Władysław Chłopicki, Dorota Brzozowska (Eds.)
Humorous Discourse

Humor Research

Editors
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Volume 11

Humorous Discourse

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Table of contents

III Computer modeling of humorous discourse

Władysław Chłopicki and Dorota Brzozowska
A foreword on humorous discourse

The present volume was conceived largely as a fruit of linguistic labour. Since nowadays the majority of linguists believe in the primary nature of the use of language and its contextual determination as the essential condition for the emergence of meaningful texts, the editors have called upon humorous scholars to think of humour as a type of discourse. And those who responded to the call, although "many are called and few are chosen" (Matthew 22: 14), were linguists. This was probably so since the notion of *discourse* used at present in many disciplines originates in the Latin and then French term *discours*, which refers to a conversation or an orderly expression of thought. The concept was taken over by mainly French scholars, linguists and philosophers of language (e.g. M. Foucault, P. Ricoeur, P. Bourdieu, R. Barthes, or J. Derrida), who, in gross oversimplification, claimed that it is social, political and other powers beyond our control that shape texts. These ideas developed further into the school of critical discourse analysis, while on the other hand the notion of *discourse* was adapted by mainstream Anglo-Saxon linguistics, which itself evolved in the compatible, although much less political, sociopragmatic direction and needed the term to account for the role of speaker/author and hearer/reader in text interpretation (cf. Shiffrin 1994; notably, German scholarship prefers *text* to *discourse* in the related sense; cf. e.g. Adamzik 2016). At the same time, and partly as a result of these developments, *discourse* became a buzzword not only in humanities and social sciences, but even in some hard sciences where a form of human interaction is involved (cf. Foucault's idea of "clinical discourse" in medicine or psychiatry, cf. Foucault 1999, or discourse analytic nature of archeology, cf. Kendall and Wickham 1999).

Thus, in the English, French, or Polish scholarship among others *discourse* is a complex notion operating in a linguistic, communicative, social and cultural context, and the text is a specific realization of a discourse, it is its centre (cf. Chruszczewski 2011: 205; cf. also Palmer 1996). The discourse is action, so the text-creation process "is always embedded in the non-verbal context, built of communicative situation, the social group which takes part in the communication and the culture in which the process unveils" (Chruszczewski 2011: 208). We think globally, *discoursally*, when planning what to say, so about linguistic action, about our goals, while we think locally, *textually*, about words when we wonder how to say it in lexical and grammatical terms.

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Such a concept is applicable to inherently humorous texts, such as jokes, demotivators, stand-up, etc as well as to humour occurring in non-humorous genres, e.g. everyday conversation, television shows, or sports commentary, since just as linguists find it difficult to identify the unequivocal source of meaning (text or context or both), so humour scholars find it hard to identify the source of humorous effects (text, context or both). The problem with defining humorous discourse is the potential circularity of the notion, which stems from the difficulty in setting it off from non-humorous discourse (cf. the discussion in Nirenburg and Raskin 2004). The "definition of local antonymy, is potentially troublesome [...], since it could lead to a vicious circle: if we defined local antonymy based upon the purpose of the discourse (i.e. humor) and then defined humor based on local antonymy, the SSTH [Standard Script Theory of Humor] would collapse." (Attardo 2001: 18). To avoid the circularity a pragmatic solution is proposed, based on the saliency of encyclopedic knowledge; specifically, Attardo postulates "a saliency hierarchy within the material of a script" (Attardo 2001: 19). Indeed, the pragmatic or discoursal solution seems only feasible, so the semantic theory of humour inevitably transforms into a pragmatic one; thus, we need to deal with humorous discourse or *global* humorous action which makes use of *local* means (words and expressions) that direct the thoughts of the audience in particular, not always entirely predictable directions (at least not easily predictable by the speaker). The issue of backgrounded incongruities is thus also relevant here as this collective notion plays a role in determining the funniness of the joke as well as its "cultural pathways" (cf. the special issue of *Humor* 24: 2, 2011, which focused around backgrounded vs foregrounded incongruities).

