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Breaking The Rules of Communication: The Humorous Implicatures of Grice's Maxims in "Who's On First?" Sketch

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Abstract

Humor is a ubiquitous and essential aspect of human communication, enriching social interactions and fostering connections among individuals. This dissertation investigates how violations of Grice's maxims in conversation contribute to humor generation. Grice's Cooperative Principle, encompassing maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner, provides a theoretical framework for understanding effective communication. However, humor often arises from intentional deviations from these maxims, leading to incongruous interpretations that evoke laughter. Drawing on theoretical perspectives such as Incongruity theory, Script-based semantic theory and general theory of verbal humor, this study explores the mechanisms through which violations of Grice's maxims contribute to humor in everyday conversations. Through qualitative analysis of naturally occurring instances of humor in conversation, this research aims to elucidate specific strategies and mechanisms underlying humor generation. Findings have shown how violating Grice's maxims affects humor, by analyzing "who's on first?" sketch, we can see how violations caused misunderstandings and misinterpretations that led to humor's creation.

Keywords: humor, Grice's maxims, Cooperative Principle, conversational *implicature*, incongruity theory, script-based semantic theory, general theory of verbal humor communication, social interaction.

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Dedication

Special gratitude and appreciation to our mothers that supported us in highs and lows, for giving us the strength to face life's challenges and continue despite failure and disappointments.

Special thanks to:

Our families, my wonderful father, Professor Hadjeres Mohamed; your steadfast support and tireless efforts have provided us with a life of comfort and security. Thank you, my great warrior. My dear little brother Bouda, the most precious gift from Allah, your prayers have been our guiding light. Love you and bless you always.

Hadjeres Zaineb

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to my father MENAI Mohamed; I wish he could have been here with me but Allah knows best. Thank you papa for all the efforts you did for me I love you.

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To my friends for supporting me All the way.

To my cats Nouna, Bayoud and Queen, love you.

MENAI Imene

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List of Abbreviations

CP: Cooperative Principle

IMDb: Internet Media Database

General Introduction

Background of the Study

Communication is a process that involves sending and receiving messages through verbal and non-verbal methods. Now, imagine a situation where one person, X, engages in a lively discussion with another, Z, while carefully noting down the words spoken on a particular topic, and maintaining coherence. This scenario reflects the essence of Paul Grice's communication theory. Grice, a remarkable philosopher and linguist, introduced the Cooperative Principle and its four Conversational Maxims: Quality, Quantity, Manner, and Relevance. These maxims serve as the foundation for structured, meaningful, and successful conversations, In the case of humor, such as stand-up comedy routines, humorous advertisements, movies, and comedic live performances, the deliberate flouting of maxims often leads to laughter and delight, highlighting the positive effects of such deviations. Comedians, are unrestricted by conventional boundaries, harness this phenomenon masterfully, as illustrated in the timeless comedy sketch "Who's on First?" by Abbott and Costello. This sketch, lauded for its cultural and historical significance, has earned a place in the National Recording Registry by the Library of Congress. It is widely celebrated as a reflection of brilliant humor. The aim of this study is to see how manipulating linguistic rules serves humor purposes.

Humor is a fundamental aspect of human communication and plays a significant role in wide range of social academics from a variety of fields including Linguistics psychology sociology and anthropology have expressed interest in comprehending and studying comedy Grice’s Cooperative Principle, which includes guidelines, on Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner offers a structure for grasping the communication, among individuals. Nevertheless, humor frequently emerges from the breach of these guidelines resulting in contradiction and

entertainment. This research attempts to analyze humorous conversation under the lens of Grice's conversational model in a classical sketch.

Statement of the Problem

Although humor has been shown to be important in promoting human connections, little is known about how humor and Grice's Maxims work together. Limited studies have examined the dynamic interactions between language pragmatics and humor mechanics, even though previous research has focused on each of these areas independently. For scholars, to accomplish a fully understanding of the complexities of humor and communication, this vacuum in the scholarly literature poses a significant problem. If the relationship between humor and Grice's maxims is not explored—that is, if the maxims do not influence the origins and meaning of humor—we run the risk of missing important information about both. The goal of the study is to reveal the complex relationship between humor and Grice's Maxims and promote a more nuanced understanding of both domains.

Research Question

1 - What insights does the violation of Grice's maxims in the "Who's on First "sketch offer into the mechanisms of humor?

2 – How do these insights contribute to our understanding of the intersection between linguistic pragmatics and comedic discourse?

Methodology

To address the research questions, we chose to analyze the comedic masterpiece "Who's on First" sketch due to its widespread recognition. This sketch has been preserved in the National Recording Registry by the Library of Congress in 2002. It is often cited as a classic example of comedic genius, featuring clever wordplay that leads to a series of misunderstandings and comedic exchanges. This timeless humor is accessible across generations, with layered jokes that operate on multiple levels - simple conversation on the

surface and a complex web of linguistic twists and turns underneath that entertain audiences every time they are repeated, “Time” magazine proclaimed that the sketch is the “Best Comedy Sketch of the 20th Century” in 1999. The Los Angeles Press Club, with great foresight, declared the same almost 50 years earlier, and it was inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown in 1956. Aiming to provide a nuanced understanding of how humor interacts with Grice's maxims through the "Who's on First" sketch, the research involves a qualitative content analysis framework to identify instances where humor challenges or confirms Grice's maxims. The population of this study consists of a divers range of comedic content sources. The researchers opted to analyze the "Who's on First" sketch serving as the sample of the study. Since the entire sketch serves as the unit of analysis, the data consists of recordings (video and transcription) of the "Who's on First" sketch.

Aim of the Study

Establishing connection between the study of humor and theories of communication. By doing so, it provides valuable insights into the mechanisms through which humor operates within the framework of Grice's principles of communication.

Research Significance

Exploring how humor is generated by transgressing communication standards, specifically Grice's Maxims. This study explores the intricate relationship between language and comedy, offering insights into how comedic effects may arise from deviations from typical communication patterns. Deeper layers of maxims violations will be exposed through the analysis of this timeless comedy play.

Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation consists of two chapters. Each chapter is divided into two sections. The first chapter, entitled "Literature Review," represents the theoretical part of this

dissertation. The first section of this chapter, "Humor" consists of definition, theories of humor, humor and communication, comedic discourse, and linguistic pragmatics. The second section is devoted to discussing the Cooperative Principle, specifically Grice's maxims. Moreover, Chapter two is the practical part of this study. Two main sections are included within this chapter. The first section explains the research methodology, and the second section analyses the selected materials. To finalize the study, the research will provide a comprehensive conclusion, including a summary of the findings and discussion, limitations and additional recommendations.

Chapter One: Literature Review

Introduction

The multifaceted nature of humor makes it a difficult concept to define; but in general, it involves eliciting amusement or laughter from others. Serving as a mechanism for social bonding, it is a multidisciplinary field in which scholars from various disciplines have long been intrigued by the mechanisms underlying humor production and comprehension. This work takes a linguistics pragmatic approach to analyze humorous utterances through the lens of the Cooperative Principle of Paul Grice.

The literature review presented in this chapter provides a synthesis of existing research on humor in section one, focusing on its concept in general, and moving to the three prominent linguistic theories of humor: Incongruity Theory, Semantic Script-Based Theory, and General Theory of Verbal Humor. These theories are interconnected by illuminating the process through which humor arises and functions in human communication. The review then sheds light on the function of humor in communication in addition to comedic discourse.

Moreover, the second section of this chapter covers Paul Grice's model of conversation, starting with the Cooperative Principle, violations of the maxims, conversational Implicature, humorous maxims, and the intersection of linguistic pragmatics. By incorporating these domains, the literature review sets the stage for a thorough examination of the verbal humor presented in the case study.

Section One: Introduction to Humor

Definition of Humor

It is like when someone tells a joke or shares a humorous anecdote, and all of a sudden, we find ourselves taken aback by how funny it is. These are moments that everybody has experienced many times during the day, which might end with smiling, chuckling, or even uncontrollable laughter (Martin & Ford, 2018). Humor is everything that causes laughter and joy. Consulting the lexicon, humor is "the mental faculty of discovering, expressing, or appreciating the ludicrous or absurdly incongruous; the ability to be funny or to be amused by things that are funny" (Merriam-Webster, 2019), and “the quality in something that makes it funny or amusing; the ability to laugh at things that are amusing” (Oxford English Dictionary). Humor is about creating something that is funny and joyful, which elicits a response from others; it is about sharing laughter and amusement or being affected by it.

Under the general term *humor*, there are various forms, including *merry*, *mirth*, *ludicrous*, *laughable*, *jolly*, *funny*, *wit*, *puns*, etc. (Attardo, 2014). Historically, the term *laughter* was the overarching term used to describe all phenomena in the field (Hemplemann, 2017). However, humor does not necessarily mean laughter. According to Ermida (2008): “Humor is not the same as laughter since it can exist without it” (p. 40). Humor is a universal aspect of human interaction (Attardo, 2017). It is considered a universal phenomenon present in all cultures. Fry (1994) stated: “No societies or groups have been found having no sense of humor” (cited in Jianget al., 2019), and the cultural context influences its usage, production, and perception.

