

## **Abstracts for Paper Presentations**

### **Death of the Cool: Memeiosis, Virality, Dankness, and the Lifecycle of Memes.**

**Salvatore Attardo and Antony Dion Mitzel**

Let us start with an unquestionable axiom: by the time academics analyze any cultural phenomenon, and particularly memes, they are no longer cool. The true kiss of death, jumping of the shark, and appearance on Facebook of a meme is when an academic writes a paper about it. In this spirit of an utter lack of cool, we present our considerations.

Blommaert (2015) argues that memes have open, indeterminate meanings, but index (connote) “cool”: using a meme is cool. The motivation for users to share a meme is to index themselves with this signified by association. Blommaert’s claim that memes cease to be cool when “people attempt to construct memes intentionally — there are several “meme generators” and “make your own meme” systems available online — they are “uncool” (p. 22) cannot be correct, because of course all memes are created by some person and thus by his definition memes would be uncool from the beginning. The reason for the death of the cool must come from social reasons.

We propose a model that combines three factors:

1. time elapsed from the origin of the meme
2. the affordances of the individual meme, and
3. the number of recombinations (mashups) undergone by the meme

Our argument is that there is a threshold determined by the asymptote of the number of affordances (i.e., possible aspects of recombination) and the potential for mashups: these factors fuel sharing and memeiosis (the creation of new memes). When both sharing and memeiosis reach their peak, the meme is no longer cool and this brings about its quick demise. We illustrate this dynamic using the life-cycle of the “woman yelling at a cat” (Taylor Armstrong and Smudge) meme (May 1, 2019 - present). There are over 400 images archived on Know Your Meme that are instance of this meme.

**‘Humorous’ versus satirical ways of targeting in nineteenth-century literature:  
Toward a literary model for the Target.**

**Anthony Manu**

While there exists no generally accepted system of categorisation, it is common practice for literary scholars to distinguish between satire and humour. While satire expresses a message about society, humour primarily amuses or lightens the mood without being dependent on a social message. Another difference is that satire criticizes its target, presenting a strong distinction between the target and those who laugh, while humour is more inclusive, at times self-deprecating. (Moura, 93-94) In Western-European and especially English literature, the nineteenth century marked an evolution from the age of satire (Palmeri, 753) toward the dominance of laughter as a form of freeing amusement based on devices like travesty, logic games or language play. Some forms of laughter however used these devices and the playful attitude critically by evoking serious concepts but using the signs by which these are communicated as materials for travesty, logic games or language play, thus refusing to take the subjects seriously. (Gray, 147) The relation the satirist/humourist, reader and target is no longer a simple opposition between the ridiculous and the rational. This paper investigates how the GTVH, as the dominant formal model for textual humour, can be used to describe this way of laughing at something and how it is brought about by formal, logical and literary devices. I argue that the knowledge resource ‘Target’ must be expanded and related to the semantic, logical and narrative resources. This approach will be developed and tested through the analysis of fragments from May Kendall’s *Dreams to sell* (1887).

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# **Self-Abnegation and Other-Glorification: A Critical Analysis of Verbal Humor about Indigenous Vs Foreign Identities**

**Lubna Akhlaq Khan**

Many studies underscore the societal aspect of humor, yet its role in the construction of 'self and other' in post-colonial situations has been mostly ignored. This study intends to provide critical analysis of self and foreign identities in Urdu jokes. Friers's Self Abnegation Theory (1998) has been used to provide the theoretical framework for the research because it suggests that self-abnegation stems from the internalization of the adverse behaviors by the persecutors. It is also claimed that being frequently told about their unproductiveness and worthlessness, the subjugated groups become convinced of their uselessness and ineffectiveness. The aim is to find out the relationship between the language of humor and self-respect at an individual and societal level and to reveal the covert effects of perpetuated suppression on the self-esteem of the indigenous identities. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods have been used to analyze the data. Jokes have been collected from Facebook posts and Whatsapp messages. Content analysis is used to develop thematic categories of the selected jokes, on the basis of targeted identities and the traits and attributes attached to them. There are a large number of stereotypical attributes attached in these jokes, and the people share such jokes to mock and laugh at themselves. These jokes are representing Indian/Pakistani people as compared to foreigners as foolish, stupid, lacking common sense, miserly, non-serious, concerned with petty issues, and other demeaning and derogatory terms. The study concludes that Urdu jokes are actively constructing different stereotypical images of indigenous vs foreign identities by glorifying the foreigners and belittling their own collective identities and reflecting them through a tunnel vision instead of presenting them objectively. Further research can explore the role of humor in constructing gender, ethnic, religious, educational and political identities and the negative effects it is creating to damage the self-esteem of the targeted groups.

