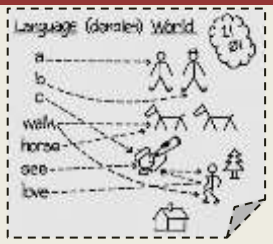
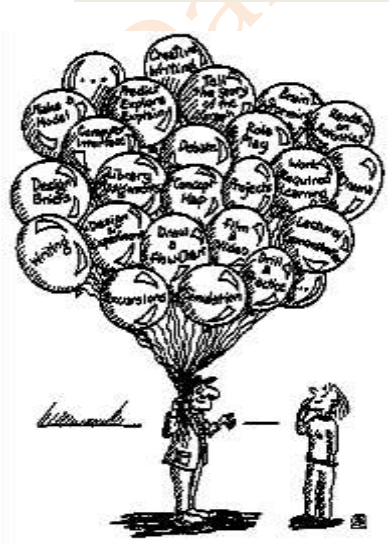
Daniela Sorea



Pragmatics

Some Cognitive Perspectives

With an Introduction by C. George Sandulescu



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In memory of my mother

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Interdisciplinarity

Pragmatics is overwhelmingly important! It is also overwhelmingly misunderstood, and chronically neglected. (Its *Wikipedia* entry is an instance of catastrophic mis-orientation.)

I for one am a pragmatics addict: I saw its vast significance as early as the 1950's, reading Peirce and Morris. I realised, even before entering

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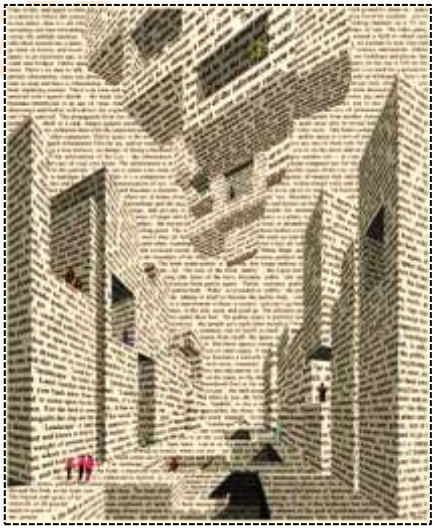
university in 1953 that no communication system could exist without the three components jointly proposed by the two Americans, namely, **semantics**, **syntactics**, and **pragmatics**. It was a time when none of the Romanian top linguists—Iordan, Graur, Rosetti—had a single word of English in their pocket (and they never even wanted to have one!).

This S S P triad that I had indeed got from the horse's mouth has stayed with me all my life, and remains essential for any discussion of all systems of signs. Then, I happened to meet Roman Jakobson at least ten times at various moments in the 20th Century, and he even invited me to hold a seminar at Harvard (in the Russian Dept.). His Scheme of Communication (Sender – Message – Receiver, accompanied by the vital twin constructs of **Code** and **Channel**) simplified life more than considerably to the teacher of English that I had been from the unusually early age of 15. (In 1948, when the King was gone, absolutely everybody in Romania wanted to learn English… Regardless.)



It is on that Jakobsonian foundation that I view **interdisciplinarity as a swing-wing strategy**, which varies considerably from one researcher to another. To say nothing of 'schools'! However, it entails both a quality, and a defect: the quality is to be open—to receive everything with open arms—that was The Roman Jakobson Attitude. And Daniela shares that with him. And with me.

The defect is to be excessively restrictive: and even rigid in one's

restrictiveness. N. Chomsky—or '**Homski**' (Хомский), as Jakobson kept calling him by his Russian name—is the paragon of the defect: with him, History is out, Etymology is out, Literature is out, Psychology is out, Sociology is out. And what not is out too. Semantics barely and modestly creeps in by the back door. (In 1957, ***Syntactic Structures*** had even eliminated semantics, to the exclusive profit of syntax!) Being a paragon of narrowness makes the Ckomsky attitude practically useless to any good teacher of English, and of any other *langue et civilisation* in general.

At the University of Stockholm, in the Dept. of Theoretical Linguistics, I was desperately trying forty years ago to introduce the necessity of ***belles lettres***. Without any success. Even Roman Jakobson came over to give me a helping hand, one afternoon or two. It was in the years after the publication of ***The Sound Pattern of English*** by N. Chomsky and Morris Halle, when the red carpet was given it at the World Congress of Linguistics (Bologna, 1972)… a book dedicated to… Roman Jakobson!

But the one man who really succeeded in achieving something was, paradoxically, Paul Grice. His first— unpublished — essay entitled 'Logic and Conversation' (a mere 20 pages or so!) was circulated **in typescript** in the early 1970's everywhere in Scandinavia and Germany. (Desktops or even laptops had not yet been conceived at the time.) And that began to mean the beginning of a turning point in West

European thinking on language at the time. For philosopher Grice was indeed from square one the epitome of pragmatics. And a fabulous propounder of it he was too.

I have since specialized in 'the conjoined relation between language studies and literature studies.' And it is on that particular basis that I am more than delighted to introduce to all of you this book on *Pragmatics* most enthusiastically! From now on, I let the book speak for itself. And I warmly congratulate Daniela Sorea for it!

C. George Sandulescu

23 August 2012

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Briefly about the Author

Dr. Daniela Sorea is a member of the English Language and Literature Department of the University of Bucharest, as a Reader. She holds a Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics from the University of Lancaster, UK. She has been teaching courses for both undergraduates: *Semantics and Pragmatics, Language, Cognition and Translation, Language, Gender and Communities of Practice,* as well as courses and workshops for postgraduates*: Intercultural Pragmatics, Translation Studies, Figurative Language in Media Discourses.*

She published a chapter on the Patriarchal Pro-Natality Discourse in Communist Romania in a volume edited by Lia Litosseliti, L. & Jane Sunderland, GENDER IDENTITY AND DISCOURSE ANALYSIS, published with John Benjamins, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, 2002. Her previous publications include SOCIAL SCHEMATA AND PERCEPTIONS OF MASCULINITY (Lambert Academic Publishing. Saarbrucken 2010) and several articles on pragmatic and cognitive approaches to literary and non-literary texts, with special focus on figurative language, irony and humour, published with national and international journals.

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FOREWORD

Writing this book has a twofold purpose. The first is to arouse the interest of neophytes in the complex interconnections between language structure, language use, cultural input and conceptual systematisation. The second envisages interdisciplinary insights meant to unveil the way language functions are shaped by cognitive representations and cultural practices.

Hopefully, the present book will encourage anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists and ethnographers to join linguists in a common endeavour to disclose the complex workings of language within specific contexts, involving specific participants whose cognitive environments ceaselessly remould the dynamics of communication. I would find it equally rewarding if scholars in cultural studies might provide new angles on and further refinement of the interdisciplinary nature of verbal exchanges, partially revealed by the analyses of various contemporary texts contained in this book.

The book is structured into eight chapters. Chapter 1 discusses various definitions of pragmatics while stressing the key concepts prioritised by each such definition (1.1.). Locating pragmatics within 'use' theories of meaning (1.2.4.) requires comparing use-centred approaches to language to two main other families of meaning theories, namely ; 'thing' theories of meaning (1.2.1.) and 'idea' theories of meaning (1.2.3.). As a crucial notion for tracing the interface between semantics and pragmatics, contextualisation is dealt with in the second part of Chapter 1 (1.5.). Finally, in the newly-added section 1.5.5., communicative phenomena are equally weighed in the light of recent theories dealing within 'communities of practice'.

Chapter 2 presents Austin's Speech Act Theory (2.1.), insisting on the performative vs. constative distinction as well as on the triad locutionary-illocutionary-perlocutionary act. Searle's typology is discussed (2.2.1.) and several speech acts (promises, questions and requests) are illustrated within the Searlean framework. The last section in this chapter (2.3.) deals with critical stances regarding the Searlean view.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to indirectness and the parameters which govern it: intentionality, power, social distance and degree of imposition. After a discussion of the relation between indirectness and politeness (3.6.), two samples of textual

analysis are provided: an excerpt from the series '*Friends*' and the opening fragment from Jonathan Coe's novel '*The House of Sleep*'.

Chapter 4 focuses on the Gricean distinction between saying and implying, followed by a thorough presentation and illustration of Grice's maxims. Types of non-observance of the maxims, namely: flouts, violations, infringements, suspensions and cases of opting out, are further dealt with. Suggested readjustments of the Gricean approach are not neglected when bringing into discussion Attardo's Perlocutionary Cooperative Principle (4.4.) and Sperber and Wilson's 'principle of relevance' (4.5.). Two analyses in terms of conversational implicatures and non-observance of Gricean maxims are supplied: one of an excerpt from the series '*Seinfeld*', the other from O'Henry's short story '*The Lickpenny Lover*'. Overlappings between inferencing and activation of cognitive schemata is further discussed (4.7.), followed by an illustration of schema instantiation in the case of sitcom jokes.

Chapter 5 discusses politeness phenomena and communicative strategies in the light of Brown and Levinson's notion of 'face', in an attempt to classify polite and impolite strategies according to the degree of face threat (5.4. and 5.5.). Analyses of various texts in terms of Brown and Levinson's and Culpeper's strategies are supplied. Such texts vary from excerpts from widely read contemporary 'chick lit' ('*The Devil Wears Prada*', '*Bridget Jones's Diary*') to widely watched sitcoms ('*Married ... with Children*' and '*Seinfeld*') or dramedies ('*The Gilmore Girls*').

Chapter 6 assesses various views on irony, starting with Grice's, Searle's, Sperber and Wilson's, and continuing with the 'Pretense Theory' set forth by Clark and Gerrig and the 'Tinge hypothesis' elaborated by Dews and Winner. Special emphasis is laid on 'incongruity' and 'attitude' as key concepts underlying the understanding of irony both as a manner of speech and a manner of thought, hence the stress laid on Attardo's viewing irony as 'relevant inappropriateness' (6.3.9.). Along the same line of argumentation, i.e. incompatibility between what is literally said and what appears as blatantly untrue, hyperbole is equally discussed (6.5.). The concepts discussed are applied to an analysis of several fragments from '*A Streetcar Named Desire*' and from '*Married with Children*'. The newly-inserted sections 6.8.1. and 6.8.2. discuss and illustrate the role and impact of sarcastic irony in certain conversations from '*The Devil Wears Prada*' and from the TV series 'Grey's *Anatomy*' .

Chapter 7 discusses the all-pervasiveness of metaphor in everyday language as well as its experiential grounding. The systematic correspondences between a source domain and a target domain are richly illustrated with a corpus of metaphors conceptualising love (7.6.), anger (7.7.) and death (7.8.). The corpus is meant to strengthen the cognitivist claim that language is not independent of thought and plays a fundamental part in our conceptualisation of experience, since it provides

much of the foundation for thought, reason, and imagination.

Chapter 8 presents and illustrates several contemporary views on parody, insisting on its being a paradoxical combination of echoic repetition and avowed dissociation. Like irony, parody combines appropriation and distanciation, thus displaying both intertextual allusions and dissociative stances. Several illustrations from media texts are provided in order to highlight how parodic reworkings exploit hypotextual resources, whose allegedly familiar features they subvert, exaggerate or imitate.

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1. THE SCOPE OF PRAGMATICS

Starting with various definitions assigned to pragmatics as a discipline and relying on several sets of theories of meaning, the present chapter intends to define context as the key element meant to shed light on the interweaving of language use and social practice. Concomitantly, stress is laid on views that define language as social action in the wider ever-fluctuating network of communicative interactions, purposes and intentions.

1.1. Defining pragmatics

As descriptive of a linguistic discipline, the term 'pragmatics' was coined by Charles Morris (1938), in his turn inspired by the semiotician Charles Sanders Peirce. Morris divides linguistics into three provinces: syntax or the study of the relation between signs and other signs, semantics or the study of signs to their referents and pragmatics or "the study of the relations of signs to interpreters" (Morris 1938: 84). Since then a plethora of definitions of pragmatics have mushroomed, some confined to its definition as the investigation of speech acts, others expanding it so to cover the multifariously vast domain of "the science of language in use" (Haberland and Mey 1977: 1), dealing with such aspects as the status of language users, the context of interactions and the appropriateness of utterances within specific social situations, as well as the communicative goals pursued by communicators.

Certain definitions are more comprehensive in that they bring into the picture concepts almost exclusively pertaining to the domain of pragmatics. Thus, Levinson's definition reads as follows: "Pragmatics is the study of deixis, implicature, presupposition, speech acts, and aspects of discourse structure" (Levinson 1983: 27). It thus draws attention to the interface between semantics and pragmatics, since phenomena such as deictic items or presuppositions initially pertained to the field of logical semantics. Gazdar's definition is even more elaborate "Pragmatics, for a natural language, concerns 'illocutionary force', 'implicature', 'presupposition' and 'context-dependent acceptability'" (Gazdar 1979: 2). Nevertheless, this definition still borders on the in-between area where semantics and pragmatics overlap, since bringing into discussion the opposition between competence as ideal linguistic achievement and performance as situationally located linguistic action is unavoidable. While wondering whether pragmatics has its own history or has been subsumed under various denominations within field and lines of

inquiry, predominantly philosophy-related, Biletzi (1996) questions the clear-cut status of pragmatics as an independent discipline while emphasising its ubiquitous interdisciplinarity:

> The relatively young age of pragmatics has had the further effect of a preponderance of attempts at neatly demarcating pragmatics (as philosophico-logico-linguistic vs. psychological study; or as differentiated from semantics; or as competence vs. performance; etc). Whether one wants to view pragmatics as the study of the grammatically encoded aspects of context, or as the study of constraints on the appropriateness of utterances, or as defined ostensively as a list of topics (to name just a few alternatives) will make a great difference, in the final analysis, to what one is looking for in a history of pragmatics (Biletzi 1996: 457-458)

Any attempt to supply a fine-grained definition of pragmatics invites investigation along two main directions:

1) approaches to language meaning and reference and their classification into families of theories of meaning
2) the interface between semantics and pragmatics

1.2. Theories of meaning

Robert Stainton defines language as follows: "Language is a system of symbols which we know and use" (Stainton 1996: 4). Investigating meaning entails three fundamental ways of viewing the relationship between language and reality, largely assimilated within three main families of theories of meaning:

1) THING theories of meaning, which view language exclusively as a system of symbols designating specific 'things' or objects or referents
2) IDEA theories of meaning, which lay emphasis on knowledge, on language being known via the comprehenders' mental representations
3) USE theories of meaning, which analyse language as social action, used for communicative purposes pursued by historically situated participants, whose use of language structures is closely tied to their harbouring specific intentions (Stainton 1996)

The main tenets of the three families of theories of meaning will be enlarged upon in the pages to come.

1. 2.1. 'Thing' Theories of Meaning

The basic claim of 'thing' theories of meaning is that meaningfulness lies in the relations between words or symbols and referents or extra-linguistic objects. Such theories roughly fall into two categories: 'direct' and 'mediated' theories of meaning.

1.2.1.1. Direct Reference Theories

Direct reference theories argue that any word corresponds to an external object and there is nothing mediating between the word and the thing referred to. Each meaningful expression is assigned a specific *referent* or *extra-linguistic object* and the *denotation* of any expression becomes *the thing named*, or *designated* by that expression. 'Thing' theories assess sentences in terms of their *truth values*, indicated by its correspondence between the respective sentence and certain extra-linguistic facts or states of affairs. To verify whether a statement is true or not, researchers need to have access to the extra-linguistic world. The so-called *truth conditions* need to be checked against facts meant to empower researchers to establish the truth or falsehood of a specific sentence.

Rooted in logical positivism, such *'verificationist theories'* professed by the Vienna Circle philosophers (such as Carnap, Schlick, Russell) revolve around the claim that "A significant assertion is one which may be tested for truth or falsity by means of experience". Since experience is the source of meaning, sentences whose meaning cannot be directly verified by resorting to extra-linguistic experience are likely to be considered meaningless.

Opponents of verificationist theories attempt to dismantle the description of sentences in terms of the true/false dichotomy. An example that is meant to question such a dichotomy would be a sentence like

(1) 'The king of France is bald',

which cannot be classified as either true or false, given the researcher's failure to identify a referent corresponding to the expression 'the King of France' (there is no such entity in the contemporary extra-linguistic reality).

1.2.1.2. 'Mediated reference' theories

Instead of focusing upon the one-to-one correspondence between a sign and the referent, 'mediated reference' theories probe into the relationship between signs, objects and mental representations. Frege's distinction between *sense* and *reference* is crucial for such approaches to understanding meaning. Senses are regarded as the multifarious ways in which people envisage objects, the manners in which objects are presented. In Frege's words, senses provide 'the manner and context of presentation' of the object. "The sense of a term is the concept or definition a speaker grasps when understanding what the term means, while the reference of a term is the object or the set of objects which the term names" (Sankey 2000: 128). Thus, the sense of the term 'red' is the idea of 'redness' as mentally represented by a language user. The 'reference' of 'red' includes the set of red entities conceptualised by means of the term 'red'.

Two basic claims are of particular significance:

1) Terms may differ in sense although they may refer to the same entity. Frege's classic example is that of the expressions 'Evening Star' and 'Morning Star' which have different senses despite their designating the same entity, namely the Planet Venus
2) The sense of a term determines the reference of that term: if we assume that the sense of a term is specified via a description, then the reference of that term is the designatum that satisfies the description which provides sense to the term.

Both the sense and the referent are subject to change. 'Atom' or 'whale' do not refer to the same entity they used to designate initially. Thus, atom' was initially defined as an indivisible unit, only to be later found out to split into a nucleus and electrons'. 'Whale was thought to be a fish species until established to belong to the category 'mammals'. Nevertheless, change of sense has not led to such expressions being devoid of meaning.

Terms may differ in sense although they may designate the same object. For instance, 'David Bowie' and 'David Robert Jones' DO NOT have the same sense although they refer to the same person, the famous British rock star. A sentence like

(**2**) 'It is common knowledge that David Bowie created Ziggy Stardust in the 70s' is a perfectly intelligible sentence, while

(**3**) 'It is common knowledge that David Robert Jones created Ziggy Stardust in the 70s'

is only understandable for connoisseurs. The same applies to expressions such

as *Shakespeare/or The Swan of Avon* or *Elvis Presley/The King of Rock*. Such expressions may designate the same referent yet express a different sense. As already stated, *if the sense of a term is specified by means of a description*, while the *reference of a term is whatever satisfies the description* granting sense to the term. Sense, then, *mediates* between a sign and what the sign refers to. There are also terms or expressions with associated senses which lack a real world referent or do not denote a specific existing entity such as: *unicorn, leprechaun, hobbit, the, but, the largest number in the world, the person who will invent the cure against Alzheimer's, the likely winner of the next Nobel Prize.*

Putnam (1975: 223-227) makes an even stronger claim in relation to causality between words and referents: reference need not be determined by sense but rather by causal relations speakers become aware of during their interaction with the world. Putnam's claim is illustrated with the famous story of the Twin Earth, where everything is identical to our planet but for water whose chemical formula is different. On earth water is called H20 while Twin-Earthers call it XYZ. Neither are aware of the distinctive chemical formula of H20 and respectively XYZ.Then, when referring to the liquid that quenches thirst and puts out fires, Earthers and Twin-Earthers designate a different entity. "Consequently, terms with the same sense may refer to different things, and so the sense of a term does not determine its reference" (Sankey 2000: 131). Putnam argues that the determination of reference requires a broadly contextual framework and that language users need to bear some causal relation to an entity in order to refer to it. That reference is determined by causal relations is a claim reinforced by Kripke in his notion of 'initial baptism" (Kripke 1980: 96-97). He maintains that a causal chain emerges between a name and its users as a result of initially baptising an entity with a chosen name. Reference is determined by causal connections rather than by some descriptive sense.

1.2.3. 'Idea' theories of meaning

Idea theories of meaning claim that linguistic meaning emerging from the pairing of expressions with 'something in the mind' rather than from entities existing 'in the world'.

There are three main versions of 'IDEA' theories of meaning:

a) the mental image version, which maintains that meanings derive from 'pictures in the head'

c) the LOT version, which defines meaning as expressible in terms of a "language of

thought"

b) the intention-based theory, according to which meanings derive from speakers' intentions.

1.2.3.1. The mental image version

In his *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, Hume defines words as 'expressive ideas', likening them to *complexes of remembered sensations or perceptions*, which generate mental images. If Hume's viewing words as clusters of perceptions were applied to present-day reality, we might assert that, for instance, mental images associated with 'pizza' or rock concert' collectively generate the meanings of the words/phrases 'pizza' and respectively 'rock concert'.

A radical mentalistic view on language is Edward Bradford Titchener's, according to which there is a fixed image corresponding to each and every word. Titchener exemplifies with the word 'cow', mentally represented as 'a longuish rectangle with a certain facial expression, a sort of exaggerated pout". He pictures the word 'meaning' as "the blue-grey tip of a kind of scoop which has a bit of yellow about it". According to such a radical imagistic theory, the question inevitably arises whether words like 'three', 'but' and 'on' are devoid of meaning altogether. The question unveils some flaws of idea-based theories. In the first place, not all meanings can be captured by mental images. Often, certain associations between words and mental meanings are not only idiosyncratic but also culture-specific: an Eskimo may entertain a different mental representation of 'pizza' than a regular American or European. An Amish person may not activate any mental representation of 'rock concert' since members of Amish communities live in seclusion and are not allowed to listen to the radio or watch TV. When hearing or reading the phrase 'tired child', one may have in mind a child that is about to fall asleep, others may be more likely to represent him/her as fussy and jumpy, some may visualise a child shuffling their feet at the end of a tiresome walk, others may see a child gasping with effort while playing football. Some mental images might not be the result of habitual interaction with the referent in question, but the consequence of some accidental association (Stainton 1996, Saaed 1996).

For instance, a child's perception of a barking dog may be dread-inducing if their first encounter was with a hungry, aggressive stray dog. A child who is a pet owner mentally represents a barking dog as a dog welcoming him/her home or acknowledging their joy in relation to their encounters. Furthermore, images may not always correspond to classes of things: it is hard to come up with supposedly shared mental representations of words designating classes such as 'vegetables', or

'stationery' or even 'seasons', because such representations are always culture-specific: autumn may not be visualisable by inhabitants of regions such as the Arctic one or the tropical one, where there is only one long winter or respectively summer. The strongest argument against mentalistic theories is, however, that ideas cannot resemble real life entities: an idea could in no way be similar to a dog or a pizza or autumn.

1.2.3. 2. 'LOT' theories of meaning

'LOT' (acronym for 'language of thought') theories of meaning maintain that public words and sentences as meaningful because they are paired with internal words and sentences, namely with certain expressions of the language of thought, also known as mentalese or LOT. In Fodor's view, mental representations are sentence-like than picture-like and the meaning of an expression in a public language is learned provided it is translated into LOT. If an expression or public symbol fails to activate a mental, sentence-like expression, it is to be labelled as meaningless.

1.2.3.3. The intention-based theory of meaning

Understanding meaning in terms of speakers' intentions is a theory elaborated by the philosopher Paul Grice. A major distinction is operated between 'natural' meaning, arising from a causal or logical relation between two signs and 'non-natural' meaning, a matter of social convention, bearing no cause-effect relation between signs. The two sentences below illustrate the notion of natural meaning

(**3**) Those spots mean measles
(**4**) Having a flat tyre means that we are going to arrive late.

In example (**3**) certain spots on a person's skin enable the physician diagnose a certain disease. In example (**4**) a flat tyre (logically) entails changing the tyre, a time-consuming task which will lead to delay in arriving at the destination.

The examples below evince that no cause-effect relationship is likely to be established concerning sentences (**5**) and (**6**):

(**5**) Those three rings on the bell mean that the bus is full
(**6**) That remark, 'Smith couldn't get on without his trouble and strife' meant that Smith found his wife indispensable.

In example (**5**), the ring of the bell is a conventional way of signalling to passengers that the bus is full and no further passengers are allowed to board it. Example (**6**) uses a conventional linguistic device, namely rhyming slang, in order to designate the referent ' Smith's wife'.

In the Gricean view, *Speaker's meaning* is to be deciphered or 'cashed out' in terms of *Speaker's intentions*. Meanings arise from pairing utterances with intentions. For instance, it has long become a matter of social and linguistic convention that an utterance of the kind 'Congratulations for getting that scholarship' is intended as congratulating the receiver of the scholarship. An utterance such as 'Thank you for your support' is intended as an expression of gratitude on the part of the speaker for some act the hearer did for his/her sake. The context in which one proffers their thanks may also indicate an ironical use of a gratitude formula: the speaker may utter congratulatory words insincerely and with the overt intention of sounding insincere, in order to point out that the hearer does not deserve an ounce of gratitude, presumably because they have shown no support (Chapman 2000, Saaed 1996)

Grice's intention-based theory has substantially contributed to the emergence and dissemination of the third group of theories of meaning, namely 'use' theories, which make the object of investigation in the field of pragmatics.

1.2.4. The 'use' theory of meaning

Pragmatics is an interdisciplinary science, where philosophy and linguistics converge in an endeavour to analyses meaning in use. The very etymology of 'pragmatics' indicates its focus on language as social action, since in Greek '*pragma*' is the equivalent of practice or action. Pragmatics locates language within wider social and cultural settings while also thoroughly contemplating the context of verbal exchanges. The meaning of a linguistic expression is given by its use, under certain circumstances, where language users with specific identities harbour specific intentions and follow specific communicative purposes. For instance, the meaning of 'I'm sorry' is supplied by what the expression does for a speaker and hearer alike, under a specific linguistic and extra-linguistic context (Nehrlich and Clarke 1996).

As Mey notes,

> pragmatics focuses on the user and his or her conditions of language use. By this is meant not only that the user is considered as being in the possession of certain language facilities (either innate, as some have postulated, or acquired, or a combination of both) which have to be developed through a process of individual growth and evolution, but, more specifically, that there are certain societal factors that influence the development and use of language, both in the acquisition stage and in usage itself (Mey 1998: 730).

According to Wittgenstein (1953), language is used in a multiplicity of ways and language users engage in a multitude of '*language-games*', such as: giving orders, formulating invitations, thanking, cursing, greeting, praying, describing objects or persons, narrating events, speculating about happenings, making assumptions, emitting and supporting hypotheses, fabricating lies, play-acting, singing, concocting and guessing riddles, telling jokes, and last but not least, translating from one language into another.

Inevitably, use-focused or pragmatic views on language regard meaning as context-dependent with reference to the possible networks of actions and the potential effects such actions may generate. Such views run contrary to truth-conditional or verificationist views on language, which assess sentence meaning in terms of truth-conditions that need testing in the extra-linguistic world. According to Strawson, meaning exceeds the limitations of reference and is not solely used to describe the world. Hence, Strawson's '*descriptive fallacy*': Since description is not the only purpose of using language, lack of reference does not necessarily entail meaninglessness (Stainton 1996, Chapman 2000).

In his seminal book, '*How to do things with words*' (1962), Austin stated that one of the age-old enigmas of philosophy - "how to bridge the gap between language and reality" - arises only when description (or representation) is regarded as the sole function of language, overlooking instances where *language and reality actually collapse into one 'deed'* accomplished with and through language. In the vein of thought inaugurated by Wittgenstein, Austin argues that, instead of saying something a speaker may be <u>doing</u> something or be performing an action: *ask questions, give order or commands, get married, baptize, excommunicate, appoint somebody in a certain social or professional position, make bets, invitations, offers and promises, congratulate, warn, apologise, threaten, curse, protest, toast, thank and bless*.

As Saaed (1996: 112) emphasises, part of the meaning of an uttered expression resides in '*its intended social function*'. If interlocutors endeavour to employ language

realistically and efficiently, they need to consider the goals usually pursued by uttering certain linguistic expressions within specific cultural communities, the intentions underlying the selection of such utterances over others as well as the manner in which these uses are signalled.

Obviously, use-centred approaches to language bring into discussion the opposition between verificationism and contextualism, inevitably followed by the elucidation of the boundary between semantics and pragmatics.

1.3. Verificationism versus contextualism

The distinction between true and non-true sentences is century old. Aristotle remarked that 'Not all sentences are statements [*apophantikos*]; only such as have in them either truth or falsity. Thus a prayer is a sentence, but neither true nor false' (*On Interpretation* 17a,1). The Stoics labelled a 'judgment' (*axioma*) as either true or false while an interrogation, an inquiry or an imperative, could not be assigned truth value (cf. Diogenes Laertius *Lives VII*: 65-68). For more than two millennia, logicians and language philosophers focused on statements and their validity, excluding other propositional types (questions, commands, exclamations of surprise, disbelief or regret, etc.)

A long-lasting fiery dispute has been unfolding between natural language, communication- oriented philosophers on the one hand and truth-conditional semantics on the other, springing from verificationist views on language.

Verificationism was a philosophical movement in the academic circles of Vienna in the 1920s and 1930s, involving philosophers such as Moritz Schlick and Rudolf Carnap. Largely understood as an extreme form of empiricism, and getting traced back to the 'philosophie positive' of 19th century French thinker Auguste Comte, verificationism posed philosophical issues in terms of language. One of the basic claims was that any significant assertion could be tested for truth or falsity by way of experience. Hence the principle of verifiability: "The Meaning of a Proposition is the Method of verification". The question "What does this sentence mean?" is identical with (has the same answer as) the question: "How is this proposition verified?" (Schlick 1938/1981: 34). As Schlick himself realised, one of the flaws of verificationism was that untestable or unverifiable sentences had to be dismissed as meaningless. As Sankey concludes: "[...] if experience is the source of meaning, terms whose meaning cannot be directly given by appeal to experience

may fail to have any meaning at all" (Sankey 2000: 121). Obviously, as I will show later, many propositions or expressions are not directly verifiable yet language users do not find them meaningless.

Logical positivism was criticised by Philosophers such as Paul Feyerabend (1975) or Thomas Kuhn (1962/1970), who contested verificationist approaches as the sole reliable insights into science. Such philosophers argue in favour of espousing a variety of methodological standards when appraising scientific facts or philosophical claims, while rejecting the use of unique scientific methods regarded as universal and resistant to alteration. Methods are open to revision and humankind should welcome productive historical variation of paradigms of scientific reasoning. In addition, meaningful observation was regarded as context-dependent rather than self-standing and theory-laden rather than independent of theoretical underpinnings. According to thinkers such as Feyerabend (1975) or Kuhn (1962/1970), "Meaning is determined in a holistic manner, by means of the whole theoretical context in which the observational term is used" (Sankey 2000: 126)

Initially a backlash against the traditional verificationist view, contextualism has become a trend in the philosophy of language maintaining that sentences acquire full-fledged content only when produced in the context of a speech act. Contextualism reinforces the position held in the 1950s by ordinary language philosophers such as Wittgenstein, J. L. Austin, and subsequently J. Searle. In the contextualist view, meaning can only be successfully delved into when the sentence is immersed in the context in which it was uttered. Dummet (2003) has striven to reconcile the two clashing positions by claiming that the view supporting the claim that language is used to communicate presupposes the view that language is a way of expressing / articulating thoughts. Thus, the two views are rather compatible than mutually exclusive, as revealed in the discussion between the interface between semantics and pragmatics below. This topic will be more fully dealt with in the next chapter.

1.4. The semantics/pragmatics interface

Truth-conditional semantics focuses on sentence meaning, and its purpose is to analyse sentence meaning in the light of formal rigour and logical plausibility by assigning truth conditions to sentence meaning in compliance with ongoing states-of-affairs. Nevertheless, the analysis of the structure of the sentence and the encoded

lexical content in terms of truth-conditions, needs supplementing by inferring information about meaning supplied by other sources (Chapman 2000). The *utterance* is the real, physically graspable unit of meaning that carries some informative contribution through the words used, the structure, its location in the conversation setting , the additional senses it triggers within that particular context, the immersion in the overall system of gestures and other ways of conveying meaning. "The most important of these sources is the context of utterance, understood broadly as the background knowledge of the interlocutors, information conveyed in other parts of the conversation or written text (co-text), as well as the baggage of world experience brought to the situation of discourse by the interlocutors" (Jaszczolt 2006: 3).

Along this line of investigation, the interface between semantics and pragmatics both delimits and reunites two comparatively separate disciplines, the formal study of sentence meaning and the study of the properties of speech acts as instances of language in use and language users' intentions. As Capone (2005) points out, language is both 'an instrument of thought' and 'an instrument of social action'

> Speech acts have their effects not only because certain persons have got appropriate thoughts but, mainly, because these thoughts have been publicly expressed by means of utterances which are socially noticeable events bound to have certain conventional social consequences. A speech act A is normally brought into effect by means of an illocutionary force indicating device, essentially some linguistic means conventionally adopted to vocalize a certain thought that, once it is vocalized in public, becomes associated with an action A (Capone 2005: 23).

Since semantics and pragmatics have become increasingly intertwined, the contribution of pragmatic inference to the elucidation of the speaker's intentions has grown prominent, alongside with the contribution of context-bound information to the clarification of semantic content. This has facilitated the shift of the centre of attention from the sentence to the utterance.

In analysing meaning in actual communicative situations, the key notions to be looked into are speaker's meaning and intention and recovery of speaker's meaning and intentions by the addressee. Grice defines this meaning by resorting to speaker's intentions and the reflexive nature of those intentions, namely their need to be recognised as such by the addressee. In his definition of non-natural or conventional meaning, Grice insists on the crucial role played by intentionality: "A meant NN something by *x*' is roughly equivalent to <A uttered *x* with the intention

of inducing a belief by means of the recognition of this intention>" (Grice 1975: 219).

Cappelen and Lepore claim that it is a mistake to assume that a semantic theory should account for speakers' intuitions about the content of the utterance, i.e. about the speaker's meaning.

> Semantics is about how best to specify the semantic value of the lexical items and their contribution to the semantic values of complex expressions and sentences in which they occur. On the other hand, when we think abut and describe what people say, i.e., when our aim is to represent or articulate what's said by an utterance, we aim to characterize a speaker's act (that utterance), and in so doing our aim is to determine something about a particular act in a particular context […] (Cappelen and Lepore 2005: 58).

The role pragmatics plays in specifying the content of a speech act in context is to add features of meaning to the semantics of the sentence; it is always possible to return from the contextualized speech act to the literal speech act by subtracting the context-dependent features. Mey emphasises the interdependence between the literal speech act and the context of use.

> Speech acts, in order to be effective, have to be situated. That is to say, they both rely on, and actively create, the situation in which they are realized. Thus, a situated speech act comes close to what has been called a speech event in ethnographic and anthropological studies (Bauman and Sherzer, 1974): speech as centred on an institutionalized social activity of a certain kind, such as teaching, visiting a doctor's office, participating in a tea-ceremony, and so on. In all such activities, speech is, in a way, prescribed: only certain utterances can be expected and will thus be acceptable; conversely, the participants in the situation, by their acceptance of their own and others' utterances, establish and reaffirm the social situation in which the utterances are uttered and in which they find themselves as utterers (Mey 2001: 219).

The boundary between what is said and what is implied is slippery, as some types of implicatures are closer in their characteristics to the semantic content of the sentence, while others more heavily rely on deriving speaker's intentions out of context-related factors. Levinson (1995, 2000) proposes a level of meaning that lies between semantics and pragmatics while preserving the weight of contextual factors in meaning comprehension. retaining the contextualist assumptions. Levinson's

theory is one of presumed or 'presumptive' meanings, relying on generalized conversational implicatures (Levinson 2000). Presumed meanings are very useful for human communication, since human speech unfolds relatively slowly and is thus time-consuming. On the other hand, humans' mental capacity for speech production and speech comprehension is remarkable. Levinson describes this contrast as a 'bottleneck in the speed of human communication' (Levinson 2000: 28) and presents it as justification for communicating through implicatures: while producing speech slows communication down, inferencing can speed it up, taking into account that "inference is cheap, articulation expensive, and thus the design requirements are for a system that maximizes inference" (Levinson 2000: 29). Otherwise formulated, understanding communicative intentions involves appropriately judging the impact of expectations, inferencing, individual mental representations and shortcuts brought about by shared collective representations meant to elucidate the meaning of contextually-situated utterances.

Capone calls such contextually-situated 'pragmemes',

> A pragmeme is a speech act – an utterance associated with a goal (and an intention to bring about such-and-such effects), which is to modify a situation and change the roles of the participants within that situation or to keep the roles the same while bringing about other types of effects, such as exchanging or assessing information, or engaging in an interactional episode whose significance lies in the production of social gratification or, otherwise, social bonds (Capone 2004: 54).

The above definition of pragmemes reinforces the claim that successful communication exploits not only the linguistic meaning of sentences but also the recognition of the speaker's intentions to change ongoing states-of-affairs, to pursue certain goals, to engage in espousing certain roles and to produce anticipated affects upon the addressee. Often most such goal-oriented, role-based interactions include some discrepancy between what is said (the truth-conditional aspects of the sentence) and what is implied or implicated (the pragmatic, context-bound, inferential aspects of the utterance). As pointed out by (see also Lyons 1987:157), the boundary between semantics and pragmatics has been amply discussed in terms of the following interrelated distinctions:

(i) meaning vs. use;
(ii) conventional vs. non-conventional meaning;
(iii) truth-conditional vs. non-truth-conditional meaning;
(iv) propositions vs. utterances;

(v) context-dependent vs. context-independent meaning.

The next section will provide several views on context as delineated from the standpoints of a variety of disciplines.

1.5. Context

The word 'context' derives from *texere* ('to weave' in Latin). The related verb *contexere* means 'to weave together', 'to interweave' or 'to compose'. Initially the term designated the act of composition, of articulating scraps of language into coherent and harmonious written texts. Later on, the term expanded from denoting the composition of meaningful discursive stretches of either spoken or written language to the conditions that facilitate understanding presumably meaningful stretches of language: "From describing the act of conjoining, the term then comes to designate the conditions shaping that which has been conjoined" (Dilley 2002: 442)

Adopting context as an analytical tool generates a dilemma between relativism, or what Culler calls 'the unboundedness of context' (1983), and the endeavour for universality and objectivity. Context-dependence views on language, basically anthropological, oppose perspectives that regard language as a formal, context-free, self-reliant and self-regulated system. Contextualists (Hymes 1962) desist from looking at language as if it were an abstract, ideal, self-sufficient system, meant to be investigated irrespective of the contexts in which it is used and of the actual users. Exclusively focusing on language structures and mechanisms, Chomskyan linguistics has researched language as an autonomous entity, in isolation from other social activities accompanying it or simply smoothening its functioning as a communicative instrument. By contrast, sociolinguistics and anthropological linguistics has emphasised the crucial role of context in verbal communication : " As an aspect of the speaker's situation or as an aspect of the surrounding social situation, context in linguistics covers a broad range of social phenomena as well as actor-oriented characteristics" (Dilley 2002: 445).

Language is a social resource, a set of cultural practices using intrapersonal (individual) representations and interpersonal (collectively shared) representations to order to enable people to communicate (Duranti 1997: 3). As an act of communication, any speech act is part of a network of social acts and participants in verbal interactions are social actors, members of specific communities, organized in a system of social institutions and envisaging certain sets of expectations, beliefs and

moral values. Language is used not only to represent the surrounding world, but to interact with it and actively mould it and (re)constitute it (Duranti 1997: 214).

1.5.1. Malinowski's 'context of situation'

Language practices need to be grasped and employed for communicative purposes via being anchored in a context of situation, which allows language to turn into 'a mode of action' (Malinowski 1923 in Duranti 1997: 215), Anthropological linguistics maintains that the study of any language cannot be achieved unless the study of the culture and social environment of the respective language speakers is equally probed into. According to Malinowki, the notion of 'context of situation' "indicates on the one hand that the conception of *context* has to be broadened and on the other that the *situation* in which words are uttered can never be passed over as irrelevant to the linguistic expression" (Malinowski 1923: 306). Malinowski regards language as an indispensable component of human behaviour, since he sustains that "the main function of language is not to express thought, not to duplicate mental processes, but rather to play an active pragmatic part in human behaviour" (1935). Consequently, Malinowski defines 'context of situation' as tantamount to 'context of culture', a notion that encompasses facial expression, gestures, body movements, the presence of other listeners, as well as the activities, beliefs and cultural practices the respective community has adopted and shared. Along the same line of investigation, linguists such as Firth and Hymes devised ethnographic, socially and historically situated frames of reference for the interpretation of verbal exchanges.

1.5.2. Geertz's 'interpretive' view on context

In favour of situating language contextually, Geertz (1973) elaborated his ethnography-based, 'interpretive' approach to understanding culture and social life, starting from the premise that "the culture of a people is an ensemble of texts" (Geertz 1973: 452). While being an ensemble of texts, culture equally provides the context that frames the meanings assigned to cultural experiences (verbal ones included) by social actors. Similarly to the (post)structuralist and deconstructionist notion of 'intertextuality', Geertz contests the idea of context as a fixed, holistic matrix and redefines it as the locus of permanently displaced human experience, given that, in the contemporary world, travel has transgressed formerly

unbreachable cultural boundaries: "The old conception of context as a fixed framework within which social activities take place becomes stretched and even shattered by means of movements of people between <intersecting contexts>" (Geertz 1997: 81). Ethnographic approaches to culture, and implicitly to language use, should not privilege the observer over the participant but rather grant the observer the opportunity to engage in 'free play' (in the Derridean sense) by assigning a plurality of meanings to a contextualised text.

Ethnographic anthropological views define context as a social construct: "An object is set in context by relations to its relevant surroundings" (Dilley 2002: 439). All social happenings are clarified by the ways they connect to their surroundings, while such surroundings are themselves "selected and interpreted in different ways" (Dilley 2002: 439). Any act of interpretation involves making connections and, implicitly, disconnections, according to the goals, intentions and background knowledge of the interpreter. Context is not a pre-established given, but a fluctuant factor, being constantly 'generated and negotiated in the course of social interaction and exchange'. Any social phenomenon, language practices included, may be perceived by a language user as embedded within a socially acceptable or congruent context, thus creating 'contexts by connection'. Language users may regard the same language practice as inappropriate within a different context, be it a factual context or a mentally represented context. As a user-dependent and circumstance-bound phenomenon, "[c]ontextualisation is, then, a social practice which has a performative character to it" (Dilley 2002: 440).

1.5.3. Four parameters defining the social dimensions of context

Duranti and Goodwin (1992) emphasise four parameters of context, regarded as both the outcome and the source of social interaction:

a) the setting, the socially situated framework of the verbal encounter
b) the behavioural environment, the use of body stances and behavioural trends during the verbal encounter
c) language as context, the way the verbal exchange invokes the use of context and, concomitantly, generates context for further verbal encounters. Participants in verbal exchanges act as social protagonists, making full use of their interactivity, defined as "the capacity of human beings to dynamically reshape the context that provides organisation for their actions within the interaction itself" (Duranti and Goodwin 1992: 5).
d) the extra-situational context, the background knowledge which enables

participants and outside comprehenders derive meaning out of the verbal exchange.

To conclude with, anthropological views on language use regard context as fluid, dynamic and historically bound, the locus of interaction between social actors which needs to be "analysed as an interactively constituted mode of praxis" (Duranti and Goodwin 1992: 22).

While acknowledging the need to (re)contextualise meaning, deconstructionists such as Culler or Derrida sustain that contextualisation only makes comprehension more burdensome, since, given the boundless nature of contexts, meanings can never become 'saturated' by way of contextual frames and only enhance the 'game' of being circularly interpreted. 'Il n'y a rien de hors texte' (Derrida in Culler 1983: 129), therefore texts need to be turned against themselves, which engenders endless instances of newly emerged intertextualities and newly posited readings. While admitting that context is expandable and that interpretations are never finite, anthropological and cognitive views of language nevertheless need the notion of context as a key-concept that provides language use with a frame of reference and specifies the socio-historical location of the language users. Meanings and interpretations may be narrowed down and may avoid homogenisation imposed by hegemonic readings if context is perceived as "an articulation concerning a set of connections and disconnections thought to be relevant to a specific agent that is socially and historically situated, and to a particular purpose" (Dilley 2002: 454).

1.5.4. Defining context objectively/subjectively

While defining speech acts as anchored in context, Sbisa (2002) starts from Austin's definition: "the total speech act is the total speech situation" (Austin 1962: 148) and strengthens the Austinian claim that the way in which the context of a speech act is conceived contributes to what the act is supposed to be.

As I will explain further in Chapter 2, Austin regards the context of a Speech Act as a cluster of events and states of affairs (be they external or psychological, i.e. springing out of the participants' moods or attitudes) related to producing an utterance and endowing it with a specific illocutionary force. Consequently, "speech acts are context-changing social actions" (Sbisa 2002: 421)

With Searle (see 2.2.1. to 2.2.3.), context is a set of attitudes and beliefs espoused

by the participants rather than an actual state of affairs (a subjective, cognitive definition of context emerges). Inspired by Grice's intention-based theory of communication, Bach and Harnish (1979: 5, 61) insist of defining context in terms of the speaker's communicative intention and the hearer's recognition of that intention by resorting to 'mutual contextual beliefs', i.e. beliefs activated by the context of utterance, presumably shared by the interlocutors.

Abiding by the main tenets of Speech Act Theories (to be enlarged upon in Chapter 2), Sbisa maintains that context is definable in terms of three oppositions:

1) *given vs constructed*

Most researchers prefer to define context as given: ideally, Austin's felicity conditions (conditions required for an act of communication to be regarded as successful) need to be satisfied by the speaker, addressee and situation of utterance. Felicity of a Speech Act is not checked before recognizing it has been accomplished. Whenever there is no evidence of the contrary, we assume that our interlocutors' Speech Acts are felicitous. Felicity conditions are assumed by default, and so are presuppositions.

(7) 'George has stopped smoking'

gives rise to the presupposition that George used to smoke.

(**8**) 'We regret that schools had to be closed because of the flu epidemic"

brings to mind the presupposition that there was a flu epidemic which led to closing down schools. If such presuppositions were not already entertained by the hearer, they undergo the process of 'accommodation', when the receiver includes the presupposition set forth by the speaker among their previous background assumptions.

2) *limited vs. unlimited*

With Austin, context is confined to those aspects of the situation encompassed by the felicity conditions required by specific speech acts (i.e. conditions to be met for the speech act in question to work properly). A further kind of delimitation emerges when assertions needs to be labelled as true or false, which happens according to the

interlocutors' goals, i.e. contextually. An assertion such as

(**9**) 'France is hexagonal'

may count as true if considering from how many sides an army could invade France or may count as false if it were to provide a fully detailed description of the shape of its borders.

With Searle, context tends to become highly extensible, potentially all-inclusive, since every Speech Act acquires meaning against a set of an indefinite number of background assumptions. Such an all-inclusive definition of context annihilates situatedness and therefore reduces the odds of measuring appropriateness of specific Speech Acts. Consequently, certain delimitations need to be imposed on the very perception of context, in an attempt to make it clear and ascertainable for the interpretation of verbal exchanges.

3) *objective vs. subjective/cognitive*

A context is *objective* in the sense that it is anchored in certain relevant states of affairs, which are not controllable by the interlocutors or which even escape the interlocutors' awareness. A context is *subjective* in the sense that it embeds the intentionalities and mental representations of the interlocutors. Thus, I may felicitously order you to open the window if I only believe it is closed and that is the reason why I feel stuffy. Yet, if the window is already open, my request becomes infelicitous. I may apologise for having ruined your book if I sincerely believe it got ruined by my having let it get soaked out in the rain. Yet, if the cat spilt water on the book and thus ruined it, my apology is sincere yet not felicitous.

1.5.5. Some instances of contextually-shifting meanings

The simplest sentences may acquire different meanings according to the context in which they are uttered. Pragmatics deals with utterances, which are actual manifestations of language expressions and which are located spatially and temporally, unlike sentences which display the same well- or ill- formed structure irrespective of its utterer or context of utterance. Thus, a very simple utterance like 'Pam has been waiting for you' is to be syntactically analysed in only one way. Pragmatically, there may be several interpretations allottable to this utterance, in

compliance with who utters it and under which specific circumstances. Thus

(**10**) 'Pam has been waiting for you'

may be a simple informative utterance, for instance, conveyed by a secretary to her boss. If uttered by a parent and addressed to their child, the utterance may sound like bringing pleasant news, making an announcement or anticipating a surprise, provided Pam is somebody their child enjoys playing or being with. If Pam has been kept waiting and the person she has been waiting for is running late, they may understand this utterance as reproachful.

Another very simple sentence, whose meaning may differ according to circumstances of interaction is
(**11**) 'You're married'.

Obviously, the utterance sounds redundant since most addresses may not find any new information in it, given that most are aware whether they are married or single. Yet, this remark may sound commonsensical in completing a questionnaire and checking whether the interviewer has ticked the right box in the case of that particular interviewee. When asked out on a date this may be a formula meant to reject the invitation, while not expressing refusal explicitly, only mentioning the reason underlying refusal (the would-be date is married, so the relationship is not bound to have a future). If a person – be they male or female – engage in excessive flirting or in morally sanctionable extra-marital enterprises, a remark such as "You're married" uttered by a friend, a relative or a simple bystander may be meant to bring them back to reality and urge them into relinquishing temptation.

If a professor tells his/her students

(**12**) 'I'll provide you with a list of supplementary readings', they may - justifiably - ask: (**13**) 'Is that a promise or a threat?'

Some students may be voracious readers and enjoy the perspective of being assigned extra readings and are likely to regard the professor's utterance as a promise. Others, less delighted by spending long hours getting documented in the respective field, may perceive the additional reading list as a threat.

If a surgeon comes out of the OR and tells the family of the patient who has undergone surgery:

(**14**) 'We've done our best'

and adds nothing else, this strikingly sounds as bad news, since the most likely interpretation is 'Even if you've done our best, we've lost him'. It may nevertheless trigger a less pessimistic interpretation, namely that the outcome is not to be assessed precisely but within the next 24 hours. If the news is good, the utterance is expected to be followed by something such as "and now he is stable and likely to recover during the following hours/days", although, in the case of breaking good news, there is no need to emphasise the doctors have done their best, but rather to specify where their 'best' has led to.

We often hear a one-word utterance in detective movies

(**15**) 'Homicide'.

This may be a forensic conclusion passed either by the detective who goes to the place of a recently committed murder or by the doctor who has done the autopsy of the body. Such a conclusion is meant to rule out any other alternatives that may have led to that person's death: suicide, accident, etc. Yet, whenever an inspector working in the Homicide brigade answers a call, they utter 'homicide' in order to introduce themselves and the department they work for to the caller. While interrogating a suspect with some murder-related antecedents, the investigators may simply utter 'homicide' to signal to the suspect what they may be charged with according to the evidence and to their previous indictments.

We often exclaim:

(**16**) 'Thanks God it's Friday!'

It may simply be an expression of relief at the thought that another working week has come to an end, or an expression of joy concerning a promising weekend. Obviously, the utterance may be assigned further emotional or factual connotations according to the context. A pupil may say that in order to imply to their parents this is a homework-free evening or an evening meant for a slumber party or any other fun-related activity. In a Jewish family, it may be a warning that the next day is Sabbath and that chores need to be finished before sunset since on Sabbath nobody is supposed to work. It may be an exclamative and a reminder, in case the interlocutors share some background knowledge about some Friday night event they have been looking forward to: like 'It's Friday and this is <Jeopardy> night' or 'It's Friday and this is disco night!'

If one asks a close friend 'Have you checked your breath?' they might be truly

concerned about their friend's having a smelly mouth when going out on a date or to the dentist's. It is nevertheless customary between friends to use such an utterance to indirectly suggest the person has a bad breath, which may or may be not true, but may sound as a form of banter rather than an insult.

In court, one frequently hears the utterance

(**17**) 'Your witness'

If the trial is unfolding, this signal the defence lawyer has finished questioning the witness and the prosecutor is free to start their own questioning. At the same time, if the utterance come sup in a dispute between lawyers, 'Your witness' may simply fulfil a referential function, more precisely it may be designating a person as an answer to a 'who-did-it?' question. For instance, if one of the lawyers asks 'Who committed perjury?" and the witness on behalf of the other party is suspected to have done so, 'Your witness' comes as an informative answer.

If a member in a gang imparts to the other members about some risk-incurring activities soon to be undertaken, s/he may be asked

(**18**) 'Are you looking for trouble?'

as a sign of sincere concern or as a form of warning against the peril foreseen in relation to the respective activities. If some guy comes up to another guy in a bar and asks 'Are you looking for trouble?' this may be a signal that the addressee is already in trouble and that the addresser simply feigns having found a reason to pick up on him and start a fight.

While regarding contexts as partially constructed by the participants according to their intentions and goals, investigation of the Speech Acts performed need some considerable degree of limitation. Hence the need to conceive context as "constrained by all and only those aspects of the world that it would be helpful for participants o consider in order to achieve their goals" (Sbisa 2002: 431).

To conclude with, context is fuzzy-edged versatile concept, which speech renders fluctuant and whose fluctuant nature allows for plurality of interpretation when it comes to speech events:

> Contexts are also continuously changing, not only because non-verbal actions or events make actual circumstances change, but also because speech acts themselves bring about changes in the conventional features of the context, notably those regarding rights, obligations, entitlements, commitments of the

participants (Sbisa 2002: 434).

The intertwining between the verbal contribution and the impact of factors beyond verbal exchange per se will be more amply delved into when discussing typologies of speech events or speech acts and rules or conventions which govern such classifications. This will make the object of the next chapter.

1.5.6. Defining Communities of Practice

Gender-based approaches to language use have endeavoured to widen notions such as context and identity of language users so as to include not only speakers' intentions and communicative goals, but also speakers' affiliation with certain communities of practice. The term 'community of practice' was introduced into gender and language research by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet who defined it as

> an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavor. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations – in short practices – emerge in the course of this mutual endeavor. As a social construct, a community of practice is different from the traditional community, primarily because it is defined simultaneously by its membership and by the practice in which that membership engages (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992: 464).

Eckert and McConnell-Ginet's definition is in its turn inspired by Lave and Wenger (1991), who do not define the concept of 'community of practice' in terms of its geographical location or constitutive population, but by the flexible membership of the people constituting it. Consequently, membership is defined by three parameters:

a) mutual engagement, typically related to regularity of interaction
b) joint enterprise, encompassing the processes of goal-sharing and of contribution negotiation
c) shared repertoire, comprising the available shared resources members employ in order to negotiate meanings, including specialised terms and linguistic routines. (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992: 95, Holmes and Meyerhoff 1999: 175-176).

Thus, in addition to membership, a 'community of practice' (henceforth CofP) is defined in terms of the socio-cultural practices chosen to be carried out by that membership, of individual members' degree of engagement in the respective

practices as well as of multifarious ways of exploiting available cultural and cognitive resources, including linguistic resources (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992, Holmes and Meyerhoff 1999).

In his study '*The intersection of sex and social class in the course of linguistic change*' (1990), Labov insists on the necessity to achieve insightful understanding of sex differences in language use within communities of speech by minimising the effect of observation and maximising the picture of the social context. In Labov's view, local information is valuable to the extent to which it is representative, objective and generalisable. He suggests "This is best achieved by the full participation of the observer in the social scene, with an acute sensitivity to the norms of local culture and the local configuration of social interaction" (Labov 1990: 208).Along the line of argument initiated by Labov (1990) and further refined by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992), Holmes and Meyerhoff (1999:179) draw out a minute comparison CofP approaches and other sociolinguistic approaches, mainly highlighting the following aspects:

- CofP approaches center on the sharing of wider social practices and not solely on 'shared identifications' or 'shared norms',
- CofP approaches maintain that membership is 'internally constructed'.
- CofP approaches claim that both personal and group identities are 'actively constructed' by group members and insist on the quality of ingroup and outgroup "regular and mutually defining interaction" (Holmes and Meyerhoff 1999: 179).
- CofP approaches envisage mutuality of social and instrumental goals and focuses on the teleological dimension of communities. As regards maintaining or blurring intergroup boundaries, a CofP approach considers that boundaries are maintained but not necessarily defined in contrast with outgroups.

CofP approaches lay considerable emphasis in the bodily routines such members undertake by virtue of their membership (Bucholtz 1999). and members of a community cannot be subjected to either homogenisation or marginalisation. Thus, Bucholtz's CofP-based study of a community of 'nerd girls' at a US high school (1999: 203-223) demonstrates the compatibility of ethnographic, activity-based language practices as well as the flaws of previous sociolinguistic theories. Such flaws may be summarised as follows:

- marginalisation of practices other than linguistic and understanding of language as disembodied and neglective of ' the physicality of speakers ' (Bucholtz 1999: 208)
- omission of marginal members, too little emphasis laid on heterogeneity, on

individual purposeful choices and agency.

- failure to picture individual identities as 'fluid, not frozen' (Bucholtz 1999: 209) displayers of multiple selves, simultaneously emerging from the combined effects of mutuality and agency.
- invisibility of local interpretations (which are central in ethnographic approaches such as CofP).

To avoid engaging in "premature or excessive generalisation" (Bergvall 1999: 280), CofP approaches lay considerable emphasis on the role played by local surveys. In the light of Eckert and McConnell-Ginet's proposal (1992): "Think practically and look locally", Bergvall insists on sharing sociolinguistic research with other socio-contextual factors, among which gender ranks prominent, so as to foster cross-cultural applicability and to provide an efficient way to combine local investigation with broader comparative approaches and to preclude unsubstantiated generalisations (Bergvall 1999: 278).

Such ethnographic approaches to language use highlight that context is subject to dynamic redefinition and ongoing delineation. Joined enterprise and mutual engagement bear considerable impact upon the way members of a CofP handle their language resources. On the other hand, language resources ceaselessly reshape the cultural identity of the community members and even the degree of membership in terms of use and possibly abuse of community-related norms and values. Such approaches are consonant with the Searlean definition of context in terms of intention, a notion which they substitute for the more comprehensive concept or 'enterprise'. Bearing in mind the close connection between communicative intention and/or cultural enterprise and affiliation to a specific community will be taken into account while providing pragmatic analyses of adverts or sitcoms in subsequent sections. While operating a text-based, hopefully rigorous analysis of a corpus of representative samples pertaining to the two genres, certain conclusions need to envisage either the typical or the likely point of view of the community of watchers and/or consumers.

2. SPEECH ACT THEORIES

We eat and we drink, we feel and we think
Far down the street we stray
I laugh and I cry and I'm haunted by
Things I never meant nor wished to say
The midnight rain follows the train
We all wear the same thorny crown
Soul to soul, our shadows roll
And I'll be with you when the deal goes down
(BOB DYLAN- *When the Deal Goes Down* – MODERN TIMES 2006)

Contemplating language as a dynamic, socially-bound and culturally-anchored phenomenon implies treating sentences or propositions or texts as interactive meaningful units of communication. Viewing communicative activities as the basic units of verbal exchanges is primarily rooted in regarding speech as a form of social practice and language as a way of performing actions rather than making true or false statements about the world.

2.1. Austin's view on the performative nature of language

As already pointed out in 1.3., Austin was an outstanding disciple of the Oxford School of 'ordinary language philosophers' who opposed verificationism and the assessment of propositions solely in terms of the true/false dichotomy. In addition, Austin was the first to systematically unveil the flaws of truth-conditional semantics in the analysis of *meaning* in language. Austin argues that apart from assertions (philosophically speaking) or declarative sentences (grammatically speaking), language is frequently employed not to merely describe states of affairs but to instate newly emerged states of affairs, otherwise put, to perform social actions. As social acts, utterances constitute what Austin calls 'Speech Acts'.

According to Austin, beyond the decontextualised 'dictionary' meaning of words, semantically meaningful stretches of words fulfil a contextually anchored function. Hence the opposition between **the *performative aspect of language***, which refers to some kind of *action* considered to be performed by saying something, and **the *constative aspect of language***, which refers to meaning assessed in truth-conditional terms. Thus, a sentence like the one cited by Halliday, 'I wouldn't do this if I was you', appears as a *declarative* in ***constative*** terms, whereas its ***performative*** aspect assign it the ***force*** of a *command*, *warning*, etc., instead of a mere statement. This distinction will be more amply discussed in 2.1.3.

2.1.1. Speaker, Hearer and reflexive intention

The use-centred, social-interactionist view on language discusses linguistic phenomena in terms of ***Speech Acts*** (henceforth ***SAs***). As social actions, Speech Acts involve acts of speaking or writing when someone (henceforth referred to as ***Speaker***) says (or writes) something to someone else (henceforth referred to as ***Hearer***) at a specific time in a specific place, often as part of a longer discourse or interchange (Austin 1962, Searle 1969, 1979, Bach and Harnish 1979). Engaging in any SA is underlain by the assumption that the Speaker intends to communicate with the Hearer. As recognized by Grice (1969) the intention is reflexive: it is Speaker's intention to have the person addressed recognize that the Speaker wants him/her to accept the role of Hearer and therefore be an (or the) intended recipient of the Speaker's message. In other words, Speaker's REFLEXIVE INTENTION toward Hearer is the intention to have the Hearer recognize that when making ***an utterance*** (henceforth ***U***) in a specific context, Speaker intends their utterance to have a certain effect on the Hearer. Such an effect is partly caused by the Hearer recognizing that Speaker has the intention to communicate with him or her by means of that particular utterance ***U*** (Grice1975, Recanati 1993).

Whenever we overhear somebody talking in their sleep, we will not assume they have a reflexive intention towards us, involuntary hearers. Consequently, a Hearer is someone intended by the Speaker to recognize the Speaker's intention in carrying out a certain Speech Act. There are numberless effects that speakers might attempt to produce, e.g. persuading the Hearer, intimidating the Hearer, warning the Hearer of danger, getting the Hearer to do something by means of a suggestion, a hint, a request, or a command. The Speaker adjusts his/her utterance to suit the Hearer, taking into account the context, the assumed shared background knowledge

and what s/he knows or supposes about the Hearer's ability to understand the message s/he wants to convey.

A distinction needs to be made between Hearer as '*direct addressee*', and Hearer as '*ratified participant*' (Goffman 1981: 131). An *Addressee* is someone who cannot reject the role of Hearer without serious affront to Speaker. Direct address is determined contextually - by direction of gaze, pointing a finger, touching an arm, using a name, In the first example below, there is a change of addressee, while in example 2 there is a non-specific addressee.

(**1**) 'Boss, I can't tell you how much effort Mark has put into this project, haven't you, Mark?'

(**2**) 'Congratulations to whoever is going to be the lucky winner of this contest!'

A *ratified participant* can more easily reject the Hearer role than an addressee and with less potential affront to the Speaker. When the Speaker is speaking, all those who can reasonably consider themselves ratified participants are expected to cooperate in the unfolding of the conversation and appropriately have their own say. Typical examples might include round tables, chat-rooms or workshops.

An *overhearer* may be any other person hearing an utterance, be they a bystander or an eavesdropper. An Eavesdropper can only admit to listening at the risk of putting themselves in an unfavourable light and potentially affronting the Speaker. People in earshot are expected to overhear, though not necessarily to listen; only hearers are properly expected to listen. The Speaker has a reflexive intention towards the Hearer but not towards an overhearer. An overhearer may understand the message the same way the Hearer does because they share some background knowledge; but, for want of appropriate contextual information relevant to the correct interpretation of the utterance, s/he may misinterpret it. A Bystander within earshot may not have been originally intended as a Hearer, yet may, depending on circumstances, accept or reject the role of the Hearer without loss of face; consider an occasion where X is arguing with Y in earshot of Z. Below there are some illustrations provided by Allan (1986)

X to Y as addressee:	Admit it or I'll smash your face!
Y to Z as ratified participant:	You heard him threaten me, didn't you?

X to Z as bystander: Buzz off!

Z to X and Y, rejecting the role of Hearer: I wasn't listening.

2.1.2. Locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts

Whenever humans interactively engage in speech acts, they concomitantly perform three types of acts:

1) *a locutionary act*: the act of saying something, which is roughly equivalent to uttering a certain sentence with a certain sense and reference, according to specific grammatical conventions. A *locutionary act* involves what is known in traditional *philosophical semantics* as the utterance's *proposition* or its *propositional content*. In performing a locutionary act Speaker uses an identifiable expression, which is usually assessable in terms of its truth value.

2) *an illocutionary act*: the act that the speaker intends to accomplish by means of a certain locution and by the conventional force assigned to the locution. The illocutionary act is achieved according to the conventionally established goals of a specific utterance and the contextual circumstances in which that utterance is produced. Beyond the *propositional content* of the utterance, the speech act acquire its *performative dimension*. Discrepancy may arise between the *illocutionary force* as conceived by the *speaker* (the speaker's ***intended illocutionary force)***, and the *illocutionary force* as conceived by the *hearer* (the ***actual illocutionary force*** or the ***uptake***). Consequently, there may be more than one illocutionary force assignable to an utterance.

3) a *perlocutionary act*: the act that is produced as a *consequence or effect* of uttering a specific locution, what is brought about or achieved by saying something, such as convincing, persuading, deterring, and even surprising or misleading. Such an effect may be predictable by the conventional status of most illocutions, but may be equally produced irrespective of the speaker's intentions and illocutionary force of their speech act.

The most significant constituent of a speech act is, undeniably, the illocutionary act. (Austin 1962), because the illocution signals what the Speaker DOES in uttering that particular utterance to the Hearer in a specific context, namely:

states a fact or an opinion
(**3**) 'IQ tests can be tricky'

confirms or denies something
(**4**) 'It's not true that Michael Jackson is a paedophiliac'

makes a prediction
(**5**) 'It'll be a stormy week'

a promise
(**6**) 'I'll join you at the country club'

a request
(**7**) 'Could I use your phone, please?'

offers thanks
(**8**) 'Thank you all for being here tonight on this very special occasion'

or an invitation
(**9**) 'Can we do lunch sometime next week?'

issues an order
(**10**) 'Get out of my face!'

gives advice or permission
(**11**) 'You may be excused'

christens a child
(**12**) 'I baptize this child James'

names a ship
(**13**) 'I name this ship Hibernia'

swears an oath
(**14**) 'I swear loyalty to my master and commander'.

In producing utterance a specific utterance, the Speaker performs an *illocutionary act* whenever that utterance has the *illocutionary force* of a statement, a confirmation, a

denial, a prediction, a promise, a request, and so forth. Thus,
(**15**) 'I'll make some coffee'
may have the illocutionary force of a statement about a future act, but it usually counts as a promise. If this is the recognized intention of the Speaker, then that promise is the illocutionary point of the utterance.

While considering the following example

(**16**) I bet you a dollar you can jump that puddle.

The Speaker's *perlocutionary act* is the act of achieving a particular perlocutionary effect on the Hearer as a result of the Hearer's recognizing the locution and illocutionary forces in the utterance. Thus, an utterance such as

(**17**) 'I bet you 100$ Harry will try to cheat on his exam'
may trigger a reply such as **(18)** 'You're on'

or simply a mental or emotional response of some kind. Other perlocutions include: alerting the Hearer by warning the Hearer of danger; persuading the Hearer via argumentation; intimidating the Hearer by threatening; getting the Hearer to do something by means of a suggestion, a hint, a request, or a command; and so forth. An effect of a specific utterance which does NOT result from the Hearer recognizing the locution and illocutionary point of that utterance is NOT a perlocutionary effect, but some kind of gestural effect (e.g. responding to a raised voice or an angry look). Perlocutions are extremely significant for communicative purposes, yet they fall beyond the boundary of linguistics and rather pertain to the investigation of behavioural patterns and/or cognitive representations. What pragmatics is concerned with is the **intentionality** of speakers to produce certain perlocutionary effects by resorting to linguistic tools such as utterances.

2.1.3. Austin's distinction between performative and constative speech acts

The constative utterance, has the property of being true or false. The performative utterance, by contrast, can never be either. To issue such an utterance *is* to perform the action, which one might not perform, at least not with so much precision, in any other way. Here are some examples given by Austin:

(**18**) I name this ship 'Liberté'.
(**19**) I apologise.
(**20**) I welcome you.
(**21**) I advise you to do it. (Austin 1963: 22)

Austin's point is that by making such utterances under the right conditions, Speaker performs, respectively, an act of naming, and act of apologizing, an act of welcoming, and an act of advising.

One distinction Austin makes in relation to performatives, is that between ***implicit performatives*** and ***explicit performatives***. Thus, the *intended illocutionary force* of the *imperative*

(**22**) 'Don't say that!',

is implicit, as what the speaker has in mind by saying it is not specifically indicated. Because of its implicitness, (**22**) can be, depending on the paralinguistic or kinetic cues given by the speaker, and on the power or status relationship between the speaker and hearer, a *warning*, a *command*, a *request* or a piece of *advice*. For the speaker to make the *illocutionary force explicit*, s/he has to indicate the speech act involved by inserting the *performative verb* before the clause. If the clause is not declarative, this will involve its grammatical conversion into a declarative clause

(**22a**) '*I warn you* not to say that',
(**22b**) '*I order you* not to say that ',
(**22c**) '*I advise you* not to say that',
(**22d**) '*I forbid* you to say that', etc.

An explicit performative clause complies with the grammatical rules of the language and contains a verb that names the illocutionary point of the utterance. By saying

(**23**) 'I promise I'll lend you a hand with your proofreading', Speaker uses an explicit performative verb to make a promise. Speaker could also have made the promise by merely uttering
(**23a**) 'I'll lend you a hand with your proofreading', in which the promise is not explicitly spelled out yet is easily inferable.

As ***performatives*** are seldom uttered using the above constructions, it does seem to be the case that most of the performatives we encounter in the English language are

implicit. A short list of performative verbs may comprise: *abolish, accept, acknowledge, acquit, admit, admonish, advise, affirm, agree to, announce, answer, apologize, ascribe, ask, assert, assess, assume, authorize, baptize, beg, bet, bid, caution, charge, christen, claim, classify, command, commiserate, compliment, concur, congratulate, convict, counsel, declare, delegate, demand, deny, describe, diagnose, disagree, donate, dub, excuse, exempt, fire, forbid, grant, guarantee, guess, hire, hypothesize, identify, implore, inform, instruct, license, name, notify, offer, order, pardon, permit, plead, pray, predict, prohibit, promise, query, question, rank, recommend, refuse, reject, renounce, report, request, require, resign, sanction, say, sentence, state, submit, suggest, summon, suppose, swear, tell, testify, thank, urge, volunteer, warn, withdraw.*

The performative verb must be in the present tense, because the illocutionary act is being performed and denominated at the moment of utterance. If '*I promise* to take you to the game tomorrow' counts as a promise on the part of Speaker,
(**24**) '*I promised* to take you to the game tomorrow' only reports on a past promise and (**25**)'I promise to visit you next time I'm in town' only announces a predicted promise.

The adverb *hereby*, inserted into a performative clause, will mark the verb as performative (cf. Austin 1962).

(**26**) 'I must hereby renounce at your services'.
(**27**) 'Trespassers should hereby be warned that they will be prosecuted'.
(**28**) 'I hereby authorize you to act as our agent from this moment'.

The subject of the performative clause denotes Speaker as an agent for either him- or herself or for another person or institution, undertaking responsibility for enforcing the illocution described by the performative verb. Sometimes, *the passive voice* is used and the authorization is made either on Speaker's behalf or behalf of someone else. The use of the third person subject points to an authorized agent empowered or entitled to utter the performative on behalf of some other person or institution.

(**29**) 'We, the undersigned, promise to pay the maintenance costs within twenty-one days.'
(**30**) 'We hereby authorize you to pay on our behalf a sum not exceeding $500.'
(**31**) 'Notice is hereby given that trespassers will be prosecuted.'
(**32**) 'The court permits you to step down.'

2.1.4. Felicity conditions

As already pointed out, unlike constative utterances, *performative*, utterances do not depend on *truth conditions* in order to be meaningful, but on certain ***appropriateness or felicity conditions***. Austin distinguishes three types, of felicity conditions:
(i) There must be a conventional procedure having a conventional effect.
(ii) The circumstances and persons must be appropriate, as specified in the procedure.
iii) The procedure must be executed correctly and completely.
In addition, he formulates a sincerity condition, specifying that the persons must have the requisite thoughts, feelings and intentions, as specified in the procedure.

Violation of any of the felicity conditions results in a performative 'unhappy' or infelicitous performative or a '***misfire***'. For instance, a registrar or a priest conducting a marriage ceremony in an unauthorized place will violate condition (i), thus committing a misfire. The same happens when if a judge utters 'I sentence you to life imprisonment' not in court but in the shower or when a president declares war to another country not via the official procedures but within an informal setting, when he merely voices his thought or intentions. A *command* cannot be issued by a particular person of lower *status* or *power* to another particular person of higher *status* or *power*. A promise is usually issued in relation to some future act, while an apology indicates regret for a past action Speaker feels responsible for. If the sincerity condition is violated, there is a case of what Austin calls an '***abuse***'. Examples of abuse include: congratulating someone when one knows that they have passed an examination by cheating, or making a promise when one already intends to break it.

Truth conditions are, nevertheless, not fully excluded from the performative framework. Thus, an utterance such as

(**33**) 'I promise to feed the fish' has no truth value but is felicitous if there is a fish such that Speaker has the ability and intention to feed, and is infelicitous - yet not false – in case there is no such fish. This contrasts with

(**33a**) 'I've fed the fish' which is either true if Speaker has fed the fish, or false if not.

To sum up, felicity conditions need to be met for performative acts to be successful. This not exclude taking truth value into account, yet entails that truth

value is less communicatively significant than illocutionary point.

