humor will be less effective, as when adults listen to children's jokes, and if it is too difficult then the humor is in danger of failing altogether.

Raskin and Attardo attempt to describe the features present enabling a joke that is intentionally told and expected to be recognized. In their General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) the researchers posit six Knowledge Resources (KRs) that inform a joke. It is the presence of violations of the Gricean CP contained in certain of the KRs of a joke that allow the hearer to first understand that a bona-fide mode of communication has been abandoned and then to backtrack to the humor CP. In the light of the argument that humor routinely violates at least the maxim of quality, it is not surprising that the first KR is script oppositions. Humor often takes advantage of the listener by combining and making compatible partially or fully incompatible scripts. The violation is seen when the listener activates one script and later discovers that it does not apply as in many jokes that revolve around a smart/dumb opposition. For example a joke about the number of 'Polacks' it takes to change a light bulb plays on the normal light bulb changing script and juxtaposes that with the

abnormal scenario of the joke. Of course with this and other semi-fixed form jokes, the realization that the activated script does not apply and that a bona-fide mode has been abandoned leads to a very fast backtracking to the humor CP.

The second KR is found in the actual wording or language of the joke. The language of a particular piece of humor not only allows for paraphrases to still be recognizably funny in their intent, but it also determines the placement of functional elements in a joke, for example the punch line. In jokes similar to the 'Polack' joke the punch line contains the information being imparted. If the speaker were really interested in telling the listeners something informative about 'Polacks' then there would be no need to start with a question and then follow it up with an answer. This violates the Gricean maxims of manner and relevance and allows the listener to recognize that bona-fide communication has been abandoned.

The third KR is the logical mechanism, or manner in which the script oppositions are connected. It is through playful juxtaposition and false analogy that opposing scripts are connected in a way that allows the hearer of a joke to understand that bona-fide communication is not in force. For example: *Did you hear about the baby born with both male and female characteristics? It has both a penis and a brain.* This joke juxtaposes real life birth defects to more normal infants. Also false analogy is used as the baby in the joke is in no way really like a hermaphrodite. These also violates the Gricean maxim of quality and activate a humor CP.

The next KR is the target, or butt of the joke. Who or what is being made fun of is easy to see with many types of humor. In other instances no one group is singled out, as in 'Polack' jokes, but rather humanity itself seems to be the

target. In black humor this seems especially so. *What does NASA stand for? Need Another Seven Astronauts.* This joke told soon after the Challenger disaster actually targets far more than the seven people killed. Rather the dangers inherent in humanity's most significant endeavors are ridiculed as a means of coming to terms with the tragedy. It seems that it is not the target itself which signals the hearer to backtrack to a humor CP, but instead it is what is said about or done to the target that allows this to happen.

A fifth KR is contained in the narrative strategy of the joke, where this is the vehicle of the humor's presentation. Rigid in 'knock-knock' or light bulb changing jokes, it can also be flexible as in the tall tale where the rules of literary license apply. This KR accounts for the fact that a joke must be in some organized form, be it question and answer, an aside in a conversation or a simple narrative. It alone does not suffice to trigger the humor CP.

The last KR is found in the situation or activity in the joke. Very often the situations are stereotypical events without any humor at all in them in real life. Changing light bulbs or chickens crossing roads are good illustrations. These scripts are frequently utilized to activate thought processes that can be juxtaposed to the events unfolding in the piece of humor. Occasionally certain situations allow themselves to become commonly used in humor by their very mundaneness. Such seems to be the case with chickens crossing roads and changing light bulbs. The very hearing of these two situations put into question form is almost itself enough for the listener to know that bona-fide communication is not being used.

By exploring the various KRs informing jokes, Raskin and Attardo have provided a model of humor recognition much more sophisticated than typologies, incongruity theory or appeals to Gricean flouts are capable of.