Humorous discourse has also been interestingly discussed in Ermida (2008), who deals with constructing literary narratives, and in Attardo (2008: 115–121), who provided an overview of discourse analysis of humour, including the functions of humour, construction of humour in discourse, humorous narratives as well as humour styles; the *Encyclopedia of humor studies* (Attardo 2014) brings a related discussion of formal properties of humour and functions of humour in verbal and online interaction (II: 705–708) as well as of verbal and written "humour markers" which signal humour and are removable without affecting humour and "humour factors" which are its constitutive elements (I: 359–361). *The Routledge handbook of language and humor* (Attardo 2017) offers an overview of linguistic aspects of humour approached from all possible paradigms active in linguistics, including structuralist, functional, cognitive, pragmatic, sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic and computational, as well as cuts through various disciplines which verge on linguistics, such as translation studies, stylistics or genre studies. The current volume differs from the former one as here we attempt to discuss selected but thorny issues of humour research which form

the major stumbling blocks as well as challenges in humour studies at large and thus merit insightful discussion.

1 Problems of humour research

The purpose of the current volume is to discuss these and other pertinent questions in order to move the debate on the role of contextual and non-contextual meaning in humour a step forward. Furthermore, a number of problem areas currently discussed and sometimes unique for humour studies are tackled in the volume. These are briefly listed below.

1. The issue of the role and status of formal and informal theory of humour and the methods of falsifying statements about humour – what does actually count as a theory and do we need the theory at all? When do we know that a claim that concerns humour has been proved or do we know it at all? This can thus be called a metatheory of humour.

2. The problem of identifying the basic mechanism or mechanisms which are responsible for a humorous effect and the set of factors which are responsible for humorous effects in discourse. This is the essentialist side of humour studies, stimulating the scholars to ask the question: What is humour? (cf. Raskin 1985, Attardo 2001). The related essentialist question concerns the problem of distinguishing humour and non-humour, particularly that of humour and metaphor (cf. e.g. Müller 2007).

3. The problem of formulating a bottom-up theory of humour performance (as opposed to the top-down theory of humour competence; cf. Raskin 1985) based on corpus research, including such varied knowledge resources as systems of beliefs, humour repertoires, and humorous texts as such as well as the way jokes are delivered prosodically.

4. The problem of the structure of humorous discourse, esp. more or less spontaneous conversation interspersed with humour, and the role of metapragmatic comments which identify intended humour and which are means to negotiate the ongoing type of discourse.

5. The related problem of distinguishing *bona fide* and *non-bona fide* modes of discourse (cf. Raskin 1985) and the classification of their potential subtypes. The problem is also manifested in the use of verbal and visual humour as contributions to the entertainment value of written discourse due to its essential playfulness and creativity. It is sometimes seen too in terms of the relation between humorous discourse and other discourses in terms of social and cultural factors it involves and of its resulting anti-discourse status.

6. The problem of constructing and aligning the audience of the humorous performer and target groups in a comic show in terms of their cultural/national/regional identity and sociolinguistic cues that help the audience relate to them and the performer himself (cf. Double 2005). The problem could also be approached from another perspective – that of the humour recipients and it could concern the way they see the humorous/non-humorous quality of a text, the functions and the limits of humour.

7. Last but not least, the highly complicated essentialist and non-essentialist perspectives on humour, as outlined above, can be seen as the background for attempts at solving the thorny problem of computer modelling of implicit inferences in humorous discourse and situation-specific information about the events, objects and persons.