Allan (1994) summarises the Austinian framework of felicity conditions as follows:

a. A PREPARATORY CONDITION, meant to establish whether or not the circumstances of the speech act and the participants in it are appropriate to its successful performance.
b. An EXECUTIVE CONDITION, meant to determine whether or not the speech act has been properly executed.
c. A SINCERITY CONDITION involves Speaker's responsibility for the illocutions in the utterance. Normally, Hearer will assume that Speaker is being sincere unless s/he has good reason to believe otherwise.
d. A FULFILMENT CONDITION determined by the perlocutionary effect of the speech act (Allan 1994).

Provided all the felicity conditions are satisfied for a given illocutionary act, Austin described it as '*happy*' or '*felicitous*'. Preparatory conditions, (a) and executive conditions, (b), subsumed under the abbreviated name PRECONDITIONS, entail that the procedure invoked by the illocutionary act 'must be executed by all participants correctly and completely' (1975:14). It is only in certain conventionally designated circumstances and uttered by people in specific positions that certain utterances can have the force they do. For example, only in certain circumstances does a jury foreman's pronouncement of 'Guilty' or 'Not guilty' count as a verdict, a legislator's 'Aye' or 'Nay' as a vote, and a baseball umpire's cry of 'Y'er out' as calling a runner out. In these cases the utterance of a certain expression counts as the performance of an act only by conforming to a socially pre-established convention (Bach and Harnisch 1979)

Researchers have assumed that different kinds of illocutionary acts involve different kinds of *sincerity conditions*: e.g. assertions and the like are sincere if Speaker believes in the truth of the proposition asserted; requests are sincere if Speaker believes Hearer has the capacity and willingness to carry out the act requested; declarations are sincere if Speaker believes s/he has the proper authority to make the declaration (Austin 1962, Searle 1969, Bach and Harnish 1979).

The felicitous nature of an illocution will depend on adequate observance of the preconditions on each illocutionary act. These conditions provide the grounds for motivating Speaker to make the utterance, and grounds from which Hearer will appropriately assess and uptake the illocutionary act expressed in the utterance.

2.2. Speech act typology

Any act of communication, linguistic or otherwise, is an act of self-expression. In the case of an apology, if you utter, (**33**) '[I'm] sorry I didn't call back' and intend this as an apology, you are expressing regret for something, in this case for not returning a phone call. An apology just is the act of verbally expressing regret for, and thereby admitting, one did (or omitted to do) something that might have bothered the hearer or even been detrimental to the hearer. An apology is communicative because it is intended to unveil a certain attitude, in this case regret, and this attitude is meant to be recognised as such, or, in Austin's words, '*produce uptake*'. Using the performative phrase 'I apologize' obviously facilitates understanding. Communicative success is achieved if the speaker chooses their utterances so that the hearer might, recognize their communicative intention under the circumstances of utterance. Thus, if you spill some beer on someone and say 'Oops' in the right way, your utterance will be taken as an apology for the damage you admit to have done by spilling beer on that person.

By saying something one generally intends not merely to communicate but also to produce some effect on the listener. When one apologizes, for example, one may intend to seek forgiveness in addition to expressing regret. As an apology, the utterance is felicitous if it is understood as expressing regret for the deed in question; as an act of seeking forgiveness, it is felicitous if forgiveness is granted. Speech acts are perlocutionary as well as illocutionary, therefore pursue some ulterior purpose, although they are primarily recognisable by their illocutionary point (asserting, requesting, promising and apologizing). The perlocutionary act is a matter of trying to get the hearer to espouse some correlative attitude and possibly to act in a certain way as a consequence of having espoused the respective attitude. For example, a statement expresses a belief and normally has the additional purpose of getting the addressee adopt the same belief. A request expresses a desire for the addressee to carry out a certain action, presumably beneficial for the speaker, and ultimately aims for the addressee to perform the respective action. A promise expresses the speaker's firm intention to do something, together with the belief that by their utterance they are bound to do it, which normally sets up the addressee's expectation to witness the promise carried out.

According to Bach and Harnish (1979), statements, requests, promises and apologies are examples of the four major categories of communicative illocutionary acts, denominated as follows: constatives, directives, commissives and

acknowledgments. Within the four categories, each type of illocutionary act is delineated by the type of attitude expressed as well as by the propositional content of the utterance.

Constatives comprise illocutionary acts such as: *affirming, alleging, announcing, answering, attributing, claiming, classifying, concurring, confirming, conjecturing, denying, disagreeing, disclosing, disputing, identifying, informing, insisting, predicting, ranking, reporting, stating, stipulating.*

Directives comprise illocutionary acts such as: *advising, admonishing, asking, begging, dismissing, excusing, forbidding, instructing, ordering, permitting, requesting, requiring, suggesting, urging, warning*

Commissives comprise illocutionary acts such as: *agreeing, guaranteeing, inviting, offering, promising, swearing, volunteering*

Acknowledgments comprise illocutionary acts such as: *apologizing, condoling, congratulating, greeting, thanking, accepting.*

Bach and Harnish spell out the correlation between the type of each illocutionary act and the typically expressed attitude. In many cases, such as answering, disputing, excusing and agreeing, as well as in acknowledgments, the act and the attitude expressed presuppose the presence of specific conversational or social conventional circumstances.

The act is felicitous if the hearer recognizes the attitude being expressed, which may be a belief in the case of a statement or a desire in the case of a request. Any further effect it has on the hearer, such as being believed or being complied with, or just being taken as sincere, is not indispensable to its counting as a statement or a request. Thus an utterance can be communicatively felicitous despite insincerity on the part of the speaker. Communicating is about overtly displaying an attitude; sincerity is about embracing the expressed attitude. The hearer can understand the utterance without regarding it as sincere (taking it as an apology) or without whole-heartedly believing that the speaker regrets having done the deed in question. Getting one's audience to believe which attitude one explicitly adopts is not an illocutionary but a perlocutionary act.

2.2.1. Searle's speech act classification and felicity conditions

As minutely and systematically pointed out in Cornilescu and Chitoran (1986), in addition to Austin's classification of acts, basically relying on the classification of illocutionary verbs, and description of Speech Acts in terms of their locution, illocution and perlocution, Searle (1975) probed deeper into *felicity conditions.* He refined Austin's set of felicity conditions, calling the fulfilment condition *'essential condition'* and introducing a *'propositional content condition'*, which partially substitutes the executive condition. Searle classifies such conditions according to several types of constitutive rules, each of which focuses upon a slightly different aspect of what is said:

1) the **propositional content condition** focuses only upon the textual content
2) the **executive/preparatory conditions** focus upon background circumstances
3) the **sincerity condition** focuses upon the Speaker's psychological state
4) the **fulfilment/essential condition** focuses upon the illocutionary point.

In compliance with the above-mentioned aspects, Searle discusses five classes of speech denominated according to a set of relatively heterogeneous criteria, comprising:

1. THE ILLOCUTIONARY POINT, which indicates the purpose of the Speech Act

> If we adopt illocutionary point as the basic notion on which to classify uses of language, then there are a rather limited number of basic things we do with language; we tell people how things are, we try to get them to do things, we commit ourselves to doing things, we express our feelings and attitudes, and we bring about changes through our utterances. Often we do more than one of these at once in the same utterance (Searle 1975: 369)

For instance, the point of directives is to get Hearer to do something; an assertive is a representation of an event or a state of affairs; a promise is the undertaking of carrying out a future action by the Speaker.

2. THE DIRECTION OF FIT between the words uttered and the world referred to: e.g. statements have a words-to-world fit because truth value is assigned on the basis

of whether or not the words describe things as they are in the world spoken of; requests have a world-to-words fit because the world must be changed or (partially) adjusted so as to fulfil Speaker's request.

3. THE EXPRESSED PSYCHOLOGICAL STATE denotes the Speaker's state of mind Thus, a statement such as
(**34**) 'This movie is worth seeing'
expresses Speaker's belief that *a certain movie deserve to be watched*; a promise
(**35**) 'I'll take you to Hawaii on our honeymoon' expresses Speaker's intention to do something; a request
(**36**) 'Will you help me with these groceries, please?' expresses Speaker's desire that Hearer should do something, an expressive (apology, congratulations) reveals the Speaker's attitude to events.

4. THE PROPOSITIONAL CONTENT of the U refers to the proposition expressed by that U and entails certain semantic restrictions imposed on the Speech Act. For instance, one cannot properly promise or predict things that have already happened and say anything like: '* promise I rang you up last night'. The semantic content of a threat (**37**) 'I'll smash you face!'
will differ from that of a promise
(**38**) 'I'll take you to the most stylish restaurant in town!',

although both involve the Speaker's undertaking to engage in some future action in relation to the Hearer. More precisely, promises differ from threats in terms of whether the specified future event is beneficial or harmful to the Hearer.

2.2.2. Assertives, directives, commissives, expressives and declarations within the Searlean framework

In compliance with the conditions specified above, Searle classifies Speech Acts into five categories as follows:

Assertives (called **representatives** in Searle 1975) are Speech Acts which commit the Speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition (paradigm cases: asserting, concluding). They have a truth value, show words-to-world fit, and express Speaker's belief that *p*.

Directives are Speech Acts which are attempts the Speaker makes in order to get the addressee engage in a certain action. Paradigm cases include requesting or questioning. They indicate world-to-words fit, and express Speaker's wish that Hearer do the act A.

Commissives commit Speaker to some future course of action, so they show world-to-words fit, and Speaker expresses the intention that Speaker do the act A. Paradigm cases comprise promising, threatening, offering.

Expressives express Speaker's attitude to a certain state of affairs specified (if at all) in the propositional content. Among paradigm cases, thanking, apologising, welcoming, congratulating are frequent. There is no direction of fit; a variety of different psychological states; and propositional content must be related to Speaker or Hearer (1975: 357).

Declarations are Speech Acts which effect immediate changes in the institutional state of affairs and which tend to rely on elaborate extralinguistic institutions. Paradigm cases include excommunicating, declaring war, christening, marrying, firing from employment. They bring about correspondence between the propositional content and the world; thus direction of fit is both words-to-world and world-to-words.

Bach and Harnish (1979: 42-51, 110-117) employ Searle's criteria, while making Speaker's *psychological state* or Speaker's *attitude* more salient. They identify six classes, splitting Searle's 'declarations' into **effectives,** acts meant to bring about changes in institutional states of affairs; and **verdictives,** acts which bear official, institutionalised impact in the situations in which they were performed (for a more elaborate discussion see Cornilescu and Chitoran 1986). If assertives, directives, commissives, and expressives are INTERPERSONAL ACTS, typically directed at individuals, DECLARATIONS are typically enforced and validated within a social group, under legally or socially stipulated conditions that allow sanctioning the addressee. Under such circumstances, Hearer's reaction as an individual is irrelevant to the effectiveness of the declaration (e.g. being baptized, disqualified from driving, or dismissed).

2.2.3. Illustrations of the Searlean framework

Thomas (1995) provides several illustrations of speech act categories in the Searlean framework, while highlighting certain limitations of the respective approach. The present section will deal with promises, questions and requests.

2.2.3.1. Promises

Thomas (1995) summarises the set of felicity conditions required by successful promises as follows:

Conditions for PROMISING
(S = speaker, H= hearer, A = future action, P = proposition expressed in the SA, e = linguistic expression)
Preparatory condition 1: H would prefer S's doing A to their not doing A
S believes H would prefer S's doing A to not doing A.
Preparatory condition 2: It is not obvious to both S and H that S will do A in the normal course of events
Propositional condition: In expressing that P, S predicates a future act A of S.
Sincerity condition: S intends to do A.
Essential condition: the utterance e counts as an undertaking to do A

I concur with Thomas that such a set of conditions looks all-comprehensive for an 'ideal' promise. Yet, in real life exchanges, Speakers do not read Hearers' minds, so they might not be fully aware whether the Hearer is willing to witness the Speaker's promise fulfilled or not. If I utter something like

(39) 'I promise you to help you with that application for Cornell'

when you have just made your mind to go on a European tour instead of applying for university, preparatory condition 1 is not met with. If you have already mailed your application and it will reach the selection board in the normal course of events, preparatory condition 2 is not fulfilled. As to the propositional content condition, we often hear people telling their nearest and dearest under extremely stressful circumstances (a close friend or a member of the family is undergoing risk-incurring surgery or has been reported missing)

(**40**) 'I promise everything in there is going on smoothly',
(**41**) 'I promise John is safe and sound'

which sounds like a guarantee for an ongoing situation to unfold successfully. Voicing such guarantees is somehow playing-god-ish on the part of the Speaker, while concomitantly questioning the validity of the essential condition, since the above utterances cannot count as an undertaking on the part of the speaker to engage in some future action allegedly beneficial to the Hearer.

Do promises made under duress count as promises? Is the utterance

(**42**) 'I promise I won't press charges against you'

made by a hostage being held at shotgun by their captor a felicitous promise? It may be, since at that moment being released or even staying alive is traded against the likelihood of pressing charges and having the offender prosecuted. Anyway, preparatory condition 2 is not observed if the police have surrounded the place and snipers are trying hard to either have the captor surrender or physically annihilate them.

Difficulties may arise when it comes to distinguishing promises from threats. An utterance such as

(**43**) 'I promise I'll rent <When Harry Met Sally> tonight'

may sound as a promise if the interlocutor is a fan of romantic Meg Ryan comedies, yet may sound terrifyingly threatening to somebody who loathes tearjerkers and only watches action-packed movies and cliffhangers.

In addition, promises and offers are hard to delimit, but for the specification of their preparatory condition: in the case of offers, Speaker does not know if Hearer wants the promised action to be carried out, consequently the uncertainty as to whether Hearer wants the action to be performed reduces Speaker's obligation to perform it. For instance,

(**44**) 'I'll order Chinese food' or
(**45**) 'I'm going to make us some coffee'

may count as promises if the Speaker is acquainted with the Hearer's tastes, but may equally count as offers if the Speaker is not familiar with the Hearer's tastes.

(**46**) 'Sure' or
(**47**) 'Yes, please'

would be the expected answer in case the H accepts the offer. The other alternative is for the Hearer to answer something like

(**48**) 'No thanks',

which counts as a refusal. Refusals are generally accompanied by justifications. Thus,

(**49**) 'I've put on some weight lately',
(**50**) 'I'm trying to quit, my blood pressure is a bit high'

and their illocutionary purpose is specify the preparatory conditions under which the offer fails to turn into a promise (since it becomes obvious to both Speaker and Hearer that Hearer does not regard the action suggested by the Speaker as beneficial)

2.2.3.2. Questions

In the lines to come, I will enunciate and comment on Searle's conditions for questions in the light of the analysis pursued by Thomas (1995).

Conditions for QUESTIONING
(S = speaker, H= hearer, Q = question, P = proposition expressed in the SA)

Preparatory condition 1: S does not know the answer
i.e. for a YES/No Q, S does not know whether P is true or false
for an elicitative/Wh-Q, S does not know the missing information.
Preparatory condition 2 : It is not obvious to both S and H that H will provide the information at that time without being asked.
Propositional condition: any proposition
Sincerity condition: S wants this information
Essential condition: counts as an attempt to elicit this information from H.

This framework applies to prototypical questions, such as people asking for directions in traffic or tourists asking their guide for information about the sights being visited. Yet, when a teacher examines a student, she obviously knows the answers to the questions asked to the examinees. Thus, both the preparatory conditions and the sincerity conditions are not met with. Nevertheless, questioning a student during an exam counts as an attempt to elicit some pieces of information from that student, which complies with the essential condition of questions. As to the sincerity condition, the teacher does want this information not for the sake of filling in a gap in their knowledge, but with a view to checking whether such gaps in knowledge occur with the student under examination. Likewise, while questioning a witness in court, a lawyer is likely to know (most of) the answers to be provided. Despite the non-observance of the preparatory conditions, the lawyer abides by the sincerity condition and, most significantly, by the essential condition. The pieces of information required do not serve the lawyer's curiosity nor do they enrich their familiarisation with the case. The requested information is elicited in a deliberate attempt to inform third involved parties – such as the prosecutor, the judge and the jurors – on whatever the lawyer regards as relevant for defence purposes.

The illocutionary point of rhetorical questions – such as

(**51**) 'Is it right to see politicians getting bribed and look the other side?'

is obviously not to seek for an answer, be it a confirmation or a denial. Far from being an elicitation of information or opinion, such a question does not even observe the conversational conventional of expecting an answer from the Hearer: it indirectly indicates or implies that it is morally wrong and even legally sanctionable to see corruption and take no steps against it. Most rhetorical questions are thus indirect recommendations, indicators of moral obligations or even scathing sarcastic comments sugarcoated by the interrogative form.

2.2.3.3. Requests

As pointed out by Thomas, requests seldom rely on cut-and-dried conditions, as they often overlap with other speech acts. Below are enunciated the conditions to be met by an 'ideal' case of request:

Conditions for REQUESTING
(S = speaker, H= hearer, A = future action)

Preparatory condition: H is able to perform A
Sincerity condition: S wants H to do A
Propositional condition: S predicates a future act A of H.
Essential condition: counts as an attempt by S to get H to do A.

With requests, preparatory conditions seldom appear as cut-and-dried, because the Hearer's ability to perform whatever action the Speaker requires them to carry out may depend on the circumstances, the Hearer's state of health or mood, the amount of time available, the (il)legitimate nature of the request. Asking a classmate to prompt you the answers during a quiz test may be unsuccessful for one of the following reasons:

- the classmate does not the answer (therefore the preparatory condition is not met with)
- the required future action is sanctionable and the Hearer refuses to take risks by engaging in it (which fails to be specified under any of the above-listed conditions)

The sincerity condition is often fuzzy-edged, too. A housewife may utter 'Dice these carrots for me' to her daughter not because she badly needs help with the salad, but because she wants to check whether her teenage daughter is capable of performing simple cooking tasks. The same utterance addressed to a close friend may count as an invitation to be included in the family's activities in order to make the friend feel welcome to the point of being 'one-of-the-family'.

Thomas (1995) points out that sometimes distinction between request, order and command needs fine-grained introspection into the context. She suggests that, unlike requests, orders and commands need to be defined in terms of an additional preparatory rule : Speaker must be in a position of authority over Hearer, which also entails a reformulation of the essential condition as follows: 'an attempt to get the Hearer to do a specific act in virtue of the authority of Speaker over Hearer'. Thus,

(**51**) 'Shine your boots'

may be a request if uttered by a parent to a child, thereby implying the boots are muddy and shoddy. The same utterance addressed to a private by their superior is undeniably an order or a command, which considerably depends on the circumstances (whether the utterance is one of a sequence of commands, such as one

of the daily military drills or an order imposed by specific circumstances, such as an incoming parade).

2.3. Criticism brought to the Searlean framework

2.3.1. Searle's conditions do not cover overlapping Speech Acts

Searle's conditions fail to provide a comprehensive description of overlapping Speech Acts and often do not manage to disambiguate between in-between instances of Speech Acts (Leech, Thomas 1995). There are cases when only the essential condition distinguishes between seemingly unrelated Speech Acts. Thomas specifies that this is the case with acts such as compliment vs. congratulate (1995). If 'e' is the expression making up the illocution, the two acts need the same preparatory, propositional and sincerity conditions, namely:

Preparatory condition: 'e' is in H's interest and S believes 'e' is in H's interest
Propositional condition: Some event, act, aspect 'e' related to H.
Sincerity condition: S is pleased at 'e',
yet differ in point of their essential condition, since with CONGRATULATE, 'e' counts as an expression of pleasure on the part of the Speaker, it is Speaker-centred, as in

(**52**) 'I'm so happy to see you've done something to your hair!',

On the other hand, with COMPLIMENT, 'e' counts as a commendation of or tribute to the Hearer, being profusely hearer-centred, as in

(**53**) 'You look great with this new hairdo!'

Ordinary speech often shows no one-to-one correspondence between perlocution and illocutionary point. The same perlocutionary act, for instance dismissing H, may be performed by an order
(**54**) 'Dismissed' if uttered in a military context, a request/command
(**55**) 'Class dismissed' if uttered in an educational setting, or an apparent expressive
(**56**) 'Thank, you, prime Minister, for your intervention' uttered during a news bulletin by an anchor pressed for time.

2.3.2. Not all Speech Acts have propositional content

Although certain utterances lack propositional content, they still count as felicitous verbalisations of communicative intentions. This frequently occurs with apologies or attempts to interrupt an ongoing conversation, such as:

(**57**) 'Sorry! Excuse me!',
questions such as:
(**58**) 'Huh?',
greetings such as
(**59**) 'Hello! Hi!',
or even compliments such as
(**60**) 'Wow!'

A minute assessment of felicitous apologies and/or greetings points out that Searle's conditions solely cope with the most prototypical instances of Speech Acts and often fail to label the 'in-between' or blurred cases. Searle himself admitted confinement to such prototypicality. Utterances are multifunctional which makes the task of distinguishing between one Speech Act and another cumbersome e.g. distinguishing request from invite, demand or question from examine, inquire, quiz.
Thus,

(**61**) 'Are you doing anything tonight?'
may count as an invitation to a date. Yet, if issued by your boss who needs your immediate contribution to a project due very soon, it most likely counts as a veiled order. An utterance such as

(**62**)' 'Have you had many extramarital affairs during the past three years?'

may be part of a court inquiry, meant to establish the (in)fidelity of the spouse or may be part of a psychiatric examination and evaluation regarding the reasons of one person's emotional (in)stability. It may as well be an item in a magazine quiz.

2.3.3. 'Multi-task' Speech Acts

By and large, Searle's conditions provide a description of the ***semantics of verbs*** employed in specific Speech Acts rather than a full-fledged description of Speech Act categories. While the same Speech Act verb may cover a range of slightly different phenomena, certain Speech Acts 'overlap' or perform multi-tasks. Schiffrin's discussion of

(**63**) 'Y' want a piece of candy?'

is highly illustrative of this piece of criticism. This utterance can be assessed as a question, a request for information ('Tell me whether you want a piece of candy', i.e. a directive, which usually differs from a question by its syntactic structure, namely an imperative), or an offer (Speaker uses the utterance to make the candy available to Hearer). Understanding it as an offer is intricately tied to its functions as a question and request, since we need to understand it as a question and request before we understand it as an offer. Schiffrin also assesses the utterance in relation to the possible responses it may trigger. Such a response may be a combination of Speech Acts: rejection of invitation and justification of such rejection, since in most cultures rejecting offers is considered rude unless the reasons for doing so are socially and culturally acceptable. An appropriate response conveying refusal may be:

(**64**) 'I'm on a diet',

since it is acceptable to postpone immediate wants such as wanting candy for long-term wants such as losing weight.

Wierzbicka (1991) points out that acts such as invitations are simultaneously offers and requests. If I invite you to a party at my house, I am both offering you access to an event of which I am a sponsor – and implicitly to food, beverages, entertainment, socialising, etc - and requesting access to your company at a future time, therefore binding you to engage upon some predictable future action.

Searle's conditions sometimes exclude perfectly normal instances of a Speech Acts. Thomas (1995) enunciates a formal Searlean framework for APOLOGISING below, while emphasising how certain deviances from the Searlean pattern are socially acceptable and even widely employed

Conditions for APOLOGIZING
(S = speaker, H= hearer, A = past action)

Preparatory condition: S believes that A was not in H's best interest
Propositional condition: S admits of some past action which is considered detrimental to the H
Sincerity condition: S regrets A
Essential condition: counts as an apology for act A

A prototypical or paradigm example for the above set of conditions would be an utterance like

(65) 'I'm sorry I stepped on your toes'.

Atypical cases of apology are, nevertheless, frequent. In certain cultures one apologises on behalf of somebody else (spouse, children pets, institution one is associated with):

(**66**) 'I'm sorry Tim couldn't make it, he has to stay extra hours',
(67) 'Sorry the boys are shouting so much, they're so excited it's Friday!'.

People may apologise over things they have no control over:

(**68**) 'Sorry you've arrived in such lousy weather!'
(**69**) 'My God! So sorry about all this litter in the streets, the garbage collectors are on strike again!'.

The apology may not necessarily refer to a past act, but to a present act:

(**70**) 'I'm sorry about this ear-grating noise'
or even some future act

(71) 'I'm afraid I'll have to ask you to leave us alone now'.

Apologies need not always be made explicit. Thus, a student arriving late for class may apologise by simply mentioning the reason of their delay:

(**72**) 'Caught in traffic'.

Thomas wonders if the sincerity condition is observed when a Speaker apologises for having crushed the chocolate cake of a Hearer who should be on a slimming diet.

At the same time, Thomas argues that paralanguage is always an alternative to utter apologetic phrases. One may smile apologetically or go around in sackcloth and ashes for forty days or serve somebody breakfast in bed to bring remedy for some allegedly harmful past behaviour.

As a conclusion to the above-listed critical remarks, Searle's constitutive conditions often fail to capture ordinary instances of frequent Speech Acts such as: requesting, questioning and apologising. On the other hand, formulating utterances that may satisfy all instances of specific Speech Acts may lead to the enunciation of hopelessly vague and unworkable conditions.

3. INDIRECTNESS

> "I didn't become a lawyer because I like the law. The law sucks. It's boring. But it can also be used as a weapon. You want to bankrupt somebody, cost him everything he's worked for, make his wife leave him, even cause his kids to cry? We can do that."
>
> (*Ally McBeal* - a 'Fish'-ism)

3.1. Sentence meaning versus Speaker's meaning

In order to fully understand illocutionary force, Speaker's intention and likelihood that Hearer may uptake that intention appropriately, Searle insists on the distinction between sentence meaning and Speaker's meaning:

> [S]entences and words have only the meanings that they have. Strictly speaking, whenever we talk about the metaphorical meaning of a word, expression, or sentence, we are taking about what a speaker might utter it to mean, in a way that departs from what the word, expression, or sentence actually means.... To have a brief way of distinguishing what a speaker means by uttering words, sentences, and expressions, on the one hand, and what the words, sentences, and expressions mean, on the other, I shall call the former *speaker's utterance meaning,* and the latter, *word, or sentence, meaning* (Lamont Johnson u.d.).

In Searle's view, words and sentences have a meaning of their own which differs from and may have no generalisable connection with that of the utterance made by speaker in cases of ironic, indirect, or figurative communication. Along the same line of thought, Kent Bach (1994) argues that, while engaging in verbal communication, there are three ways in which we can perform a speech act:
1) **directly or indirectly**, i.e. with the aid of performing another speech act,
2) **literally or nonliterally**, depending on the whether the utterance makes more sense if used literally or if employed to be understood figuratively, and
3) **explicitly or inexplicitly**, depending on whether we clearly and straightforwardly formulate our communicative intentions.

According to Bach (1994), the three contrasts are distinct and unmistakable.

The first two concern the relation between the utterance and the speech act(s) thereby performed. In the case of indirect communication, one illocutionary act may be performed via various utterances owing not so much to their semantic content but to their contextually graspable illocutionary point. For example, we can make a request or give permission by making a statement, e.g.

(**1**) 'I am getting thirsty' or
(**2**) 'Your room's a mess', and we can make a statement or give an order by way of asking a question, such as
(**3**) 'Will the waitress ever bring our drinks?' or
(**4**) 'Can you clean up your room?'.

Schiffrin supplies a comprehensive definition of an Indirect Speech Act or ISA:

> An ISA is defined as an U in which one illocutionary act (a 'primary act') is performed by way of the performance of another act (a 'literal act'). Hs are able to interpret ISAs by relying upon their knowledge of SAs, along with general principles of cooperative conversation, mutually shared factual information, and a general ability to draw inferences (Schiffrin 1994: 59)

In other words, whenever an illocutionary act is performed indirectly, it involves performing some other direct act. Bach emphasises that, with nonliteral utterances, the overall meaning is not the sum of the meanings of all the words assembled together, it is something that cannot be predicted by the semantics of the proposition alone, e.g.

(**5**) 'My mind got derailed' or
(**6**)'You can stick that in your ear'. Occasionally utterances are both nonliteral and indirect. For example, one might utter
(**7**) 'I love the sound of your voice'

to tell someone nonliterally, more exactly ironically, that she can't stand the sound of his voice and thereby indirectly ask him to stop singing.

Both nonliteral and indirect utterances demonstrate how the semantic content of a sentence may fail to reveal the force and content of the illocutionary act being performed by use of that sentence. They rely on the processes Grice analyses when revealing that quite frequently, what is meant is not determined by what is said. Some of Grice's examples illustrate nonliterality, e.g.

(**8**) 'He was a little intoxicated', used to explain why a man smashed some furniture, while most of them are indirect statements, e.g.,
(**9**) 'There is a garage around the corner' used to tell someone where to get petrol, and (**10**) 'Mr. X's command of English is excellent, and his attendance has been regular', used in giving somebody a polite, yet not highly eulogising letter of recommendation.

3.2. Grasping indirectness: long winding road or shortcut?

While discussing utterances such as:

(**11**) Would you mind passing me the ashtray?
(**12**) Why don't you finish your drink and leave?
(**13**) I must ask you to leave my house.
(**14**) Leave me and I'll jump into the river

Saaed argues that each of the above utterances functions both as *a direct Speech Act*, thus fulfilling its *conventionally expected function* and as *an indirect Speech Act*, thus fulfilling its *supplementary actual function*. Thus, (**11**) and (**12**) function both as questions and as requests, (**12**) even as a command. Apparently successful as statements, (**13**) and (**14**) function as an order and respectively, as a threat.

The problem arises whether Speakers are solely aware of the Indirect Speech Act or they have access to both the Direct Speech Act and the Indirect Speech Act and choose the Indirect Speech Act as being contextually the aptest. Searle (1975) maintains that *Speakers have access to both.* In utterances such as:

(**15**) Can you pass the salt?
(**16**) I wish you wouldn't do that
(**17**) Aren't you going to eat your cereal?

Two Speech Acts are available to the Hearer: the *direct* or *literal* speech act and the *indirect* or *nonliteral* Speech Act. Appropriate understanding of the illocution of such utterances involves backgrounding of the literal or direct act and, consequently, foregrounding the nonliteral or indirect act. The questions in (**15**) and (**17**) or the

statement in (**16**) are backgrounded while the request acquires primacy or salience in all the above-listed utterances, all of which can be paraphrased as follows:

(**15a**) Please pass the salt.
(**16a**) Please don't do that.
(**17a**) Please eat your cereal.

In Searle's view, Indirect Speech Acts work because they are systematically related to the structure of the associated Direct Speech Act; more specifically they are *tied to one or another felicity condition* of the act. The above-discussed utterances work because they address the felicity conditions for requests. Thus,

(**15**) 'Can you pass the salt?'
addresses the preparatory condition (the Hearer is able to perform the act).
(**16**) 'I wish you wouldn't do that'
addresses the sincerity condition (the Speaker wants the Hearer to do the act).
(**17**) 'Aren't you gong to eat your cereal?' addresses the propositional content condition. An utterance such as
(**18**) 'Salt is made of sodium chloride' does not address any felicity condition for requests, therefore, will never be understood as an indirect request.

In order to acquire full understanding of both the backgrounded Direct Speech Act and the foregrounded Indirect Speech Act, three elements combine in order to support a chain of inference:

1. **the felicity conditions**
2. **the context of the U**
3. **the principles of conversational cooperation**

Obviously, in an everyday situation, when dealing with an utterance such as 'Can you pass the salt?', the context will tell the Hearer that the Speaker should already know that s/he can pass the salt. Since one of the *felicity conditions for a question is violated,* the Hearer is prompted into *searching some other illocutionary point for the utterance*. The Hearer embarks upon a line of inferencing starting from the finding that if the utterance U is not a genuine question, it must have some other illocutionary point. Bearing in mind that the Hearer knows that a condition for requests is the Hearer's ability to carry out the requested act, as well as that it is common knowledge to regard passing salt at meals as a widely used practice and as a reasonable goal entertained by the Speaker, the Hearer may feel justified while

inferring that *the utterance is likely to count as a request.*

Gordon and Lakoff (1975) agree with Searle that stating or questioning a felicity condition of a Direct Speech Act will produce an indirect version. Thus, instead of using

(**19**) 'Please come home!'
the following indirect strategies are possible:

(**19a**) 'Can you please come home?' (an U which questions the preparatory condition)
(**19b**) 'I want you to come home' (an U which states the felicity condition)
(**19c**) 'Will you please come home?' (an U which questions the propositional content condition)

Instead of **(20)** 'Write me a letter of recommendation' one may use one of the indirect strategies suggested below:

(**20a**) 'I hope you'll write me a letter of recommendation', which states the sincerity condition (I want you to write a/the letter of recommendation)
(**20b**) 'Would you be able to write me a letter of recommendation?", which questions the preparatory condition (the Hearer is able to write a/the letter of recommendation)

Because formulations such as "Can you..." display a striking *degree of conventionality*, and tend to be speedily grasped as a matter of convention. Gordon and Lakoff (1975) consider that Hearers incline to employ shortcuts in conversation, called *conversational postulates*. Such postulates are rules that are likely to be followed whenever the Hearer is encouraged by the conversational setting and by the conventionally acquired illocution of the respective utterance to search for an indirect meaning. Like Searle, Gordon and Lakoff (1975) opine that appropriately understanding Indirect Speech Acts involves inferencing. If Searle regards inferencing as playing a paramount part in deciphering indirect intentions, Gordon and Lakoff (1975) prioritise conventions to the point of regarding Indirect Speech Acts as highly similar to idioms and often involving no inference from a direct to an indirect act.

3.3. Parameters of indirectness

Thomas argues that "...indirectness occurs when there is a mismatch between the expressed meaning and the implied meaning" (1995: 119). In her view, there are four major claims that need focus while discussing indirectness:

1. pragmatics is concerned with *intentional indirectness*
2. indirectness is *costly and risky*
3. Speakers should (seek to) obtain some *social or communicative advantage* through employing indirectness
4. Indirectness is largely related to *politeness* phenomena

Each of the above claims will be discussed in the following subsections. I will illustrate the concepts under discussion by authentic e-mail messages exchanged between Romanian and British participants in the LANCDOC programme between 1997 and 2001. The LANCDOC programme was a long-distance, part-time taught doctoral programme organised by the University of Lancaster, UK, sponsored by the British Council and specially tailored for Romanian academics. Being one of the fourteen Romanian doctoral students, I engaged in many e-mail conversations or was informed on several messages circulating in this community, which comprised interactions between students and the director of the PhD programme, students and the administrative manager of the programme, supervisors and supervisees, Romanian students and other students or professors.

3.3.1. Intentional indirectness

Not all instances of indirectness are intentional, since some may be caused by *linguistic inadequacy*. Such instances of inadequacy occur when the Speaker doesn't know the correct word for some object, be it in their own language or in a foreign language, when the Ss forget a word because of nervousness, excitement, fear or other emotional factors. When my daughter was a rebellious teenager, I first went shopping at the Arcades in Lancaster, I wanted to buy her what I now know it is called in fashionista vernacular a pair of stone-washed jeans and a fleece. I knew exactly what those clothing articles looked like but their denomination, in spite of having come across it in the Sugar or Miss magazines, was on the tip of my tongue. So I asked for 'a pair of trousers, y'know, overalls, with whiter spots here and there' and I was offered a pair of cubistic-like imprinted leotards. I designated the 'fleece' as a 'parka that is kind of fluffy', then as 'a kind of duffle coat one wears because it's

posh' and completely baffled the shop assistant who brought me a sequin-adorned, feathered up top with a hideous hood.

Dascal (1985) labels indirectness as 'costly' and 'risky'. Indirectness is 'costly' in the sense that an indirect U usually takes longer for the Speaker to produce and longer for the Hearer to process. It may equally be regarded as 'risky' in the sense that the Hearer may not correctly understand what the Speaker aims to mean by saying what they say.

(**21**) In 1995, my family accommodated Jeanie, a young British GAP volunteer. Jeanie was constantly listening to Britney Spears, which somehow displeased me and my family. Consequently, the following exchange took place one evening:
Dana: Would you like to listen to something else now?
Jeanie: No, I'm pleased with Britney.

Instead of making a direct complaint, I indirectly suggested Jeanie might have had enough of Britney Spears. Obviously, my indirect strategy failed as Jeanie took – or at least pretended to take - my utterance as a genuine question and was ready to play the CD for the n'th time.

(**22**) Julie was a British guest who used to visit Romania almost every year. After going downtown one afternoon, on arriving home, we had the following conversation:
Dana: Julie, would you like a drink?
Julie: Well, I've been on beer all day.

As she explained later, Julie wanted to indicate that she would rather stick to beer. Nevertheless, I misinterpreted her indirectness as an refusal to have any drink and, rudely enough, did not offer her any until she claimed one in a friendly remonstrative tone : 'Is that beer coming or not?'.

Naturally, one may wonder why we bother to employ indirectness instead of plain straightforward utterances. Prompting such questions arises from the assumption *of rationality*: Although people do behave irrationally with appalling frequency, we tend to assume, unless there is evidence to the contrary, that people have *reasons to behave the way they have chosen to.* There may be numberless justifications for the use of indirectness. As a rule, language users tend to take extra pains in employing indirect strategies to avoid some supposedly negative consequences direct

illocutions may risk bearing upon their interlocutors. Indirectness smoothens criticism, consequently enabling the Addresser to avoid hurting the Addressee's feelings, as in the following letter written by an editor to a researcher who submitted a paper for publication:

(**23**) 'In your paper, you slightly run the risk of being accused of using cognitive theories on metaphor in an unprincipled way...'

Indirectness may also soften or mitigate impositions, by avoiding emitting orders and commands and eluding a position of authority when attempting to persuade interlocutors to perform a certain action for the Addresser. Below is a conversational scrap which I happened to often overhear between members of the academic staff and the Chief Librarian:

(**24**) 'Have you given any thought to having me subscribed to <Journal of Pragmatics>'?

Occasionally, indirectness is a mere display of subtlety and cleverness. When I used to be a doctoral student in Lancaster, despite having to submit a paper within a few days, several colleagues and I took a morning off and did some shopping at Sainsbury's, where we had the misfortune to run into the course tutor, an advocate of rigorous working schedules before deadlines. To gently reprimand us, while striving hard not to be imposing or overcritical, she addressed us as follows:

(**25**) 'I hope the Sainsbury spree has not turned you all into shopoholics to the point of getting indigestion with too much caviar and smoked salmon.'

During the same doctoral programme, specially tailored for Romanian academics, the Programme director did her best to enable us to make the most of our stay in Lancaster, starting with our arriving there safe and sound. She wanted Salah, a student rep to come to pick us up from the railway station, given that we arrived past midnight and risked finding no buses or taxis at that time. While endeavouring to avoid imposition and acting bossy, she indirectly suggested how much we were likely to appreciate Salah's help. This is the e-mail she sent him:

(**26**) 'The newly-registered Romanian students arrive by the midnight train from Manchester. There are no buses to the Lancaster campus after 11.30. I don't know whether they have any money on them and cabs are hard to get even around the station. The keys to the staff van are with Jack the porter. They'll love to see a

friendly face when they get off the train.'

One issue that widely required the use of indirectness was acknowledgement of failure or confession of failure. When one of our fellow students did not manage to pass their upgrading exams or did less well during their panel discussion, it would have been rude both to feign total ignorance of the matter or to openly deplore their sad lot. Therefore, we picked up an indirect strategy which we realised worked quite successfully at the level of daily socialisation: expressing hope as to some future improvement of the situation of the interlocutor, thus indirectly acknowledging the awareness of the undesired situation and expressing commiseration or solidarity with the experiencer.

(**27**) To fellow student who had problems upgrading: 'I hope you clarified whatever issues you were struggling with last week and everything's going smooth again'

Individuals and cultures vary widely in how, when and why they choose indirectness as a communicative instrument. The preferred use of indirectness over directness is both individual-dependent and context-bound. Choice of indirectness over directness varies dramatically according to cultural and social rules and accepted behaviours. There are, however, several factors which govern indirectness in all languages and cultural communities:

1. The *relative power* of the Speaker over the Hearer
2. The *social distance* between the Speaker and the Hearer
3. The *degree of imposition* entailed by the act in question
4. The *relative rights and obligations* between the Speaker and the Hearer

3.3.2. Power

In most social contexts, mainly in institutional ones, language users tend to use a greater degree of indirectness with those who exert some power or authority over them than with those who do not. Such power is accepted as a regular type of behaviour in hierarchical settings: courts, military establishments, church, workplaces, educational institutions, where seniority and/or authority prompts language users to more frequently employ indirect formulations instead of direct ones.

One is very likely to be extremely cautious, hence remarkably indirect, when telling their boss about the too strong fragrance of their cologne (if they dare

mention it at all). When one needs to tell the same thing to a friend or a sibling they may simply formulate a request:

(**28**) 'Please don't pour so much cologne next time!'

Obviously, a much subtler formula would be used with the boss:

(**28a**) 'These refined designer perfumes only need a tiny little drop and everyone will, willy-nilly, feel their delicious fragrance!'

followed by a compliment disguised as a question:

(**28b**) 'What is it? Chanel 5 or Diorella? They're both scentsentional!'.

One may engage in such painstaking conversational procedures because one might risk a lot by offending their boss, since superiors can exert either *reward power* (influence your career in a positive way by giving you an extra bonus or by promoting you) or *coercive power* (influence your career in a negative way by inflicting you disagreeable chores, demoting you, sanctioning you and eventually, firing you)

Spencer-Oatey (2000) discusses three types of power that are likely to influence the use of indirectness in conversations:
1) Legitimate power may be exerted when one person has the right to prescribe or request certain things by virtue of their social or professional role, age or status. For instance, a student is likely to use indirectness when asking the authority empowered to make a decision for an extension of their due deadline. Here is one e-mail I wrote to the Director of the PhD programme in order to be granted an extension:

(**29**) 'Dear Jane, I would be extremely grateful if you could approve a week's extension to the deadline of my <Language in Use> assignment; tables are extremely time-consuming and display is essential when data are so rich'

On the other hand, somebody's superior need not be indirect when issuing orders to subordinates whose job description includes carrying out the ordered activities. Thus, the Director of a long-distance programme who needs to mail her students a specific article may directly require her secretary to photocopy the item:

(**30**) 'Elaine, please make 14 copies of chapter 3 for the course tomorrow. Thanks.'

2) *Referent power* is defined as the power held by one person over another by virtue of the respect or admiration inspired to that person.

As a participant in a conference, I found a fellow student's presentation particularly interesting. Although our status and age were similar, I could not formulate my request – asking her to give me a draft of her paper – directly such as in

(**31**) 'Give me your paper draft' or even
(**32**) 'Let me have a look at your paper', since we had been acquainted for too little time. The next day, I chose to write her an e-mail instead, which read as follows:
(**33**) ' Dear Beth, I was really fascinated with your presentation. Could you send me the draft in attach if this is not too much trouble?'

3) *Expert power* is the power conferred to a certain person owing to their special knowledge or expertise, which some other person may need. When I was doing some state-of-the-art review on social categorisation and stereotyping, I needed Susan Fiske's latest articles and ventured to write her an e-mail in which I tried to pay particular heed to the indirectness of my formulation and particularly to the justification underlying the request, in order to avoid formulating a too abrupt and even misplaced request.

(**34**) 'Dear Professor Fiske, Your latest article on <Ambivalent Sexism> would be of crucial importance in my research. Would there be any way for me to get a copy, taking into account that, sadly enough, our faculty cannot afford to pay a subscription to <Journal of Social Psychology>?'

3.3.3. Social distance

As Thomas points out, power and social distance conflate more often than not and there is noticeable tendency to use more indirectness towards interlocutors you are socially distant from. When an addresser feels close to their addressee (this being largely the case of people you are related to, peers, or people who display similarity in terms of age, status, ethnicity, occupation) they tend to employ less indirectness than in the case of total strangers. Thus, the feeling of 'belonging together' or '*solidarity*' implies less indirectness than '*social distance*' does. In a situation when one

needs change for the coffee machine, a peer is likely to be directly requested for small change:

(**35**) 'Got any change, Jay?',

while the same request addressed to a stranger needs to be smoothened by an apology and mitigated by some justification for the time and trouble assumably taken by the stranger:

(**36**) 'Excuse me, could you change fifty pence for me? I need tens or fives for the coffee machine'.

Exaggerated indirectness with peers may imply deliberate distancing. Usually, if you need help with handling the photocopying machine, a request is likely to be formulated directly if addressed to a classmate or a friend, especially when they are likely to prove cooperative:

(**37**) 'Help – the paper's stuck in the photocopier'.

On the other hand, deliberately using indirectness to somebody formerly regarded as close is likely to end up in conveying aloofness and feigned formality. Thus, addressing a friend with whom one has recently had a tiff by

(**38**) 'Do you have any idea what you're supposed to do when the paper gets stuck in the photocopier?'

may emphasise the idea of distance as well as the desire of the addressee to preserve that distance despite the favour requested.

3.3.4. Degree of imposition

The size of the imposition (potentially) brought about by an utterance may weigh considerably in choosing the degree of indirectness. An addresser is likely to use a higher degree of indirectness in requesting their interlocutor to perform a painstaking and time-consuming task (such as fixing their TV set) than one carried out with least effort (passing along a hand-out during a workshop). Supervisors' comments on students' work may illustrate the point, taking into account that, often enough, such comments are quite direct if the task imposed on the supervisee is not

too demanding, such as in:

(**39**) Supervisor to Supervisee: 'Rewrite this passage, it's a bit unclear towards the end'

Whenever the comments are hedged by expression such as 'I'm afraid' or 'I'm so sorry but...', the criticism is expected to be more scathing and the imposition deriving thereof more painstaking, such as in

(**40**) 'I'm afraid you may need to take a more critical stance towards Lakoff's theory and that implies reweighing the pros and cons.'

A useful framework facilitating the understanding of the concept of 'size of imposition' is Goffman's notion of '*free*' and '*non-free*' goods (1976). According to Goffman, free goods are those that, in a given situation, anyone may use without permission. These range from benches in a park or salt in a restaurant, to things in one's house such as food, drink, books, which family members or roomies are entitled to share, yet which are not made available to any guest without the lodger's permission. Unless you are a very close friend and abide by the house rules regarding the shared use of goods or you are somebody like Kramer in 'Seinfeld' who feels no imposition when it comes to helping himself out of Jerry's fridge, *requesting someone else's free goods requires a minimal degree of indirectness.*

Lakoff (1974) extended the concept of free/non-free goods to information by emphasising that certain topics – such as weather or comments on the beauty of the landscape - may be dealt with freely, unrestrictedly, others are similar to *non-free goods* because those who might initiate such topics or those who might be involved in any exchange concerning such topics may label them as '*none of your business' topics* .

While running the risk of grossly overgeneralising, I would maintain that what is 'freely-available' in a conversation is culture-dependent. In Britain or in the States, it is regarded as intrusive to enquire about a stranger's income, politics, religion, marital status, whereas in other countries such information can be sought freely. In Romania, talking about disabilities or addictions is more or less taboo, and such topics are embarked upon in a confidential tonality and a euphemistic vein, being particularly eluded in the presence of a disabled person or an addict. On the contrary, despite the politically-correct craze so vehemently derided years ago, in Anglo-Saxon communities such topics are openly and straightforwardly addressed. In Romanian communities, prevailingly in the rural milieu, parents do not bring up

sex issues in the conversations they have with their children. It is common knowledge that such a topic has become natural to the point of being compulsory in American families. Deploringly enough, sexist and racist comments are not legally sanctioned if used in the Romanian media, while in Britain or the States the emitter of such comments is liable for legal prosecution.

3.3.5. Rights and obligations

Indirectness may be regulated by the Speaker's right to make a particular demand and/or by the Hearer's obligation to comply. One may simply say:

(**41**) 'Next stop!'

to the bus driver if there is a scheduled stopping place and it is the driver's obligation to stop there. Yet, if a traveller wants to take advantage of the bus stopping at traffic lights and get off there, they cannot expect the driver to regard this as an obligation but as a favour. Therefore, asking an indirect question such as

(**42**) 'Do you think you could possibly let me out just beyond the traffic lights, please?' would sound more convincing in this case.

3.4. Why indirectness?

Indirectness obviously adds intricacy to matters of communication and disentangling certain indirectly formulated utterances may encounter serious hindrances, most of which are not related to language use, but to use (and abuse) of social conventions, norms and what is allegedly regarded as common knowledge within a particular cultural community. Despite the effort incurred, indirectness permeates everyday language in a plethora of contexts, from highly formal meetings to street gang rows. Thomas (1995) signals several reasons for the preference language users show in using indirectness. First, indirectness springs out of the *desire to make language more interesting*. As a teacher, I am well aware there are many ways to pass comments on a student's having cut your class, from choosing to make no comment at all to mildly reprimanding them or warning them they might not be allowed to sit in for the final exam. When I myself decided to skip a session on class

management, our professor made the following comment, which I regarded as remonstrative in a mildly ironical way:

(**43**) 'With your diplomatic flu, a dose of classroom interaction management would have been the last thing you need'

Indirectness contributes to *increasing the force* of one's message. If one wants to deplore the unfortunate day they just have had,

(**44**) 'Today I've run out of luck' would sound less convincing and less likely to arouse compassion among listeners than something like:
(**45**) 'My day followed Murphy's law. Y'know, if something may turn wrong, it sure will.'

Watchers of *Married With Children* remember Al's begging God to put an end to his miserable condition whenever a fat woman snapped at him for not finding any pair of shoes for her swollen oversized feet. When the situation went from bad to worse, for instance in the episode when feminist neighbour Marcy organised a breastfeeding protest in Al's store, he exclaimed

(**46**) 'Please, please, someone kill me!'.

During the period I was finalising my doctoral thesis and everyone was eagerly wondering
(**47**) 'Isn't it ready yet?'

I could have said
(**48**) 'No, I'm afraid it's not"

Yet, I thought conversations may sound less indulging in self-pity and more inclined towards perkiness and self-irony, and that was why I used to jocularly echo one of Al Bundy's notorious mots,

(**49**) 'We may be losers but not quitters'.

Indirectness is highly likely to occur when the addresser faces *competing goals.* For instance, when a teacher has to tell a student their work is not up to the required standards, the teacher's need or rather responsibility to tell the truth may conflict

with the desire not to hurt the student's feelings. Potential discouragement and offence may be avoided by engaging in utterances that combine praise with criticism:

(**50**) 'This is a very ambitious essay. You still seem to overlook certain common errors, such as sequence of tenses...'

Naturally, in order to understand what the teacher means, the student must be aware of the conflicting goals and may even be appreciative of the interweaving of honesty and tactfulness.

3.5. Being indirect and being polite

Indirectness is closely related to politeness phenomena, especially to the notion of 'face', defined by Goffman (1981) as the public image an individual seeks to project. This notion has been fully dealt with in Brown and Levinson's seminal book on Politeness Theory, where the following definition is provided: the face is "the public self image that every member of society wants to claim for himself" (1987).

Like Goffman, Brown and Levinson discuss two components of face borrowed from Goffman (1981):

1. positive face , which represents an individual's desire to seem worthy and deserving of approval
2. negative face, an individual's desire to act freely, autonomously, in a manner that is not impeded by others.

Mutual self-interest requires that participants in a conversation maintain both their own face and that of their interlocutor, since verbal exchanges are frequently potential threats to face in the following two ways:

1. threats to negative face potentially damage an individual's autonomy. Such threats are likely to be conveyed by Speech Acts such as orders, requests, suggestions, advice. On the other hand, apologies or confessions may be regarded as self-face threatening.
2. threats to positive face potentially lower an individual's self-esteem and social prestige and are typically brought about by disapproval, disagreement, accusations, interruptions.

Face threatening acts and politeness phenomena are to be more thoroughly

discussed in Chapter 5, which focuses on degrees of potential face threat, ways of eluding such threats and the variety of polite and/or impolite strategies interlocutors are free to espouse.

With the aid of indirect strategies and the diplomatic weight conveyed by indirectly formulated utterances, politeness serves to diminish potential threats to both the addressee's and the addresser's positive and respectively negative, faces. Thus, negative indirectness diminishes the threat of orders and requests. One may feel more inclined to help a stranger if a request for small change is formulated as a negative question for request:

(51) 'You don't happen to have any change for the phone, do you?'.

Sometimes, giving an explanation for an implied request may sound more persuasive than formulating the request itself: such may be the case of uttering:

(**52**) 'It's stuffy in here' instead of the abrupt imperative
(**53**) 'Open the window!'.

Querying a preparatory condition for a request may also count as a request followed by the pursued perlocution. Thus

(**54**) 'Could you hand me that book?'

may efficiently end up in coming into possession of the respective book.

On the other hand, positive indirectness attenuates the potential threat commonly provided by disagreements or interruptions. Expressions such as:

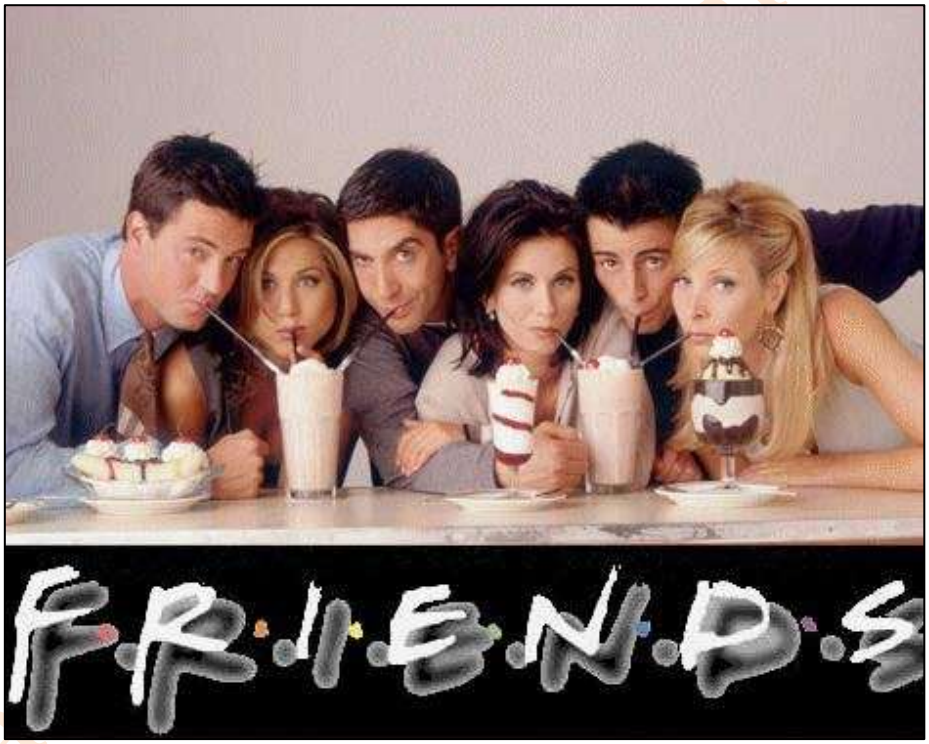
(**55**) 'I'm sorry but you're wrong' or
(**56**) 'I have to say that I don't agree'

work more efficiently in terms of politeness strategies than their direct equivalents.

To conclude with, the Searlean framework of Speech Act analysis and approach to Indirect Speech Acts highlights that there is no steady, unmistakable correlation between locutions and sentence forms on the one hand and illocution and felicitous Speech Acts on the other. In correctly understanding the illocutionary force of any speech act, especially in the case of Indirect Speech Act, the Hearer

needs to combine linguistic knowledge and contextual knowledge, meant to enlighten them on the Speaker's intentions, on the means employed by the Speaker to achieve a particular intended illocutionary force with the aid of a specific utterance, and on the variations of any assignable illocution with respect to social distance, power and degree of acquaintance. A thorough investigation of Indirect Speech Acts reveals that Hearer's inferencing what is indirectly said or implied by the Speaker relies on certain conversational principles, which make the object of the next chapter.

3.6. 'Chandler takes pedicures!': Speech act types and indirectness in Friends"



The series '*Friends*' focuses on the daily interactions between three men and three women who frequently gather at each other's apartments and share sofa space at Greenwich Village's 'Central Perk' coffeehouse. Monica is a chef with a compulsive obsession for neatness and order. She is married to Chandler, a dry wit who is never at a loss for words. Across the hall is Chandler's longtime roommate Joey, a soft-hearted, dim-witted womanizer, currently acting in the soap opera "Days of Our Lives." Across the alley from Monica and Chandler is Monica's hapless brother Ross, a geeky paleontology professor who has been divorced three

times, including once from Rachel, Monica's best friend in high school. Although Rachel is no longer romantically involved with Ross, she currently shares his apartment where they are raising their newborn daughter, Emma. Rounding out the circle of friends is Monica's ex-roommate, Phoebe Buffay, a New Age anti-materialistic eccentric, occasionally working as a massage therapist.

Scene: Central Perk. Ross and Chandler are on the couch.
(U1) Monica: (entering) Hey!
(U2) Ross and Chandler: Hey!
(U3) Monica: (to Chandler) Hey sweetie! (they kiss)
(U4) Ross: (looking at Monica's legs) WOW!
(U5) Chandler: Hey! Stop staring at my wife's legs! No no! Stop staring at your sister's legs!
(U6) Ross: I'm sorry, it's just... how did you get so tan?
(U7) Chandler: She went on one of those spray-on tan places.
(U8) Ross: Eh, you got a spray-on tan?
(U9) Monica: Chandler gets pedicures!
(U10) Ross: (laughing) Why, why you do, like with the-the toe separators?
(U11) Chandler: (To Monica) Why...why?
(U12) Ross: Still, I can't believe that's sprayed on... I mean, it looks really good. I wonder if I should get one!
(U13) Chandler: Sure, then you should get a mini skirt so you can really show it off.
(U14) Ross: So, do you get colours or just French tips?
(U15) Monica: There. Here's their card.
(U16) Ross: Thanks. (he takes the card) Hey, I know where this place is! It used to be an X-rated video... (pauses when he realizes what he is saying) florist. (he goes away)"

In order to illustrate the interrelationship between speech act typology and indirectness I have chosen a scene from the series '*Friends*'. Each utterance has been numbered and, for simplicity's sake, the analysis is structured according to the sequencing of the numbered utterances.

The scene opens with a greeting, **(U1)** , a full-fledged three-facet speech act: the locutionary act is the interjection 'hey', the illocutionary act is the conventionally established familiar way of acknowledging somebody's presence and showing (minimal) pleasure at seeing them, and the perlocutionary act is the effect the greeting has on the hearer, the impulse to greet back. Much like the previous

utterance, **(U2)** preserves the informal register and provides the expected direct answer to the first act of greeting.

Following the pattern of verbal exchanges previously established, **(U3)** is also a greeting, which equally embeds an expressive, since it displays affection towards addressee by the use of the term of endearment 'sweetie'. The affectionate tonality if reinforced by means of body language ('they kiss') specific of husband – wife interactions. The interjection in **(U4)** bears the combined meaning of a declarative and of an expressive, and has the illocutionary force of a compliment. The illocutionary act felicitously observes the preparatory condition (it arouses the interlocutors' curiosity and catches their attention) and the sincerity condition (the speaker is indeed impressed with what he sees and does not refrain from expressing it). The perlocutionary act is indicated by the pleasurable effect the utterance bears on the addressees. However, it deviates from traditionally acknowledged politeness rules, as it is considered rude to stare at somebody's legs (especially a woman's legs), even in a familiar environment.

In **(U5), t**he response to Ross's reaction consists of two interjections ('Hey!' and 'No, no!') that function as interdiction-inflicting directives, since they count as an attempt undertaken by the speaker to prevent the hearer from doing something regarded as morally questionable. The first directives occurring in between the interjections ('Stop staring at my wife's legs') are in the imperative form and have the illocutionary form of a corrective-prohibitive command: they reprimand the interlocutor's infringing upon the addresser's territory, and performing the intrusive act of staring at a part of his wife's body. The repetition of the negation 'No, no!', acts as a sort of wake-up call to reality: Ross's behaviour is likely to be all the more outrageous, to the point of being morally sanctionable, given that Monica is his sister. This motivates Chandler's next directive, which displays an enhanced prohibitive illocutionary force: 'Stop staring at your sister's legs!'.

(U6) is a straightforward apology, followed by an unsuccessful attempt for justification. Its typicality derives from its expressing regret for a past mistake. The next interrogative sentence is a direct request for information. The speaker doesn't know the answer and neither he nor the hearer would expect to be told what is going on without asking (preparatory condition). The question is a proposition (thus satisfying the felicity condition pertaining to the propositional content condition), the speaker wants the information (thus satisfying the sincerity condition) and hopes to get an answer from the hearer (thus satisfying the essential condition). All the felicity conditions for questioning are fulfilled alongside with the intended perlocution: the speaker asks a question in order to elicit the hearer's answer.

The answer to Ross's question, **(U7),** is a direct speech act, a representative,

uttered to commit the speaker to asserting an expressed proposition intended as true. There is however some deviation from conversational conventions as Chandler answers the question instead of letting his wife do it. It is intended as an instance of mild harmless interspousal banter, since Chandler thus reveals Monica has a fake tan. The interrogative **(U8)** sounds rhetorical because it is not a request for information (the speaker has already found out the answer to this question), but rather an expression of surprise, emphasized by the presence of the interjection 'Eh'. This way, the conditions for properly asking a question are infelicitous. The question is meant to display the speaker's utter amazement at some state-of-affairs (other people having fake tan).

The direct declarative in **(U9)** is intended to minimise Monica's allegedly frivolous concern with having fake tans. She swerves the topic from her presumably ill habit to Chandler's concern with manicures, a type of behaviour that might be regarded as emasculating, even gayfying. The tonality echoes a child's telling on some other child who has badly misbehaved, the illocution of which reveals a redressive action meant to switch the focus from Monica – whose image might have become unflattering - to Chandler, whose image risks being much more liable to derision. In addition to its providing some potentially deriding details on Chandler's beautifying habits, the utterance equally brings about a boomerang effect of Chandler's previous malicious intervention.

The expressive in **(U10)** counts as a mock inquiry for information. The felicity conditions for questioning are not met because Ross does not expect an honest response, his question is highly sarcastic, resorting to mock politeness and faking interest in the subject. Moreover, it carries an expressive illocutionary force: masked derision is expressed at Chandler's having pedicures, a habit which makes him look effeminate.

The two elliptical interrogations in **(U11)** are loaded with the illocutionary force of a complaint permeated with reproach, paraphrasable as 'Why did you do this to me? Do I deserve being treated like this?'. The intended perlocution is to convince the addressee that the utterance is a complaint and to make the addressee feel remorseful. In **(U12)**, Ross shifts the spotlight from the initial topic by directly expressing his surprise and by continuing with a constative that offers a direct explanation, also embedding a compliment targeted at Monica. A more indirect construction comes next 'I wonder if I should get one!', directed not so much towards his interlocutors, but rather to himself, which addresses the sincerity condition and has the illocutionary force of a request for suggestion or recommendation. This phrasing allows for a short, pensive break that entails some degree of hesitation on Ross's part.

Chandler's reply, **(U13)**, is a directive, masked in the form of a predictive assertion. It aims at depicting a highly improbable situation, which Chandler pretends to be a turn-on, followed by an insincere indirect compliment: if Ross wore a mini skirt he might look smashing with his tanned legs. The utterance is an instance of friendly banter, even if permeated with a sarcastic streak, intended to be mocking at Ross for having even considered such an option. The primary, literal act is backgrounded by the conversational implicature which entails the exact opposite of what is said: that neither is Ross likely to wear a mini nor to display tanned legs. Ross backfires by **(U14)**, a mock inquiry, a sarcastic question that performs a conversational red herring since intended to swerve interlocutors' attention away from himself. By feigning interest in pedicures, Ross endeavours to emphasize the effeminate nature of such concerns with a man, and consequently to reinforce Chandler's lack of manliness.

The two direct utterances in **(U15)** express an offer made by Monica. The line is a directive (she gives the card to Ross and expects him to take it) intended as a shortcut to Ross's earlier remark ('I wonder if I should get one!'), thus enabling achieving the assumed perlocution : going to the beauty parlour where fake tans are catered. In **(U16**), Ross responds as expected, accepting the card offered and thanking Monica. He goes on elaborating on his ability to identify the place: not only can he spot it (in a mere descriptive), but is pleased with his being familiar with its whereabouts. Once he realises he has unwillingly supplied information as to his former going to an X-rated video-store, Ross embarks upon redressive action and changes his descriptive statement, by substituting 'X-rated video store' by 'florist's'. He obviously violates the sincerity condition in a descriptive, since he is well aware that what he describes is not true. Not to further put himself in an unfavourable light any longer, Ross chooses to 'opt out' of the conversation altogether ('he goes away').

3.7. 'He's just trying to impress us!': Indirectness in student interaction in Coe's '*House of Sleep*'

An analysis of a conversation from the beginning of Jonathan Coe's novel "The House of Sleep' will be provided in the lines to come. Similarly to the previous analysis, utterances have been numbered and the analysis of speech acts, (in)directness and communicative intentions follows the sequencing of the numbered utterances.

'Pinter!'**(U1)**(…)
'That's just so typical, **(U2)**' the woman added: then closed her eyes as she puffed on her cigarette. She was smiling, perhaps taking the argument less seriously than the thin, pasty, earnest-looking student sitting opposite her.
'People who don't know anything about theatre, **(U3)**' Veronica continued, 'always talk about Pinter as if he's one of the greats. **(U4)**'
'OK,' **(U5)** said the student. 'I agree that he's overrated. **(U6)** I agree with that. **(U7)** That's exactly what proves my point. **(U8)**'
'It *proves* your point?'**(U9)**
'The British post-war theatrical tradition,' said the student, 'is so …etiolated, that....' **(U10)**
'Excuse me?'**(U11)** said an Australian voice next to him. 'What was the word?'
'Etiolated,' **(U12)** said the student.' So etiolated, that there's only one figure who...'
'Etiolated?'**(U13)** said the Australian.
'Don't worry about it,' **(U14)** said Veronica, her smile broadening. 'He's just trying to impress us.'**(U15)**
'What does it mean?'**(U16)**
'Look it up in the dictionary' **(U17)**, snapped the student. 'My point is, that there's only one figure in post-war British theatre with a claim to any kind of stature, and even he is overrated. **(U18)** Massively overrated. **(U19)** Ergo, the theatre is finished.'**(U20)**
'Ergo?'**(U21)** said the Australian.
'It's over. **(U22)** It has nothing to offer. **(U23)** It has no part to play in contemporary culture, in this country, or in any other country.'**(U24)**
'So what... you're saying that I'm wasting my time? Veronica asked. 'That I'm out of tune with the whole… Zeitgeist?' **(U25)**
'Absolutely. **(U26)** You should change courses at once: to film studies.'**(U27)**
'Like you.'**(U28)**
'Like me.'**(U29)**

(Jonathan Coe- *The House of Sleep)*

The first utterance, an exclamative sentence, can be regarded as an expressive since it does not name the renowned British playwright as in item of information to a question such as 'Who wrote <The Dumbwaiter>?' but expresses a psychological state, namely annoyance at the student's naivety. As opposed to the paradigmatic cases of expressives (thanking, apologizing, welcoming, etc), which are usually

expected on particular occasions where there is a need to satisfy social expectations, this utterance is used to convey indignation or contrariety. It displays a condescending attitude towards the interlocutor's opinion, assumed to have been stated previously. Corroborated with the information we get from the narrator's speech about Veronica (described as non-conformistic, self-confident and adamant about her own opinions), we can finally interpret her exclamation as an expression of indignation in relation to a blatantly preposterous opinion, the one imparted by the student who later asserts that Pinter 'is one of the greats'.

(U2) continues in the same vein of irritation and condescendence. It can be categorized as a representative, as an assertion which renders the expression of a belief (i.e. 'it's typical for those who don't know anything about theatre to rate Pinter among the best'). Such a dissenting act, indicating that the Speaker thinks that the Hearer is wrong or misguided, has the illocutionary force of indirect criticism or downright mockery at the Hearer's expense. If read in connection with **(U1),** interpreted as an expressive, that **(U3)** also bears expressive consonance. Part of Veronica's reply to the student, **(U4)** and **(U5)** indirectly point out the difference in style, refinement of taste and critical judgement which seem to entitle Veronica to espouse a position of intellectual superiority granted by her allegedly higher expertise. By resorting to sarcasm, Veronica separates herself from the large mass of ignorant persons, in which she subtly includes the student.

Utterances **(U6), (U7**) and **(U8)** count both as assertives and as expressives, meant to voice agreement with Veronica's claims about Pinter. However, assent seems to be only formal since the sincerity condition is only observed as part of a social convention which signals insertion of agreement formulae in order to elude escalation of dissent. **(U6)** comes as a rather unexpected avowal, since the Speaker admits having taken over Veronica's claim in order to better substantiate his own point.

Utterance **(U9)** has the syntactic form of a question, but rather expresses disbelief as to the previously expressed opinion. Since the missing piece of information has been provided in the previous utterance, the sincerity and the essential conditions for questioning are not observed. Apart from unveiling disbelief, the utterance is meant as an expression of disapproval and of bewilderment in connection with an opinion regarded as naïve and erroneous by Veronica. The emphasis on the verb further substantiates the categorization of this Seech Act as an expressive. Although it does not aim to require information, **(U9)** expresses refutation of the interlocutor's allegedly shaky arguments (paraphrasable as 'because Pinter is talked about the way he is, proves his point'). The illocutionary aim of this Indirect Speech Act is to confuse, bewilder, and finally humiliate the interlocutor, by implying that he is

illogical or lacks solid argumentative skills.

The student's reply in **(U10)** is an assertive, more specifically a descriptive utterance by means of which a property is assigned to the 'theatrical tradition', meant to highlight Veronica's argumentative flaws. At this point, the Australian guy who has been overhearing the conversation interferes. He apologizes for interfering in **(U11),** an utterance devoid of propositional content. **(U13)** is a directive, an act of questioning which is a typical example of speech act that observes all constitutive rules: the preparatory condition 1 is that the Australian guy does not know the answer (he really wants to find a piece of information, his question is an elicitive one); the preparatory condition 2 is that it is not obvious that his interlocutors will provide the information without being asked; the guy is genuinely interested to know the information (sincere to the point of not withdrawing from showing ignorance). Finally, the essential condition is also observed because the utterance counts as an attempt on the part of the Australian to elicit this information from the other participants in the debate.

The student fails to understand what prevented the Australian from securing the uptake: namely, his lack of familiarity with a certain word. Instead of clarifying this issue, the student continues to strengthen his argumentation in **(U17) (U18) (U19)** and **(U20)** which are formally representative Speech Acts. The Australian asks again for an explanation in **(U21**). This time he also seems to express surprise which entitle us to regard **(U21)** as an expressive act overlapping with the foregrounded act of inquiry.

Veronica answers the Australian in a serious, seemingly polite tone, yet she is deriding his ignorance in a veiled way. She uses a directive to simulate granting friendly advice while conveying disapproval with her interlocutor's sophisticated parlance **(U15).** She also simulates ignorance, thus showing solidarity with the Australian, as she uses the pronoun 'us' (which suggests inclusiveness) instead of 'you' (as in 'he's trying to impress you'). This is a way of reinforcing in-group solidarity (as in 'he wants to impress us both') while seeking potential solidarity with someone likely to take her opinions and recommendations for granted.

Because the student takes offence since he regards Veronica's commentary as scathing criticism, he becomes uncooperative and, instead of answering with a representative Speech Act (as expected) he switches to **(U22) - (U24)**, which combine the illocutionary force of a command and of a rather malicious suggestion implying that he is unwilling to waste his time explaining such a common-sensical thing. He uses an Indirect Speech Act to suggest that the Australian is too narrow-minded to even be entitled to take part in their conversation. Obviously irritated and excluding the Australian from the conversation, he pursues his line in the exchange with a

representative meant to emphasise an argumentative point: he states the premise, a salient fact (Pinter is overrated) which should demolish the conclusion, yet only consolidates it.

When the Australian joins the conversation again (after having been dismissed previously) he expresses puzzlement as to the use of words such as 'ergo' rather than tries to find out what the word means. The student continues his self-sufficient speech without any courtesy towards the poor ignorant Australian. The Australian's expressive is overlooked and in **(U22)** to **(U24)** the student pursues his emphatically formulated conclusive statement: the theatre is on the verge of extinction.

Utterance **(U25)** is a request for confirmation (therefore, a directive), which comes up as a concluding comment passed on the implicatures Veronica was meant to have inferred from the student's previous set of statements: 'Since theatre is on the verge of extinction, I am wasting my time studying drama'.

Utterance **(U26)** has the form of an expressive, without any propositional content, meant to validate the appropriateness of Veronica's line of inferencing. and the intonation of an explanative sentence. **(U27)** is a directive taking the form of a recommendation. What the Speaker expresses is not so much the desire that the Hearer do a certain action but the belief that doing so is in the Hearer's interest. The perlocutionary intention is, in this case, that the Hearer should believe the Speaker to be sincere and perform the action as advised to. It seems nevertheless that the intended perlocutionary effect is inefficient since Veronica may be ironical in uttering **(U28):** she may not observe the sincerity condition and not regard her interlocutor as a reliable example to follow. If Veronica is indeed ironical, her interlocutor fails to grasp the irony since his **(U29**) is an honest self-appreciative assertion.

4. GRICE'S COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE AND CONVERSATIONAL MAXIMS

Load up on guns and bring your friends
It's fun to lose and to pretend
She's over bored and self assured
Oh no, I know a dirty word

Hello, hello, hello, how low? (x3)
Hello, hello, hello!