Instead of simply categorizing humor types, arguing for the resolution of incongruity or positing a distancing of the author to make humor a flout, the GTVH would analyze Twain's story in the light of the six knowledge resources' ability to activate the humor CP. This theory was developed to better account for instances of verbal humor. The following analysis will illustrate its applicability to humorous literature, at least in the case of the tall tale.

VI. The Knowledge Resources of "My Watch"

The first KR, script oppositions, builds upon incongruity theory when describing partially or fully incompatible script scenarios. In "My Watch" the oppositions clearly comprise categories such as expert/novice (the repairmen/Twain), and competent/incompetent or smart/stupid as with real world repairmen and those of the story. Another opposition is to be seen in the naivete of Twain the character and Twain the real world writer. By creating a story where the authorities upon whom one must rely are bumbling boobs and at the same time allowing himself to be lead around by the nose for fear of appearing ignorant to strangers, Twain forces the reader to compare events in the story with real world occurrences. This naturally brings together at least partially incompatible scenarios or scripts.

Very few of us would go to the lengths that Twain does to repair a good, pocket watch. "Then I prepared to cross-question him rigidly, for this thing was getting serious. The watch had cost two hundred dollars originally, and I seemed to have paid out two of three thousands for repairs (p. 66)." Having paid originally \$200 for it, a large amount of money in 1870, he proceeds to spend two or three thousands for its repair, the money all the while going to

progressively inept experts. It is as unlikely that the real Twain would do such as thing as it is that we would.

This set of opposing scripts is strengthened by the opposition of the story's repairmen versus ones in real life. No technical master so incompetent would remain long in business and the last repairman of the story, the ex-steamship buddy, stresses precisely this. The depth of his lack of understanding is too great even for Twain. And coupled with his mounting frustration, this soon results in the repairman's death, an event most readers must sympathize with because of similar situations we have been in.

The third opposition, expert/novice, builds on this. The relationships between Twain and the repairmen are reminiscent of our own lives, but hardly accurate depictions of real life events. Even though most of us have at one time or another been taken for a ride, we certainly put our feet down sooner than Twain does in the story. Twain's repairmen are not dishonest people, they merely do not know what they are doing. In sort of a perverse Peter Principle, already incompetent people have risen to an even further level of incompetency and most of us would see this quicker than Twain the character. Twain alludes to this when he implies that watchmakers are in fact failed experts from other fields. "My uncle William...used to wonder what became of all the unsuccessful tinkers, and gunsmiths, and shoemakers, and engineers, and blacksmiths; but nobody could ever tell him (p. 67)."

All three of these oppositions force the reader to recognize that the story is not to be viewed as an attempt to accurately portray the real world. As it is a piece of fiction, the reader's disbelief is already suspended, but the oppositions contained in this KR distance even further the events of the story from real life. Good drama is just that because characters, relationships and events are taken

from real life. Even though we know none of the things happened to any such person, in quality drama we recognize that very similar things do occur to similar real people. But in the case of "My Watch" the gross exaggeration of characters and events marks a clear violation of the standard CP, even in terms of the world of fiction. Thus the script oppositions in the story not only signal that the mode of communication as non-bona-fide, they do so in relation to the world of fiction helping to distinguish humorous prose from other fictional genres.

Looking at the story from the perspective of the third KR, logical mechanism, yields further insights. The manner of connecting script oppositions in this story comprises both false analogy and juxtaposition. By equating the watch with the powers that control the natural course of time, Twain creates a world that would be frightening if it were not so amusing. In our world watch is to time as thermometer is to temperature, that is a man made construct that can only measure natural occurrences. Yet in the story the analogy becomes causal, as watch is to time is now like dam is to river. Instead of measuring nature, Twain's malfunctioning watch directly influences it. Just as a dam can prevent the flow of a river or cause a flood, so Twain's watch slows down and speeds up the course of time. In addition, the juxtapositions of the repairmen and Twain the character vis a vis their real world counterparts enable the reader to discern the author's humorous intent. Experts are simply not that inept and no one would go to the lengths that Twain did to have a watch repaired. The logical mechanisms of this story both violate the Gricean CP, specifically in relation to the maxim of quality and thereby signal a departure from the bona-fide mode of communication.