Though humor is a widespread feature of human existence, it is subjective; people do not share the same point of view, even within the same social group. Therefore, what is considered humorous to one person may not be to another. Ermida (2008) asserted that

“humor varies depending on cultural and civilizational perspective”. A brief contrasting example shown in the Eastern and Western cultures in humor perception is that the Western culture shows a positive attitude toward humor, and the Eastern culture, which shows a particularly unfavorable attitude towards it (Jianget al., 2019).Moreover, a significant consideration regarding the conceptualization of humor lies in the absence of an agreed-upon definition. Ermida (2008) claimed that humor is complex and varies in interpretation and terminology, often overlooked by interdisciplinary studies. This complexity leads to disagreements among researchers about what humor truly is, and its elusive nature often results in skepticism. Researchers face challenges in defining humor due to its multifaceted nature and the tendency for skepticism in studying such a subjective.

Linguistic Theories of Humor

Incongruity Theory

Incongruity theory is one of the humor theories interested in explaining why we find certain things funny from a cognitive perspective. It stands behind the idea of the contradictoriness of combined ideas that create surprise in a sudden way. According to Ermida (2008), “The idea that humor results from the combination of dissimilar elements and feeds on the consequent surprising effect is established on”. From this perspective, contrast and surprise equal humor (p. 25). The incongruity theory suggests that humor arises from the perception of incongruity between what is expected and what actually occurs. Wu (2013) mentioned that: “Incongruity theory identifies amusement as an intellectual reaction to something that is unexpected, illogical, or inappropriate in some way”(p. 53). The theory analyzes humor in terms of language use, structure, and communication. Attardo (1994) noted that "incongruity theories are conceptually closer to linguistic theories of structuralist descent because they are essentialist” (p. 49). This means that the focus is on the essential

elements that contribute to humor, such as incongruity, by looking at humor's linguistic and cognitive mechanisms.

Script-Based Semantic Theory (SSTH)

This theory was published by Victor Ruskin in 1985. He dealt with the concept of a script and refers to it as the meaning of the joked text (Schwarz, 2009). Ruskin (1985, p. 81) defined the script as cognitive structure internalized by native speakers, reflecting their understanding of a part of the world. Individuals have a repertoire of scripts representing their knowledge of common routines, procedures, and situations.(cited in Schwarz, 2009).In addition, Attardo (1994) referred to it as an “organized set of information about atopic” and “a cognitive structure internalized by the speaker, guiding them on how things are done and organized” (p. 199). Ruskin (1985) explained his theory as:

> A text can be characterized as a single-joke carrying text if both of the conditions [...] are satisfied.
>
> i) The text is compatible, fully or in part, with two different scripts.
>
> ii) The two scripts with which the text is compatible are opposite [...].
>
> The two scripts with which some text is compatible are said to overlap fully or in part on this text" (cited in Attardo, 1994, p. 197).

This means that there are conditions that define a single-joke carrying text that possesses the ability to be interpreted in conflicting ways, leading to humor through the resolution of incongruity.

General Theory of Verbal Humor

The General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) is a result of the collaboration between Victor Ruskin and Salvatore Attardo in 1991. It was a revised version of the Script-Based Semantic Theory. It incorporated linguistic and non-linguistic elements (such as phonological, morphological, sociological, and cognitive information) beyond just semantics

(Attardo, 2017). The theory provided a comprehensive understanding of how humor operates in language while considering the multiple dimensions of linguistic and cognitive processes (Attardo, 2017). The theory's primary focus is verbal humor, and it defined a joke as a composition comprised of six distinct knowledge resources: script opposition, logical mechanism, situation, target, narrative strategy, and language.

Humor and communication

Humor is crucial for connection and communication in human social life. Martin (2007) stated in his integrative approach, "the psychology of humor," that humor can combine emotional and cognitive components to promote mutual understanding and appreciation. Along the same lines, McGraw and Warren (2010) contribute to this understanding by noting that humor can reduce tension and conflict in social encounters when something seems comfortable but also understood as being non-threatening. Resourcefully, these scholars linked humor to everyday life facing situations, whether accidental or purposeful that might contain violations (linguistic, social, or even cultural), congruity, unexpected elements, etc. Humor here shifts hard situations into laughable and funny moments. The old school provided examples of how humor can help relieve stress. Kuiper and Martin (1998) suggested that humor can help create a positive environment and lessen the negative effects of stress in day-to-day interactions, assuming that humor provides support and a sense of belonging. Also, in the workplace, where it can be used as a tactic to manage civility, power, and provocation, humor also serves a social purpose (Holmes, 2000). These points emphasize the varied and intricate functions of humor in interpersonal relationships, like stress relief, and professional contexts, like the workplace, highlighting the role humor plays in fostering social cohesiveness, well-being, and clear communication. In conclusion, humor is a commonplace aspect of social interactions, serving to foster collaboration, improve communication, foster social cohesion, and lessen violence.

Comedic discourse

It is a complex and multidimensional kind of communication that has a wide range of applications, including education, entertainment, and social interaction, as well as conflict resolution. The intricacy of human connection and cognition is reflected in this art form and social skill. It involves written or spoken communications and can be used in professionally scripted performances, such as those in comedies and movies, as well as in casual chat. Creating incongruities, manipulating language, and subverting expectations are some of the tactics that can be used to produce humor within conversation. These tactics frequently rely on the interlocutors' shared information, timing, and context manipulation. Notably, the velocity and coherence of argumentation structure in ordinary conversation can cause amusing responses to become automated, which makes it easier to create amusing dialogue even when there is dispute (Norrick & Spitz, 2010).Furthermore, Wang (2016) argued that the cognitive processes that go into comprehending and producing humor. According to relevance theory, when people are humorously communicating, they form cognitive presumptions about the context and look for the most pertinent interpretation that will heighten the funny effect. Humorous conversations can be found in abundance in the humor of the popular television show "Friends." According to Wang (2016), Relevance Theory offers a close examination of the series' humor, which frequently originates from the way characters interact with one another, the way they subvert social conventions, and the use of situational irony.

Section Two: Gricean Conversational Model

Cooperative Principle

According to Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975), our discussions are often collaborations in which participants are aware of shared goals. Adhering to these principles facilitates achieving lucid and efficient communication. The following maxims are proposed by Paul Grice (1975):

Maxim of Quantity: Provide just enough information, neither too little nor too much. This means giving all relevant information to the other party without over loading them with unnecessary facts.

Maxim of Quality: Aim for authenticity and accuracy. Never communicate something you believe to be untrue or lacking sufficient support.

Maxim of Relevance: Include only pertinent facts. Your interaction should be directly related to the subject or context of the discussion.

Maxim of Manner: Be succinct, concise, and organized. To ensure your message is interpreted as intended, avoid ambiguity and complexity.

Maxims Violation

In the context of Grice's maxims (1975), “violation” refers to situations where speakers intentionally or unintentionally depart from the maxims to achieve practical effects like irony, humor, or emphasis. Various linguistic techniques can be used.

Flouting:

Purposefully disobeying a maxim to highlight the transgression. For example, a speaker may flout the Maxim of Quantity when speaking humorously to convey comedy.

Opting Out:

Speakers may choose not to adhere to a maxim due to social or contextual considerations. For instance, disregarding the Maxim of Manner to preserve social harmony.

Conversational Implicatures

Pragmatics is a sub-discipline of linguistics, deals with Implicatures. The notion of conversational Implicature traces back to Grice's work (1975), particularly his paper "Logic and Conversation," presented in 1967 and later published in 1975. Grice highlighted that communication has two facets: one explicitly stated and understood, the other hidden and connected to the context. He defined conversational Implicature as the content "conveyed by an utterance but that is not part of its literal, semantic content." (Grice, 1975). The degree to which the context of a sentence decides what is said is a related topic. To anticipate and understand conversational Implicatures and clarify how they occur and are understood, Grice developed a theory. The core function of this theory is the Cooperative Principle (CP) and related maxims.

According to the Cooperative Principle, participants in a conversation often work together to comprehend one another by adhering to the principles of Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner. Levinson (1983) stated that Implicatures occur when these rules are disregarded, broken, or taken advantage of, creating more implicit meanings.

Example1: Conversation between two friends.

Alex: "I wonder if Sam will show up on time for today's meeting."

Chris: "He never disappoints."

Although the statement appears to show Sam's discipline and commitment, the Implicature conveys the opposite—a lazy, late person.

Example 2: In everyday conversation in an Arabic country:

A: لقد جاء سمير

B: الصادق الأمين

In this ordinary conversation, Samir is described as a noble, honest gentleman. However, beyond words, he might be a deceitful person, adding new levels of meaning to the

discourse beyond the literal meanings of the words. These examples demonstrate how conversational Implicatures can be expressed through context, deviating from a word's literal meaning and adding new layers of meaning to the discourse.

Humorous Implicatures

The cooperative principle sets forth Maxims for conversations to be appropriate and successful. Paul Grice (1975) proposed four conversational maxims: quantity, quality, relevance, and manner. Violating one or more of these maxims by conversation participants not only disrupts the conversation but can also create comedic effects at times (Pan, 2012c). Humor, therefore, can be seen as a form of violating the cooperative principle. Attardo (1994) claimed that jokes, a type of humor, present a violation of one or more of Grice's Maxims. He supported this claim by noting that Grice himself accounted for irony, another type of humor, as a violation. Humorous Implicature arises from the context and the violation of conversational norms, leading to particularized conversational Implicature. An illustration of this Implicature from Attardo (1994) is as follows:

Example 1:

Person A:"Excuse me; do you know what time it is?"