**Mexican verbal humor: *El relajo* as a social representation of a country's culture.**

**Xóchitl Tavera-Cervantes**

**Carlos González-Di Pierro**

Is it true that in Mexico we laugh at misfortune? Is death an object of mockery? How does the Mexican people live humor? Through a brief historical review of the humorous manifestations present in some films, comics, stand-up comedies and even informal conversations, we explore the way in which Mexicans make use of linguistic resources that range from popular slang to metaphor and other rhetorical figures, forming a particular sense of humor that is today a characteristic feature of the country's culture.

In addition, the pragmatic inferences that come into play are reviewed, showing how people of different ages and backgrounds identify topics and common situations that place them at *el relajo*, a local concept which is a state of suspension of seriousness that exceeds laughter and comedy itself and is constituted as a shared space where social values and practices are revealed and shared through verbal utterances, consolidating an important part of Mexican identity.

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## **The syllable as the unit of phonological correspondence in punning mechanisms.**

**Sarvenaz Balali**

Imperfect Puns are a subgenre of humor in which the script overlap is realized through phonological similarity between the pun and its target. The previous research in the field has aimed to shed light on the tolerable phonological difference between a pun and its target. Previous studies have underlined the importance of phonological similarity at the phonemic level. They have also provided evidence for the important role of the location of phonological manipulation within the syllable (Hempelmann, 2003; Guidi, 2012). Due to the well-established relevance of the syllable as a phonological and prosodic unit, the present study hypothesizes that identifying the syllable (in place of randomly distributed phonemes,) as the unit of phonological correspondence may provide for more effective approaches to measuring phonological similarity. This study, therefore, considers a corpus of 200 English puns and tries to specifically examine how phonological manipulation operates across syllables in the punning strings. The findings of this study may provide new insight into phonological similarity in puns. Also, the findings may be used to contribute new aspects to the theory of phonological correspondence.

## **“Game” in Improv Comedy: A Genre Rife for GTVH Analysis**

**Anthony J. Greblick**

I realized, via the *Routledge Handbook* (especially Tsakona, 2017) and email correspondence with S. Attardo, that improvisational comedy may serve humor studies as a rich genre for investigation. The comedy involved is expected, but not scripted or canned; it is instead created on the spot and according to accepted conventions. In particular, the notion of “game (of the scene)” (*UCB Manual, 2013*) lends itself well to analysis via the GTVH. A “game” occurs in a scene involving two (or more) performers generally working without costumes, props, or other set pieces. The performers are to quickly establish the “baseline reality” of the scene—namely, the *who* (their relationship), *what* (their activity), and *where* (their location), thereby providing the audience with an understanding of what is normally expected in such circumstances. After that, the first unusual thing introduced serves as the basis for the game, to be expanded on (or “heightened”), all for the sake of comedy. As Attardo (pers. communication) suggested, “the baseline reality is the Situation KR... a collection of scripts/frames... the ‘first unusual thing’ would be the basic script opposition, or incongruity...” Further, a successful game/scene should be rife with jab lines (Attardo, 2001), ideally culminating in a punch line, often signaled via extended laughter, even applause, and some form of scene edit (e.g., a sweep). Beyond improv, the concept of “game” is found throughout more familiar scripted material (e.g., W.C. Fields’ *The Golf Specialist*, the Two Ronnies’ “Four Candles” sketch, and Freberg and Butler’s “Elderly Man River”).

## **Charand-o-Prarand (Stuff and Nonsense) Columns in Sur-e-Esrafil Weekly as a Turning Point in Persian Satire.**

**Reza Panahi**

In Persian literature, satire falls into two major body of works, the old and the modern ones. The old literary works make use of satire (Hajv) and lampoon (Hazl) to criticize objectionable issues, but the modern Persian literature, under the influence of foreign literature especially the French one, uses a new style of satire, normally called Tanz, a criticism targeting social and political issues using wit, humor and fantasy. There have been a couple of contemporary satirical works affecting this literary change. Charand-o-Parand (stuff and nonsense), a satirical political column by Dekhoda (1907-1909) published in Sur-e Esrafil, can be claimed to be the most influential one. Therefore, I argue that in studies on Persian satire not enough attention has been paid to Charan-o-Parand. In this study I attempt to shed light on how this satirical column has turned out to be a turning point in satirical literature of Persian. To achieve this goal, I examined most of the columns published from 1907-1909.