Wit the lights out, it's less dangerous
Here we are now, entertain us
I feel stupid and contagious
Here we are now, entertain us
A mulatto
An albino
A mosquito
My libido
Yay! (x3)

I'm worse at what I do best
And for this gift I feel blessed
Our little group has always been
And always will until the end
(Nirvana - *Smells like teen spirit*)

As pointed out in the previous chapter (mainly 2.1.), the *constative* approach to language failed to provide language researchers with an adequate picture of language in actual use, consequently an analysis of *Speech Acts* could reveal facets of meaning beyond or in addition to those conveyed by the semantics of the proposition expressed. In his renowned William James lectures at Harvard (Grice 1957, 1968, 1969), Grice argued that the non-natural or conventionally assigned meaning of a word or sentence is a derivative function of what speakers literally mean by uttering that word or sentence in specific instances. The universal 'type' meaning for a given word is an abstraction from the 'token' meanings produced by speakers in specific instances of use. To Grice, what a word 'means' derives from what speakers mean by uttering it. He adds that "what a particular speaker or writer

means by a sign on a particular occasion . . . may well diverge from the standard meaning of the sign" (Grice 1957: 381).

4.1. Conversation as cooperation

A significant facet of meaning Grice highlighted when contemplating language in context will be revealed in the light of the *Cooperative Principle*. In his second of his seven William James Lectures at Harvard, Grice (1975) proposes that participants in a conversation obey a general 'Cooperative Principle' (henceforth CP), which is expected to be in force whenever a conversation unfolds: "Make your conversational 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."

By formulating the CP, Grice is not being prescriptive, i.e. telling people how they ought to behave when they entertain a conversation. He is neither naive, supposing that people are always thoughtful and cooperative in the everyday sense of the word. He simply remarks that people tend to observe certain *regularities* while they interact verbally. He suggests that in conversational interactions people work on the assumption that *a certain set of rules is in operation*, unless they receive indications to the contrary (similarly to disobeying traffic rules with a view to signalling one's car has broken down or one has been followed by alleged Mafia killers). There are times when such an assumption is suspended and we wonder why our interlocutor is not operating according to a shared set of conversational norms. This prompts us into inquiring about possible *reasons why that person may have not chosen standard conversational behaviour.*

In compliance with the CP, a recurrent observation to be made in relation to conversational interaction is that what has been said by each of the two (or more) parties in a conversational interaction does not always seem to naturally or logically 'follow' from what preceded it. Paradoxically enough, in most cases, what is said by each *speaker* usually appears to 'make sense' to the *listener(s)*. This is partly enabled by the retrieval of the *elliptical elements*, which manages to restore some logical sense to what has been said, and makes normal conversation more amenable to comprehension. But the analysis of *ellipsis* does not completely account for the mechanisms of understanding and pursuing conversations, since there are other features of discourse which are not explicitly stated and which cannot be retrieved

solely by looking at what has previously been said. The Gricean approach provides a framework for the retrieval of at least *some* of the implicit resources of conversation which empower interlocutors to have access to what is implied beyond what is explicitly said. To Grice, one reason why what is said in conversational discourse 'makes sense', in spite of the missing implicit elements, is provided by the appropriate functioning of the CP.

4.1.1. Saying versus implying

The capacity of interlocutors to make sense of the utterances they exchange in spite of some missing elements, is that such elements are often *implicated* and such *implicatures* are made possible by *cooperation* between speaker and listener. As Schiffrin explains, implicatures arise from a speaker's use of combined semantic (logic, truth-conditional) meanings and non-natural or conventionally established meanings, regulated by conversational principles. In other words, context mediates the relationship between what is said and what is implied by the Speaker. Expecting to observe the CP enables language users to realise when a certain assumption has been suspended and why interlocutors have chosen to disregard an accepted set of conversational postulates. Consider the following example (adapted from Thomas 1995):

(1) B has locked herself out and is shivering in the middle of the night in her camisole. A spots B from her window and initiates the following exchange:
A: Do you want a coat?
B: No, I want to stand out here and freeze stiff.

At face value, B's reply appears untrue and uncooperative, but such instances of sarcasm are frequently encountered and correctly inferred. B aims not only to imply the contrary to what she literally said, i.e. that she does not want to freeze out in the dark, but, additionally, that A's question sounds futile to the point of utterly nonsensical, since B may obviously welcome a coat to keep her warm. Additional implicatures may equally target A's tactlessness: B needs more than a coat and it is stupid of B to inquire just about that, overlooking B's need to find a locksmith or some accommodation for that night.

In the Gricean framework, A assumes that, in spite of what is literally said, B must be observing the CP and must have made an appropriate response to the question, consequently he will look for an *alternative interpretation*. Without

presuming that the interlocutor observes the CP, there would be no search for another, additional level of interpretation. It is the observation that the Speaker has said something manifestly untrue, combined with the assumption that the CP is in operation which prompts the Hearer into searching for an implicature.

4.1.2. Implicatures and inferential work

Grice views pragmatic interpretation as heavily relying on inferencing processes**:** the hearer is able to hypothesise about the Speaker's meaning, based on the meaning of the sentence uttered, on background or contextual assumptions and, last but not least, on general communicative principles which speakers are expected to observe.

In '*Logic and conversation*' (1975), Grice discusses HOW the Hearer gets from what is said to what is meant. He delves into the long winding road language users embark upon in order to progress from ***expressed meaning*** to ***implied meaning***. "To imply is to hint, suggest or convey some meaning indirectly by means of language" (Thomas 1995: 58). In his explanation of implied or additional meaning, Grice distinguishes between two kinds of implicatures:

1. *Conventional implicatures*, which convey the same extra meaning regardless of context and which are always lexicalized
2. *Conversational implicatures*, which convey different meanings according to different contexts, i.e. are calculated afresh each time the Speaker and the Hearer interact.

1. Conventional implicatures are carried by a restricted number of words: *but, even, therefore, yet*. Grice gives the following convincing examples:
   (2) He is poor but honest,

an utterance stating that honesty appears contrary to expectations in relation to financial underprivileges.

(3) John is an Englishman therefore he is brave.

an utterance which triggers entailment built on the argumentative of reaching a conclusion based on a set of premises:
Premise 1: All Englishmen are brave.
Premise 2: John is an Englishman,
Conclusion: John is brave

Thomas discusses the following example:

(4) Actress Kathleen Turner outraged by a sentence in a script: "The main character was 37 but still attractive"

The perlocution of the sentence read in the script (outrage) is evidence to Turner's questioning the assumption that a 37 year old is not expected to be attractive or, if one were to generalise, women who have reached a certain age risk lacking attractiveness altogether.

To illustrate how Conversational implicatures work, Grice starts by discussing the following short conversation:

(5) A: Is that scotch over there?
B: Help yourself.

In Grice's example, A's utterance is literally a request for information (on the nature of the liquor), yet B interprets it as a request for a drink. Nothing in the literal meaning of A's utterance could lead B to that interpretation, which can only be derived by means of conversational implicature.

Any implied meaning *risks being (mis) understood* by the Hearer as the Speaker intended it to be uptaken, since a Speaker may imply something that the Hearer may fail to infer appropriately. Consider the following exchange excerpted from Koncealovki's movie,'Tango and Cash':

(6) Tango (to Cash, his partner who is driving recklessly through rising flames): Who taught you to drive like that?
Cash: Stevie Wonder.

Cash's reply may fail to be inferred correctly, i.e. the implicature may have been misread if his interlocutor did not know that Stevie Wonder is blind and that only somebody driving with their eyes shut could be daring and irresolute enough to get their way through the flames.

Jaszczolt (2006) discusses the following examples given by Grice (1975: 32):

(7) A: Smith doesn't seem to have a girlfriend these days.
B: He has been paying a lot of visits to New York lately.

In order to retrieve the relevance of B's statement as a reaction to that issued by A, one has to perform some basic inference. B's response is relevant and informative but not by virtue of the truth-conditional content of the sentence, but rather by virtue of what it implies (or, to use Grice's term, *implicates*) in this conversation. This implicated meaning, called a conversational implicature, is fundamentally context-bound. The implicature 'Smith may have a girlfriend in New York' bears no structural resemblance to the sentence uttered by B, it is constructed by the addressee entirely on the basis of pragmatic inference.

Hancher (1978) went on investigating the difference between conventional and conversational implicatures within the Gricean framework. He argues that in the case of an utterance such as:

(8) That box looks red to me.

the Hearer's tacit knowledge of the CP governing the speaker's use of language, rather than of any peculiar semantic features of the phrase 'looks to me' enables him/her to infer that the speaker means to acknowledge by implication that some doubt has been cast on the box being red. Such an implication arises not from the semantics of the sentence but from "a general feature or principle of the use of language", according to which "One should not make a weaker statement rather than a stronger one unless there is a good reason for so doing."

Similarly, when making an utterance such as:

(9) Rudy is either in Minneapolis or in St. Paul.

it is the Hearer's tacit knowledge that enables him/her to infer that the Speaker means to imply that s/he does not know in which of the two cities Rudy is. If the Speaker had known the city, s/he would have been expected to say which. By failing to do so, the Speaker implies (whether truly or falsely) that he does not know which.

Such general pragmatic implication is 'cancellable': the Speaker may add something meant to suppress the previous conversational implication. S/he can say, for example, (4) Rudy is either in Minneapolis or St. Paul; I know which, but I won't tell you. On the contrary, semantic or conventional implications are not suppressible or cancellable. For example, to say

(9) 'John has stopped smoking, though he never smoked'

is nonsensical, because the verb 'stopped' implies John used to smoke; and that implication is not cancellable by way of uttering 'though he never smoked'.

4.2. Conversational maxims

Implicatures are likely to be established by envisaging the four conversational rules or 'Maxims' comprised by the CP:

I. *Maxims of Quantity*:
1. Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange.
2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

II. *Maxims of Quality*: Supermaxim: Try to make your contribution one that is true.
1. Do not say what you believe to be false.
2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

III. *Maxim of Relation*: Be relevant.

IV. *Maxims of Manner*: Supermaxim: Be perspicuous.
1. Avoid obscurity of expression.
2. Avoid ambiguity.
3. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).
4. Be orderly.

As initially formulated, the maxims sounded imperative, despite Grice's not being either dictatorial or credulous enough to believe people may simply follow such principles as if they were following instructions in a book on social etiquette. As Jaszczolt argues,

> It has to be remembered that although Grice's maxims are formulated as if they were prescriptive laws, their raison d'être is to spell out the principles that the human mind naturally follows rather than some social or moral laws that people can choose to obey. Although it is possible to consciously disobey the maxims or even overtly opt out of them, the standard presumption in every conversation is that they do apply. Unless the addressee has clear evidence of such opting out, he/she assumes that the speaker obeys the maxims simply by

> virtue of being a rational agent. It also has to be noticed that even a conscious breach of the maxims does not signal that they are not active: in order to violate the maxim of quantity, for example, the speaker must hold an assumption that this maxim should indeed be conformed to (Jaszczolt 2006: 6).

Implicatures are expected to arise from the very discrepancy between obeying the norm and their infringement on specific occasions. The ability to realize the imperatives formulated in the maxims is an important part of a speaker's communicative competence. Since conversation is a principle-governed cooperative enterprise, children need to be taught such imperatives as part of the process of socialization and language acquisition. Grice would argue further that observing the CP and maxims is 'reasonable (rational)' behavior, because it is beneficial to both addresser and addressee. The result is that the non-observance of any of these maxims will be linguistically aberrant, or 'marked', counting as an attempt to signal that something is being *implied* in addition to what is being said. Yet, at a subtler insight, *cooperative* behaviour operates even if the *conversational maxims* are *apparently* not observed.

4.2.1. Non-observance of maxims

Faced with a speaker's non-observance of a maxim, a competent hearer will draw one of several possible conclusions:

A. The speaker is openly 'opting out' from the operation of the maxim and is unwilling to abide by the CP.

B. The speaker is deliberately and secretly subverting the maxim and the CP, usually for some self-serving purpose. This constitutes an instance of maxim violation.

C. The speaker means to observe the CP, but fails to fulfill a particular maxim through ineptitude. For example, he may ineptly use words too technical for the audience and occasion, thus inadvertently non-observing the Maxim of Manner. This is an instance of maxim infringement.

D. The speaker presumably means to observe the CP, and yet s/he is blatantly not observing a maxim; if he is not inept, s/he must mean something additional to what s/he is saying. For example, when asked what she thinks of a new restaurant, a

woman who replied,

(10) 'They have handsome carpets'

would appear to be flouting the first Maxim of Quality. If there is no reason that she means not to be observing the CP and that she is not inept either, then her remark must mean something other than what it literally asserts - for example, that the food they serve is not the best in town. When non-observance of a maxim is deliberate and intended to be recognised as deliberate, this is a case of Maxim Flouting (Hancher 1978).

Sometimes, the speaker presumably means to observe the CP and uses certain implicatures, without non-observing a specific maxim, but by invoking a certain maxim as a ground for interpretation. If one person says

(11) 'I'm out of gas'

and their interlocutor replies

(12) 'There is a gas station around the corner',
this utterance *invokes* the Maxim of Relation, since the interlocutor believes that the gas station is open and will have gas for sale.

Grice (1975: 49-50) outlines the general line of reasoning by which the hearer should be able to recover the '*implicatum*' (thing implicated) in any given case of conversational implicature. Obviously, the conversational implicatum will be determined by the intentions of the speaker. Grice acknowledges that in some cases the hearer may be unable to rule out one or more possible interpretations; in that sense a particular implicatum may be indeterminate.

Observing the maxims entails the Speaker saying exactly what s/he means, neither more nor less. Otherwise formulated, there is no distinction between what is said and what is implied, consequently there is no inferential work for Hearer to embark upon. Thomas gives the following example in which all Gricean maxims are flawlessly observed.

(13) Where are the car keys?
They're on the table in the hall.

Paradoxically enough, more often than not, people fail to observe the maxims, be it deliberately or accidentally. There are five major ways of failing to observe a maxim:

1. Flouting
2. Violating
3. Infringing
4. Opting out
5. Suspending

Each will be discussed and exemplified in the sub-sections to come.

4.2.1.1. Flouts

Flouting a maxim was Grice's chief concern. The process applies to instances when "a S blatantly fails to observe a maxim, not with any intention of deceiving or misleading, but because the S wishes to prompt the H to look for a meaning which is different from, or in addition to, the expressed meaning" (Thomas 1995: 65). Mey (1996: 70) reinforces Thomas's claim by providing a more concise yet comprehensive definition of 'flouting', understood as a case of verbal communication when "we can make a blatant show of breaking one of the maxims… in order to lead the addressee to look for a covert, implied meaning".

Flouts exploiting the Quality Maxim:
Such flouts occur when the Speaker says something which is and needs to be perceived as blatantly untrue. Here are two of Thomas's illustrative examples:
e.g. On Christmas, an ambulance picks up a collapsed drunkard who collapsed on the sidewalk. Soon the drunkard vomits all over the paramedic. The paramedic says:

(14) 'Great, that's really great! That's made my Christmas!'
Inferencing in the Gricean framework unfolds as follows:

i) The paramedic expressed pleasure at having somebody vomit over him
ii) There is no example in recorded history of people being delighted at having somebody vomit over them.
iii) I have no reason to believe that the paramedic is trying to deceive us.
iv) Unless the paramedic's utterance is entirely pointless, he must be trying to convey some other proposition.
v) The most obviously related proposition is the exact opposite of the one he has expressed.
vi) The paramedic is extremely annoyed at having the drunkard vomit over him.

Woman expressing her hindsight opinion about her ex:

(15) 'In all my greasy past, he's the biggest grease spot.'

Inferencing in the Gricean framework unfolds as follows:

i) It is patently false that a man is a grease spot.
ii) The wife does not appear to be trying to make us believe that her ex is a greasy spot.
iii) Unless her U is entirely pointless, she must be trying to convey some other proposition
iv) This proposition must be somehow related to her U.
v) The most obviously related proposition is that, like grease spots, her ex is extremely disgusting.

Flouts exploiting the Quantity Maxim:

When a Speaker blatantly gives more or less information than required, s/he may flout the Quantity Maxim and deliberately talk either too much or too little in compliance with the goal of the ongoing conversation. Below is an excerpt from the renowned sitcom 'Seinfeld'

(16) George Costanza's message on his answering machine: Believe it or not, George isn't at home. Please leave a message after the beep. I must be out or I'd pick up the phone. Where could I be? Believe it or not, I'm not at home.

George provides redundant information – obviously, a person is either at home or they are not – alongside with acknowledging the Hearer's disbelief as to his not being in.

Thomas (1995) discusses the following excerpt from Shakespeare's 'The Taming of the Shrew'

(17) Petruchio has come to ask Baptista for his daughter's hand in marriage:
Petruchio: And you, good sir! Pray, have you not a daughter
Call'd Katherina, fair and virtuous?
Baptista: I have a daughter, sir, call'd Katherina.

By confirming that he has a daughter called Katherina, but omitting any mention to her fairness or virtue, Baptista implies that she does not possess these qualities to any marked degree.

A flout occurs when a Speaker blatantly fails to observe a maxim, with the deliberate intention of generating an implicature and triggering an inferential process on the part of the Hearer. In such cases, one or several maxims are 'exploited'. Hancher (1978) insists that, as the maxims stand, there may be an overlap, as regards the *length* of what one says, between *the Maxims of Quantity* and M*anner*; this overlap can be explained (partially if not entirely) by envisaging *the Maxim of Quantity* : often saying too much is hardly distinguishable from being overtalkative, lacking focus or beating about the bush. On the other hand, if the speaker is overconcise or provides a strikingly curt reply, then the M*axim of Manner* is again not observed, since clarity is tampered with. The dividing line between the non-observance of the two maxims is blurred, and there are frequent instances when both the M*axims of Quantity* and Q*uality* are transgressed.

Flouts exploiting the Relation Maxim:

As a rule, such flouts tend to occur when the response is obviously irrelevant to the topic (abrupt change of topic, overt failure to address interlocutor's goal in asking a question)

(18) Father to daughter at family dinner: Any news about the SAT results?
Daughter: Ice-cream anyone?

Daughter is reluctant to discuss SAT issues either because she feels her family are too intrusive or because she has no good news (her score is quite low). To postpone discussing the topic, she switches the line of conversation to a 'safe' topic, such as an offer to serve ice-cream.

(19) Suspicious wife to allegedly unfaithful husband: And....why would you smell of Chanel 5?
Husband: I'm going to turn in. I've just been swamped at the office these days.

The husband averts discussing potential evidence for his being unfaithful by switching the conversation towards a 'safe' topic: his work and its strenuous consequences.

Flouts exploiting the Relation Maxim frequently occurs with utterances that sound contradictory in meaning:

(20) Al: Christmas is about family, about giving. Now let's see all the crap I got from my family last year. (*Married with Children*)

The utterance above is the expression of a belief, consisting of the ironical quotation of the commonly entertained belief that the Christmas spirit boosts solidarity among family members, which is far from being consonant with Al's actual family life. By containing a derogatory, even obscene word, 'crap', the second utterance contradicts the allegedly enticing expectations set forth in the first utterance, thus implying that, on that Christmas, like in all previous Christmases, Al will not expect too much from his family.

Flouts exploiting the Manner Maxim:
In most cases, such flouts involve absence of clarity, brevity and transparency of communicative intentions. In the example below:

(21) Interviewer: Did the Government promise teachers a raise and did not start any legal procedures about it?
Spokesperson: I would not try to steer you away from that conclusion.

The long-winded and convoluted response is not caused by the Speaker's inability to speak to the point because the Speaker faces a clash of goals: she would like to cooperate during the interview but successful conversation conflicts with another goal: sparing the government she is the spokesperson of from acquiring an unfavourable public image. This instance reveals what Dascal calls 'the desire <to say> and <not to say>' (Dascal 1985)

(22) George's message on Carol's answering machine:
Uum... Hi. It's George. George Costanza. Remember me? The guy that didn't come up for coffee. You see, I didn't realise that coffee didn't really mean .... Well, whatever. Anyway, it was fun. It was fun.... So, so, you call me back... if you want. It's up to you... You know, whatever you want to do. Either way, the ball's in your court. So, uh, take it easy. (*Seinfeld*)

Again, George is unnecessarily verbose, provides justifications which yet fail to clarify his previous behaviour, offers alternatives which normally Carol has been already envisaged, overuses conversational, fillers such as 'well', 'so', 'you see', 'you know' and 'take it easy'.

4.2.1.2. Violation

Although most scholars use the term 'violation' for any instance of maxim non-observance, in the Gricean framework, violation is defined as the *unostentatious or 'quiet' non-observance of a maxim*. A Speaker who violates a maxim 'will be liable to mislead' (Grice 1975: 49).Violating a maxim is quite the opposite of flouting a maxim (when the Speaker wants the Hearer to search for extra meaning, to decipher their implicature). Violating a maxim rather prevents or at least discourages the Hearer from seeking for implicatures and rather encourages their taking utterances at face value. Below are examples of short exchanges indicative of violations of each maxim.

Violation of the Quantity Maxim:

(23) Supervisor: Did you read the articles and write up the review of literature?
Supervisee: I certainly read the articles. Weren't they captivating!

Violation of the Quality Maxim

(24) A: You stained my dress with red wine, you klutz!
B: Nobody will notice.

Violation of the Relation Maxim

(25) A: Did you like my presentation?
B: The attendance was impressive, wasn't it?

Violation of the Manner Maxim

(26) Pierce: Major Frank Burns, M.D., manic-depressive. It's an honourary title.
Trapper: He's also schizoid.
Pierce: He sleeps in two bunks. (*M.A.S.H.*)

4.2.1.3. Infringing a maxim

Maxim infringement occurs when a Speaker *fails to observe the maxim, although s/he has no intention of generating an implicature* and no intention of deceiving. Generally infringing stems from *imperfect linguistic performance* (in the case of a young child or a foreigner) or from impaired linguistic performance brought about by nervousness, drunkenness, excitement, disability.

Several blatant instances of infringing occur in the following dialogue from '*Friends*',

in the episode when Rachel and Ross have got quite inebriated at their hotel in Las Vegas.

(27) **Rachel:** Yeah, and also we need more umm, drinks. Hold on a second. (Gets up but stumbles a little bit.) Whup, okay. (She makes it to the phone and picks it up, without dialing.) Hello! Vegas? Yeah, we would like some more alcohol, and y'know what else? We would like some more beers. Hello? Ohh, I forgot to dial!
(They both start laughing. There's a knock on the door.)
Ross: That must be our alcohol and beers! (Gets up to answer it.)
Joey: Hey!
Ross: Ohh, it's Joey! I love Joey! (Hugs him.)
Rachel: Ohh, I love Joey! Joey lives with a duck! (Goes and hugs Joey.)
Joey: Hi!
Rachel: Hey!
Joey: Look-look-look you guys, I need some help! Okay? Someone is going to have to convince my hand twin to cooperate!
Ross: I'll do it. Hey, whatever you need me to do, I'm your man. (He starts to sit down on the bed. There's one problem though, he's about two feet to the left of it. Needless to say, he misses and falls on his butt.) (Looking up at Joey.) Whoa-oh-whoa! Are you, are you okay?

Non-observance of the Quantity Maxim is evident in the pleonastic utterances 'we would like some more alcohol, and y'know what else? We would like some more beers' and 'That must be our alcohol and beers'. Their drunkenness also explains why Ross fails to observe the maxim of relation, when right after greeting Joey, tells him he loves him. So does Rachel, who makes an exclamatory comment on Joey's living with a duck, right after she greets him. The Maxim of Quantity may equally be non-observed since Joey obviously knows he has taken a duck for a pet and needs not to be reminded of it by Rachel. Ross's offering to help Joey –'Hey, whatever you need me to do, I'm your man'- is obviously an infelicitous act of volunteering, since the preparatory condition (Ross is able to physically undertake some action beneficial to Joey) is not met with. Ross's collapsing after having volunteered to help Joey, followed by his stuttered inquiring about Joey's well-being – 'Are you, are you okay?' – confirm both his inability to carry out any undertaken task and his non-observance of the Relation and Manner Maxims. Obviously, all these instances of non-observance are caused by the speakers' temporary impairment, given their advanced state of inebriety. Consequently, such instances are to be regarded as cases

of infringing the conversational maxims.

4.2.1.4. Opting out of a maxim

A Speaker opts out of observing a maxim whenever s/he indicates *unwillingness to cooperate in the way the maxim requires.* This happens when a suspect exerts their right to remain silent or when a witness chooses not to impart information that may prove detrimental to the defendant.

(28) Detective: Has the defendant ever told you she hated her father and wanted him dead?
Shrink: Such information is confidential and it would be unethical to share it with you.

Refusing to engage in a topic is a privilege any speaker may avail themselves of both in publicly broadcast interviews:

(29) Reporter to Renee Zellwegger: Rumour has it that you are about to divorce after only four months of marriage?
Renee Zellwegger: It's really nobody's business to pry into my life.

and in private pillow talk:

(30) Joan: Did you get a valentine from Dave?
Anna: Stop asking stupid questions!

4.2.1.5. Suspending

Under certain circumstances/as part of certain events there is no expectation on the part of any participant that one or several maxims should be observed (and non-fulfillment does not generate any implicatures). Such cases include:
1) Suspending the Quality Maxim in case of funeral orations and obituaries, when the description of the deceased needs to be praiseworthy and exclude any potentially unfavourable aspects of their life or personality.
2) Poetry suspends the Manner Maxim since it does not aim for conciseness, clarity and lack of ambiguity.

3) In the case of speedy communication via telegrams, e-mails, notes, the Quantity Maxim is suspended because such means are functional owing to their very brevity.
4) Jokes are not only conventionally untrue, ambiguously and seemingly incoherent, but are expected to exploit ambiguity, polysemy and vagueness of meaning, which entails, among other things, suspension of the Maxims of Quality, Quantity and Manner.

Attardo's definition of flouting ("flouting is violating a maxim which then is salvaged by the fact that the speaker is fulfilling another maxim. When a maxim is flouted, the violation of the CP is only superficial and temporary…" may favour defining of jokes as maxim flouters rather than maxim suspenders (Attardo 1997: 755). Whether non-observance of maxims with jokes involves flouting or suspending, jokes are commonsensically perceived neither as lies nor as ill-formed strings of discourse. Raskin suggests that jokes are a different kind of communication, abiding by a different set of maxims. The hearer switches to the non-bona fide mode of communication and reinterprets the information according to four 'Humor Maxims', which read as follows:

1. Maxim of Quantity: Give exactly as much information as is necessary in the joke;
2. Maxim of Quality: Say only what is compatible with the world of the joke;
3. Maxim of Relation: Say only what is relevant to the joke;
4. Maxim of Manner: Tell the joke efficiently.

(Raskin 1985 in Attardo 1994: 206)

The operation of the above-enunciated non-bona-fide maxims insures that the addressee does not expect the joke-teller to be truthful or to convey any information relevant for utilitarian purposes. Rather, he or she recognizes that the intention of the speaker is to elicit a humorous response.

4.3. Concluding remarks on implicatures

Having discussed and illustrated several ways of non-observance of the Gricean conversational maxims has unveiled several characteristics of conversational implicatures. Such recurrent traits are defined and exemplified in the lines to follow.

4.3.1. Relexicalisation

Relexicalisation or reformulation of an implicature can alter semantic meaning (remove unpleasant connotations of an offensive term) but bears no consequence upon implicatures.

(31) Underfed, isn't he (about somebody's fat cat)
The word 'underfed' could be replaced by any of its synonyms, such as frail, puny, skinny, delicate and the irony still holds.

As properties of utterances not of sentences, *implicatures are context-dependent*, as pointed out by Thomas's examples below:

(32a) It's my birthday today.
Many happy returns. How old are you?
I'm 5.
This is an honest question, a straightforward inquiry on that person's age.

(32b) How old are you, George?
I'm 18, father.
I know how old you are, you fool.
This is a hint at George's immaturity, which George fails to infer, consequently supplying information about his age as if his father were asking an honest question and were ignorant of his own son's age.

(32c) What do you do?
I'm a nurse, but my husband won't let me work.
How old are you?
I'm 39.
This is a hint combined with a recommendation: the interlocutor is allusively reminded of her right to exert freedom of choice given her mature age and is concomitantly recommended to feel entitled to enforce that right.

4.3.2. Calculability

Conversational implicatures are not conveyed at random, it is possible to spell out the steps a Hearer goes through in order to calculate the intended implicature.

(33) (B.J. and Pierce need help in the OR)
B.J.: Why don't you wake up Frank? He could be of some help.
Pierce: Leave him alone. As a doctor he's having his peak now. (M.A.S.H.)

The calculability path involves the following steps: Since BJ suggests waking up Frank (the much derided hypochondriac and patriotardic surgeon who is the constant laughing stock of the regiment), Frank must be asleep. It is common knowledge that when one is asleep one cannot prove their professional expertise and dexterity. By uttering 'As a doctor he's having his peak now', Pierce implies that by being asleep, Frank does in no way exert his medical skills and that lack of exertion is the most desirable situation. Since this sounds contradictory in terms of common knowledge, the only inference to be made is that Frank's medical expertise is null and he is likely to do less harm to his patients when asleep than when in the OR.

4.3.3. Defeasibility

The defeasible nature of an implicature resides in its being cancellable: the Speaker may imply something then deny what has been implied by pretending correcting the Hearer's uptake

(34) A: Did you get the dress from the cleaner's?
B: You're not borrowing it.
A: I don't want to borrow it.

A implies that availability of the dress might give her the right to borrow it. B cancels this implicature and A subsequently denies any intention of having implied her desire of borrowing it, in order to avoid rejection.

(35) Fran (ecstatically commenting on Mr. Sheffield's first novel): ... and that wedding night after all those years of sexual tension!
Mr. Sheffield: Miss Fine, they don't get married!
Fran: Well, I'm just telling you what the public wants.
(*The Nanny*)

As a nanny to Mr. Sheffield's children, Fran pines after her employer, one of

Broadway's most wanted singles, and often fantasises about their eventually tying up the knot. Since Mr. Sheffield is not yet ready to make such commitment, he implies the fictional couple referred to by Fran are not to marry after all. At that moment, to avoid appearing too straightforward or too desperate, Fran cancels her innuendo by putting the blame on the audience who are always craving for happy endings.

4.4. Locution and perlocution co-functioning: Attardo's Perlocutionary Cooperative Principle

Starting from Grice's CP, Attardo insists on the concomitant functioning of locutionary and perlocutionary cooperation, which applies to both linguistic and extra-linguistic goals. In Attardo's view, speakers cooperate not only within the linguistic exchange (maximizing the transmission of information) but also outside the linguistic exchange (maximizing the participants' effectiveness in the world). Certain inferences either cannot be calculated within Gricean pragmatics without surreptitiously postulating the PCP (Perlocutionary Cooperative Principle) in compliance with which speakers are cooperative beyond the linguistic level. Otherwise put, speakers engage in two types of 'cooperation': *locutionary cooperation* (LC) and *perlocutionary cooperation* (PC), defined by Attardo as follows:

> LC is the amount of cooperation, based on the CP, that two speakers must put into the text in order to encode and decode its intended meaning. PC is the amount of cooperation two speakers must put into the text/situation to achieve the goals that the speaker (and/or the hearer) wanted to achieve with the utterance (Attardo 1997: 771)

Inferencing the meaning of any utterance is a two-stage process: first, the interlocutor needs to make sure that the intended meaning is decoded at the locutionary level, secondly, they need to make sure that the intended effect is achieved at a perlocutionary, or behaviour-related level. Grice himself mentioned that conversational cooperation was only a particular case of the more comprehensive type '*purposive behavior*' (1989: 29) He provided examples such as:

(36) A: I'm out of petrol.
B: There's a garage round the comer. (Grice 1978: 32)

B's remark is relevant only if he/she thinks "that the garage is open, and has petrol to sell" since the availability of gasoline is relevant only if we assume that A's goal is to fill his/her tank. If speaker B had only been interested in the optimal functioning of the conversation, he/she could have replied that there was a garage around the comer, thus showing that he/she had understood the request for information while choosing to ignore A's immediate need. The only problem would be that the information A is receiving will not help in getting A's tank filled, therefore its intended perlocution or social effect would not serve the goal of 'purposive behaviour'.
Further on, Attardo demonstrates the shortcut operated via the PCP by taking into discussion a pair of examples provided by Kempson:

(37) A: How long does it take by taxi to Piccadilly Circus?
(37a) B: One minute.
(37b) B: You don't need a taxi – it's only two minutes' walk. (Kempson 1975)

Assuming that this conversation takes place in Regent Street, (37a) is not pragmatically acceptable, while (37b) is. If B answers the question stricto senso, he fails to be *communicatively helpful and only validates* a mistaken assumption, i.e. that one needs a taxi to get from Regent Street to Piccadilly (Kempson 1975:163). Attardo explains that B's literal reply is inadequate because it would be wasteful to drive for such a short distance: therefore (37b) best serves if B is willing to help A to get to Piccadilly Circus in the shortest possible time, with the smallest possible expense, and with the least effort, i.e. on foot. (37a) would only be acceptable if the person asking is handicapped and if being driven is the only solution for them to reach Piccadilly.

Hence the formulation of Attardo's *Perlocutionary Cooperative Principle (PCP):* Cooperate in whatever goals the speaker may have in initiating a conversational exchange, including any non-linguistic, practical goal. (Or in other words, be a good Samaritan).
1. If someone needs or wants something, give it to them.
2. If someone is doing something, help out.
3. Anticipate people's needs, i.e., provide them with what they need, even if they do not know that they need it.

A persuasive illustration of the PCP provided by Attardo is the following:

(38) A: Please get Smith on the phone.
B: He's right here in the waiting room.

Even if the secretary literally refuses to perform her boss' orders, she cooperates at a higher level, fulfilling her task of facilitating the encounter between her boss and Smith. Well aware that A's goal is to talk to Smith, and also that, with Smith being in the waiting room, she can get A to achieve his goal without making the phone call at all, she can safely disregard A's order, thus producing an efficient shortcut for A to have his goal fulfilled.

An example such as:

(39) A: Where's the Phillips screwdriver?
B: You need an Allen wrench for that screw.

(39) reveals that interlocutors tend to cooperate with the Speaker's goal even if their linguistic contribution to the exchange may sound inadequate or even counter-productive. By providing a seemingly uncooperative reply at the level of locution, the interlocutor envisages cooperation at some higher behavioural level, bearing in mind some social needs of their interlocutor that exceed the level of verbal interaction and pertain to that of more complex social cooperation.

Below are some further exchanges illustrative of Attardo's PCP which frequently occur in everyday encounters:

(40) Student: Do you have any idea if there's a copy of Attardo's book at the library?
Teacher: I'll lend you my copy for a few days.

(41) A: When do they open the cafeteria?
B: Take a sandwich, my mum packed enough for an army.

(42) A (in B's house): Is there a phone booth nearby? I have to call long distance.
B: Don't be silly. Call from here!

Obviously, Attardo emphasises, if the PCP is in conflict with other principles, then it can be safely disregarded. He mentions the following joke:

(43) Executioner: I wonder what the matter with the electric chair is today.
Death-row inmate: Those two wires should be connected.

where, absurdly enough, the person sentenced to death cooperates both verbally and socially with their executioner, giving them instructions as to how to make the electric chair function properly.

To sum up, beyond inferencing the Speaker's intentions via comprehension of the locution and illocution of the utterances in a given context, Hearers incline to adopt of behavioural goals identical to Speaker(s) in order to smoothen social cooperation.

4.5. Sperber and Wilson's principle of relevance

Sperber and Wilson reject the utility of principles and maxims and propose a new theory, the *Relevance Theory*, revolving around the tenet that human cognition is relevance-oriented (we pay attention to information that is relevant to us). Every aspect of communication and cognition is governed by the search for relevance. Consequently, every utterance starts as a call for the Hearer's attention and thus creates an expectation of relevance. When dealing with an utterance that is addressed to us, we are entitled to entertain not just hopes but steady expectations of relevance. To see the intended relevance of an utterance implies retrieving the intended combination of content, context, attitude and implications.

Sperber and Wilson admit that one of Grice's major contributions was to underline the communicative role played by intentions as mental representations of a desired state of affairs. Inferencing processes heavily rely on the expression and recognition of intentions as the hearer grasps the speaker's communicative behavior by identifying the underlying intention. Sperber and Wilson enrich Grice's discussion on the contribution of implicatures and inferential strategies to successful communicative acts and distinguish two levels of intention:

1) *informative* , i.e. an intention to inform the hearer of something

2) *communicative*, i.e. the intention to inform the addressee of that informative intention.

In the process of inferencing, the identification of the informative intention is done through the identification of the communicative intention, or via 'verbal

ostensive communication'. In the unfolding of ostensive communication, intentions are clear or 'mutually manifest' to both speaker and hearer. If the speaker has the intention to communicate something, they ostensively provide the addressee with evidence meant to enable them to infer the speaker's meaning.

Otherwise formulated, the hearer's inference of the intended speaker's meaning is does not need to rely on the observance of the CP but on pursuing the *Principle of Relevance* according to which ''human cognition tends to be geared to the maximisation of relevance'' (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 158). Human beings are biologically geared toward processing the most relevant inputs available and have an innate propensity to predict the mental states of interlocutors.

Communicators are equipped with a single comprehensive criterion for evaluating interpretations, which evaluates potential interpretations according to the expectation of relevance they bring about. This criterion is powerful enough to exclude all but a single interpretation, the one which best satisfies *the expectation of relevance*. Interlocutors

> …cannot be expected to go against their own interests and preferences in producing an utterance. There may be relevant information that they are unable or unwilling to provide, and ostensive stimuli that would convey their intentions more economically, but that they are unwilling to produce, or unable to think of at the time (Wilson and Sperber 1986: 257-258).

Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory defines context as a dynamic, mental entity made up of a subset of an individual's assumptions about the world. Such assumptions are accessed in the search for an *optimally relevant interpretation of a specific communicative act in a specific context*. As soon as one interpretation is found to be satisfactory, interpretation stops and other interpretive hypotheses are relinquished:

> When a hearer following the path of least effort finds an interpretation which satisfies his expectations of relevance, in the absence of contrary evidence, this is the best possible interpretive hypothesis (Wilson and Sperber 1996: 305).

The Principle of Relevance assumes hearers embark upon a fundamental procedure, namely inferencing considers interpretive hypotheses in order of accessibility (involving least effort) and ceases when hearers reach an interpretation which satisfies the expectations of relevance raised by the stimulus. Relevance, then, is a matter of *balance* between *cognitive reward or interest* on the one hand and

cognitive effort on the other.

Our cognitive architecture is designed so as *to maximise the benefit/cost ratio*. Relevance basically involves two clauses:

> (a) everything else being equal, the greater the positive cognitive effects achieved in an individual by processing an input at a given time, the greater the relevance of the input to that individual at that time; and (b) everything else being equal, the smaller the processing effort expended by the individual in achieving those effects, the greater the relevance of the input to that individual at that time (Wilson and Sperber 1996: 302).

Newly presented information is relevant in a context only when it achieves contextual effects. The greater the contextual effects, the greater the relevance. However, contextual effects cost some mental effort to derive. As a consequence, *the greater the effort to derive them, the lower the relevance*. Efficiency with respect to a communicative goal is tantamount to striking a balance between cost and benefit, (or between degree of expenditure and degree of achievement). Effort is normally undertaken in the expectation of some reward, since, reasonably speaking, there is no point in having one's attention drawn if there's nothing relevant to be communicated to that person. What the (rational) Hearer seeks is the optimally relevant interpretation, i.e. the one that yields *the greatest possible contextual effects in return for the smallest amount of processing effort*.

If an utterance has a manifestly satisfactory and immediately accessible interpretation, that is the only interpretation that a rational Speaker may have intended to communicate, since

> It is in the audience's interests that the communicator should produce an U whose interpretation calls for less effort than any other U he could have made to achieve the same effect (Blakemore 1994: 35).

As Sperber and Wilson's examples point out, different contextual assumptions lead to different implications. Thus example **(44)** may lead to two contextual implications since it relies on two contextual assumptions:

(44) Peter: Would you like some coffee?
Mary: Coffee would keep me awake.

Contextual assumption 1: Mary doesn't want to be kept awake.
Contextual implication 1: Mary doesn't want any coffee.

Contextual assumption 2: Mary wants to stay awake.
Contextual implication 2: Mary wants some coffee.

With example **(45)**, the Hearer needs to disambiguate from the contextual assumption that best satisfies their own need for relevance:

(45) A: Are you going to the seminar?
B: It's on pragmatics.
Contextual assumption 1: B likes pragmatics
Contextual implication 1: B goes to anything on pragmatics.
Contextual assumption 2: B hates pragmatics
Contextual implication 2: B is not going to the seminar.

The interpretation intended by the Speaker and most likely to be chosen by the Hearer depends on which contextual assumption is highly salient under given circumstances. As soon as a highly salient, optimally relevant interpretation is recovered, all other interpretations are disallowed.

Contextual effects are achieved when newly presented information interacts with a context of existing assumptions in three possible ways:

a. by *strengthening* an existing assumption
b. by *contradicting* or eliminating an existing assumption
c. by *combining* an existing assumption with new information and contextual clues in order to yield a contextual implication

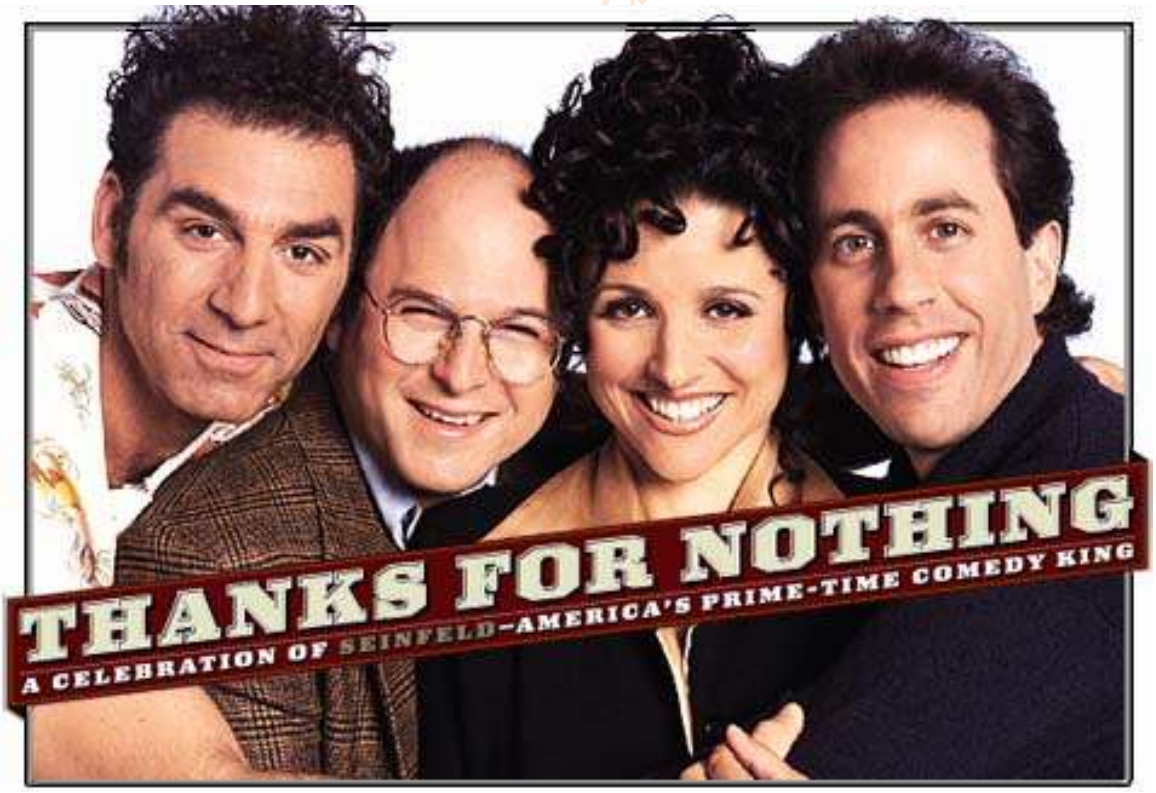
Relevance Theory claims that the interpretation that satisfies the expectation of relevance is the only one that the Hearer has any rational basis for choosing. At this point, a word of caution is necessary: to claim that a choice is rationally justified is not the same as to claim it is invariably correct. Sperber and Wilson admit that interpreting utterances is a *fallible process of hypothesis formation and evaluation*. Therefore, there is no guarantee that the interpretation that satisfies the Hearer's expectation of relevance will be correct, i.e. coincide with the one the Speaker intended to convey. As Blakemore argues, because of mismatches in cognitive environments, the Hearer may overlook a hypothesis that the Speaker regarded as highly salient. On the other hand, the Hearer may notice a hypothesis that the Speaker overlooked. This may inevitably lead to instances of misunderstanding. Yet, the aim of a relevance-based theory of communication is not to provide an infallible interpretive system but to identify the fundamental principles underlying the Hearer's (fallible) choices.

In the end, relevance involves improvement or restructuring of a person's knowledge, which can be achieved by adding new information, by adjusting existing assumptions, or by drawing conclusions which combine items of old and new information. Such processes will also be discussed in the light of schema theory in section 4.7.

4.6. Illustrations of the Gricean CP and Maxims

In this section I will attempt to provide a discussion of two conversations in terms of Gricean Maxims and implicatures. The first dialogue is a scene from the TV series 'Seinfeld', while the second is extracted from a short story by O'Henry. Utterances have been numbered and discussed in the order they appear in the sequence.

4.6.1. Jerry Seinfeld's 'talking with her is like talking with you'



Premiering in 1991, '*Seinfeld*' gradually emerged from a show about 'nothing' – the trivia wrinkles of everyday life, from Superman to breakfast cereal - to a cult hit. With its notorious creed of 'No hugging, no learning', the program broke new ground, its plots absurd yet grounded in contemporary life and its characters twisted-minded and self-absorbed yet undoubtedly alluring.

The following excerpt is taken from the pilot episode.
[Scene: Pete's luncheonette. Jerry and George are sitting at a table.]

GEORGE: How come you're not doin' the second show tomorrow? **(U1)**
JERRY: Well, there's this uh, woman might be comin' in. **(U2)**
GEORGE: Wait a second, wait a second, what coming in, what woman is coming in? **(U3)**
JERRY: I told you about Laura, the girl I met in Michigan? **(U4)**
GEORGE: No, you didn't! **(U5)**
JERRY: I thought I told you about it, yes, she teaches political science? **(U6)** I met her the night I did the show in Lansing...[looks in the milk can] There's no milk in here, what... **(U7)**
GEORGE: Wait wait wait, what is she, [takes the milk can from Jerry and puts it on the table] what is she like? **(U8)**
JERRY: Oh, she's really great. I mean, she's got like a real warmth about her and she's really bright and really pretty and uh...the conversation though, I mean, it was...talking with her is like talking with you, but, ya know, obviously much better. **(U9)**
GEORGE: [with a big smile] So, ya know, what, what happened? **(U10)**
JERRY: Oh, nothing happened, ya know, but it was great. **(U11)**

(U1) is a question by means of which George is trying to make Jerry reveal a piece of information, namely the reason why he is not having a second show. His question meets with Grice's conditions for questioning: the preparatory condition - George does not know the answer, and the sincerity condition - George wants to know the information. Apart from merely asking Jerry a question, Gorge equally expresses implied astonishment: the question in not formulated in a standard form 'Why are you not having...' and the insertion of 'how come' alludes to George's finding Jerry's postponement of his second show unexpected, even baffling.

(U2) is a representative, meant to commit Jerry to the truth of the expressed proposition, while also indirectly conveying an attitude on Jerry's part: that of

vacillation between supplying George with all the facts relevant to his question and refraining from confession. Jerry's hesitation is implied by the use of the modal verb modal verb 'might' and of the conversational fillers 'well', and 'uh'. Jerry's reply flouts the maxim of quantity (Jerry is less informative than George expected him to be in that specific line of discussion) and of Maxim of Manner (Jerry is extremely vague about the information supplied). Obviously, Jerry's vagueness enhances George's curiosity.

By the utter display of interest in **(U3)**, George's question obeys the preparatory condition, since George still does not know the answer, and the sincerity condition, since George is sincere, even overeager to find out further details about the woman Jerry met. George flouts the Manner Maxim by being neither orderly nor articulate in his formulating his question, which mostly consists of his reiterating certain snippets of Jerry's previous utterance. Although Seinfeld watchers are acquainted with such lack of orderliness in the conversational pattern between Jerry and George as well as with George's tendency to nag interlocutors by repeating certain words much to everyone's exasperation, **(U3)** may be regarded as a case of infringement: George may not flout the manner maxim in a deliberate attempt to imply something to Jerry, but might be simply infringing it out of overexcitement and overanxiousness to find out incoming news.

By the assertive in **(U4),** Jerry violates the Maxim of Quantity: he fails to properly inform George and pretends not having already brought Laura into discussion. Jerry also violates the Manner Maxim, talking as if George were supposed to know where Jerry met Laura, being well aware he has not mentioned it to George before. **(U5)** sounds slightly reproachful, since George deconspires Jerry's previous intention of deceiving him by resorting to maxim violations**.**

In **(U6),** although Jerry embarks upon some redressive action towards George**,** he still remains less informative than he should be, and thus flouts the Quantity Maxim. In addition, he flouts the Manner Maxim as he continues to elude clarity of expression. Moreover, he flouts the Relation Maxim, when he abruptly changes the conversation topic and inquires about the milk can. **(U7)**

By making **(U8)**, George ignores the new line of conversation Jerry has opened by mentioning the milk can, and makes salient his refusal to engage in any other topic than Jerry' love life by means of body language: he simply places the milk out of Jerry's reach. After the repetition of the imperative 'wait' George reiterates the same question he has already asked, being extremely repetitive – thus flouting the Maxim of Quantity – and persistent to the point of nagging (a conversational penchant which is typical of George throughout the show).

In **(U9),** Jerry finally endeavours to fill George in with the 'cherchez la femme'

information. He keeps being less informative than expected (flouting the Quantity Maxim) while also being ambiguous and unorderly (flouting the Manner Maxim): he switches from praising certain attributes of Laura's to indirectly complaining about the nature of their conversations, which are likened to those with George. In this way, Jerry flouts the Relation Maxim. The implicature may be that Laura may simply be a good chatty companion and not 'girlfriend material'. The next utterance, seemingly offensive to George, yet part of the banter strategies the two friends frequently engage in, is a redressive action Jerry takes against Laura and, implicitly, against himself for having chosen her for a date. He wants Laura to sound more interesting than George, yet refrains from giving any details to substantiate that.

At first blush, **(U10)** sounds an honest, although exasperatingly repetitive question. Yet paralanguage (the 'big smile') indicates an implicature: George is not simply interested in how the date went on, but whether Jerry and Laura slept together and would be happy to find a few spicy details about the sex. In the following utterance **(U11),** Jerry makes two apparently contradictory statements, thus flouting the Relation Maxim: 'Nothing happened' and 'It was great'. Obviously, the utterance 'Nothing happened' flouts the Quality Maxim, since something must have literally happened during a date (be it just chat, having dinner and drinks). What Jerry implies by using this gross exaggeration is that 'nothing worth making the encounter a date to remember' happened, or, otherwise put, things did not turn out in compliance with expectations. The implicature Jerry intends George to uptake is that he and Laura did not have sex. Yet, contrary to mutual knowledge about Jerry's dating habits and contrary to both Jerry's and George's expectations, not having sex did not spoil the fun, since dating Laura 'was great'. Both Jerry and George keep repeating 'It was great', thus constantly flouting the Quantity and the Relation Maxims, in a lame attempt to clarify the issue, to grasp the reason why Jerry did not end up in bed with Laura and eventually, to find justification for his wanting to see her again.

4.6.2. 'May I not hope for the privilege?'

The following analysis of an excerpt from O'Henry's '*The Lickpenny Lover*' focuses on indirectness and non-observance of Gricean maxims with a view to unveiling certain discrepancies in conversational styles between two interlocutors whose social status is utterly different: a millionaire and a salesgirl. The context is provided by the author in the lines below.

There were 3,000 girls in the Biggest Store. Masie was one of them. She was eighteen and a saleslady in the gents' gloves. One day Irving Carter, painter, millionaire, traveller, poet, automobilist, happened to enter the Biggest Store. Carter strolled across to the glove counter in order to shoot a few minutes on the wing. His need for gloves was genuine; he had forgotten to bring a pair with him. And then Irving Carter, painter, millionaire, etc., felt a warm flush rise to his aristocratically pale face. When the gloves were paid for and wrapped Carter lingered for a moment. He had no chance of meeting this beautiful girl socially. His mind struggled to recall the nature and habits of shopgirls as he had read or heard of them. Somehow he had received the idea that they sometimes did not insist too strictly upon the regular channels of introduction. After a few friendly and well-received remarks on general subjects, he laid his card by her hand on the counter.

(O'Henry - *A Lickpenny Lover*)

'Will you please pardon me,' he said, 'if I seem too bold **(U1)**; but I earnestly hope you will allow me the pleasure of seeing you again. **(U2)** There is my name **(U3)**; I assure you that it is with the greatest respect that I ask the favor of becoming one of your – acquaintances **(U4**). May I not hope for the privilege? **(U5)'**

Masie knew men - especially men who buy gloves. Without hesitation she looked him frankly and smilingly in the eyes, and said:

'Sure. **(U6)** I guess you're all right. **(U7)** I don't usually go out with strange gentlemen, though. **(U8)** It ain't quite ladylike. **(U9)** When should you want to see me again? **(U10**)'

'As soon as I may, **(U11)'** said Carter. 'If you would allow me to call at your home, I – **(U12)'**

Masie laughed musically. 'Oh, gee, no! **(U13**)' she said, emphatically. 'If you could see our flat once! **(U14)** There's five of us in three rooms. **(U15**) I'd just like to see ma's face if I was to bring a gentleman friend there! **(U16)**'

'Anywhere, then,' said the enamored Carter, 'that will be convenient to you. **(U17)'**

'Say', suggested Masie, with a bright-idea look in her peach-blow face; 'I guess Thursday night will about suit me. **(U18)** Suppose you come to the corner of Eighth Avenue and Forty-Eighth Street at 7:30. **(U19)** I live right near the corner. **(U20)** But I've got to be back home by eleven. **(U21)** Ma never lets me stay out after eleven. **(U22)'**

The conspicuous gap in social status between the participants in the dialogue is mirrored in their way of using direct/indirect speech acts. Irving Carter, a well-

bred, widely-travelled painter, millionaire, of aristocratic origin ranks higher on the social ladder than Masie, one of the many pauperous salesgirls. Generally, a person having a higher position tends to not use indirect speech acts in his/her conversation with someone who socially takes a lower position. Yet, Carter resorts to an intricate network of indirect speech acts in order to ask Masie out. In **(U1)**, the presence of the verb *pardon* triggers the interpretation of this Speech Act as an expressive one, the case being that of apologizing. The utterance is nevertheless not prototypical for an apology since it refers to a future act, as it does not obey Searle's preparatory condition, i.e. S expresses regret for a past act.

All these may lead to regarding utterance **(U1)** as a directive, namely a request: the Hearer is able to perform A – Masie can pardon Carter's boldness (preparatory condition), the Speaker wants the Hearer to do A – because, obviously, Carter does not want to appear in an unfavourable light before Masie (sincerity condition), the Speaker predicates a future act of the Hearer - she will pardon him in case he seems too bold (propositional condition) and the Speech Act counts as an attempt by the Speaker to get the Hearer to engage in the undertaken act. Carter chooses his words carefully, therefore utterance **(U5)** reveals hesitation and inserts last minute adjustment: instead of saying *friends*, he replaces the word with *acquaintances* which is more polite and less intrusive.

Utterance **(U2)** is a direct way for Carter to introduce himself, as part of the getting acquainted protocol, while also signalling potential diminishing of the social distance. **(U3)** reinforces the apologetic illocutionary force of **(U1)**, since Carter's hope and anticipated pleasure in relation to becoming acquainted with Masie are downplayed by insisting upon the respectful stance Carter takes towards such a potential acquaintance. In stressing his respect towards Masie, he is overloquacious, thus flouting both the Manner Maxim and the Quantity Maxim. He further flouts the Manner Maxim by insisting that Masie is doing him a favour, in other words by acknowledging incurring debt. **(U2)** plays the additional function of preparing Masie for the main illocution Carter has in mind: to ask Masie's permission to see her socially. Strangely enough, Carter does not specify which 'privilege' he is talking about, thus flouting both the Quantity Maxim (he is underinformative) and the Manner Maxim (he is vague and unclear). Yet, Masie's ability to engage in a cooperative conversation, backed by her previous experience of having been asked out by glove buyers and by her own wish of dating the dashing gentleman, enable her to uptake Carter's illocution adequately.

If Carter chiefly uses indirectness, Masie is, by contrast, very direct. Utterance **(U11)** is a direct request for information that confirms Masie's having uptaken Carter's illocution, despite its being conveyed in sophisticated parlance. The author's

comment: 'Without hesitation she looked him frankly and smiling in her eyes she said' is indicative of her being used to such proposals. Her replies are very simple, direct and confessive, strikingly contrasting with Carter's convoluted expression. Thus, **(U6)** is an acceptance of Carter's previously expressed overpolite invitation. Although the assertives in **(U7)** and **(U8)** sound direct, they carry implicatures: Masie tries to convey she is making an exception in Carter's case, not being in the habit of dating perfect strangers. By means of the evaluative **(U9)** she implies she will not behave unladylike, in order words, she indirectly suggests she is able to act like a lady, despite her modest extraction. **(U10)** is a direct question, somewhat dissonant from the previous innuendoes. It is followed by **(U11)** and **(U12),** two indirect attempts on Carter's part to imply he is available whenever Masie may allow him to be in her company.

Being uneducated and unfamiliar with the gentlemanly custom of calling on his date's house before taking her out, Masie fails to pick up the implicature borne by Carter's phrase 'to call at your home'. Consequently, her exclamative utterance **(U13)** implies that her home is an inappropriate sight for Carter's eyes. The utterance is, additionally, a refusal to have Carter pay her a brief visit and meet her family. **(U14)** is a descriptive which is brought to justify the grounds for such refusal, while **(U15)** is an expressive comment upon Masie's mother's likely reaction if faced with a visitor such as Carter. Both utterances are overinformative, as Masie infringes the Maxim of Quantity in an attempt to justify her discomfort with Carter's taking too close a look at her whereabouts.

(U17) is one of Carter's scarce direct remarks, showing his willingness to see Masie anytime she pleases. **(U18)** and **(U19)** are suggestions made by Masie, which, despite specification of time and place of the date, include hedges such as 'I guess' and 'I suppose'. Such hedges contribute to flouting the maxim of manner, since lack of focus is meant to lend a hypothetical tinge to the date, thus preventing her acceptance of the invitation from sounding frivolous. **(U19), (U20)** and **(U21)** provide additional reasons for Masie's having established a specific location: proximity will allow her to return home at some reasonable hour. The implicature carried out by such flout of the Quantity Maxim (she provides too much information about her behaviour and family rules) is that Masie wants to be perceived by Carter as an honourable girl, always inclined to obey her curfew.

Carter has several reasons to prefer indirectness. Firstly, it is in his aristocratic nature to be overpolite and courteous, which conventionally entails massive use of indirect communicative strategies. Carter is well aware that Masie and he belong to different walks of life and interaction between such people might be painstaking

('He had no chance of meeting this beautiful girl socially'). Although he may have some idea that Masie is not the type to stick to rigid protocol ('Somehow he had received the idea that they [the salesgirls] sometimes did not insist too strictly upon the regular channels of introduction.') he still inclines to overuse Indirect Speech Acts and repeatedly flouts the maxim of quantity – by providing unwanted details - in order to appear polite and respectful. The size of imposition needs be taken into account, since Carter's invitation may entail time- and effort-consuming preparation on Masie's part. An additional explanation would be that he is so smitten with love that he cannot afford being too direct for fear he might be turned down. Therefore, non-observance of the quantity and manner maxims may be a case of infringement brought about by nervousness. Concomitantly, Carter may want to increase the persuasive force of his message while trying to sound interesting and to display a gentlemanly overpolite charisma.

4.7. Implicatures and schema theory

In the light of the inferential processes judged by Grice (1975: 58) as useful to the calculation of implicatures, Cooren and Sanders (2002) maintain that "there is a systematic basis that could explain why and how interlocutors' interpretations are generally confined to one or a few possibilities in specific circumstances". They give the well-known example:

(46) 'I am thirsty!',

> which often implies expressing the need to be served a beverage. One could nevertheless come up with contexts in which such utterance would not imply that something is requested to satisfy the immediate thirst of our interlocutor: For example, we could be walking in the middle of the desert without water for quite a while and it could then be just meant as an expression of despair (Cooren and Sanders 2002: 1055).

According to Cooren and Sanders, any uttered proposition evokes a schema of conventional practices, or an institutional script. If A encounters B on a city street and asks,

(47) 'Can you tell me how to get to City Hall?'

and B replies,

(48) 'I'm going there, just come with me'.

Strictly speaking B has not complied with A's request but has acted in compliance with a traveling script or schema, which includes means of transportation, anticipating a route, keeping a schedule, etc. Within that schema, asking for directions for getting to a place is done for the purpose of arriving at that particular destination. Such cases of compliance will be further dealt with in the discussion of Attardo's Perlocutionary Cooperative Principle (see 4.4.). Obviously, the two authors point out that "implicatures can be inferred most reliably when speaker and hearer are members of the same socio-cultural community, and less and less so to the extent that their socio-cultural backgrounds diverge." Implicature-laden utterances may be termed '*task implicatures*', since they are designed to pursue certain social goals and cooperate with the interlocutor in order to attain the respective goal, which is not always strictly communicative. Behaviors and utterances occur within the framework of a social activity or task and "the schema of any social activity specifies what conduct constitutes the most direct, efficient way to engage in that activity" (Cooren and Sanders 2002: 1058).

The next section will discuss the way humans schematise knowledge and use storage of that knowledge in order to facilitate communication.

4.7.1. Schema theory: the basic claims

Uptaking implicatures adequately heavily relies on a language user's existing background knowledge, which needs to be activated during the process of inferencing (see 4.7.2.). When utterances are analyzed in isolation, conversations seem incomplete and fragmented without the activation of relevant prior knowledge. On the other hand, exchanges become meaningful when participants are able to use their shared background knowledge to fill in the gaps or the 'default elements' needed to calculate the conversational implicatures. Each new experience, verbal interactions included, is understood by being compared to a stereotypical version of a similar memorised experience and then by being processed in terms of deviation from or conformity with this stereotypical version.

In cognitive linguistics, as well as in cognitive psychology, such a stereotypical mental representation is called a '*schema*' (pl. '*schemata*'). The concept

of "schema" as a mental representation can be traced back to Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason" (1787), where it is understood as a structure of the mind representing concepts and guiding perception and comprehension of the world. The origin of the schema theory in its current sense is attributed to the Cambridge psychologist Bartlett (1932 in Cook 1994: 16), whose basic principle is that texts are interpreted with the help of a knowledge structure activated from memory, capable of filling in details that are not explicitly stated.

In the 70s, schema theory became one of the major concerns of artificial intelligence researchers, each of whom used different synonyms for the term *'schema'*: such as *'frames'*, *'scenarios'*, *'scripts'*, *'encyclopaedic entries'*. Rumelhart and Ortony's definition of schemata is particularly noteworthy:

> Schemata are data structures for representing the generic concepts stored in memory. They exist for generalized concepts underlying objects, situations, events, sequences of events, and sequences of actions. Schemata are not atomic. A schema contains, as part of its specifications, the network of inter-relations that is believed to generally hold among the constituents of the concept in question (Rumelhart and Ortony in Semino 1997: 131).

Schemata arise from repeated exposure to similar objects and situations, resulting in mental representations of typical instances (Cook 1994: 11). Schemata can explain omission of certain elements and provide missing or 'default elements' Communication will then crucially depend on shared expectations about the default elements of the schema.

Rumelhart regards schemata as the 'building blocks of cognition', as 'fundamental elements upon which all information processing depends' (Rumelhart 1980: 33). Schemata as *high-level cognitive structures* play a crucial role in comprehension, since they facilitate retrieval of generic concepts stored in memory and organisation of both already stored and newly-acquired knowledge into *associative conceptual networks*. Bower and Cirilo share Rumelhart's claim and consider that once disconfirmatory evidence against a certain line of comprehension has been gathered, inappropriate ongoing schemata are deactivated and the comprehender starts seeking for a more suitable alternative in compliance with previously acquired personal and cultural experience. Once credible evidence has been gathered against the validity of a schema or in favour of its incoherence, the comprehender '*suspends*' processing of that schema and his/her mental resources are 'allocated' towards the processing of a 'more promising schema' (Rumelhart 1980:

42). Semino equally advocates that "inferences and distractions may occur, which require the comprehender to abandon or suspend currently active scripts in favour of others" (Semino 1997: 137).

Emphasising the role played by background knowledge in schema activation, Semino highlights the fact that schemata are not contained in texts or in verbal interactions, they get instantiated in comprehenders' minds according to previous knowledge. Words activate concepts in the readers' minds and those concepts subsequently undergo restructuring into new networks of relationships (Schmidt 1991: 275, Sorea 2006: 62-68). Making sense of texts and conveying meaning towards other comprehenders vitally depends upon *shared expectations* about the schema variables, which are scaffolded by the comprehender's socio-cultural experiences.

If schemata are assessed in terms of their spacio-temporal dimension – location and order of happenings, it is helpful to borrow Shank and Abelson's term '*scripts*'.

> A script is a structure that describes appropriate sequences of events in a particular context…Scripts handle stylized everyday situations… A script is a predetermined, stereotype sequence of actions that defines a well-known situation (Shank and Abelson 1977 in Semino 1997: 145).

In discourse comprehension, scripts are activated by '*headers*' or '*triggers*', i.e. textual references to entities or actions related to the script. Headers may be more or less associated with a particular script, so they vary according to their 'predictive power' (Semino 1997: 146, Sorea 2006: 64-65). Nowadays a term like '*script*' seems easier to accommodate by language users, given their assumed knowledge about film and MTV video scripts. Yet, familiarity with film and MTV texts may equally distort interpretation by favouring that visualisable digression which any interpretation wholly unrestrained by language-related confinements risks to entail. Moreover, '*script*' needs distinguishing from '*frame*', a term introduced by Minsky (1975). If '*frame*' refers to memory structures that contain stereotypical knowledge about specific *situations*, '*script*' is used by Schank and Abelson to designate knowledge about *sequences of events* perceived in the chronological order of their occurrence (see Short 1996: 228 and Semino 1997: 128). Rumelhart (1980) uses the term 'schemata' to refer to 'generic concepts stored in memory' consisting of networks of interrelations. In their Relevance theory, Sperber and Wilson use the term '*encyclopaedic entries*' to comprise '*chunks*' of experience that other theorists label as '*scripts*', '*scenarios*' or '*frames*' (Sperber and Wilson 1986 in Semino 1997: 146).

Mick Short draws an analogy between schemata and filing cabinets:

> When we come across a reference to a situation we have come across before, we access the relevant 'file' in the 'filing cabinet', which consists of "an organised inventory of all the sorts of things related to that situation which we have previously experienced (Short 1996: 227).

Resuming Abelson's notion of 'scripts' or 'vignettes', Forceville (1996) defines them as "a kind of blueprints that help people, often subconsciously, to decide how certain events are likely to unfold, and to evaluate events" (Forceville 1996) and regards "invocation of scripts" indispensable to text deciphering. While commenting on the standardised core of scripts, Holland and Quinn emphasise the prototypical nature of all culturally organised perceptions of experience, which they call 'stories': "These 'stories' include prototypical events, prototypical roles for actors, and events unfold in a simplified and wholly expectable manner." (Holland and Quinn 1987: 24). Holland and Quinn's notion of 'cultural model' (see Sorea 2006: 68-70) nests the representations of a specific situation shared by the members of a community, in other words what Sperber and Wilson call 'cognitive environment' (see 4.5.).

To a higher degree than all synonymous terms, *'schema'* encompasses expectations, anticipations and inferencing landmarks. Schemata facilitate comprehension by striking a balance between the effort of activating pre-existent knowledge and the cognitive effort required by every new interaction. As Semino puts it,

> Generally speaking, the main function of schemata is to enable understanders to form expectations about what is likely to happen next, either in the real world, or in the world of a text. This does not only contribute to the disambiguation of references and of figurative expressions, but also to the readers' ability to infer what they do not witness directly, or what is not explicitly mentioned in a text (Semino 1997: 171-172).

To better understand how schemata are formed and activated, I will exemplify the previously introduced notions by discussing two recurrently activated schemata: the ZOO schema and the MARRIAGE schema. From an early age, most of us develop a ZOO schema. The variables or components of such a schema are: WILD ANIMALS, CAGES, VISITORS. The relations between these variables (or the 'variable constraints') are as follows: animals are wild, unlike pets or household animals, therefore need to be kept in confined spaces to avoid hurting the visitors. As a rule, visitors are children accompanied either by parents or by schoolteachers. Those who entertain a more detailed schema also remember children watching the

animals without being allowed to feed them and observing a safe distance from the cage. For most people, the ZOO schema is not a rigid structure, it may accommodate incoming elements, such as new animal species or 'cageless' zoos in the form of wild parks, where animals are separated from visitors by trenches, enjoy more freedom to move and find themselves in a habitat much more similar to their natural habitat.

Another schema, frequently activated throughout a wide variety of cultural communities, is the WEDDING schema. Most of us instantiate a schema consisting of the following variables: a bride, a groom, a priest or a civil authority empowered to legalise the marital union, a place (either a church or some other location specially destined for the ceremony and party), a person 'giving away' the bride (usually the father or a father figure), the consent given by both spouses-to-be, the rings that, once handed by the best man, are exchanged, the vows (that either observe a traditional formulation or are written by the spouses-to-be), the declarative 'I now pronounce you husband and wife', followed by permission granted to the groom to kiss the bride. Obviously, events need to be sequenced in a certain order (the bride must be given away and then asked for consent, vows must be exchanged before the two are 'joined in holy matrimony', the bouquet is thrown by the bride and caught by an unmarried woman once the ceremony is over). Of course, the schema is very flexible and can accommodate culture-dependent elements. For instance, in Jewish weddings, the man steps on a glass and breaks it at the end of the ceremony. In Orthodox weddings, the spouses-to-be and their godparents perform a roundabout dance reinforcing the circularity of the rings exchanged, a symbol of everlasting love. When it comes to a wedding within a polygamous community such as an African or Arab one, we know little about the rituals and the role of each participant. Likewise, we have only recently become acquainted with the performative formula 'I hereby pronounce you partners for life' used in gay marriages in those countries where homosexual unions have been legitimised, which we are likely to have accommodated into our existing WEDDING schema.

4.7.2. 'Schema-refreshment' versus 'schema-reinforcement'

As high-level cognitive structures, schemata facilitate coherence of to-be-comprehended input by supplying simplified and prototypical clusters of knowledge on situations, objects, events, persons. For the sake of cognitive economy, schemata enable perceivers to select those portions of existing knowledge and to develop those expectations that normally provide smoother and shorter paths towards the successful processing of incoming social stimuli. As '*cognitive misers*',

people generally tend to remember information that confirms their schemata and forget information that disconfirms them (Fiske and Taylor 1984: 162). *Schema-consistent information* is favoured by normal retrieval processes, while schema-inconsistent information requires painstaking integration into memory. As people spend less time and make less effort in decoding and interpreting information that is *consistent* with their expectations, it is natural to assume that schema-consistent information generally requires less effort in processing than *schema-inconsistent information* (Augoustinos and Walker 1996: 45).

On the other hand, as Eysenck and Keane (1990: 279) argue, comprehenders may also spend less time and pay less attention to those elements they find familiar and dedicate more time and focus more on the unexpected elements: "Since there is no need to spend very long looking at expected objects, this frees up resources for processing more novel and unexpected aspects of any given scene" (Eysenck and Keane 1990: 279).

Processing of schema-consistent versus schema-inconsistent information in relation to comprehenders' processings of texts has been discussed by linguists such as Cook (1994) or Semino (1995, 1997) in the light of two concepts: '*schema-reinforcement* and '*schema-refreshment*'. 'Schema-reinforcement' largely accompanies the processing of schema-consistent information, while 'schema-refreshment' relates to the processing of schema-inconsistent information.

Whenever an input, be it textual or not, can be accommodated within existing schematic representations of events, situations, persons, and the comprehender's expectations are relatively readily met with, there is likelihood for the comprehender to undergo 'schema-reinforcement', i.e. *strengthening schema-consistent representations*. An example of schema-reinforcing would be receiving a huge phone bill when one is aware they have spent many hours talking long distance. Being prescribed certain medication for some ailment or disease might be schema-reinforcing if the patient has previously taken that medicine or has read about the disease and possible ways to treat it. A less informed patient may undergo expectation-challenge when prescribed a drug they have never heard of or which has been rumoured to have dangerous side-effects.

Whenever the textual input fails to match the comprehender's *'schematic expectations'* (Cook 1994: 10), schemata are likely to undergo *disruption* or *refreshment*. The degree of schema change depends on each reader's willingness and ability to alter their previous schematic representations of reality or to draw new connections between existing schemata. Cook (1994) regards schema-refreshment as inextricably linked to the effect of *unexpectedness* or *unfamiliarity* (generally brought about by literary texts) (Cook 1994: 182).