Person B: "Yes."In this example, the

In this example the answer of the question is not informative as it should be, simply saying "Yes." The Implicature here is that the respondent knows the time but hasn't explicitly provided that information. This can imply that the respondent knows the time but doesn't want to share it. Here, the Quantity Maxim was violated due to the lack of required information, creating a humorous situation. Attardo (1994) pointed out that violation through providing excess information is also possible (p. 272). This means that providing more information than required could also create humor.

The Intersection of Linguistic Pragmatics

The intersection of linguistic pragmatics involves analyzing language usage in context, focusing on meaning dimensions that arise not only from linguistic structure but also from language use. Speech acts, conversational Implicature, presuppositions, deixis, and etiquette are just a few of the numerous language-related topics covered in this discipline. According to Grice (1975), "Make your contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged." Here, Grice highlights the significance of thoughtfully adding to discussions by considering the context, goal, and direction of the exchange. Effective communication, according to his theory, involves matching one's contributions to the objectives and standards of the current conversation, emphasizing the significance of relevance and the complex dance of Implicature in conversations. Similarly, Schiffrin (1994) confirmed that situational conditions and individuals' communication goals influence discourse. She emphasized those communicators' objectives, intentions, and situational elements impact discourse or language use in context. This viewpoint underscores the fluidity of communication and the importance of context in determining meaning, highlighting the dynamic nature of Implicature shaped by intentionality and context. Meanwhile, Stephen C. Levinson (1983) focused on politeness and its role ineffective communication, highlighting the idea that being polite involves navigating social situations effectively through suitable language and communication techniques. J.L. Austin (1962) contributed to this discussion in his work "How to Do Things with Words," emphasizing that speech is not just about transmitting information but also about using language to carry out activities or functions, known as performative force. John Searle (1969) in his philosophical essay on speech acts emphasized the coherence between words and actions, stressing the importance of aligning speech acts with intended outcomes for effective communication. Words and deeds work together to communicate complex meanings, with

Implicature acting as hidden meaning-bearing threads in the linguistic pragmatics tapestry, adding subtlety (implicit)and unspoken meaning to communication and strengthening discourse.

Conclusion

By providing a context for the presented study, this chapter has offered insights into analyzing utterances in humorous conversations, highlighting the importance of intentionality in communication. It has illustrated how the intended meaning is conveyed through the generation of comedic effects via the violation of one or more of Grice's conversational maxims. In the upcoming chapter, the focus will shift to exploring the implementation of Grice’s conversational maxims. This exploration aims to demonstrate how humor can emerge through the violation of the cooperative principle and the interplay between linguistic pragmatics and comedic discourse. This investigation will delve deeper into the mechanisms behind humor creation, shedding light on the intricate relationship between language use, communicative intentions, and humorous effects.

Chapter Two: The Fieldwork

Introduction

Grice's Cooperative Principle (CP) serves as a guide for successful communication. By adhering to these principles, individuals can achieve effective and cooperative interactions. However, rules are often made to be broken, and the violation of these maxims can serve the purpose of generating humor. In this chapter, we will analyze the "Who's on First?" sketch to explore how deviations from the CP give rise to laughter.

This chapter begins with a detailed clarification of the methodology and the subject of the analysis. We will outline the specific qualitative methods employed to dissect the sketch, following the methodological framework, the core of the chapter will present a comprehensive analysis of the sketch. Each utterance will be examined for its adherence to or deviation from Grice's maxims, highlighting the resultant humor. Subsequently, the findings of the analysis will be presented. By providing specific examples and interpretations, we will illustrate how the interplay of language and humor functions within the sketch.

Finally, the chapter will conclude with a synthesis that links all parts of the analysis together. This conclusion will not only summarize the key findings but also reflect on the broader implications of how breaking communication rules can enhance humor. By connecting the theoretical underpinnings with the practical examples from the "Who's on First?" sketch, we aim to provide a cohesive understanding of the role of maxim violations in comedic discourse.

Overall, this chapter will demonstrate that while Grice's Cooperative Principle offers a foundation for effective communication, intentional deviations from these maxims can create timeless and enduring humor.

Section one: Research Methodology

Research Method

Our study focuses on analyzing the "the who's on first" skit using Grice's Maxims, aiming to find violations in order to see if this violation contributes in generating humor. Therefore, the research adopted a qualitative content analysis using Grice Maxims where we analyzed two or more utterances according to the development of the conversation and the names added each time. The term violation will be carefully used and its *Implicature* is going to be explained.

Population

The population for our study on humor includes a diverse range of content sources such as sketches, stand-up comedy routines, crazy videos, humorous advertisements, funny clips from movies, and comedic performances from social media influencers. Our aim is to select the most relevant and suitable content that addresses our research questions and fulfills our objective, which is to establish a connection between humor and Grice's Maxims. We seek to determine if the Cooperative Principle is respected or not and to identify the reasons behind any observed violations. The chosen sample will be carefully represented, explained, and transcribed for detailed analysis and interpretation.

Sampling

The sampling technique used in this study is purposeful. The selected sketch, "Who's on First?" is considered one of a kind, with a rating of 8.5/10 of its animated version on 'The Internet Media Database (IMDb) and a runtime of 6 minutes and14 seconds. This sketch is notable for its frequent violations of conversational norms, making it an ideal subject for analysis. It has been preserved in the United States National Film Registry by the Library of Congress due to its cultural and historical significance. The sketch has been performed on stage, radio, film, and television, showcasing the brilliance of the comedians involved, who

have been inducted into the Hall of Fame. "Who's on First?" has had a significant linguistic impact, with its wordplay and confusion creating timeless humor that has earned it recognition as the best comedic sketch of the 20th century, according to “Time” Magazine. Additionally, the American Film Institute included the sketch in its 2005 list of the 100 greatest movie quotes of all time. The analysis conducted in this study is qualitative. We will be examining utterances that contain violations of conversational maxims to address the research question. The choice of the material was entirely subjective, driven by the study's aim to explore how these violations contribute to the sketch's humor and its enduring popularity. By focusing on “Who's on First?” this study seeks to elucidate the mechanisms by which humor is generated through linguistic and pragmatic strategies.

Data Collection

The data used in this dissertation is a recording of a classical comedic sketch named “Who's on First” broadcasted for the first time on the radio in 1938. The researchers incorporated the transcription of the sketch to facilitate the analysis after a careful scanning with the video for its consistency subtle differences were found, and other statements are not mentioned therefore we relied on our listening to write them down. The transcription was retrieved from Filmsite.org. It is a comprehensive website dedicated to the history, analysis, and critique of classic American films.

Description of the “Who’s on first?” Sketch

Is a famous comedy routine performed by the American comedy duo Bud Abbot and Lou Costello for the first time on a national radio on 24 March 1938 in the “Kate Smith Hour” show, but there existed no version of this performance until their second performance in the same radio show on 6 October 1938. This version of the show was captured and preserved (O’Dell, 2002).

Throughout their careers, Abbott and Costello performed the famous "Who's on First?" sketch several times, often adding their twist. It made its debut in their 1940 movie "One Night, in the Tropics" And reappeared in their 1945 film "The Naughty Nineties" known for being one of their renditions of the sketch. They also featured it extensively on both radio broadcasts and television shows. Moreover, the routine was officially copyrighted by Abbott and Costello in 1944. Determining the complete and accurate authorship of the final version of the sketch has proven to be “impossible” (Palumbo, 2002). Since the skit seems to be a result of influence and adaptation.

Plot Summary

The sketch revolves around a humorous misunderstanding between the characters Sebastian and Dexter Broad Hurt (also referred to as Abbot in other versions). The misunderstanding arises from the names of the baseball team players in which their names sound like questions and responses as “Who”, “What” and “I don’t care”, “Today” and “Tomorrow”.

Main Characters

Bud Abbot: in the role of Dexter broad hurt, the manager of the mythical St. Louis Wolves. A straight patient man who tries to explain the names of the team players to his partner.

Lou Costello: in the role of a peanut vendor named Sebastian Dinwiddle (Baseball Almanac, Inc., n.d.) who struggles to understand the baseball players’ weird names.

Section Two: Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis

Since the sketch is a dialogue between the two main characters, we will analyze each Two or more utterances together according to the development of the conversation, and the names added.

The sketch starts with Dexter (Abbott) appearing on stage dressing as a baseball manager or coach, holding a bat in his hands, few minutes and Sebastian (Costello) appears making a huge mess and interrupts Dexter's act.

- Sebastian: Will you keep quiet?
- Dexter: Excuse me, please (the audience), Sebastian, please don't interrupt my act.
- Dexter: What in the world are you doing? Why interrupt my act like this?
- Sebastian: Look, Mr. Dexter, I mean, after all, if you're in a ballpark, they always sell peanuts and popcorn and things like that.
- Dexter: I know that, Sebastian, but not in front of them. (To the audience) I think he's pardoned. Friends, ladies and gentlemen, and also the children, will you excuse for a minute, please? Thank you.
- Dexter: What do you want to do

Engaging the audience in the act is a smart move to guarantee their focus being part of the act not only watching it, (this shows the talent and intelligence of the comedian).