The fourth KR is the target. In certain instances of verbal humor the target is quite easy to see, for example in ethnic humor. Also in literature some social

group or other, or even a character, may be the target of the humor. In the case of Twain's story one could initially believe that the target is Twain himself. Perhaps he is relating in a humorous fashion some incident he himself has experienced. This could especially be the case when one considers his silence for fear of appearing ignorant with each and every comment made by the repairmen. "My Watch" could be a warning to the reader that we should be less concerned with appearances than he himself was.

Though this possibility does exist, it strikes the reader more aptly that the target of humor in the story is more general than simply Twain himself. It seems that the true target is humanity itself and modern man in particular. Twain's story highlights modern man's over-reliance on technology and technological experts. The watch's ability to control natural and man-made phenomena focuses the reader's attention on the distance such technology has carried humanity from the natural world. Twain's experiences with his watch controlling his life are only exaggerated forms of how our clocks control us.

A second aspect of humanity as the target is contained in the descriptions of the technical experts and also in Twain's actions in relation to their actions. Each repairman is more inept than the last, a condition which the reader is supposed to compare to his/her own experiences. Naturally not all experts, in any field, are incompetent, but certainly in every field some are. This in conjunction with Twain's passive acceptance of their expertise should cause the reader to reexamine his/her own blind faith in so-called experts whom we should always and immediately appeal to. Therefore, the target as another KR which informs humor contributes information enabling the reader to discern the humorous intent.

Another KR aiding in the recognition of humor is the narrative strategy.

Unlike some instances of verbal humor where the narrative strategy is somewhat fixed, as in knock-knock jokes, in the case of "My Watch" the vehicle of the humor's presentation is extremely flexible. As a literary genre one would first categorize this as a short story and then further type it as a tall tale. Twain's first person narrative exaggerates real world daily events to an absurd degree. The absurdities then quickly cross beyond exaggeration and become outrageously unreal. This however does not suffice for the recognition of humorous intent. Other genres such as romance, horror and science fiction/fantasy similarly utilize a great deal of absurd exaggeration. It is only in conjunction with the other five KRs that the information gleaned from looking at the narrative strategy helps in recognizing the humorous intent.

The last KR to be considered is the situation, here the repairing of a watch. Like many situations of humor, the standard scenario is often taken from daily events and from ordinarily unfunny ones at that. These standard scenarios serve to activate stereotypical scripts which are shown later not to apply. This is clearly the case with this story as Twain first has us conjure up images of normal watch repair procedures and then wildly departs from the images we have brought up. As the story progresses the script first envisioned by the reader recedes further and further as the watch's actions and the repairmen themselves are described in ways only slightly reminiscent of real life. It is the situation of the story that acts as a weight in the creating of script oppositions and the connecting of these oppositions in the logical mechanism that allow the reader to understand Twain's humorous intent. The situation is all part of the original set up meant to mislead the reader until the humor can be sprung.

VII. Conclusion

This analysis has shown first that Raskin and Attardo's General Theory of Verbal Humor is indeed generalizable to at least some types of literary humor, namely the humorous short story or tall tale. In the course of this analysis it has also been shown that the GTVH is a far more sophisticated model of the humor recognition process than humor typologies, incongruity theory or appeals to Gricean flouts via mention theory. While typologies allow the investigator to gain some insights into the character of humorous pieces, they simply do not address the central question of this thesis, i. e. how do we recognize intentional humor as such? Incongruity theory also contributes to humor research but it has been shown to be lacking in both descriptive and explanatory powers. The appeal to the recognition and resolution of opposing pairs of scripts does yield insights into humor recognition, but its weaknesses vis a vis Raskin and Attardo's GTVH are clear. The insights to be gained are better accounted for in the KRs situation, script opposition and logical mechanism. Equally unappealing is Pratt's and Martinich's claim that humor is the result of a Gricean flout. Merely claiming that the receiver of a piece of humor recognizes it as an attempt at humor just because the originator intended it that way does little for how the receiver actually got to that conclusion. Similarly, distancing the originator from any violation by appealing to character's intent, in the case of a mention theory account of humor, is untenable. It seems correct to account for humor by appealing to the originator's intent. But the claim that the intent of the author is somehow different from that of a character gives the character a sense of volition that it patently cannot possess. Clearly, in the field of humor research