Along the same line of argument, DiMaggio distinguishes between 'automatic *cognition'* and '*deliberative cognition'* (DiMaggio 1997: 4-6). Automatic cognition is regarded as a routine type of cognition exploiting recurrent schemata, whose instantiation is likely to supply default assumptions about persons, relationships, events and their consequences (Di Maggio 1997: 4). In contrast with automatic cognition, deliberative cognition involves overriding existing patterns of conceptualisation, while critically and reflexively contemplating existing mental structures in the light of expectation-challenging inputs. Deliberative cognition is not likely to be employed frequently as deliberation rejects the shortcuts automatic thinking offers. Nevertheless, people are strongly motivated to appeal to deliberation whenever existing schemata fail to adequately account for new inputs.

Semino proposes that language input – be it in the form of literary or non-literary texts - should be located along a continuum whose two ends are schema-reinforcement and schema-refreshment:

> If a text reinforces the reader's schemata, the world it projects will be perceived as conventional, familiar, realistic and so on. If a text disrupts and refreshes the reader's schemata, the world it projects will be perceived as deviant, unconventional, alternative, and so on (Semino 1997: 155).

Semino refines Cook's definition of 'schema-refreshment' by underlining that schema refreshment rather includes "unusual instantiations of schemata and/or the simultaneous activation and interconnection of schemata, that, in my case at least, were not normally activated together" (Semino 2001: 350-351). The schema-reinforcement and the schema-refreshment potential of a text can account for the "degree of alternativity, possibility, conventionality, etc., that readers attribute to text worlds" (Semino 1997: 176). Semino insists on regarding schema refreshment as a potential and in most cases non-predictable effect of the text upon the reader's pre-existing knowledge structures, since, she argues, readers may ignore expectation-challenging textual elements or may accept them solely for purposes of text comprehension (Semino 1997: 213). Later on, taking on board Jeffries's criticism as to the presence of a cline with schema reinforcement at one end and schema refreshment at the other (Jeffries 2001), Semino proposes introducing the notion of a schema-refreshment cline as an analytical tool. Such a cline would have "no schema refreshment at one end and dramatic schema refreshment at the other" (Semino 2001: 352). Being a comprehender-dependent phenomenon, schema-refreshment is liable for 'interpretative variability' (Semino 2001: 348) while not excluding "some degree of consensus about textual meaning between readers with shared cultures"

(Jeffries 2001: 332).

A traditionally-minded person may experience schema refreshment when going to an Anglican church and seeing that the Mass is being held by a woman priest. Likewise, conservative people may undergo schema-refreshment accompanied by strong affective reactions (from surprise to outrage) when witnessing a gay wedding or simply reading about the marriage between two homosexual persons. Even seasons such as autumn or spring may appear schema-refreshing to inhabitants of the tropical areas or of the Polar Circle, where, evidently, there is only one season lasting throughout the year.

4.7.3. A schema-based approach to sitcom jokes

The tenets of the schema theory successfully apply to investigating joke mechanisms and joke comprehension. A seminal study on jokes in the light of scripts is Raskin's who claims that: "A text can be characterized as a single-joke-carrying text if both of the following 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 be fully or in part in this text" (Raskin 1985 in Attardo 1994: 197).

Raskin's analysis is inspired by Freud, who analyzed humor in terms of certain criteria that once met are able to generate a felicitous product:

a) a cheerful mood that reflects an individual's predilection for laughing;
b) expecting the comic situation by adjusting to comic situation;
c) encouragement created by the agreeable social context;

The speaker has to take into account the following factors regarding the addressee:

d) the mental activity performed at the moment;
e) the attention must be focused on the comparison that induces the humorous situation;
f) the situation is supposed to create a strong effect upon the hearer, as well. (Freud 1905/1976)

Raskin emphasizes the following conditions that make a text humorous: the text must be compatible with the two different overlapping scripts and the two scripts that must be compatible to the text are necessarily opposite. This means that

humor is based on deceiving the listener in order to achieve its purpose. The speaker must induce the first script as plausible to the hearer and then apply the revealing strategy that points to the punch line, which eventuates very different from what the addressee anticipated in the first place.

As already specified, a schema is activated by a linguistic 'header' or 'trigger'. Headers vary in their 'predictive power', i.e. they are more or less strongly associated with one particular script, and such 'scriptal ambiguity' is widely used in achieving the punchline of the joke. Let us see an example:

(44) "I'm telling you, you can't make me tell a lie. Truth must be served."
"Oh, please, can't you serve it later?"
"No, it's getting cold."
('*Perfect strangers*')

The example displays 'scriptal ambiguity' as to which of the two scripts the header 'serves' is meant to be activated. One script is related to serving food or beverage. The other is activated by a second meaning of the verb 'serve' – 'to render active service,
homage, or obedience to (God, a sovereign, commander etc.)'.

> The funniness of a joke may be accomplished via the concurrent activation of rival scripts, leading right before the punchline or script suspension and embarking in the less expected script (Cook 1994: 82).

In Raskin's view, a successful joke exploits the overlapping of the two scripts or schemata in the joke text, usually triggered by the header, which Raskin calls 'script-switch trigger' (in Attardo 1994: 211).The overlapping of the two scripts is not necessarily a cause of humour in itself; Raskin adds the necessary condition that the two scripts should be opposed/conflicting. Other types of discourse are equally based on overlapping schemata, but, for want of conflicting schemata, the respective texts are not humorous, although they may be obscure, allusive or metaphorical, (Attardo 1994: 204). According to Raskin, script oppositions fall into three major classes:

(1) actual versus non-actual
(2) normal versus abnormal
(3) possible versus impossible.

These three classes are all instances of the primordial opposition between real and unreal, and, in their turn, are instantiated in more concrete versions, according to the different cultural normative dichotomies, such as life versus death, obscene versus non-obscene, high versus low status etc.

Jokes are usually built on complex structures of conflicting scripts which makes their analysis so intricate. If a joke is within a communicative strategy, then we have a clear distinction between locution and illocution (the speaker wants to send an indirect message by means of humor). The strategic use can be very successful in achieving the speaker's genuine communicative goal because such humor instances are easily cancelable when necessary ('Can't you tell a joke?' or 'Don't you have a sense of humor?' are such instances):

> Joking may be considered as an agreeable pastime, but it can also be analyzed from the point of view of the pay-offs to the participants involved in the interaction. … In this, the humorous behaviour can be regarded as part of a personal communicative strategy (Zajdman 1995: 331).

Zajdman specifies that this statement is made according to Ernst Berne's book that is entitled '*Games people play*'. In consonance with the double-script approaches previously discussed, Zajdman conceptualizes humor as a sort of a double-decker: the first deck is the amusement, the entertaining part and the second layer goes beyond joking in that it hides an implicature within, it refers to an aspect that only relies on the actual joke in order to convey a message.

In order to illustrate the cognitive concepts introduced in this section and their intertwining with previously presented pragmatic notions, I have chosen to discuss a corpus of jokes from TV sitcoms: '*Perfect Strangers*', '*Cybil*', '*M.A.S.H.*' and '*The Prince of Bel-Air*'. I intend to discuss the particular scripts used in each joke, the way the opposition between scripts is achieved, the way these particular scripts are activated, evincing the types of headers used and the mechanisms allowing the simultaneous activation of opposed scripts within the same text.

4.7.4. Analysing sitcom jokes in terms of schema theory

As I have already discussed, in terms of schema theory, jokes are instances of potentially schema refreshing discourse: joke receivers may have their existing schemata contradicted by the joke text, even if these schemata are powerful to the

point of having become clichés. An example of disrupted cliché is offered in example **(45):**

(45) Mr. Banks's son is worried about his admission in college, especially that he knows that he is not as good as his father or his cousin. His father tries to encourage him: 'You don't have to prove anything, to impress anyone. You don't have to do what I do, or be like your cousin. Just be yourself!'
His son answers: 'Oh, please, there's no need to be cruel!'
('The Prince of Bel-Air')

The father's advice, 'Just be yourself', prompts the joke receiver to instantiate a predictable pattern of expectations: acting natural is acknowledged, in most (western) cultures, to be a valuable, positive, rewarding attitude, which has been verbalized in the form of a cliché. The joke exploits the simultaneous possible activation of two contradictory schemata: the 'naturalness' schema, on the one hand, and the 'low self-esteem' schema on the other: for people with a poor personality, far from being rewarding, acting natural is disastrous. This changes the perspective on the advice: it is no longer well-meant and kind, it comes to sound thoughtless, even ruthless.

Example **(46)** is based on a similar opposition of schemata likely to be instantiated by joke receivers:

(46) 'Listen, I don't like this idea: driving like nuts on the highway, listening to loud music and all this stuff.'
'Relax, brother, nothing will happen to you. After all, let's live a little; look at us: we're young, we're single, one of us is really attractive, the other one is you'.
('The Prince of Bel-Air')

The first part of the last sentence ('…one of us is really attractive') is likely to activate an 'advantage' schema, in which attractiveness is an asset. The second part of the repartee ('the other one is you') prompts a 'disadvantage' schema, clashing with the first one. The implicature of this last sentence is not only that, presumably, 'the other one' does not fit into an 'attractiveness' subschema, but neither in some 'compensatory' schema, of the type 'I'm attractive, you're clever'; since the compensatory element is missing, the joke may trigger a schema refreshing situation with the joke receiver.

Example **(47)** exploits the same pattern:

(47) Two women are talking about their husbands. One of them says: 'Oh, I know what you mean. My husband has only two moods: angry and angrier'.
('Perfect Strangers')

The joke is based on the fact that the first part of the last sentence arouses some expectations that are not fulfilled: in the sentence: 'my husband has only two moods', the expectation, prompted by background knowledge, is that the two moods are different, if not opposite. This schema of two opposite moods, expected to be verbalized by two antonyms, clashes with the schema most likely to be activated by the punch, which only contains a single lexical trigger: the adjective 'angry', used with two different degrees of comparison. Use of the same word shatters the listener's expectations, which were initially anchored in two opposites.

Instantiation of opposed or conflicting schemata as a consequence of the encounter with a jocular text relies on the opposition between real and unreal situations. As already specified, this basic opposition is realized in three specific patterns: the oppositions actual/non-actual, normal/abnormal, possible/impossible. Example (49) illustrates the third type:

(48) Mr. Banks asks his son, Carlton, to help him fix the cradle. Since both of them are clumsy, it takes longer than they thought and Carlton is really annoyed. Mr. Banks asks him:
'Am I keeping you from something more important?'
'As a matter of fact, I have to study for my mid-term, to go to a party with the boys, and then I'd like to have a wife and kids and go on with my life.'
('Prince of Bel-Air')

This joke is based on a possible/impossible opposition between short-term and long-term goals. The first script likely to be instantiated invokes the possible/probable time for fixing a cradle (a short-term goal, normally not time-consuming). The second one, triggered by 'having a wife and kids…' is a script scaffolded by long-term, even lifelong goals and intentions, obviously impossible to fulfil during or instead of fixing a cradle.

In order to trigger instantiation of conflicting schemata, metaphorical transfer and register variation/opposition are some of the basic mechanisms to be used in example **(49)** below:

(49) 'Well, nice to meet you guys, but I must be going now.'

'Won't you stay for dinner? We have "ambush stew". It attacks you when you least expect it.'

(M.A.S.H. 4077)

Although this is not a joke, in the common sense of the word, the unusual collocation 'ambush stew' and the explanation given are based on a potential clash between two schemata likely to be activated by hearers: the 'dinner' schema, embedding the 'bad food' subschema, and the 'war' schema. The metaphorical transfer from the war jargon onto the eating schema (reinforced in the explanation subsequent: 'It attacks you when you least expect it') is likely to bring about a schema-refreshing effect, which is common and necessary to all jokes.

(50) "Hey, man, what are you doing? Are you crazy?
"I prefer the term <emotionally challenged>'.

('The Prince of Bel-Air')

The question 'are you crazy', which is an indirect way of reprimanding somebody for being unreasonable, is likely to activate an 'irrational behaviour' schema, less probable to be triggered by the politically-correct synonym 'emotionally challenged'. The clash between insane behaviour and politically-correct stance makes up a scrip-based opposition reinforced by the clash in registers.

The next joke, **(51),** is an example of the way in which implicature and presupposition are used in order to achieve the humorous effect:

(51) 'When I was in high school, I was chosen <the girl the most likely to succeed>.'
'Well, we all have our little disappointments.'

('Perfect Strangers')

The humorous gist of this text is given by the clash between two potentially instantiated schemata: the 'success' schema, likely to be triggered by the first line, and the 'disappointment' schema, likely to be triggered by the punch. The implicature in the punch line (that the female character has failed, alongside with the presupposition that disappointment is generated by failure are the elements that lead to the activation of the second schema. Moreover, the opposition between the importance that such a failure would have and the adjective 'little' used by the speaker enhances the effect of the joke.

(52) 'You know, my husband gave up working as a stunt man, and, although he is unemployed, he wouldn't change his mind. He says that going back to stunts would be a step back.'
'I understand what he's afraid of. You see, if he takes a step back, he'll get back to the caves again.'
('Cybill')

This example is based on a high/low status script opposition. The first script, that of a high status person unwilling to give up this position is opposed to a second script, in which the same person is described as very close to the 'cave man', a widespread cultural epitome of atavism and brutish ignorance. Unlike in other jokes, there are no lexical triggers for the two scripts, but the whole text is responsible for activating the scripts in question. Usually, joke texts do contain a lexical header for the scripts; moreover, these headers are ambiguous, in the sense that they may trigger two or several different scripts at the same time. Example (**53**) is relevant in this respect:

(53) Mrs. Banks: 'Listen, Phillip, I've read in this magazine that these cradles are very dangerous. One of them threw a baby and he flew fifty feet in the air.'
Mr. Banks: 'Oh, relax, honey, I'm sure we can beat that.'
('The Prince of Bel-Air')

The first schema likely to be activated in the joke is that of 'extreme danger'; the proportion of the danger is suggested by the 'fifty feet' header, which is not very 'predictive' a header (it does not activate one specific script, but it can be common to various scripts). This is exactly what happens in the punchline, where the same header is used to potentially trigger a different script: that of record breaking.

(54) 'My grandmother is 106 years old and she is as strong as a sea-turtle.'
'I wonder what I will be like when I am 106'
'You'll have no problem; you already look like a sea-turtle.'
('Perfect Strangers')

The joke is based on the probable overlap of two schemata, activated by one lexical item: 'sea-turtle'. The sea turtle is a symbol displaying different connotations in different cultures: while with some it bears appreciative emotional connotations, and is regarded/intended as a compliment (in the first sentence), with others it is only an embodiment of decrepitude and old age. The last line is ambiguous: it seems

to be bona-fide communication, but the implicature of using the verb 'look' instead of 'be' or 'behave' is: "you just look old, but you are unlikely to become mature/wise/strong".

(55) Mr. Banks: 'Oh, hello, Vivian, how are you? You look great, did you lose some weight?'
Vivian: 'Yes, and it seems to me that you have found it.'
('The Prince of Bel-Air')

A play upon the meaning of a verb ('to lose') is also the mechanism used in example **(56)**. In the first case, the verb is used as part of an idiomatic structure ('to lose weight'). In the second case, the verb preserves its lexical meaning and its semantic relations with the other words, in this case, the antonym 'to find', likely to trigger an impossible script, that of somebody literally finding some lost weight.

As previously exemplified, joke receivers are inclined to activate different scripts during their encounter with the same text: hence the concurrent running of more than one script or the concurrent activation of rival scripts. Example (56) illustrates the concurrent running of two scripts as part of another:

(56) Mother: 'I can't believe that you and Carlton have graduated and are moving into your own place now. It seems to me that only yesterday was I whipping the tears off his little face.'
Will: 'Oh, but it was yesterday, aunt Viv. I told you he wasn't prepared to see <Jurassic Park>'.
('The Prince of Bel-Air')

The joke is likely to urge listeners to activate the 'age' schema, consisting of two opposed subschemata. The first is a 'maturity' subschema, triggered by mentioning graduation and moving to a place of one's own. The other one is a 'childhood' schema, whose headers are 'crying when seeing a film' (implying the inability to distinguish between fiction and reality, fear of the unknown) and 'having Mummy whipping off the tears'. These two scripts are not incompatible when applied to different persons, but they are mutually exclusive when activated in relation to the same person. Their co-occurrence despite their mutual exclusion is what feeds the punchline.

(57) The night before an important exam, Balki and Larry decide to stay up all night and study. Naturally, they fall asleep and wake up at ten o'clock in the

morning. Larry says: 'Balki, wake up, it's ten o'clock, your history exam started an hour ago.'
'Really? How am I doing?'

('Perfect Strangers')

There are two mutually exclusive subscripts likely to be activated with an 'exam' schema: taking it or not taking it, out of various reasons, one of which could be oversleeping. Although he is in the latter situation, Balki behaves as if the exam were in progress; he fails to recognize that what Larry says is in fact an indirect way to say that he is late for his exam and consequently he must have failed.

The joke below (58) may also lead to activation of two opposite schemata:

(58) "Isn't it too long a trip for a woman who is 106?"
"Are you kidding? My grandmother wakes up every day before sunrise, goes ten miles up the hill with the goats and grazes them, then goes down the hill ten miles, cooks breakfast for 26 men and, after they go to work, she does 45' of aerobics."

('Perfect Strangers')

The possible instantiation of two conflicting schemata exploits a cultural incongruity: the image of an overworked woman, subordinated to men, toiling in a rural environment in Mypos, suggested by the first sentences, and the image of the American, emancipated urban woman of the 80's and her interest in body-building, ('she does 45' of aerobics'). Another predictable opposition is that between the usual image one has about a woman who is 106 years old and what is told about her in the joke, yielding a combination of script oppositions giving rise to humour.

5. POLITENESS THEORIES

> "Listen, I don't need to pay for a therapist to give me crap. I have a roommate who does it for free"
> "I have my dignity, or at least it should look like it..."
> "My...my smiling license has been suspended"
> (*Ally McBeal* – 'McBeal'-isms)

The present chapter will deal with linguistic instantiations of politeness and with the fundamental sets of strategies widely employed in verbal communication in order to maintain or, on the contrary, disrupt social harmony. Special emphasis will be laid on the connection between using specific politeness strategies and pursuing specific acts of preserving or damaging the interlocutor's image or one's own image.

5.1. Politeness as social norm

As *social norm*, politeness embodies notions such as 'good manners', 'social etiquette', 'social niceness'. According to the social norm view, each society espouses a particular set of social norms, consisting of more or less explicit rules that prescribe certain types of behaviour in certain contexts. Politeness arises when an act of behaviour complies with such accepted shared norms, while impoliteness arises when an act is incongruent with such norms (Fraser 1990). Politeness is in most cases anticipated by sociocultural norms:

> A child, for example, is not ordinarily entitled to authorize a parent to do something; two close friends do not issue orders to each other; an employee is not free to criticize an employer; a felon does not christen a ship … And, while a podiatrist is entitled to ask questions, there are restrictions on the content: questions about your history and the reason for the visit are expected; questions about your intimate moments are not (Fraser 1990: 233).

Socially regulated norms prompt us into adjusting our actions in order to comply with certain socially accepted and shared standards or requirements, considered essential by the community of practice one belongs to. Each community concurs to establish specific ethical values and consequently politeness norms and

strategies which, together with beliefs and attitudes, define its members as an ingroup, distinctive from other outgroups. According to Lakoff, politeness aims to diminish potential clashes and prevent conflict, thus contributing to social harmony:

> Politeness can be defined as a means of minimizing confrontation in discourse – both the possibility of confrontation occurring at all, and the possibility that a confrontation will be perceived as threatening (Lakoff 1989:102).

Politeness-related practices combine individual behavioural tendencies with socially imposed and internalised norms and parameters, the individual being under social pressure while to some extent free to exert personal choices. In Mills' view,

> [p]oliteness is not only a set of linguistic strategies used by individuals in particular interactions, it is also a judgement made about an individual's linguistic habits; thus it is a general way of behaving as well as an assessment about an individual in a particular interaction. Thus, if a person whom we would normally categorise as very polite is impolite in a particular instance, this might have greater force than a less offensive statement by someone whom we would categorise as habitually impolite (Mills 2003: 33)

Social pressure has sometimes been regarded as tantamount to the so-called 'power of politeness' (Kallia 2004: 145). Polite acts of behaviour – be they verbal or non-verbal – are performed by individuals, yet grasping the concept and applying it to various contexts and encounters bears solid social anchoring, since it abides by assimilated social behaviour standards. Politeness "presupposes that potential for aggression as it seeks to disarm it, and makes possible communication between potentially aggressive parties." (Brown and Levinson 1987: 1).

5.2. Linguistic politeness and communicative strategies

Linguistic politeness covers only part of the vast phenomenon comprised under the umbrella term 'social politeness', hence distinction needs to be made between politeness as a system of 'message strategies', and politeness as 'a social judgement' (Craig 1986). Over the past 20 years, linguistic theories of politeness have focused on the way communicative strategies (both verbal and non-verbal) are employed to maintain or to promote social harmony.

Robin Lakoff (1989) proposes three categories of speech acts according to the politeness theory: *polite, non-polite* and *rude* (Kallia 2004: 147). The criterion underlying such classification is "the discourse type in which the given utterance occurs, i.e. whether the discourse is intended primarily for communicating information or for supporting social relations" (Kallia 2004: 147). Polite speech acts are defined as utterances that follow the rules of politeness, irrespective of the expectation factor. The difference between non-polite and rude speech acts is that only the latter display clear violation of politeness norms. Non-polite behaviour occurs when politeness is not expected, whereas rude behavior appears in contexts where politeness is expected or required.

Haverkate (Haverkate in Kallia 2004: 146-147) divides speech acts fall into three categories: *polite, impolite* and *non-impolite*. Polite acts such as confessing or apologizing may endanger the speaker's image. Insulting or threatening are considered impolite acts since they intend to harm the hearer. The third category is considered neutral in point of pernicious intentions, although polite efforts in the form of paralinguistic devices may be employed in order to convey a polite message. Non-impolite speech acts are frequent cases of directives and assertives. For instance, when a superior asks an employee to bring him a file he may use a polite tone of voice or use indirect formulation, most of which may embed as softening devices, so that an order becomes more similar to a request. This way, the speech act cannot be catalogued as a simple request because of the social distance imposed by the positions of the two participants: the employee knows that it is his job to assist his/her superiors, and the superior knows that he/she will provide support when necessary.

5.3. Brown and Levinson's face-saving view

The most influential approach to politeness is *the face-saving view*, elaborated by Brown and Levinson (1978/1987), revolving around three basic notions:

(a) the view of communication as rational activity, Speakers are endowed with rationality, a precisely definable mode of reasoning from ends to the means employable to achieve those ends (Brown and Levinson 1987).

(b) Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle and maxims of conversation. According to the Cooperative Principle people operate on the assumption that ordinary conversation is characterized by *no deviation from rational efficiency without a reason* (Brown and Levinson 1978).

(c) Goffman's (1967) notion of *face*: "Face is an image of the self delineated in terms of approved social attributes" (1967: 5). In their seminal study of linguistic politeness, Brown and Levinson borrow the notion of 'face' from Goffman and redefine it as *the public self-image that every member [of society] wants to claim for himself*.

As already pointed out in the discussion of indirectness, '*face*' is a crucial concept in pragmatics, since it captures all aspects of a person's public image, being likely to unveil self-esteem and the way an individual strives to maintain self-esteem in the public sphere. As Thomas stresses, "every individual's feeling of self-worth or self-image; this image can be damaged, maintained or enhanced through interaction with others" (Thomas 1995: 169).

According to Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, one should normally try to avoid face-damaging situations, more precisely situations when a person's face risks revealing undesirable, socially unacceptable aspects, thus making the person in question feel embarrassed or uncomfortable. All individuals are said to constantly invest in face preservation, and all actions taken to preserve one's face are generically called '*facework*'. 'Facework' comprises the multiplicity of the actions undertaken by a person in order to either preserve or save their face.

5.3.1. Face-Threatening Acts

Any act that impinges upon a person's face to some extent (typically insults, criticisms, insults) is a *Face-Threatening Act* (henceforth FTA). People are generally motivated to avoid FTAs and are willing to make efforts, take pains and/or to incur financial or emotional costs in order to save face. To this end, facework is designed to maintain or support face by counteracting potential FTAs, among which the most frequent and salient cases are:

- *potential threats to the positive face*: criticism, disagreement, apology, confession
- *potential threats to negative face*: orders, requests, threats/ thanks, unwilling promises or offers.

Facework relies on the interactants' mutual interest in cooperating to maintain their respective faces. Since a threat is likely to lead to a counterthreat or even to escalate and turn into physical violence, the Speaker has a vested interest in maintaining not only their own face but the Hearer's face as well, a concern which enhances the probability of reciprocally avoiding face damage. When facework manages to counteract potential threats, 'redressive facework' may be resorted to, taking into

account that:

> Any action that impinges in some degree upon a person's face (typically, orders, insults, criticism) is a 'face-threatening act' (hereafter, FTA). Facework can be designed to maintain or support face by counteracting threats, or potential threats, to face. This kind of facework is often referred to as redressive facework, since it involves the redress of an FTA (Culpeper 2001: 239).

The culturally inculcated positive evaluation of reputation, prestige, (self)-esteem, involve preventing one's public image from suffering damage, i.e. from 'losing face'. As already mentioned, potential damage to one's face simultaneously engenders face protection or 'facework' and face redressing or '*remedial work*', destined to restore one's allegedly damaged face. Any face threatening act needs to be counterbalanced by appropriate doses of politeness (Kasper 1994).

5.3.2. Positive and negative face wants

Brown and Levinson provide a minute discussion of Goffman's notion of face in terms of '*positive and negative face wants*'. Such wants will be discussed more thoroughly in the lines to come.

Positive face wants are those aspects of an individual's face which include "the desire to be ratified, understood, approved of, liked or admired" (Brown and Levinson 1987: 62) by their peers, friends, superiors etc. It springs out of the need to be worthy of positive appraisal. As social beings, people desire to be recognized as attractive, interesting, friendly, intelligent and so on – according to the personal preferences of each individual, to the importance of each aspect in one's life and to the socio-cultural weight of certain features (wealth in advanced countries, wisdom in traditional countries). A person's concern for their positive face includes their wanting others to acknowledge their existence **(1)**'Hi, how are you today?'), approve of their opinions **(2)** 'You're right about fast foods' or express admiration **(3)** 'You did a terrific job'.

In any communicative situation, the communicator's goals provide essential cues meant to foreground certain aspects of face. Thus, when asking the bank manager for a loan, the Speaker must look trustworthy and solvable. When seeking for a medical prescription or a sick leave, the Speaker must look ill (or s/he may be regarded as a fraud). When being interviewed for a scholarship, the Speaker must

look academically promising.

There is a distinction between FTAs which threaten the speaker's own positive face and those which threaten the hearer's positive face: potential threats to the hearer's positive face are, typically, criticism, disagreement, while apology and confession are typically expected to damage the Speaker's face.

A person's concern for their negative face revolves around the "want of every competent adult member that his actions be unimpeded by others" (1987: 62) *Negative face wants* arise from the desire that someone's actions should not be hindered or obstructed by others, in other words that, basically, an individual nurtures the tendency to suppress any outside influence preventing them from saying or doing what they want or coercing them into embarking upon unwanted courses of action.. As a rule, people want to act freely, unobstructed by what other people suggest, request, order or impose upon them and frequently disapprove of other individuals' interventions into their ongoing or planned activities. Negative face-threatening acts involve intruding on someone else's autonomy, and consequently impinging upon an individual's freedom of action.

Potential threats to one's negative face are, typically, orders, requests, threats – which may damage another individual's negative face, promises or offers made under coercion– that can prove quite harmful for one's own negative face.

> To conclude with, positive politeness anoints the face of the addressee by indicating that in some respects, S[peaker] wants H[earer]'s wants. On the contrary, negative politeness is essentially avoidance-based and consist(s)...in assurances that the speaker...will not interfere with the addressee's freedom of action. Positive politeness is thus concerned with demonstrating closeness and affiliation whereas negative politeness is concerned with distance and formality (Mills 2003: 89).

5.3.3. Three variables used to assess FTAs

Assessment of the amount of face threat involves three sociological variables: the *social distance* between the speaker and the hearer, *the relative power* of the hearer over the speaker, and *the absolute ranking of imposition* in the particular culture. "Distance is a symmetric social dimension of similarity/difference between the speaker and the hearer" (Culpeper 2001: 241) that relies upon the frequency of

communicative encounters

Relative power refers to an asymmetry in social encounters, "it is the degree to which a participant can impose his own plans and self-evaluation" (Culpeper 2001: 241), since power is exerted within social hierarchies, where interactants have different social status and the asymmetry governing their relation emerges at conversational level. ***Absolute ranking*** of imposition springs out of the dimension or weight of what the Speaker imposes on the Hearer, thus impinging upon the Hearer's negative face to a higher or lesser degree:

> Negative face impositions can be ranked according to the expenditure (a) of services (including the provision of time) and (b) of goods (including non-material goods like information, as well as the expression of regard and other payments). Positive face impositions can be ranked according to the amount of 'pain' suffered by the other, based on the discrepancy between the other's self-image and that presented in the FTA (Brown and Levinson 1987: 74-78 in Culpeper 2001: 241).

The face-threatening potential of an act is assessable by means of the three variables mentioned above and is always context-dependent. In addition, the presence of a third party is also a politeness issue because the potential face threat is enhanced under such circumstances. The third party may be a simple referee at the beginning of his/her involvement in the discussion. During an incipient stage, this third individual may serve as an assessor. If negative politeness instances occur, the third party is usually supposed to pretend that he/she is not paying attention to the discussion, that he/she hasn't noticed anything. This person may change the entire course of action: he/she may remain a simple observer, but he/she may also engage actively in the interaction, by taking sides or playing the role of intensifier (Zajdman 1995: 335).

Culpeper suggests that two additional factors may contribute to the degree of face preservation or face saving: *affect,* since more politeness is associated with greater liking and *mood*. As a rule, anger is likely to trigger some decrease in politeness behaviour, while joy or content are likely to enhance polite tendencies in interlocutors' social and linguistic behaviour.

5.4. Politeness strategies in Brown and Levinson's framework

Brown and Levinson claim that any rational Speaker/Hearer will select an appropriate strategy to counterbalance the expected face threat. Consequently, the lesser the imposition, the less powerful and distant the interlocutor, the less polite one will need to be. They propose *five superstrategies* (or general orientations to face) that are systematically related to the degree of face threat:

1) Bald on record: The FTA is performed "in the most direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way possible" (Brown and Levinson 1987: 69), in other words in compliance with Grice's maxims. When using a bald-on-record strategy, Speakers provide no effort to reduce the impact of the FTAs, and are likely shock the addressee, embarrass them, or make them feel uncomfortable. However, this type of strategy is commonly found with people who know each other very well, and are at ease in their environment, such as close friends and family. Typical examples supplied by Brown and Levinson are:

Emergencies:
(1) 'Help!!'

Task-oriented commands:
(2) 'Give me that!'

Requests:
(3) ' Put your coat away'.

Alerting:
(4) 'Turn your headlights on!' (When alerting someone to something they should be doing)

In all the above enumerated utterances, no attempt is made to acknowledge the Hearer's face wants. Along the same line of argumentation, Thomas argues that bald-on-record strategies are typically used

- in emergency situations: shouting
  (5) 'Get out' when a house is on fire,
- when the face threat is very small:
  (6) 'Come in' as a response to a knock on the door
- when the Speaker has considerable power over the Hearer
  (7) 'Stop complaining' uttered by a parent to a child

2) Positive politeness strategies involve the use of strategies designed *to redress the Hearer's positive face wants* (treating the Hearer as a member of the same group, express liking related to some aspect of the Hearer). They are frequently employed in groups of friends, or where people in the given social situation know each other fairly well. They usually attempt to minimize the distance between interlocutors by expressing friendliness and solid interest in the hearer's need to be respected, in other words to minimize the FTA. Therefore, positive politeness strategies function as a kind of '*social accelerator*', clearly evincing the Speaker's wish to be closer to the Hearer, as seen in Brown and Levinson's examples below:

Attend to the hearer:
(8) 'You must be hungry, it's a long time since breakfast. How about some lunch?'

Avoid disagreement:
(9) A: 'What is she, small?'
B: 'Yes, yes, she's small, smallish, um, not really small but certainly not very big.'

Assume agreement:
(10) 'So when are you coming to see us?'

Hedge opinion:
(11) 'You really should sort of try harder.'

3) Negative politeness strategies involve the use of strategies designed to redress the Hearer's negative face wants. The Speaker indicates respect for the Hearer's face wants and the wish not to interfere with the Hearer's freedom of action, thus *redressing* or *compensating for potential interfering* or *transgressing the Hearer's personal space*. The main focus for using this strategy is to assume that there may be some imposition on the hearer, or some intrusion into their space, hence the assumption of either social distance or awkwardness in the situation, unlike positive politeness strategies, which tend to speed up solidarity and accelerate bonding.

While positive politeness is free-ranging, negative politeness is specific and focused: it performs the function of *minimising a particular imposition* that the FTA unavoidably effects.

When we think of politeness in Western cultures, it is negative-politeness behaviour that springs to mind. In our culture, negative politeness is the most elaborate and the most conventionalised set of linguistic strategies for FTA

> redress; it is the stuff that fills the etiquette books - but not exclusively - positive politeness gets some attention. Its linguistic realisations (conventional indirectness, hedges on illocutionary force, polite pessimism, the emphasis on H's relative power) are very familiar to a westerner (Brown and Levinson 1987: 34).

Otherwise formulated, negative politeness strategies largely bring about an increase in social distance, and act as *social brakes*. Therefore, negative politeness strategies entail self-effacement, formality, restraint, deference, made salient by the use of *softening* or *mitigating mechanisms* such as *hedges* or *impersonalisation* (such as passivisation or pluralisation), as pointed out by Brown and Levinson's examples below:

Be indirect:
(12) 'I'm looking for a comb'

In this situation you are hoping that you will not have to ask directly, so as not to impose and take up the hearer's time. Therefore, by using this indirect strategy, you hope they will offer to go find one for you.

Forgiveness:
(13) 'You must forgive me but....'

Minimize imposition:
(14) 'I just want to ask you if I could use your computer?'

Using the Passive Voice:

(15) 'I'm afraid your book had to be returned a week ago'.

Pluralise the person responsible:
(16) 'We forgot to tell you that you needed to buy your plane ticket by yesterday.' This takes all responsibility off of only you and onto 'we', even if you were the person responsible for telling the hearer when the deadline was to buy the ticket.

<u>4) Off-record strategies</u> presuppose that "there is more than one unambiguously attributable intention so that the actor cannot be held to have committed himself to one particular intent" (Brown and Levinson 1987: 69). In this case, the utterance bears an implicature that evades clarity and thus can be immediately dismissed because, theoretically, the speaker doesn't commit him/herself to a specific intent. As previously pointed out, implicatures are cancellable in inappropriate contexts (see 4.3.3.). Thus, one may cancel an implied request for a cup of tea such as **(17)** 'I'm thirsty' by saying: **(17a)** 'I simply said I was thirsty, I never asked for a cup of tea'.

In this way, this strategy typically involves indirectness and, moreover, it can enable the speaker to avoid responsibility for having performed a face-threatening act. Instances for this strategy are: hinting, presupposing, understating, overstating, tautology, irony, metaphors, ambiguities, contradictions, rhetorical questions, vagueness and incompleteness, overgeneralization, and use of ellipsis: "An off-record communicative act is done in such a way that it is not possible to attribute just one clear communicative intention to the act" (Zajdman 1995: 330). In such cases, the S removes him/herself from any potential imposition perceivable by the hearer, as Brown and Levinson's examples below highlight:

Give hints:

(18) 'It's cold in here.'

Be vague:
(19) 'Perhaps someone should have been more responsible.'

Be sarcastic or jocular:
(20) 'Yeah, he's a real rocket scientist!'

5) Withholding the FTA is the strategy that can be most easily implemented because all the speaker has to do is resist or renounce their wish to make an utterance that risks being face-threatening, since,"… an option every communicator has is not to talk" (Craig 1986: 442). This stratagem can be best applied when considering all other options inefficient.

Both positive and negative politeness strategies require '*redressive action*", i.e. action taken in order to 'give face' to the Hearer in an attempt to counterbalance the expected face damage of their FTA. As Thomas remarks, redressive actions need not be verbal: holding a submissive posture, giving a box of chocolates or merely smiling apologetically may as well count as means to redress some allegedly damage-inflicting action undertaken by the Speaker.

In compliance with Brown and Levinson's framework of politeness, each superstrategy can be satisfied by several *output strategies* . Thus,
Positive Politeness Output Strategies include:

Notice, attend to the Hearer:
(21) 'You've had your hair cut'.
Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy for the Hearer):
(22) 'That was so awful, my heart bled for you'

Use in-group identity markers:

(23) 'Joey, pal, come over here'

Seek agreement (select a safe topic on which agreement is expected)

(24) 'Nice weather today"

Avoid disagreement (white lies, hedging opinions):

(25) 'Yes, it's kind of nice'.

Joke (meant to put the Hearer 'at ease'):

(26) 'So you're free to do me a favour tomorrow'.

Assert knowledge of the Hearer's wants

(27) 'I know you're looking for a good dentist, here's his address'.

Offer, promise:

(28) 'Come over for a cup of coffee'.

Include both Speaker and Hearer in the activity:

(29) 'Let's have a drink'

Negative Politeness Output Strategies comprise acts such as:

Be conventionally indirect:

(30) 'Do you mind opening the window?'

Use questions, hedges:

(31) 'I was wondering, could you help?'

Be pessimistic (use conditional or subjunctive, negation and remote possibility markers):

(32) 'I don't suppose there would be any remote chance for a nice quiet date?'

Minimize the imposition:

(33) 'Could I borrow your pen for only one second?'

Apologize:

(34) 'I don't want to trouble you, but...'

Impersonalize Speaker and Hearer:

(35) 'It would be great if this job were done'.

Go on-record as incurring a debt:

(36) 'I'd be forever grateful if you helped me with my exam'.

5.5. Culpeper's Impoliteness Strategies

Fraser and Nolan argue that the context is highly important when it comes to

discussing polite or impolite acts, since there is no such thing as inherent impoliteness:

> …no sentence is inherently polite or impolite. We often take certain expressions to be impolite, but it is not the expressions themselves but the conditions under which they are used that determines the judgement of politeness (Fraser and Nolan 1981: 96).

The notion of inherent impoliteness irrespective of context only holds good for a minority of acts, specifically those when the Hearer is engaged in some anti-social activity (picking nose or ears, belching, farting, now even smoking). No change of context can remove the impoliteness from an utterance such as

(37) 'Do you think you could possibly not pick your nose?'

as the offence is not amenable to politeness strategies.

If politeness pursues the preservation of *social harmony*, impoliteness deals with the use of strategies meant to create *social disruption*. Culpeper argues that impolite communication employs strategies that may upset social harmony and create disruption in social relations by *attacking face* or *enhancing existing face threat*. Culpeper (2005: 38) proposes that "Impoliteness comes about when: (1) the speaker communicates face-attack intentionally, or (2) the hearer perceives and/or constructs behaviour as intentionally face-attacking, or a combination of (1) and (2)." For an impolite utterance to be felicitous it has to express intentionality. This can be related to Grice's distinction between "natural meaning" and "non-natural meaning" (see 1.2.4.): for an utterance to have non natural meaning it must not merely have been uttered "with the intention of inducing a certain belief but also the utterer must have intended the <audience> to recognize the intention behind the utterance" (Grice [1957] 1989: 217).

Culpeper's impoliteness theory heavily relies on Brown and Levinson's politeness superstrategies. Similarly to Brown and Levinson's five politeness superstrategies, Culpeper discusses five superstrategies namely: <u>bald on record, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, sarcasm or mock politeness</u> and <u>withhold impoliteness</u>.

1) <u>Bald on record impoliteness</u> strategies are performed when there is high risk of losing face and when the speaker has the intention of attacking the Hearer so that the hearer's face may end up seriously damaged. In this case, the face-threatening acts are performed in a direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way in

circumstances where face is extremely important.

2) Positive impoliteness strategies envisage damaging the Hearer's positive face. Examples of such impolite acts are: being completely disinterested or unconcerned, seeking disagreement, using obscure or secretive language, ignoring the other party, making the other feel uncomfortable or excluded from the (communicative) activity, using inappropriate identity markers, using taboo words, calling names, being unsympathetic etc.

3) Negative impoliteness strategies aim at damaging the Hearer's negative face wants, by sanctioning his/her actions and coercing them into embarking upon unwanted course of action or restricting freedom of already pursued action. Instances of negative politeness are: frightening, invading the addressee's space, ridiculing, scorning, being contemptuous, associating the hearer with negative elements, hindering the addressee, belittling the addressee, not treating him/her seriously, putting their indebtedness on record, or cursing them.

4) Sarcasm or mock politeness strategies involve performing the FTA with the aid of politeness strategies that are obviously insincere, and thus remain surface realisations, mock replicas of polite snippets of conversation which sound incongruent with the context and the relationship between interlocutors.

Culpeper insists on language users being able to distinguish sheer instances of impoliteness from instances of 'mock impoliteness' or *banter*. Mock politeness occurs at the surface of a conversation and is not intended to cause offence but to reinforce in-group solidarity. Banter reflects and fosters social intimacy or even to create it, starting from the premise that the more intimate a relationship, the less necessary politeness. Insults are likely to be interpreted as banter when directed at targets the Speaker endears.

(38) 'Eat beef – you bastards" (ad slogan of an Australian meat retailer)
(39) 'How're you doing, motherfuckers?' (Metallica on opening their concert in Bucharest)

5) Withholding politeness strategies tend to be employed when the Speaker keeps silent or refuses to act although he is required to be polite. In this case, the addressee expects politeness, yet politeness strategies are not considered a reasonable option. Examples of using this strategy are avoiding eye contact or deliberately refusing to engage in the act of thanking when receiving a present.

5.6. Limitations of Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory

Brown and Levinson's model of politeness has been criticised for overgeneralising of Eurocentric norms. Spencer-Oatey (2000) argues that the term 'face' concentrates on the needs of the Western individual, thus being less applicable for the analysis of cross-cultural interactions, such as interactions between Asian and Western interlocutors. Within some cultures or communities – some western ones included - concerns may encompass the way that the group is represented, or the way that the individual fits appropriately into a role defined by the group. Spencer-Oatey employs the term 'rapport management' (2000) in her endeavour to focus on the relation between group and self rather than simply focusing on the self in isolation. In addition, Spencer-Oatey challenges the clear-cut distinction between positive and negative face which Brown and Levinson proposed, suggesting that their 'conception of positive face has been underspecified, and that the concerns that they identify as negative face issues are not necessarily face concerns at all.'(Spencer-Oatey 2000: 13) She modifies the way face is conceived by enlarging it so as to encompass the notion of sociality rights: while face is concerned with the personal and social value of the individual, sociality rights 'are concerned with personal/social expectancies and reflect people's concerns over fairness, consideration, social inclusion/exclusion and so on.' (Spencer-Oatey 2000: 14) Besides face-threatening acts, Spencer-Oatey suggests bringing rights-threatening behaviour into discussion.

Culpeper has criticised their model for not making room for the investigation of inference, the level at which a great deal of linguistic politeness and impoliteness occurs. (Culpeper, 1996) As Holmes notes, politeness does not wholly reside within linguistic forms, neither is it confined at utterance level only. Thus, a statement such as

(40) 'Do you think it would be possible for you to contact Keith Williams today?'

would be interpreted by Brown and Levinson as polite if used by a boss to her/his secretary, since mitigating features are included in this possibly threatening direct request; however, this might be interpreted as impolite, if addressed by a boss to his/her secretary with whom he usually engages in an informal style of communication, and this is not the first time that the request has been made.

Consequently, politeness should be seen as a set of strategies or verbal habits which someone sets as a norm for themselves, as well as a socially constructed norm within particular communities of practice (Spencer-Oatey 2000: 10). An important element in the assessment of an act as polite is judging whether an utterance is appropriate or not within a given community of practice. To illustrate flexibility of assessment when it comes to polite acts within specific communities, Mills gives the following examples:

> a woman university lecturer may use mild swear words and a range of informal expressions to set a seminar group at ease and create an atmosphere of informality and openness, (that is paying positive politeness to the face needs of the group) but this may be interpreted by some of the group members as impolite, ingratiating or patronising, if they have particular views of the language which is appropriate to staff members or to what they consider a relatively formal setting such as the seminar (Mills 2003: 121).

Impoliteness is only contextually defined, mainly when classified as such by prominent community members or when its occurrence may lead to a disruption in ingroup relations (Spencer-Oatey 2000:12).

5.7. Impoliteness and motherly love: the case of Bridget Jones

This section will analyse the concept of impoliteness as illustrated in the relationship between Bridget Jones and her mother in Helen Fielding's widely-read novel '*Bridget Jones's Diary*'. Bridget's mother seems to lack any consideration for Bridget's 'face'. Although an ideal stereotypical mother would try to preserve her daughter's face, Bridget's mother seems to constantly keep it under attack by the use of different FTAs. Kasper (1994) speaks about a counterbalancing of these FTAs through the use of doses of politeness. However, in the case of Bridget's mother, she does not seem to care about whether she hurts her daughter's feelings and lowers her self-esteem or not.

The impoliteness strategies Bridget's mother uses are strikingly diverse. She uses both positive and negative impoliteness strategies. When her daughter finds herself in a difficult and stressful situation, her mother chooses to ignore. On the other hand, she is obsessed with the way Bridget will be perceived by their acquaintances, i.e. with saving Bridget's positive face as displayed in the public

sphere. Ignoring her daughter's actual face wants and being disinterested in Bridget's saving or losing her positive face seems not to cause the mother too much anxiety: "Mum. It's my first day at work today. I'm really nervous. I don't want to talk about Mavis Enderby.' 'Oh, my godfathers, darling!' What are you going to wear?" (p. 78).

Another type of strategy she employs is bald-on-record impoliteness. Any trace of consideration for Bridget's positive face wants is deliberately suspended in the mother-daughter verbal encounters. The mother is not critical in a stimulating way, she deliberately utters callous and hurtful remarks targeted at her daughter's positive face: "Nobody wants a girlfriend who wonders round looking like someone from Auschwitz, darling" or "I'm taking you to have your colors done! And don't keep saying, <<what>>, please, darling. Color me beautiful. I'm sick to death of you wondering around in all these dingy slurries and fogs. You look something out of Chairman Mao". (p. 44). Such remarks are the more merciless as they attack a highly valued layer of Bridget's self, her appearance, given Bridget's obsession with weight and attractiveness. The mother-daughter exchange becomes a combination between bald-on-record impoliteness and positive impoliteness strategies which proves extremely damaging to the daughter's face:

> 'My godfathers, darling!' she said breathily, steaming through my flat and heading for the kitchen. 'Have you had a bad week or something? You look dreadful. You look about ninety.' (p.56)

Attacking the way her daughter looks and her way of life is a recurrent stance in the mother's behavior. The mother spares no effort in making it clear to her daughter that she is a social wreck and that nobody could possibly value her assets, consequently Bridget will be denied all social benefits arising from an adequate social image: career, suitable boyfriend, etc: "If you don't do something about your appearance you'll never get a new job, never mind another boyfriend!". Of course, this is all the more frustrating for Bridget, as she is constantly but unsuccessfully trying to improve, although unable to stick to any diet, to quit drinking and smoking or to follow the steps of any self-help book.

Bridget's mother takes the privileged status of a fashion guru, yet her expert-like advice is always preceded by a range of insults directed at Bridget's lack of taste and sloppiness:

> 'What are you going to wear?'
> 'My short black skirt and T-shirt.'

Put 'Oh, now you're not going to go looking like a *sloppy tramp* in dull colors. something smart and bright on. What about that lovely cerise two-piece you used to wear? Oh, by the way, did I tell you Una's gone down the Nile?'

It is almost fascinating to observe the ease with which Bridget's mother attacks her daughter and does not even seem to care about the irreparable damage done to her daughter's self-esteem. It is almost with a tinge of naiveté that she throws insults around, as if she were the only authority. She dexterously shifts the discussion from an insult to casual conversation, so that Bridget hardly finds the time to respond to any face-threatening act and even to acknowledge it as face-threatening.

The question arises whether Bridget's mother is *intentionally* impolite or is simply an outspoken and unsparing person? There is little textual evidence as to her impoliteness being spontaneous or premeditated. She may be willfully inconsiderate and self-absorbed, taking malicious delight in damaging other people's positive faces and not engaging in any remedial facework. Her abruptness and rudeness resemble that of a child's, whose impact and repercussions are amplified since paradoxically initiated by a parent.

5.8. 'The bald and the beautiful': Face threats in 'MARRIED... WITH CHILDREN'

The Bundys are the ordinary family in that they stay together when in dire straits and that they are constantly challenged by everyday routine issues – financial problems, shortage or lack of food, scarcity of entertainment options, children's nerve-shattering requests. On the other hand, there is nothing usual about them: Al hardly makes the minimal wage as a shoe salesman – yet he is the only one who has a job, Peggy engages in no housewife duties as she refuses to cook, clean around the house or do the groceries. Kelly, their beautiful dim-witted daughter, is only interested in dating. Bud, their intelligent but physically repulsive son does not seem capable to have an ordinary dating life like other teenagers despite his obsession with women's bodies and sex. The Bundys are viewed as a white trash family because none of them achieves anything in life and they do not follow any moral code, often trespassing their own set of rules.

Al Bundy is the main character of the sitcom, whose description is supplied by the title: '*Married … with Children*'. The dots are ironically placed after the word 'married', as if bad luck recurs persistently in Al's life. The punctuation implies that being married is already too much to handle, while having children only adds up to the disastrous dimensions of the situation.

Al's unhappiness permeates both his workplace and his home. He works as a shoe salesman for a minimal wage, which offers him no satisfaction either psychologically or financially. He has come to hate fat women who enter the shoe store and demand shoes smaller than their actual size by claiming that the shoe producer has designed flawed footwear. Every time he gets home from work he starts telling his family about that day's tragic events at the store: 'A fat woman came into the shoe store…' is the notorious line that initiates his daily complaints much to his family's distress.

Any working man is supposed to relax, enjoy his meal and feel laidback when arriving home. But Al Bundy does not have this privilege too often since his wife refuses to listen to him, does not cook him dinner (or any other meal), does not clean the house and detaches herself from Al's concerns. As a result of his being held in low esteem by Peg, Al Bundy refuses to pleasure her, to hold or cuddle her and showers very rarely.

As a compensation for the treatment he gets from his family, Al is keen on bowling, browsing soft-porn mags like 'Big'Uns' and visiting strip joints with his friends. He indulges in watching reruns of football games and old John Wayne westerns, a beer can in his left hand while his right hand is comfortably tucked into his pants. He loves watching sports, which reminds him of his youth and his shattered dreams. A former promising fullback, Al basked in (his only moment of) glory when scoring four touchdowns in a single game. Once he found out about his then girlfriend's (Peggy's) pregnancy and decided to marry her, he broke his leg and he was unable to pursue his career as a football player and take advantage of his university scholarship. This is how he ended up a shoe salesman, ceaselessly victimising himself and blaming Peg for his pitiable decay.

Al is defied, scorned, scoffed or simply avoided by his neighbors and by his own family, being pigeonholed as the epitome of failure. He seems to be haunted by misfortune irrespective of the circumstances. His neighbor Marcy hates him because he displays an ironical attitude in her presence. Al calls her names like 'chicken', or 'boy' and often mentions her scrawny legs and her flat chest in an attempt to question her womanhood. Al is often seen as a caddish grouchy misogynist who considers women unworthy pernicious creatures. On the other hand, he turns out to be a real gentleman in the presence of beautiful women who remind him of his

youth dreams. Surprisingly, he is never tempted to cheat on his wife. He puts up with his wife's faults, even if he displays a disapproving attitude regarding her.

Peggy Bundy is a typical couch potato who refuses to do anything in the area of household tasks. She prefers sitting on the couch and watching television shows like Oprah while eating bonbons. Apart from not bothering to look for a job and even despising the prospect, she also neglects her family's basic needs: she never provides food or cleans the house or does the laundry. Her husband and children take desperate measures to stay fed, scrapping for crumbs of food, devouring other people's leftovers or gatecrashing at buffet parties. However, they stay away from the 'surprise pack' in the refrigerator, an indefinite package whose origin no one seems to remember.

Peg is a shopoholic and, despite her husband's ridiculously low revenues, she is a peerless squanderer when it comes to clothes and shoes that are consonant with her loud, garish personality: tight pants, stiletto heels and animal print body-hugging blouses are her favorite. Despite her sluttish clothing style, Peggy is an attractive woman, paradoxically faithful to Al, yet relishing a highly versatile love/hate marital relationship. She does not miss any opportunity to attack Al yet gives him the opportunity to talk back in the same quarrelsome register. In site of her lack of education, Peggy manages to find the most scathing witty repartees when discussing with Al.

A corpus of short conversations will be analysed in the pages to come with a view to illustrating conversational strategies targeted at face damage and ways employed by protagonists to dodge threats to specific aspects of their face.

(1) Madam Inga put a spell on the Bundys.

(a) PEGGY: We've been cursed, Al.

(b) AL: You know what the good part is? There's no such thing as cursing. This is great, Peg!

(c) PEGGY: You're meddling with powers that, just like a woman's body, you can't understand.

In this scene, Peggy is frightened by Madam Inga's (who is a crystal gazer) curses. Fortune-telling has different effects on the two Bundys: on the one hand there is Al, who does not believe in predicting the future since all fortune-telling is about making money at gullible people's expense; on the other hand , there is Peggy, who starts believing in magic and fears that the effects of the curse might reach them.

Peggy is trying to wake her family to vigilance as the illocution of her utterance unveils her awareness of some potential danger **(a)**: she tells them their

lives are at risk. Nonetheless, the intended perlocution fails since Al does not take her seriously. He is using positive impoliteness strategies in order to sanction her gullible belief in old wives' tales about casting curses. Al has not experienced a single instance of magic in his life, therefore he considers it does not exist **(b**). Since Al is contradicting Peggy's beliefs, she chooses to express herself quite offensively. She counterattacks Al by using a bald on record strategy when stating that fortune-telling is not within his range of knowledge, and so is a woman's body, stressing via this unexpected association that Al is unacquainted with both. This aggressive strategy is meant to stop Al from contradicting her as she wants him to confide in her intuition.

(2) **(a) MARCY**: Steve? Al told me I'd find you here. What's wrong?
(b) STEVE: I've just been sitting here trying to decide how to tell you something terrible.
(c) MARCY: What is it, Steve?
(d) STEVE: I'm going bald.
(e) MARCY: And?
(f) STEVE: That's it. That's the news.
(g) MARCY: I've known that since the day you got on your knees to propose.
(h) STEVE: Then you still think I'm attractive?
(i) MARCY: Oh, Steve. Of course. Anybody would.
(They hug.)
(j) STEVE: Well, somebody doesn't. Look what somebody put on my desk.
(He takes out the newspaper clipping.)
(k) MARCY: I put that there.
(l) STEVE: Why?
(m) MARCY: 'Cause it was your turn to shop and tuna, three for a dollar forty-nine is a great deal.

This scene disambiguates the previous context: Steve is sure that Marcy wanted him to actively engage in treating his hair loss because of a piece of paper left by Marcy within Steve's reach, that advertised hair lotion. He believes that he might be losing his attractiveness and that Marcy was subtly trying to convince him to treat his hair. When showing Al the paper, it was the tuna advertisement that captured his attention. Steve corrected Al and asked him to look on the other side of the paper.

Marcy engages in a conversation with her husband, trying to receive some answers in relation to Steve's unidentified problem **(a).** Steve finally decides to open

up to her and he attempts to approach the topic gradually **(b).** Marcy asks him about the reason of his distress **(c)** and only then does he decide to offer a clear straightforward answer **(d),** thus threatening his own positive face. Marcy does not perceive the situation as serious and does not understand Steve's fears **(e).** She informs Steve that his hair loss does not surprise her in any way **(g)** and redresses her husband's positive face by convincing him that he is attractive **(i)**. Steve continues to be worried by the paper advertisement **(j)** that threatens to minimize his positive face and Marcy reveals that she put it on Steve's desk, but gives no more clues as to her intentions **(k)**. He wants to know the justification of her gesture **(l)**, so Marcy clarifies her intention: Steve was simply supposed to buy tuna **(m)**.

(3) **(a) AL** (holding up a small cactus): Sweetie … is this your little cactus?
(b) PEGGY: Uh-huh.
(c) AL: Any particular reason you put it where the alarm clock used to be?
(d) PEGGY: I thought it would dress up the room a little bit … Oh gee, I meant to tell you to be careful when you slammed your hand down on it this morning …
(e) AL (holding up his dressed hand): Well, you didn't.
(f) PEGGY: Sorry.

Al rhetorically asks his wife whether the cactus belongs to her **(a)**, since he obviously knows the answer. His question does not aim at identifying the owner, but implies the wish to find out the reason why the cactus is the house. Peggy simply confirms that the cactus is hers, ignoring the illocutionary force of Al's reproach disguised as a question **(b).** Al insists that his wife admit she has put it in the very place where the alarm clock used to be, by addressing Peggy a question that is meant to establish why the cactus was in that specific location **(c)**. Peggy flouts the Quality Maxim twice: first, by trying to deceive Al into believing the cactus was just an ornament intended to embellish their bedroom, secondly, by claiming she had the intention of telling him about the cactus **(d)**. She is aware of the harshness of misplaced reproach towards Al's actions ('you slammed your hand down on it [i.e. the cactus]') which she considers wrongfully aggressive. Al wants to attack her positive face by reminding her of her own wrongdoing: forgetting to warn him against the replacement of the alarm clock with the cactus **(e)**. Peggy reacts by insincerely apologising for her omission and insincerely expressing regret in an attempt to redress her own face.

(4) **(a) BUD**: Mom, how are we gonna get money? Dad took his wallet in the shower with him.
(b) KELLY: Yeah, and as we all know, when we rifled his pants last night, we found a note in his pocket that said 'It's in my underwear, I dare you'. Dad's playing hardball, what are we gonna do, mom?
(c) PEGGY: Ah, don't worry about it. That's not his real wallet. This is (She shows a wallet.)
(d) BUD: But won't dad know?
(e) PEGGY: No. I bought a duplicate wallet and I filled it with xeroxed money, ha ha. The way I figured it, if your dad's got the gall to go out and buy himself something without telling the family, he deserves to go to jail.

As usual, Bud, Kelly and Peggy are concerned about the way they lay hands on Al's money. Bud informs his mother and sister about Al's cautionary steps towards **(a)** protecting his income. Kelly is puzzled by the strategies that her father employs when it comes to protecting his wallet: he placed it in his underwear the night before and left a note challenging them to prove their courage **(b).** By doing so, Al risks losing his positive face since he implies his unwashed clothes, especially his underwear, are repulsive, given their notoriety for hardly ever been in a washing machine. As usual, Peggy finds an impromptu solution. Always of one step ahead of Al, Peggy has pilfered his wallet before he could even think about safeguarding it **(c).** Her action has obviously managed to impede Al's potential initiative, thus damaging Al's negative face: his strategy was obstructed even before being devised. Peggy enhances her positive face this time, because she proves to be more quick-witted than her husband. Bud is afraid that his father might find out about the money that has been grabbed by his mother **(d).** Again, Peggy undergoes unimpeded action: she has taken steps to secure a successful theft by replacing the real money with forged notes **(e).** She further considers that Al's is not entitled to buy anything without first discussing it with his family, repeatedly threatening his negative face. She shows no concern for either Al's positive or negative face, not caring whether he is the family dupe or whether he may risk going to jail. Naturally, Al's recklessness will bring inauspicious consequences: he could be imprisoned because of his lack of cunningness.

(5) Steve is complaining to Al by telling him about hair problems. Al is reading: 'Monoxodyl: Hope for the hairless'. […]
(a) AL: I know.
(b) STEVE: You know?

(c) AL: Sure. You've seen my wife, my kids, my house. I'm lucky my hands haven't fallen off.
(d) STEVE: How can you accept this? If all our hair falls out, our wives won't want us anymore.
(e) AL: (encouraging) There you go. Look on the bright side.

Al acknowledges Steve's situation, implying being in a similar situation **(a).** While seeking for moral support, Steve seems to be surprised to find that Al has been experiencing the same problems and relieved that he is not the only man growing bald **(b).** Al reminds his neighbour of his unenviable life by simply enumerating its alleged 'assets', which are implied to count as 'liabilities': 'my wife, my kids, my house'. The utterance could sound delusive, because normally spouse, offsprings and home are cherished, and assessed as accomplishments rather than failures, while Al is implying that his family is the source of his physical decay, including the cause of his baldness. This implicature is suggested not only by the context created by the previous statements, but also by the following utterance, according to which he makes an ironical overstatement: he claims to be lucky to still have his hands. This utterance implies that his 'nearest and dearest' drive him on the verge of both precarious health and insanity **(c).** Obviously aware of Al's pitiable lot, Steve's rhetorical question implies that he cannot understand why Al does nothing to improve his image in front of his wife. Steve's concern that Marcy might be less attracted to him in case he grows bald **(d)** is not shared by Al, who views repellence on the part of the wife as a break from her constant nagging about his poor sexual performance. Al is even encouraging Steve to consider a life devoid of marital sex as a promising perspective before starting treating his hair, in a poorly feigned attempt to strengthen male bonding and camaraderie and concomitantly preserve both Steve's and his own positive faces.

Steve's positive face is at risk from the very beginning. He admits he does not like himself anymore, and is willing to find a remedy to his problems. He also shows concern towards Marcy and he imagines her appreciation for him vanishing in the future, implying that his positive face is at risk, and his ego might feel unflattered for want of attention. Steve threatens his own positive face by confessing to Al, but he shows more interest in redressing it. Steve is also exposing his negative face, because he admits it was his wife who indicated him to use the medicine for hair growth, thus implying he more often than not follows her orders and is not granted unobstructed freedom of action. He thinks she left the paper advertisement in sight for him to spot it, thus making a subtle suggestion at his growing bald and his need to take immediate action against it, a new threat to his negative face, likely to turn

into an imposition.

Al's positive face is constantly damaged by his total neglect of his appearance. He shows no concern toward preserving or redressing his face, i.e. towards being approved of and even admired by his wife and children. He even suggests Steve to endorse the same strategy, i.e. prove his wife that her opinions are of no importance to him. Al inclines to favour loss of positive face to damage of negative face: being bald and sloppy is less threatening and manlier than not being able to make decisions without the wife's consent.

(6) Peggy goes to the door and opens it to Marcy.

(a) PEGGY: Hi, Marce.

(b) MARCY: Oh, Peggy, I'm so worried about Steve. He's acting very strangely. Last night we had sex and he wore a sombrero.

(c) PEGGY: Ooh. The ribbed kind?

(d) MARCY: On his head, Peggy. It's a hat.

(e) PEGGY: You have to put your foot down. If I didn't, Al would still be wearing the Walkman.

(f) MARCY: That's not all. Steve insists we turn the light off when we make love.

(g) PEGGY: Well, that was one of the few rules Al and I both agreed to.

Marcy comes to Peggy to confess that she and Steve have problems, thus attacking her own and her husband's positive face **(b).** Marcy actually tries to find out the reason of Steve's strange demeanor but the perlocutionary act fails to be grasped by her interlocutor. Peggy believes that Marcy refers to a contraceptive device and is exhilarated to receive such detailed information about her neighbors' intimacy **(c).** By doing so, she risks damaging her own positive face, that of an intrusive busybody. Marcy is thus required to explain the meaning and the use of a 'sombrero' **(d).** Having now correctly understood the situation, Peggy needs no more explanatory information and finally manages to give her friend a piece of advice, which indirectly threatens Al's negative and positive face. The negative face is seriously damaged since Al is obviously not able to act freely, and the positive face is being threatened by being portrayed as a hilarious walkman addict in the presence of Marcy, whom he intensely dislikes and disapproves of. For Peggy, it is a redressive strategy meant to enhance her positive face – she allegedly prevented Al from making an utter fool of himself. Peggy uses her personal example to convince Marcy of the efficiency of taking action, whenever the husband tends to go astray.

Just when she thinks the crisis is no longer an issue, Marcy gives her further

example of awkward behavior **(f)** consisting of Steve's wish to turn off the light before lovemaking. She implies that something similar has not happened before, whereas Peggy considers failure inherent to her marital life with Al **(g),** and attempts to partly redress her husband's negative face. She admits that they both consented to having the lights off. Again, she threatens both Al's positive face and her own, since she acknowledges they have very little esteem or appreciation for each other and that hiding in the dark may prove helpful.

(7) Jefferson starts a successful business –madam Zelda, the fortune-teller – and is forced into accepting Al as his partner.

(a) AL: I'm thinking about expansion.
(Peggy comes in.)
(b) JEFFERSON: What kind of expansion?
(c) AL: The kind of expansion that will allow me to dress my woman in hermine and pearls, (looking at Peg) as she deserves it ... and I won't forget you either, Peg."

This is an instance of interaction in which the third party is a simple observer who does not participate in the conversation, yet manages to interfere between the two active interlocutors. Al's utterance **(a)** captures Peggy's attention – who instantly enters the room – and Jefferson's – who even expresses his wish to find out more information about Al's plan. The perlocutionary act proves successful. Despite being utterly inquisitive, Peggy refrains from interfering in the conversation. She prefers to briefly engage in a bystander position and pay attention to Al's and Jefferson's dialogue. Al and Jefferson apparently ignore her, as they do not speak to her directly. Jefferson asks Al to fill him in, to give him details about the planned expansion **(b)**. Al's reply seems to answer Jefferson's question at first, then it obviously violates the Relation Maxim and the Quality Maxim. Al is clearly trying to send a message to his wife, but instead he deliberately gives his neighbour false pieces of information. Again, the verbal expression and the illocution accompanying it are deceitful: the utterance sounds very promising at the beginning, and Peggy hopes for praise and admiration. It is the second part of Al's utterance that reveals his true intention: that of offending Peg, who has been dreaming that all that commendation has been exclusively addressed to her, that finally her husband may show some appreciation. Her hopefulness is also generated by the presence of a third party witnessing her would-be glorification, meant to enhance her positive face to a notable degree. Al's strategy consists of playing upon the serious tone in which Jefferson asked for details. Al avoids technical details and chooses to address the

issue they are all interested in: the amazing thriving of their business. By specifying his intention to lavish valuable gifts on 'his woman', Al plays with Peggy's expectations. She would normally be the one designated as 'his woman', yet the conventional implicature carried by 'either' in "*I won't forget you either, Peg*" implies that Al intends to cater some of Peg's wants while most expensive gifts are to have a different destination. Al's displaying such a complex strategy to offend his wife in the presence of a third person points to how much he is willing to undermine Peggy's positive face: by implying that, were he rich, she would neither deserve his bestowing his wealth on her nor his showing her in public.

(8) **(a) STEVE**: I'm Steve and I've been concealing my... problem...
(b) BALD GUYS: Say it.
(c) LANCE: Say it.
(d) STEVE: My baldness from my wife. I was ashamed.
(The bald man next to Al is tearing up. Al reacts.)
(e) STEVE: But you have given me the strength to be proud of my hairline, no matter where it may wander across my head. You're the greatest. I love you.
(They applaud. Steve sits down.)
(f) LANCE: Good, Brother Steve. Tell her so she can realize, like thousands of other women have, that bald men are sexier, more virile, and aerodynamic. Let's face it. It doesn't get better than bald. A bald head says good in bed.

This scene deals with middle aged men's sore spot: premature balding, during a meeting specially organised by men facing hair problems. The parodic streak is obvious since the scene bears a mock resemblance with an Alcoholics Anonymous assembly where people acknowledge their problem and try to overcome potential temptations or challenges.

Steve is deeply dismayed because of his growing bald and is required to face his anguish by the group members **(b), (c)** since he cannot stifle his emotional outbursts **(a)**. Then, all of a sudden, not only does he vent his emotions, but he also identifies the source of his hair loss **(d):** his wife. By confessing about his grief before the entire community, Al threatens his own positive face and, on acknowledging it, he is overwhelmed by emotions and admits being embarrassed. Then, he continues his speech in a surprisingly different manner – fate-defying and self-ironical, intensifying face threat **(e).** Lance, the group leader, encourages him to visualize the benefits of baldness that makes men 'sexier, more virile, and aerodynamic' **(f).**

Exaggerated eulogy of the benefits of baldness is an off-record strategy meant to preserve the positive face of the participants in the reunion. In order to be persuasive, Lance mentions one of the most longed-for assets with middle aged men: satisfactory sexual performance, which, in his view, increases with baldness.

(9) **(a)** (They all cheer): All right! Brother Al. Have you been moved to share?
(b) **AL**: Sure, I'll share. Let me share this little tidbit with you. You guys are nuts. Attractive, virile, sexy? Women want you? For what? To check their make-up? But you human flashlights have really helped me. When I came here tonight, I thought I was bald. But looking at you guys, I realize two things. One, I really miss playing pool, and two, I'm not bald. Steve's not bald. You guys are bald. Really bald. Hundred watt, soft-white bald. Steve, we should feel great, cause we got hair. And I'll tell you something else. If and when I do lose my hair, I still won't be sitting here with you. Cause I've got something at home that doesn't care what I look like. That accepts me for what I am, and is always there when I need it. My couch. He swaggers out as bald guys boo him.

During the same gathering of bald men, Al is kindly asked to share his experience with his co-sufferers **(a)** after Steve had previously engaged in a similar pursuit. Although it is a male-bonding activity, Al does not approve of such tactics. At first he seems to agree to the proposal and want to tell his story in front of his peers, but then he manages to challenge the community's expectations. He uses bald on record strategy to abruptly express his feelings and thoughts, which are far from being consonant with the other participants'. Al engages in positive impoliteness strategies by calling the group members 'nuts' and 'human flashlights'. By expressing such direct insults, Al threatens his own positive face, proving that self-control is not one of his strengths. He asks several rhetorical questions in a row to make irony even more scathing. Thus he explains that bald people are not 'attractive, virile' or 'sexy' and they cannot be granted appreciation or approval from women. The last rhetorical question employs an off-record strategy, since it implies that bald men can be taken for mirrors, only serving women to check on their make-up. Via repetition, Al reinforces the dichotomy bald/non-bald and attempts to save his positive face by strongly asserting his belonging to the latter category.

Via this speech Al claims to be the voice of reason, as if the entire community were living in some fantasy world and Al alone brought them down to earth. Apart from his endeavour to preserve his positive face, Al equally strives to stress his negative face wants: he will not comply with community regulations since he is

willing to act freely. He ends his complex statement with another instance of indirectness, meant to insert an expectation-challenging element: Al praises the morale-boosting entity that makes him forget about his looks, but only in the end does he mention he is not referring to his wife, as commonsensically expected, but to his couch.

(10) **(a) PEGGY**: What if he is cheating on me?
(b) MARCY: Stand by your man – in court! Take him for everything and get yourself another man. A real man.
(c) PEGGY: I don't want a real man. I want Al!
(d) MARCY: Why?
(e) PEGGY: Oh I don't know . Have you ever had a pair of old shoes? They're boring and ugly and stink to high heaven. But they're yours, you know? They're worn down and broken in and … and when you put 'em on it feels like there's nothing there, hahaha. That's my Al.

Peggy is worried by Al's increasing concern with his appearance and suspects an extra-marital affair. She confides her worries to Marcy, thus unveiling her insecurity and threatening her own positive face. Peggy's first utterance implies the desire to receive guidance from her neighbor **(a).** Marcy fails to understand the implicature and offers radical solutions meant to wind up in divorce **(b).** She offers no solace to Peg, but suggests a vengeance ploy: Peggy should divorce and find herself another man. She attacks Al's positive face in front of Peggy by implying he is nothing but a despicable creature and a lowlife. Peggy feels insulted by Marcy, because her face is damaged via association with Al's, springing from ingroup solidarity which normally permeates family life: although Peggy often attacks Al's face, her offences are more likely to be interpreted as instances of gross banter, even as means of reinforcing spousal solidarity. Under these circumstances, Marcy is blatantly branded as the outsider. Far from being supportive, she widens the communication gap between Al and Peg, thus threatening the ingroup solidarity of the Bundys. Peggy reads Marcy's communicative intentions correctly and the perlocution is undelayed: she justifies her need of Al. At the same time, she expresses hopelessness as to the opportunity to find herself 'a real man', as well as acknowledgement of Al's not being one, which targets Al's positive face **(c).** Marcy is unable to accept Peggy's decision readily and asks her details about the reasoning underlying her justification **(d).** Peggy finds it difficult to explain why she is unwilling to renounce the company of somebody who is not even 'a real man', so, she makes an analogy between Al and an old pair of shoes **(e).** This conversational

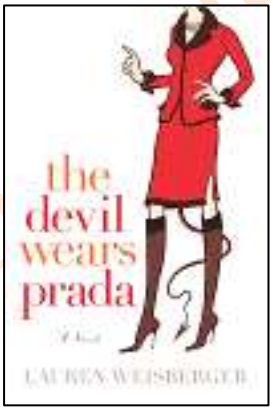
move damages Al's positive image, because Peggy implies via analogy that Al is indeed old and plain. What Al and the old shoes share are: shabby appearance, sloppy hygiene, importance of belonging, advanced degree of deterioration. The shared feature mentioned last ('feels like there's nothing there') is quite ambiguous: as far as shoes are concerned, they provide comfort, but with respect to Al, it may suggest that his presence remains unnoticed, therefore is not in the least disturbing. This remark on Al's presence being hardly ever noticed is a positive impoliteness strategy ('Ignore the other'). Peggy concludes by saying 'That's my Al'. The possessive adjective plays an important role because it confers support to Al's positive face, indicating that he is wanted by his wife despite all his flaws.