Maxim of Manner:

In this passage there is a direct clear lack of politeness, which is considered a main element of communication by doing so he violated the maxim's expectation for being orderly and clear.

The Implicature:

Mr. Dexter wants Sebastian to stop talking immediately, using inappropriate tone by saying "Will you keep quiet", and "don't interrupt my act ".

Maxim of Quantity:

Dexter's repetition of "don't interrupt my act" broke the quantity maxim by providing more information than it should be provided.

The Implicature: Dexter emphasized on the importance of his act and requesting respect and calm, indicating his irritation.

Maxim of Relevance:

Dexter's questions are rhetorical and requesting Sebastian to stop interrupting him and screw the act.

The Implicature: Dexter is frustrated and mad seeking for explanation for Sebastian behavior

- Sebastian: "Look, Mr.Broadhurt, I mean, after all, if you're in a ballpark, they always sell peanuts and popcorn and things like that."

  Sebastian's response shows irrelevant information about ballparks.

Implicature:

Here, he attempts to ignore and run from justifying himself with a non-relevant answer. Adding to the confusion and humor.

- Dexter: "Now on the St. Louis team, we have Who's on first, What's on second, I Don't Know's on third."
- Sebastian: "That's what I want to find out. I want you to tell me the names of the fellows on the St. Louis team."
- Dexter: "I'm telling you. Who's on first, What's on second, I Don't Know's on third."

Maxim of Manner:

Dexter's introduction of player names leaves room for interpretations. Misleading the listeners with unclear names, because "Who," "What," and "I Don't Know" appear more like questions than answers, this bluntly breaches the Maxim by raising questions and ambiguity.

The Implicature:

Dexter is intentionally being unclear, because he thought that Sebastian-understands him and has a background about the game, and quickly feeding his curiosity about the game to get back to his act. All of these breaks serve the development of the comedic discourse.

- Sebastian: "You know the fellows' names?"
- Dexter: "Yes."
- Sebastian: "Well then, who's playing first?"
- Dexter: "Yes."
- Sebastian: "I mean the fellow's name on first base."
- Dexter: "Who".
- Sebastian: "The fellow's name on first base."
- Dexter: "Who."
- Sebastian: "The guy on first base."
- Dexter: "Who is on first."

Maxim of Quantity:

Dexter's brief and rapid answers to Sebastian's questions about the player's name, without any clarification or additional information to identify that "Who" is the player's name, lead to a lack of understanding and repetition of the same question many times, that added a taste of humor.

The Implicature: Dexter assumes Sebastian knows that "Who" is the name of the player, but Sebastian's interpreted it as a question, lead to further chaos.

Maxim of Manner:

Dexter's repetitive use of "Who" as an answer without elucidating that it is a name increases ambiguity, confusion, and misunderstanding.

The Implicature:

Dexter is not cooperating fully, breaking the CP rules of exchanging information, showing ignorance toward Sebastian, adding to the comedic effect as the misunderstanding deepens.

- Sebastian: "I'm asking you who's on first."
- Dexter: "Now on the St. Louis team, we have Who's on first, What's on second, I Don't Know's on third.
- Sebastian: "That's what I want to find out. I want you to tell me the names of the fellows on the St. Louis team."
- Dexter: "I'm telling you. Who's on first, What's on second, I Don't Know's on third."
- Sebastian: "That's who's name?"
- Dexter: "Yes".

Maxim of Quantity:

Back to the principle that asserts that the information must be provided in the proper proportions, neither too little nor too much. Dexter's, inadequate answers do not give Sebastian the necessary background knowledge (contextual information).

The Implicature:

Dexter believes that Sebastian should already know or deduce the information himself, which is not the case, without even giving himself and Sebastian a chance to explain the misunderstanding that develops the muddle.

Maxim of Manner:

Again, ambiguity of the player's name still exists. Dexter's comment, "That's the man's name," violates the Maxim of Manner since it fails to make it clear until now that "Who" is a name of the first base player, after desperate attempts from Sebastian. This interaction lacks clarity.

The Implicature:

Dexter is either unable or unwilling to simplify his language for Sebastian, or trying to get rid of him, enhancing the comedic effects.

Maxim of Relevance:

Dexter's answers are accurate when considering the player names, but they don't address Sebastian's request for clarification, which still misleading him.

The Implicature:

Dexter's responses, while truthful, are not helpful in the context of Sebastian's confusion that is still turning around, thus generating humor.

- Sebastian: "When you pay off the first baseman every month, who gets the money?"
- Dexter: "Every dollar of it."
- Sebastian: "All I'm trying to find out is the fellow's name on first base."
- Dexter: "Who." Sebastian: "The guy that gets the money."
- Dexter: "That's it.

Maxim of Quantity:

Dexter provides excessive information about the payment without clarifying the name, ignoring and skipping Sebastian's questions. This scant information breaks down the maxim and takes the conversation in a different direction.

The Implicature:

Dexter does want to bother himself with Sebastian, assuming Sebastian understands who the first baseman is, which he does not.

- Sebastian: "Who is?"
- Dexter: "Yes."

Maxim of quantity:

The response is ambiguous and lacks the necessary information to Sebastian's question.

The Implicature:

Dexter's response "Yes" to Sebastian's question implies a playful agreement but does not provide a direct clear answer for his question.

- Dexter: "Why shouldn't he? Sometimes his wife comes down and collects it."

Maxim of relevance:

Dexter's irrelevant response about a wife that collects something from somewhere, escaping from the initial idea.

The Implicature:

When Dexter's subsequent statements suggest a mix-up or misunderstanding about someone receiving something and their wife coming to collect it, contributing to the humor and absurdity of the conversation.

- Sebastian: "Who's wife?"
- Dexter: "Yes. After all, the man earns it."

The Maxim of Quantity:

Sebastian is asking for clarification, but his question assumes "Who" is a question not a typical name, and Dexter's response is misleading and assumes Sebastian understands the player's name is "Who." The violation occurs because Dexter's responses are deliberately concise and do not provide the additional context that Sebastian needs to understand the names, he is asking for more information to clarify his confusion.

Implicature:

Dexter gives just enough information to answer Sebastian's questions literally but not enough to clarify the true meaning behind the names, the double meaning here is the key element that causes humor.

- Sebastian: "Who does?"
- Dexter: "Absolutely."

The Maxim of Quality:

Sebastian seeks clarification but ends up stuck in a loop of circular reasoning about the name "Who." Dexter continues the pattern of giving correct but unhelpful information which led to the violation. Dexter's statements are technically true but misleading because of the double meanings of the word "who", for Sebastian, it is a question whereas for Dexter is the player's name. The wordplay here is what caused the violation though Dexter's statements are true.

Implicature:

Abbott's answer "Absolutely" implies that "Who" is the name of the first baseman. Sebastian interprets it as confirmation of an action rather than understanding that "Who" is the player's name.

- Sebastian: "All I'm tryin' to find out is what's the guy's name on first base."
- Dexter: "Oh, no, no. What is on second base."

Maxim of Relevance:

Sebastian directly states his goal, but his wording sets up more confusion

for Dexter, so he corrects Sebastian with information about a different player.

Implicature:

Dexter corrects Sebastian by stating that "What" is the name of the second baseman, implying that Dexter thought that Sebastian mixed between the names of the first and the second players, however, Sebastian takes "What" as a part of the sentence, not as a name.

- Sebastian: "I'm not askin' you who's on second."
- Dexter: "Who is on first."

Maxim of Relevance:

Sebastian's frustration grows as he attempts to steer the conversation back and Dexter repeats the correct information, causing further confusion.

Sebastian’s questions are relevant to his goal of understanding the player’s names. Dexter violates this maxim from Sebastian’s perspective because his answers, while technically relevant do not address Sebastian’s intended meaning of knowing the first baseman’s name.

The Implicature:

Sebastian should understand that "Who" is the name, but he interprets it as Dexter being uncooperative which leads to a comedic situation.

- Sebastian: "That's what I'm trying to find out."
- Dexter: "Well, don't change the players around."
- Sebastian: "I'm not changin' nobody."
- Dexter: "Take it easy."

The Maxim of Manner:

The violation here arises as a result of ambiguity, the player’s name is not clearly understood by Sebastian which makes Dexter think that he understands the player’s names but he mixed up their positions in the team.

The Implicature:

is that Sebastian is trying to find out the first baseman’s name, during which Dexter is concerned about maintaining stability. Dexter's final advice to "take it easy" indicates that there is stress and tension arose in the situation

- Sebastian: What's the guy's name on first base?
- Dexter: What's the guy's name on second base?
- Sebastian: I'm not asking you who's on second.
- Dexter: Who's on first.
- Sebastian: I don't know.
- Dexter: He's on third - we're not talkin' about him.

The Maxim of Manner:

Sebastian's question is ambiguous for Dexter because he did not receive it as a question and he referred to "What" as the player's name on first base, when he tried to correct Sebastian saying that "what" is the name of the player on second base he cause more confusion, he shifts the focus to second base, by introducing the second baseman name "what".

The Implicature:

Sebastian wants to know the player's name but the ambiguity creates confusion for Dexter to introduce the second baseman's name. This confusion creates a comedic effect.