The question could be raised to what extent the set of issues presented above and the ways they are handled by scholars contributes to the already accumulated knowledge on the workings of humour in discourse in such publications as Raskin (1985), Attardo (2001), Martin (2006) or Attardo ed. (2014). The clarity and succinctness with which the problems are formulated and subsequent direct and honest and at the same time scholarly ways of dealing with them make the collection accessible and highly informative. Naturally, not all the questions have been answered, and some chapters end with a call for more research or more interdisciplinary cooperation in specific areas of humour research. Still the greatest asset of the volume is the fact that it has asked most of the important questions and lucidly emphasized the need for the theoretical and empirical studies of humorous discourse to coexist and at the same time emphasized multiple contextual, linguistic, social and cultural, factors which humour scholars have to take into account in order to provide an exhaustive description of the functioning of humorous discourse – a large step for some linguists brought up within the tradition of structuralist or generative paradigms. The linguists contributing to the volume have also shown a commendable degree of open mind, which is an indispensable factor when dealing with humorous discourse; they, perhaps more than any other texts, demand mental flexibility and contextual embedding.

2 Structure of the volume

The order of the chapters in the present volume, contributed by leading scholars in the field of humour studies, reflects the array of problems briefly discussed

above. The collection opens with the contribution by **Victor Raskin** who emphasizes the vital nature of theory-building in science as well as in humour research, particularly of the metatheory which would allow the researcher to assess the validity of and, if necessary, falsify the statements made about the nature of humour. This is followed by a series of contributions which handle the essentialist side to the study of humour. **Władysław Chłopicki** provides an overview of the promising notion of metonymy for humour research, which with its related network of notions such as metonymic paths, chains or compression, draws attention to the linguistic and cultural complexity and dynamics of humorous discourse, although it does not necessarily focus on the dichotomies traditionally considered basic for humour as is shown in the detailed analysis of selected jokes pursued in the chapter. **Agnieszka Libura** researches the concept of conceptual integration, widely used in cognitive linguistics and outside of it, and applies it to political discourse in order to find that even though it does explain a great deal of the workings of humorous cartoons, it has a broader application and might underemphasize what is essential for humour. **Sachiko Kitazume** sees the nature of both verbal and visual humour in a twist, or a minor, yet sometimes far-reaching, alteration that yields a comic effect, thus stressing the dynamic nature of humour. At the same time, she addresses an important issue of distinguishing between humour and metaphor, metaphor being deprived of an opposition and being based on an overlap of images, while humour relying on the scripts considered contradictory and overlapping only on the literal reading.

The next set of contributions reach further into contextual study of humorous discourse as they research various aspects of humorous performance and specifically the structure of humorous discourse. **Salvatore Attardo** demonstrates the diversity of factors which affect humour performance, from systems of beliefs and values to humorous repertoires, and shows a number of conversational jokes which failed even though they met all the requirements of General Theory of Verbal Humour, the reasons for failure including the wrong use of language, lack of explicitness or unavailability of scripts, reference to sensitive scripts or the prosodic factors. **Ksenia Shilikhina** is the first one to discuss the structure of corpus-based natural discourse in English, Russian, Polish and German with humorous elements in it, raising the issue of the presence of metapragmatic comments offered by the discourse participants as those elements which help all sides negotiate the nature of the ongoing discourse and resolve it as either *bona fide* or *non-bona fide*, as these modes tend to overlap and compete. As a result of her study she postulates a number of categories of metapragmatic markers, refining the notion of *non-bona fide* communication. The contribution of **Jan Chovanec** takes up the issue of the relationship of the verbal and visual

in humour (raised earlier by Kitazume) in the context of sports discourse in the British press and its culturally highly valued entertainment aspect. He discusses this in terms of wordplay creativity and general playfulness as essential categories which explain why the manner of presentation is sometimes more important than the content and why humour in the analysed headline examples can be considered successful.

Another two chapters discuss the most difficult area in the study of humorous discourse, that of the response of the audience to the performance, show or other humorous input. **Marina Santiago and Sarah Seewoester Cain** lucidly report on their study of two stand-up performances by one New York comedian, in a comedy club and in a nationally televised talk show, and argue that he uses two kinds of strategies to develop a relationship with his audience and align them towards various ethnic and other target groups – these are discursive and sociolinguistic cues used differently depending on where he is performing in order to achieve a maximum humorous effect. **Villy Tsakona**, on the other hand, takes account of the differences of the assessment of a controversial, sexist, but humorous advertisement among viewers, who actually took part in a political debate on the subject. In her informative discussion she takes into account the notions of *non-bona fide* communication, normative community of humour, metapragmatic stereotypes and sociocultural presuppositions, and concludes that the viewers fell into two normative communities, one stressing the harmless and the other the harmful nature of the humour in the advertisement.