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## Humor, politics, and discourse: Acting on (political) stage

Irene Derzhko

Together with the changes in the political landscape and rhetoric in many countries over the years, we have observed the revival of political satire and the rise of its importance on television and on the internet. Yet how can televised caricatures reflect, refract, and produce political realities and thus create an additional dimension of the political dynamics of the country? In order to answer these questions we designed a triangulation method that combines both critical and multimodal discourse analysis approaches and analyzed coupled samples of French political satire and their representative hypotexts. We show which and how discourse means are used by comedians to perform a normative critical function of parody. We then examine the complex interplay of several discourse frames that can be discerned in both politicians' and comedians' performances. Our results display a distinct gendered frame that is of dual-use for politicians and their opponents and which is also mimicked by the humorists. Similarly, we discuss the multifaceted nature of modern means of communication and the role of the audience in this regard. Finally, while touching upon the “parodic paradox” that describes an ambiguous relationship between the parody and its hypotext, we reflect on the role of political satire in contemporary society and hypothesize its impact on the world political scenery.

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## Abstracts for E-Poster Presentations

### Smiling and humor in French conversation

**Béatrice Priego-Valverde, Brigitte Bigi and Mary Amoyal**

“Cheese!” is a conversational corpus audio and video recorded in Aix-en-Provence, France. It consists of 11 French face-to-face conversations lasting around 15 minutes each. Cheese! was firstly collected in order to make a cross-cultural comparison of smiling during humorous productions between American English and French (Priego-Valverde et al., 2018). Consequently, it has been recorded in respect with the American protocol (Attardo et al. (2011).

The aim of this paper is to present an exploratory study about the links between smiling and humor. To this end, smiles of two interactions were manually annotated, relying on the “Smiling Intensity Scale” (SIS) (Gironzetti et al., 2016). The SIS measures the smile intensity gradually from 0 (neutral face) to 4 (laughter), based on Action Units (AUs) detailed by the Facial Action Coding System (FACS) (Ekman and Friesen, 1978). In parallel, humorous instances of the same two interactions were manually annotated. First, the whole humorous sequences were annotated and classified as canned joke (CJ) and conversational humor (CH). Then, within each sequence of conversational humor, humorous items were annotated. Finally, the analysis of each reaction to a humorous item allows us to distribute each of them in failed (Fa) and successful humor (Su).

Based on the analysis of two interactions of “Cheese!”, two questions are asked: (1) Does smiling frame humor? (2) Does smiling have an impact on its success or failure?

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## **SMAD: A tool for automatically annotating the smile intensity along a video record**

**Stéphane Rauzy and Mary Amoyal**

We present an automatic tool for tracing the dynamic of the smile intensity along a video record. The processed output consist in a sequence of adjusted time intervals labeled following the *Smiling Intensity Scale* of Gironzetti et al. (2016) [3], a 5 levels scale varying from neutral facial expression to laughing smile. The state-of-the-art toolbox OpenFace [2] is firstly used for tracking the face and for measuring the intensities of the facial Action Units of interest all along the video. In a second step the smile intensity automatic annotation is performed based on these OpenFace Action Units measurements. The statistical model underlying our SMAD tool is trained on a 1 hour manually annotated smiles of the CHEESE! corpus [4] (a full description of the model will be found in Rauzy & Amoyal, submitted to JMUI).

The evaluation of the engine reveals an observed agreement of 68% between manual and automatic annotations. A more concrete experiment conducted on in-the-wild video records shows that manually correcting the labels and interval boundaries of the automatic outputs reduces by a factor 10 the annotation time as compared with the time spent for manually annotating smile intensities without pretreatment. The smile annotation of PACO [1], a 5 hours corpus of conversational data build up for analyzing the impact of common ground in spontaneous face-to-face interaction, has already benefited from this gain in annotation time.

The SMAD scripts and documentation are available to download at the HMAD open source project url page [https : //github.com/srauzy/HMAD](https://github.com/srauzy/HMAD)

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