- Sebastian: "I'm not asking you who's on second."
- Dexter: Who's on first.

Again, the Violation occurs because of Ambiguity Sebastian tries to clarify his question but uses "who" in a way that adds to the misunderstanding, as well as Dexter's use of "who" confounds Sebastian.

Implicature: Sebastian is attempting to correct Dexter and refocus on his original question about first base, indicating he doesn't understand Abbott's earlier statement, However, by using "who," he unconsciously continues the confusion. Where Dexter reiterates that the player on first base is named "Who," which Sebastian misinterprets as a question rather than a name.

- Sebastian: "I don't know."
- Dexter: "He's on third - we're not talkin' about him."

Maxim of Manner:

The phrase "I don't know" is ambiguous because it can be interpreted in two ways, it could be an admission of unknowingness or referring to another player's name.

The Implicature:

Sebastian expresses his confusion, not realizing he's unconsciously referring to another player's name, setting up the stage for Dexter to introduce a new player ("I Don't Know") without resolving the existing confusion.

- Sebastian: "How did I get on third base?"

Sebastian expresses his confusion about the progress of the conversation while he has not got an answer yet for his first question.

The Implicature: Sebastian is completely lost in the conversation and is expressing his confusion over how the topic shifted surprisingly.

- Dexter: You mentioned his name!
- Sebastian: If I mentioned the third baseman's name, who did I say is playing third?

Referring to the third baseman "I Don't Know" Sebastian did not recognize that it was the player's name. Sebastian uses "who" as a question word, but within the context, it could be confused with the name "Who" while he is looking for clarification.

The Implicature: Dexter is pointing out that Sebastian unknowingly mentioned the name of the third baseman, "I Don't Know," adding to the confusion, where Sebastian is already seeking clarification on the identity of the third baseman, mistakenly thinking he has misidentified them which create a humorous effect.

Maxim of Manner:

- Dexter: No - Who is playing first."

"Who" is the name of the first baseman, but Sebastian interprets it as a question word, leading to misunderstanding and more ambiguity which causes the violation.

Implicature:

Dexter is reiterating that the first baseman is named "Who," but this response is taken literally as a question word by Sebastian which further confuses him.

- Sebastian**:** Stay off of first, will ya?
- Dexter: Well, waddya want me to do?

Maxim of quantity:

Both utterances lack clarity, Sebastian does not state clearly what he wants Dexter to do, Dexter's response is vague and does not provide any new information to resolve the confusion.

The Implication:

Sebastian wants to stop discussing the first baseman and concentrate on clarifying the third baseman's identity and Dexter expressing his frustration and confusion, seeking guidance on how to proceed in the conversation.

- Sebastian: Now, what's the guy's name on third base?
- Dexter: No, What's on second.

Maxim of relevance:

Sebastian is asking for the guy's name on third base, and Dexter's response is not relevant to

Sebastian's question, Instead he introduces the player on second base which is not the Information Sebastian is seeking.

Implicature:

Dexter is trying to correct Sebastian's implied mistake, thinking Sebastian is asking about second base, which establishes a humorous situation.

- Sebastian: I'm not asking you who's on second.
- Dexter: Who's on first.

Maxim of relevance:

Again, Dexter's response is irrelevant to Sebastian's concern but it shifts the focus to the first baseman instead of addressing Sebastian's clarification about not asking about second base.

Implicature:

Dexter is reiterating the identity of the first baseman "Who", but this does not help Sebastian clarify his question about the third baseman.

- Sebastian: I don't know.
- Dexter: He's on third.

Maxim of manner:

Sebastian by saying "I don't know" is referring the earlier Dexter's utterance "who's on first" by stating that he does not know who the first baseman is whereas here it sounds ambiguous it can be interpreted as a lack of knowledge or as the name of the third baseman and the confusion here is what caused the violation and led Dexter's to respond as it is the third baseman name.

- Sebastian: There I go - back on third again.
- Dexter: Well, I can't change their names

Maxim of Relevance:

Dexter's response, while true, remains irrelevant, it does not address Sebastian's confusion about the third baseman's name.

Implicature:

Dexter implies that the names are fixed and the confusion they cause is unavoidable.

- Sebastian: Would you please stay on third base, Mr. Broadhurst?
- Dexter: Now, what is it you want to know?

Maxim of Relevance:

Dexter’s response is a general question that does not directly address Sebastian’s request to focus on third base.

The Implicature:

Dexter is opening the floor for clarification, indicating he did not understand what Sebastian wants to know specifically, hence indirectly asking for a restatement.

- Sebastian: "What is the fella's name on third base?"
- Dexter: "What is the fella's name on second base."

Maxim of Relevance:

Dexter responds with information about the second baseman instead of directly answering Sebastian’s question about the third baseman.

The Implicature:

Dexter's continuous mentioning of "What" (the second baseman), leads Sebastian further away from the answer he seeks.

- Sebastian: "I'm not askin' you who's on second."
- Dexter: "Who's on first."

Maxim of Relevance:

Sebastian tries to clarify his position and states that he is not asking about the second baseman while Dexter responds with information about the first baseman instead of addressing Sebastian’s clarification about not asking about the second baseman.

The Implicature: Dexter recapitulates the name of the first baseman, "Who," which diverts again and again the conversation away from the third base and continues the misunderstanding that leads to a humorous situation again.

- Sebastian: "I don't know."
- Dexter & Sebastian (together): "Third Base!"

Maxim of Manner:

Sebastian’s statement "I don’t know" can be interpreted as ignorance or as the name of the third baseman. Dexter and Sebastian together then they used it to identify the third baseman.

The Implicature:

Dexter and Sebastian play on the double meaning of "I don’t know," for Dexter is the name of the player whereas Sebastian said it because he knows that Dexter is going to mention it immediately whenever Sebastian says “I don’t know” but in fact, he did not realize that “I don’t know” is the third baseman player’ name

- Sebastian: "The left fielder's name?"
- Dexter: "Why."

Maxim of Relevance:

Dexter’s response “Why” is irrelevant to the question about the left fielder’s name.

Implicature:

Dexter is introducing another player named "Why," but this adds to the confusion as Sebastian is not asking for a reason but a name.

- Sebastian: "I don't know, I just thought I'd ask ya."
- Dexter: "Well, I just thought I'd tell ya."

Maxim of Relevance:

Dexter’s response is irrelevant, it does not provide the information Sebastian is seeking about the left fielder.

Implicature:

Dexter is engaging in a play on words, pretending to answer but not providing useful information to Sebastian.

- Sebastian: "Then tell me who's playin' left field."
- Dexter: "Who is playing first!"

Maxim of Relevance:

Dexter redirects to the first baseman instead of answering the question about the left fielder.

Implicature:

Dexter emphasizes the ongoing confusion about player names, maintaining the misunderstanding.

- Sebastian: "Stay outta the infield!!"
- Dexter: "Don't mention any names out here!"

Maxim of Relevance:

Dexter’s response avoids providing the name of the left fielder, shifting the focus to the already mentioned name.

Implicature:

Dexter suggests that discussing names causes confusion, thus avoiding answering directly.

- Sebastian: "I want to know what's the fella's name in left field?"
- Dexter: "What is on second."

Maxim of Relevance:

Dexter violates the relevance maxim because he answers with the second baseman's name instead of addressing the left fielder.

Implicature: Dexter maintains the pattern of confusion, highlighting the miscommunication between him and Sebastian.

- Sebastian: "I'm not askin' you who's on second!"
- ·Dexter: "Who is on first."

Maxim of Relevance:

Dexter redirects to the first baseman again, ignoring Sebastian's attempt to focus on the left fielder.

The Implicature:

Dexter is reiterating the name of the first baseman, "Who," furthering the cycle of misunderstanding.

- Sebastian: "I don't know!"
- Dexter and Sebastian: "Third base!"
- Dexter: "Now take it easy, take it easy, man."

Maxim of Manner:

("I don't know") can be interpreted as either a lack of knowledge or the name of the third baseman causing more confusion for Sebastian. Implicature: This phrase "I don't know" continues the routine's pattern of ambiguous responses leading Dexter to calm Sebastian, reassuring that the confusion, anger and misunderstanding arose.

- Sebastian: "And the left fielder's name?"
- Dexter: "Why."
- Sebastian: "Because!"
- Dexter: "Oh, he's center field..."

Maxims of quantity and quality:

Dexter violates the quantity maxim by providing less information than required where it should be stated that "why" is the player's name and also appears to violate the maxim of quality because it seems to be deliberately vague. Sebastian responds with "Because," which is not a direct answer and brief where he violates the maxim of quantity.

Implicature:

The wordplay added another layer to the confusion but when considering the context Dexter meant that “why is the left field player’s name Sebastian understood it as a word question that is why he answered “because” unknowing that it is the center field player’s name.

- Sebastian: "You got a pitcher on the team?"
- Dexter: "Wouldn't this be a fine team without a pitcher."

Maxim of Quantity:

Dexter gives a rhetorical statement instead of a direct answer, adding unnecessary information.

Implicature:

Dexter implies that of course they have a pitcher, subtly criticizing the obviousness of Sebastian's question, leading to a comedic situation.