The collection closes with the contribution by **Julia Taylor Rayz**, who discusses the Ontological Semantic Theory of Humour and its potential application to humorous discourse. Among the problems, which will by now be clear to the reader given all the complexity discussed in the previous chapters, she emphasizes the difficulty in accounting for implicit inferences of all kind as well as text-specific or culture-specific references to events, objects and persons, information about which contained in the database turns out not to be specific enough or fuzzy for the purposes of the computer system which is to model them, as sophisticated as it may be.

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I Approaches at the essence of humorous discourse

Victor Raskin
Humor theory: What is and what is not

1 Introduction

This paper will reiterate my pretty rigid view of what a theory is in general and what, in that light, a theory of humor is. It will acknowledge and urge to ignore the informal use of the word theory as misleading and harmful for humor research. It will also explore the question of the feasibility for such a theory and whether it is worth striving for it, especially so since my view is not widely shared by other humor researchers. In the process, other related issues will be discussed, and one of them is why I do not consider books that consist of jokes and the informal, intuitive, subjective comments on them to be very useful at this mature stage of humor research. So, I will start the body of the paper with a joke and its informal discussion.

2 A joke and its informal analysis

Three American men, a Pole, a Jew, and a WASP, found a bottle with a genie in it on the beach. The genie offered them each a wish. The Pole said that he would like to move to Poland but not the way it was, wrecked by communism, but a free and prosperous Poland. And he was gone. The Jew said that he would like to move to Israel but not to the besieged, endangered place it was but rather to a safe, peaceful place, in good relations with its neighbors, and stable economically, politically, and in every other respect. "How about you?" asked the genie impatiently, "I must be off, you know." "Is the Pole really in a kind of Poland that he wanted?" the WASP asked. "Yes, of course," answered the genie. "And the Jew in a peaceful Israel?" "Yes!" "Are they really gone?" "Yes, they are," answered the genie angrily. "Give me your wish, please!" "Okay," said the WASP, "May I have a diet coke?"

   This is **a** joke and not **the** joke, even though the paper will not analyze another joke, because, of course, it is not the Doctor/Lover joke from Raskin (1985), which is standardly referred to as The Joke in humor research literature. What happens in this joke is slightly more complicated than in The Joke, where the doctor's wife, incongruously, invited the male patient, seeking to see her

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husband for his health problem, to "come right in" while her husband is away. Related in the American favorite 3-stroke narrative, the diet coke joke gives us the first man's wish that requires the change of his (or his ancestors') native country from ruined to prosperous. It is followed by the second man's wish that requires peace in the Middle East, a standard in Western humor for an impossible task. The wishes are granted, and the two men are gone to those much improved countries.

We have been set up for the third man's wish: we are led to expect to involve, by analogy, a serious transformation for his country. Will he ask for ridding it of crime, drugs, cancer, poverty? He is taking his time and then making sure that his Polish and Jewish countrymen are gone. Reassured on that count, he surprises us by asking for a diet coke, something he can get for a tiny amount of pocket change around the corner (it is, of course, a beach with a corner).

The surprise element in humor has been noticed at least since Kant (1791), who also talked about the juxtaposition of two very different situations as the cause of this surprise, and all the components of that are present in the joke: the third man's wish is different than that of his two friends' in content and especially in scope. So is this what constitutes the joke or is there anything else? With this juxtaposition and its surprise alone, we may still conclude that what is implied – the "message" of the joke – is that the American's country does not need any improvement for him to stay in it, and this is why he chooses a trivial request. But there is something else in the text: while seeing for himself that his friends are gone, he demands reassurance from the genie that it is indeed so, and the trivial request follows immediately after he is satisfied that the Pole and Jew are gone. We "get" the additional implication that America does not need improvement after it is rid of those "ethnics." The joke comes through then as an anti-immigrant one – at least hostile or rejectionist with regard to more recent, less established immigrants than "The Mayflower" descendants or those who like to think of themselves as such.