(11) **(a) MARCY**: You know, (Steve and Marcy are looking at each other) Steve and I decided to share the household chores.
(Steve and Marcy do the Eskimo greeting with their noses)
(b) PEGGY: You see, Al? Steve helps around the house.
(c) AL: Way to go, Steve! Say, listen, who'd you like to win the NBA championship this year?
(d) STEVE: Well, Al, to tell you the truth since we got married I don't watch much sports. Marcy doesn't like it and we decided we'll only do things we both like.
(e) MARCY: I feel sports glorify violence and competition, and I don't think it's psychologically healthy. When we have a child, we don't want it to grow up with that winning-is-the-only-thing attitude. A child is better off not being exposed to sports.
(f) AL: You gonna neuter him too?

This scene is part of the two couples' first get-together, when they are just getting acquainted and first impressions are created. Steve and Marcy seem to be a well-balanced couple governed by understanding and reasonable behaviour, whereas the overall perception of Al and Peggy in terms of hectic behaviour mirrors the permanent state of confusion regarding family matters. Marcy states that they share household tasks and that Steve and her are able to communicate on both conversational and non-conversational levels **(a).** Peggy immediately makes this issue salient, implying that Al does not help around the house **(b)**. It is one of the first threats to Al's positive face in public, where image should count considerably. Al insincerely congratulates Steve on performing domestic work and passes on to a different topic that is usually enjoyed by men: sports **(c).** He uses background knowledge, namely a typified assumption that all men enjoy watching 'manly'

sports - when asking Steve an NBA-related question, meant to imply Steve would rather watch sports than do household chores. Al's strategy fails because his new neighbor admits having desisted from watching sports when he got married **(d).** Steve further explains how this situation has been reached by virtue of an agreement that stipulates exclusively performing actions both spouses enjoy. Marcy elaborates on Steve's explanation and includes her personal belief according to which sports imply aggressiveness **(e).** She also takes the possibility of having children into account, which is the best reason to stop watching sports. This indicates how systematic Marcy and Steve are in planning their future. Marcy uses highbrow language ('share household chores', 'psychologically healthy') to prove that she belongs to a different class that the Bundys. Her speaking in a sophisticated vernacular is a sign of her wish to enhance her own positive face while threatening Al and Peggy's. However, the snobbish words she is using are inadequate in this situation (a mere conversation with her neighbors), concomitantly violating the Quantity and the Manner Maxims. Al desires to break free from Marcy's incomprehensible lingo and asks her whether they are planning to 'neuter' their child **(f),** implying that they have been dismantling too many gender-related distinctions and that their 'gender-blind' behaviour is preposterous despite their alleged high education. This is a good opportunity for Al to speak his mind and he does not hesitate to destroy Steve and Marcy's positive faces using words that can be easily understood.

5.9. Face damage and the Prada-clad devil



Lauren Weisbergen's novel '*The Devil Wears Prada*' is an account of Andrea

Sachs' struggle to survive and advance in the jungle of fashion magazines. Freshly graduated from college, Andrea is accidentally granted a dream job as a personal assistant to Miranda Priestly, the notorious chief-editor of Runway magazine. Initially mesmerised by the glamourous life of New York's trendsetters, Andrea quickly becomes disenchanted by the perspective of turning into the personal slave of a despotic fashionista. Miranda Priestly is the boss from hell, the embodiment of any employee's worst fears: she constantly assigns impossible missions over the phone, intimidates and over-works all her staff, and sends Andrea on wild goose chases all over the city for the sheer delight of proving her incompetence.

In the pages to come, I will analyse four excerpts from the opening chapter, in an attempt to highlight how a textually-substantiated discussion of FTAs and (im)politeness strategies may highlight the witty remarks, the sarcastic dialogue and the enticing array of characters, all of which make the book unputdownable.

I. Mission Impossible

> ...My cell phone bleated loudly. And as if the very essence of life itself didn't suck enough at that particular moment, the caller ID confirmed my worst fear: it was Her. **(U1)** Miranda Priestly. **(U2)** My boss. **(U3)**
> "Ahn-dre-ah! Ahn-dre-ah! Can you hear me, Ahn-dre-ah?" **(U4)** she trilled the moment I snapped my Motorola open--no small feat considering both of my (bare) feet and hands were already contending with various obligations. **(U5)** I propped the phone between my ear and shoulder and tossed the cigarette out the window, where it narrowly missed hitting a bike messenger. He screamed out a few highly unoriginal 'fuck yous' before weaving forward.
> "Yes, Miranda. **(U6)** Hi, I can hear you perfectly." **(U7)**
> "Ahn-dre-ah, where's my car? **(U8)** Did you drop it off at the garage yet?" **(U9)**
> The light ahead of me blessedly turned red and looked as though it might be a long one. The car jerked to a stop without hitting anyone or anything, and I breathed a sigh of relief. **(U10)** "I'm in the car right now, Miranda, and I should be at the garage in just a few minutes." **(U11)** I figured she was probably concerned that everything was going well, so I reassured her that there were no problems whatsoever and we should both arrive shortly in perfect condition. **(U12)**

Andrea is out on an errand, fulfilling one more of her boss's overdemanding tasks: she has to take Miranda's Porsche back to the garage, but she suddenly receives a phone call from Miranda herself. From this moment on, Andrea engages in a

twofold conversation: 1) one with herself, commenting upon events as they are unfolding, and 2) one with an interlocutor, who is, in turn, Miranda, then Cara, the babysitter, then Miranda again. Regarded as a self-addressed representative describing an ongoing event and its consequences, **(U1)** relies on a conventional implicature carried by 'as if' to emphasise that, although Andrea's life was already nightmarish, her boss found the least expected moment to make it worse. In uttering **(U1),** Andrea flouts the Quality Maxim, by saying something that is not literally true ('the very essence of life sucked') in order to supply a hyperbolic description of the state of mind Miranda's call has brought about.

Taking into account the relative power relation between Andrea and Miranda, namely employer-employee, Andrea knows that Miranda can exert reward or coercive power over her. By capitalizing the pronoun 'her' and by using short, elliptic sentences, she emphasizes the spine-chilling effect her editor has over her.

(U4) is a rather abrupt addressive, bearing in mind that the speaker repeats the hearer's name three times. It is a FTA, as Miranda doesn't greet Andrea as would be expected at the beginning of a phone call conversation, thus withholding politeness deliberately. 'Can you...' is not a mere inquiry, but a reproach in disguise, paraphrasable by 'Why haven't you answered the phone sooner?'. The implicature is amplified by the specification Andrea brings concerning Miranda's pitch ('trilled') The size of the imposition and the threat to Andrea's negative face are anticipated by the gestures Andrea makes while waiting for Miranda's preposterous orders.

In **(U6)** and (**U7)**, Andrea observes the Cooperative Principle as she answers Miranda's question appropriately. Andrea's greeting, apparently flawlessly polite, may nevertheless be considered an instance of mock politeness via violation of the Quantity Maxim ('perfectly'). Besides informing Miranda on Andrea's readiness to engage in conversation, (**U6)** and (**U7)** may also serve as mitigating devices in an attempt to soften up a conversation anticipated as ruthlessly intrusive and overcontrolling on Miranda's part.

(U8) and (**U9)** are directives that take the form of questioning. While (**U8)** is a clear request for information, (**U9)** contains a conventional implicature, conveyed by 'yet', by means of which Miranda shows her superior position and demands that her orders be instantly carried out. It may also be a remonstrative, enabling Miranda to imply that she hardly expects Andrea to carry out her tasks in due time.

(U11) provides Miranda with all the necessary information, flouting no maxim, thus showing cooperativeness on Andrea's part. Andrea performs no FTA: despite the obviously irritating questions of her boss and her lack of politeness, she keeps her calm and answers politely, bearing in mind the status of Miranda, who is in a position of exerting legitimate power.

(U12) reinforces Andrea's intention to achieve a 'reassuring' perlocution upon her hard-to-please boss. Andrea's polite behaviour contrasts with Miranda's, who hardly ever refrains from damaging her employee's positive face (the lack of greetings and implied criticism) and negative face (Andrea's freedom is impeded by orders and requests).

II. Who's Madelaine?

> "Whatever," **(U1)** she said brusquely, cutting me off midsentence. **(U2)** "I need you to pick up Madelaine and drop her off at the apartment before you come back to the office." **(U3)** Click. **(U4)** The phone went dead. I stared at it for a few seconds before I realized that she'd deliberately hung up because she had provided all of the details I could hope to receive. **(U5)** Madelaine. **(U6)** Who the hell was Madelaine? **(U7)** Where was she at the moment? **(U8)** Did she know I was to pick her up? **(U9)** Why was she going back to Miranda's apartment? **(U10)** And why on earth - considering Miranda had a full-time driver, housekeeper, and nanny - was I the one who had to do it? **(U11)**

Miranda's sudden change of mind regarding her initial plans frustrates her employee, who finds herself in a deplorable predicament. After her boss hangs up, Andrea is left baffled, engaging in self-addressed rhetorical questions.

(U1) is an expressive, which shows Miranda's lack of interest in what Andrea has just said, Miranda's choice of words highlights a dismissive attitude towards her employee (she interrupts the ongoing talk 'brusquely', not hesitating when it comes to 'cutting me off') and lack of appreciation towards Andrea's efforts, in other words utter positive impoliteness. In the same vein as **(U1)**, **(U3)** is a directive – one of Miranda's orders which flouts the Quantity Maxim: Miranda does not provide all the details for Andrea to meet the felicity conditions required by the fulfilment of the expressed request and keeps Andrea in the dark as to the very situation she is requested to deal with. It is also an instance of withholding politeness as Miranda does not say either 'please' or 'thank you', at the end of her request. In addition, she rudely interrupts the conversation ('Click').

The next sequence of utterances - **(U7)**, **(U8)**, **(U9)**, **(U10)**, **(U11)** - are self-addressed queries, conveying Andrea's amazement at her boss's indecipherable order and sudden opting out of the conversation. Still perplexed, Andrea rhetorically asks herself questions in an attempt to compensate for Miranda's having been underinformative (whether her intent to non-observe the Quantity Maxim was deliberate or not is debatable, therefore this non-observance may be labelled as a

flout as well as a violation), after the phone conversation with her boss is over. The conversational implicatures this sequence of utterances conveys is annoyance on Andrea's part, since she finds herself coerced to carry out a task on which she has been insufficiently informed. Furthermore, **(U7)** and **(U11)** are examples of positive impoliteness strategies; they provide information on Miranda's social status ('Miranda had a full-time driver, housekeeper, and nanny') while implying that, despite all the other employees catering to her needs, Miranda keeps inflicting impossible missions on Andrea.

III. Assembling the puzzle

I started by calling Miranda's nanny, but her cell phone went straight to voice mail. After a long range of failures to reach other acquaintances, Miranda's nanny picked up.
"Cara, hey, it's me." **(U1)**
"Hey, what's up? **(U2)** Are you on the street? **(U3)** It sounds so loud." **(U4)**
"Yeah, you could say that. **(U5)** I had to pick up Miranda's Porsche from the dealership. **(U6)** Only, I can't really drive stick. **(U7)** But now she called and wants me to pick up someone named Madelaine and drop her off at the apartment. Who the hell is Madelaine and where might she be?" **(U8)**
Cara laughed for what felt like ten minutes before she said, **(U9)** "Madelaine's their French bulldog puppy and she's at the vet. **(U10)** I was supposed to pick her up, but Miranda just called and told me to pick the twins up early from school so they can all head out to the Hamptons." **(U11)**
"You're joking. **(U12)** I have to pick up a fucking dog with this Porsche? **(U13)** Without crashing? **(U14)** It's never going to happen." **(U15)**
"She's at the East Side Animal Hospital, on Fifty-second between First and Second. **(U16)** Sorry, Andy, I have to get the girls now, but call if there's anything I can do, OK?" **(U17)**

Andrea embarks upon solving the mystery created by the insufficient information contained in her boss's new orders. She has to uncover the identity of the unknown Madeline and in order to succeed she turns for help to Cara, the nanny of Miranda's twins.

(U1) is a representative, accompanied by a greeting acknowledging Cara's presence and informing her on the identity of the caller. Andrea's use of her addressee's first name (Cara), suggests there is a relatively high degree of familiarity

between the two. Andrea's words also imply the existence of a degree of fondness, which affects her mood and therefore her politeness strategies sound natural unlike the instances when she is being deferential to Miranda. Observing the Cooperative Principle, Cara's response provided by (**U2)-(U4)** follows the conventions of politeness and suggests an attempt at mutual face preserving, by showing concern for the interlocutor.

In (**U5)** Andrea starts justifying her call: she obeys the requirements of the quantity maxim, but not those of the manner maxim, which it violates by suggesting she is not willing to engage in that line of talk, because there are other emergencies that need clarifying ("Yeah, you could say that").

Departing from the conciseness of her previous utterance, in (**U6)**, Andrea fails to observe the Quantity Maxim by providing unrequired information. Furthermore, **(U6),** a representative, offers the answer to a question that was not asked. Given the context, it sounds rather like a complaint than an attempt to keep Cara abreast with the latest developments. Likewise, (**U7)** elaborates on Andrea's troubles and infringes the Quantity and Relation Maxims, because of Andrea's anxiety of not managing to carry out Miranda's preposterous orders.

(**U8)**, a directive, is an attempt to ask for information. The language Andrea employs betrays again the existence of a degree of familiarity between herself and her interlocutor - "Who the hell is Madeline …?" . In (**U9)-(U11),** while observing the Cooperative Principle, Cara provides the answer Andrea seeks and produces a response which obeys all four conversational maxims. **(U11)** is an explanatory utterance, which may be regarded as not observing the Quantity Maxim. Yet, there is no implicature arising from the non-observance of the Quantity Maxim, as Cara seems to convey justification for the task having been redirected to Andrea.

(**U12)** and (**U13)** re-emphasize the familiarity between the speaker and the hearer. **(U12)** is an expression of disbelief, while **(U13)** and **(U14)** are rhetorical questions, which unveil Andrea's bewilderment at Miranda's preposterous demands and her lack of confidence in her ability to carry out such demands. (**U15)** is a predictive which expresses the most likely scenario Andrea envisages.

(**U16)** provides further information imparted by Cara to Andrea, abiding by all the conversational maxims. The last utterance, (**U17)**, is an expressive, meant to signal Cara's dismissing Andrea. Trying to end the conversation politely, she apologizes, performing a self-directed FTA. The last part of the utterance is a reassuring phrase, pointing at Cara's readiness to further offer her help: "…but call if there's anything I can do, OK?"

IV. Feeling like a Dead Dog?

> Later on, I managed to leave the car at the garage and the dog with Miranda's doorman without further incident. Arriving at the office, I strolled confidently into the assistants' suite outside Miranda's office and quietly took my seat, looking forward to a few free minutes before she returned from lunch.
> "And-re-ah," she called from her starkly furnished, deliberately cold office. **(U1)** "Where are the car and the puppy?" **(U2)**
> I leaped out of my seat and ran as fast as was possible on plush carpeting while wearing five-inch heels and stood before her desk. **(U3)** "I left the car with the garage attendant and Madelaine with your doorman, Miranda, **(U4)**" I said, proud to have completed both tasks without killing the car, the dog, or myself. **(U5)**
> "And why would you do something like that?" **(U6)** she snarled, looking up from her copy of Women's Wear Daily for the first time since I'd walked in. **(U7)** "I specifically requested that you bring both of them to the office, since the girls will be here momentarily and we need to leave." **(U8)**
> "Oh, well, actually, I thought you said that you wanted them to – "**(U9)**
> "Enough. **(U10)** The details of your incompetence interest me very little. **(U11)** Go get the car and the puppy and bring them here. **(U12)** I'm expecting we'll be all ready to leave in fifteen minutes. **(U13)** Understood?" **(U14)**

In the forth part of the dialogue, after painstakingly managing to fulfil her task, Andrea arrives at the office only to discover that her boss is not only completely dissatisfied with her, but on the warpath again, ready to bring more serious damage to her positive face – belittling her merits - and her negative face - imposing new obstructions on Andrea's freedom of action via new orders. Although she does everything in her power to please her boss, Miranda makes it obvious that Andrea's efforts have been in vain.

(U2) is a directive, more specifically a case of questioning, a potential FTA towards Andrea's positive face (Miranda fails once more to greet her) and also a case of withholding politeness (lack of greeting when expected). **U3** is a self-addressed assertive, which justifies Andrea's reaction to Miranda's rudeness, while providing supplementary details about her discomfort ("while wearing five-inch heels"). Andrea is aware of the legitimate, coercive power her boss holds over her, as she "ran as fast as was possible" at Miranda's call.

A reportive, (**U4**) observes the Cooperative Principle. Despite Miranda's blatant impoliteness Andrea proves both informative and considerate, given her full

awareness of her lower hierarchical position. (**U5)** is a self-addressed reportive, which is overinformative and ironic, thus flouting the Quality Maxim, since Andrea does not literally envisage "killing the car, the dog or myself".

An instance of indirect speech act, **(U6)** is a question nesting a reproach, made salient by specifying Miranda's pitch of voice ('snarled'). The implicature is 'Why would you do something that stupid?' and is intended as a FTA to the hearer's positive face, meant to undermine Andrea's professional competence. The commentary is highly indicative of Miranda's impolite stance: she speaks on an authoritative discourteous tone and hardly gives Andrea any consideration ("looking up from her copy of Women's Wear Daily for the first time since I'd walked in"). Paralanguage (avoiding eye-contact) reinforces Miranda's question being a threat to Andrea's positive face.

(**U8)** sounds like a representative, but by contrasting a reported request to an expected state-of-affairs, it implies that Miranda hints at underlining her superior position and also showing her irritation in relation to the task not having been performed as supposedly requested. (**U9)** is disguised apology in the form of an avowed misunderstanding of Miranda's order. Andrea threatens her own positive face wants by admitting she must have misunderstood Miranda's directives, although fully aware Miranda never gave such precise directives.

By (**U10)** Miranda opts out of the conversation and bluntly points out that she is not interested in her employee's explanations, which is an instance of positive impoliteness. (**U11)** sounds as a representative but is an expressive by means of which Miranda vents her contempt towards Andrea and ruthlessly voices lack of consideration towards her assistant ("The details of your incompetence interest me very little"). A directive in the form of a request, **(U12)** is a FTA to both the hearer's negative and positive face, because of the way in which the request is formulated ("Go get…and bring…"), which unmistakably shows Miranda's scornful attitude. (**U13)** is apparently a description of Miranda's expectations, yet, despite its indirectness, it may rather count as a masked order for Andrea to make haste. (**U14)** operates as a dismissive formula and is a threat to Andrea's negative face via reinforcing the need to speed up the fulfilment of her request.

Apart from defining (im)politeness strategies and likelihood of face damage, the analysis of the four excerpts has indicated certain salient features and behavioural patterns of the main characters. Thus, Miranda Priestly, the notorious editor of '*Runway*' magazine constantly asserts her position of superiority, her legitimate power and social distance from her employee, Andrea, by constantly recurring to directives. This clearly leaves no doubt as to who is the boss and who is

the subordinate. The trenchant manner in which she barks out her capricious and demeaning requests and orders suggests that she expects her outrageous command to be immediately and successfully carried out, even if that means that her employee has to perform the role of a driver or even read her mind so as to anticipate her needs. When Miranda usually utters representatives, the brevity of the sentences marks either her discontent or her utter disinterest and obliviousness of other people's feelings. She repeatedly flouts the Quantity Maxim, thus making her commands infelicitous in order to find reasons to inculpate Andrea. Moreover, when she employs indirect speech acts, the conversational implicature derived from such instances emphasizes her employee's incompetence. Miranda's coercive power seems to give her the right to simply disregard politeness and constantly engage in FTAs. Thus, she withholds politeness, as she always fails to say 'please' or 'thank you' when such speech acts are expected of her and never employs redressive politeness strategies to save her face.

As Miranda's personal assistant, Andrea Sachs has no other choice than to comply with her overauthoritative boss's demands, even if this means ceaseless loss of positive and negative face. When talking to Miranda she obeys the politeness strategies and the Cooperative Principle, while aware of the relative power relationship between them. When she apologizes for having failed to successfully carry out the tyrant's orders, she does it insincerely and only feigns disregarding her negative and positive face wants. However, when engaging in conversations with herself, Andrea uses indirect speech acts and conversational implicatures meant to unveil her discontent and perception of her boss's whimsical despotic nature.

5.10. Not 'a chip off the old block' – Lorelai versus Emily in 'THE GILMORE GIRLS'

The series is centered on Lorelai Gilmore, a woman who, 16 years before the events we are to witness throughout the film, got pregnant and decided to abandon school in order to raise her daughter, to the disappointment of her mother, Emily Gilmore.

Emily, a control freak, cannot understand her daughter's independence and her desire for self-sufficiency, which is why she still blames her daughter for having ruined her own life. Since past decisions have not been forgiven, it is only natural that Emily still sees her daughter as a person incapable to make the right decisions. Thus, her behaviour towards her daughter is infused with critical remarks and directives.

While being at the hospital, before 16-year-old Lorelai gives birth to Rory, Lorelai is criticized for having left home

EMILY: You're having a baby – do you know that, Lorelai? **(U1)**
LORELAI: Well, that explains the stomachache. **(U2)**
EMILY: You do not leave your house when you are having a baby without telling your mother. **(U3)** You say, "Excuse me, Mom. **(U4)** I'm having a baby, give me a ride to the damn hospital!" **(U5)**

The scene presents a situation which fails to meet with Emily's expectations. Emily's first line **(U1)** starts with describing an ongoing state of affairs ("you're having a baby"), which only states the obvious. Although at first sight a rhetorical question, the second part of **(U1)** represents a FTA pointed at Lorelai's positive face, as it questions her ability to asses the circumstances and to take sensible actions.

Perceiving her critical attitude conveyed via the implicature, Lorelai answers with a witty remark. The alleged justification in **(U2)** is undeniably irony-laden and is Lorelai's rejection of her mother's criticism by simulating 'stating the obvious' and thus belittling Emily's observant spirit. Lorelai chooses to flout the Quantity Maxim and convey an implicature; her mother is given to understand that, contrary to expectations, Lorelai is very well aware of what is happening.

Yet Emily chooses to ignore the implicature. Instead of engaging in a redressive action meant to minimize the damaging effects of the criticism previously conveyed, she engages in a sequence of prescriptive utterances and **(U3)** performs a

new FTA, this time directed both towards Lorelai's positive and negative face. Emily's words "you do not leave the house…without telling your mother" attempt to label Lorelai as immature and impulsive, while simultaneously imposing Emily's decision on her allegedly irresponsible daughter.

(U4) indicates a course of action, that is, the line of behavior that Lorelai was expected to have followed and she did not. Emily's words voice her declared credo that politeness is to be used in all situations, while **(U5)** expresses her disappointment with her daughter's refusal to allow her to take the control of the ongoing event.

> One of the weekly family dinners, 16 years later, Emily starts criticizing Lorelai right after she enters the room
>
> **EMILY**: I'm extremely disappointed in you Lorelai **(U1)**… I had lunch with Bitty Charleston today and she told me what happened with you and the headmaster. **(U2)**
> **LORELAI**: What? Geez, does that woman do nothing all day but hide under his desk with a tape recorder? **(U3)**
> **EMILY**: After all we've gone through to get Rory in that school, and then you humiliate all of us by not being involved. **(U4)**
> **LORELAI**: Hey, she wasn't involved either. **(U5)**
> **EMILY**: You are a grown up, you have to set an example. **(U6)** If she's not involved with school, then she learned it from you. **(U7)**

This dialogue is highly illustrative of Emily's propensity to criticize anything that thwarts her plans. For somebody as keen on the importance of politeness in everyday situations, as Emily professes to be, she commits several acts of blatant impoliteness. **(U1)** is an illustration of bald on record impoliteness, as it performs a FTA pointed at Lorelai's positive face, targeted at her desire to be 'ratified and approved of'.

In **(U2),** Emily provides the full account of her previous judgement passed on Lorelai, based on hearsay and revealing fear of potential damage brought to the family's prestige and unblemished reputation. **(U3)** is Lorelai's rhetorical question in which emphasis is laid on an ironical description of her mother's hearsay strategies meant to dig out incriminative details on Lorelai. Obviously, the intended humorous effect brought about by hyperbolisation is a device Lorelai employs in an effort to

alleviate the tension.

But Lorelai's efforts are left unattended by her mother, who ignores the attempt to avoid disagreements and pursues her criticisms. **(U4),** again a description permeated with reproach conveys a FTA pointed at Lorelai's positive face, held responsible for tarnishing the family's good name. Her use of the pronouns 'we' and 'you' creates an antithesis between herself and her husband, on the one hand, and Lorelai on the other. Her assertion emphasises their efforts to get Rory into a top private school while opposing it to Lorelai's attitude, portrayed as the evildoer, willing to jeopardize the entire future of her daughter by her stubbornness. Thus, the words convey an attack directed towards Lorelai's being a good mother, who acts in the best interest of her daughter.

Lorelai's response, an attempt to counterbalance the effect of Emily's words, is not limited to a direct rejection of the accusation. Her utterance, **(U5),** in an attempt to remove the guilt placed upon her by her mother's words through the implicature it carries (if her daughter had shown an interest she would not have restrained her efforts in trying to help her accomplish her goals).

Again, Emily ignores her daughter's justification and renders her criticism even more scathing. Thus, **(U6)** is another attack on Lorelai's positive face, conveying the implicature that she is not a responsible adult capable of being a role-model for her daughter. Following the same line, **(U7)** strengthens the precedent implicature, which presents Lorelai as a bad example for her daughter and makes her seem guilty for Rory's line of behavior which fails to comply with Emily's expectations and desires.

The whole situation challenges our expectations since, as a rule, family reunions are meant to strengthen the bond between the members of a family and thus promote an atmosphere of harmony. Normally, in such situations all the members of the family cooperate in the effort of preserving their faces. Yet Emily does nothing of the sort. On the contrary, all her utterances involve the performance of a FTA and an endeavour to create disruption.

Emily was invited by Rory at her Graduation Ceremony because Lorelai was certain she would not like to come. Much to Lorelai's exasperation , Emily brings a cameraman.

> **LORELAI**: Mom, please. **(U1)** People will be showing up here soon. **(U2)** You can't – **(U3)**
> **EMILY**: Lorelai, I am perfectly capable of handling this. **(U4)**
> **LORELAI**: Okay, I'm just gonna let everyone deal with all this because I

need to relax and get a cup of coffee and maybe hammer a nail into my head. **(U5)**
EMILY: You're not needed here, Lorelai. **(U6)** Go get your coffee, relax. **(U7)** You're going to redo your makeup later, aren't you? **(U8)**
LORELAI: Maybe an Irish coffee. **(U9)**

Contrary to what Emily's potential face threats permeating all their discussions, Lorelai tries to convince her mother to give up her plans in a polite way, as illustrated by **(U1), (U2)** an **(U3).** The first two utterances are indirect speech acts which fail to reach their goal, because Emily does not grasp the implicature, **(U3)** is an attempt to engage in direct speech, yet unsuccessful, as the mother interrupts her daughter, committing an act of negative impoliteness.

By **(U4),** an assertive, Emily not only rejects what she perceives as a face-threatening act (rejecting what she feels to be an implicature that she may not let the situation slip out of her hands), but she also asserts she does not need Lorelai's guidance, an implicature resulting from the flouting of the Relation Maxim.

Thus, giving way to her mother, Lorelai chooses to opt out of what she feels to be an endless, fruitless discussion. **(U5)** expresses her need to no longer engage in painful conversation, and the second part, "and maybe hammer a nail into my head", flouts the Quality Maxim (describing an intention that is not literally true by means of hyperbole) and thus conveys the implicature that she needs a break from a burdensome situation.

Once again, Emily does not take into account the feelings of her daughter or her sarcasm and dismisses her bald-on record, thus threatening Lorelai's negative face (compelling her into taking a specific future action, namely withdrawing from the scene) **(U6).** Though the following sentence, **(U7)** seems to convey an interest in Lorelai's wellbeing and a desire to minimize the effects of what has been previously said, Emily manages again to hurt her daughter with the following directive **(U8).** Though directive in form, the meaning of the utterance is not limited to its face value, because it is not simply a request for information. Rather, the choice of a tag question and the propositional content makes it sound like an order. At the same time, the utterance represents a FTA directed at Lorelai's positive face.

Proving that she is not willing to argue with the absurd wishes of her mother, Lorelai's reply **(U9),** which flouts both the Relation Maxim (since her words are in no way connected to what she has been asked) and the Quantity Maxim (because she does not answer the question with 'yes' or 'no'), conveys the implicature that, given the escalation, she needs some very strong beverage (the

coffee she mentioned in **(U5)** no longer suffices and the solution is some Irish coffee, which contains spirits).

Lorelai bought her mother a DVD player and she is trying to install it under Emily's distrustful look

EMILY: You know how to hook this up? **(U1)**
LORELAI: I know how to read an instruction manual. **(U2)**
EMILY: Since when? **(U3)**
LORELAI: Hm, please. **(U4)**
EMILY: Maybe we should get a professional. **(U5)**
LORELAI: I can do this. (U6) Just give me five seconds here. **(U7)**
EMILY: Well? Well, can you do it? **(U8)** Oh, just forget it. **(U9)**

Emily's question **(U1)** is not a simple request for information, it subtly implies she distrusts Lorelai ability to install the DVD player. Lorelai's answer, **(U2),** an understatement, which flouts the Quantity Maxim, conveys the implicature that the operation she is to perform is not a complicated one, but something that any person willing to operate a DVD player can do. This constitutes an off-record attack at her mother's positive face, since her mother is in the habit of asking other people to perform various tasks for her.

Emily reacts as expected and by implying she is not aware of this allegedly new capacity of Lorelai's, carries out a FTA pointed at Lorelai's positive face which questions Lorelai's ability to successfully carry out a simple task. **(U3)** She does not even give in to her daughter's subsequent efforts to alleviate the strain **(U4).** Instead, she continues her attacks on Lorelai's positive face by the implicature of her following utterance **(U5),** which hints at their need of professional help, given Lorelai's habitual inability to accomplish useful activities. Lorelai rejects her mother's suggestions and volunteers to perform the task herself, as shown by (**U6**). She minimises her request for extra time by diminishing the imposition in **(U7).**

Again Emily's reaction proves that she doubts Lorelai's ability to successfully complete any practical task **(U8),** followed by a rather impolite opting out, meant to sever any communication along the line of talk they have so far engaged in **(U9).**

The previous analysis of several conversations between Lorelai Gilmore and her mother Emily reveals prevalent attitudes in the mother-daughter relationship. Emily is a manipulative person who expects all people to cater to her needs and to follow her orders. She refrains from using politeness in cases where she would be expected to (for instance, she starts criticizing Lorelai as soon as she enters the room, without greeting her). Moreover she constantly engages in the performance of FTAs pointed at her daughter's face. She undermines both Lorelai's positive face (by constant criticisms) and her negative face (by dismissing her efforts and undermining her ability to work things through by herself).

More often than not her criticisms and complaints against Lorelai are conveyed through direct speech acts, as she does not really take interest in any strategies meant to alleviate the damaging effects of her FTAs. She does not contemplate the possibility that her acts may hurt the addressee, thus manifesting no consideration for her daughter's feelings. She does not make use of implicatures too often, and when she is faced with those suggested by her daughter's words, she feigns not uptaking them. What she does is obstinately ignore everything that is not in accordance with her plans and intentions. Every time the implicatures of Lorelai's words may potentially threaten her face, she readily engages in face-saving work, meant to counterbalance any possible damage.

In most of the cases, the daughter is the one who tries to reinstate harmony in their interactions, but apparently the only key for dealing with Emily and keeping her self-respect is the use of negative impoliteness strategies, consisting of ignoring her mother, and thus serving her a dose of her own medicine.

5.11. Hooking up and breaking-up: maxim non-observance, FTAs and (im) politeness strategies among the protagonists in 'Seinfeld'

Seinfeld has been labelled as 'the show about nothing', its unique humorous vein arising from unorthodox ways of contemplating the trivia of New York's urbanite life. The often irrational, cynical and/or compulsive behaviour of the protagonists, along with the expectation-challenging evolution or involution relationships depicted throughout the series, has entitled critics and viewers alike to regard the show as a comedy of manners.

The characters share many traits with the majority of American urban population, especially single people living in cities harbouring very little

appreciation of family values. Throughout the series, family life is depicted as abounding in commotion and is regularly ridiculed: George, Kramer and Elaine have perceptible dysfunctional relationships with their parents and current partners or partners-to-be. All of them were single New Yorkers who seem unable to develop long-lasting loving relationships with others, either in their careers or their romantic lives: other people's slightest shortcomings and mannerisms inspire them with repulsion sooner or later. All of them live in rented apartments and never express any desire to live elsewhere or to possess a home of their own. While casual allusions to marriage are made (for example, George's relationship with Susan, which ends up in George unintentionally killing her) none of them takes this possibility seriously into account.

This section will analyse several excerpts in an attempt to highlight the relation between FTAs and certain behavioural patterns: Elaine's clever maneuvering of interlocutors so as to remove any hindrances threatening her flings, George's phobia towards commitment and Kramer's break-up artistry. The short, chubby, bald, choleric George keeps complaining about his unemployed life and his having to live with his parents, while constantly making a mountain out of a mole, no matter how trivial his issues may be. Jerry's neighbour from across the corridor, Kramer is a tall, bony, sanguine and stress-free eccentric: his propensity of taking everything easy and letting bygones be bygones point to his outgoing, air-headed nature.

5.11.1. Elaine's verbal wheeling and dealing

In the excerpt below, Elaine, Jerry's ex-girlfriend and current friend, interacts with one of the supporting characters, Newman, an overweight uncouth postal worker who lives in Jerry's and Kramer's building. Jerry does not refrain from explicitly expressing resentfulness towards Newman, while Kramer accepts him as another weirdo of his entourage. In his turn, Newman exhibits an ambiguous attitude: he would like to be included among Jerry's friends yet lack of acceptance in the bunch urges him to display envy and malice. Since Elaine is the one asking him a favour, she is performing a serious amount of facework. On the other hand, Newman also engages in facework since he is highly tempted to incur a potential debt in order to get some approval and eventually inclusion in the bunch.

The particular context having led to such an encounter is the following: Elaine wants to retrieve a fur coat – belonging to her current hunky, beefy and dumb boyfriend – which she threw out of a window and which Newman happened to recover from a tree. To accomplish this end she handles a wide array of positive and

negative face-saving strategies.

Newman: Ahhh! This is very much as I imagined it to be. Aside from this rattan piece, which seems oddly out of place. **(N1)**
Elaine: Please, sit down, Newman, um, I wanted to talk to you about something. **(E1)**
Newman: This isn't about my opening your mail? **(N2)**
Elaine: What? **(E2)**
Newman: Because I don't, never have, anything I read was already open. **(N3)**
Elaine: Uh, yeah, uh, no. Newman, uh, I heard that you found a fur coat in a tree. And, I believe that it belongs to a friend of mine, and I'd like to give it back to him. **(E3)**
Newman: Sorry. Climbers, keepers. **(N4)**
Elaine: You know, Newmie. Um, I know how you feel about me, and I have to tell you, I'm quite flattered. **(E4)**
Newman: You are? **(N5)**
Elaine: Oh, yeah. I mean, of all the men that I know, you're the only one who's held down a steady job for several years. **(E5)**
Newman: Well, it's – it's interesting work, I don't mind it. **(N6)**
Elaine: Ha ha ha ha**. (E6)**
Newman: Don't you have a-a boyfriend? A, uh, burly athletic type? **(N7)**
Elaine: Uh, don't worry, he's cool. **(E7)**
Newman: Cool? **(N8)**
Elaine: Very cool. So, what do you say? Can you do me this little favor, Newmie? **(E8)**
Newman: Oh, how I've waited for this moment. But alas, my heart belongs to another man's wife, and I have given the coat to her. **(N9)**
Elaine: All right, we're done here. **(E9)**
Newman: For I am in love with Svetlana, and I don't care if the whole world knows, except for Silvio, who would throw me out of the apartment, where I would be dancing on the sidewalk – **(N10)**
Elaine: Thank you, thank you, thank you very much. **(E10)**

By uttering **(N1)** Newman abruptly flouts - or possibly infringes - several conversational maxims. He is not supposed to provide information that is considerably self-incriminative, namely that he fantasises about Elaine, her life and her apartment. His next remark strengthens the previous presupposition that Newman has been imagining Elaine at her place and draws a comparison between

his fantasy and reality, resulting in an unflattering comment on Elaine's taste. Both the Relation Maxim (the topic is unrelated to the context and to any expectable line of conversation) as well as the Quantity Maxim are not observed while Newman provides unnecessary details about his aesthetic values. It is debatable whether such non-observance is a flout – Newman deliberately intends to embarrass Elaine by attacking her positive face and passing judgements on her taste – or a mere case of infringement – Newman may be involuntarily rude, he simply displays the lack of social skills of a stigmatised overweight loner.

(E1) announces the strategic maneuvers Elaine is about to embark on: she does her best to be polite to Newman, by avoiding any damage to his negative face. To this end, she uses the conventional offer-opener 'please' and the deferential hedge 'I wanted', an attempt to mitigate the imposition of asking Newman to spend some time and be requested to do her a favour. She feigns ignoring his derogatory remark, and refrains from suggesting his critical remark has been misplaced. She inclines to protect Newman's negative face rather than preserve his positive face, therefore she engages in a non-confrontational conversational line.

(N2) emerges as another uncooperative remark, which infringes the relation Maxim by bringing about a topic that has not been envisaged by the interlocutor. It is a confessive, therefore a threat to Newman's own positive face as well as to Elaine's negative face. The implied confession is 'I've been opening your mail', which admits to Newman's having invaded Elaine's privacy. **(N3)** embeds no endeavour for face saving while providing simultaneous flouts of three maxims: Quantity, Quality and Manner. Newman is overinformative, disorderly and willing that Elaine should uptake his utterance as a lie. Where apology may be expected, Newman would rather have his own face threatened, while equally insulting Elaine by his use of mock politeness: he only pretends to be ashamed of his having read her mail, yet he wants her to know he can and will do that anytime he pleases.

(E3) counts as an attempt on Elaine's part to disregard Newman's implied aggressiveness. She engages in a diplomatic, non-confrontational line of talk, destined to minimise Newman's intention to carry out further potentially face-threatening acts. By vaguely acknowledging Newman's previous utterance, she employs positive politeness output strategies. Then, she chooses to minimise her imposition, which counts as an effort to save Newman's negative face, by using indirectness and vagueness enhanced by the repeated occurrence of hedges: 'I heard that... I believe that.... I'd like to give it back'. She insists on the need to return the coat to its owner and refrains from specifying this would serve her own interest by avoiding formulating the request on her own behalf. This strategy may count as an attempt to save her own face, being unwilling to incur a debt. Neither does Elaine

straightforwardly tell Newman the coat is not his therefore keeping it would be socially sanctionable, since she is well aware that might impede Newman's freedom of action and constitute a serious threat to his negative face.

(N4) indicates Newman has appropriately uptaken Elaine's implicature. He accordingly employs indirectness and overconcisely invokes a non-existing right: 'Climbers keepers' devised on the cliché 'Finders keepers', thus flouting the Maxim of Manner. His being concise to the point of risking sounding cryptic unveils his decision to look detached and unsympathetic and ignore Elaine's request. In this way he willfully performs a threat to Elaine's positive face. It is a way to indirectly convey he is in a position of control and power and negotiation of the request considerably depends on his goodwill.

(E4) witnesses a shift in Elaine's face-saving strategy, redirected from negative output strategies to devices meant to boost Newman's positive face. She addresses him by an in-group identity marker in the form of a term of endearment, 'Newmie', in an attempt to make him feel included in her group of friends and be granted social acceptance. She shows explicit acknowledgement of and sympathy for Newman's feelings 'I know how you feel about me'. In addition, she expresses exaggerated concern and approval when uttering 'I have to tell you I'm quite flattered'. Elaine flouts the Quality Maxim, since viewers know from previous episodes Newman is hardly to her liking. She also feigns vulnerability by feigning to have performed a confession, usually a threat to one's own positive face. Such displayed vulnerability may sound as a commissive, by means of which Elaine – temporarily and only conversationally - makes herself available to Newman, although fully determined not to lead him on once her request is fulfilled. It is hard to tell whether she is aware that Newman will be observant enough to see she is engaging in niceties only to speed reaching her purpose or whether she believes him naive enough to be easily baited by what looks like a flirtaceous remark. Therefore, she may be flouting the Quality Maxim, as Newman is able to read her insincere confession, or she may be violating it, in an attempt to deceive him into believing he may be accepted, even liked by Elaine.

(N5) could be consonant with both interpretations. Newman may have been duped by Elaine's confession or he may have read her ulterior motifs yet be pleased to see her grovelling some more. He preserves his initial duplicitary attitude, not letting either the interlocutor or the viewer easily label him as gullible or devious.

(E6) is a persistent endeavour on Elaine's part to boost Newman's face, in compliance with all previously employed strategies. Motivation of her approval of Newman is poorly substantiated, therefore previous exaggeration sounds all the more closer to gross flattery. Newman feigns not having seized Elaine's flattery as a

caricature of a compliment and feigns showing concern in his work, according to routine conversations in which people exchange generalities about their jobs without showing genuine interest in their interlocutor's activities. **(E6)** signals imminent loss of self-composure, camouflaged by Elaine's persistency in preserving a polite stance and demeanour towards Newman.

(N8) is suggestive of Newman's not having grasped Elaine's flattering remarks as violations and, consequently, weighing the promising perspective brought about by Elaine's offer. To reinforce his belief in her goodwill, Elaine blatantly violates the Quality Maxim by concocting a lie as to her boyfriend being cool with her being available for other guys **(E7).** By uttering **(E7)** she resumes her previous negative output strategy and tries to minimise the imposition ('this one little favor'), while concomitantly preserving boosting of Newman's positive face (she calls him 'Newmie' again).

(N9) disambiguates the exchange. Newman has been aware of Elaine's intentions to delude him and he has been eagerly waiting for 'this moment' to deconspire her malicious intentions and threaten both her positive face (by showing she has not been subtle enough) and her negative face (by impeding her actions since he obstructs access to the object of her desire). In hindsight, **(N1)** and **(N2)** may be reassessed as flouts not as cases of infringements. Being anti-social, Newman takes delight in infringing social norms and expectations and even basks in the glory of the cunning manipulator who is able to impede other people's actions and obstruct other people's pursuits. Specifying he is in love with Svetlana may afflict Elaine's positive face (he rejects her for some other woman) as well as her negative face – he refuses to engage in the course of action she requested him to, lacking any motivation to do so. **(N10)** voices an emotional outburst, which infringes the Quantity, Relation and Manner Maxims, since Newman has his moment and feels unimpeded to express genuine feeling whether this disturb his listener or not.

(E9) and **(E10)** are means employed by Elaine to opt out of a conversation that has failed to put her to any advantage. Using mock politeness, she thanks Newman for his performance.

5.11.2. George Costanza's commitment phobia

According to Elaine, George Costanza is a 'short guy with glasses, looks like Humpty-Dumpty with a melon hat', the prototypical 'loser': he is a neurotic, self-loathing, bullied by his parents, with whom he lives despite mutual dislike. George

exhibits a non-negligible number of contemptible traits, among which stinginess, dishonesty, insecurity, social gawkiness and inadequacy. His paranoid penchant urges him into concocting elaborate plots to weasel out of relational, financial, or legal obligations, always with unexpected harmful consequences. Paradoxically, despite his unappealling looks and dating clumsiness,George often dates or plans to date attractive women.

His relationships with women always fail lamentably: either they break up with him or he breaks up with them for fear of commitment. At a certain point, George and Susan have been dating for a year, and, in a short-lived bout of midlife crisis he proposes to her, after he and Jerry had made a 'pact' to move forward with their lives.

> George: I got engaged. **(U1)** I'm getting married. **(U2)** I asked Susan to marry me. **(U3)** We're getting married this Christmas. (**U4)**
> Jerry: You're getting married? **(U5)**
> George: Yes! (**U6)**
> Jerry: Oh, my god! (**U7)**
> George: I'm a man. (**U8)** Jerry, I'm a man. **(U9)** And do you know why? **(U10)** It's because of that talk we had. (**U11)** You were my inspiration. **(U12)** Do you believe it? (**U13)** You. (**U14)**That lunch was the defining moment of my life. (**U15)**
> Jerry: I'm blown away. (**U16)**
> George: You're blown? (**U17)**
> Jerry: Wow! (**U18)**
> George: You like that? (**U19)**
> Jerry: And she said "Yes"? (**U20)**
> George: It took a couple of hours of convincing. (**U21)** I was just like those guys in the movies. (**U22)** And it worked! (**U23)** She said "Yes"! **(U24)** I can't believe my luck that she was still available. **(U25)** A beautiful woman like that. **(U26)** You think she's good looking, right? (**U27)**

Since Jerry has not inquired about George's ongoing relationship, George's rigmarole about his marriage is an infringement of the Quantity Maxim which states that one should be as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange). **(U1)** ('I got engaged'), (**U2)** ('I'm getting married'), (U3) ('I asked Susan to marry me') and **(U4)** ('We're getting married this Christmas') As a rule, infringing stems from imperfect linguistic performance or impaired language performance brought about by nervousness, drunkenness, excitement, disability. As the

conversation takes place immediately after George's marriage proposal to Susan, George is visibly nervous and excited and wants to share this piece of information with his best friend. **(U2)** is redundant because it contains the same information as **(U3)** with the only difference that **(U3)** offers the name of the fiancée, too. **(U4)** is clearly out of place because it would be more appropriately introduced as an answer to a plausible question the interlocutor might feel bound to ask.

Jerry seems to be so shocked so the point of being unable to utter any congratulations. George avows being shocked himself while repeatedly infringing the Quantity Maxim in **(U8)** to **(U15)**, which, more or less, convey the same information and attitude. George engages in a first instance of positive politeness because **(U12)** is intended as compliment targeted at Jerry: a source of inspiration for George, an example to be followed**.** **(U13)** is an attempt to find whether the compliment has reached its target or not. Whether this compliment has brought satisfaction to Jerry's positive face is not certain. Jerry's **(U16)** ('I'm blown away') is rather ambiguous: he may be either be flabbergasted to see that he has such a powerful influence on his friend or incredulous as to George getting married. George attempts carrying out another positive politeness strategy when inquiring about Jerry's opinion as to his marital intentions. Jerry engages in an instance of positive impoliteness in **(U20)** ('And she said <Yes>?') as his utterance expresses veiled disbelief as to Susan's having accepted George's marriage proposal.

Ignoring Jerry's sarcastic implicature, George provides a bona fide answer to Jerry's question in **(U21)** to **(U24).** He risks damaging his own positive face by showing astonishment as to Susan's accepting his proposal by avowing his inferiority to Susan ('I can't believe my luck that she was still available') and **(U26**) ('A beautiful woman like that!'). Engaging again in positive politeness strategy, he shows once again his interest in Jerry's opinion ('You think she's good looking, right?'). **(U27)** is not only meant to reinforce group solidarity but it is also proof of George's insecurity and his lack of confidence in his own taste in women.

Later on, in the same episode, when Jerry breaks up with his girlfriend, George empathetically panics and imitatively tries repeatedly to find his way out of the commitment undertaken. His wish is fulfilled under a gruesome, morbidly humorous circumstances: he inadvertently causes her death by selecting the cheapest envelopes for their wedding invitations, the toxic glue of which is swallowed by Susan while licking shut the envelopes with the wedding invitations.
While reluctantly endeavouring to put on a mourner's face for the next three months, George starts dating another woman. Unavoidably, commitment phobia raises its ugly head:

George: I'm not married. **(U1)** I'm not allowed to go out with somebody else? **(U2)**
Jerry: It depends. (**U3)**
George: Depends on what? **(U4)**
Jerry: On many factors. (**U5)**
George: Like what? **(U6)**
Jerry: Well, how long you've been seeing her. **(U7)** What's your phone call frequency? **(U8)** Are you on a daily? **(U9)**
George: No, semi-daily. **(U10)** Four or five times a week. **(U11)**
Jerry: What about Saturday nights? **(U12)** Do you have to ask her out, or is a date implied? **(U13)**
George: Implied. **(U14)**
Jerry: She got anything in your medicine cabinet? **(U15)**
George: Might be some moisturizer. **(U16)**
Jerry: Let me ask you this... **(U17)** Is there any Tampax in your house? **(U18)**
George: Yeah. **(U19)**
Jerry: Well, I'll tell you what you got here. **(U20)** You've got yourself a girlfriend. **(U21)**
George: Do you believe my luck? **(U22)** The first time in my life I have a good answer to the question 'What do you do?' and I have a girlfriend. **(U23)** I mean, you don't need a girlfriend when you can answer that question. **(U24)** That's what you say in order to get girlfriends. **(U25)** Once you can get girlfriends, you don't want a girlfriend, you just want more girlfriends. **(U26)**

In **(U1)** ('I'm not married'.) and **(U2)** ('I'm not allowed to go out with somebody else?') George claims that is a noticeable difference between being married and having a girlfriend. Insecure of his claims, asks for Jerry's approval by using a positive politeness strategy and thus acknowledging Jerry's expert power over him. Jerry poses as a figure of authority and cross-questioning snowballs. Even though initially George felt the need of approval, during the cross-questioning he no longer seems that eager to get Jerry's validation of his initially expressed opinion. When Jerry tried to find out what type of relationship George is involved in, George attempts to violate the Quality Maxim in (**U10)** ('No, semi-daily') but ends up by flouting it in **(U11)** ('Four or five times a week'). In **(U10)** he tries to prevent Jerry from finding out the truth but in **(U11)** he signals Jerry that things are, in fact, a bit different. In order to redress George's face wants, Jerry ignores the lie and continues

his prying. When Jerry brings enough arguments in favour of acknowledging the presence of a girlfriend in George's life (George sees her often and she keeps in his apartment moisturizers and Tampax), George feels compelled to accept the truth because he respects Jerry's opinion. However, lacking any concern for his own positive face wants he annuls any possibility of being liked or admired and belittles himself in **(U22)** *('*Do you believe my luck?'); thus he manages to shift the focus from the girlfriend onto his own predicament. While uttering **(U23)** ('The first time in my life I have a good answer to the question 'What do you do?' and I have a girlfriend'), **(U24)** ('I mean, you don't need a girlfriend when you can answer that question') and **(U25)** ('That's what you say in order to get girlfriends') George displays his duplicitary attitude as to having a steady relationship and alludes to his fear of commitment. These utterances pose threats to his own face and to Jerry's as well, since Jerry's advice and opinions seem to have been labelled as useless, even discomfort-inducing. By hyperbolically expressing his opinion on dating and its long-term consequences in **(U26)** ('Once you can get girlfriends, you don't want a girlfriend, you just want more girlfriends') George threatens his own positive face - he appears selfish and insensitive - while forcefully defending his negative face - his desperate need to act freely, unbridled by the limitations dating imposes.

In the following excerpt from *The Ex-Girlfriend* episode, he tries to justify his breaking-up with a woman.

> George: It just didn't work out. **(U1)** What can I do? **(U2)** I wanted to love her. (**U3)** I tried to love her. (**U4)** I couldn't. **(U5)**
> Jerry: You tried. **(U6)**
> George: I kept looking at her face. (**U7)** I'd go: "C'mon, love her. Love her!" **(U8)**
> Jerry: Did you tell her you loved her? **(U9)**
> George: Oh, I had no choice. (**U10)** She squeezed it out of me! (**U11)** She'd tell me she loved me. (**U12)** Alright, at first, I just look at her. (**U13)** I'd go "Oh, really?" or "Boy, that's, that's something." **(U14)** But, eventually you have to come back with "Well, I love you." **(U15)** You know, you can only hold out for so long!" **(U16)**

As usual, George feels the urgent need to give more information that required and, consequently, he flouts the Quantity Maxim by providing too much information in **(U1)** and unnecessary justification in **(U3)** ('I wanted to love her'), **(U4)** ('I tried to love her') and **(U5)** (I couldn't). Because he needs to show Jerry that he appreciates his opinion, he performs the flouting first by means on a rhetorical

question in **(U2)** ('What can I do?') . Jerry uses a positive politeness strategy in **(U6)** ('You tried'), with a view to emphasising that Jerry pays attention to George's words ((**U6)** reinforces **(U5**)) and displays solidarity towards George's experiences and viewpoints. Nevertheless, George fails to observe Jerry's solidarity and goes on flouting the Quantity Maxim. Finally, in **(U9)** ('Did you tell her you loved her?') Jerry feels compelled to offer some sort of support for George's flouting and tries to save George's positive face by showing interest in what he has to say. Unable to simply answer Jerry's question by 'yes' or 'no', George further elaborates on people's reactions when told they are loved. He flouts both the Quantity Maxim (he says a lot more than it was required from him) and the Manner Maxim because he is anything but brief and orderly. He is so upset because he had to tell someone 'I love you' and his very saying it led to separation from his girlfriend. If saying 'I love you' is difficult, breaking up is worse. At first, he does not even want to do it face-to-face:

> George: Do I have to break up with her in person? **(U1)** Can't I do it over the phone? (**U2**)... I have no stomach for these things. (**U3)** She can't kill me right?! **(U4)**
> Jerry: No, of course not. **(U5)**

George begins by questioning in **(U1)** ('Do I have to break up with her in person?') the need for a confrontation. He is cowardly enough not to want to see the woman he intends to break up with and without waiting for Jerry's answer he comes up with a solution in **(U2)** ('Can't I do it over the phone?') uttered, again, in the form of a question addressed to Jerry. Even though George acknowledges Jerry's relative power, he lacks the patience to wait for an answer, which may be regarded as an instance of blunt impoliteness. In **(U4)** ('She can't kill me right?!') George finally allows Jerry to answer and their solidarity is thus reinforced.
Despite his being a self-centred, gawky and ill-tempered break-upper, in *The Lip Reader* episode, there is an instance when George's breaking up strategy appears infallible:

> George: It's not you, it's me.... (**U1)** You're giving me the 'It's not you, it's me' routine? **(U2)** I invented 'It's not you, it's me.' **(U3)** Nobody tells me it's them, not me. (**U4)** If it's anybody, it's me. **(U5)**
> Gwen: Alright, George, it's you. **(U6)**
> George: You're damn right it's me. (**U7)**
> Gwen: Look, I was just trying to.... **(U8)**
> George: I know what you were trying to do. (**U9)** Nobody does it

better than me. (**U10)**
Gwen: Well I'm sure you do it very well. (**U11)**
George: Yes, well, unfortunately you'll never get the chance to find out. **(U12)**

Gwen, his soon to be ex-girlfriend tries to break up with George by using the 'it's not you, it's me' trite phrase. Of course, George fails to see this delicate attempt at saving his positive face wants and successfully damages his own positive face by shouldering all the blame. Not only does he avow being a liar in **(U3)** ('I invented 'It's not you, it's me.'), but indirectly hints at his being accustomed with breaking up with women by trying to make them believe that it is his fault Gwen sarcastically feigns saving his negative face wants and acknowledges his freedom of acting in a cowardly manner. He claims having repeatedly applied the verbal break-up cliché and being disappointed by Gwen's appropriating his own cue.

One of George's recurring obsessions is his repelling women. His worries are not wholly unsubstantiated because his ex girlfriend, Susan, became a lesbian immediately after their break-up and there is at least one occasion in which he shares this concern with Jerry. In *The Subway* episode he says that "I always get the feeling that when lesbians look at me, they're thinking, <That's why I'm not a heterosexual>". His statement threatens his own positive face and is likely to damage his own self-esteem, unless it is taken for an instance of self-targeted banter.

5.11.3. Kramer's nightmarish view on marriage

'A tall, lanky doofus, with a bird-face and hair like the Bride of Frankenstein', Kramer spends most of his time in Jerry's apartment and has a very distinct modus vivendi – you do not need anything of your own, as long as your lenient neighbour has it. Kramer's trademarks include his erect frizzy hair and vintage attires, his violent bursts through Jerry's apartment door and his proclivity for nonsensical, mannerisms. Kramer does not seem to have trouble attracting women, but his relationships often come to an embarrassing end and, like Jerry's, are usually short-lived. In *The Conversion*, after Kramer attracts the attention of a young Latvian Orthodox nun, he learns from the priests that he had the 'Kavorka', or 'lure of the animal', a powerful attraction over women. In *The Puffy Shirt*, Kramer dates a 'low-talker', a woman who speaks so quietly that Jerry does not hear her ask him to wear a buccaneer-like 'Puffy Shirt' during a live show on national television, which Jerry unknowingly agrees to. In *The Pie*, Kramer dates Olive from the Coffee Shop whose

super-long nails are the only cure to his itchy back. When he loses his itch and wants to break up with her, he uses a mannequin that looks like Elaine as his fake new girlfriend. In *The Wife*, he gets overly-tanned after falling asleep on a tanning bed and then horrifies his African-American girlfriend and her family who thinks he painted his face black in order to mock them. In *The Soul Mate* Kramer falls for Jerry's girlfriend Pam and with Newman's help he tries to win her over. He almost gets a vasectomy for her because he finds out she is not interested in having children.

Given Kramer's uncanny nature and dating habits, he is the least appropriate person to counsel others matters of the heart, yet that does not hinder him from doing so. For instance, in *The Engagement*, when Jerry informs Kramer about his discussion with George on marriage, Kramer voices a highly uncommon view on the matter:

> Jerry: I had a very interesting lunch with George Costanza today. **(U1)**
> Kramer: Really? **(U2)**
> Jerry: We were talking about our lives and we both kind of realized we're kids. **(U3)** We're not men. **(U4)**
> Kramer: So, then you asked yourselves, "Isn't there something more to life?" **(U5)**
> Jerry: Yes. **(U6)** We did. (**U7)**
> Kramer: Yeah, well, let me clue you in on something. **(U8)** There isn't. **(U9)**
> Jerry: There isn't? **(U10)**
> Kramer: Absolutely not. **(U11)** I mean, what are you thinking about, Jerry: Marriage? Family? **(U12)**
> Jerry: Well... **(U13)**
> Kramer: They're prisons. **(U14)** Man made prisons. **(U15)** You're doing time. **(U16)** You get up in the morning. **(U17)** She's there. (**U18)** You go to sleep at night. **(U19)** She's there. **(U20)** It's like you gotta ask permission to use the bathroom. **(U21)** Is it all right if I use the bathroom now? **(U22)**

Although eccentric in most interactions, Kramer is, by and large, polite toward Jerry. He sincerely considers himself to be Jerry's friend and, consequently, in **(U5)** ('So, then you asked yourselves, <Isn't there something more to life?>') he deliberately engages in impolitely interrupting Jerry since he considers Jerry is about to express something preposterous, i.e. to contemplate marital status. Jerry readily

accepts the interruption because, fortuitously, Kramer anticipates what he is about to express. Kramer continues to employ negative impoliteness strategies aimed at damaging Jerry's negative face wants, by sanctioning his actions and coercing him into restricting freedom of already pursued action. In the sequence of utterances **(U14)** up to **(U22)**, Kramer performs uninterrupted violation of the Quantity Maxim (he rants and raves about marriage and family), of the Relation Maxim (the example of the husband terrorized by his wife cannot be aligned with Jerry's potential marital status), of the Manner Maxim (the example he provided is obscure and ambiguous – asking permission for using the bathroom is an example of socially polite behaviour or accepted etiquette) and even the Quality Maxim (he lacks adequate evidence supporting his opinion because he has never never married). By violating all the four Maxims and engaging into impoliteness towards jerry as Jerry can hardly slip in a word, Kramer provides a hair-raising depiction of marriage.

Ironically enough, all the arguments Kramer provides in order to frighten Jerry happen to be, the very reasons that drive people to getting married. Kramer argues that married people see each other all the time and implies this is a disadvantage, while it is common knowledge that, at least ideally, people actually marry in order to be together forever. He complains of communication being compulsory in a marriage while, again, it is commonly shared knowledge that communication is the most important foundation for marriage and for healthy relationships in general.

Break-up situations foster Kramer's employing impoliteness strategies. In *The Dog* episode, He is not ashamed to tell Jerry about his break-up strategies and even shares his impatience to offend some particular woman.

> Jerry: You're breaking up? **(U1)**
> Kramer: Oh yeah! **(U2)** The sooner the better. **(U3)** I can't wait to do it. **(U4)** You know how there's some people you worry about whether or not you're gonna hurt their feelings? **(U5)** With her, I'm looking forward to it. **(U6)** Boy, I'd like to get it on video. **(U7)** Watch it in slow motion and freeze frame it! **(U8)**

In **(U3)** ('The sooner the better') and **(U4)** ('I can't wait to do it') he announces his eagerness to pose a threat to the woman's face wants. In **(U5)** ('You know how there's some people you worry about whether or not you're gonna hurt their feelings?') he avows to his being impolite and makes it clear that he will deliberately engage in emotionally hurting the woman. He clearly exaggerates his depiction of the farewell scene in **(U7)** ('Boy, I'd like to get it on video') and **(U8)** ('Watch it in

slow motion and freeze frame it'!) yet this ironic exaggeration only implies Kramer's eagerness in breaking up with his date. **(U5)** accurately summarises what people fear the most when they break up with someone, which does not prevent them from doing it anyway. The only difference is that Kramer is ready to engage in such hurtful undertaking while others try to avoid such direct confrontations.

Although he might be slightly exaggerating in his describing his break-up technique, later on in the same *The Dog* episode he ruthlessly confronts his soon-to-be girlfriend.

> I must've been out of my mind! **(U1)** Look at you. **(U2)** Why don't you do something with your life? **(U3)** You sit around here all day. **(U4)** You contribute nothing to society. You're just taking up space. **(U5)** How could I be with someone like you? **(U6)** I wouldn't respect myself. **(U7)**

His reproaches are both ironic and hilarious because what he seems to dislike in his girlfriend's life sounds very similar to what he himself does in his own life. He criticizes her for doing nothing all day long, although he himself has never been employed. After cumulative the reproaches targeted at the girlfriend's meaningless existence in **(U3)**, **(U4)** and **(U5)** and bracketed by the rhetorical questions in **(U1)** and **(U6)**, irony springs out of his last utterance, **(U7)** ('I wouldn't respect myself'). Kramer involuntarily implies that he is not worthy of respect either, having proffered repeated insults that undoubtedly damage the woman's both positive (the need to be accepted as part of a group) and negative (her independence, her personal choices about how she understands to live her life) face.

To conclude, the above analysis of excerpts from Seinfeld in terms of maxim non-observance and FTAs has hopefully managed to unveil certain features and behavioural propensities of the protagonists. The exchange between Elaine and Newman is illustrative of her keen sense of diplomacy and her wielding tactful remarks as a way of selfishly yet surreptitiously pursing her purposes while avoiding open confrontation and seeking for short-term allies. The sections discussing exchanges involving George and Kramer are telling of their attitudes toward dating and breaking-up and of the way such attitudes translate into a series of non-observances of the conversational maxims and exploitations of both politeness and impoliteness strategies. The analysis unveils George's propensity for self-targeted face threatening acts as well as Kramer's unwilful to the point of innocent engaging in face-threatening mannerisms.

6. IRONY REVISITED

A traffic jam when you're already late
A no-smoking sign on your cigarette break
It's like ten thousand spoons when all you need is a knife
It's meeting the man of my dreams
And then meeting his beautiful wife
And isn't it ironic...don't you think
A little too ironic...and, yeah, I really do think...

It's like rain on your wedding day
It's a free ride when you've already paid
It's the good advice that you just didn't take
Who would've thought... it figures
(Alanis Morissette- *Ironic*)

This chapter will deal with several contemporary approaches to irony and will endeavour to illustrate most viewpoints with the aid of relevant examples. Emphasis will be laid on concepts such as pretense, relevant inappropriateness and the use/mention distinction while a wide variety of texts - starting with excerpts from women's magazines and ending up with instances of irony and hyperbole in sitcom dialogues - will be analysed so as to make salient the contribution of such concepts to the understanding of communicative acts.

6.1. Classical approaches to irony

The word *irony* originates in the *eironi*, which describes the main features of the stock characters in classical Greek comedies, revolving around the conflict between two characters: the 'imposter' versus the 'ironical man'. The imposter was depicted as the pompous fool who pretended to be more than he actually was, while his antagonist was the cunning dissembler who posed as less than he was. The denouement always displayed the victory of the ironical man. Feigning ignorance, the speaker asked a number of ironical questions in order to direct the attention towards his interlocutor's genuine ignorance.

Plato ascribes negative connotations to irony, as he regards it as in instance of mockery and the surreptitious expression of pretense and deceit, involving bragging and belittling. In his dialogues, Socrates apparently agrees with his interlocutor, Socrates leads his interlocutor, yet leads him towards eventually denying his own point of view. *Socratic irony* pursues to attack fake seriousness and to cast doubt on what others take for unquestionable truths, proving the relativity of dogmas while exploiting the flexibility of human judgement. Later on, Aristotle defined irony as the rhetorical figure which names an object by using its opposite name. Aristotle assigns moral connotations to irony, which is regarded as a way of fending off vanity, while the ironist is perceived as the person who stoops to compromise. With Aristotle, irony reflects an attitude, since it is meant either to criticize or praise.

The Roman rhetors Cicero and Quintillian embrace a view similar to Aristotle's, considering irony a figure of speech that suggests the opposite of what is said (*simulare per contrarium*). Cicero expands the concept of irony to include not only saying something *opposite*, but also saying something *different* from what one really intends to say, regarded as appropriate for humorous purposes. Quintilian maintains that orators should make use of irony in order to conceal meanings. His view is similar to the Aristotelian one, considering irony a figure of speech that suggests the opposite of what is said. Quintilian distinguishes between irony as a trope, which resides in the power of words alone, and irony as a figure, which embeds disguise of the speaker's meaning. Furthermore, he claims that the scope of irony varies from a few words to a piece of discourse, ranging from the simple figure of speech to the expression of an attitude (Lesovici 1999: 29).

The definition of irony given by DuMarsais (1981 in Lesovici 1999) is an extension of the principles of irony established in classical rhetoric: "Irony is a figure through which we wish to imply the opposite of what we are saying; consequently, the words we use in the case of irony are not understood in their literal meaning."

To summarise, classical approaches to irony claim that the distinction drawn between literal and figurative meaning underlines the perception of the literal meaning as the norm and of figurative meaning, including irony, as deviation from the established norm.

6.2. Contemporary approaches to irony: Verbal vs. situational irony

A basic distinction in the field of irony is that between *verbal irony*, a linguistic

phenomenon defined by Gibbs (1994) as the strategy of using incongruity between reality and expectation, and *situational irony*, a state of the world which is perceived as ironical. Gibbs points out that in the case of verbal irony, the speaker intentionally creates a juxtaposition of incompatible actions or words, whereas situational irony reveals events which are ironic irrespective of the speaker's implication.

Gibbs explains that while verbal irony may be intended, a speaker cannot deliberately *do* something ironic:

> Verbal and situational irony, though mostly distinct, are related in one important way, in that the speakers' intentional use of verbal irony reflects their conceptualization of situations as ironic… We conceptualize events, experiences and ourselves as ironic and our language often reflects this figurative mode of thinking (Gibbs 1994: 365).

Both verbal and situational irony involve a confrontation or juxtaposition of incompatibles. However, while with verbal irony an individual evokes such a confrontation by their utterance, situational irony simply happens to be noticed as ironic. Verbal irony displays the technique of using *incongruity* to suggest a *distinction between facts and expectations* (saying one thing and meaning another) with the audience aware of both. Awareness of a discrepancy between expectation and reality reveals that irony is not a matter of language but of thought, a fundamental pattern in the workings of the human mind (Gibbs 1994: 365). In his '*Concept of Irony*' Kierkegaard regards it as all-pervasive and therefore representative of human nature: "As philosophers claim that no true philosophy is possible without doubt, by the same token, one may claim that no authentic human life is possible without irony". Famous examples of situational irony testify to the presence of an ironical mode of thought: thus, the man who invented the guillotine was beheaded by it: The man who built the Bastille was imprisoned in it; The bishop who invented the iron cage (a torture chamber so small that the victim could neither stand nor lie in it) was the first to be confined in it. All these uncanny happenings can be viewed as unexpected, anomalous twists of fate. If we intend to make this unexpectedness explicit, we may express our attitude by employing clear semantic markers and say: "*Ironically* or *The irony of fate* is that the man who invented the guillotine was beheaded by it".

6.3. One stage vs. two stage theories

Recent contemporary theories, both linguistic and psychological, have increasingly focused on the *processing* of irony. Some theorists (Grice 1975, Dews and Winner 1999) claim that irony presupposes a two-stage processing, which involves the processing of a meaning of an utterance, the rejection of this interpretation on pragmatic grounds and a subsequent reinterpretation of the text. A partially contrastive approach (Sperber and Wilson 1986) claims that the processing of irony is not distinct from that of the literal meaning of an utterance and that ironic meaning is arrived at directly, without the mediation of a rejected interpretation. Such theories are to be discussed in the pages to come and illustrated with instances of irony extracted from women's magazines.

6.3.1. The Gricean account

Grice's account differs from theories which dealt with instances of irony in terms of literary and rhetorical language in that it is based on an analysis of instances of irony in the context of everyday communication. In Grice's view, irony is a case of conversational implicature, generated by the ironist's flouting of the Quality Maxim (Grice 1975: 46). By flouting the Quality Maxim, the speaker implicates the opposite of what is said. The ironist says something he does not believe to be true while having no intention to tell a lie. Thus, the hearer is compelled to look for an additional meaning, which, in Grice's view, is "some obviously related proposition. The most obviously related proposition is the contradictory of the one he purports to be putting forward" (Grice 1975: 53).

Furthermore, Grice proposes a model of the processing of irony, which will be illustrated on the example below.

Context: A is building a house. B offers to help A. For two hours, B has done nothing but drinking beer and playing with the dog. At this point A says:

(1) 'You're a big help!'

According to Grice's theory, A utters something untrue, thus failing to observe the quality maxim. At the same time, the implied meaning of A's utterance is the opposite of what is said, namely that B is no help at all. As to the processing of

this ironical remark, the model proposed by Grice is as it follows.

- A says <B is a big help>;
- There is no reason to suppose that A is not observing all the maxims, or at least the Cooperative Principle;
-A could not be doing this unless he thought that<B is no help at all>;
-A knows that the audience can see the supposition <B is no help at all>;
-A has done nothing to stop the audience from thinking that <B is no help at all>;
-A has implicated that <B is no help at all>.

In '*Further Notes on Logic and Conversation*' (1978) Grice extends the definition of irony seen as a conversational implicature. Grice claims that irony is a way of pretending and, consequently, of adopting an attitude towards a state of affairs.

> To be ironical is among other things, to pretend (as the etymology suggests) and while one wants the pretence to be recognized as such, to announce it as pretence would spoil the effect (Grice 1978:125).

The claim that irony equally expresses an attitude on the part of the speaker significantly broadens the scope of irony. Thus, in the example above the ironist (A) expresses an attitude of indignation, while actually implying the opposite of what he says. At the same time, A pretends to be speaking in somebody else's voice, namely somebody who inclines to sound appreciative of the 'help' B is offering.

Grice formulated the 'two-stage' hypothesis of processing non-literal language: this involves a first literal and mandatory stage, and a second non-literal optional stage. In the Gricean view, the initial stage in irony comprehension involves identifying non-observance of the Quality Maxim, which signals the addressee that they should reject the literal meaning and subsequently derive the implied meaning. Since the initial interpretation is contextually incompatible (B does not actually help A), it is discarded and replaced by the appropriate meaning (B is no help at all).

I will illustrate Grice's theory with the following example taken from the September issue of '*Cosmopolitan*' (1998) where I came across an article entitled: *"What really men want for their birthday"*. Several men had been asked about the best and the worse birthday presents they had ever received. Most of them preferred computer and video games, CDs, tickets to football or basketball games or to

concerts. What most of them hated to be offered were clothes, be they from their girlfriends or from their mothers. They found such choice very irritating because they felt manipulated by some sort of female 'reforming zeal' (1998:92) which deprived them of freely expressing themselves through their attires. In this context, an utterance like

(2) 'See this shirt? She [the girlfriend] bought it for me last year. I'm just crazy about her tastes in clothes!'

sounds blatantly untrue. In order to infer what the man meant by uttering **(2),** the reader of the magazine envisages that the speaker tries to imply some other proposition than the one he expresses. As Grice claims, the proposition implied by the speaker must be obviously related to what s/he says and the most obviously related proposition is the contrary of what the speaker 'purports to be putting forward' (Grice 1975:53). The man who utters **(2)** implies that he is displeased both with the shirt and his girlfriend's buying clothes for him.

As already pointed out, according to Grice, the receiver must follow a model that helps him/her to distinguish between the two layers of meaning: *what is said vs. what is meant*. I will illustrate the Gricean model in relation to the example analysed above. In order to avoid the possible misunderstandings, I will refer to the speaking subject as A and to the reader as B.