- Sebastian: I dunno. Tell me the pitcher's name.
- Dexter: Tomorrow.
- Sebastian: You don't want to tell me today?
- Dexter: I'm tellin' you, man.
- Sebastian: Then go ahead.
- Dexter: Tomorrow.
- Sebastian: What time?
- Dexter: What time what?

Maxim of quantity:

Dexter violated the quantity maxim because he maintained providing Sebastian with less information than required, and without the additional context, confusion arose. Dexter’s repetition of the short answer “tomorrow” adds nothing to what Sebastian wants, to know which creates confusion between them, leading Sebastian to ask “What time?” thinking

that Dexter is going to tell him about the pitcher's name tomorrow (as a temporal adverb), because he did not understand that the pitcher's name is tomorrow. They both end up asking each other for clarification because of the minimal shared amount of information.

The Implicature:

Sebastian interprets "Tomorrow" as a temporal reference, while the other Dexter uses it as a proper noun (the name of the pitcher), creating a very humorous situation.

- Sebastian: What time tomorrow are you gonna tell me who's pitchin'?!
- Dexter: Now listen, Who is not pitchin'. Who is on ---
- Sebastian: I'll break your arm if you say who's on first!
- Dexter: Then why come up here and ask?
- Sebastian: I want to know what's the pitcher's name?
- Dexter: What's on second.
- Sebastian: I don't know.
- Dexter and Sebastian (together)**:** Third Base!!

Maxims of Manner and Quantity:

Sebastian is questioning about the pitcher's name and Dexter tries to correct him by stating that "who" is on first and "what" is on second consequently the third baseman going to be mentioned by Sebastian whenever he answers "what's on second" by "I don't know". Dexter's answers lack clarity and explanation and that is what made Sebastian nervous and frustrated.

The Implicature:

The misinterpretation of the player names as regular words, creates a comedic scenario where Sebastian and Dexter's responses perpetuate the confusion.

- Sebastian: You gotta catcher?
- Dexter: Yes.

- Sebastian: The catcher's name?
- Dexter: Today.
- Sebastian: Today. And Tomorrow's pitching.
- Dexter: Now you got it.
- Sebastian: That's all. St. Louis has got a couple of days on their team

Maxim of Quantity:

Both Sebastian and Dexter provide a minimal amount of information that is technically true but misleading without context. For example, "Today" and "Tomorrow" are given as names but are interpreted by Sebastian as temporal references
where Dexter for example could have said, "The catcher's name is Today," making it clear that "Today" is a proper noun. The violation occurs because of a lack of the required information.

The Implicature:

The use of "Today" and "Tomorrow" as names, without clarifying whether they are proper nouns, leads Costello to misunderstand them as time references, creating comedic confusion.

- Sebastian: I would like to catch. Now I'm being a good catcher, Tomorrow's pitching on the team, and I'm catching.
- Dexter: Yes.
- Sebastian: Tomorrow throws the ball and the guy up bunts the ball.
- Dexter: Yes.

Maxim of Quality:

The violation lies in the responses of Dexter which lack helpfulness and clarity despite being technically true. Instead of providing clear and informative replies to Sebastian's statements and questions, Abbott simply responds with "Yes," which fails to

address the specifics of the conversation. This violation of the Maxim of Quality leads to confusion and frustration for Sebastian.

The Implicature:

Dexter's unhelpful responses violate the Maxim of Quality by failing to provide the clarity needed for effective communication, resulting in humorous misunderstandings and frustration for Sebastian.

- Sebastian: Now when he bunts the ball, me being a good catcher, I want to throw the guy out at first base, so I pick up the ball and throw it to who?
- Dexter: Now that's the first thing you've said right.
- Sebastian: don't even know what I'm talkin' about!!!
- Dexter: Well, that's all you have to do

Maxim of Relevance:

The violation occurs within the Maxim of Relation. Dexter's response, "Now that's the first thing you've said right," doesn't directly address Sebastian's question about who to throw the ball to. Instead, Dexter comments on the correctness of Sebastian's statement, which doesn't provide the information or clarification Sebastian is seeking.

The Implicature:

Dexter's response indicates a failure to address Sebastian's question directly, leading to confusion and frustration for Sebastian. The miscommunication and absurdity of Dexter's responses and Sebastian's questions create a comedic tension.

- Sebastian: Is to throw it to first base?
- Dexter: Yes.
- Sebastian: Now who's got it?
- Dexter: Naturally.
- Sebastian: Who has it?

- Dexter: Naturally.
- Sebastian: Naturally.
- Dexter: Naturally.
- Sebastian**:** OK.

Dexter’s responses, consisting solely of the word "Naturally," lack the necessary detail or clarity to adequately address Sebastian’s questions. As a result, Dexter’s responses violate the expectation of providing sufficient information, leading to confusion and frustration for Sebastian.

Implicature:

Dexter’s minimalistic responses imply a lack of engagement or cooperation in the conversation. This fosters a sense of confusion and absurdity, contributing to the humor of the exchange.

- Dexter: Now you've got it.
- Sebastian: I pick up the ball and I throw it to Naturally.
- Dexter: No, you don't, you throw the ball to first base.
- Sebastian: Then who gets it?
- Dexter: Naturally!
- Sebastian: ok.

Maxim of Quantity:

Dexter provides responses that are technically true but lack the necessary detail to resolve Sebastian's confusion. The brevity and lack of context in Dexter’s answers fail to give Sebastian the information he needs to understand that "Who" is the name of the first baseman.

The Implicature:

Dexter’s repeated use of "Naturally" implies that the answer should be obvious to Sebastian. However, because Dexter does not explicitly state that the first baseman is "Who", Sebastian remains confused. The humor stems from this ongoing misunderstanding, where Sebastian interprets "Naturally" as an instruction or name, rather than understanding it as Dexter’s affirmation of the logic he is trying to convey.

- Dexter: all right.
- Sebastian: I throw the ball to Naturally
- Dexter: You don't! You throw it to Who!
- Sebastian: Naturally!
- Dexter: Well, that's it. Say it that way.
- Sebastian: That's what I said!
- Dexter: You did not.
- Sebastian: I said I'd throw the ball to Naturally

Maxim of Quantity:

Dexter insufficient ambiguous information, with the repetitive use of "who" blocks the conversation, in the other side Sebastian's response "naturally" is too short for any clarification. Dexter: “Well, that's it. Say it that way.” this vague undetailed answer is going to cause another series of misunderstandings.

Sebastian by saying; “that's what I said!” Believing that he provided enough information, yet he didn't.

Maxim of Relevance:

- Dexter: “You don't! You throw it to Who!”

This statement seems relevant to Dexter but irrelevant to Sebastian that still struggling with the first baseman's name.

- Sebastian: “Naturally!”

Sounds irrelevant to Abbott's intended meaning (to throw it to the player who")

Maxim of Quality:

Sebastian's truthful response "naturally" seems correct because of his misunderstanding however it is incorrect in the actual context.

Implicature:

All of the above misunderstanding caused by, "who", Sebastian who's receiving it as question and Dexter that refuses to cooperate fully by explaining explicitly his intentions, that created a smooth funny humor.

- Dexter: You don't. You throw it to Who.
- Sebastian: Naturally.
- Dexter: Yes!
- Sebastian: So I throw the ball to first base and Naturally gets it.
- Dexter: No! You throw the ball to first base.
- Sebastian: Then who gets it?!
- Dexter: Naturally!

Maxim of Quantity:

- Dexter: “You don't. You throw it to Who.”

Dexter's repetition to the same information in order to correct the confusion didn't work because Sebastian still struggling with his misunderstanding about the first base player that created all this mess.

Maxim of Manner:

- Sebastian: “So I throw the ball to first base and Naturally gets it.”

The ambiguity stands due to Sebastian's misunderstanding of names that's why they can't understand each other, which is part of the act of course, to enhance humor. “No! You

throw the ball to first base.” here although Dexter tried to explain a point and remove ambiguity, however he failed.

Implicature:

Frustrated Dexter trying to explain himself to Sebastian but misunderstanding controls the room therefore Sebastian fails to catch the Player's name.

- Dexter: You're not saying that...
- Sebastian: I throw the ball to Naturally!
- Dexter: You throw it to Who!
- Sebastian: Naturally!
- Dexter: Naturally. Well, say it that way.
- Sebastian: That's what I'm saying!!!

Maxim of Quality:

- Sebastian: “I throw the ball to Naturally!”

  This assertion is incorrect due to the misunderstanding.

- Dexter: “You throw it to Who!”

  This interference is true yet, misunderstood by Sebastian.

The Implicature:

Here, frustration peaks, and highlight the Characters’ failures to align their interpretations, leading to a humorous effect build on confusion.

- Dexter: Now don't get excited. Now don't get excited.
- Sebastian: I throw the ball to first base.
- Dexter: Then Who gets it!
- Sebastian: He'd better get it!!!
- Dexter: All right, now don't get excited. Take it easy.

- Sebastian: Hrmmph. Now I throw the ball to first base, whoever it is drops the ball, so the guy runs to second. Who picks up the ball and throws it to what. What throws it to I Don't Know. I don’t know throws it back to Tomorrow. A triple play!
- Dexter: OK, it could be

Maxim of Relevance:

The first baseman's name still leading conversation off-track, as if Dexter and Sebastian are speaking about two different topics.