What else does the joke evoke? The mention of a Pole brings forth, in an experienced humor consumer's mind, the ethnic jokes about Polish Americans, who are standardly, though factually incorrectly represented as dumb (see Davies 1990). This parallel is actually rather unhelpful here: the Pole is doing nothing dumb here. In a similar joke, the Pole goes last and, after his friend have their wishes to be elsewhere are satisfied by a genie, the Pole says that he misses them already and wishes them to be back with him on the uninhabited island. In fact, the joke is clearly not optimized: while the American is essential for it, the choice of ethnics is not fully justified – a Jew may be a perennial outsider

but the "Jewish question" is much more of a European than American phenomenon, and the American in the joke must be a skinhead in order to count the Jewish presence in America to be crucial for its being a desirable place to live, and a Pole is simply anachronistic. Speaking of which, putting the joke in the pre-1960s time frame, the ethnics should have been a Black and a Jew, while bringing it closer to the present time, the Pole and Poland should have been replaced by a Mexican and Mexico, given the intensity of the Hispanic immigration conundrum in American politics of the recent decades.

Even more remotely, the joke may evoke a whole layer of three-nationality jokes that all share the 3-stroke narrative structure and use the well-established ethnic stereotypes for mostly West Europeans (British, formally polite; French, lovers; German, literally methodical; Italian, foodies) and an occasional Central (Romanian, will do anything for money) and East European (Russian, heavy drinker (male), inept in love choices (female)). This will probably underscore the perception that none of the 3 characters in the diet coke joke rely on any customary stereotypes, thus lowering the quality of the joke or at least of its verbalization for a demanding and experienced consumer.

3 Here comes the theory

The theory that comes in to offer its formal analysis of the diet coke joke is, of course, the linguistic theory of humor. Its three consecutive stages have been the original Script-based Semantic Theory of Humor (SSTH: Raskin 1985), its expanded successor, the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH: Attardo and Raskin 1991; Attardo 1994), and its semantic formalization, the ontological semantic theory of humor (OSTH: Raskin et al. 2009). Besides the obvious advantage of having been developed by this author and his associates, it is the only theory – or rather family of theories – that satisfies the requirement for a set of statements to qualify for the status of theory in the proper, formal, technical and even mathematical sense of the term, first developed in Raskin (1999 – reprinted as Ch. 2 in Nirenburg and Raskin 2004).

This view of theory, actually the metatheory, as it were, the theory of theory, should have been developed in the philosophy of science but, unfortunately, never has, primarily because of that discipline's focus on just a selection of natural sciences and, in those, on the empirical justification of theories. According to this metatheory, a theory includes, besides its body consisting of a number of statements and constituting the most visible part of any theory, a set of premises and goals, a purview, a method for falsifying it, and a justification/ evaluation mechanism. The falsification principle, often misunderstood, is pure

Popper (1972), according to whom, every theory is a hypothesis which has not been falsified. A theory that is unfalsifiable, in principle, is a faith, so every theory builder should provide a way to falsify it as part of the theory.

Both the general status of a full-fledged theory and the specific notion of a theory of humor was presented as a plenary lecture at the phenomenally well-organized and supported 2012 Annual Meeting of the International Society of Humor Studies at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, Poland. A shorter, computationally biased version was presented at the AAAI 2012 Fall Symposium on the Artificial Intelligence of Humor (Raskin 2012a). An expanded version was used in a few keynote addresses since. To quote from Raskin (2012a),

"A well-developed, mature, self-aware, and therefore usable computational theory is characterized by all the properties below – it must be and actually is:
- adequate, if it provides an accurate account of all the phenomena in its purview;
- effective, if it comes with a methodology for its implementation;
- formal, if it submits itself to logical rules, whether it does or does not use a specific formalism–confusing formality with formalism is one of the worst and unfortunately common offenses in discussing a formal theory;
- constructive, if that implementation can be completed in finite time;
- decidable, if there is an algorithm for its implementation in principle;
- computable, if this algorithm can be demonstrated;
- explicit, if it is fully aware of all of its components and provides a full account of each of them."