- A says, "I'm just crazy about her tastes in clothes!";
- There is no reason to suppose that A is not observing the maxims or, at least, the Cooperative Principle;
- A could not be doing this unless he thought that <I'm <u>not</u> crazy about her tastes in clothes";
- A knows (and knows that the reader knows that A knows) that the reader can see that the supposition <I'm not crazy about her tastes in clothes!"> is required;
- A has done nothing to dissuade the audience about his not being crazy about her tastes in clothes;
- A intends the audience to think that he is not crazy about her tastes in clothes;
- Consequently, A implies that he is displeased with her tastes in clothes.

Grice introduces Plato's idea of pretense within his theory, widening the scope of irony by specifying that it expresses an attitude of the speaker. If **(2)** is to be assessed from this viewpoint, the reader's knowledge of the man's disagreement on receiving clothes for his birthday is not sufficient to ensure that the implied meaning is the opposite of what he said. Being an ironic speaker, one should express a certain

attitude of indignation, contempt or hostility while actually implying the opposite of the utterance. The speaker pretends to be someone else, namely one who enjoys getting clothes for his birthday from his girlfriend.

The main criticism brought to Grice (Sperber and Wilson 1986) was that, despite his focus on language in use, his view is still tributary to traditional rhetoric approaches. Although no longer called a trope, but viewed as a conversational implicature, irony is still dealt with in terms of the sheer contrast between what is said and what is meant. Moreover, Grice's theory is considered not to have sufficiently explained the hearer's processing of irony. As shown later in 6.3.4., Sperber and Wilson show that irony need not be restricted to implying the opposite of what is said. Despite the criticism it has received, scholars agree that, unlike traditional views, Grice's account of irony, allows not only specifying the conditions under which an utterance should be considered ironical, but also identifying the ironical intent. Consequently, Grice's theory of irony is worth considering a breakthrough in the history of views on irony.

6.3.2. Searle's account: the three-stage model

Like Grice, Searle is concerned with the way in which people grasp the extra meaning attached to one's literal and non-literal utterances. Assuming the distinction between literal and non-literal utterances, Searle asserts that "in non-literal utterances, speakers do not mean what they say, but instead mean something else" (Searle 1979 in Dews and Winner 1999: 1581). He puts forward a model of non-literal language processing which does not differentiate between types of non-literal language such as irony or metaphor and which is called by Dews and Winner "Three Stage Model" (Searle 1975), since it involves three successive stages:

1) Derive the literal meaning
2) Test this meaning against the context
3) If the literal meaning fails to make sense, seek an alternative non-literal meaning.

Let's take, for instance, the ironic criticism *"Good move!"* in the following example:

(3) Bill is carrying a batch of heavy files in his arms. Entering his office, he stumbles over the threshold and falls to the ground, scattering the files all over the place. Watching him from his desk, his colleague John says to him: *"Good move!"*

According to Searle's model, the hearer understands the ironic criticism in **(3),** by first analysing the positive literal meaning of the ironic utterance. Bill first takes John's utterance literally and thinks his colleague meant to say that he had made a good move. Then, Bill checks this meaning against the context. Realising that the literal meaning is not appropriate in the context, Bill seeks for an alternative meaning. Thus, the derivation of the conveyed meaning is optional. Searle (1979a) argues that addressees infer a non-literal meaning by assuming the *opposite* of the literal interpretation (Dews and Winner 1999: 1581).

Searle's model tries to explain the way in which hearers understand what is beyond a literal utterance in a more concise way and using more general terms than Grice does. Yet, both Grice and Searle rely on the same assumption which will be later questioned, namely that, analysing the initial, literal meaning of an utterance is a mandatory stage in reaching the implied, non-literal meaning. According to both Grice and Searle, the search for a non-literal meaning starts when the hearer realises that the speaker's utterance is context-inappropriate. In Grice's framework, a non-literal utterance blatantly flouts a maxim, while in Searle's, such an utterance fails to make sense against the context. Briefly put, with both theorists the intended meaning is necessarily the opposite of the literal one.

6.3.3. Sperber and Wilson's view on irony.

Sperber and Wilson's account of irony criticises the Gricean approach to irony (1975), in compliance with which an ironic utterance communicates the opposite of the literal meaning. Sperber and Wilson provide several counterexamples to Grice's claim, such as ironical understatements, ironical quotations and ironical interjections, proving that such utterances cannot be successfully analysed as instances in which the Quality Maxim fails to be observed and which solely communicates the opposite of what is said (Sperber and Wilson 1981: 262)

Ironical understatements are not analysed as communicating the opposite of what is said, but less than what is meant. For example, Mercutio's ironical comment on his death wound

(4) "No, 'tis not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church door; but 'tis enough, 'twill serve" (Romeo and Juliet, III)

does not communicate the opposite of what is said, namely that the wound is not deep enough or that it would not serve.

Ironical quotations, in Sperber and Wilson's view, are used for the purpose of expressing a speaker's attitude towards an utterance.

(5) "Oh, to be in England
Now that April's there"
(Robert Browning - "*Home thoughts from abroad*")

This quotation does not express the desire to leave England but rather asserts the idea that Browning's romantic view of England in spring does not correspond to reality. Sperber and Wilson maintain that for such utterances to be successfully understood as ironical, they must first be recognized as quotations.

Sperber and Wilson argue that ironical interjections have no obvious opposite meaning: they simply exploit the background knowledge of the speaker in relation to specific information. For example, the utterance

(6) 'Ah, Tuscany in May!'

said while visiting Tuscany on a rainy day has no opposite meaning. Moreover, Sperber and Wilson claim that since ironical interjections are not complete propositions, they cannot be analysed as instances in which the Quality Maxim is not observed.

Thus, on the purely descriptive level, Sperber and Wilson argue that the traditional definition of irony is flawed. On the other hand, even the examples which fit the traditional definition of irony are not adequately described by the claim that they communicate the opposite of what is said (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 262). Since according to the traditional definition an ironic utterance communicates a single determinate proposition which could have been conveyed by means of a purely literal utterance, the ironical utterance

(7) 'What a wonderful party!'
could be pragmatically equivalent to the literal counterpart

(7a) 'What an awful party!'.

Yet, the two utterances differ as to the speaker's motivation and the attitude conveyed. Moreover, the effects on the hearer by each of the utterances are likely to be very different. In the next section, I will expand upon Sperber and Wilson's definition of irony in terms of the use/mention distinction.

6.3.4.1. Irony as echoic mention.

The account of irony elaborated by Sperber and Wilson (1986) is based on a distinction between the *use* and the *mention* of words and sentences. In Sperber and Wilson's view, words and sentences are *used* when they describe a certain state of affairs, and *mentioned* when they are self-referential or self-designating. Thus, in direct quotations a sentence or other linguistic expression is mentioned. In the following example, Mary simply mentions what Susan said.

(8) Peter: What did Susan say?
Mary: I can't speak to you now.

Indirect quotations, could also be analyzed as cases of mention. If Mary's answer in the example above had been

(8a) 'She couldn't speak to me then',

meant as an indirect quotation, then this quotation would have mentioned the proposition Susan expressed. Thus, according to Sperber and Wilson, indirect quotations *mention* the proposition expressed by another person.

Starting from the distinction between use and mention, Sperber and Wilson argue that verbal irony is a variety of indirect quotations, which, as shown, involve the mention of a proposition. Moreover, they claim that indirect quotations may be used for different purposes, namely *reporting* or *echoing*. While a *report* of speech or thought gives information about the content of the original, an echoing utterance additionally expresses the speaker's attitude or reaction to what was said or thought (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 265). Thus, Mary's utterance **(8a)** 'She couldn't speak to me then' may be meant to inform Peter what Susan said, or Mary may want to tell Peter not only what Susan said, but what she thought or felt about it or how she reacted to Susan's utterance. These two different motivations are illustrated by:

(9) Context 1: On Saturday morning the father asks both Bill who has nothing to do and John, who is studying for a difficult test, to paint the fence. Father also warns Bill that John might refuse to interrupt his work. Bill goes to his brother room to tell him about the task they have been given, but finds him focused

on studying. Bill goes out to paint the house by himself, after John tells him that he really has to study hard. Later on, Father says to Bill:

Father: 'I saw you did the job by yourself after all.'

Bill: 'John couldn't help me. He was too busy.'

In this case Bill only wants to report to his father a state of affairs, explaining John's inability to help him.

(9a) Context 2: Suppose John was playing with the boys in the street when Bill came to him and asked to help him paint the fence. John replied: 'I can't. I'm too busy'. Having noticed that Bill did all the work while John was playing, father says:

(10) Father: 'John wouldn't help, would he?'
Bill (contemptuously): 'He couldn't. He was too busy.'

This time Bill also reacts to John's echoed explanation, expressing an attitude of disapproval. He dissociates himself from the utterance he echoes, indicating indirectly that John was unwilling to help him. Thus, in **(10),** Bill echoes his brother's utterance, clearly disapproving of the message it conveys and expressing contempt towards it.

Sperber and Wilson argue that echoic utterances may be used to express a considerable array of attitudes, mainly revolving around dissociation of the speaker from the echoed utterance: "The speaker echoes a thought she attributes to someone else, while dissociating herself from it with anything from mild ridicule to savage scorn" (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 265).

The two researchers give a highly illustrative example: Peter has given Bill some money and is reassuring Mary that Bill will return it in due time. Peter says :

(11)'Bill is an officer and a gentleman'.

Bill fails to return it as promised and Mary comments:

(12) 'An officer and a gentleman, indeed',

thus expressing not only her belief that the expressed opinion is false but that, under the given circumstances, it sounds *patently absurd.*

Along this line of argument, Sperber and Wilson emphasise that the reasons underlying the speaker's dissociation from the opinion echoed are the following:

a) the speaker may believe the opinion to be false and thus s/he implicates the opposite of what s/he says. From this point of view, the interpretation

of the ironic utterance satisfies the traditional definition of irony;

b) the speaker may not believe the echoed opinion is false, but intends to share the attitude that "to hold it or express it would be patently absurd" (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 267).

Consequently, Sperber and Wilson's echoic account of irony applies both to examples which fit the traditional definition of irony, and to those that do not. Ironical utterances should not be treated any differently than echoic utterances, which do not normally depart from a norm. The ease with which echoic utterances are understood does not suggest flouting of a Quality Maxim.

6.3.4.2. Irony as echoic interpretation

Being confronted with examples in which irony involves an element of parody and caricature, Sperber and Wilson find the analysis in terms of mention unsatisfactory, since mention involves an identical reproduction of an original (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 269) Consequently, they replace the notion of *mention* with the notion of *interpretive resemblance*, defined as a case of resemblance to the propositional content. To say that an utterance interpretively resembles another means, that the two utterances share some logical and contextual implications. Thus, Sperber and Wilson reanalyse echoic utterances as "*echoic interpretations* of an attributed thought or utterance" and verbal irony as "a variety of echoic interpretations, literal or non-literal, of an attributed thought or utterance." (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 269). As to the recognition of irony, Sperber and Wilson claim that a hearer is able to identify ironical utterances through inference. Recognition of irony depends on the shared cognitive environment of the communicator and the addressed audience.

Attardo shows that, according to Sperber and Wilson (1986: 240) the implicatures of an ironical utterance are to be deciphered if the following stages are followed:

1. recognition of the utterance as echoic,
2. identification of the source of the opinion echoed,
3. recognition that the speaker's attitude to the opinion echoed (most frequently rejection or disapproval.

Unlike the pragmatic models of Grice and Searle, Sperber and Wilson equally provide a new approach to the *processing* of irony : whenever we try to grasp people's intention out of what they utter we go through a "fallible process of

hypothesis formation and evaluation" (1986: 271). This process takes place not only in the case of irony, but also with the interpretation of any kind of "human information processing" (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 271).

According to Sperber and Wilson, when we interpret our interlocutors' speech acts, we need some mental effort of attention, memory and reasoning. At the end of this effort-consuming process our initial beliefs come to be altered by the outcome of our interpretation. We either embrace new beliefs, cancel some already existing ones, or merely strengthen them. These alterations are called *contextual effects* and they determine the *relevance* a certain utterance has for a hearer. *Maximal relevance* implies *maximal contextual effect* for *minimal processing effort*. When engaging in communication, humans tend to get as much information as possible with as less effort as possible. Thus, relevance is the essential condition of existence of an utterance, since "Any utterance addressed to someone automatically conveys a presumption of its own relevance. This fact, we call the principle of relevance" (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 272)

For an utterance to be understood, it must have one and only interpretation consistent with the principle of relevance, that is an interpretation which is satisfactory both in terms of contextual effects and in terms of effort. An optimally relevant interpretation achieves adequate contextual effects, i.e. has contextual implications, strengthens or eliminates an existing assumption against the minimal effort possible. Thus, the principle of relevance explains how linguistic form and background knowledge interact in order to smoothen verbal comprehension. **(10)** can be illustrative of this claim. Father will interpret Bill's remark as ironic, because he will find the other possible interpretations of the utterance inconsistent with the principle of relevance. One such interpretation would be that Bill *uses* a sentence in order to describe a certain state of affairs he noticed. Yet, father knows John to be a lazy boy and actually saw him playing in the street instead of helping his brother. Thus, the hypothesis that Bill really believes John was not able to help him does not satisfy any of the contextual effects mentioned earlier, but merely contradicts acknowledged facts. In the circumstances, Bill could not have rationally expected his utterance to achieve adequate contextual effects on this interpretation. Consequently, the interpretation of Bill's utterance as a case of use must be rejected as inconsistent with the principle of relevance.

If Bill's utterance is considered a case of mention, two possibilities emerge: Bill *mentions* a proposition either *to report* what John said or *to echo* his brother's utterance in order to express an attitude to it. The hypothesis that Bill's utterance is intended as a report of speech is inconsistent with the principle of relevance since it

will involve the same contradiction of known facts, this time brought about by John's utterance as reported by Bill. The only possibility left is that Bill's utterance is intended as echoic, more precisely that he is echoing John's utterance in order to express *an attitude* towards it. Bill wants to dissociate himself from the echoed utterance and this interpretation achieves the intended contextual effects against minimum effort. It reminds father of John's lazy nature and reluctance to carry out household tasks. Concomitantly, the utterance draws father's attention to Bill's irritation with this situation and warns father it is high time he took some action to amend John's behaviour. Since no other utterance would have achieved these effects more economically, this interpretation would also be satisfactory with respect to the effort undertaken by the hearer and would therefore be consistent with the principle of relevance.

Sperber and Wilson point out that "the first interpretation tested and found consistent with the principle of relevance is the only interpretation consistent with the principle of relevance, and is the one the hearer should choose" (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 274). In the light of such an assertion, ironical utterances will be interpreted as such if they are the first to be consistent with the principle of relevance and acknowledged as consistent by the hearer. Moreover, Sperber and Wilson discuss the attitudes intended to be conveyed by and the effects the ironical utterance bears upon the hearer: "On the other hand our analysis of irony… crucially involves *the evocation* of an attitude – that of the speaker to the proposition mentioned." (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 274).

Irony does not necessarily imply a negative critical attitude towards its object. Thus, 'asteism' is indicative of 'genteel irony' (Fontanier in Attardo 2000), defined as praising or flattering someone under pretense of blaming or criticizing. Holdcroft (1983: 496 in Attardo 2000) claims that irony can occasionally be 'playful and affectionate'. A well-known example are repartees such as

(13) 'I love you, you idiot' kind, recurrent in dramedies (such as Rory's reply to Dean in '*The Gilmore Girls*')

To conclude with, Sperber and Wilson argue that discuss speakers do no keep detached from the propositions they mention and they invoke attitudes in order to contribute to the dynamics of the exchange. Any utterance presupposes the speaker's *informative intention* to modify the hearer's *cognitive environment*, that is to make a certain set of assumptions *manifest* or more manifest to him/her. The hearer, in his/her turn, guided by the criterion of consistency with the principle of relevance, has to decide which set of assumptions the speaker wanted to make

manifest to him. Along the same line of thought, in their 'echoic reminder theory', Kreuz and Glucksberg (1989) argue that not all ironies are echoic mentions (1989: 375) and that an ironical utterance need only allude 'to an antecedent event' (1989: 375) which may merely include expectations and implicit norms.

In the lines to come, a few extracts from women's magazines will be analysed in terms of Sperber and Wilson's relevance-based approach to irony, insisting on the expression of the speaker's attitude towards the echoed opinion. I will start the following example:

(14) 'Teach us. Teach us, men, to get in touch with our inner shopping child.' (*Cosmopolitan*, September 1998: 88)

The utterance is part of the concluding paragraph of an article entitled "*Why you'll never get him to enjoy shopping*", which deals with female shopoholic tendencies as opposed to male shopping phobia. Moreover, the speaking subject confesses about his own frustrating shopping-related experience in the company of his girlfriend, describing conflicting scripts each of them activates. As he sees it, shopping seems to be a 'seraphic happiness' (1998: 88) for women while for men it is a way of draining energy out of them. In this context, **(14**) acquires ironic dimensions because it echoes an over mediated slogan: 'Get in touch with your inner child' meant to urge the reader into expressing childhood emotions instead of bottling them up. On the background provided by **(14)**, the slogan would mean that there is a 'shopoholic' inside every woman, but not inside every man. Therefore, the man echoes this slogan in order to ridicule women's unquenchable crave for shopping.

Likewise, the following, extract from the same article *'Why you'll never get him to enjoy shopping'* deals with the same divergences between men's and women's shopping habits. The man uttering **(15)** goes shopping with his girlfriend who uses him as a porter. Exhausted and bored out of his wits with carrying shopping bags for his girlfriend and he says that all he can think of is 'home…sofa…tea' (*Cosmopolitan*, September, 1998:89). In this context, the man wonders:

(15) 'Could it have something to do with the bags I am accumulating?' (*Cosmopolitan*, September 1998: 89).

The utterance is ironic because the man feigns uncertainty about the source of his exhaustion and boredom when he is certain that the cause of annoyance <u>is</u> his carrying bags during his girlfriend's shopping sprees. The conflicting attitudes of the

partners towards shopping are the key to the maximal contextual effects likely to be produced by the man's utterance. The contextual implications are indicative of total discomfort on the part of the man, assumed to be springing from his revulsion towards shopping. Maximal contextual effects are obtained since the speaking subject's strengthens the assumption that men hate going shopping or, at least, they do not enjoy it as much as women do.

A woman keeps dragging her husband through an endless chain of shops, in search of a 'decent' pair of trousers. Exhausted, he says:

(16) 'I don't know why only one in every hundred pairs of black trousers will do?' (*Cosmopolitan*, September 1998: 89).

When saying this, he implies that women tend to find all items of clothing unsatisfactory. His remark refers not only to trousers, but to all clothing in general. When uttering **(16),** he exaggerates women's dissatisfaction with clothes only to show how absurd their behavior can become when clothes are involved. **(16)** may count as an ironical interrogation because the man feigns ignorance about women's constant dissatisfaction with clothing items and incessant hesitation in picking up one. He hyperbolically implies that nothing caters for women's taste. He scoffs at women's time-consuming search of the 'right' clothing item. **(16)** becomes a case of overstatement that carries ironic meaning.

Evocation of attitudes is particularly visible in the case of ironical quotations, which, as already mentioned, are a means of echoing someone's thoughts or words with the purpose of making overt the speaker's attitude towards the echoed utterance or thought. Such invoked attitudes may range from mild criticism to ruthless sarcasm.

(17) 'There is no such thing as the perfect man'… and 6 other motherisms you should ignore. (*Cosmopolitan*, July 1999:34).

The echoing of a thoughtful mother's opinion on men and implicitly on marriage combined with the coinage 'motherism' turns the sentence into an ironic remark targeted at the mother. Although, **(17)** is made up of two different utterances, produced by two different persons, the direct echoing of the mother's words outline an ironic reading of **(17)** at the mother's expense. Again, the speaker does not imply the opposite of what s/he says, but only tries to deconstruct the model of the overconcerned and overprotective mum.

Mention must be made that, in the view set forth by Sperber and Wilson,

recognition of irony is not an infallible process: "The communicator's intentions cannot be decoded or deduced, but must be inferred by a fallible process of hypothesis formation and evaluation" (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 270). For instance, in 1964 John Lennon declared:

(18) 'The Beatles are more popular than Jesus Christ'.

His comment was not intended as a boastful blasphemic statement but rather as a comment to be paraphrased as "Isn't this attention we're getting somewhat ridiculous? We are not in the same class as Jesus at all, but media people act as if we were" (this is Lakoff's interpretation 1990). Obviously, appropriate recognition and decoding of irony heavily relies on specific shared knowledge between interlocutors. If a Speaker says

(19) 'John's a real Einstein'

(intending to mean "John's stupid) both Speaker and Hearer should share a low opinion of John's intelligence and some knowledge as to expressing mild derogation towards John's low IQ by incongruently assessing him as tantamount to a genius, namely Einstein.

Sperber and Wilson's theory is the first to provide a plausible explanation as to the successful interpretation of ironic utterances, which presupposes a selection of the interpretation which is consistent with the context together with the speaker's dissociation from the opinion echoed.

6.3.5. Berntsen and Kennedy's theory

Bernsten and Kennedy (1996) endorse Kierkegaard's existentialist view on contradiction when they sustain that successful irony involves an opposition or contradiction between a literal statement and what the receiver takes to be the sender's belief. Life-related attitudes and beliefs should not be conveyed in a straightforward way, Kierkegaard contends, "they should be conveyed in such a way that the receiver of the message would be able to experience matters personally rather than simply grasping ideas in an abstract emotionally-distant way" (Kierkegaard in Berntsen and Kennedy 1996:14). Contradictions, among which paradoxes are the most striking, should not be resolved in order to become meaningful, Kierkegaard argues, because resolving them would deprive them of

their vital meaning. A contradiction is to be evaluated rather than resolved. In a certain context, a contradiction can correspond to and can specify an attitude for the receiver, which is defined as "a kind of evaluation, dealing with feeling and affect, interests and ideas. An attitude is preconceptual because it is a stance taken towards an idea, rather than an idea per se". (Kierkegaard in Berntsen and Kennedy 1996: 16)

Berntsen and Kennedy's theory inclines to contest Grice's and Searle's views, as it claims that the contradiction implied at the surface level of an ironic utterance does not need to be removed for the irony to be properly understood. Moreover, Berntsen and Kennedy do not attempt to explain the way hearers process irony, but rather focus on the attitude conveyed. This attitude emerges from the contradiction existing between a literal statement and what the receiver takes to be the sender's belief and may be one of detachment, derogation, reservation, superiority or indignation:

> To produce a statement about a subject matter which opposes apparently indisputable knowledge or beliefs can be a way of displaying the subject matter is taken by the speaker to be amusing or ridiculous or absurd or beneath contempt, depending on the context. That is, the contrast between the literal statement and the shared background knowledge can be a way of specifying an attitude (Berntsen and Kennedy 1996: 21).

A hearer recognizes an utterance as ironical if he\she is aware that the speaker contradicts common knowledge or beliefs in order to express an attitude towards them, that is to specify that s/he regards them as amusing, ridiculous, absurd or beneath contempt. The following text:

(20) 'I spend money I don't see,
On things I don't need
To impress people I don't know.'

was written on the back of the car of an American citizen, assuming that it is commonly believed that success is necessarily measured according to one's purchasing power as acknowledged by their peers. Such an idea of self-accomplishment, inherent in a consumer-based society is held in contempt and regarded as absurd. The speaker's self ironical remark expresses detachment from the widespread credo that spending a lot of money actually defines who somebody is. A hearer cannot truly believe that the speaker deliberately does the absurd things

he mentions, i.e. he buys unnecessary commodities in order to make an impression on unknown people. What the reader is presented with is the sender's interpretation of the commonly entertained belief on success, dissociating himself from it by espousing a self-mocking attitude.

The close relation between contradiction and the attitude intended to be conveyed is made salient in analysing the excerpt below in the light of Bertsen and Kennedy's view:

(21) "He [Truman Capote] was more famous for being famous than for anything he ever wrote although 'Breakfast at Tiffany's' and 'In Cold Blood' were classics."

(*Cosmopolitan*, February 1998: 12)

The excerpt is one of the comments that accompanies the issue of Truman Capote's biography, advertised in the 'Calendar' page of the '*Cosmopolitan*'. The incongruity between being famous and not having written but few memorable works, alongside with the explanation that fame alone is fame-boosting are meant to specify the writer's depreciative attitudes towards Capote's survival through the fame those novels bought him.

The excerpt below reinforces the claim that irony is underlain by some perceived incongruity, which enhances the force of irony and make its effects easier to grasp.

(22) "Laura Bailey – model and former squeeze of Richard Gere – managed the admirable feat of turning 21 in 1995, 24 in 1996 and 22 in 1994 and 1995."

(*Cosmopolitan*, July 1998: 73)

What the reporter hints at in **(22)** is the stars' obsession with their age and the tricks they play in order to hide it. It is also commonly assumed that a public persona should live up to the audience's expectations which involves, among other assets, glamorous lifestyle and unblemished beauty. It is equally believed that fame and fortune are much easier to acquire while you are still young, especially in Western cultures, which glorify rejuvenation. Under these demanding circumstances, stars try to save face. Laura Bailey seems to be charged not so much with lying about her age, but with proving careless about elaborating her lying strategy. While revealing Laura's 'being caught red-handed', the ironical load of the utterance emphasizes that Laura's blunders surpass the limit of common sense and

of chronological inadequacy ('21 in 1995, 24 in 1996, 22 in 1994 and 1995') because this is blown out of proportions. Laura's declarations as to her age are ironically repeated so that such blatant incongruities sound potentially offensive. The obvious clash between the common sense ways of accepting one's aging and the inadequate strategies of Laura's coping with her own: the irony rests on the incongruity of events as the victim herself presents them.

6.3.6. Clark and Gerrig's *'Pretense Theory'*.

An alternative view of irony suggests that verbal irony involves pretense rather than echoic interpretation. Inspired by Grice as two the 'two-stage' processing of irony and by Socrates's adopting the pose of the ignorant, Clark and Gerrig's '*Pretense Theory*' (1984) claims that a person who uses an ironic utterance assumes a role and consequently borrows an ironic voice. The main tenet of Pretense Theory is that when a speaker is being ironical he *pretends to be someone else*, addressing somebody other than the actual hearer

> A speaker pretends to be an injudicious person, speaking to an uninitiated audience; the speaker intends the addressee of the irony to discover the pretense and thereby see his or her attitude toward the speaker, the audience and the utterance (Clark and Gerrig 1984: 12).

In Clark and Gerrig's view, a person who uses irony does not only echo an interpretation they dissociate from, but can also *enact* the person to whom the respective thought or attitude is attributed. Unlike traditional theories of irony, which focus mainly on the utterances employed by the speaker, Clark and Gerrig also take into consideration the identity of the speaker. They distinguish between two layers of meaning that should be processed in order to understand irony: *the layer of reality*, where the participants in conversation share some common knowledge, beliefs and suppositions, and *the layer of pretense*, where the participants assume different roles, pretending to be someone else. Recognition of irony depends on the recognition of a discrepancy between the two layers and of what the speaker is and what he/she pretends to be.

> A listener's understanding of an ironic utterance depends crucially on the common ground he or she believes is shared by the ironist and the audience, their mutual beliefs, mutual knowledge and mutual suppositions (Clark and

Gerrig 1984:124).

If the hearer succeeds in recognizing irony, they can in their turn adhere to pretense and consequently assume a different role, thus engaging in what Clark and Gerrig (1984) call '*joint pretense*'. On the other hand, the hearer may choose to preserve their real identity and give a non-ironic answer or they may not acknowledge the speaker's fake identity and thus fall a victim to the ironist.

In order to illustrate their claims, Clark and Gerrig imagine a situation in which a man brings his wife a bunch of withered flowers on their anniversary. She assumes the role of the happy wife, although she is disappointed, and says:

(23) 'What lovely flowers you've brought me!'

The man is likely to recognize the derogatory attitude, provided that he is aware of the state of the flowers and consequently sounding thoughtless and callous. Thus, he will realize that his wife is pretending to be a happy wife and he may choose to join the pretense, by assuming the role of the careful husband. He may also choose to be ironic in his turn and say

(23a) 'And they smile lovely, too!'
On the other hand, the man may choose not to pretend, acknowledging his wife's derogatory attitude. Thus, he may say:

(23b) 'Sorry, dear. They were the best I could find at this hour.'

In this case, although the man recognizes the irony, he refuses to join the pretense and chooses to reply by an apology.
Finally, the man may believe the flowers to be in a good condition and expect his wife to be pleased. Thus, his answer may be

(23c) 'I'm glad you like them!'

In this case, he fails to recognize the irony and considers his wife's utterance an expression of gratitude.
The text below, an extract from the British magazine '*Zest*', can be analyzed in the light of Clark and Gerrig's theory:

(24) 'We love Americans. They've given us blue jeans, hot dogs, George Clooney- and now <drug earrings>' (*Zest*, August 1998: 14).

The reporter assumes the voice of a person glorifying the American myth: the land of all possibilities, the country that invents ground-breaking facilities such as blue jeans, hot dogs, good looking actors, and last but not least the incredible concoction called 'drug earrings'. The article is accompanied by a picture of a pair of earrings made of two green pills. The reporter's intention is to outline the shallowness of American cultural emblematic values [hot dogs, blue jeans] and to focus on the meaninglessness of an invention such as drug earrings. The reporter takes an ironical distance and displays an attitude of mockery towards the Americans and their latter-day concoctions. He draws up a list of prototypical American inventions only to shatter the model of the perfect American world. Things such as blue jeans, movie stars, hot dogs are most often than not associated to American lifestyle and make the layer of reality. Pretending to 'love Americans', the reporter assumes a fictional identity only to emphasize the discrepancy between what he implies about them and what he actually thinks of them: they have given us a whole list of useless things, among which the 'dernier cri' earrings. This is a case highly illustrative of irony as arising out of this discrepancy between reality and the manner in which the ironist presents it.

As to the processing of irony, although Clark and Gerrig's theory maintains that irony is a two-layered act of communication in which the literal meaning is activated and retained by both the speaker and the hearer (who rejects it as the intended meaning though they pretend otherwise), it is not clear whether this double-layered approach assumes a sequential or a parallel process.

6.3.7. Dews and Winner's account of irony. The '*Tinge Hypothesis*'.

Dews and Winner's account of irony is based on the assumption that a general theory of language should account for the reason why people say things they do not mean and for the way hearers distinguish what is meant from what is said (Dews and Winner 1999: 1579). Emphasis is laid on the processing of irony, defined as a form of non-literal language in which the speaker conveys an attitude toward a person, situation or object, typically opposite in tone to that of the literal meaning (Dews and Winner 1999: 1579).

Dews and Winner distinguish between two instances of irony: *ironic criticism*,

considered the most commonly used form of irony, in which the speaker says something positive to convey a negative attitude, e.g.

(25) 'Well done!

said to someone who has just broken a cup) and *ironic praise*, less commonly used, in which the speaker says something negative to convey a positive attitude:

(26) 'You have a hard life!'
to a friend going to Hawaii for an all-expense-paid vacation).

For the purpose of offering a plausible account as to why irony is used and how it is processed, the two linguists propose the '*Tinge Hypothesis*' (Dews and Winner 1995), which states that irony diminishes the conveyed meaning when compared with the meaning of literal language. Thus, in the two instances of irony identified by Dews and Winner, the ironical meaning expresses less than the literal meaning. In their view, this diminishing or 'muting' effect is highly related to the way irony is processed. For this claim, they take into account the tone of the literal meaning, which colors ('tinges') the hearer's perception of the intended meaning.

> Irony mutes the evaluative meaning conveyed in comparison to literal language. In the case of ironic criticism, the positive meaning "tinges" the negative intended meaning, resulting in a less critical evaluation. Conversely, in the case of ironic praise, the literal negative meaning "tinges" the positive intended meaning, resulting in a more critical evaluation (Dews and Winner 1999:1580)

For instance, in the ironic criticism **(25)** 'Well done!', said to a clumsy person who has just broken a cup, the positive literal interpretation mutes the negative conveyed meaning, which is less critical than a straightforward criticism like

(25a) 'How clumsy you are!'.

The 'Tinge Hypothesis' assumes that at least some aspects of the literal meaning need processing to determine the conveyed meaning of an ironic utterance. Thus, Dews and Winner argue that processing the literal meaning is obligatory in order to identify the conveyed meaning, since the literal meaning is one source of information which helps the hearer construct the speaker's meaning. This presupposes the following distinction between literal and non-literal (ironic) utterances: "The relation between what is said and what is meant is one of consonance in literal language and dissonance in non-literal language." (Dews and

Winner 1999: 1581)

Starting from these assumptions, Dews and Winner propose a multiple meaning model of verbal irony processing, "in which comprehension may occur after the recognition of an incongruity or simultaneously" (Dews and Winner 1997:405) According to this model, hearers process both the literal and the non-literal meaning of an utterance in order to construct its intended meaning. Thus, Dews and Winner argue that the literal meaning of an ironic utterance is activated initially, either before or alongside the ironic meaning, and is retained in order to dilute either the criticism or the praise. The excerpt below is illustrative of Dews and Winner's 'tinge'-related approach to ironic criticism.

(27) 'She might look like an angel, but she snores like a buffalo.' (*Cosmopolitan*, September 1998:121)

The utterance belongs to the 'Confessions' column of '*Cosmopolitan*' and it is meant to express ironic criticism on the part of a woman who shares a room with a snoring person (Annabel). It is common knowledge that snoring hardly becomes men, and is socially sanctioned as repellant with women. In order to improve Annabel's image as a woman, the roommate compares her with an angel. The result is hilarious because what it is conveyed is incongruous: Annabel is a snoring angel. There is discrepancy between the way that 'angel' and 'buffalo' are derisively combined to characterize Annabel: 'angel' as exaggerate praise and 'buffalo' as exaggerate criticism. Irony results from the clash between the images invoked by the speaker in order to tinge the effect of the utterance (literal criticism).

The column entitled 'Hollywood Gossip' comprises the following piece of news that informed the reader on Leonardo Di Caprio's latest Hollywood payment for his film:

(28) "After cashing almost £12,000,000 for his latest film 'The Beach', Leo will have a hard time spending it on…everything he can think of." (*OK*, October 1999:14)

It is common knowledge that movie stars are always supposed to have lots of money and make their wildest dreams come true. The reporter expresses his opinion on Leo's choice of spending his money in a feigned concern for such a 'problem'. The negative tinge of 'will have a hard time' opposes the positive implication of 'spending his money on…everything he can think of'. Irony arises in the gap between the praise for Leo's success with his latest film and the feigned worries for

Leo's spending his money. The actors situation is evaluated by the reporter via ironic praise.

6.3.8. Giora's '*Graded Salience*' Hypothesis

Giora's account of irony (1995) rejects the Gricean interpretation of irony, which postulates priority of the literal meaning in processing irony. She proposes a theory of irony which is based on the assumption that irony involves *the presence of both the literal and the implied meanings*, the relation between the two being that of indirect negation. In order to support this assumption, Giora lists a number of differences between direct and indirect negation. Primarily, direct negation is subject to a number of scalar implicatures, which irony avoids by being indirect (Giora, 1995: 242). Moreover, she argues that while direct negation implies the opposite of what one negates, indirect negation accommodates "more mitigated interpretations" (Giora 1995: 244).

Giora's '*Graded Salience*' Hypothesis maintains that contextual information comes into play after the stage in which the most salient meanings have been processed, its function being that of suppressing or retaining *incompatible meanings or of selecting contextually appropriate meanings*. In Giora's view, while interpreting utterances whose multiple interpretations are similarly salient, such meanings are activated in parallel, irrespective of contextual information. For example, in interpreting conventional ironies such as

(29) 'Tell me about it!',

given that both the ironic and the literal meaning are listed in the lexicon, these meanings are activated in both literal and irony-inducing contexts. However, the interpretation of less familiar ironies, such as

(30) 'What a lovely day for a picnic!'

whose literal, but not ironic meaning is listed in the lexicon, involves a sequential process: such ironies are interpreted first literally and then ironically.

In the following example, context is shown to play a decisive role in assigning ironical intention to an utterance, **(30)** 'It was a Kodak Moment!', which is otherwise employed to convey admiration or nostalgia. Under the title *"Whitney Huston-husband Bobby released from jail"* the tribulations that accompanied Bobby's release from prison are recounted: crowd of fans, Bobby's actors friends carrying "Free Bobby" placards and Whitney, the wife, waiting in a limo outside the jailhouse. The

reporter also noted the presence of grim wardens at the jail gate. Against this background, the remark of one of the warden's sounds ironic in the context of Bobby's exaggeratedly warm welcome on his release:

(31) 'It was a Kodak moment!' (*Hello!*, July 2000:43)

Bobby's release is indeed a very happy moment both for him and for those who care about him and can become a 'Kodak moment'. However, irony in (18) should be understood in the context of the warden's annoyance with the tribulation outside the detention center. Authority of the ironic speaker (the warden) over the convict and his friends may be basically established by his legal position. The merry-making of Bobby's supporters contrasted with the stiffness implied by any place of imprisonment make the warden echo the Kodak slogan as indicative of his disapproval of Bobby's warm welcome which sounds 'much-ado-about-nothing'. Irony is targeted at the people's tendency to turn any event in the life of a star into a national holiday.

6.3.9. Attardo on the relevant inappropriateness of irony

Attardo formulates a model that constitutes a hybrid between the Gricean model of mismatch between what is said and what is implied and Sperber and Wilson's notion of relevance. He thus defines irony in terms of purposeful and relevant inappropriateness. As a first step, Attardo adjusts Grice's CP into what the calls the '*principle of least disruption*'. Taking into account that the ironic meaning is arrived at inferentially, and that irony is an entirely pragmatic phenomenon, the interpretation of the ironical meaning depends crucially on the activation of the CP, which resumes its functioning once it has been acknowledged as having been violated. Attardo's '*principle of least disruption*' is intended as a more comprehensive communicative principle, that tolerates violations as long as they are kept to a minimum in terms of cognitive efforts. Starting from Grice's claim that "irony is intimately connected with the expression of a feeling, attitude, or evaluation" (1989: 53), Attardo maintains that the expression of a speaker attitude towards the ironical referent may be adequate to the context , since the ironical utterance would be interpreted as cooperatively related to some contextual element.
Attardo provides a very persuasive example:

(32) 'I love children so'.

and comments on its ironic use as follows: If one says 'I love children so' while disliking them, one is technically lying. Yet, para-linguistic signals (tone of voice, mimicry), may indicate willing and blatant non-observance of the maxim of quality, while signalling such non-observance to the hearer(s). Then one is not 'really' lying, but rather being ironical. by implying something that sounds conspicuously inappropriate, yet sufficiently relevant to communicate an attitude (distanciation, jocularity, detachment).

Attardo's model can be summarised as follows:

"an utterance u is ironical if

1. u is contextually inappropriate,
2. u is (at the same time) relevant,
3. u is construed as having been uttered intentionally and with awareness of the contextual inappropriateness by S, and
4. S intends that (part of) his/her audience recognize points 1-3,
5. unless H construes u as being unintentional irony, in which case 3-4 do not apply.

Usually, irony is used to express an evaluative judgment about a given event/situation

which is commonly, but not exclusively, negative." (Attardo 2000: 824)

Such a model subsumes all the key concepts evinced by previous theories: intentionality, incongruity, pretense and, last but not least, attitude and judgement display, all of which unveil insincerity in the form of ironical performance. Attardo concurs with Brown (1980: 114) who discusses insincere ironical examples of congratulations, thanking, requesting, and apologizing and defines irony as "the performance of a speech act with an attendant flaunting of the absence of the required sincerity conditions". Attardo's position equally endorses that of Haverkate (1990), in whose view "irony is the intentional expression of insincerity" (1990: 104). It also reinforces Glucksberg's (1995: 52) concept of '*pragmatic insincerity*' by means of which "the speaker has violated at least one of the felicity conditions of well formed speech acts, usually the sincerity condition". Alongside with Glucksberg, Attardo underlines that the other necessary condition is the allusion to "some prior expectation, norm, or convention that has been violated in one way or another" (1995: 53). A colourful illustration Attardo provides is Jerry Seinfeld's famous

(33) 'Hello Newman'

ironical/sarcastic greeting, "said with a sneer which clearly belies the greeting". Equally convincing is his example of the anti-immigrant utterance made by an

Italian immigrant like himself:

(34) 'We should throw all these immigrants, legal or illegal, out of the US'.

The hearer's awareness that Attardo is a legal alien residing in the US coupled with the logical assumption that Attardo is unlikely to advocate something self-threatening, will lead H to believe that Attardo is echoing some unnamed American xenophobe, whose utterance sounds both inappropriate and relevant in a given context.

6.4. The need for irony in social interaction

Unlike most other discursive strategies, irony *explicitly* sets up a relation between ironist and audiences. Irony contributes to facilitating social interactions along two major directions:
1. It enables demystifying daily routines
2. Social relations can be preserved by jocularity as well as by sarcasm

Jocular statements in the form of playful remarks used to chide others in a jesting manner contribute to reinforcing ingroup solidarity. An ironic utterance such as

(35) 'If she stand you up I can always lend you my inflatable doll'
only strengthens male bonding if uttered between buddies. Bitter and caustic utterances vested as sarcastic remarks can evoke ingroup amusement and affiliation. Uttering something like

(36) 'That's beyond the comprehension of us pinheads'

reinforces\ in group jocularity among students who do not aim to be overachievers or straight A students, while targetting outgroup sarcasm at nerds or overambitious peers. Addressing a friend who has made a complete pig of himself at the latest party:
(37) 'Delighted to see you again, Mr. Exquisite Manners!'

only enhances familiarity and straightforwardness which are permissible among ingroup members.

In the following excerpt from the '*Sugar*' magazine, irony is not employed in its critical dimension, but rather in a jocular way, indicating the playful position that the writer adopts towards the possessor of the glasses.

(38) 'Matt's got specs appeal!' (*Sugar*, November 1999: 15)

This is a caption attached to a picture of a British actor who is wearing an unusual pair of glasses with thick frames and flowers painted on them. Irony targeted against the actor's fashion tastes moulds on the pattern of echoing utterances as they were envisaged by Sperber and Wilson's theory. **(38)** echoes the famous 'S/He has sex appeal', indicative of a person's charming appearance. However, the echoing of such a notorious phrase is done with the purpose of disclosing the opposite of what "sex appeal" might usually mean: Matt has no sex appeal because he wears a hideous pair of sunglasses. Taking into account the jocular attitude of the writer, little damage to the actor's face is done, because such a laidback approach diminishes any potentially offensive effect of the utterance. The writer does not engage in an ironic discourse in order to deceive either target or readers, but to signal the target's questionable taste in sunglasses.

Self-irony is also said to preserve social relations by exploiting their jocular dimension and reinforcing in-group solidarity. Understanding the bantering intentions of irony creates easiness both for the ironist and for the audience in taking irony as a less offensive form of criticism. Since the community shares the same set of values, the notion of victim becomes irrelevant because irony would hardly be employed in a discourse that might create discontent among the members of the same group. It may temporarily exclude the potential targets from conversation but it is unlikely to exclude them from the community.

The text below is a caption of a snapshot of Naomi Campbell holding a bottle of water in one hand with an expression of bliss on her face (she is laughing). The caption mentioned Naomi's possible recover, both physical and psychological, after her break up with gorgeous Joaquín Cortés.

(39) 'I drink myself happy … and I don't mean reach for the gin.'
(*OK!*, September 1999: 237)

It used to be common knowledge that the supermodel had been through a rough time after the break up and tried to ease her pain in drugs and alcohol to such an extent that she had to join a rehabilitation programme. 'I drink myself happy'

sounds like the confession of an alcoholic who drinks in order to feel good. 'I don't mean reach for the gin' is the utterance that targets the irony against Naomi herself. Naomi implies that she drinks water and deludes herself into feeling happy. She thus suggests that her drinking days are over (she drinks water now), but not her sorrow. Naomi's self-mockery may be indicative of her regret for Joaquin's unshared love. The jocular dimension of **(19)** resides in Naomi's ease of talking about her problems: she seems to ironically contemplate both her past (drinking) and her present (delusion of happiness).

"Soccer Babes Go Home!" is an article on football in the June issue of the '*Cosmopolitan*' (1998: 60). Simon Bass, the reporter, notices that women become increasingly interested in football and they try to share this new craze with men. He finds this activity disturbing for the male community since he perceives women as invading their intimacy. He tries to argue that football is a men-only activity, given the habits they develop and the delight they take in indulging in the things they are exclusively entitled to experience whenever football is involved. This is the context where **(40)** is embedded:

(40) Football is a boy's thing – the common language of men, their territory. It's ritualistic, emotional and male. Stop interfering [addressed to women] and let us get on with it! Football gives men a legitimate excuse to go mad and act irrationally without feeling embarrassed. The experience allows us an opportunity to scream, shout, sing and get drunk, all within an afternoon. It's cheaper than a weekly session with a therapist.

Irony is accessed in **(40)** in its jocular dimension as it points to a self-bantering way of talking about male-centred experiences and male bonding. The attitude towards the issue of women's interference with men's hobbies is not a hostile one as far as 'soccer babes' are concerned. The speaker is more concerned with reinforcing male values, football being one of them: 'Football is a boy's thing – the common language of men', 'Football gives men legitimate excuse to go mad', '…let us get on with it'. Simon Bass describes men's behaviour when football is involved as a common practice of a ritual ('It's ritualistic') that consists in rather disturbing activities if regarded outside the context of the game. The relaxed view on their cavemen-like behaviour provides the self-ironic reading of **(40)** because men have found a 'legitimate excuse' for 'acting irrationally without feeling embarrassed'. Making fun at his own expense, namely admitting that he and his buddies behave like cavemen, Simon Bass adopts a self-ironic attitude as to male-bonding since the

utterance is indicative of the speaker's awareness of men's community engaging in childish irrational behaviour. There is an additional ironic reading of **(40),** provided by the last sentence of the excerpt: 'It's cheaper than a weekly session with a therapist'. This remark is obviously addressed to women who are known to deal with their problems "with a therapist". The implications are that instead of wasting time and money on sessions with a shrink, men find better, 'cheaper' ways of dealing with their frustrations, including attending football games.

Another instance of self-irony occurs in an extract from "*New York Night Out*", an article on the VH-1 Fashion Awards. Details are supplied both on the designers' work and on the stars that attended the ceremony. In an interview with Sarah Jessica Parker, the reporter cannot refrain from reminding her of the latest news on her anorexic tendencies, to which she replied:

(41) 'Who me? Eating disorder? Compared to the people here, I consider myself huuuuuge.' (*Cosmopolitan*, February 1998: 13)

Sarah's comment is obviously done with the intention of defending herself from the rumours that go around about her. She (and the reader, as well) knows that actresses are increasingly slim and often become obsessed with slimness. By saying she is 'huuuuuge' in comparison with the skinny models on the catwalk, Sarah tries to deny the rumours of her being an anorexic. By exaggerating the description of her body weight she invalidates the rumours. She affords to be self-ironic in asserting her 'huuuuugeness' because such an assertion is a proof against her being an anorexic. She opts for self-irony to show the reporter that she feels comfortable about her weight, while still supplying a mock echo of typical anorexic talk (no matter how scrawny, anorexics keep complaining about being 'too fat').

Irony often resorts to hyperbole or overstatement to render the incompatibility between what is stated and what is reasonably credible. Consequently, I have considered it necessary to dedicate the next section to the discussion of hyperbole.

6.5. Hyperbole

Hyperbole (also referred to as *exaggeration* or *overstatement*) may be defined as a purposeful exaggeration, consisting of extreme formulations and the creation of counterfactual contexts. In everyday conversation, hyperbolic expressions are meant

to intensify evaluative or affective dimensions of language interactions such as humorous or ironical exchanges, provided they have not become so conventionalised that language users are no longer aware of their magnifying function. Thus, to say one has not seen someone 'for ages' simply meaning 'for a long time' does not normally acquire an exaggerated or overstated illocutionary force, given the frequency and conventionality of the expression. Similarly a verb such as 'be dying to' (e.g. 'dying to meet someone') may hardly be perceived as exaggerated or overstated, despite its being literally counterfactual. Pomerantz's examples include utterances such as 'He didn't say one word', and 'Whenever he's around he's utterly disparaging of our efforts', where entities and events are described in the most extreme way possible. Such extreme assertions evincing overlap between extreme formulations and counterfactuality are affect-permeated while they are not necessarily processed as absurd or counterfactual.

Hyperbole encompasses two opposite directions of expression: on the one hand, it may take the form of *exaggerated intensification* (called by Smith *auxesis*), on the other hand it may espouse the form of *exaggerated reduction or attenuation* (called by Smith *meiosis*). According to Ravazzoli (1978 in McCarthy and Carter (2004), hyperbolic expressions may either expand/magnify or attenuate/belittle entities/events/states-of-affairs. Utterances which describe someone as 'a colossus' are a case of *metaforica amplificante* , while referring to someone as 'a bag of bones' is a case of *metaforica attenuativa*.

By stating something that is not literally true, but blatantly an exaggeration of reality, hyperbole may be regarded as a case of non-observance of the Gricean Quality Maxim. Gibbs (1994) underlines that the main distinction between hyperbole and simple overstatement resides in overstatement being often non-deliberate or unintentional, while hyperbole is meant to be grasped as intentional. The following excerpts from MASH illustrate this claim:

(42) Pierce: Major Frank Burns, M.D., manic-depressive. It's an honorary title.
Trapper: He's also schizoid.
Pierce: He sleeps in two bunks. (*M.A.S.H.)*

Hawkeye and Pierce's statement as to Frank's insanity is reinforced by flouting – and not violating – the Quality maxim. This is achieved by literalisation, since the two doctors represents the medical concept of split personality typical of schizophrenia as genuinely having the schizoid person embodied in two different persons, taking two different locations ('He sleeps in two beds').

Gibbs views hyperbole as one form of irony, alongside jocularity/teasing, sarcasm, understatement and rhetorical questions. What all the forms of irony share is ''the idea of a speaker providing some contrast between expectation and reality'' (Gibbs 1994: 13). Echoic mention and pretense (defined as the speaker pretending to be some other persona and to be addressing some person other than the listener) feature both irony and hyperbole. Associating hyperbole to irony or operating overlapping or intertwining between the two is not uncommon, since hyperbole seems to be recurrent in irony-laden conversations. Gibbs (1994: 391) considers that both hyperbole and understatement are closely related to irony ''in that each misrepresents the truth''.

In the following excerpt from the same series, *MASH*, the exchange takes place between surgeons in the OR:

(43)	**BJ**	- I'm so bushed I can't remember my last patient
	Hawkeye	- He had quintuplets
	BJ	- Oh yeah
	Burns	- Silencio. I mean how can I operate with all this flapdoodle going on
	BJ	- Where there's a war there's a way Frank. Wipe *(A nurse wipes his brow)*
	Potter	- How many more out there
	Houlihan	- I counted nineteen when I came in
	Potter	- Nineteen, there were nineteen two hours ago
	Hawkeye	- They restock the shelves when they run out

Hawkeye blatantly utters non-truths ('he had quintuplets' and They restock the shelves when they run out') in a twofold attempt: to signal jocularity and ingroup humour, meant to boost the morale of his exhausted comrades, and to emphasise the absurdity of the war, which may be cynically described as a ceaseless process of piling up corpses on shelves. The excerpt reinforces Roberts and Kreuz's claim (1994) that irony and hyperbole co-occur in contexts where the goals were humour, emphasis and clarification. One characteristic shared by hyperbole and irony is what Kreuz and Roberts (1995 in McCarthy and Carter 2004) call 'nonveridicality', a discrepancy between an utterance and reality, what we refer to as counterfactuality. What distinguishes hyperbole from other violations of the Gricean Maxim of Quality, particularly from lying, by its overtness and transparency. Hyperbole triggers ''a kind of joint pretense in which speakers and addressees create a new layer of joint activity'' (Clark in McCarthy and Carter 2004).

In the series '*Seinfeld*', George Costanza's depiction of Kramer's life as a holiday camp is strikingly hyperbolic: by setting forth 'nonveridicality' in the sense that George *pretends* to literally believe each detail of his description of Kramer's paradisiac existence.

(44) Kramer goes to a fantasy camp? His whole life is a fantasy camp. People should plunk down $2000 to live like him for a week. Sleep, do nothing, fall ass-backwards into money, mooch food off your neighbors and have sex without dating... THAT's a fantasy camp**.**

As usual, George flouts the Quantity Maxim, this time with a view to exaggerating a state-of-affairs, namely Kramer's happy-go-lucky lifestyle and to show his attitude towards it, a mixture of disapproval and envy. He wants Jerry, his interlocutor, to engage in 'joint pretense' and share his semi-stifled outrage permeated with avowal of jocular awe.

McCarthy and Carter (2004) use corpus-based analysis to demonstrate that overstatement may be used "in a variety of contexts, many of which can hardly be said to be ironic, but which simply express delight, antipathy, humour and other affective reactions". They concur with Fogelin (1988), who regards over- and understatement, as devices which prompt the listener into producing some 'corrective' response, more often than not 'mutually recognised' (2004: 166). McCarthy and Carter argue as follows:

> In the case of irony, there is a difference between the utterance and reality; the one negates or contradicts the other, and the corrective response is one of kind (the listener who hears What a lovely day! on a horrid, cold, rainy day, 'corrects' the assertion to What a horrible day!). In the case of under- and overstatement, the difference is not one of kind, but of degree; the corrective response is to up- or downscale the assertion to accord with reality (the listener who hears I almost starved to death when I stayed at my aunt's house! 'corrects' it to something like My aunt was very mean with food/did not feed me nearly enough so I was hungry). Hyperbole, therefore, magnifies and upscales reality, and, naturally, upscaling produces a contrast with reality which, given the right contextual conditions, may provide the kind of negation or mismatch with reality that is heard as ironic (McCarthy and Carter 2004: 170).

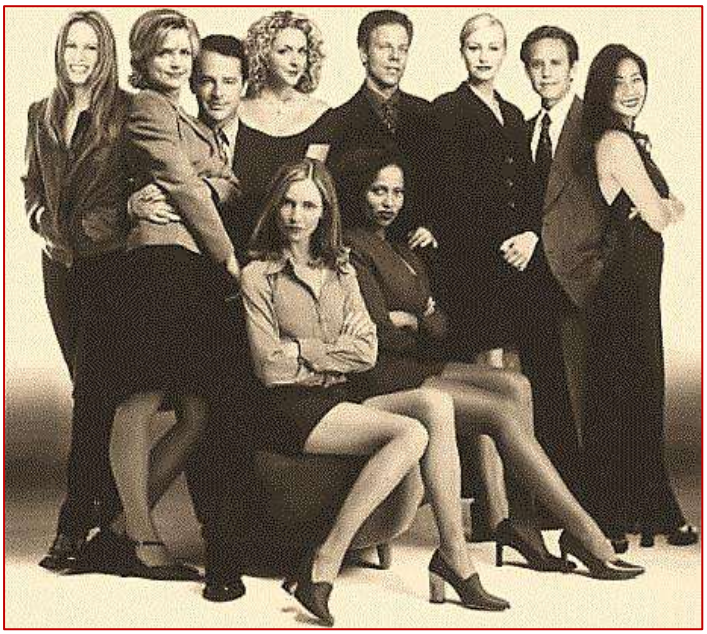
Since the discrepancy between what is (over)stated and what could realistically been described as true endows hyperbole with an affective dimension, which best emerges when investigated interactively, since it supposes interlocutors to engage in a joint acceptance of a distortion of reality as in the previous dialogue between Jerry and George. Such joint acceptance of counterfactuality by acceptance of exaggeration occurs via pretending to take for granted utterances which upscale and magnify reality to varying degrees. Such utterances abound in George's self-ironical comments at his own status of a peerless loser.

(45) 'My father was a quitter, my grandfather was a quitter, I was raised to give up. It's one of the few things I do well.'

(46) 'I have a bad feeling that whenever a lesbian looks at me they think, <That's why I'm not a heterosexual>'.

Like hyperbolic-ironic praise, hyperbolic-ironic criticism engenders ingroup jocularity and self-teasing reinforces ingroup bonds. Not receiving any 'corrective' replies from his interlocutors does not dissuade George from indulging in corrosive self-appraisal, as one convention in their group of friends is relish each character's self-deprecating comments.

In the following excerpt from the dramedy '*AllyMcBeal*', Richard Fish makes a plea which abounds in hyperboles. The plea is delivered under the following circumstances: Ally and Richard are in court defending the right of a woman called Risa Helms to be married in church against her priest's will to perform the ceremony. The priest desisted from this enterprise because a few days before the wedding, he called on Risa and much to his amazement and outrage, she was having sex with a man other than her husband-to-be.



47) **Judge**: I was hoping it wouldn't come to that.

RF: Yeah, it's unreasonable for this minister or any member of the clergy to demand morality from a parishioner, the Church makes its money of the threat of Hell, if people weren't out there committing sins, they wouldn't be running to Church seeking forgiveness and throwing money in the buckets. I should also like to point out nobody frowns at a man when he slips at a bachelor party, the ministers are usually right there slipping with him. But I object to is the double standard, why is it OK for men to gather that last little rose bud and not for women? This is the highest form of gender discrimination and I won't stand for it! Women love sex! They love to think it, dream it, and talk about it, as long as they retain the right to sue you after. (*he sits down*)

Judge: Mister Fish, I am not going to order a minister to perform a wedding ceremony.

RF: You're a gender bigot, Judge.

The use of hyperbole goes hand in hand with the building of a fallacious line of argument: if there is no sin within the congregation, the mission of the church is annihilated. The plea abounds in extreme quantifying expressions 'throwing money in buckets', 'nobody frowns...', 'the highest form of gender discrimination' as well as in blatant overgeneralisations, when he slips at a bachelor party, the ministers are

usually right there slipping with him'. Fish engages in pretense by feigning insurmountable outrage at the alleged discrimination the priest is about to make when refusing to marry a woman who had been succumbing to the pleasures of the flesh. 'I object to [this] double standard, I won't stand for it!' His engaging in outraged objections is magnified by inflamed rhetorical questions spiced up with figurative language indicative of indulging in carnal lust: 'why is it OK for men to gather that last little rose bud and not for women?' Fish's game of pretense includes a series of exclamatives about women's right to have free sex and dream about it, a line of argumentation which is being defended forcefully and ardently in a crescendo of exclamative sentences: 'Women love sex! They love to think it, dream it, and talk about it, as long as they retain the right to sue you after.' The 'counterfactuality' or non-veridicality of Fish's arguments only enhances their argumentative force, and the plea against bigotry snowballs up to the final insult, when Fish calls the judge a 'gender bigot'.

6.6. Irony and pretense in *'A Streetcar Named Desire'*

The following analysis of irony in several excerpts from Tennessee Williams's *'A Streetcar Named Desire'* attempts to delineate the circumstances under which the interlocutors choose to engage in pretense. Blanche is a well-educated woman, who takes great pride in her intellectual and physical qualities and has the tendency to regard the other characters as inferior and to treat them accordingly. However, the loss of her husband and of all the members of her family (except for Stella, her younger sister) propels her into extreme behavior (such as engaging in a relationship with one of her students or entertaining wealthy men in notorious places) which she tries to keep secret. Thus, the main reason for which she engages in pretense is, in her case, that of preserving the image of a distinguished, radiant aristocratic lady, which she has been promoting among her peers. On the other hand, Stanley, Blanche's brother-in-law, is an ex-sergeant, very proud of his Polish descent, notorious for his rough straightforwardness and uncouth behavior. His pretense-based behavior is triggered by his concern to dominate those around him and to constantly reassert his role of authority within the family.

6.6.1. 'I rarely touch it!'

Blanche has announced her visit, but Stella decided not to tell her husband about it. Upon her arrival, Blanche tries to find out more about Stanley, but Stella is very elusive as to her husband's temper and habits. On the other hand, Stanley does not know much about Blanche, except that she is not married and that she teaches English in a small town called Laurel. Thus, we may assume that the two characters who engage in conversation have little background knowledge about each other.

Previous to their conversation, Blanche has been drinking his whisky. Her sister, Stella, offered her the drink and she drank two glasses. When she left, Blanche poured herself another three glasses and put the bottle back on the shelf, hoping that nobody might notice. By the amount of alcohol she is able to drink in a very short period of time, it is clear that she has a drinking problem, although she chooses to deny it.

(48) **Stanley**: Liquor goes fast in hot weather. **(U1)** [He holds the bottle to the light to observe its depletion] Have a shot? **(U2)**
Blanche: No, I -rarely touch it. (**U3)**
Stanley: Some people rarely touch it, but it touches them often. **(U4)**
Blanche: [faintly] Ha-ha. **(U5)**

This excerpt illustrates an episode of pretense in which Blanche assumes the role of a non-alcoholic. By avoiding direct accusation, Stanley produces the initial pretense premise - that Blanche does not have a drinking problem - which he reinforces by offering her a drink **(U2)**: 'Have a shot?'. In initiating the pretense episode, Stanley makes use of his background knowledge: he apparently keeps count of his drink, so he is sure that the bottle contained more whisky upon Blanche's arrival; moreover, since his wife is pregnant, he cannot suspect her of having drunk the whisky. His first cue **(U1)**: 'Liquor goes fast in hot weather!' is rather ambiguous and does not allow Blanche to infer Stanley's intention. Consequently, she has no option but to join the pretense. It could be considered an expression of surprise, not necessarily intended as an accusation; on the other hand, given the circumstances, this utterance could be accompanied by a derogative attitude.

Blanche's answer **(U3):** 'No. I rarely touch it.' clearly shows that she has indeed touched it. She refuses the drink, allowing Stanley to continue with the pretense. Stanley's remark in **(U4):** 'Some people rarely touch it, but it touches them often!' shows that this pretense episode lacks playfulness. On the contrary, it is

intended to compel Blanche into admitting that the pretense premise is actually true. This particular utterance illustrates a derogative attitude on Stanley's part, which, once identified, ought to allow Blanche to continue engaging in pretense.

6.6.2. 'He must have had a lot of admiration!'

Stanley had learned about the loss of Belle Reve. Since Blanche has not clarified to Stella the circumstances in which their parents' estate had been lost, Stanley becomes very suspicious about his sister-in-law. Blind with rage, he ravages the contents of Blanche's trunk in search of some papers that were to prove how Belle Reve had been lost. To his utter despair, the trunk contains only clothes and jewelry. Stanley's suspicions increase as he realises that Blanche could not possibly afford such a large wardrobe, much less expensive jewelry.

(49) **Blanche**: It looks like my trunk has exploded**. (U1)**
Stanley: Me and Stella were helping you unpack. **(U2)**
Blanche: You certainly did a fast and thorough job of it! **(U3)**
Stanley: It looks like you raided some stylish shops in Paris. **(U4)**
Blanche: Ha-ha! Yes, clothes are my passion! **(U5)**
Stanley: What does it cost for a string of fur-pieces like that? **(U6)**
Blanche: Why, those were a tribute from an admirer of mine! **(U7)**
Stanley: He must have had a lot of admiration! **(U8)**

Given the state of the assets in her trunk-the clothes are spread all over the room – and her having gradually learned that Stanley is of a rather rough and irate nature, Blanche produces the premise that Stanley has not been going through her things in search of evidence for the loss of Belle Reve. Stanley feigns concern for putting Blanche at ease in his own house by ironically uttering **(U2)**: 'Me and Stella were helping you unpack'. This justificatory remark proves ironical because what is said (granting help) is wholly incongruent with the situation the two characters face, since it is common knowledge that throwing someone's clothes all over the room hardly qualifies as helpful.

Blanche exploits this discrepancy between Stanley's ironical remark and the surrounding reality by making an ironical remark on Stanley's helpful gesture in the form of a veiled compliment **(U3):** 'You certainly did a fast and through job of it!'. Blanche assumes the role of someone who is impressed by his gesture, mocking at his alleged readiness to help her.

In their theory of pretense, Clark and Gerrig claim that in cases in which the hearer succeeds in recognizing irony, s/he has several options: s/he may join the pretense by assuming a different role and consequently give an ironic answer; s/he may choose to preserve his real identity and give a non-ironic answer or s/he may not acknowledge the speaker's fake identity and fall a victim to the irony. Although he recognises Blanche's derogatory attitude, Stanley fails to employ either of these alternatives. Instead, he chooses to redirect Blanche's attention towards a different matter **(U4):** 'It looks like you raided some stylish shops in Paris!' expressed in an irony-laden indirect accusation.

On the other hand, **(U4):** 'It looks like you raided some stylish shops in Paris!' initiates another episode of pretense, in which Stanley attempts to verify the hypothesis whether Blanche has sold the estate, spending the money on clothes and jewelry. Considering that Blanche is not the sole heir of Belle Reve, Stanley's final intent is to prove that she is dishonest and untrustworthy. He assumes the role of the pretender by first feigning bewilderment as to Blanche's large wardrobe, then by ironically questioning her as to the price of an apparently expensive string of fur-pieces **(U6):'** What does it cost for a string of fur-pieces like that?'. Blanche's answers sound uninformative in that respect, which proves that she has understood the pretense premise (i.e. 'I didn't sell the estate'). Her replies urge Stanley into adopting an ironical stance towards her explanation in **(U7):** 'Why, those were a tribute from an admirer of mine!'. This time, it is Stanley who assumes the fake identity of someone quite impressed with Blanche's deserving such an expensive gift. In addition, he ironically implies that bestowal of expensive gifts is related to boundless admiration on the part of the gift-giver, insinuating that a man who lavishes such presents upon Blanche must be granted some favours instead **(U8).**

6.6.3. 'I cannot imagine any witch of a woman casting a spell on you'

In this excerpt, Stanley adopts an adamant stand towards women who fish for compliments, a propensity which he considers a sign of vanity and a waste of time. The short narrative about his being insensitive to the lure of a glamorous woman is an indirect means of conveying his reluctance to believe in men who instantly yield to the seductive powers of stylish women.

(50) **Stanley:** I never met a woman who didn't know she was good-looking or not without being told, and some of them give themselves credit for more than they've got. **(U1)** I once went out with a doll who said to me 'I'm the

glamorous type, I'm the glamorous type!' **(U2)** I said 'So what?' **(U3)** Some men are took in by this Hollywood glamour and some men are not. **(U4)**
Blanche: I'm sure you belong in the second category. **(U5)**
Stanley: That's right. **(U6)**
Blanche: I cannot imagine any witch of a woman casting a spell on you. **(U7)**
Stanley: That's – right. **(U8)**

(U5): 'I'm sure you belong in the second category' and **(U7):** 'I cannot imagine any witch of a woman casting a spell on you' are two instances of irony in which Blanche mocks at Staley's reluctance to admit being sensitive to women's charm. She assumes a derisive attitude towards Stanley's assuming a fake identity, that of a man who never gives in to a woman's charms and who is usually very straightforward- to such an extent that he does not refrain from being rude. **(U6)** and **(U8)**, 'That's-right', clearly show that Stanley fails to recognize Blanche's derogative attitude. He falls a victim to the ironist, by interpreting Blanche's utterances as expressions of approval.

6.6.4. Irony and FTAs

This section will analyse the conclusions reached by having analysed the use of irony and politeness strategies, with special emphasis laid on pretense.

Blanche's choice to engage in pretense is generated by her constant concern with her self-image. She assumes a fake identity with the purpose of creating a self-image in compliance with her alleged social status and with the background knowledge she would like the others to entertain about her. When trying to determine which of the face wants she values most, it should be mentioned that throughout the play she is constantly expressing her need to be liked, appreciated and reassured: she asks the other characters about her looks, she expects men to stand up when she enters a room, she needs the other characters to be sympathetic over the loss she suffered. The patterns of social interaction she espouses are usually designed so as to arouse approval and/or admiration, which she wants expressed either verbally or by gift-offering. Consequently, most of Blanche's interactions are oriented towards maintaining or saving her positive face. As the story unfolds, given that the other characters are invested with greater power and control, her undertakings, which mainly involve concealment of the truth, are redirected towards preserving her positive face, pretense is the prevalent strategy she employs in reaching the purpose of face preservation.

On the other hand, Blanche's concern with her negative face is not entirely neglected, especially before the truth about her past is revealed. By indulging in her favourite pastimes, such as placing a paper lantern over the bulb in one of the rooms or spending hours in the bathroom every day, she invades her sister's and brother-in-law's personal space therefore threatening their freedom of action.

Stanley's use of pretense is triggered by his need to preserve his positive face, reinforcing his manliness and position of head-of-the-family as well as by his need to exert his negative face wants, i.e. his desire to act unimpeded. By and large, his behavior can be characterized as reckless and even brutal: he refuses to use the fork, he likes to bang things around, he beats his wife when she tries to get him to end the poker game, he tears his clothes when undressing, since his concern to preserve his negative face and then to enhance it prevails over the need to save his positive face, i.e. to avoid striking the others as a boisterous ruffian.

Irony is always present in the context of pretense and is exhaustively employed by any character who compels his/her interlocutor to assume the role of the pretender. Within the framework provided by the Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory, irony is an instance of off record behavior, which aims at preserving face. If irony is used as a politeness strategy, it is expected to diminish the impact of the threat because it is an ambiguous way of expressing one's attitude: speakers may always cancel having any sanctionable or potentially offensive intentions implied by claiming that the literal meaning is the one intended to convey.

In the second excerpt discussed, there are two instances of irony used by the characters as FTAs. The first instance of irony **(U1):** 'Well, you certainly did a fast and thorough job of it!' is employed by Blanche in order to mock at Stanley's helpfulness. It is a polite way of stating that his gesture hardly qualifies as helpful, while being an attempt on Blanche's part to minimize damage to the speaker's face. What triggers this effect on the speaker's face is the commonsensical assumption that a person's intention of being helpful renders their action appreciable and does not normally arise criticism, despite the way in which it is performed. Thus, this instance of irony under the form of an FTA apparently has a less offensive effect.

Another colourful instance of irony, **(U8):** 'He must have had a lot of admiration!', is a bald on record superstrategy which damages the hearer's face. Stanley's communicative intention is rather ambiguous, since one cannot tell whether he implies that Blanche is not worthy of expensive gifts, such as fur pieces, or that he considers her either an irresolute squanderer of the family's fortune or a prostitute. In either case, this ironical remark clearly has an offensive effect, since it is meant to disparage the hearer.

Dialogue **(50)** contains some instances of irony whose offensive effect increases as the conversation goes on. **(U5):** 'I'm sure you belong in the second category' brings damage to the face of the hearer, since Blanche endeavors to save Stanley's positive face and acknowledges his qualities, in a clumsy attempt at flattery. Concomitantly, she ventures to assert that he is precisely the opposite of what he believes himself to be. Stanley's attempt to assess his straightforwardness and manly determination signals that his negative face is at stake. **(U7):** 'I cannot imagine any witch of a woman casting a spell on you' is similar to the ironical remark in **(U5)** inasmuch as it threatens Stanley's negative face. Apparently, it has the same offensive effect as **(U5)**, yet Blanche's persistent acknowledging of Stanley's qualities increases the damage to his negative face. Moreover, the fact that this ironical remark is built on exaggeration maximises the degree of face threat.

The verbal exchanges between Blanche and Stanley are irony-laden and pretense-incurring, consequently enhancing mutual face threat risk. As already pointed out, potential face damage is regulated by the social distance between speaker and hearer, relative power and size of imposition (Brown and Levinson 1987: 64). Social distance between interlocutors is one of the basic factors determining the right levels of polite behavior (Holmes 1995: 11). Labeling social distance involves considering the roles that people assign each other and assume for themselves. Such roles are placed at two extremes of social distance: total strangers and intimates (Holmes 1995: 13). Social distance does not clearly delimit Blanche and Stanley either as strangers or as intimates. Contextual information unveils a rather paradoxical situation: on the one hand, they share little background knowledge, they hardly know each other, while, on the other hand, they are relatives. Since the two characters are in the process of becoming acquainted, the degree of deference should be relatively high. Such deference is usually pretense, and polite expressions are then employed ironically.

Relative power or hierarchical status refers to the degree to which a participant can impose his/her face. In the second excerpt, Blanche is first invested with greater power, since she is in the position to ask Stanley for explanations for his having invaded her personal space and rummaged through her belongings. Her authority is granted by the awkward situation Stanley finds himself in. Stanley's inquiries over the assets in her trunk place Blanche in an uneasy situation (in which any attempt on her part to provide explanations might damage her positive face) and thus he is granted authority. In the fourth excerpt, Blanche's greater power over her interlocutor derives from Stanley's failure in assessing his manly authority.

In all the excerpts in which the characters' assume the role of the pretender, their interlocutor (who usually initiates the pretense episode by feigning curiosity or ignorance) is invested with greater power inasmuch as he/she is certain that the pretense assumption is indeed true. Thus, he/she is entitled to adopt a critical attitude towards the hearer and their choice to do it by using irony proves to be efficient since the insertion of irony in the game of pretense has the expected outcome, namely that of damaging their interlocutor's face, while boosting their own.

The third factor that determines the degree of threat is size of the imposition. In the second excerpt, Blanche's relaxed way of approaching the problem via mild ironic criticism is indicative of the low degree of imposition. On the other hand, since Stanley's intention is to blackwash Blanche, the degree of imposition is fairly high. Such is the case in the fourth excerpt, where first Blanche's, than Stanley's ironical remarks end up by damaging their interlocutor's face, as initially intended.