a more sophisticated account of humor recognition is created by appealing to the originator's initial misleading intent contained in the KRs posited by Raskin and Attardo. It is the recognition of this intent that allows the receiver of a piece of intentional humor to backtrack to a humor CP and thereby recognize it as humor.

Chapter Four

Limitations, Further Research and TESOL

I. Limitations

Although Raskin and Attardo have created a more sophisticated account of verbal humor recognition which can be generalized further to account for some written humor, the positing of an alternate CP does bring certain questions into the investigation. Grice originally argued for a Cooperative Principle to account for certain instances of implied meaning. By means of inferential chains beginning with the assumption that the other participants in the exchange are cooperating, all those involved are able to infer the meaning behind what is said when what is said is blatantly off target. Many examples of this have been given in this thesis and from the literature it is clear that Grice's CP has enormous explanatory power. Therein lies the hitch. Any principle so powerful in its ability to account for implied meaning is a bit suspicious. By ultimately standing on inference as its foundation, Grice's CP is capable of much manipulation by the clever researcher. This is not to say that the Gricean CP and its maxims are without merit, for again there is much that is logical about them. However, up to this point there remains no means of testing it other than for researchers to posit series of inferential chains of assumptions.

This leads directly to the second limitation with Raskin and Attardo's General Theory of Verbal Humor. Not only do the authors base their theory on the argument that humor is the result of a violation of the Gricean CP, they

further go on to create a humor CP which is to account for humor recognition. In creating a humor CP, the researchers compound the problem of using the untestable CP of Grice as a foundation by utilizing another equally empirically untestable principle as a central core to their theory. If Grice's initial CP remains untestable after 20 years, it seems plausible that a diagnostic for a humor CP will prove just as elusive.

Another problem with positing a separate humor CP comes with the question of, if we need a separate CP for humor, might we also need others for different types of what Raskin and Attardo call non-bona-fide modes of communication. Their belief that humor is non-bona-fide rests on the claim that with humor none of the normal attitudes towards Grice's CP apply. That is to say that humor neither superficially nor essentially abides by the maxims, yet it is not devoid of cooperation. If this is true of humor, is it not also true of many other types of communication. In applying Raskin and Attardo's GTVH to literary humor, it was established that the GTVH could indeed account for the humor in at least one type of literary humor far better than other existing theories in humor research. It seems therefore plausible that other literary genres might equally be accounted for through the creation of for example horror, tragedy, or science fiction CPs in their ultimate foundation. Likewise, one can consider instances in which communicative acts taken from their special surroundings lose their original meaning, for instance in religious rituals where food or drink is blessed in such a way as to undergo a transformation from profane to sacred. Removed from the ritual context, such a rite becomes blasphemy. Therefore, perhaps there is a religious CP which can account for the recognition of the sacred. The problem soon becomes apparent that a danger exists in an over-proliferation of CPs needed to account for the very many differing types of human

communicative behavior. That is not to say that separate CPs would indeed be necessary for these and other cases, but the researcher utilizing Grice's original principle needs to be cautious in creating addendums to a theory just to handle new cases.

Other limitations with the GTVH and its application to literary humor revolve around the specifics of the theory itself. It has been argued in this thesis that the knowledge resources 1. script opposition, 2. language, and 3. logical mechanism contain the violations of the Gricean maxims which allow the hearer/reader to recognize non-bona-fide communication and ultimately humor. Limiting the efficacy of the GTVH are the exact roles played by the other three knowledge resources.