Each of these properties is not an evaluative adjective – lest it be thought that all of these just praise a theory that is claimed to have them in 7 different ways. In fact, each property has a clear and distinct meaning, and its constructiveness, for instance, means that the theory comes with a methodology that leads to results, for which the theory provides a conceptual format. A linguistic theory is maintained, within the family of linguistic theories of humor, to possess all of the properties above. We will defer a discussion of informal theories of humor to the last section of the paper.

What all the three phases of the family of theories share is the Main Hypothesis, first formulated in SSTH, that the text of a verbal joke is compatible, in full or in part, with two different and often standardly opposite scripts. Typically, the initial script is developed from the start of the joke and then is defeated by the punch line, which typically, again, serves as the triggering device that switches to the second script. According to this theory, then, the initial script has the wish grantees coming up with enormously hard-to-fulfill orders that involve socio-political changes for the whole countries that take decades, if not centuries to

accomplish. The diet coke line is the punch line that introduces the opposite script of an extremely trivial, passing wish that does not require the supernatural power of a genie to bring about. All the elements of a joke are, thus, demonstrated to be present, and the text is characterized as a joke. End of story? Well, no, but a pretty auspicious beginning. We are talking!

What we are talking is a pretty high bar that this view of theory sets. A real theory defines a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for a phenomenon that it is the theory of. Thus, for a short verbal joke, it claims that if a text is a joke then its text is compatible with two opposite scripts (necessary condition), and vice versa, if we have a text that is compatible with two opposite scripts, it is a joke. This establishes a reliable method of falsification of the linguistic theory: one counterexample of either a joke that is not compatible with two opposing scripts or of a text that is compatible with two opposing scripts but is not a joke will falsify the theory. The search for a counterexample started straight at the start in Raskin (1985). That it has not yet been produced in several decades seems to demonstrate the validity of the theory.

There are serious issues to consider here. Thus, for the necessary conditions to obtain, the two opposing scripts should always be discovered. Can there be a consistent methodology for doing that or does the fact that it seems always possible trivialize the issue? Within SSTH, Raskin (1985) identified, deductively, 3 archetypes of script opposition, normal/abnormal, actual/non-actual, and possible/impossible. Raskin (1987) listed, inductively, some 17 standard oppositions, such as good/bad, sex/no-sex, life/death, that together seem to cover a predominant majority of all jokes, making it virtually impossible to think of any joke that goes beyond that empirical set. And yet, in the diet coke joke, it is not that easy to identify the opposed scripts even in terms of the archetype oppositions: normal/abnormal is perhaps the strongest candidate but the whole situation is abnormal, so the opposition is more between correct and expected vs. incorrect and unexpected.

We will talk about this in the next section but the universality of this set of conditions is hard to argue about: it is a strong argument in defense of the Main Hypothesis. It seems more promising to look for a counterexample on the sufficient conditions, which are always much harder to identify. Triezenberg (2004, 2008) appears to have moved the furthest and boldest in this direction, arguing that the X is a murderer/X is not a murderer opposition, a legitimate member of the actual/non-actual archetype, underlies all Agatha Christie's detective novels, which are not at all funny, however. The most effective defense here is that GTVH was not set up for longer texts, even though Chłopicki (1997), Attardo (2001) and Ermida (2009) claim that it is extendable. In other words, the best

defense against this counterexample is that it violates the purview of the theory it tries to subvert.