Maxim of Quantity:

Sebastian provided over detailed description of the play, without trying to unlock player’s names. (Because until now he still doesn't know who's on first).

Maxim of Manner:

The list of names (Who, What, I Don't Know, Tomorrow) develops the confusion to the highest level. The Implicature here is the development of the misunderstanding by adding another name "tomorrow" which has a temporal significance that leads to an incorrect series of events creating a hilarious laugh.

- Sebastian: he's on third, and I don't care!
- Dexter: What was that?
- Sebastian: I said I don't care!!
- Dexter: Oh, that's our shortstop.

Maxim of Manner:

Presenting more weird confusing names fired the stage, creating a sense of giving up.

Maxim of Relevance:

The conversation continually diverges from a logical development due to name confusion.

The Implicature:

Sebastian and Dexter frustration increases as they fail to understand each other, Dexter by not cooperating fully with Sebastian thinking only about his act trying to get rid of him, Then Sebastian that refuses to understand the player's names.

Findings and Discussion

The analysis of the "Who's on First?" sketch revealed various comedic elements and linguistic complexities from the beginning to the end of the act. The unexpected entrance of Sebastian, combined with Abbott's smart move of engaging the audience, set the stage for an unstoppable wave of laughter. Notably, the humor in the sketch is genuine, with no background laughter added artificially. The sketch employs a series of humorous expressions and violations of Grice's Maxims, cleverly presented by Abbott (Dexter) and developed by his friend Costello (Sebastian) in a smooth, hilarious manner. This aligns with Attardo's (1994) perspective on how intentional and unintentional violations of the Cooperative Principle (CP) and its maxims elevate humor to a sophisticated level. The comedic discourse combines linguistic phenomena, particularly CP violations (Grice, 1975), with humor, showing how these violations generate Implicature that result in laughter. Both main characters fail to respect the CP, either intentionally or accidentally. Abbott's refusal to cooperate with Costello led to a series of misunderstandings without any room for clarification, especially with the use of "Who" as a name. This word, along with other names like "What" and "I Don't Care," further elevated the humor. If the misunderstandings had been resolved at the beginning, the conversation would have ended naturally. Costello's lack of knowledge about the baseball game contributed significantly to the confusion throughout the act. The sketch, directed at baseball lovers and former players, relies on the audience's strong background in the sport to understand Abbott's explanations and the wordplay. The clever use of extraordinary names underpins the humor of the show. Hence, the intentional

violations of the maxims by Abbott and the unintentional misunderstandings by Costello are key drivers of the humor in the sketch. They not only develop the conversation but also deliver emotional states such as frustration, anger, and patience. Moving to the Cooperative Principle (CP), which ensures effective communication through adherence to maxims by manipulating language to convey hidden messages (Levinson, 1983). The deliberate breaking and confusions within the dialogue in the context of comedic discourse serve a dual purpose, they can carry hidden meanings, adding layers of depth to the discourse, or they can simply be tools for generating laughter by deviating from expected norms.

Humor often relies on the repetition of familiar expressions to induce laughter. Rather than adhering strictly to the Gricean maxims. J.L. Austin (1962) “How to Do Things with Words", explains language manipulation and how to perform using language linked to humor to see how the element of surprise and unpredictability affects comedic performances.

Limitations

It may seem easy amusing at first to use humor as a case study, but after months of searching for the right sample, “who's on first” sketch that is regarded as the greatest act of the 20th century fits the best after solving the sample issue, Finding and concentrating on one humorous material of study may affect generalizability. Applying Grice's model of analysis to prevent bias was the ideal way to examine and preserve validity and reliability, because of the qualitative nature of the analysis that also depends on subjective interpretation. Despite these drawbacks, the study offers insightful information about the interaction between comedy and conversational Implicature, laying the foundation for further, additional investigation.

Recommendations

Future research should go beyond the "Who's on First?" sketch to explore more about cultural and historical aspects. Additionally, cognitive humor theories (the psychological

side) and additional pragmatic frameworks that can provide deeper insights. and with nowadays development including AI by creating systems that can understand, generate, and respond to humor in an appropriate way specially that a wide range of young people are using it, it might be a challenging task because of interpretations and context-dependent nature of humor.

Conclusion

Having or facing misunderstandings in any field of life might cause either a problem or confusion and harms communication purposes , as it is presented by Paul Grice in his framework the principles of communication the CP , these rules are applicable in all domains except comedy and humor, the foundation of the comedic science is based on breaking and violating rules of CP to serve the act , movie or sketch, such as the presented case("who's on first"), that used violations and misunderstanding to create timeless humor and build a Bond between linguistic pragmatics and the comedic discourse.

General Conclusion

Communication is the exchange of information, thoughts, ideas, and even emotions between individuals through various means, such as spoken or written language and even signs. To complete this process, it requires several major aspects: the sender, the message, the receiver, and strong feedback to guarantee the intentions are correctly understood. Intentions fall under pragmatics, which works hand in hand with communication, focusing on how meaning is received and interpreted. Grice (1975) explained the theory of the Cooperative Principle by emphasizing on respecting conversational maxims, however, humor often works the opposite way by relying on confusion and misunderstanding to create laughter. By doing so, maxims violations in the case of humor, works as a key for successful acts, shows, sketches, or movies by succeeding in drawing laughter on audience faces. This success in creating amusement and humor often involves the use of wordplay (Attardo, 1994).

Studying Abbott and Costello's "Who's on First?" comedy offers a thorough look at how humor functions within the parameters of linguistic pragmatics. This sketch illustrates how misinterpretations and violations of Grice's conversational maxims—specifically, Quantity, Quality, Relevance, and Manner—lead to humorous consequences by creating a sense of confusion and misunderstanding (Grice, 1975). As Attardo (1994) ,and Levinson(1983) emphasized on the role of manipulating words and playing on the audience's expectations and comprehension abilities, especially those with a background in the discussed topic, that explains why the names in the sketch were intentionally left unclear, resulting multiple misinterpretations and misunderstandings that heighten the humorous effect .

Through the analysis of these violations, we gain a more comprehensive understanding of comedy from a pragmatic perspective. The "Who's on First?" comedy emphasized the value of conversational Implicatures, speaker intentions, and context in generating and recognizing humor, and how having a strong background helps in interpreting the message

correctly (Grice, 1975; Attardo, 2017). This interaction between humor and language deepens our understanding of communication techniques by showing how purposeful misunderstandings can lead to amusement and laughter. Applying linguistic pragmatics theory to this case study advances our knowledge of humor in communication. It shows that comedy is a sophisticated mechanism that operates within the norms and expectations of conversational engagement, rather than just a linguistic phenomenon (Attardo, 1994).

To conclude, the "Who's on First?" comedy effectively illustrates the complex relationship between humor and communication, making it a useful case study for linguistic pragmatics research. Intentional transgressions of conversational rules shed light on the fundamental mechanisms of comedy and provide important insights into the roles of misunderstanding and confusion in creating humorous discourse, starting from violations to misinterpretations that generate humor. This study contributes to our understanding of humor's role in communication and opens new avenues for investigating the dynamic interactions between language and comedy in diverse contexts.

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Appendix

Who's on first

Costello: I love baseball.

Abbott: We all love baseball.

Costello: When we get to St. Louis, will you tell me the guys' names on the team, so when I go to see them in that St. Louis ballpark, I'll be able to know those fellas?

Abbott: Well, now, is that all right, folks? All right...as long as it's OK with the audience...Now look, then you'll go and peddle your popcorn and don't interrupt the act anymore?...But you know, strange as it may seem, they give ball players now-a-days very peculiar names.

Costello: Funny names?

Abbott: Nicknames. Pet names.

Costello: Not as funny as my name, Sebastian Dinwiddle.

Abbott: Oh yes, yes, yes...Oh yes, absolutely. Yes, now, on the St. Louis team, we have Who's on first, What's on second, I Don't Know's on third...

Costello: That's what I want to find out. I want you to tell me the names of the fellas on the St. Louis team.

Abbott: I'm telling ya. Who's on first, What's on second, I Don't Know's on third.

Costello: You don't know the fella's name?

Abbott: Yes.

Costello: Well then, who's playing first?

Abbott: Yes.

Costello: I mean, the fella's name on first base.

Abbott: Who.

Costello: The fella playing first base for St. Louis?

Abbott: Who.

Costello: The guy on first base.

Abbott: Who is on first!

Costello: Well, what are ya asking me for?

Abbott: I'm not asking you. I'm telling you. Who is on first.

Costello: I'm asking *you* who's on first.

Abbott: That's the man's name.

Costello: That's who's name?

Abbott: Yes.

Costello: Well, go ahead and tell me.

Abbott: Who.

Costello: The guy on first.

Abbott: Who!

Costello: The first baseman.

Abbott: Who is on first!

Costello: Have you got a first baseman on first?

Abbott: Certainly.

Costello: Then who's playing first?

Abbott: Absolutely.

Costello: When you pay off the first baseman every month, who gets the money?

Abbott: Every dollar of it. Why not? The man's entitled to it.

Costello: Who is?

Abbott: Yes.

Costello: So who gets it.

Abbott: Why shouldn't he? Sometimes his wife comes down and collects it.

Costello: Who's wife?

Abbott: Yes. After all, the man earns it.