The target of humor as a knowledge resource without doubt informs the piece of humor, but as seen in the section on humor typologies the target can change with but a small change in focus while the remainder of the humor stays the same. This is easily demonstrated with a light bulb joke that first targets an ethnic group, say 'Polacks', then is altered to target sorority girls.

1. How many 'Polacks' does it take to change a light bulb? Three. One to hold it and two to turn the table he's standing on. 2. How many sorority girls does it take to change a light bulb? Three. Two to watch while one calls daddy.

The other KRs are either only slightly different or they have not changed at all and it is this that captures the similarity between the jokes. It appears that it is not the target itself which so much informs the humor, even though it does point out the butt, but rather what is said and done to or by the target is what really informs the humor. Anyone or anything is a potential target for humor, and the manner in which this KR enables the hearer/reader to recognize humorous intent is unclear. There is really nothing intrinsically funny about either target

group, and one could substitute just about any group at all as the target and the result would still be recognizably a joke. Also it is difficult to see where a Gricean violation could occur in this KR. More investigation into the manner that the other KRs connect and interact with this one needs to be done in order to get a clearer picture of the role that the target as a knowledge resource informing humor plays.

The next knowledge resource whose role is unclear is the situation. Just as with the target, any situation or activity is potentially humorous, particularly with the more irreverent among us. Mostly the situations in humor seem to be mundane events of daily life, changing light bulbs for instance. And it is also possible to alter the situation of a piece of humor without effectively changing the humor itself. For example the sorority girl light bulb joke could involve changing a tire or even walking a dog. Like the target, the situation in humor seems to inform the piece because of the interaction between it and the other KRs. Exactly what these interactions are and what their parameters might be remains to be investigated.

Another KR that requires clarification is the narrative strategy. Raskin and Attardo call this resource the vehicle of presentation and use it to account for the fact that humor must be cast in some organizational form, for example a riddle in question/answer form or a witty aside in some conversation. However, going into no further depth as to what elements comprise this resource leaves the researcher with merely a statement that such and such piece of humor has such and such form. There must be a fuller description of the role this resource has in order to account for say differences between limericks and humorous poems, for example those of C. Morgenstern. Limericks are very fixed in form and even minimal alteration changes a limerick to something else. Clearly

there the organizational form of a limerick aids in the recognition of it as such. Therefore, it seems that there must be something more to the narrative strategy as a knowledge resource that aids in the recognition of other types of humor. Very possibly most humor types are not as easily recognizable through their form as the limerick is, but that does not entail that this resource plays only a minimal part in the recognizability of other instances of humor.

Lastly, the language resource also requires further thought. According to the authors of the GTVH, this resource accounts for the actual phrasing of a humorous piece and the placing of functional elements within that piece. Still, it must be conceded that some people are better joke tellers, and writers, than others. Should everything else about a joke be the same but two different people tell it, one a professional comic and the other anyone off the street, chances are that the comic will tell it better. The script oppositions, the logical mechanisms, the target, the situation and the narrative strategy are all the same, even the language is the same yet there is a large difference in hearer reception, so much so that in certain cases it is conceivable that the humor could not even be recognized when told by a very bad joke teller. It seems that the difference must lie in the language knowledge resource and that in order to capture it this resource must be expanded to include prosodic features like pitch, intonation, rhythm, etc. Surely these factor into humor appreciation and it seems very plausible that they also factor into humor recognition. Further investigation into the features included in this and the other KRs will only make the GTVH stronger and more accountable.

In considering whether new insights have been reached through this analysis, it seems that the KRs posited by Raskin and Attardo may not all be pertinent to instances of literary humor. The roles played by the narrative

strategy, the target and the situation do not necessarily help the reader in concluding that bona-fide communication is not in force. Rather, the connections the other KRs have in relation to these seem to more clearly signal abandonment of bona-fide discourse. Although this thesis has shown that the GTVH is expandable to certain types of literary humor, there remains a strong possibility that other knowledge resources exist which have yet to be discovered and investigated.