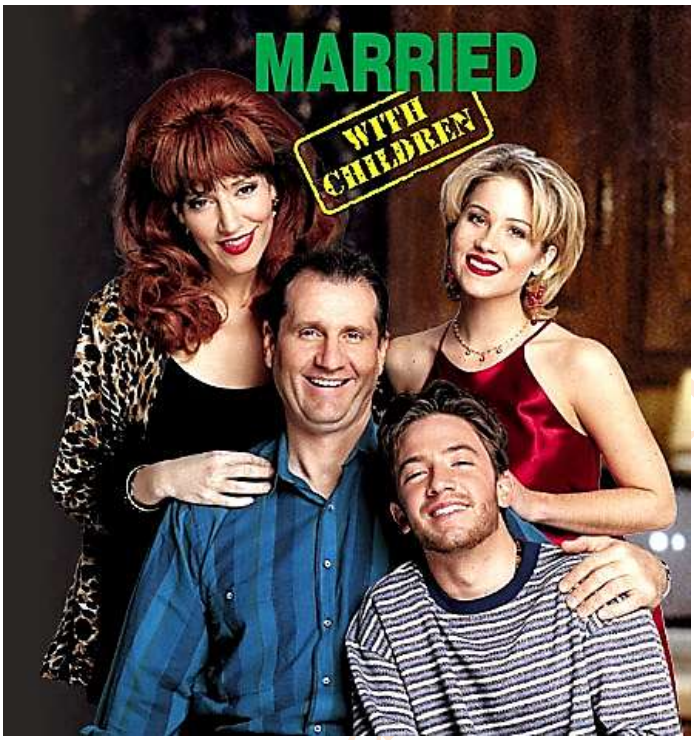
Irony is usually employed by the character who initiates the pretense episode, by producing a pretense assumption whose truth value is substantiated by contextual information. Although the characters' intention is to use pretense as a face-saving strategy, it does not have the expected outcome precisely because the use of irony in the context of pretense yield a magnified damaging effect.

Pretense is primarily employed as a face-saving strategy by the role it plays in supporting and even boosting the speakers' faces. Blanche makes use of pretense in order to save her positive face, while Stanley assumes the role of the pretender for the purpose of saving his negative face. Yet, Blanche's exaggerated use of pretense brings about her own decay. She not only loses her positive face, but her failure in acknowledging this loss and her insistence in preserving the face she has unavoidably lost render her both ridiculous to the point of being pitiable.

6.7. Irony and hyperbole in *'Married... With Children'*

In the following analysis of several conversations from the sitcom '*Married... with Children'*, I will attempt to highlight how irony blends with hyperbole in the course of FTAs which involve both positive ad negative impoliteness strategies. The interrelationship between non-observance of maxims, output strategy and face threat has already been discussed in relation to a corpus of conversations from this series (see 5.8.) The presently analysed corpus will specifically focus on the function

of irony and hyperbole in the process of actual or potential face damage and attempted face preservation undertaken by the protagonists.



(51) Al enters wearing a bathrobe. He is followed by Peggy, also wearing a robe and smoking.
(a) PEGGY: You were great, Al.
(b) AL: Leave me alone.
They sit on the couch.
(c) PEGGY: C'mon, Al. I really believe if you'd practice once in a while, you could actually get good at sex. Honey, you don't have to hit your head.
(d) AL: That's the one part I enjoy, Peg. It takes my mind off what the rest of my body is going through.

Peggy is attacking Al's negative face by ignoring his wishes and ridiculing him **(a).** She pretends paying him a compliment yet addresses him an ironical comment targeted at his sexual performance. In this way, she exploits the incongruity between the admiration literally expressed and the grim reality, i.e. Al's pitiable sexual performance. Al notices the negative impoliteness strategy his wife employs by resorting to ironical derogation and reacts by threatening back her

negative face. This is why he scorns her immediately **(b)**, bald–on-record refusing further communication, while acknowledging his adequate grasp of Peg's irony. As usual, Peggy is not trying to minimize face threat at all. She ironises him again, by resorting to pretense: she feigns advising him to improve his performance, thus ironically implying that this performance is not satisfactory. Her insincere, irony-laden advice is an indirect threat to Al's positive face : it presupposes he is not a good lover and Peg has to display fake concern for his lack of sexual prowess **(c)**. By means of irony, Peg's utterance implies the opposite of what it says: that lovemaking is not one of Al's strengths. Al blows his dismay out of proportions and by using off-record strategies implies that Peg is to blame for the wretched condition he is in.

(52) **(a) AL:** Why did I ever agree to this Tuesday night sex?
He turns on the TV.
ANNOUNCER: And that's it for Monday Night Football.
He turns off the TV. He looks at Peggy.
(b) AL: This isn't Tuesday, Peg. (She hangs her head.) You've done a bad thing. You must be punished. From now on, when we have sex, it has to be between two consenting adults.
(c) PEGGY: Oh, Al. I just wanted it to be closer to your shower night.

Al utters a rhetorical question, which is an ironical understatement: what he implies is an attitude: that of regret for having agreed on engaging in sexual intercourse with his wife on a weekly basis. Al accuses Peggy of having misbehaved then he uses irony by echoing the well-known cliché on consensual sex between adults. The echoed phrase "it has to be between two consenting adults" reveals the incompatibility of what Al literally asserts (the occurrence of consent) and what actually happens (he is always reluctant to making love to Peg and stubbornly tries to escape this Tuesday night indictment). Peg's answer is a justification for her having picked up Tuesday night and an irony-permeated malicious understatement: by saying sex needs to be closer to Tuesday night, the night Al takes a shower, Peggy implies that Al only showers one a week, being a slob for the rest of the week. Her remark is an ironical understatement targeted at Al's sloppy hygiene, employed by Peggy to strongly attack Al's positive face.

(53) **(a) AL**: Well Peg, I'm showered and ready to go to work, an edge ever closer to the grave. Wish me luck.
(b) PEGGY: Al, take me. I wanna have sex on the kitchen table. (She sits down on the kitchen table.)

(Al is looking at her perplexed.)

(c) AL: I wanna have a meal on the kitchen table. Learn to live without it. I did. Goodbye.

(d) PEGGY: Al, I'm serious, I want sex.

(e) AL: Peg, how long have we been married? 40 or 50 years? Do we not have two children?

(f) PEGGY: Well, yeah.

(g) AL: Then my job's done.

Al announces Peg that he has just taken a bath and that he is going to work. He uses the hyperbole 'an edge ever closer to the grave' to remind his wife of his pitiable lot of a shoesalesman working for the minimal wage. **(a)** He uses irony by asking Peggy to wish him luck, pretending that going to work is some awe-inspiring feat he has to face every day. Peggy disregards the nature of her husband's complaints, thus violating the maxim of relation and asks him to favorably respond to her explicit sexual initiative **(b).** Such initiative attacks Al's negative face while Peg tries to preserve her face by stressing that her wishes and her husband's are nothing alike. She only takes her own feelings into account and hopes to delude him into engaging into expectation-challenging activities such as lovemaking on the kitchen table. Al's response uses zeugma and collocates 'a meal' with the verb 'to have' and the locative 'on the kitchen table'. This zeugma reveals the incongruity between his expressed need and Peg's, ironically emphasising his permanent starvation and Peg's failing to carry out any nurturing activities. By saying he would rather use the kitchen table to have a meal, Al ironically implies that, traditionally, kitchen tables serve as pieces of furniture families have breakfast, lunch or dinner on **(c).** However, Al is realistic enough to understand that Peggy cannot be forced into cooking meals for him and decides to diminish the risk of her losing face. He advises Peggy to take his example and learn how to survive without indulging in favorite activities. Peggy overlooks Al's remark, violating again the maxim of relation. She explains to Al that she means every word she said and will utter her wish one more time, implying that she is not willing to relinquish her request **(d).** Al's reply is bitterly ironical: he utters rhetorical questions about the duration of their marriage, using overstatement to imply the unsatisfactory nature of their marital relation **(e).** It also includes a rhetorical question about the existence of their two children, which, by ironically stating the obvious, reveals one more time the gruesome lot Al has to face as a husband and a father. Apart from conveying an ironical complaint, Al's irony-permeated rhetorical questions are an attempt to demonstrate that he has fulfilled his painful duties and desperately wants to be exempted from any sex-

related chores **(g).**

(54) Peggy is lying on the couch watching TV, eating bonbons and smoking.
(The sound of a car pulling up is heard and Peggy immediately turns off the TV, puts out her cigarette and hides her bonbons with a couch cushion. She turns on the vacuum and sucks up all of her cigarette butts and bon-bon wrappers. She acts like she is vacuuming.)
(Al enters.)
(a) PEGGY: Hi, honey.
(b) AL: Hi. Working hard?
(c) PEGGY: Oh yeah, you know I like to keep the house clean. Phew!
(She turns off the vacuum and slumps down onto the couch, exhausted.
Al puts a hand on top of the TV.)
(d) PEGGY: Hard day?
(e) AL: Yeah, you?
(f) PEGGY: Oh yeah.
(g) AL: Yeah, must've been, even the TV's sweating! Hey get me some juice, OK?
(h) PEGGY: Oh, that's what I forgot to do.

This scene describes the moment Al comes home from work. He is tired and expects some support and gratification from his family. Peggy pretends being busy. She is greeting Al like a thoughtful wife by echoing an affectionate or term of address **(a).** Al does not greet her back, but ironically hints at her household efforts **(b)**, feigning appreciation of her allegedly effort-consuming household chores. Peggy joins pretense by claiming she enjoys cleaning around the house and to be working hard **(c)**. Al immediately takes notice of the warm television set, indicative of the incompatibility between what Peg says (she likes to work to keep the house impeccably clean) and what she has actually been doing (watching talk shows such as 'Oprah' or 'Phil' for hours on end). Peggy continues the game of pretense by faking concern for Al's job and asks him if he had a tough day at work **(d)**, Al chooses to echo by asking back the exact same question **(e)** thus ironically alluding to Peg's doing nothing but watch Oprah and Phil all day long. Peggy plays along the game of pretense and asserts that she has indeed toiled by means of a simple affirmative reply **(f).** This is the point where Al strategically attacks her with a malicious ironic remark exploiting both hyperbole and personification: the television set "[i]s sweating", consequently Peg has been, as always, a couch potato, while the TV is the only one to have been 'slaving away' **(g).** When Al asks for juice, Peggy

fakes regret when telling him she has forgotten to buy juice **(h),** thus ironically implying she has been doing numberless things except juice-acquiring. This last utterance enhances her negative face: she proves that she cannot be forced into doing anything by her husband, while implying that she is able to act resentfully.

(55) **(a) Bud**: I'm through with women!
(b) Al: What? You got married?

These lines are emblematic for Al Bundy's way of conceptualizing marriage: as enticing to the outsider, yet tormenting to the insider. Bud offers him the opportunity to have this opinion reinforced when disillusioned by women and deciding to avoid them **(a)** during a moment of weakness. Al uses the conversational context framed by Bud to express his own belief about the topic and switches the conversational focus towards himself. Al's rhetorical question is an understatement teeming with irony and underlain by hyperbole, since it implies there is no worse fate than getting married. In addition, this ironical comment is indicative of a twofold attitude: disinterest in Bud's amorous failures – regarded by the Bundys as inevitable – and self-pity towards the incurable grief inspired by Al's own marital status.

(56) Madam's Inga spells turned out to be real.
(a) PEGGY: Once again, you've enriched our lives, Al! (to Kelly and Bud): Thank your father, kids!
(b) KELLY and **BUD**: Thanks, dad!

The above lines are repeatedly echoed throughout the series and that ceaselessly remind the children that actual states-of-affairs are incongruent with any expression of gratitude addressed to their father. By pretending to thank Al, Bud and Kelly join Peg in a game of pretense, which holds Al responsible for all misfortunes the family encounters. Peggy's damage to Al's face seems to be enhanced whenever the children take her side. She likes offending Al in private, but she takes much more pleasure in offending him in front of their children and in public. She uses irony by saying the opposite of what she thinks , namely that Al is not worth thanking but blaming for the miserable state that the entire family is experiencing (**a**). Kelly and Bud play along, using irony in order to make their father feel remorseful for his actions.

The paradox is that, despite his efforts to help his family, Al inevitably ends up as the scapegoat, as the only one responsible for the outcome of any action, be it

undertaken by himself or by the entire family. Peggy, Kelly and Bud are all judging Al in terms of the traditional role of the father: the breadwinner and, consequently, the one responsible for his family's welfare or misfortune.

(57) (Kelly is on the couch, brushing Buck. Peggy comes downstairs.)
(a) PEGGY: Hi, Kelly. I'm sorry I couldn't make breakfast. I was busy prying off the pillow that was stuck to daddy's head.
(b) KELLY: He's not growing any hair, is he?
(c) PEGGY: No, but a few hundred came away with the pillow.

Peggy is acting motherly on this particular occasion because by pretending to apologise to Kelly for not having made breakfast she grasps the opportunity to damage her husband's face. Peggy uses overstatement 'I was busy prying off...' in order to claim having been engaged in an effort-consuming activity: cleaning Al's pillow by removing his hairs. Kelly's line consisting of a rhetorical question is in accordance to Peggy's style: ironical-hyperbolical. She is asking about the possibility of Al ever recovering his hair **(b).** The illocution in Peggy's utterance is a new opportunity to attack Al: by resorting to hyperbole again, she specifies the amount of hair that Al lost on the pillow **(c):** growing bald by 'a few hundred' hairs suggests that Al is completely bald, which he is not.

6.8. Notes on sarcasm

Commonly, sarcasm is a common type of ironic criticism targetting in an unmasked attempt to criticize or ridicule that specific individual, while concomitantly veiling the speaker's intention to damage face. Sarcasm usually emerges as an indirect means of expression, and according to the Webster dictionary, it is "witty language used to convey insults or scorn". Brumark provides a well-articulated definition of sarcasm: "Sarcasm has been defined as ruder and more hostile kind of irony, arguably more face threatening than even malicious irony" (Brumark 2004). The person who uses this type of irony usually wants to reproach someone with something, by blaming him/her for a certain action with the intention of putting the blame on the interlocutor; the hearer is treated callously and bluntly and his/her mistakes are being roughly judged and are concomitantly being emphasized through sarcasm.

Gibbs regards sarcasm as an aggressive, mordant, abrasive form of irony as it

communicates personal disapproval in a scathing manner, as "Sarcasm is a form of verbal irony, expressing sneering, personal disapproval in the guise of praise." (1994: 398). Sneering, ridiculing, mocking a person, situation or thing, are instances of sarcasm couched in the guise of praise. Despite its face-damaging purpose, Gibbs stresses that irony and, implicitly, sarcasm, empower people to maintain social relationships between friends, workmates or family members.

> The presence of irony, hyperbole, understatement, ad oxymora in the way we speak about our common experiences points toward the conclusion that these figures provide part of the figurative foundation for everyday thought. These figures specifically illustrate how our conceptualization of incongruous situations motivates the need for speech that reflects these figurative schemes of thinking. We can maintain and modify social relationships by recognizing incongruous situations and then commenting on them directly in ironic terms that include figurative language, such as sarcasm, hyperbole, understatement and oxymora." (Gibbs 1994: 395)

Sarcasm-laden exchanges are "nonserious acts that have serious consequences" (Gibbs 1994: 374) as they have important role in the way social relations are initiated, strengthened or altered. Haiman emphasises that while sarcasm is aggressive, ironyneed not be so, and that while irony may be situational, sarcasm may not. Haiman defines sarcasm as a type of pretense which overtly and deliberately produces a ''separate metamessage'' meant to express ''hostility or ridicule'' at some other speaker (1998: 25). However, when there is a relationship of unequal power between interlocutors, sarcasm is used as "a means of avoiding open confrontation and of securing cooperation in cases of conflicting interpretations and interaction expectations" (Kotthoff 2002: 8)

Sarcastic irony differs from kind irony in that it is ruder and more hostile and the speaker categorically states the flat opposite of the propositional truth of the utterance. It is employed with the purpose of mockery, ridicule and condescension. An example of sarcastic speech might be a reply such as 'Well done' or 'Great job', uttered in an angry tone to a person who has done something wrong. An ironic 'Well done' would come when a student has forgotten to bring his/her essay timely to class, after having worked intensely on it.

Kotthoff (2000: 13-19) defines four dimensions of ironical and/or sarcastic verbal encounters: **status, aggressiveness, social alignment,** and **sexuality**. Status is closely related to the study of humorous conversation. Subordinates are less likely to use humor, as they refrain from using humor because they fear of the embarrassment of

not eliciting the appropriate reaction. Humorous aggression is a component of types of teasing, mocking and ridiculing, transgressing the boundaries of innocent banter. Social alignment refers to the function of humor of 'bonding' and/or 'biting' since humour often fosters higher familiarity among the participants in the humorous conversation. Along the same line of argument, Attardo states that alleviating tension and enhancing intimacy is achieved by:

a) Social management, which involves all the in- and out-group functions of humor, especially the establishing of solidarity, etc.

b) Decommitment, i.e., the possibility of "taking back" something by claiming that one was "just kidding."

c) Defunctionalization; i.e., the loss of "meaningfulness" via ludic uses of language (Attardo 2003: 9)

6.8.1. Mastering sarcastic irony and self-irony in *'The Devil Wears Prada'*

In the best-seller *The Devil Wears Prada*, Miranda, 'the boss from hell', does not miss one single opportunity to attack her employees with a puzzling variety of expressions pervaded by scathing irony, often tainted with a sarcastic hue. The following exchange is illustrative of the sarcastic irony Miranda relishes using and abusing:

> "Are you preparing my lunch yourself, Andrea? **(U1)** Because according to my clock, I asked for it thirty-five minutes ago. **(U2)** I cannot think of a single reason why—if you were doing your job properly—my lunch would not be at my desk yet. **(U3)** Can you? **(U4)**"
>
> She got my name right! A small success, but no time to celebrate. **(U5)**
>
> "Uh, um, well, I'm very sorry it's taken so long, but there was a little mix-up with -" **(U6)**
>
> "You do know just how uninterested I am in such details, do you not?" **(U7)**
>
> "Yes, of course I understand, and it won't be long before—" **(U8)**
>
> "I am calling to tell you that I want my lunch, and I want it now. **(U9)** There's

> really not much room for nuance, Emily. **(U10)** I. **(U11)** Want. **(U12)** My. **(U13)** Lunch. **(U14)** Now**! (U15)"** (Weisberger 2003:181)

In the very first utterance ('Are you preparing my lunch yourself, Andrea?'), Miranda voices her disappointment of not having got what she asked for without further delay and ado in her typical incisive manner. Not in the least striving to smoothen the hurtful effect of her criticism; she is keen on blaming Andrea for an alleged failure and on by humiliating her through excessive use of sarcasm and iciness. Sarcasm and the distance it inevitably engenders are conveyed by means of the boss's ironic allusions to Andrea's alleged incompetence and lack of initiative. Empowered by her social and intellectual superiority, Miranda feels wholly entitled to indulge in sarcastic reproaches and reiterations of Andrea's alleged incompetence, as in **(U2)** ('Because according to my clock, I asked for it thirty-five minutes ago'), **(U3)** ('I cannot think of a single reason why—if you were doing your job properly—my lunch would not be at my desk yet') and **(U4)** ('Can you?'). A hardhearted, haughty and spiteful woman, Miranda is elated when finding new linguistic resources meant to make Andrea's life a living hell.

Miranda spitefully and systematically undermines Andrea's endeavour to articulate an apology in **(U7)** ('You do know just how uninterested I am in such details, do you not?'). She carries on in insulting her employee's professional abilities in **(U9)** ('I am calling to tell you that I want my lunch, and I want it now.') and **(U10)** ('There's really not much room for nuance, Emily'.). She purposefully calls her Emily, and not Andrea, her real name, in order to highlight the girl's meekness. The range of laconic utterances **(U11)** to **(U15)** are deliberately redundant, since they reiterate the same information as in **(U9)**; they are used with the only malicious purpose of ironising the addressee.

Although downtrodden, Andrea does not respond to such abashing criticism. Since Miranda does not couch her criticism in some less demanding formulation, the interlocutor can only infer the sarcastic streak but cannot retort vehemently as she could in case of a direct attack. Miranda often manages to hurt her new assistant's feelings, via a mechanism described by Anolli:

> Because of a cool detachment from emotions, irony may be used as a device for wounding someone in a much more cutting way than direct criticism oriented in the same direction. In fact, an explicit insult can be produced in a moment of rage, as a consequence of the speaker's mood in the contingent condition. Alternatively, an insult can arise from a cold calculation, so as to express,

besides blame, even the ironist's intention of not losing his/her self-control in showing the interlocutor' slack of success (Anolli 2001:11).

Andrea's replies to her employer's stinging remarks are to be discussed in terms of Attardo's interaction-based approach to humour, which takes into account five types of reactions to irony along the following lines:

- Totally serious reaction
- Ignoring the tease
- Serious reaction, followed by laughter
- Laughter followed by serious reaction
- Laughter, acceptance of the tease, followed by serious reaction
- Laughter, acceptance of the tease, playing along

Out of these types of reactions, Andrea prefers ignoring Miranda's teasing and cutting observations. Her subordinate status compels her to report to Miranda, and by virtue of her position, she cannot afford having a serious reaction or laughing at the remarks (as established by the third type of reaction to irony). By virtue of being indirect insults, Miranda's ironies give Andrea no other alternative but to accept the tease and play along.

The following excerpt shows how Andrea responds to her superior's attacks:

> "I simply do not understand what takes you so long to speak after you pick up the phone," she stated. From any other person on earth that would have sounded whiny, but from Miranda it sounded appropriately cold and firm. Just like her. "In case you haven't been here long enough to notice, when I call, you respond. **(U1)** It's actually simple. **(U2)** See? I call. You respond. Do you think you can handle that, Ahn-dre-ah? **(U3)**"
>
> "All right then. Now, after wasting all that time, may we begin? **(U4)** Did you confirm Mr. Tomlinson's reservation?" she asked.
>
> "Yes, Miranda, I made a reservation for Mr. Tomlinson at the Four Seasons at one o'clock." **(U5)** (Weisberger 2003: 94).

When Miranda asks Andrea why she failed to answer the phone during the first split-seconds after it began to ring, she also pokes fun at the employee, saying 'when I call, you respond' in **(U1)** and derides at Andrea's presumed incapacity to

fulfill the simplest task. In **(U2)** ('It's actually simple'), she infantilises Andrea by stressing how effortless this enterprise really is: a person calls, the other answers. Miranda further pokes fun at the confused subordinate in **(U3)** by feigning concern as to whether Andrea will ever be able to handle such an effortless thing ('Do you think you can handle that, Ahn-dre-ah?'). Further on, in **(U4)**, Miranda blames Andrea for wasting her time ('Now, after wasting all that time, may we begin?') although she is the one who has prolongued the conversation beyond expected limits. Although Andrea had good reasons not to answer the phone, being busy carrying out some other hard-to-achieve errand, her justification interests the employer very little. Consequently, Andrea does not have any other alternative but to accept the taunt and to cope with whatever Miranda asks of her, hence Andrea's compliant reaction in **(U5)**: 'Yes, Miranda, I made a reservation for Mr. Tomlinson at the Four Seasons at one o'clock.' Analysing this conversation reveals that Miranda's sole purpose is to watch her employees slavishly serving her, no matter how ridiculous her whims and wishes might be.

Despite Miranda's repeated use of sarcastic irony is used to express disapproval, complaints, criticism, contempt, Andrea manages to preserve her own face "primarily by allowing the speaker to avoid responsibility for the potentially face-damaging interpretation of the utterance" (Jorgensen 1996: 616). Andrea learns her lesson from her boss's ironical comments and sometimes she even tries to regard the remark as somewhat humorous. The dialogue below illustrates Andrea's frustration and annoyance when being reprimanded by her boss. Regardless of how scornful Ms. Priestly can be, Andrea does not express disdain or outrage:

> "Ahn-dre-ah. The latte is ice cold. I don't understand why. You were certainly gone long enough! Bring me another."
>
> I inhaled deeply and concentrated on keeping the look of hatred off my face. Miranda set the offending latte on my desk and flipped through the new issue of Vanity Fair that a staffer had set on the table for her. I could feel Emily watching me and knew her look would be one of sympathy and anger: she felt bad that I had to repeat the hellish ordeal all over again, but she hated me for daring to be upset about it. After all, wouldn't a million girls die for my job? (Weisberger 2003: 168)

As a rule, sarcasm tends to rather soften the expression of negative feelings

toward the hearer than to cause amusement. In the above paragraph one may notice Miranda's scathing judgemental remarks at the expense of her assistant, which, evidently, bothers Andrea; however, the 'boss from hell' manages to veil her negative feelings in the interaction, by simply feigning being cool-headed while beginning to read a fashion magazine. Her malicious remark is short-lived, thus avoiding a possibly indignation-laden repartee from the hearer.

Kotthoff (2000) claims that women's self-irony, humor at their own expense is more often encountered then in the case of men. A female narrator often presents her misadventures and inadequacies and indulges a self – derogatory attitude. Beyond danger-inducing generalisations, women tend to initiate forms of humor based on incongruity and surprise, while forms of put-down humor dominate among men. As she refrains from ironically answering, Andrea mentally engages in self-directed irony as well in irony targeted towards potential addressees. Thus, Andrea cannot stand Miranda's husband who exasperates her with all sort of unpleasant questions which she would rather not answer. She uses irony as a device to avoid direct impact of any explicit hurtful words or phrases which might hurt the interlocutor's feelings. In **(U1)** and **(U2)** she reiterates the same question ('What's going on?') with the purpose of articulating her lamentable situation. In **(U3)** ('I spend most of my time trying to survive my term of indentured servitude with your sadistic wife') and **(U4)** ('If there are ever any free minutes during the workday when she's not making some belittling demand, then I'm trying to block out the brainwash drivel that's spoon-fed to me by her assistant in chief') the reader witnesses her ironising her boss (an act she can only fancy) and casting blame on her for making her existence deplorable. Although claiming to be very satisfied with her work in **(U6)** ('Well, Mr. Tomlinson, not too much'), deep inside she hates her boss and the "indentured servitude" she has to put up with **(U5)** ('On the increasingly rare occasions that I find myself outside the confines of this magazine, I'm usually trying to convince myself that it really is OK to eat more than eight hundred calories a day and that being a size six does not put me in the plus-size category'). The only thing that Andrea is able to make known through **(U6)** and **(U7)** is that she is just fine, there is not much going on in her life; in the discussion there is no mention of her genuine feelings.

> "Thank you, Andy. You really are a big help to everyone. So Mr. T. would sure like to hear more about your life. What's going on?"
>
> What's going on? **(U1)** What's going on? **(U2)** Hmm, well, let's see here. Really not all that much, I suppose. I spend most of my time trying to survive my term

of indentured servitude with your sadistic wife. **(U3)** If there are ever any free minutes during the workday when she's not making some belittling demand, then I'm trying to block out the brainwash drivel that's spoon-fed to me by her assistant in chief. **(U4)** On the increasingly rare occasions that I find myself outside the confines of this magazine, I'm usually trying to convince myself that it really is OK to eat more than eight hundred calories a day and that being a size six does not put me in the plus-size category. **(U5)** So I guess the short answer is, not much.

"Well, Mr. Tomlinson, not too much. **(U6)** I work a lot. And I guess when I'm not working I hang out with my best friend, or my boyfriend. Try to see my family." I used to read a lot, I wanted to say, but I'm too tired now. And sports have always been a pretty big part of my life, but there wasn't time anymore. **(U7)** (Weisberger 2003: 201)

The only thing that keeps Andrea going is her belief that this humiliating experience is simply a means to an end: to work with a prestigious newspaper such as *The New Yorker:* "The prestige of having Runway on my résumé was sure to give me even more credibility when I eventually applied to work at The New Yorker than, say, having Popular Mechanics there. Besides, I'm sure a million girls would die for this job".

This verbal pattern of behaviour also emerges in the following paragraph in which the reader clearly understands how Andrea feels under the constant pressure of her superior; Andrea repeats that she is a 'lucky girl' in **(U1), (U2), (U3)** and **(U4)**, thus flouting the Quantity Maxim, by being repetitive and making her discourse more informative than is required, when, deep down, she is perfectly aware she would quit her job in a split-second if she found another one with a more serious newspaper.

Ah, yes. Mrs. Whitmore. I am a lucky girl indeed. **(U1)** I'm so lucky, you have no idea. **(U2)** I can't tell you how lucky I felt when I was sent out just yesterday afternoon to purchase tampons for my boss, only to be told that I'd bought the wrong ones and asked why I do nothing right. **(U3)** And luck is probably the only way to explain why I get to sort another person's sweat- and food-stained clothing each morning before eight and arrange to have it cleaned. Oh, wait! I think what actually makes me luckiest of all is getting to talk to breeders all over the tractate area for three straight weeks in search of the perfect French

bulldog puppy so two incredibly spoiled and unfriendly little girls can each have their own pet. **(U4)** Yes, that's it! (Weisberger 2003: 173)

The above analysis of sarcastic irony in Lauren Weisberger's novel points out that Miranda's domineering nature pervades the overwhelming majority of her utterances and is strengthened by caustic irony. The interactional milieu she creates is cold and overbearingly judgemental. Because of Miranda's incessant use of irony and sarcasm, Andrea changes her plain, commonsensical, low profile dressing style, for a posh eccentric one, in order to win the approval of her unfeeling boss and her colleagues, especially Emily's, her obnoxious co-worker. The gist of Miranda's ironies consists in the intention to damage her interlocutor's face: she incessantly wants to emphasize the faults of the others, whom she perceives as inferior, ceaselessly failing her expectations.

6.8.2. Sarcastic irony as a means of 'bonding' and 'biting' in '*Grey's Anatomy*'

As the series *Grey's Anatomy* prevalently focuses about relationships, either doctor-doctor, or doctor-patient relationships, the following analyses of several conversations will uproot the ironic-sarcastic vein of these conversations as well as take into account the contextual use of irony and its relation to the characters' emotions, intentions and behavioural patterns. The interns frequently make use of the language as a form of play especially in ingroup conversations, when they all gather to rest, and the function of joking is to vent their feelings. Humor helps them clarify work – related issues and confess work – related frustrations in everyday conversation, vent their fears of failure in their jobs and it is an opportunity to showcase their personality. Joking serves other purposes as well such as building up relationships, bonding or disregarding somebody's condition. On the other hand, the interns find themselves on an inferior position towards the residential doctors as they have to learn from their attendant, work hard to gain respect and appreciation and eventually acquire a status in the medical community of one of the best hospitals. Consequently, the first set of excerpts is meant to analyse the role played by irony in the conversations between Dr Bailey and her interns, while the second set will delve into the 'bonding' and 'biting' functions of irony among interns.

6.8.3. Humor in verbal encounters between Dr. Bailey and her interns

On their first day at work the interns are assigned to Dr. Miranda Bailey, nicknamed 'The Nazi' and are surprised to see a thick-set hostile-looking woman as their attendant. Dr. Bailey's sarcasm is one of her major conversation penchants and she makes use of it whenever she establishes the way her interns are supposed to relate to her. The outgoing enthusiastic Izzie Stevens tries to introduce herself, in order to establish a personal and professional rapport, an enterprise which fails lamentably:

> IZZIE: Hi. I'm Isabel Stevens but everyone calls me Izzie. *(She holds out her hand to shake Dr. Bailey's. Dr. Bailey just looks at her)* DR. BAILEY: I have 5 rules. Memorize them. Rule number 1. Don't bother sucking up. I already hate you, that's not gonna change. *(points to the desk)* Trauma protocol. Phone lists. Pagers. Nurses will page you." (Episode 1, 1st series)

Dr Bailey's refusal to shake Izzie's hand suggests blatant unwillingness to establish any rapport based on equality of status with the interns and preserve her authority, irrespective of such behaviour incurring the risk of being dictatorial. Her gesture is a straightforward, bald-on record face-threatening act, as she will not cooperate with Izzie's bashful initiative to minimally socialize. At the same time,

Bailey's reaction indicates a tendency to preserve her own face; she preserves her own dignity and authority, while patronizing the interns and not refraining from overtly declaring her dictatorial stance.

The target of her ridicule is not only Izzie, but all interns. Sarcasm is achieved through the communication of personal disapproval of the interns' attempt to establish a friendly rapport with her. Her rules are sarcastically enunciated, having a totalitarian tonality and being intended to infantilise the addressees: Bailey's statement 'I already hate you, that's not gonna change' is a hyperbole, sounding like an ultimatum although they are at the beginning of an allegedly long – term cooperation.

However, the interns are eager to learn and they are about to do any compromise to be asked to scrub in. It takes Meredith a lot of courage to go to Bailey, and offer her a Mocha Latte offering, so as to smoothen the ground for her volunteering to assist in the O.R.

> MEREDITH: Dr. Bailey, I was hoping to assist you in the O.R today, *(Bailey stops walking and turns around)* Maybe do a minor procedure? I think I'm ready. *(She holds up the tray with the latte)* Mocha latte?
> *(Bailey is about to speak before she is interrupted by the others who have heard everything)*
> CRISTINA: If she gets to cut, I want to cut too.
> IZZIE: Yeah me too.
> GEORGE: I wouldn't mind another shot. I mean if everybody else is.
> DR. BAILEY: Stop talking. Every intern wants to perform their first surgery. That's not your job. Do you know what your job is? To make your resident happy. Do I look happy? No. Why? Because my interns are whining. You know what will make me look happy? Having the code team staffed, having the trauma pages answered, having the weekend labs delivered and having someone down in the pit doing the sutures!" (Episode 2, 1st series)

The attendant is at the end of her tether while listening to the four interns' requests. The conversation tends to make the viewer believe that, although Bailey disapproves of her interns' behavior, she may choose somebody to perform surgery. Unexpectedly enough, her monologue consists of redundant rhetorical questions: 'Do you know what your job is?', 'Do I look happy?', 'Why' and snappish unexpected answers: 'To make your resident happy.' 'Because my interns are whining'. Dr. Bailey's sarcastic reply reinforces the hierarchical relationship between her and her interns. One source of her sarcasm is her choice of the words:

the verb 'whining' has a pejorative meaning, designating an activity which is highly inappropriate with surgical residents. Her first question 'Do you know what your job is?' is redundant because the interns obviously know what their job is. Bailey does not ask this question to remind them which their duty but to infantilise them. She is treating them as if they were children or retarded people while stating the obvious in such a blunt manner. Bailey is not unhappy with the interns' attempt but she tries to make them aware that work-related issues prevail.

Attardo's theory on the function of irony successfully applies to Dr. Bailey's replies. As pointed out before, according to Attardo, humorous discourses (including ironical and/or sarcastical stretches of conversation) has three main functions, one of them being *social management*, which involves both social control and conflict mediation. Bailey uses humor as a social management strategy, she emphasizes the interns' attitude as being childish while reprimanding them as to their lack of focus on other issues, and reinforces the hierarchical rapport between the attendant and the interns. At the same time, she avoids any conflict between the interns, an unavoidable situation which would have emerged if she had picked one of them to perform their first surgery. In this case she clearly states that the choice is not their job and they will benefit from equal odds.

The conversation below highlights Dr. Bailey's use of sarcasm while venting displeasure at her interns' sloth. The manner in which Bailey draws attention to their sluggish actions is contemptuous, her contempt being best voiced in her pretending to address them as if they were children:

> DR. BAILEY: Are we saving lives or having a tea party? Walk faster people. (Episode 3, 2nd series)

Her attitude is over authoritative and rigid. The expression 'tea party' occurs again in the conversation below, when the interns lose focus on their jobs in order to admire Dr. Bailey's baby. Their attendant does not hesitate to reply:

> *All the interns are admiring Dr.Bailey's baby*
> DR. BAILEY: Okay this is not a tea party. Go work. Save some lives. *(They disperse quickly)* Now!
> *(Bailey chuckles and walks down the other way)*(Episode 18, 2nd series)

Obviously, the expression 'tea party' is derogative: Bailey unhesitantly engages in belittling the situation as well as her interns' behavior by reminding them the obvious: they are at work, in a hospital and they seem to forget that. Moreover, her

urge 'Save some lives' is essentially hyperbolic: while sending them to work, dr.Bailey overemphasizes the interns' huge medical responsibility.

Transgressing Bailey's rules takes place when Cristina and Izzie unsuccessfully try to persuade the family to give their consent to performing autopsy so they eventually decide to steal the body and perform an autopsy, disregarding the consequences of their actions. They have to perform a draining procedure on the man who died unexpectedly. The scene is humorous as Izzie does not feel completely self-assured as to the procedure while Cristina claims having the situation under control. The next moment Cristina produces an anatomy book, which reveals that Cristina herself was unfamiliar with the procedure. Bailey, busy in the O.R., notices that the two girls are missing and she knows 'exactly where they are':

> *Cristina and Izzie are performing the autopsy when Bailey enters*
> BAILEY: Don't even tell me you're doing what I think you're doing!
> CRISTINA: Um...
> BAILEY: Not only did you disregard the family's wishes, you broke the law! You could be arrested for assault! Do you like jail? The hospital could be sued! I could lose my license, my job! I like my job! Did you think about any of this before you started cutting open a poor man's body? I could seriously kick both of your asses right now. Do you have anything to say?
> *(Izzie picks up Mr. Franklin's heart from the scales)*
> IZZIE: Look at his heart.
> BAILEY: It's huge!
> IZZIE: It's over 600 grams, and there's some kind of grainy material in it.
> CRISTINA: We want to run some tests.
> BAILEY: Oh, now you want to run tests?
> CRISTINA: At this point, what could it hurt?
> BAILEY: I hate both of you right now."(Episode 9, 1st series)

When the attendant demands what they have been trying to conceal from her and are least likely to confess: 'Don't even tell me you're doing what I think you're doing!', Cristina and Izzie freeze. Bailey continues stating the obvious - that the girls have failed to observe the regulations. Her monologue turns into a series of sarcastic, rhetorical statements, questions alternating with anger – venting exclamative which show bleak scenarios likely to result from non–observance of hospital regulations: 'Do you like jail?...I like my job!' She deeply disapproves of the interns' misplaced and risky initiative by mercilessly uttering expressions of exasperation and grim

prophecies. Finally, their disobeying the rules of the hospital turns out to be a good initiative because the dead man's heart is bigger than normal. The two girls figured that the cause of the man's death is hereditary and they may save the man's daughter provided the disease is diagnosed in due time. The family signs the autopsy papers, 'just as a simple formality' as Bailey tells them. This is another example when Bailey uses humor as a social management procedure and makes Cristina and Izzie realize the serious consequences of their actions. "I hate both of you right now.' is a hyperbole; Bailey deliberately over-emphasizes her anger and disapproval, to make her interns understand that even if performing the autopsy turns out to be useful, she still strongly disapproves with their erratic behavior and is indignant at their initiative.

On the other hand, Bailey defends her interns when she knows that they are right. She avoids marring the reputation of the medical staff of Seattle Grace Hospital and her protective authority strengthens her bond with the interns, irrespective of her sarcastic and stern attitude towards them. Despite her empathetic bouts, Dr. Bailey preserves her sarcastic attitude though, whenever she interferes with the interns. This is the case when a man falls from the 5th floor in front of George O'Malley and survives. The man dies on the hospital table shortly after his accident, without any reason. George is impressed with the peculiar series of events so he talks to Bailey:

> DR. BAILEY: There'll be an autopsy. Sometimes people get on the table and they just die. There's no way of knowing beforehand and no way of controlling it.
> GEORGE: But he fell five storeys and lived. It doesn't make any sense. He survived so I could go and find Daisy. And then she didn't even want to see him so what's the point?
> DR. BAILEY: We're all a part of the cosmic joke O'Malley. Now leave me alone. (Episode 8, 1st series)

Bailey's sarcastic remark 'we're all a part of cosmic joke' echoes George's utterance 'He survived so I could find Daisy'. Bailey sarcastically reproduces George's statement, expressing disapproval with the intern's belief in the wondrous workings of fate. 'Now leave me alone.' puts a brutal end to George's attempt of asking more questions or becoming too much emotionally involved in this case. The context makes the utterance sound even more sarcastic because Bailey is the person least expected to be interested in a philosophic discussion with one of her interns. Her avowed lack of interest is expressed in the utterance meant to voice feigned

interest: 'We're all a part of the cosmic joke O'Malley'. Bailey's sarcasm is meant to bring George's feet back on the ground and relinquish his fate-related view on the events.

To conclude, whenever she is not being sarcastic or indignant with the faulty performance of her interns, Miranda Bailey consistently preserves an impersonal intonation, which rules out the likelihood of intimacy. her sarcasm is a social management tool, which she wields masterfully, so as to emphasise professional hierarchies and to avoid useless emotional waste.

6.8.4.Humor among interns

Teasing and joking as means of social identity display and of social bonding. Verbal and situational humor as well as conversational joking may engender conflict, may control clashes of will but may equally foster social proximity (Boxter and Cortes-Conde 1997: 275-277). When social identity is displayed by means of humor, factors such as gender, social distance between the interlocutors weigh significantly. Situational humor delineates a frame which is dynamically shaped by in-group knowledge, including not only verbal acts but also non-verbal communication, organised as mental cognitive structures

Boxter and Cortes-Conde distinguish between three types of humor: *teasing*, *joking* about an absent other and *self-denigrating* humor. Teasing implies the presence of the person targeted by conversational joking. This person, be it either the

addressee or a participant in the conversation immediately becomes the focus of all locutors. When joking about absent others, the members of the conversation "unite in a clear bond" (Boxer and Cortes–Conde 1997: 280). This type of humor is regarded as safer since its satirical effect is less likely to arouse hostility or make the others feel uncomfortable. In terms of safety and face-preserving, self-denigrating humor, although seemingly threatening to the locutor's own face, places the speaker at the center of the verbal play. With self-targeted irony accompanied by self-denigration, the speaker is both the initiator and the referent of humor. Norrick (1993) grasps self – denigrating humor as an opportunity to present positive self – images beyond what is seemingly voiced as harmful to one's own image:

> Funny personal anecdotes end up presenting a positive self- image rather than a negative one. …they convey a so – called sense of humor, which counts as a virtue in our society. They present a self with an ability to laugh at problems and overcome them – again an admirable character trait. So apparently self-effacing personal anecdotes redound to conversational rapport and positive face for the teller in several ways at once (Boxer and Cortes–Conde 1997: 281-282)

As humorous occurrences, joking about an absentee and self – denigrating humor appear safer than teasing. Conversational joking has the main role of strengthening social bonds while self – teasing not only deliberately displays the speaker's identity, but equally accelerates bonding among participants.

The first episode of *Grey's Anatomy* foregrounds a group of interns whose personalities are poignantly different, and who come from different backgrounds. Despite common background knowledge – they all studied medicine and they are going to practise as residents for the next seven years, the interns barely know each other, and resort to verbal resources as the primary landmarks guiding them towards building rapports. As the analyses of various conversations will hopefully point out, irony and sarcasm rank among the most frequent and most efficient linguistic resources meant to consolidate bonds among the interns.

One of the most amusing scenes is in the first episode when one of the interns is chosen to perform his first surgery, closely supervised by the attendants. All interns are crammed in the observation deck above the O.R. to watch George performing an appendectomy for the first time. This is the first time when the interns act as an in-group, taking into account lack of professional experience associated with a propensity to turn nervous George into the butt of their injokes:

Camera pans to observation deck above the O.R where interns have gathered to watch George help with the surgery.
INTERN #1: He's gonna faint. He's a fainter.
INTERN #2: Nah code brown. Right in his pants.
INTERN #1: He's all about the flop sweat. He's gonna sweat himself unsterile.
INTERN #3: 10 bucks says he messes up the McBurney.
CRISTINA: 10 says he cries.
INTERN #2: I'll put 20 on a total meltdown.
MEREDITH: 50 says he pulls the whole thing off. *(All the interns stare at Meredith)* That's one of us down there. The first one of us. Where's your loyalty?
(Everyone is quiet for a bit)
CRISTINA: 75 says he can't even I.D the appendix.
IZZIE: I'll take that action. (Episode 1, 1st series)

During this conversation, sarcasm is directed at an absentee: George is down in the O.R. and cannot hear his colleagues' sarcastic bets. However, he can feel the high pressure of being in the center of the attention, knowing that his reputation is at risk and that his image as perceived by the other interns and the residential doctors depends on his performing the appendectomy according to satisfactory professional standards. The interns on the observation deck clearly bond while betting on George's allegedly clumsy attempt to overcome first surgery fright. Meredith is the only supportive intern, reminding the others of their own lack of experience and emphasising that mocking at another inexperienced intern is not only an appropriate but an unethical attitude. She is trying to redress George's damaged face by means of a positive politeness strategy. Predictably enough,George's face is seriously damaged when he messes up the surgery. Discouraged, he looks for compassion among the other interns (Cristina, Meredith, Izzie, Alex) and he finally resorts to self – denigrating humor:

GEORGE: Maybe I should've gone into geriatrics. No one minds when you kill an old person.
CRISTINA: Surgery is hot. It's the marines. It's macho. It's hostile. It's hardcore. Geriatrics is for freaks who live with their mothers and never have sex.
GEORGE: I've gotta get my own place. (Episode 1, 1st series)

Paralinguistic cues such as George sitting in a wheel – chair while talking to the others, his sad eye gaze and depressed look encourage the viewer to perceive him as a pitiable victim of hostile circumstances. In addition, George himself questions his ability to become a surgeon and wonders whether geriatrics could be a better choice. His self – doubts, although expressed in a hyperbolised humorous manner, are candid. George's irony fulfils a self – protective function, thus triggering a sort of defense mechanism. If George looks for empathy from his mates, Cristina's reply is far from being encouraging: her derogatory definition of geriatrics as a job ('Geriatrics is for freaks who live with their mothers and never have sex') is an off – record strategy: Cristina performs a face – threatening act by means of an implicature. She indirectly labels George as a weirdo, as opposed to a 'true man', whose macho propensity is likely to urge him into choosing surgery.

George is not the only intern who seriously doubts his professional abilities after his first 48 – hour shift at Seattle Grace Hospital. Together with their attendant's strictness, exhaustion contributes to the feeling of inadequacy and they tend to believe that they could do better in other fields. When she doubts her ability to become a good surgeon Meredith uses irony in a self-deprecating manner.

> MEREDITH: I wish I wanted to be a chef. Or a ski instructor. Or a kindergarten teacher.
> GEORGE: You know I would've been a really good postal worker. I'm dependable. *(Meredith chuckles)* You know my parents tell everyone they meet that their son's a surgeon. As if it's a big accomplishment. Superhero or something. … If they could see me now.

After 48 exhausting working hours, any other profession she may envisage (chef, ski instructor, kindergarden teacher) are likely to bring her peace of mind and fulfilment. George is being supportive and when mentioning he would make a good postal worker, he uses irony to pinpoint that allegedly lesser jobs might compensate for the traumatic experience of the endless shifts. His self-ironising remark arouses Meredith's laughter. Self – denigration involves identity display: both interns admit lack of self-confidence trust and question their abilities being fully aware of the potential face damage incurred. fed by self-directed irony, self – denigration enables Meredith and George to bond and achieve social proximity.

The irony-laden and sarcasm-permeated verbal interactions between the interns unveil a wide array of feelings: sympathy, curiosity, annoyance. A rapport of mutual dislike soon emerges between Cristina, one of the most competitive interns, proud to be a Stanford valedictorian and Alex Karev, a shallow, rather misogynistic, self-centred playboy. The interaction below is illustrative of their mutual dislike:

CRISTINA: I have a BA from Smith, a PhD from Berkeley and a MD from Stamford and I'm delivering lab results. It'll take me all day to get through these.
(Bailey and cocky intern Alex approach from down the hall. Bailey overhears the last of Cristina's sentence)
DR. BAILEY: Then get started.
CRISTINA: Oh, ah I wasn't complaining. I, I …
DR. BAILEY *(interrupts):* Intern was reassigned. So he's mine now. Have him shadow you for the day. Show him how I do things.
(Bailey walks off)
ALEX *(holds out his hand):* Alex Karev, nice to meet you.
CRISTINA *(shakes his hand):* The pig who called Meredith the nurse. Yeah. I hate you on principle.
(She starts heading down the hall. Alex follows leaving George standing by himself)
ALEX: And you're the pushy overbearing kiss ass. I, ah hate you too.
CRISTINA: Oh it should be fun then. (Episode 2, 1st series)

The irony of the situation (an outstanding medical student delivering labs) is augmented when the attendant overhears her remark and suggests she should get started. Cristina takes great pride in her Stanford diploma and she finds it hard to stoop to delivering labs. Alex's intention of introducing himself to Cristina the moment she is coerced to obey her attendant's orders is a positive impoliteness strategy: 'Alex Karev, nice to meet you' sounds ruthlessly ironic in the context of Cristina's positive and negative face being threatened by Dr. Bailey. Despite her seemingly polite reply to her new colleague's cue, Cristina's utterance disguises an expression of poorly concealed contempt: 'The pig who called Meredith the nurse. Yeah. I hate you on principle.' Cristina does not hesitate to use a bald – on – record strategy since she unambiguously tries to damage the interlocutor's positive face, by calling him an unflattering name and by showing no hesitation in insulting him. Without delay, Alex employs bald – on – record impoliteness strategy meant to salvage his face while concomitantly issuing a bald-on-record threat at Cristina's positive face ('And you're the pushy overbearing kiss ass. I, ah hate you too'). Cristina's concluding remark ('Oh it should be fun then.') suggests detachment while it does not necessarily perform a distancing function: explicitness may sometimes foster social proximity despite acknowledgement of mutual dislike. Under such circumstances, highly sarcastic instances of conversation between Cristina and Alex do no longer shock anyone:

Cristina and Alex lounging in the deserted hospital hallway hangout.
ALEX *(moans):* My head hurts.
CRISTINA: Maybe it's a tumor.
ALEX: You wish I had a tumor.
CRISTINA: Look I'd rip your face off if it meant I got to scrub in." (Episode 4, 1st series)

Alex complains about a headache, not necessarily looking for compassion while Cristina's overstatement or hyperbole-laden remark is obviously an instance of mock politeness. She emits mock threats, some of which are boldly targeted at damaging Alex's physical integrity ('Look I'd rip your face off if it meant I got to scrub in.'). Christina's sole purpose is performing a many and as challenging surgical procedures as possible and she admits resorting to machiavelic means so as to assist surgeons in the O. R.

For a certain span of time, Meredith has been seeing surgeon Derek Shepard, who sneaks in her house every night, so that her flat mates George and Izzie should not see him. The following excerpt is an instance of conversation between George and Izzie in Meredith's absence: neither seems to have had enough sleep the previous night because of the noise coming out of Meredith's room:

Izzie is watching coffee percolate in the kitchen when George enters.
GEORGE: You get any sleep?
IZZIE: Oh, she could oil the bedsprings as a courtesy or at least buy a padded headboard.
GEORGE: So who's the guy?
IZZIE: You think it was just one guy doing all that work? (Episode 6, 1st series)

Izzie's reply is ironic because she suggests Meredith to 'oil the bedsprings as a courtesy' or 'at least' buy a padded headboard. At first blush, her choice of words indicates a polite stance, but their use is intended as ironical at Meredith's expense. Izzie's rhetorical question is a hyperbole which implies that there has been more than one person "doing all that work" and making so much noise that she could not get any sleep.

Familiarisation among the interns increases with every episode and irony-laden encounters only foster proximity and consolidate friendship. In episode 9, 1st series George gets a sexually transmitted disease. Letting the others know that he has syphilis is embarrassing for him and his positive face is severely damaged when he finds out that all the interns know about his illness:

They sit down at a table with Cristina and Izzie.
CRISTINA: Hey, syph-boy.
GEORGE: You told her?
IZZIE: Just Cristina.
ALEX: 'Syph-boy.' It's got a nice ring to it, it's kinda like Superboy, only diseased.
CRISTINA: Izzie didn't have to say a word. Around here, the only thing that spreads faster than disease is gossip.
GEORGE: That's not true. Just cause Izzie can't keep her mouth shut doesn't mean everyone knows.
(Meredith enters)
MEREDITH: Hey, George. How are you feeling? Sorry about the syphilis.
GEORGE: Everyone in this hospital knows?
ALEX: Knows you're a player. (Episode 9, 1st series)

Given their familiarity, Cristina does not hesitate to use a bald – on – record strategy, and mock George by addressing him as 'syph –boy'. She labels him according to the embarrassing disease he has, which is blatantly offending. Alex Karev joins her in proffering ironical comments on the expression 'syph – boy', which is derisively contrasted with 'Superboy' The expression 'only diseased' mockingly belittles the importance of George's ailment and shows mock pity at George's expense. George tries to preserve his face while inquiring about the source of the gossip. Meredith's sincere expression of compassion does not comfort George, who suspiciously wonders whether there is anyone who does not know about his disease.

To conclude, conversational joking among the interns is a means to exhibit social identity and to build interpersonal rapports. The occurrence of irony, teasing, mocking constitute linguistic resources which fulfil both bonding and biting functions.

7. FIGURATIVELY SPEAKING: METAPHORICAL THOUGHT AND EXPRESSION

You know that it would be untrue
You know that I would be a liar
If I was to say to you
Girl, we couldn't get much higher
Come on baby, light my fire
Come on baby, light my fire
Try to set the night on fire

The time to hesitate is through
No time to wallow in the mire
Try now we can only lose
And our love become a funeral pyre
Come on baby, light my fire
Come on baby, light my fire
Try to set the night on fire, yeah
(The Doors – *Light my fire*)

The recent proliferation of theories on metaphor has emerged as a backlash against traditional Aristotelian views on mind as inherently literal and on figurative language as exclusively ornamental. According to traditional approaches, the mind provides reflection of already existing unalterable truths, while figurative language is a mere a device of poetic imagination and of rhetorical flourish, a matter of *extra*ordinary rather than ordinary language. Consequently, figurative language is not only useless but misleading when access to true knowledge is pursued. Gibbs states that, in the Aristotelian view,

> We see the mind as a mirror of some God-given reality that can be best described in simple, nonmetaphorical terms, language that more closely reflects underlying 'truths' about the world. Figurative or poetic assertions are distinct from true knowledge, a claim first made by Plato in his famous critique of poetry. To think or to speak poetically is to adopt a distorted stance toward the ordinary world (Gibbs 1994: 1).

In the next sections, I will discuss recent linguistic and philosophical theories of meaning, which emphasise that our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is *fundamentally metaphorical in nature*: the way we think and we experience life is very much a matter of metaphor.

7.1. The ubiquity of metaphor

Metaphor is an indispensable instrument of conceptualizing the world, which implies a particular entity being perceived, spoken of or described in terms of another entity ('*meta*' meaning '*over*' and '*pherein*' meaning '*to carry*"), "a particular set of linguistic processes whereby aspects of one object are < carried over > or transferred to another object so that the second object is spoken of as if it were the first." (Hawkes 1992: 1). Hence *the all-pervasiveness of metaphor in everyday life, in language as well as in thought and action.* (Lakoff 2001) : because so many of the concepts that are so important to us are either abstract or not clearly delineated in our experience (our emotions, ideas, time, etc.), we need to get a grasp on them by means of other concepts, understood in clearer terms (spatial orientation, objects, etc.).

Part of the structure of a specific concept can be understood metaphorically, using structure imported from another domain, while part of it may be understood directly, or literally. Such imports are systematic in that there is *a fixed correspondence* between the structure of the *domain to be understood* (e.g. life) and the structure of the *domain in terms of which we understand it* (e.g. journey). Since we usually understand such transfers in terms of common experiences, they are largely unconscious and their cognitive functions are mostly automatically fulfilled. More specifically, in the case of profoundly conventionalized conceptual metaphors, aspects of one concept, *the target*, are understood in terms of nonmetaphoric aspects of another concept, *the source.* "A metaphor with the name A is B is a mapping of part of the structure of our knowledge of source domain B onto target domain A" (Lakoff and Turner 1993:59).

Contemporary views on metaphor record slightly different opinions about the two components of a metaphor: the *tenor* and the *vehicle*. Richards (1996) considers that the *tenor* is the entity/concept that is described in terms of another entity/concept, and the *vehicle* is the one in terms of which the first one is described. Max Black (1962) assimilates the tenor with what he calls '*primary subject*' and the *vehicle* with the '*secondary subject*'.

Since our ordinary conceptual system has been deemed as metaphorical in nature (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 3), metaphors are not just a matter of intellect, but also a matter of everyday processing, i.e. they govern our daily functioning, down to the most mundane details. "Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature" (Lakoff and Johnson

1980: 3-4).

Our conceptual system defines everyday reality since it structures what we perceive, how we interact with the surrounding world, and how we relate to other people: "Metaphors are basic schemes by which people conceptualize their experience and the external world" (Gibbs, 1994: 1). Language is not independent of mind and substantially contributes to our perceptual and conceptual understanding of experience. Figurative comprehension is not simply a matter of language neither is it deviant or ornamental but omnipresent in everyday speech, taking into account that it provides much of the foundation for thought, reason, and imagination.

7.2. Source domains and target domains

To illustrate how a concept can be both metaphorical and widely used in everyday language, the concept LOVE and the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY need to be contemplated. The experience of love permeates our everyday language through a wide variety of phrases:

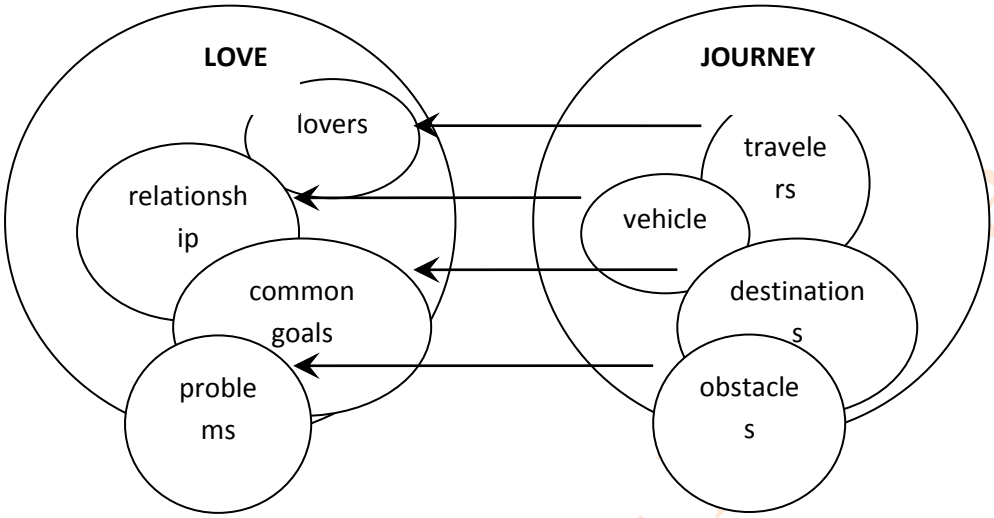
Look how far we've come.
We're at a crossroads.
We'll just have to go our separate ways.
We can't turn back now.
I don't think this relationship is going anywhere.
We're stuck.
It's been a long, bumpy road.
This relationship is a dead-end street.
We're just spinning our wheels.
Our marriage is on the rocks.
We've gotten off the track.
(Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 44f.).

The examples above are linguistic instantiations of a metaphorical scenario deep-rooted in our verbal expression as well as in our thought which views love as a journey. The cultural scenario of the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY entails correspondences between:

- lovers and travelers
- common life goals and destinations to be reached

- the love relationship and a traveling vehicle that allows them to pursue those common goals together
- problems in the relationship and obstacles in the path of travel (barriers and crossroads where a decision has to be made as to which direction to go and as to the co-travellers should keep traveling together) and so forth.

These correspondences may be visualised as follows:



(McGlone 1996: 547f.)

On the basis of the previous examples and the correspondence chart, the conclusion may be easily reached that language users categorise the concept of LOVE in terms of the concept of JOURNEY, by drawing specific correspondences between the domain of LOVE and that of JOURNEY. Metaphorical mappings enable comprehenders to achieve *understanding of relatively abstract concepts in terms of those that are more concrete* (Lakoff 2001). The main contribution of cognitive views resides in their acknowledging the complementarity of reason and imagination. While reason involves categorization, entailment and inference. Imagination involves picturing one entity in terms of another entity. By reuniting reason and imagination, metaphor appears as an instantiation of '*imaginative rationality*' (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 5-12).

The LOVE IS A JOURNEY metaphor can be understood as a mapping from a *source domain* (in this case, journeys) to a *target domain* (in this case, love). There are *ontological correspondences,* according to which entities in the domain of love (e.g., the lovers, their common goals, their difficulties, the love relationship, etc.) *correspond systematically* to entities in the domain of a journey (the travellers, the vehicle, destinations, etc.). Metaphors are not random or arbitrary occurrences, meant to be treated as isolated instances, they display *cross-cultural systematicity* (Lakoff and

Johnson 1980: 40)

7.3. Highlighting and hiding

Systematicity of metaphors involves two simultaneous processes: highlighting and hiding. To comprehend one aspect of a concept in terms of another (e.g., comprehending an aspect of love in terms of a journey) language users *highlight certain features* (headway or hindrance, partnership, obstacles, speed) while concomitantly *hiding other, inconsistent aspects of the concept* (such as travel equipment or schedule) Viewing love as a journey that two partners undertake in order to reach their common goals will automatically conceal another facet of love: love is a state of tension and/or of conflict. Thus particular facet of love is highlighted in a different conceptual metaphor, namely LOVE IS WAR:

He is known for his many rapid conquests.
She fought for him, but his mistress won out.
He fled from her advances.
She pursued him relentlessly.
He is slowly gaining ground with her.
He won her hand in marriage.
He overpowered her.
She is besieged by suitors.
He has to fend them off.
He enlisted the aid of her friends.
He made an ally of her mother.

Metaphorical structuring involved is partial, not total. If it were total, one concept would actually *be* the other, not merely be understood in terms of it. Strictly speaking, love is not a journey, it can only be understood in terms of a journey by **metaphorical mapping**. Neither is love a sick person in need of medical assistance in the metaphorical mapping LOVE IS A PATIENT, equally prolific in everyday language. We can speak of a *sick relationship, a strong, healthy marriage.* A marriage can be *dead,* or it can no longer be *revived.* Yet, no correspondences occur at the level health insurance or admission to hospital:

Their marriage is on the mend.
We're getting back on our feet.

Their relationship is in really good shape.
They've got a listless marriage.
Their marriage is on its last legs.
It's a tired affair.
(Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 49)

7.4. The experiential grounding of our conceptual system

Cognitivist views emphasise that our conceptual system is metaphorically structured and that is most concepts are partially understood in terms of other concepts, because *conceptualisation is experientially grounded*. The most salient sources for direct conceptualisation reside in spatial notions, such as UP/DOWN, FRONT/BACK, IN/OUT, NEAR/FAR, one of the earliest human interactions with the surrounding environment.. Such landmarks of our spatial experience are enlightening as to our ceaseless everyday bodily functioning, which makes them prioritary over other possible structurings of space.

It cannot be claimed that physical experience is in any way more basic than other kinds of experience, whether emotional, mental or cultural. Yet, more often than not, the nonphysical is typically conceptualized in terms of the physical. In other words, we conceptualize the less clearly delineated, i.e. usually less concrete and inherently vaguer concepts in terms of the more clearly delineated, i.e. usually more concrete concepts (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 56-59). The systematic correlates between our emotions (like happiness) and our sensory-motor experiences (the erect posture) form the basis of orientational metaphorical concepts (such as HAPPY IS UP).

7.5. Classification of metaphors from a cognitive perspective

According to the cognitive view, metaphors divide into three main classes:

1) Structural metaphors structure one entity or concept in terms of another, without any constraint as to the concrete of abstract nature of either. In western cultures, time is conceptualised as a valuable commodity, whose waste should be impeded:

TIME IS A VALUABLE COMMODITY

You're wasting your time.
There's little time left – let's hurry.
Come on, we're running out of time.
Sorry to take away some of your precious time...
This project is not worth considering for a second.
Lucky him – he's got so much time on his hands!

2) Orientational metaphors organize a whole system of concepts - moods, quantities, virtues, emotions or reason – in terms of oppositions related to *spatial orientation*: up-down, in-out, front-back, on-off, deep-shallow, central-peripheral, near-far. Such spatial orientations arise from the way our bodies function within our physical environment. The widespread occurrence of the following metaphorical mappings below emphasises the centrality of orientational metaphors:

HAPPY IS UP vs. SAD IS DOWN

I'm feeling up.
My spirits rose.
He's really low these days.
I fell into a depression.

CONSCIOUS IS UP vs. UNCONSCIOUS IS DOWN

Get up.
He rises early in the morning.
He dropped off to sleep.
He's under hypnosis.

HEALTH AND LIFE ARE UP vs. SICKNESS AND DEATH ARE DOWN

He's at the peak of health.
Lazarus rose from the dead.
He's in top shape.
He fell ill.
He came down with the flu.
His health is declining.

He dropped dead.

MORE IS UP vs. LESS IS DOWN

My income rose last year.
The number of errors he made is incredibly low.
He is underage.
If you're too hot, turn the heat down.

GOOD IS UP vs. BAD IS DOWN

Things are looking up.
Things are at an all-time low.
He does high-quality work.
Her enthusiasm was ebbing.

VIRTUE IS UP vs. DEPRAVITY IS DOWN

She has high standards.
She is upright.
She is an upstanding citizen.
That was a low trick.
I wouldn't stoop to that.
That would be beneath me.

RATIONAL IS UP vs. EMOTIONAL IS DOWN

This metaphorical mapping has solid experiential and cultural roots, taking into account that, in our culture, people view themselves as being in control over animals, plants and their physical environment, by virtue of their unique reasoning ability. CONTROL IS UP thus provides a basis for RATIONAL IS UP (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 17)

The discussion fell to the emotional level, but I raised it back up to the rational plane.
He couldn't rise above his emotions (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 14-19).

3) Ontological metaphors enable us to view events, activities, emotions, ideas as clearly delimited entities and substances, on which boundaries have been

imposed. Hence the frequency of the so-called *container metaphors*. The experiential grounding of the container metaphors lies in the fact that we are physical beings, bounded and set off from the rest of the world by the surface of our skins, and we experience the rest of the world as outside us. As Lakoff and Johnson remark, "each of us is a container, with an in-out orientation. We project our own in-out orientation onto other physical objects that are bounded by surfaces. Thus, we also view them as containers with an inside and an outside." (1980: 29) Lakoff and Johnson further specify that we impose this orientation to our natural environment, to solid objects as well as to substances, land areas, human beings, rocks or substances, the visual field, events or activities:

There's a lot of land in Kansas. (land area as container)
He's out of sight now. The ship is coming into view. (visual field as container).
He's immersed in washing the windows right now. (activity as substance and therefore as container)
I put a lot of energy into washing the windows. (action as container).

Events and actions are conceptualized metaphorically as objects, activities as substances, states as containers. Hence the wide variety of expressions such as "to be *in* love", "to be *out of* trouble", "to *enter/emerge from* a particular psychological .state

People are physical beings, bounded and delineated from the rest of the world by the surface of our skins, and our *bodies are viewed as containers* endowed with an inside and an outside:

> Our encounter with containment and boundedness is one of the most pervasive features of our bodily experience. From the beginning, we experience constant physical containment in our surroundings (those things that envelop us). We move in and out of rooms, clothes, vehicles, and numerous kinds of bounded spaces. In other words, there are typical schemata for physical containment (Johnson
> 1987:21).

As the discussion of metaphors of anger will later reveal, emotions are conceptualised as fluids that get heated or cooled within such containers, whose level rises within such containers, and which sometimes gush out of the container:

When hearing about the libel, he blew his top.
She was steaming with outrage.

Let him simmer for a while, he deserves it.
Ralph had an outburst of rage/laughter/despair.
The demonstrators could not stifle their fury.

A special type of ontological metaphors is represented by those metaphors where the physical object is further specified as being a person. **Personification** allows us to make sense of phenomena in the world in human terms by ascribing human qualities to entities that are not human, such as theories, diseases, inflation, etc. This allows for the comprehension of a wide variety of experiences with non-human entities in terms of human motivations, goals, characteristics and activities.

Life has cheated me.
The experiment gave birth to a new theory in genetics.
Cancer finally caught up with him.
Inflation has attacked the foundation of our economy.
Our biggest enemy right now is inflation.

7.6. The cognitive paradigm of love

Lakoff and Turner (1993) point out that LOVE is not a concept that has a clearly delineated structure. Each aspect of love intended to be made salient is conceptualised via a different metaphorical mapping: LOVE IS A JOURNEY, LOVE IS WAR, LOVE IS A PHYSICAL FORCE, LOVE IS MADNESS. Aspects such as duration (ephemeral vs. eternal), level of emotional arousal (dispassionate vs. passionate), and level of commitment (flighty vs. dedicated) could be relevant. According to Glucksberg and McGlone (1999: 1541-1558), love, the target domain, is conceptualized in terms of deeply entrenched concrete concepts, the source domains, such as containers or journeys or external forces. Such metaphorical mappings will be discussed and illustrated in the subsections to come.

7.6.1. Love as a journey

Whenever we say something like '*going ahead with our plans*', or '*working our way around obstacles*' we exploit the basic metaphorical mapping PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS. When we think of love as purposeful, we think of it as having destinations and paths leading to those destinations, hence the metaphorical

mapping LOVE A JOURNEY. People worry about whether they '*are getting anywhere*' with their relationships, while if they have to make a choice out of several alternatives, they may utter '*I don't know which path to take*'.

At a closer look, the LOVE AS A JOURNEY metaphor produces the following entailments:

- the persons engaged in a relationship are travelers
- their purposes are destinations
- the means for achieving purposes are routes
- difficulties in love are impediments to travel
- progress is the distance traveled
- things the partners gauge their progress by are landmarks
- choices in love are crossroads
- the relationship itself is the vehicle

In *Can You Feel the Love Tonight* (Elton John) there is an interplay of metaphors of love and metaphors of the beloved person. The prevalent metaphor is LOVE AS A JOURNEY, which is revealed in the lines '*It's enough for wide eyed wanderer that we got this far*.' The present stage of the relationship, its progress up to the moment of speech correspond to the distance traveled so far by the two partners. The addresser describes himself as '*the wide eyed wanderer*', '*the star-crossed voyager*'. He also designates himself as a '*restless warrior*'. ('*It's enough for this restless warrior / Just to be with you*') The term '*warrior*' evokes the metaphor *LOVE IS WAR*, entailing that the one who aspires to attain true love must engage in a fight.

LOVE IS MAGIC is another metaphor underlying the lyrics. The addresser refers to "*an enchanted moment*", while Love is assigned the supernatural quality to "*make kings and vagabonds believe the very best*." Social inequities and rank differences are effaced by the touch of love, since the poor and the rich alike are rendered into submission by love.

When conceiving love in terms of a journey, the person in love may appear as a traveler who has gone astray '*on a dark and lonely road*', thus being doomed to lose his beloved:

'Will you treat me like some traveler
On a dark and lonely path
Who sees a light and a woman
Who will give him love…'
(*Broken Wings* - Chris De Burgh)

The 'dark and lonely path' is highly suggestive of a relationship undergoing a

crisis, while the light may be an instantiation of the love harboured by the chosen, in striking contrast with the darkness of the road the addresser undertook.

Blissful love can be described as reaching a celestial destination, the stars: '*you took me on a highway to the stars*'. Out of reach for mortal people, the stars symbolise ideal, unreachable love and happiness. By association with the orientational metaphor HAPPY IS UP, failure to attain this utopian destination is translated as an imposition to stop midway or a digression from the trajectory: '*[You] left me halfway there*.' and '*flew away*'

Love is an unparalleled experience, conceptualised as a journey to a mesmerising untrodden realm '*We're heading for something / somewhere I've never been*'. (Celine Dion*: The Power of Love).* Risk to get lost during such perilous journeys can be averted by receiving guidance from the beloved, conceptualised as a sense of direction though some unknown territory*:* "You gave my life some direction" (*Madonna: 'Stay'*.) The beloved person is assimilated to the guide meant to support the person in love embark upon some previously delineated path, hopefully leading to happiness.

7.6.2. The unseverable bond: love as unity

It is commonly assumed that people explicitly or implicitly acknowledge the existence in their society of a set of beliefs and conventions about romantic love, which have come to constitute *the prototypical model of romantic love***.** (Kövecses (1986:97-106; 1988: 60 – 71, Sanchez 1995: 669), organized into a series of stages within a temporally-delineated scenario.

Stage 1.

1.1. Love (as an entity) is an indispensable object.
1.2. Self (= person in love) therefore searches for it, till Self finally finds a true Object of Love.
1.3. Object of Love attracts Self irresistibly.
1.4. This attraction is the cause for Self's Love.
1.5. Love exists in Self.

Stage 2.

2.1. Self tries to keep control, i.e. to prevent Love from going above the limit on the scale of intensity.
2.2. Self, however, loses control over Love.

2.3. Love goes above the limit.
2.2. Self is in a state of lack of control.
2.3. Self experiences certain physiological effects of Love: increase in body heat, increase in heart rate, blushing and interference with accurate perception.
2.4. Love has likewise a number of behavioral effects on Self: physical closeness to Object of Love, sexual desire, loving visual behaviour, interference with normal life functions.