Costello: Who does?

Abbott: Absolutely.

Costello: All I'm tryin' to find out is what's the guy's name on first base.

Abbott: Oh, no, no. What is on second base.

Costello: I'm not askin' you who's on second.

Abbott: Who is on first.

Costello: That's what I'm trying to find out.

Abbott: Well, don't change the players around.

Costello: I'm not changin' nobody.

Abbott: Take it easy.

Costello: What's the guy's name on first base?

Abbott: What's the guy's name on second base.

Costello: I'm not asking you who's on second.

Abbott: Who's on first.

Costello: I don't know.

Abbott: He's on third - we're not talkin' about him.

Costello: How did I get on third base?

Abbott: You mentioned his name!

Costello: If I mentioned the third baseman's name, who did I say is playing third?

Abbott: No - Who is playing first.

Costello: Stay off of first, will ya?

Abbott: Well, waddya want me to do?

Costello: Now, what's the guy's name on third base?

Abbott: No, What's on second.

Costello: I'm not asking you who's on second.

Abbott: Who's on first.

Costello: I don't know.

Abbott: He's on third.

Costello: There I go - back on third again.

Abbott: Well, I can't change their names.

Costello: Would you please stay on third base, Mr. Broadhurst?

Abbott: Now, what is it you want to know?

Costello: What is the fella's name on third base?

Abbott: What is the fella's name on second base.

Costello: I'm not askin' you who's on second.

Abbott: Who's on first.

Costello: I don't know.

Abbott & Costello (together)**:** Third Base!

Costello: You got a outfield?

Abbott: Oh sure!

Costello: St. Louis has got a good outfield?

Abbott: Oh, absolutely.

Costello: The left fielder's name?

Abbott: Why.

Costello: I don't know, I just thought I'd ask ya.

Abbott: Well, I just thought I'd tell ya.

Costello: Then tell me who's playin' left field.

Abbott: Who is playing first!

Costello: Stay outta the infield!!

Abbott: Don't mention any names out here!

Costello: I want to know what's the fella's name in left field?

Abbott: What is on second.

Costello: I'm not askin' you who's on second!

Abbott: Who is on first.

Costello: I don't know!

Abbott & Costello: Third base!

Abbott: Now take it easy, take it easy, man.

Costello: And the left fielder's name?

Abbott: Why.

Costello: Because!

Abbott: Oh, he's center field...

Costello: You got a pitcher on the team?

Abbott: Wouldn't this be a fine team without a pitcher.

Costello: I dunno. Tell me the pitcher's name.

Abbott: Tomorrow.

Costello: You don't want to tell me today?

Abbott: I'm tellin' you, man.

Costello: Then go ahead.

Abbott: Tomorrow.

Costello: What time?

Abbott: What time what?

Costello: What time tomorrow are you gonna tell me who's pitchin'?!

Abbott: Now listen, Who is not pitchin'. Who is on ---

Costello: I'll break your arm if you say who's on first!

Abbott: Then why come up here and ask?

Costello: I want to know what's the pitcher's name?

Abbott: What's on second.

Costello: I don't know.

Abbott & Costello (together)**:** Third Base!!

Costello: You gotta catcher?

Abbott: Yes.

Costello: The catcher's name?

Abbott: Today.

Costello: Today. And Tomorrow's pitching.

Abbott: Now you got it.

Costello: That's all. St. Louis has got a couple of days on their team.

Abbott: Well, I can't help that. All right. What, what do you want me to do?

Costello: Gotta catcher?

Abbott: Yes.

Costello: I'm a good catcher too, you know.

Abbott: I know that.

Costello: I would like to play for the St. Louis team.

Abbott: Well, I might arrange that.

Costello: I would like to catch. Now I'm being a good catcher, Tomorrow's pitching on the team, and I'm catching.

Abbott: Yes.

Costello: Tomorrow throws the ball and the guy up bunts the ball.

Abbott: Yes.

Costello: Now when he bunts the ball, me being a good catcher, I want to throw the guy out at first base, so I pick up the ball and throw it to who?

Abbott: Now that's the first thing you've said right.

Costello: I don't even know what I'm talkin' about!!!

Abbott: Well, that's all you have to do.

Costello: Is to throw it to first base?

Abbott: Yes.

Costello: Now who's got it?

Abbott: Naturally.

Costello: Who has it?

Abbott: Naturally.

Costello: Naturally.

Abbott: Naturally.

Costello: OK.

Abbott: Now you've got it.

Costello: I pick up the ball and I throw it to Naturally.

Abbott: No, you don't, you throw the ball to first base.

Costello: Then who gets it?

Abbott: Naturally!

Costello: ok

Abbott: All right.

Costello: I throw the ball to Naturally.

Abbott: You don't! You throw it to Who!

Costello: Naturally!

Abbott: Well, that's it. Say it that way.

Costello: That's what I said!

Abbott: You did not.

Costello: I said I'd throw the ball to Naturally.

Abbott: You don't. You throw it to Who.

Costello: Naturally.

Abbott: Yes!

Costello: So I throw the ball to first base and Naturally gets it.

Abbott: No! You throw the ball to first base.

Costello: Then who gets it?!

Abbott: Naturally!

Costello: That's what I'm saying!

Abbott: You're not saying that...

Costello: I throw the ball to Naturally!

Abbott: You throw it to Who!

Costello: Naturally!

Abbott: Naturally. Well, say it that way.

Costello: That's what I'm saying!!!

Abbott: Now don't get excited. Now don't get excited.

Costello: I throw the ball to first base.

Abbott: Then Who gets it!

Costello: He'd better get it!!!

Abbott: All right, now don't get excited. Take it easy.

Costello: Hrmmph. Now I throw the ball to first base, whoever it is drops the ball, so the guy runs to second. Who picks up the ball and throws it to What. What throws it to I Don't Know. I Don't Know throws it back to Tomorrow. A triple play!

Abbott: OK, it could be.

Costello: Another guy gets up and hits a long fly ball to Because. Why? I don't know. He's on third, and I don't care!

Abbott: What was that?

Costello: I said, I don't care!!

Abbott: Oh, that's our shortstop

The sketch video's link: https://youtu.be/sYOUFGfK4bU?si=K8BabCtS8YzSIsL7

Résumé :

Cette note aborde le principe de la coopération conversationnelle fondée sur le respect des règles linguistiques présenté par le chercheur Paul Grice et sa relation avec la comédie. La note explique comment les violations délibérées de ces règles peuvent être à l'origine de la comédie, qui repose essentiellement sur les malentendus et la confusion verbale, et met en évidence la relation entre les deux. La note souligne également l'importance du contexte dans la compréhension et la simplification du dialogue, en indiquant comment le contexte peut soit aider à comprendre le discours, soit provoquer des malentendus. L'analyse du sketch comique américain "Who's on First" d'Abbott et Costello, classé comme la meilleure œuvre comique du siècle, diffusé à la radio et à la télévision et présenté dans plusieurs pays, montre que le non-respect des règles linguistiques et des dialogues et les malentendus sont à l'origine de cette comédie.

L'analyse indique que le texte comique et la violation des règles linguistiques sont les deux faces d'une même médaille, ce qui signifie que la comédie n'a pas de limites.

Elle répond à la question fondamentale de la recherche sur la relation entre la comédie et les violations linguistiques dans le dialogue, et comment le dépassement délibéré des règles linguistiques a produit un effet comique burlesque en raison de l'ambiguïté, et comment le malentendu a abouti à une performance comique, considérée comme la meilleure de son genre.

Mots-clés : humour, dialogue, malentendu, contexte, Paul Grice, règles linguistiques.

الملخص:

تناولت هذه المذكرة مبدأ التعاون الحواري القائم على احترام القواعد اللغوية التي قدمها الباحث بول غرايس وعلاقته بالكوميديا. توضح المذكرة كيف أن التجاوزات المتعمدة لهذه القواعد يمكن أن تكون سبباً في ولادة الكوميديا، التي تعتمد أساساً على سوء الفهم والتشويش اللفظي، وتبرز العلاقة بينهما. كما تشدد المذكرة على أهمية السياق في فهم الحوار وتبسيطه، مشيرة إلى كيف يمكن للسياق إما أن يساعد على فهم الكلام أو أن يسبب سوء الفهم. يُظهر تحليل العرض الهزلي الأمريكي "Who's on First" by Abbott and Costello، الذي صُنّف كأفضل عمل كوميدي في القرن وتم عرضه على الراديو والتلفاز وتقديمه في أكثر من دولة، أن عدم احترام قواعد اللغة والحوار وسوء الفهم هي السبب في إنتاج هذه الكوميديا. يشير التحليل إلى أن النص الكوميدي وانتهاك قواعد اللغة هما وجهان لعملة واحدة، مما يعني أن الكوميديا لا حد لها.

حيث تجيب على السؤال الاساسي البحث عن العلاقة بين الكوميديا والانتهاكات اللغوية في الحوار، وكيف أن تجاوز القواعد اللغوية بشكل متعمد أنتج تأثير كوميدي هزلي بسبب الغموض وكيف ان سوء الفهم انتهى بعرض كوميدي، صنف الافضل من نوعه.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الفكاهة، الحوار، سوء الفهم، السياق، بول غرايس، القواعد اللغوية.