II. Further Research

As previously alluded to, certain limitations inherent in Raskin and Attardo's General Theory of Verbal Humor are in part traceable to the youth of the field of humor research. Uncertainty in the descriptions and workings of certain of the KRs can be rectified through further investigation and analysis. Not only will the continued research into the exact natures of all of the KRs enhance the theory, but their use in analyzing various types of humor will certainly add weight to the argument that humor revolves around initial misleading intent.

It has been the contention of this thesis all along that Raskin and Attardo's GTVH is the more sophisticated model of intentional humor recognition and that this account of verbal humor is generalizable to at least one type of literary humor, namely the humorous short story or tall tale. Further analyses of other types of literary humor, for instance parody and satire could quite possibly illustrate that the GTVH is similarly explanatory of literary humor per se. A scathing satire like Swift's *A Modest Proposal* or a social parody like Wilde's *The Importance of Being Ernest* would make excellent vehicles for

investigating the greater generalizability of this theory in the realm of literature. In fact the works of many authors from many different ages should be utilized in ongoing research. The advantages to this are not only in the strengthening of the theory, but they lie also in the gaining of insight concerning the loss of humor recognizability over time. Clearly the satire of Art Buchwald is more easily seen than that of Swift, for the first time reader of both. What aspects of the KRs fade over time and recede from public awareness?

Additional research must also be made into the parameters of the KRs interactions vis a vis the limits to humor recognition and as well appreciation. It seems to be the case that other genres of fictional prose often exhibit some of the knowledge resources that inform humor. Horror for instance certainly makes use of script oppositions and logical mechanisms. Rothbart in her study seems to be on to something in connecting the manner of resolving humor with that of horror. By investigating the interactions of the six KRs it is possible that they will be shown to aid the reader in distinguishing between the various genres of fictional prose. For example it is plausible that it is in the script oppositions that one is able to differentiate humor from drama, while the language KR aids in separating humor from horror.

This leads directly to another possibility for further research. Although it was stated previously that an over-proliferation of CPs would be a damaging limitation to Raskin and Attardo's theory, it is possible that only a few more CPs are necessary to account for other types of implied meaning. It would be of great interest to see research conducted pertaining to the role the Gricean CP plays in the distinguishing of different types of not only literature but also ritual behavior. The old saying that there is a time and a place for everything is pertinent to this discussion as a priest conducting an official ceremony is

recognized by the laity as either performing it correctly or not. In the recognition of this can Grice's CP alone account for this or is there some signal which triggers a ritual CP which in turn allows the viewers and participants of a ceremony to recognize it as such? Of course a certain ritual frame is often established to aid in the recognition, but as with humor it seems that this is probably not enough. Furthermore, merely positing ritual or play frame establishment as a basis for recognition of rituals and humor simply begs the question as to how the frame initially came to be recognized as a means for conveying these types of communication.

Returning to the field of humor research, additional avenues of investigation clearly lie in the interaction between the humor CP, prosodic features of language and body language itself. This connects back to the role of humor's delivery not in its appreciation aspect but in its very recognition. Some people simply tell jokes better and further research needs to be conducted into the manner that pitch, intonation, timing, organization, etc. enable the hearer to recognize that bona-fide communication has been abandoned. The skits of Steve Martin in the 1970s often contained his well known long, drawn out and rising pitched *Well Excuuuse Meee!* It seems clear that the language KR posited by Raskin and Attardo should very well be able to account for the prosodic elements so clearly contained in many instances of verbal humor. Likewise, body language is an intricate part of much verbal humor and the GTVH also needs to be expanded to include this. Clearly at times body language simply adds to the effect or to the appreciation of humor, but in other cases it seems alone responsible for humor recognition, as when someone winks after pulling your leg.