There are other, less generous alternative interpretations, one of them being dismissive: who cares? This is a serious alternative: many if not most scholars go about their research, following an established methodology without much concern for the foundations of their activity, that is, why they should be doing what they are doing the way they are doing it. Scholars may improve methodologies and even get better results but it takes a great scholar to question what the others are taking for granted and presenting as an incontrovertible dogma. One such scholar in linguistics, who replaced the presumably completed structuralist agenda with the generative paradigm, was Chomsky (1965), who asserted that a refusal to consider the theory underlying an activity does not eliminate the theory but rather accepts an implicit theory without a chance to consider in consciously. So, theory building becomes simply an attempt to bring the implicit theory into full visibility, to explicate it, and to follow it consciously – or to modify it.

It is worth adding here that the constructivity of a full-fledged linguistic theory, including that of humor, does not pertain to other theories defined with the help of a set of necessary and sufficient conditions. Thus, Searle's (1969) Speech Act Theory defines the speech act of promise (and any other) as set of 9 necessary and sufficient conditions but there is no procedure for establishing that any condition is taking place: thus, a promise is a promise if the hearer would like the speaker to commit the future act that the speaker promises. A series of psychological experiments, extremely well designed a la Ruch (2012), would help to establish that but a philosophical theory would never rely on psychology.

Searle (1969) also differentiates between the necessary and especially sufficient conditions that are constitutive and those that are regulatory. Thus, the chess moves are observed when chess is played (necessary) and whenever a game is played that follows these moves, that game is chess (sufficient). But also, the rules do constitute the game of chess. Contrary to that, the necessary and sufficient rules of gravity do not establish gravity, so they are regulatory. In this context, even if something like the Main Hypothesis expresses a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for humor – and at a certain coarse grain size, it probably does – it does not constitute humor. It is very interesting to explore what makes these conditions regulatory. What does make humor exist? Is it a necessary mode of communication? We will not explore it any further here on a pretty feeble excuse that considering, let alone answering this question goes beyond the scope of a linguistic theory of humor.

4 The purview of a theory

The fact that the linguistic theory of humor has not been falsified as a scientific theory does not mean that it has not been criticized. As a dominant theory in the cognitive study of humor, as opposed to the emotional study that Martin 2007 assigns to psychology, it has been massively subjected to the appropriate treatment, namely, universally cited and not quite universally attacked. A book-length attack, Ritchie (2004) takes it to task for not being expressed in a logical formalism. My book has been widely and critically reviewed but hardly anybody has ever noted that it barely touched the substance of the theory and stopped much shorter of really substantive criticism from inside of the theory.

The theory was set up as conditional. It predicated itself on the pre-existence of a formal/computational theory/system of representation of meaning in natural language but nothing of the kind had yet been developed – it reached the non-conditional status only with the advent of the Ontological Semantic Technology (Raskin et al. 2010; Taylor et al. 2010, Taylor et al. 2011a, Taylor et al. 2011b; Hempelmann et al. 2010; Taylor and Raskin 2011). But the largely "soft," informal, non-constructive, atheoretical community took it for an attempt at the final truth and criticized it as such for something it had not made any claims about. Much of it came from European scholars, seriously affected by phenomenology, while the theory is, of course, a product of analytical philosophy. And while the inside criticism has questioned just about every aspect of the theory formally and agonized about strengthening, the outside criticism accused the theory of not explaining everything about every humorous situation. The standard argument against the theory has been that there is more to humor. And this raises the issue of the purview of the theory and sends us back to the informal analysis section that follows.

What of the information listed there in association of the joke is the theory responsible for? If all the theory is interested in is to discover a pair of opposed scripts in a text that it tests for being a joke, then even SSTH is a complete theory that has never been falsified. Then the theory may be criticized for having a very limited purview but not for being not a valid theory. Within the theory again, it has been exposed as proceeding on a similar idealization – the homogeneity of the community – that most linguistics had used unconsciously until Chomsky (1965) mentioned it in passing: while fully cognizant of the fact that humor affected different people differently, the theory dealt with an idealized homogeneous hearer/consumer of a joke. Carrell (1997a, 1997b) outlined a SSTH/GTVH compatible theory of the humor audience, a theory that still awaits its full development that will clearly combined the cognitive and emotional aspect of humor (see Ruch 1998).