

**JOKES IN THE MODERN ENGLISH COMMUNICATIVE SPACE:  
TEXTUAL AND DISCURSIVE ASPECTS**

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**Abstract.** *Humor is a universal aspect of human communication, yet it manifests uniquely across different cultures and languages. This article explores the textual and discursive aspects of jokes in the modern English communicative space. By analyzing their structural, linguistic, and contextual features, the study provides insights into how jokes function as both textual artifacts and dynamic discursive tools. The findings underline the socio-cultural significance of humor in English-speaking contexts, with examples drawn from digital media, stand-up comedy, and everyday interactions.*

**Key words:** *Humor studies, jokes, textual analysis, discursive functions, digital communication, multimodality, cultural contexts in humor, identity construction, social interaction, cross-cultural humor, participatory humor.*

**Introduction.** Humor has long been a subject of academic inquiry, with jokes serving as a key focus in studies of language and communication. In the modern English communicative space, jokes not only entertain but also reflect cultural values, societal norms, and interpersonal dynamics. This article examines jokes as both textual constructions and discursive phenomena, addressing their structural features, linguistic strategies, and pragmatic functions.

The textual construction of jokes has been extensively studied in the field of linguistics and humor research. Raskin's (1985) Semantic Script Theory of Humor (SSTH) underscores the importance of script opposition, where humor arises from the incongruity between two overlapping but contradictory scripts



within a joke. For example, wordplay and double entendres exemplify the creative manipulation of linguistic structures to produce humor.

Attardo (1994) extended this framework with the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH), identifying six parameters that define a joke: script opposition, logical mechanism, situation, target, narrative strategy, and language. This multidimensional approach emphasizes the interplay of linguistic and contextual elements in joke construction, offering a comprehensive understanding of their textual composition.

In the modern English communicative space, jokes often incorporate contemporary linguistic trends, such as internet slang, emojis, and memes. Studies by Dynel (2021) highlight the dynamic nature of jokes in digital communication, where multimodality and brevity are key textual features. The use of GIFs, hashtags, and other visual-textual hybrids reflects the evolving landscape of humor in online platforms.

From a discursive perspective, jokes function as tools for social interaction, identity construction, and power dynamics. Holmes (2006) examined humor in workplace communication, revealing how jokes are used to reinforce group solidarity, mitigate tension, and assert authority. Similarly, discourse analysis of political humor has shown how jokes critique power structures and influence public opinion (Tsakona & Popa, 2011).

In the digital era, the discursive functions of jokes have expanded to include global and cross-cultural communication. Androutsopoulos (2015) explored how jokes circulate across linguistic and cultural boundaries on social media, illustrating their role in fostering global connections while also highlighting potential misunderstandings due to cultural differences.

Additionally, the performative nature of jokes in digital spaces, such as Twitter and TikTok, has been a focus of recent research. Humor is not only produced but also co-constructed by audiences through likes, comments, and shares (Shifman, 2014). This participatory dimension underscores the importance of context and audience in shaping the discursive impact of jokes.





Pragmatic studies have further enriched our understanding of jokes in modern English. Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle and its maxims are often flouted in jokes to create humor through implicature. For instance, jokes frequently violate the maxim of relevance or manner to produce unexpected punchlines, thereby engaging audiences in inferential reasoning.

In digital communication, pragmatic phenomena such as code-switching and intertextuality are commonly observed in jokes. Research by Yus (2018) highlights how users exploit contextual cues and shared knowledge to interpret humor in online interactions, emphasizing the role of pragmatics in decoding multilayered jokes.

Despite the rich body of research, several areas warrant further investigation. First, there is a need for more studies on the intersection of humor, identity, and marginalized voices in the English communicative space. Understanding how jokes contribute to inclusivity or exclusion in digital and offline contexts can provide deeper insights into their societal impact.

Second, while much attention has been given to Western humor traditions, comparative studies across different cultural contexts remain limited. Exploring how English jokes interact with other linguistic and cultural paradigms can enhance our understanding of humor as a global phenomenon.

Lastly, advancements in artificial intelligence and machine learning present opportunities to study jokes through computational linguistics. Examining how algorithms generate and interpret humor can shed light on the boundaries of human and machine creativity in humor production.

The analysis of textual and discursive aspects of jokes reveals several key findings. First, the textual structure of jokes in modern English relies heavily on brevity, multimodality, and the creative use of language. This is particularly evident in digital spaces, where jokes are designed to capture attention quickly and are often accompanied by visual elements for added impact. Studies by Dynel (2021) confirm that the integration of visual and textual components enhances the humor effect and audience engagement.



Second, the discursive functions of jokes are closely tied to their social and cultural contexts. In workplace communication, jokes help establish hierarchies and foster collaboration (Holmes, 2006). On social media, jokes transcend linguistic boundaries, promoting cross-cultural interaction but also exposing users to potential misunderstandings. Androutsopoulos (2015) found that while jokes can build global communities, they often require shared cultural knowledge for full comprehension.

Moreover, pragmatic violations in jokes, such as flouting Gricean maxims, demonstrate the importance of audience inference in humor. Yus (2018) emphasizes that understanding jokes often involves decoding multiple layers of meaning, which may vary depending on the communicative platform and audience.

Textual Features of Jokes Jokes often rely on linguistic ambiguity and wordplay to elicit humor. For instance:

Pun: *"Why don't skeletons fight each other? Because they don't have the guts."*

This joke uses polysemy, with "guts" referring both to bravery and internal organs, creating a humorous double meaning.

Irony: "I'm on a seafood diet. I see food and eat it." The joke subverts the expectation of a serious dietary claim with a comedic twist.

Discursive Strategies in Joke-Telling Context plays a critical role in the effectiveness of jokes. In stand-up comedy, timing and delivery are crucial, as illustrated in this excerpt:

Comedian: "I told my wife she should embrace her mistakes. She hugged me." The humor stems from the incongruity between the intended and interpreted meanings of "embrace her mistakes."

In digital contexts, humor often incorporates visual elements and intertextual references, as seen in memes and viral tweets:

Meme: A picture of a cat with the caption, "I work hard so my cat can live a better life." The humor arises from anthropomorphizing the cat and juxtaposing human effort with feline leisure.





Social and Cultural Implications Jokes serve as mirrors of societal attitudes and cultural values. For example, self-deprecating humor often reflects cultural norms of humility and modesty. Conversely, satire targets power structures and social inequalities, exemplifying the subversive potential of humor.

This study highlights the multifaceted nature of jokes in the modern English communicative space. Textually, jokes employ a range of linguistic strategies to create humor, while discursively, they navigate complex social and cultural terrains. The findings underscore the importance of context in joke interpretation and the evolving role of humor in digital communication. Future research could explore cross-cultural comparisons of humor or investigate the impact of artificial intelligence on joke creation and appreciation.

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