There are also numerous possibilities for further research in the ability of using insights gained from humor research in language teaching. Apte (1985) argued that because humor is by and large culturally based, it can be utilized as a major conceptual and methodological tool for gaining insights into cultural systems. Humor is the result of cultural perceptions, both individual and collective, of incongruity, exaggeration, distortion and any unusual combination of cultural elements. It is culturally based in the sense that individual cultural systems influence the stimuli that trigger the humor experience. Familiarity with the cultural codes is a prerequisite for recognizing these stimuli. This familiarity is for the most part unconscious as the members of a cultural group are aware of the background knowledge implicit to the recognition of humor generating stimuli. Any individual who is not a member of a given group will not have internalized the group's behavioral patterns and values and thereby may not experience humor. In instances of linguistic humor, e.g. puns, riddles, witticisms, etc., a lack of command in the target language will inhibit understanding. The degree of comprehension and appreciation of linguistic humor is a function of proficiency in the language being used.

In American culture humor seems to be ubiquitous. Used and accepted in almost any situation, formal and informal, it is necessary for second language learners to be able to recognize the humorous intent of utterances. Humor to a large degree affects the very organization of conversations. Viewed as enjoyable and pleasurable, it often serves to relax the participants and signals a time out from more serious language and social interaction. According to Norrick humor is also often involved in the foundation of the micro-organization of conversations, for example in spontaneous puns in an utterance pair. This involvement is seen to progress often to higher levels of organization in such

areas as openings, closings, topic shifts and the alignment of participants.

Humor can even become the primary organizational principle in conversation, as in bantering and joke telling sessions.

Sherzer notes humor helps to establish rapport via anecdote swapping and joking relationships and to say that someone has a sense of humor is to say that they find the same things funny as we do. As important as it is for language learners to grasp these aspects of humor, it is equally necessary to understand humor's capacity to produce animosity. Through mocking, sarcasm and personal attack humor is often used to define social boundaries in group identification. Less overtly, humor is also a mechanism of aggression in terms of testing the knowledge and intelligence of conversational partners.

Bouton (1994) notes that cultural misunderstandings often arise from the different expectations or ideas of the Cooperative Principle possessed by different cultures. He begins by arguing that conversational implicature as a means of expressing a message indirectly is well established. Furthermore, this very common, unremarkable strategy is successfully interpreted only when there is a common understanding of the expectations in a conversation. From the information contained in this thesis it should be clear by now that humor recognition is very much tied to Grice's CP. And the ESL/EFL teacher who desires to impart aspects of American culture to the students eventually must touch on the subject of humor. In order to better understand and teach humor as a cultural entity, the language teacher should become familiar first with the principles of pragmatics and second with those of humor research

Bouton conducted a study at the University of Illinois with 436 non-native English speaking students (NNS) upon arrival in the U.S. in Aug. 1986, again 5 months later and once more at 12 months of residence in the U.S. After a pilot

study conducted on 79 NNSs and 60 native English speaking students (NS) determined that implicature interpretation was consistent among among NSs, and markedly different response were obtained from the NNSs, a written elicitation instrument was employed which required the students to interpret implicature from a dialogue. With 436 students tested, only 79% of the responses were the same as those chosen by NSs. These results remained the same in the follow up studies. Four and a half years later, 30 of the original NNSs who took part in the pilot study were tested again. Although increased proficiency in interpreting implicature was noted, statistically significant differences remained.

The conclusions for this study are clear. If students after four years still have difficulty in interpreting Gricean conversational implicature, how much more difficult must it be for them to grasp humor. If we are to prepare our students well, we must begin teaching pragmatic aspects of our culture explicitly. This is not to say that we teach linguistic theory, rather that we bring to our students' attention the communicative importance of these principles and allow them to practice interpreting implied meaning. Such a study goes a long way in supporting the claim that pragmatics needs to be a required part of any advanced teacher training.

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