Stage 3.
3.1. Self attempts (in a variety of ways) to get Object of Love to return her/his Love in exchange for Self's Love.
3.2. Love exists in Object of Love.
3.3. Object of Love attempts to resist his/her own Love for Self.
3.4. Object of Love tries to keep the intensity of his/her Love below the limit.
3.5. The intensity of Object of Love's Love gradually rises above the limit.
3.6. Object of Love loses control over Love.
3.7. Object of Love experiences the same physiological and behavioral effects of Love

Stage 4.
4.1. Love is mutual.
4.2. Self and Object of Love view each other as in a state of perfect harmony, as forming a unity. Love is believed to be a source of energy, a need and a valuable possession that needs constant watching, since the Object of Love is irreplaceable.
4.3. Self and Object of Love experience Love as something pleasant.
4.4. Self and Object of Love's attitude towards each other is referred to by them through a variety of emotional concepts: liking, sexual desire, respect, fondness, admiration, enthusiasm, mutual protection, self-sacrifice, jealousy, faithfulness.
4.5. Both Self and Object of Love keep experiencing the same physiological and behavioral effects of Love.
4.6. Both Self and Object of Love are happy.

Stage 5.
5.1. Love is fulfilled in marriage.
5.2. Love's intensity decreases.

5.3. Love gradually turns into affection.

This model is metaphorical-metonymic because it emerges from the metaphors and metonymies commonly utilised to conceptualise romantic love. It relies on a cultural model about love regarded as 'natural' and 'commonsensical'. Cultural models create a set of structured expectations – scripts – about how the world is or should be. Such expectations provide a simplified and idealized rendition of an ideal world where prototypical events unfold or prototypical states, i.e. emotions, manifest wholly expectedly in a chain held together by shared assumptions about both physical and psychological causality (Bialostok 2002: 350).

According to Kövecses (1986: 52-66; 1988: 18-27), the central metaphorical mapping in the paradigm of romantic love is THE LOVE RELATIONSHIP AS A UNITY OF TWO COMPLEMENTARY PARTS. , purporting the following entailments:

- two lovers overcome their isolation by being united with their better halves';
- two lovers are complementary chemical parts;
- two lovers are physical parts (perhaps of a greater entity) that fit each other;
- two lovers are biological parts living in symbiosis.

Primarily, the metaphor suggests a state of harmony reached by way of shared love, conceived of as a bond between two parts. If a physical or chemical unity can be dissolved, so can a unity brought about by love, the constituents/partners can break up or split up. The image-schematic structure of both the source ('unity') and the target ('romantic love relationship') is the same: both cases involve two parts ('the lovers' and 'the complementary parts') and a whole ('the relationship' and 'the unity').

If love is a unity of two complementary parts, Kövecses argues, one part alone is dysfunctional. One part cannot function in a normal manner, unless it is 'completed' by the second part. Those who are not involved in a love relationship may be viewed as somehow 'incomplete' individuals. Kövecses argues that the unity metaphor and its entailments is deeply inculcated culturally to the point that love is regarded as a vital need, on the same level as food or shelter.

Love as a flawless unity engenders the extended concept of 'true love', based on the belief that, since love is a unity consisting of two parts, one part is only functional if completed by another unique part that matches it perfectly. True love, then, is irreplaceable and noninterchangeable. Consequently, it is within each individual's range of expectations to his/her 'perfect match'/soulmate (Christensen 2001).

This LOVE AS UNITY metaphorical mapping is experientially grounded, and relies on a metonymic conceptualisation of love: the behavioural tendency for lovers to be physically close often stands for the love relationship itself. This is one instance of the general metonymic principle *effect for cause*: the behavioral or physiological effects of an emotion stand for that very emotion which causes them. Along this line of thought, another experientially-grounded conventional metonymy underlying LOVE AS UNITY metaphor is the SEX FOR LOVE metonymy. Sexual activity presupposes intimate physical closeness. In both cases, physical closeness is but one step away from oneness, just as the joining of hands during the wedding ritual is but one step from the sanctified unity of the two lovers (Sanchez 1995: 671).

In terms of highlighting and hiding, ontological and epistemic correspondences between the source domain 'UNIT' and the target domain 'LOVE' emerge clearly (Sanchez 1995: 671-672) If ontological correspondences are correspondences between the entities in the source domain and the corresponding entities in the target domain (e.g., the container in the source domain corresponds to the body in the target domain), epistemic correspondences involve systematic correspondences between stereotypical knowledge about the source domain and knowledge about the target domain (Lakoff and Kövecses in Holland and Quinn 1987: 201). Expressions such as

We were made for each other.
We are one.
She is my better half.
Theirs is a perfect match.

are underlain by the following sets of ontological and epistemological correspondences:

Ontological correspondences:

- the unity is the love relationship.
- the two complementary parts are the two lovers.
- the bond or attachment between the two complementary parts is the

emotional bond or attachment between the lovers.

- the strength of the bond between the parts is the intensity of love in the relationship.

Epistemic correspondences:

- the unity is destroyed if one part or both of them are taken away – the love relationship is destroyed if one or both of the lovers stops being involved in it.
- the parts are nonfunctional unless they can be joined in the unity – the lovers are incapable of having a love relationship unless it is carried out together.
- the parts constituting the unity have such a strong link that they can be damaged if they are separated
- the unity can be restored if the parts are put together again.
- there can only be one complementary part that will 'fit in' with the other; there can only be one true object of Love for each Self.
- if one of the parts is missing, it is necessary to look for it to build up the unity; if one person is alone, that individual must look for the other person so as to 'build' their love relationship.

7.6.3. Food, warmth and love

That love is an indispensable need for the lover is epitomized in such a conceptual metaphor as LOVE IS FOOD. Love is juxtaposed with a physical process, i.e. eating, by the similar grounds which exist between food and love: both of them may be seen as objects of consumption, which generate physical gratification, and which may, at times and owing to excesses, become causes for gluttony (Bialostok 2002:353).

He is sex-starved.
She's quite a dish.
You look luscious.
Hi, sugar!

The attraction between the two lovers as well as the intensity of their emotional bond is traditionally rendered by means of a frequent conceptual metaphor: LOVE IS FIRE. The LOVE IS FIRE metaphorical mapping involves mapping the ontology of fire onto the ontology of love and desire respectively. The

connections between the two domains are provided by the similitude between the several stages of a fire and the stages of a relationship: usually, a fire starts burning slowly, then blazes up, burns steadily, then turns to embers among ashes, and finally dies out. There has to be an external agent to light the fire – who, in the case of love, is enacted by desire. Knowledge of fires is mapped onto desire at many points: desire can start with a spark, be ignited, and then be kept going by stocking or fuelling. Events can dampen or extinguish desire the way water can dampen or extinguish a fire.

The conceptualisation of desire as fire highlights sexual craving as a dangerous or even destructive force, which can rapidly spread beyond control. Sometimes, positive entailments of the metaphor are emphasized, as connotations of vitality and the warmth associated with fire. Like food, warmth is one of our basic physical needs, which may provide a further reason for the accessibility of this metaphor (Deignan 1996: 34). Being experientially grounded, this metaphor describes desire in terms of its physiological manifestations: high body temperature (Lakoff (1987, Patthey-Chavez et al. 1996).

She's an old flame.
Don't be cold to me.
She's hot stuff.
He was consumed by desire
It was only a flash in the pan
Definitely Tom has the hots for Jessica.

Love is often referred to as a flame: '*There's a flame over you and me*'. (*Fire on the Water,* Chris De Burgh). The flame is inherent to the presence of the fire and the escalation of feelings reaches the intensity of a fire. In the same song, the love relationship evolves to what is metaphorically expressed as '*fire on the water*'. The choice of the two terms of the metaphor is highly unusual and converges towards creating a striking effect by the juxtaposition of two opposites, indicative of the temperamental character of the relationship. That fire cannot be extinguished by the water grants love a force that surpasses the experiencer's control. Helplessness is avowed: '*It's fire on the water / I can't stop it now.*' The juxtaposition of the two primordial yet mutually exclusive elements may also enable conceptualisation of love as the unity of opposites, since fire and water may figure the two would-be partners as two opposites that attract.

In another song, evolution of a love relationship corresponds to the stages of the ignition of a fire. '*We are moving from a spark to a flame*'. (*High on Emotion*, Chris De Burgh). Since the sparkle is the incipient stage of a fire, it can be said to correspond

to the beginning of the relationship. Being ignited, the sparkle develops into a flame; likewise, love grows steadily into a solid relationship, if constantly fuelled with passion and affection. Each stage of the fire finds echo in the stages of a relationship. The LOVE AS FIRE metaphor is the recurrent theme in *Eternal Flame* (Bangles). As the title itself suggests it, love is compared to an everlasting flame. Physically, love is felt as a sensation of burning: "*Is this burning an eternal flame?*"

7.6.4. Love as enemy

In the second and third stages of the typical model of romantic love presented above, such issues as loss of control and resistance arise. These may be covered by the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS AN ENEMY which, in its turn, may entail the following ontological correspondences:

1) weapons used by the enemy are the attractive qualities of the Object of Love;

2) resistance against the enemy is an attempt by either Self or the Object of Love at controlling the emotion; enemy's victory amounts to loss of control by Self.

The following examples illustrate the conceptualisation of love as an inimical entity:

He is known for his conquests.
She fought for him, but his mistress won out.
He fled from her advances.
She pursued him relentlessly.
She is besieged by suitors.
He has to fend off all the women who want him.
He made an ally of her mother.

This rather unusual association between the two apparently incompatible domains – love versus war – is prevalently foregrounded in the circumstances of putting an end to a relationship. The sense of being 'embattled' (Lakoff 1982: 78) comes from experiencing oneself as being in a warlike situation even though it is not actual combat. The two partners turn into adversaries and planning strategies, attack, defense, retreat, maneuvering, counterattack, , truce, victory or surrender are stages in the parties' behavior under the unfortunate circumstances of ending a relationship.

Love in terms of WAR and PLAY is the topic in *You Give Love A Bad Name (Shot Through the Heart,* Bon Jovi). If love is indirectly referred to as a prison ('*Chains of love got a hold on me*'), passion is explicitly described as a prison out of which there's no way out: '*When passion's a prison, you can't break free*'. The lover is assimilated metaphorically to a loaded gun: '*You're a loaded gun*.' Common knowledge about guns brings to mind weapons used in times of war. They must be loaded and they function by pulling the trigger and cause wounds and even death. The wound caused by the deterioration of their relationship is so deep that it resembles a wound caused by shooting. Symbolically, the addresser specifies that the wounded part of the body is the heart, since the wound of a vital organ leads to the death of the wounded person. Moreover, the moral author of the wound is the very beloved person: '*Shot through the heart and you're to blame*'.

This conceptual metaphor may be seen as an instantiation of a superordinate metaphorical mapping, namely LOVE IS AN EXTERNAL FORCE embedding a process of personification. Thus, love is a dangerous invader into the conscience and particularly into the reason of Self. It is a force to be battled against, emerging as an entity via the ontological metaphor EMOTIONS ARE ENTITIES, which the experiencer usually almost finds hard to resist (Deignan 1996: 25). The experiencer of love is metaphorically conquered by this powerful external force which deviously and dexterously uses a variety of weapons:

She's devastating.
I was knocked off my feet.
I could feel the electricity between us.
He has a lot of animal magnetism.

LOVE IS AN ENEMY often overlaps with the LOVE IS AN ILLNESS metaphorical mapping, which also implies resistance to potential threat to one's wholesomeness. The mapping between disease and love is made possible by experientially-grounded epistemic correspondences such as:

1) what is common to both states is loss of complete, rational control of body and mind;
2) a link between love and illness is also present through physical sensations such as heat and dizziness, which are sometimes associated with love and desire, yet are also symptoms of illness (Deignan 1996: 29).

Like a disease, love appears to interfere with normal functioning of the Self,

consequently, if the body must fight against disease as it must fight against love, both of which appear as fierce enemies for Self. A recurrent metaphorical mapping is that where love is drug-induced bliss, highlighting aspects of pleasurability and loss of mental faculties:

He is intoxicated with love.
I am giddy with love.
I have been high on love for weeks.
She is drunk with love.

In Fever (Madonna) the LOVE IS ILLNESS metaphor translates as the passage from the health to sickness, while the primary causes of the state of fever are the manifestations of love:

'You give me fever
When you kiss me
Fever when you hold me tight
Fever in the morning
Fever all through the night…'

A version of love being comprehended in terms of ailment is its conceptualisation as mental insanity, hence the metaphorical mapping LOVE IS INSANITY:

I'm crazy about her.
I'm madly in love with him.
I'm wild over her.
She's got me delirious.
She drives me out of my mind.

The loss of rational control which is characteristic of illness metaphors, is brought to the foreground in the LOVE IS INSANITY metaphor. This metaphor is highly ambivalent in its evaluation. As recently as early in the twentieth century, sexual desire and acts which infringed prevailing moral standards used to be associated with insanity. The high degree to which the expression *sex maniac* is established in the language may also be a reflection of this link. *Sex maniac* is sometimes used to refer to people whose sexual desires lead them to seek unwilling partners and/or acts of violence. Intensity of love often corresponds to mental disturbance: '*I'll love you more with every day / Truly, madly, deeply do…'*.(*Truly, Madly,*

Deeply (Savage Garden).

Unfulfilled love brings about madness, as Patsy Cline avows:

'Crazy…I'm crazy for feeling so lonely…'
'I'm crazy for trying
And crazy for crying
I'm crazy for loving you…'

7.6.5. 'It's a kind of magic...'

Endeavours for self-control and the strife to master one's amorous urges may be made salient by means of another conceptual metaphor: LOVE IS MAGIC. Some of the ontological correspondences underlying this mapping can be formulated as follows:

1) the magician's skills are Self's skills in getting Object of Love to return to his/her love;
2) the magician's skills are Object of Love's attractive qualities, resulting in Self's loss of self-control.

She cast her spell over me.
The magic is gone.
She had me hypnotized.
I'm charmed by her.
She is bewitching.

The LOVE AS MAGIC metaphor is grounded in the belief that love borrows the characteristics of a magic experience. Love is commonly associated with loss of the ability to behave rationally and experienced as the invader of the rational self, as an uncontrollable force. Consequently, it is easy to conceive of love in terms of a magic spell, with the person in love being portrayed as a passive experiencer of an uncanny phenomenon beyond common grasp.

7.7. The conceptualization of anger

Emotions are more often than not conceptualized in a complex manner, and expressing them is not randomly articulated. Looking at inferences likely to be drawn among the expressions listed below, seeking for a systematic structure

becomes imperious:

You make my *blood boil*.
Jack was a *hot-tempered* young man
Their parents were having a *heated* argument/debate about where to go
He's *wrestling* with his anger.
Watch out! He's *on a short fuse*.
He's just *letting off steam*.
Try to *keep a grip on yourself*.
Don't *fly off the handle*.
Alex was *bursting* with anger
Bob *went ballistic* when he saw what they had done.
I'm sorry I *blew my top*.
It was an *explosive* situation.
He *channeled* his anger into something constructive.
He *was red with anger*.
He *was blue in the face*.
He *appeased* his anger.
He *was doing a slow burn*.
He *suppressed* his anger.
A major row *erupted* at the meeting
When I told my mother, *she had a cow*.
Allison was *getting very hot under the collar*

7.7.1. A cultural model of the physiological reactions of anger

The most widespread cultural model of the physiological effects of anger encompasses the following landmarks:

- the physiological effects of a given emotion stand for the emotion
- as anger increases, its physiological effects increase.
- there is a limit beyond which physiological effects of anger impair normal functioning.

The physiological effects of anger are increased body heat, increased internal pressure (blood and muscular pressure), agitation, and interference with accurate perception. Emphasis laid on specific physiological effects – body heat, internal pressure, redness in the face, impairment of perception - yields systematically ranged clusters of metonymies for anger:

BODY HEAT:
Don't get *hot under the collar*.
Billy's a *hothead*.
They were having a *heated argument*.
When the cop gave her a ticket, she got all *hot and bothered* and started cursing.

INTERNAL PRESSURE:
Don't get a *hernia*!
When I found out, I almost *burst a blood vessel*.
He almost had a *hemorrhage*.

REDNESS IN FACE AND NECK AREA:
She was *scarlet with rage*.
He got *red with anger*.
He was *flushed with anger*.

AGITATION:
She was *shaking* with anger.
I was *hopping mad*.
He was *quivering with rage*.
He's *all worked up*.
She's *all wrought up*.

IMPAIRMENT OF ACCURATE PERCEPTION:
She was *blind with rage*.
I was beginning to *see red*.
I was so mad I *couldn't see straight*.

7.7.2. The ANGER IS HEAT metaphor

The cultural model of anger conceptualises it as both a fluid and as heat, while locating the heated fluid in a container, namely the human body. This representation combines two metaphorical mappings ANGER IS HEAT, and, respectively, THE BODY IS A CONTAINER FOR THE EMOTIONS. Hence the emergence of the central metaphor: ANGER IS THE HEAT OF A FLUID IN A CONTAINER, illustrated in the examples below:

You make my *blood boil*.

Simmer down!
I had reached the *boiling point*.
Let him *stew*.
He often gets hot under the collar.
When there is no heat, the liquid is cool and still, which corresponds to lack of anger in the central metaphor, such as in:
Keep *cool*.
Stay *calm*.

Excessive heating may lead to the furious person's reaching *the boiling point, stewing, simmering or seething* with rage, even getting steamed up or fuming. The heated fluid produces pressure inside the container, i.e. the body, which consequently may undergo dramatic changes, some suggesting dissolution of the body-container. Thus, an angry person may *explode, blow up, have an outburst, erupt or burst* with anger. A rabid person may also displace their body-container upwards, similar to a gas-propelled balloon: thus such a person may *hit the ceiling, go through the roof,* On the contrary, controlling one's anger corresponds to keeping the heated fluid within the container and preventing it from flowing out. Thus a person able to master their anger is likely to *contain* one's rage, *to keep* one's rage in, *to suppress* one's anger or *to keep one's anger bottled up inside oneself.*

There is a remarkable range of <u>ontological correspondences</u> between the source domain (HEATED FLUID IN A CONTAINER) and the target domain (ANGER), among which mention must be made of:
The container is the body.
The heat of fluid is the anger.
The heat scale is the anger scale, with end points zero and limit.
Container heat is body heat.
Pressure in container is internal pressure in the body.
Agitation of fluid and container is physical agitation.
Explosion is loss of control.
Coolness in the fluid is lack of anger.

Similarly, <u>epistemic correspondences</u> between the entities in the source domain and the entities in the target domain are multiple:
Source: The effect of intense fluid heat is container heat, internal pressure and agitation.

Target: The effect of intense anger is body heat, internal pressure and agitation.

Source: When the fluid is heated past a certain limit, pressure increases to the point at which the container explodes.

Target: When anger increases past a certain limit, pressure increases to the point at which the person loses control.

Source: An explosion is damaging to the container and dangerous to bystanders.

Target: A loss of control is damaging to the angry person and dangerous to other people.

Source: An explosion may be prevented by the application of sufficient force and energy to keep the anger in.

Target: A loss of control may be prevented by the application of sufficient force and energy to keep the anger in.

The central metaphor is extremely productive, since the expressions underlain by it can *elaborate* the conceptual metaphor. For instance, a "stew" is a specific cooking process involving a certain level of heat and a long-lasting procedure; "simmer" indicates slow boil and is likely to designate lesser intensity of anger. Despite the fact that both are cooking terms, the outcome of the cooking process is hidden, since what is highlighted is the manner and intensity of the hot fluid boils within the container...

In addition, there is extensive knowledge about the source domain The HEAT OF FLUID IN A CONTAINER; which enhances the productivity of the metaphor: further transfers from the Heated fluid domain onto the anger domain are made possible. Thus, when fluids start to boil, they go upward, a movement meant to trigger the entailment: WHEN THE INTENSITY OF ANGER INCREASES, THE FLUID RISES, underlying expression such as the following:

His pent-up anger *welled up* inside him.
She could feel her *gorge rising*.
We got a *rise* out of him.
My anger kept *building up* inside me.
Pretty soon I was in a *towering rage*.

It is equally common knowledge that intense heat produces steam which is likely to come out of the container and draw the attention of lookers-on as to the anger manifesting itself within the body-container:

She got *all steamed up*.
Billy's just *blowing off steam*.

I was *fuming*.

Whenever such pressure is under control, expressions such as the following are easily conceptualisable:

I *suppressed* my anger.
He *turned his anger inward*.
He managed to keep his anger *bottled up* inside him.

On the contrary, whenever the pressure on the container becomes too high, the container is likely to explode, and eventually disintegrate and invade the space surrounding the body-container:

When I told him, he just *exploded*.
We won't tolerate any more of your *outbursts*.
I *blew my stack*.
I *blew my top*.
She *flipped her lid*.
He *hit the ceiling*.
I *went through the roof*.

Sometimes, outburst and intrusion of the formerly contained liquid into the space surrounding the body-container is conceptualised in terms of giving birth:

She was *having kittens*.
My mother will *have a cow* when I tell her.

Anger has the ontology of a mass entity and takes the grammar of mass nouns, as opposed to count nouns; thus, one can say: "How much anger has he got in him?", but not: "*How many angers does he have in him?" By being conceptualized as a mass entity, there is a parameter, heat, indicating its amount, limited by the volume of the body-container. Similarly to a hot fluid in a closed container which can take a specific amount of heat before it explodes, humans can only bear a limited quantity of anger, before they explode, i.e. lose control. As anger intensifies, its physiological effects increase to the point of interfering with normal functioning: body heat, blood pressure, agitation and interference with perception may increase to the point of impairing our ability to function properly.

7.7.3. Slowly burning or fanning the flames of anger?

Similarly to love, anger is commonly conceptualised in terms of fire. ANGER IS FIRE is a widespread metaphorical mapping, which underlies a great number of expressions, among which:

Those are *inflammatory* remarks.
They were having a blazing/flaming row
He was *breathing fire*.
Your insincere apology just *added fuel to the fire*.
After the argument, Dave was *smoldering* for days.
That *kindled my ire*.

Thus, an infuriated person may *be* all *fire, flame/ flare up, be inflamed* with grief, rage, desire or simply *burn* with anger. Being slowly consumed by anger is conceptualised as being smouldered near/by a slow fire, as in the expression *to do a slow burn* ("slowly mounting anger"). Intensifying one's rage corresponds to increasing the destructive power of fire, hence becoming more enraged is tantamount to *fanning the fire/the flames* or even to *setting ablaze* (with fury or hatred).

The ontological correspondences between the source domain FIRE and the target domain ANGER are the following:
The fire is anger.
The object burning is the angry person.
The cause of the fire is the cause of the anger.
The intensity of the fire is the intensity of the anger.
The physical damage to the object burning is mental damage to the angry person.
The danger of the fire to things nearby is danger of the anger to other people.

The epistemic correspondences between FIRE and ANGER are:
Source: Objects can burn at a low intensity for a long time and then burst into flame.
Target: People can be angry at a low intensity for a long time and then suddenly become extremely angry.
Source: Fires are dangerous to things nearby.
Target: Angry people are dangerous to other people.

Source: Things consumed by fire cannot serve their normal function.
Target: At the limit of the anger scale, people cannot function normally.

7.7.4. The ANGER IS INSANITY metaphorical mapping

Similarly to the metaphorical conceptualisation of love, recurrent metaphors for anger focus on the salience of agitation, a significant component of our cultural model of insanity: insane people go wild, start raving, flail their arms, foam at the mouth and so on. These physiological effects can stand, metonymically, for insanity. Like in the case of love, the overlap between the cultural models of the effects of anger as an emotion and of those of insanity as a physiological dysfunction provides a basis for the metaphorical mapping ANGER IS INSANITY: Thus, angry people *have a fit, foam at the mouth, tear their hair out, bang one's head against the wall, drive round the bend/up the wall.*

Such expressions unveil how emotional effects are understood as physical effects and how anger is seen as a form of energy. According to our understanding of physics, when enough input energy is applied to a body, the body begins to produce output energy. In this case, the cause of anger (input energy) produces internal heat (output energy). Internal heat can also function as input energy, producing various forms of output energy: steam, pressure, externally radiating heat and agitation. Such output energy is viewed as pernicious to one's peers.

7.7.5. 'Fighting' one's anger and defeating the beast within

Like love, whenever anger is judged to be as a detrimental emotion which produces undesirable physiological reactions, leads to inability to function normally and is dangerous to others, it is viewed as an opponent humans need to confront and defeat. The following expressions are extremely widespread in everyday language:

I'm *struggling* with my anger.
He was *battling* his anger.
She *fought back* her anger.
I've been *wrestling* with my anger all day.
I was *seized* by anger.
I'm finally *coming to grips with* my anger.

He *lost control over* his anger.
Anger *took control* of him.
He *surrendered* to his anger.
He *yielded* to his anger.
I was *overcome* by anger.
Her anger has been *appeased*.

The ANGER IS AN OPPONENT metaphor is constituted by the following correspondences between the source domain STRUGGLE and the target domain ANGER

- The opponent is anger.
- Winning is controlling anger.
- Losing means having anger control you.
- Surrender allows anger to take control of you.
- The pool of resources needed for winning is the energy needed to control anger.

A widespread metaphorical mapping in Western culture, PASSIONS ARE BEASTS INSIDE A PERSON signals potential danger generated by emotions, while simultaneously unveiling the wild, uncontrollable side of humans, in needs of constant control. Loss of such control is tantamount to the animal getting loose, hence the metaphorical mapping ANGER IS A DANGEROUS ANIMAL, salient in expression such as:

He has a *ferocious* temper.
He has a *fierce* temper.
He has a *monstrous* temper.
He *unleashed* his anger.
Don't let your anger *get out of hand*.
He *lost his grip* on his anger.

The epistemic correspondences between the source domain DANGEROUS ANIMAL and the target domain ANGER are the following:

Source: It is dangerous for a dangerous animal to be loose.

Target: It is dangerous for a person's anger to be out of control.

Source: A dangerous animal is safe when it is sleeping and dangerous when it is awake.

Target: Anger is safe near the zero level and dangerous near the limit.

Source: It is the responsibility of a dangerous animal's owner to keep it under control.

Target: It is the responsibility of an angry person to keep his/her anger under control.

Source: It requires a lot of energy to control a dangerous animal.

Target: It requires a lot of energy to control one's anger.

An ANGRY PERSON behaves like A DANGEROUS ANIMAL, since they *bristle* with anger, *bare* their teeth and/or *ruffle* one's *feathers, snap/snarl* at interlocutors, *growl with rage*. They may engage in destructive acts depicted in gory terms since they may *bite one's head off, jump down one's throat, chew somebody out/off or pour out one's venom*

7.7.6. The scenario of anger as a disease

The experientially-grounded assumption that anger has detrimental effects on both the person who feels it and on the people around him/her has yielded the metaphorical mapping ANGER IS ILLNESS/DISEASE. Thus, the person seized with fury is likely *to carry* one's anger *around* with oneself and to ceaselessly have a *chip* on their shoulder. They are perceived as unpleasant or even painful, similar to *a pain in the ass, a pest or a pain in* one's *neck.*

According to this conceptualisation of anger, the following scenario usually unfolds in relation to the angry Self (S):

Stage 1*:* offending event

There is an offending event that displeases S. A wrongdoer intentionally does something directly to S. The wrongdoer is at fault and S is innocent. The offending event constitutes an act of injustice and produces anger in S. The scales of justice can only be balanced by some act of retribution and the intensity of retribution must be equal to the intensity of offense. S has the responsibility of performing such an act of retribution.

Stage 2: anger

The entity anger is associated with a scale that measures its intensity. As intensity increases, S experiences physiological effects: increased body heat, internal pressure, and physical agitation. As anger gets very intense, it exerts a force upon S

to perform an act of retribution, and since acts of retribution are dangerous and/or socially unacceptable, S has the responsibility to control his anger.

Stage 3: attempt at control
S tries to control his/her anger

Stage 4: loss of control
Every person reaches a certain threshold in controlling anger. When the intensity of anger goes beyond the threshold, S can no longer control his anger. S exhibits angry behavior and his/her anger forces him/her to attempt an act of retribution. Since S is out of control and acting under coercion, S is not responsible for his/her own actions and acts as if insane.

Stage 5: act of retribution
S performs an act of retribution. The wrongdoer is the target of this act. The intensity of retribution roughly equals the intensity of the offense and once balance is struck, anger dwindles in intensity.

The various conceptual metaphors discussed and illustrated converge – at least partially - into the prototypical scenario. Naturally, the manifestation of anger depicted in the prototypical scenario is by no means the only foreseeable, yet it ranges within the realm of the expected.

7.8. Matters of life and death

The metaphorical mappings for the highly comprehensive concept of 'death' which are to be discussed in this section, namely 'DEATH IS SLEEP', 'DEATH IS AN ENEMY', 'DEATH IS A CONTAINER', etc. are not to be regarded as arbitrary. There exists a coherent conceptual organization underlying the use of the various expressions for death and dying, which derives from our bodily and social experience. The question remains whether we can posit the universal character of these metaphorical mappings. According to Lakoff (1994), some mappings seem to be universal, whereas others seem to be culture-specific. Contrastive studies with languages of a non-Judaeo-Christian culture might reveal different mappings, though one would hypothesize that the metaphors could still be accounted for in terms of embodiment.

7.8.1. Eternal sleep

There exist a series of expressions for death whose origin is based on the system of beliefs in the Judaeo-Christian tradition:

- There is a life hereafter, an immortal life.
- Heaven is located up in the skies.
- People who die and go to heaven are reunited in life hereafter.
- On Doomsday, all dead are summoned and judged, and consequently redeemed or condemned for eternity.

In this way, the mapping of the belief in a life hereafter with the domain of death forms the basis for the metaphor 'DEATH IS ETERNAL LIFE'. Various aspects of this reunion in life hereafter with God and with the Saints are made salient while referring to death designated as 'the last reckoning' or as "be (coming) alive with Jesus". "Join the choir invisible", "join the angels" are expressions that underline the religious belief that after dying, a person begins an everlasting heavenly life. With respect to the expression "the final summons", Neaman and Silver (1983:149) observe that the imagery of summoning originates in the Book of Revelation's description of the raising of the dead, as does the euphemism, 'the final call'. The religious expression "be asleep in Jesus" is illustrative of the overlapping of the 'DEATH IS SLEEP' metaphor with the image schema 'ETERNAL LIFE IS UP'. The expression "be asleep in Jesus" can also be found in *The New Testament* where dead people are often said to be sleeping (as Jesus said about Lazarus). It is said that when a person who is dying exhales for the last time, his/her soul left the body. Therefore, in this case, one of the physiological effects of death is invoked. The expression "yield the ghost" reflects the metaphor mapping 'DEATH AS DEFEAT' since the dying person's spirit is laid in the hands of death. The expressions "go up to meet one's Maker" (slang) also espouses the image schema 'ETERNAL LIFE IS UP'. After dying, one's place is no longer on earth but in God's heavenly abode.

Both religious representations and common experience substantiate conceptualising death in terms of sleep, rest or some other form of non-consciousness. The metaphorical mapping 'DEATH IS SLEEP' repeatedly underlies frequent expressions, since deceased persons are said to be 'sleeping the sleep of the righteous' or' going to their rest' or 'sleeping in a peaceful place'. Death is often referred to as the Big Sleep or the Eternal Sleep. When bidding farewell from a

dearly departed we say 'May you rest in peace'. To spare an animal the agony of an illness, the veterinarian 'puts it/him/her to sleep'.

In ontological terms, we find correspondences between entities in the source and target domains, that is, between the 'effects of sleep' and the 'effects of death':

- Sleeping entities are motionless and lie down; therefore the effect of sleeping is stillness and repose.
- Dead entities are motionless and lie down; therefore the effect of death is stillness and a horizontal stance.

The metaphorical mapping 'DEATH IS SLEEP' intertwines with the metaphorical mapping, i.e. 'DEATH IS REST', where death is expected to bring along quiescence. However, when death is conceived of as sleep, death can be viewed as ultimate rest, an eternal slumber from which we never wake. Furthermore, on the basis of our experience of the physiological effects of death, we are also able to construct the Metonymic Principle according to which 'THE PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF DEATH STAND FOR DEATH'. Taking into account that, with metonymy, reference to one salient characteristic of one conceptual domain represents the entire domain (Gibbs 1994: 258), the following system of metonymies for death based on various aspects of the death scenario emerges:

- Last movements, pains, sounds made at deathbed.
- Lack of movement.
- Interruption of movement.

Since life is associated with movement, breathing, being awake, death is conceptualised as cessation of movement: thus a dead person has *turned up their toes, become a stiff and breathed their last.* The expression "*turn up one's toes*" humorously alludes to the position of a dead person who lies down motionless, with his feet forward. '*Become a stiff*' is associated with *rigor mortis*: when a person dies, the human body grows heavy, drained of life since all the functions of the organism cease their activity. Obviously, breathe one's last recalls interruption of a vital function of the living body, i.e. the capacity to breathe.

Furthermore, metonymic extensions applying to different aspects pertaining to the burial scenario and the subsequent decay of the body have thriven. Thus people who die '*leave feet first*', '*become a landowner*', '*push up the daisies*' or '*turn to ashes*'. Such expressions are experientially grounded. When pallbearers carry the coffin to the tomb, the funeral ritual implies carrying the person with the feet forward. In times of war, the verb "to die" was replaced by expressions like '*go feet first*' or '*go home in a box*'. When bringing into discussion the expression "*push up*

the daisies", special attention should be granted to the etymology of this metaphor. Ayto (1993: 244) noted that the tradition of regarding the daisy as the typical flower that grows on people's graves dates back at least to the mid 19th century. The first euphemism to exploit it was '*turn up one's toes to the daisies*', followed shortly afterwards by '*under the daisies*' and, early in the 20th century, '*push up the daisies*'. The expression '*turn to ashes*' may relate to the cremation process. If a person expresses his/her wish of being cremated after dying, the human body literally becomes ash. It may equally envisage the decay the body undergoes when death takes control. When young, healthy and active, human existence may be conceptualised in terms of warmth and ardour, such conceptualisation exploiting the metaphorical mapping LIFE IS FIRE. When young, the fire of our life burns unhindered; when old and near death, it starts dying out and eventually turns to ashes.

'*Become a landowner*' is a humour-laden metaphorical construction that points to the fact that when dying, one actually comes to own his/her (last) plot of land, i.e., the grave. This scenario may be underlain by the metaphorical mapping: 'THE GRAVE IS OUR LAST ABODE' in which life is viewed as a journey, whose terminus is the point of departure for death, equally conceived of as a journey with a destination. Consequently, those who die '*go to their last home*', '*are put to bed with a shovel* ' (bringing to mind the ritual of the diggers' filling the hole in the ground with earth once the coffin has been set within the grave) and inevitably 'go to their final resting place'.

7.8.2. Death, space and time

In a fairly extensive group of expressions 'death' is conceptualized in terms of our bodily experience of spatiality. In this case image-schemas which characterize the source domains (containers, paths) are mapped onto the target domain (death), and the metaphors preserve the image-schematic structure of the source domain (Lakoff 1994).

The properties of life are inferred from the topological properties of containers in the light of the metaphorical mappings: 'LIFE IS A CONTAINER', 'DEATH IS A CONTAINER'. The structural elements of containers are: an interior, a boundary and an exterior, as well as an entrance slot. Consequently, 'Dying' may be conceptualized as exiting container A (This world/Life on earth) and entering or being in container B (The world of Death/Existence elsewhere located):

The expression '*be at the portals of death*' suggests that the dead person exited

life and finds him/herself at death's door, on the point of entering another world. There is a boundary separating the two containers, that of earthly Life and that of Death. Thus, the passage from life to death, from container A to container B, is conceptualized as going through some transition point, crossing a barrier or a dividing line. Expressions such as '*cross the great divide*', '*take the big jump*' indicate that death is perceived as a change of place and transgression of a boundary.

The LINK schema views life and death as being connected to each other. When dying, the link that bounds these two worlds disappears and life comes to an end just to be further replaced by death.

> Without links, we could neither be nor be human. We come into existence tethered to our biological mothers by umbilical cords that nourish and sustain us (Johnson 1987: 117).

This bodily experience forms the basis for the LINK schema, which consists of two entities, A and B, connected by a bonding structure. This schema provides the basis for the metaphorical interpretation of life as the link which connects our being with this world, and of death as disconnection from life. Hence the conceptualisation of life as verticality and of death as horizontal stance, mirrored in the metaphorical mappings 'LIFE IS UP', 'DEATH IS DOWN'. Convincingly enough, Lakoff and Johnson (1980:15) argue that there is a physical and cultural basis for such metaphors:

- Serious illness forces us to lie down physically.
- When you are dead, you are physically down.

Death is generally conceived of as descent ("the downward path") because of the fact that when dead a person lies down physically. The expression "be beneath the sod" points to the place one goes after dying, the grave.

The PATH schema is a recurrent structure emerging from our physical experience in which the source domain 'path' is mapped onto the target domain 'death'.

> Every time we move anywhere there is a place we start from, a place we wind up
> at, a sequence of contiguous locations connecting the starting and ending points,
> and a direction (Lakoff 1987: 275).

This conceptual experience is structured in terms of a Source-Path-Goal schema, which provides the basis for a series of metaphorical mappings from this spatial domain onto an abstract domain like 'death'. In this way, within the metaphorical mapping 'DEATH IS A JOURNEY', dying is conceptualized as a journey along a path from a starting point to an end point, emphasis being laid upon the following elements:

- Setting off from the starting point.
- Motion along path.
- Destination or end point.
- Actions announcing and completing the journey.

The expression "the last voyage" unveils that death is conceived of as a journey with no return. When a person dies, he/she embarks on the last voyage of his/her life. "Buy a one-way ticket" not only points to a journey but also suggests that the traveler embarks upon a journey with no return. The expression "hang up one's hat" presents death in a humorous manner and enforce the idea of death being one of the most natural phenomena there is.

Our understanding of life and death is bound up with our understanding of time. One of our major cultural models of life is that each of us is allotted limited time on earth. Time is perceived as a permanently moving object, running in the direction of the future and finally reaching the inevitable event of death.

In our culture, we have a metaphorical understanding of the passage of time based
on movement along a physical path. (…) And we understand the course of
processes in general metaphorically as movement along a path toward some end
point (Johnson 1987:117).

Given such conceptualisation of time, life is characteristically construed as a process, delineated via the Source-Path-Goal schema, consequently conceptualized as having a starting point, an end point and a time span. In between, death may be conceptualized as the last moment in the allotted time span, through the metaphor 'DEATH IS THE LAST HOUR'. The expression "*the hour is come*" underlines that our allotted time is eventually used up and we die. The slang expression "*snuff it*" means "*to stop the flame of a candle burning*", which unveils the same scenario of putting out

the last light, i.e. the last gasp of life.

7.8.3. Personifications of death

Similarly to anger or love, death is frequently conceptualized as an inimical entity, relying on the metaphorical mapping 'DEATH IS A PERSON', which personifies a recurrent human experience, since

> Perhaps the most obvious ontological metaphors are those where the physical object is further specified as being a person. This allows us to comprehend a wide variety of experiences with nonhuman entities in terms of human motivations, characteristics and activities (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 33).

Death embraces various personifications, according to the specific human aspects each such personification highlights. "The Grim Reaper" is himself responsible for the death he brings about: his role is not to escort or summon one to death but rather to effect the death. The personification of death as "Grim Reaper" exists by virtue of its overlap with the metaphorical mapping 'PEOPLE ARE PLANTS', in compliance with which humans are conceived of as plants to be harvested by the reaper. In connection with the instruments meant to effect death, an expression such as "the scythe of death" derives its meaning from the common representation of death as carrying the scythe as an instrument of execution. Like The Grim Reaper, this image originates in pagan harvest ceremonies. A similar personification is "the finger of death".

Lakoff (1994: 231-232) points out that death seems to be personified in a relatively small number of ways: drivers, coachmen, footmen; reapers or opponents in a struggle or game". Such conceptualizations appear exploit the understanding of events (like death) in terms of actions carried out by some agent (like reaping). If we associate the idea of an event as an action on the part of some causal agent with the metaphor 'DEATH IS DEPARTURE', we find that the causal agents characteristically involved in departures are 'drivers', 'boatmen', etc., which would explain why it is that these types of agents are chosen to personify death rather than 'teachers' or 'healers'.

Death is also viewed as an event in which an entity ceases to exist, similarly to the actions of destroying and devouring. Death is consequently understood as an

opponent, as a pernicious agent that can attack and disintegrate us. The expressions '*be smitten with death*' and '*surrender one's life*' emphasise the power with which death, an unvanquishable adversary, can strike. They are underlain by the metaphorical mapping DYING IS LOSING A CONTEST AGAINST AN ADVERSARY, evidently one of the versions of the more comprehensive mapping DEATH IS AN ADVERSARY. Such a mapping overlaps with that of conceptualising life in terms of a game: 'STAYING ALIVE IS A CONTEST'. In any contest, be it a race, a wrestling match, an armed combat, a struggle against a beast, a chess game, one has an adversary. This adversary can be personified as Death in expressions such as '*be mated*', '*be cleaned out of the deck*', '*be KOed*', where death is viewed as the mastermind whom everybody has tried and failed to defeat, and to whom everybody eventually surrenders. The expression '*be mated*' clearly alludes to a game of chess in which the competitors are life on one hand and death on the other hand. In the end, death checkmates life and wins the game. The idiom '*be cleaned out of the deck*' is taken from the game of cards and refers to the person that loses and is deprived of all his/her money, thus cleaning the deck. Consequently, life does not stand a chance when confronted with Death. '*Be KOed*' is an expression pertaining to the game of boxing in which a competitor (death) can win in an instant only by giving his adversary (life) a deadly blow.

Death is often conceptualized as a fear-inducing animal. The expressions '*in the jaws of death*' arises from conceptualising death as a menacing beast. The expression '*keep the wolf from the door*', which initially meant 'to ward off starvation and financial ruin', alludes to the wolf's notorious ravenousness, which enables death being personified as a wolf because of the wish to devour his victims.

7.8.4. Death described as a socio-cultural practice

Furthermore, just as our life may be conceptualized in terms of the various activities we undergo while alive, death is conceptualized as the cessation of all activity, or as its ultimate stage, hence the metaphor 'DEATH IS THE FINAL ACT'. In this respect a variety of expressions related to gambling games, to the theatre, to business, eating permeate the expression of death in everyday language.

The expression '*take the last curtain call*' recalls a theatrical setting and brings to mind the curtain which falls once the performance is over. However, the expression '*take the last curtain call*' suggests that the artist appears for the last time in front of his/her audience. Undoubtedly, "last" is the keyword of the expression as it encompasses the finality of death and can be found in many idioms connected with

death. The expression 'lay *down one's knife and fork*', invokes eating and the instrument for this activity, while also suggesting giving up via in the phrasal verb 'lay down'. In this example, death is not seen as a violent threat to life; rather it is accepted as the final stage in the circle of life. The euphemism '*cash in one's chips*' pertains to gambling slang and refers to the end of the game when the chips are changed into cash. '*Shut* up shop' is an expression that means 'to *stop doing business, either temporarily or permanently*. The expression is humorous and refers to the fact that when one dies, he/she naturally quits the business of living. In other expressions, death is conceptualized as a debt bound to be paid, like in the expression settle one's accounts: we live on borrowed time and must finally pay up, as part of the concluding phase of a transaction, and of leaving no debts outstanding on one's 'departure' (Ayto 1993: 241-242).

'*Kick the bucket*' is an expression of controversial origin. It may be thought to originate in the situation of a convicted man with a rope around his neck who suddenly has the bucket he is standing on kicked out from beneath his feet. The phrase 'kick the bucket' is also regarded to originate in the description of a method of slaughtering hogs, where the animal was strung up on a heavy wooden framework and its throat cut. 'Bucket' is thought to be an English corruption of *'buquet'*, a French word for the wooden framework that the hog kicked in its death struggles.

7.9. Concluding remarks on metaphorical mappings

The above discussion of metaphorical mappings of love, anger and death reveal that dread of intense emotions such as love and anger is frequently verbalised, possibly because of their potential to disrupt expected life patterns. Anger and love are metaphorically conceptualised as dangerous destructive forces, via similitude to fire, and fearsome enemies via similitude to adversaries in a battle or to wild beasts. In addition, numerous metaphors map love and anger as insanity, thus stressing potential lack of rational control. Although the source domains of these metaphors generally refer to undesirable states, the metaphorical uses do not supply negative evaluations, but often encode the experiencer's pleasure at losing touch with his/her rational self.

As an event, death appears to be equally conceptualised as an inimical persona or as an escort meant to accompany an individual during their last journey. Death is

indeed perceived as a journey towards a final destination, which marks the end of another journey, namely life. It is frequently systematically correlated to its metonymical manifestations, namely sleeping or lying down.

The discussion of metaphors of love, anger and death has reinforced the cognitive claim that basic conceptual metaphors are part of the common apparatus of thought and expression shared by the members of a culture, since "To study metaphor is to be confronted with hidden aspects of one's own mind and one's own culture" (Lakoff and Turner 1993: 214). Such metaphors evince systematicity in that there is a fixed correspondence between the structure of the domain to be understood and the structure of the domain which highlights aspects meant to enable understanding. Since such metaphors are rooted in common experiences, they are largely unconscious and their use is not necessarily revealing of poeticity.

8. PARODY BETWEEN ECHO AND DISSOCIATION

my lawyer says five zero three
i get the dress, i like the weave
i know it's not new but i don't mind
because you signed
quit me britney all is mine

oh britney baby
the reason i'm leaving you
joy you got me died-yeah
oh britney baby
there's something that i want from you
it's not toupee i binned it
show me were you hid the tv
shell out britney, laws you need to know now,contents clause

my low-life-ness ful-filling me
when you undress, it makes me heave
when i mate with you, jolie in mind
so glad you signed
quit me britney pay the fine
(*Quit Me Baby All Is Mine* !, a parody of *Hit Me Baby One More Time* based on the performance by Britney Spears)

The present chapter will discuss several contemporary views on parody, insisting on its being a paradoxical combination of repetition and distortive rendition, or, otherwise put, on its causing both appropriation and distanciation with allegedly known discourses. Illustrations from media texts will be supplied in order to unveil the main tenets of each theory under discussion.

8.1. The contribution of Sperber and Wilson's theory to the analysis of parody

In the view of Sperber and Wilson, the echoic account of irony allows for the

disclosure of similarities and differences between irony and parody. The two scholars start by describing parody as an instance of *direct quotation*, which, like irony, combines an *echoic allusion* and a *dissociative attitude*. Nevertheless, while with irony the echo targets the *content*, with parody the echo resumes and distorts of *linguistic form*. Furthermore, while assessing parody as a case of mention, Sperber and Wilson insist that parody "is typically based on looser forms of resemblance" (Sperber and Wilson 1996: 268), since parodic hypertexts do not usually reproduce the exact words of the original, and therefore cannot be seen as varieties of direct quotation or mention. Moreover, apart from *specific parody*, there are frequent cases of *general parody*, in which a whole style or type of discourse is alluded to. In such cases, the parodic utterances do not echo any text in particular, so they cannot be thought of as 'mentions' of other utterances. Finally, parody is not always directed at *style* (so at linguistic elements), but may well target the *content* of pre-existing texts. It is quite obvious that in such cases the parodic messages cannot be identical reproductions (or mentions) of previous texts, but they may resemble the propositional content of those texts. It is with such instances of parody of content that the notion of *interpretive resemblance* may prove its usefulness. Thus, we could consider that parodic hypertexts *resemble* their hypotextual resources, of which they are *echoic interpretations*.

Since the concept of mention implies an identical reproduction of the original, and parody works by difference rather than similarity, an analysis of parody in terms of mention seems quite impossible. Parodic hypertexts, it has been argued, operate transformations on their "models", precisely in order to make their polemical attitude manifest. Consequently, parodic reworkings do not 'mention' their hypotextual resources, but modify, distort, exaggerate or grotesquely imitate their salient features.

The element of exaggeration proper to many parodic transformations stands at the basis of the cartoon in figure 1, depicting an imaginary television debate between Lazio and Hilary Clinton, who both ran, in 2000, for the New York Senate seat.

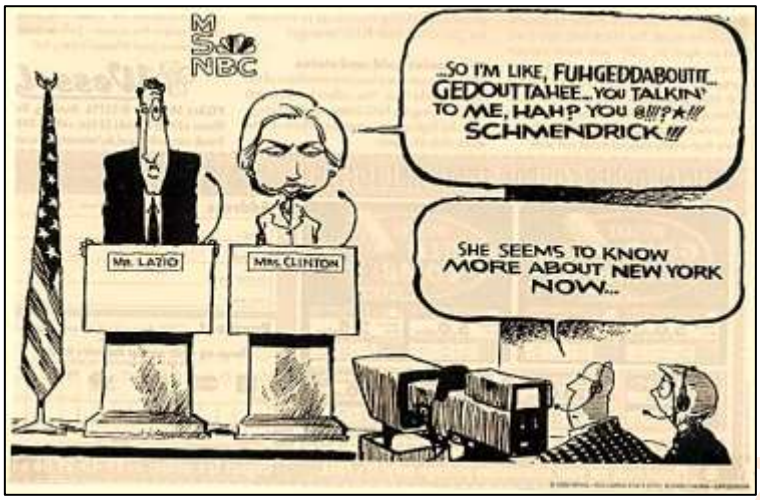


Fig. 1

As she was not from the 'Big Apple', Hilary Clinton focused her campaign on convincing New Yorkers of her allegedly heartfelt affinities with the region she hoped to represent in the Congress. Apart from the obvious caricature of Hilary Clinton's attempts to prove her undeniable familiarisation with the New York milieu and lifestyle, the cartoon also involves an exaggeration of linguistic elements. Hilary Clinton's lines clearly echo the New York vernacular and accent, with a reproduction of typical expressions such as 'fugheddaboutit', 'getoutahee' or 'schmendrik. Moreover, the formulation 'You talking to me, hah?' can easily be seen as a literal reproduction of Robert de Niro's famous line in Martin Scorsese's movie *The Godfather*. What is particularly striking about the comment attributed to Hilary Clinton (apart from the absurdity of a politician ever using such a vocabulary on TV debates) is the unusual density of slang expressions and pronunciations. Clinton's lines echo the New York vernacular, but they do so in an exaggerated manner, which reveals the cartoonist's ironic intent and the parodic status of the accompanying drawing.

As mentioned before, there are instances of parody of content which could roughly be analysed by means of Sperber and Wilson's notion of interpretive resemblance. An exemplification could be provided by the following three imaginary parodic answers to the question *Why did the chicken cross the road?*:

Al Gore: I invented the chicken. I fight for the chickens and I am fighting for the chickens right now. I will not give up on the chickens crossing the road! I will fight for the chickens and I will not disappoint them.

Pat Buchanan: To steal a job from a decent, hardworking American.

Grandpa: In my day, we didn't ask why the chicken crossed the road.

Someone told us that the chicken crossed the road, and that was good enough for us.

The three parodic texts bear an interpretive resemblance to the type of speeches to be expected from the three protagonists. Thus, Al Gore's answer dwells on the Democrat's often asserted preoccupation with the rights and well-being of the American people (replaced here by the 'chickens'), Pat Buchanan's answer echoes the populist and chauvinistic nature of his speeches, while grandpa's comment is an allusion to old people's tendency to contrast present realities to those of their youth, regarded as superior in all respects.

8.2. Appropriation and subversion of public speech and writing conventions

Parodic refunctioning of public discursive conventions is enabled precisely by the highly conventional and clicheistic nature of this particular writing style. The more striking these clichés are, the easier and more tempting it is for the parodist to transfer them into contexts that make them appear particularly ludicrous The wide-circulated internet joke *'Why did the chicken cross the road?'* benefits now from a whole website displaying imaginary answers provided by a plethora famous people (mainly politicians). 'Press statement' spoofs capture the essence of the stereotypical discourse of politics, as well as the main concerns and character features of the virtually interviewed. The humour arises from the apparent trivial nature of the topic which the question deals with ('a chicken crossing the road') and from the way this topic is adjusted in each imaginary answer so as to yield completely different, yet equally convolute, meanings, depending on the main interests of the interviewees. For instance, 'Bill Clinton' suspects that the word 'chicken' refers to Monica Lewinsky, "Ralph Nader" addresses environmental issues, 'Saddam Hussein' is preoccupied with military operations, 'Ernest Hemingway' instantly brings up the problem of suicide, 'Ronald Reagan' (criticized for his rather poor skills as a politician) does not understand the question, while 'Colonel Sanders' (founder of the *Kentucky Fried Chicken*) is worried that he has 'missed one'.

8.3. The *reminder* theory (Kreuz and Glucksberg 1989)

Certain acknowledged limitations of Sperber and Wilson's approach to the

investigation of both irony and parody were solved to a certain extent by Kreuz and Glucksberg's *reminder theory* (1989). The basic assumption of this account is that ironical utterances need not be echoic mentions, but should only allude, in a disapproving vein, "to an antecedent event" (Kreuz and Glucksberg 1989 in Attardo 2000: 808). Such improvement to Sperber and Wilson's theory is likely to prove useful in analyzing echoic texts based on looser forms of resemblance, which is the case of most parodic reworkings. Since this account leaves room for differences to emerge between the echoes and their targets, its relevance for the study of parody appears to be wider in scope than that of Sperber and Wilson's *mention theory*.

The cartoon in figure 2 evinces a parodic content that could be analysed in the framework of the reminder theory.

Fig. 2

The scene in the drawing takes place in the context of a Muslim society - most likely, in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan. The verbal elements and the accompanying visual elements are echoic reminders of conversations and situations frequently occurring in the Western civilizations. Specifically, the utterance of one of the men in the cartoon is reminiscent of the sexist remarks often made by Western men on the looks of women who happen to pass by them. Although the exclamation 'whoopee' is quite a literal reproduction of a Western enthusiastic exclamation, the comment itself (*Would you look at the thumbs on her*) is 'slightly' different from the original type of remarks, targeting other parts of the female body. The humour of the cartoon springs from the incongruity between the situation and the type of utterance that is echoed as well as the situational context in which the echoes are integrated. The two men appear at least ridiculous making comments on the women's thumbs, for want of any other visible, i.e. unclad body parts to refer to. To my mind, there is no

critical-disapproving intent attributable to this parody, since emphasis is laid on the humorous aspect of the situation.

The relevance of the *echoic mention* and the *reminder* theories for the study of parody is also discussed in Rossen-Knill and Henry's article on the pragmatics of verbal parody (1997). Their observations will be presented in the following section, along with the two linguists' own account of parodic utterances.

8.4. Rossen-Knill and Henry's model of parody

The present section will discuss a formal model that seeks to reunite the features essential to parodic messages. The model was put forward by Deborah Rossen-Knill and Richard Henry in their 1997 article "The Pragmatics of Verbal Parody" and constitutes a structured, systematic approach to the mechanisms of both parody production and reception. Admitting the scarcity of studies that approach parody as a *linguistic phenomenon*, Deborah Rossen-Knill and Richard Henry specify that the object of their analysis is parody in *everyday conversation*, since parody needs to be regarded as "a human behaviour which is enacted in various ways, through gesturing, writing and speaking, and in various contexts – e.g. on street corners, in family conversations and in literature" (1997: 720). The model they suggest is intended as an investigation of the structural and pragmatic aspects of parody, aiming to explain "how a speaker uses an utterance to communicate a parodic message to a hearer" (Rossen-Knill and Henry 1997: 720). The emphasis is, therefore, on parody production, but the two linguists also set out to explore the conditions necessary for successful interpretation.

Although the producer is designated as the Speaker and the receiver as the Hearer, Rossen-Knill and Henry take into account not only spoken parody, but also written parody (which I tend to consider a pervasive form of popular culture texts). Their preliminary definition of parody is: "any act in which a speaker uses a verbal expression (written or spoken) to communicate some parodic meaning to a hearer" (1997: 721)

According to Rossen-Knill and Henry, parody can be viewed as a type of *expressive* (in John Searle's classification), because "the speaker produces a verbal expression to convey some critical attitude (the psychological state) about the object of parody" (Rossen-Knill and Henry 1997: 722). As for the object itself, it can be "anything in the world" (740), from events, actions, beliefs and thoughts to individuals, groups and institutions. Consequently, to function as an object of

parody, a belief, attitude or thought "must have some manifestation in the world which is identifiable by the parodist and the audience" (Rossen-Knill and Henry 1997: 741). On the other hand, when the parody embraces an individual or a group, the latter becomes the object of parody via association with a specific behavioural pattern or belief (Rossen-Knill and Henry 1997: 741), whose salient features are identified and brought into bolder relief for comic effect. The final definition that Rossen-Knill and Henry give to verbal parody is: "a highly situated, intentional and conventional speech act which re-presents the object of parody and flaunts that re-presentation in order to criticize that object in a humorous way" (1997: 721).

In compliance with the model proposed by Rossen-Knill and Henry, the act of re-presentation is central (though not sufficient) to parody production. This act consists of the speaker's intentional recasting of the object in the form of a verbal expression. It is essential that this re-presentation be *intentional,* and not an accidental reiteration of linguistic or behavioral elements. At the same time, the act of re-presentation is bound to evince some sort of *alteration* of the re-presented object, which points to the producer's intent to parody, and not to simply repeat or imitate. Hence Rossen-Knill and Henry's assumption that the re-presentation does not *replicate* its antecedent, but should only be "*distinctly like* the action being parodied, a quality which depends on the speaker's and hearer's knowledge about the parodied object and its context" (Rossen-Knill and Henry 1997: 724). It becomes clear that the parodist's task is of considerable difficulty, inasmuch as s/he must combine imitation and alteration of the target, in order to make sure that the receiver recognizes the 'model' but, at the same time, does not take the reworking for a mere repetition of the original. Otherwise put, the producer has to incorporate an identifiable re-presentation of the parodied object in the parody itself, thus directing the receiver to the parodied target and enabling him/her "to reconstruct the original act, hold it up to the parodying version and work out the parodist's commentary on the original" (1997: 728). It is nonetheless the speaker's task to produce a re-presentation that is sufficiently distinct from the target and to anticipate a successful uptake of that re-presentation by the receiver.

Rossen-Knill and Henry emphasise that the parodist neither replaces the original speaker's point of view nor presents his/her own (1997: 728). Instead, the parodist transforms the target text and subordinates the parodied point of view to his/her own perspective, thus evincing "the differences between the parodying and parodied voice, thereby actively *distancing* him/herself from the parodied point of view" (1997: 728).

In their description of parodic re-presentations, the authors also attempt to

draw a parallel between their model, on the one hand, and the *echoic mention* and *reminder* theories, on the other hand. Specifically, they compare their notion of *intentional re-presentation* with Sperber and Wilson's concept of *echoic mention* and Kreuz and Glucksberg's notion of *echoic reminder*. A first conclusion that they arrive at is that the mention theory can only account for parodies targeting *linguistic* forms and conventions and do not facilitate clarifying parodic intentional re-presentations targeting something else than a linguistic "model" (e.g. an action / situation / individual etc). Secondly, they consider that the reminder theory, although based on "a more lenient relationship between a verbal expression and what it echoes" (1997: 726), may prove useful in the analysis of irony but cannot also account for parodic representations. The motivation the two linguists provide is that while irony "employs only one code to refer to and comment on its object" (1997: 726-727), parody makes use of two codes - a *representing* and a *represented* voice -, each corresponding to a distinct speech event.

An essential condition for the success of any parodic reworking is the producer's capacity of making his/her intention to parody manifest to the receivers. The signaling of parodic intent displays two equally important aspects:

1) the parodist must hint to the receivers that his/her utterance/text *alludes back to another message;* s/he must indicate somehow the s/he intends his/her text to recall (re-present) an object;
2) the parodist must then show to the receivers that his/her attitude towards the re-presented object is one of *ironical and critical distanciation*.

Critical distanciation refers to the strategies that the parodist deploys in order to mark the differences that exist between the parodic version and the antecedent that is re-presented. Such tools as irony, exaggeration, ridicule or incongruity are used by the parodist in order to indicate to the decoders that his/her imitation is not a neutral repetition of an original, but a reworking motivated by a desire to comment (polemically) on the object (be it a text, a belief, an action or an individual).

Signaling parodic intent is meant to result in *flaunting the re-presentation*. Before attempting to bring into relief the distance between the parodic hypertext and its hypotext, the parodist must first ensure that the receiver is aware of his/her intention to refer back to an object (Rossen-Knill and Henry 1997: 729-730). The flaunting of the re-presentation refers, therefore, to all the methods used by the parodist in order to (a) trigger the receiver's awareness as to the existence of a 'target' and (b) make this target (and his/her intention to re-present it) recognizable to the decoder.

Flaunting works paradoxically. While its basic function is to relate the parody to an antecedent and direct the hearer to that pre-existing target, flaunting can also generate parodic difference and distanciation. The very fact that the speaker laughs, winks or adopts a new tone of voice during the re-presentation engenders contextual changes that alter the value of the original utterance and contribute to the receiver's successful *deciphering of the parodic imitation*.

The instruments that empower the producer to flaunt the re-presentation in conversational parody are laughter, the pitch and tone of the voice, stylistic variations of the object and, especially, the exploitation of the Gricean Maxims of Quality, Manner and Relation (Rossen-Knill and Henry 1997).

8.5. Reading the parodic vein in TV productions

In keeping with Simon Dentith's theory of *karaoke culture*, present-day TV shows are venues of a multitude of parodic practices, with varying degrees of mockery and criticism and more or less drawing on self-reflexivity and metacommunication (Dentith 2000). In TV shows, parody can be identified on several levels and in various forms. There are, first of all, a number of productions which are based on re-presentations of individuals or groups of people (whose roles are played either by real actors or by cartoon characters) and which aim at extra-discursive targets, rather than focusing in inter-discourse references.

Of all the popular culture products, movies and TV shows are the most likely to provide an interesting field for the study of parody as flaunting re-presentation. The conversational style that such texts involve allows for an application of some of the two linguists' assumptions to the parodic re-presentations they may employ. There are, for instance, numerous TV shows in Romania (such as *Divertis Show* or *Cronica circotasilor*) that attempt to amuse audiences with parodic impersonations of famous people. On such shows, a parodic re-presentation of a politician is quite commonplace, while underpinned by an act of flaunting. Taking the general example of an actor who parodies a well-known politician, his re-presentation can be regarded as having several layers, each working for a more faithful rendition of the "model", which will allow the audience to trace back the object of the impersonation. The actor will imitate the target's dressing style, hairdo, verbal habits and the general content of his speeches. In this endeavor, his main tool will be *mimicry*, which is essentially based on an element of *exaggeration*.

A more special type of parody is to be encountered in the famous 1980's TV series *Moonlighting*. As Raymond Gibbs observes in his *Poetics of Mind* (1994), the production is remarkable for its use of self-reflexivity and metacommunication. In effect, there are many scenes in the series where the actors come out of their roles to address the audience directly about the characters' lines and actions. On one occasion, after David Addison (Bruce Willis) bursts in a room where his partner Maddie Hayes (Cybil Shepherd) is being interrogated by the police, the detective conducting the investigation exclaims 'Why are you bursting in like this?'. Addison's answer is: 'Ask the writers. And besides, how else could I burst in?'. In another episode, when Maddie Hayes starts swearing, Addison stops her, saying that 'there are kids watching', while at the end of an episode in which the focus is on the *Blue Moon* secretary Miss DiPesto, Maddie and David decide to ask the writers to give them 'bigger parts in next week's episode'. On other occasions, the two characters answer letters from fans about the possibility of them ever getting romantically involved or express their optimism about wining some *Emmy* awards. Finally, in the episode '*Camille*', the two detectives take part in a chase around the studios where the show is shot, but the scene ends in confusion, when the crew starts taking away part of the props because the current season is about to end. In the final scene, Maddie and David say good-bye to each other and to the audience, until the autumn, when a new season starts.

8.6. Blatant instances of flaunting: demolishing the 'happy family' myth

Fig. 3

The nuclear family, which is central to most national ideologies, often emerges as a focus of advertisements (see most *McDonald's* ads), generally presented as "a site of harmony, warmth and security, an idealized unit with no problems that cannot be solved by commodities" (Sturken and Cartwright 2001: 219). A parodic rendition of this stereotype is contained in the *Prozac* spoof reproduced above in Fig. 3. Here, the parodist replaces the serene family environment with a chaotic household, in which the only source of peace for the "tortured" mother and wife lies in a bottle of *Prozac* pills, meant to enable her to cope with the overwhelming demands of family life. The parodist appropriates several conventions of advertising: the slogan ('You'd kill them without it'), the image-text juxtaposition, the framing of the brand and the technique of *appellation*, the strategy of "hailing" the consumer (here, in a direct manner, by the use of the pronoun 'you') and thus incorporating him/her into the signifying world of the ad (Gillian Rose 2001). Nevertheless, this appropriation of mainly formal features of advertisements is only a pretext for the obvious intention to mock a content- and meaning-related element, namely the conventional representation of family life in ads. The spoof is, thus, a highly ironical instantiation of the manner in which commodities are described in ads as the means through which the family holds and thrives together. What makes the spoof particularly ironic towards advertising is the fact that a drug, *Prozac*, is shown as facilitating familial emotion and communication in a literal sense: the

Prozac pills make family members more relaxed, thus easing household tensions.

As the analysis of irony and hyperbole in 6.7. has already pointed out, the highly controversial show *Married with Children* can be considered a gruesome parody of the American family and of the American dream. Al Bundy is not the successful self-made man, but a much-despised shoe salesman who barely earns the minimal wages, is constantly nagged by his wife and robbed by his children and whose only solace lies in reading 'Big'Uns' at the loo and bragging about his glorious youth as a footballer at Polk High. Peg Bundy displays no motherly proclivities and no inclinations for housewifery; she is a tartish-looking, garishly dressed, loudmouthed couch potato, whose eyes are glued to Oprah and Phil's shows all day long, who is addicted to tele-shopping and to getting her big hair even bigger at the beauty parlour. Bud, their son, is a pizza face teenager obsessed with female nudity and the desperate urge to stop being a virgin. Kelly, a stereotypical 'dumb blonde', is a brainless promiscuous bimbo, who constantly bullies Bud about his repulsive looks, sponges on Al whenever she can squeeze some cash from him and solidarises with Peg when it comes to hatching a plot against Al. Despite their small victories against spiteful neighbours Marcy and Steve Rhoades or gullible strangers whom they extort for food or money, the four characters demolish the very idea of 'winners'. As Al suggestively puts it 'we may be losers but not quitters', since they excel at failing at anything they take a shot at. The relationships between the four characters are also a parodic rendition of the idealized descriptions of the harmonious, loving families promoted by domcoms such as '*Full House*': the characters are busy deriding and deluding each other, conspiring against the weaker, taking advantage of the parent's or respectively child's soft spot and sensitive nerve, blackmailing spouse or sibling, sticking together only when it comes to exposing some shameful secret concerning one of them in public

8.7. Juxtaposition and flaunting in spoofs

The practice of parodic appropriation may target both specific existing advertisements or, more often, certain conventions of advertising, among which headlines, captions, slogans or image-text juxtapositions. Such conventions are read subversively, their main function being not to extol consumer products, but to deride and criticize the deceiving potential of advertising. Whether performed by ordinary consumers, militant artists or non-governmental organizations, subversive

reading of ads and advertising conventions offers its practitioners the *jouissance* of creating cultural products meant to promote oppositional meanings. The critical, satire-laden vein of this type of parodic appropriation will be in relation to a set of *Absolut Vodka* spoofs. (fig.4)

When the product is an established brand and the advertisements that promote it are instantly recognizable, the parodies that "poach" on them are more likely to attract attention and receive a correct reading on the part of the viewers. Starting from these specific codes and conventions, the *Adbusters* organization has attempted to increase awareness about dangerous and misleading alcohol advertising by parodying the *Absolut Vodka* advertising strategies.

The *Absolut Vodka* advertising campaign exploits a specific ongoing motif, namely *the shape of the bottle*. *Absolut* ads either explicitly present the vodka bottle or associate it with eccentric or even morbid concepts, such as death. In figure 5 ,while preserving the motif of the shape of the bottle and the short, effective slogan, *Absolut Vodka* spoofs replace the positive images (such as those of Christmas presents or London) by renditions of objects with negative connotations such as a coffin, cord or a morgue tag, accompanied by equally discouraging slogans, such as. *Absolut Silence* or *Absolut Hangover*. The puns amplify such negative connotations, since the 'hangover' image suggests a noose literally hanging in the air instead of a post-drinking migraine and the expression 'on the ice' simultaneously triggers the script of serving vodka with ice cubes and having corpses frozen in a mortuary.

Fig. 4

Parody, therefore, is only *apparently* destructive; in reality, it leads to the creation of a new form out of the very texts and conventions that are re-functioned. This constitutes the so-called *parodic paradox*, which Simon Dentith describes as follows:

> … the parodic paradox, by which parody creates new utterances out of the utterances that it seeks to mock, means that it preserves as much as it destroys

– or rather it preserves in the moment that it destroys (Dentith 2000: 189)

Thus, most spoofs appropriate logos and trademarks representative of the values and practices that make up a company's identity and of enviable lifestyles. Their exposure to consumers makes them all the more liable to parodic appropriations and reworkings, whose critical undercurrent targets not so much the logos themselves as the companies and, implicitly, the values they stand for. A relevant example is figure 5, where the world-famous *McDonald's* logo (the stylized *M*) is reproduced on the monitor used during an operation that attempts to save the patient from an ironically-termed *Big Mac attack*. In figure 6, the *McDonald's* clown is silenced by a tape on which the word *Grease* is written, with the two letters *e* replaced by the company's logo, in a transparent allusion to the cholesterol-rich *McDonald's* food

Fig. 5

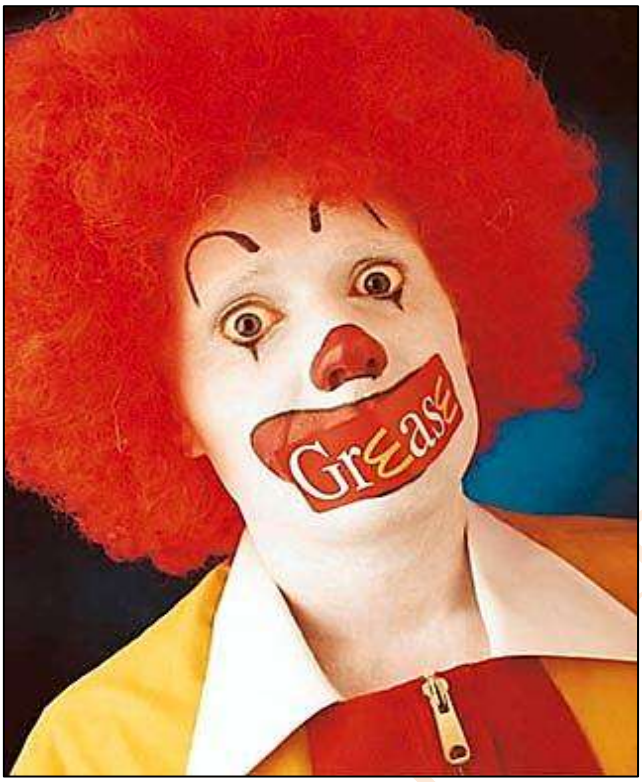


Fig. 6

8.8. Parodic appropriation of pop song lyrics

As Simon Dentith (2000) remarks, parodic appropriation of popular songs is not a latter-day concoction of cultural consumers, but has always represented an important practice of popular culture. Unlike fans, who faithfully learn and reproduce the lyrics of their favourite songs, the creators of this type of parodies play off the language and topic stereotypes of popular songs and use their reworkings as vehicles for satirical, even sarcastic comments.

The parody in '*I'm George W.*', for instance – a reworking of the traditional folk song Oh, Susanna– does not seek to poke fun at the original lyrics, but appropriates their rhythm and some of the words and uses them as a starting point for a humorous comment on George W. Bush's low IQ, promiscuous youth and ascendance owing to his father's money and influence. In effect, the strategy that most of these song parodies resort to is maintaining much of the form but replacing the original topic with one that is hardly suitable for a pop song. The comic effect arises here precisely from the incongruity between what should be an artistic form of expression – initially longing for the beloved and promising to embark upon a long

journey to reunite with her - and the satiric down-to-earth streak permeating the parodic version: how a corrupt dullard from Texas climbs the social and political ladder up to the Senate then to the White House.

(7) **"Oh Susannah" Based on the performance by Stephen Foster**
"I'm George W." Parody by George Mann

Let me introduce myself, George W. is my name
And I'm a rich dumb frat boy, goofing off has been my game
My daddy's name and money help me everywhere I go
And I want to be your leader, though my brain's a little slow

I'm George W., don't you cry for me
I've come all the way from Texas just as dumb as I can be
I'm George W., don't you cry for me
Now I've made it to the White House- that's in Washington, DC
(Second voice: "Hey, he got it right that time!")

Don't ask me 'bout my past, you know I've sure seen better days
Though I spent most of the 80's in a drunken, coked-up haze
But I bought my way through Harvard and I bought my way to Yale
And Poppy's name and money kept my drunk ass out of jail

I'm George W., don't you cry for me
I've come all the way from Texas just as dumb as I can be
Oh I'm George W., don't you cry for me
Now I've made it to the White House- that's in Washington, CD
(Second voice: "That's DC, dummy!")

So let me introduce myself, George W. is my name
And things in good old Washington will never be the same
Now Dick and Colin tell me what to say and what to do
They even help me figure out which people I should screw

I'm George W., don't you cry for me
I've come all the way from Texas just as dumb as I can be
Oh I'm George W., don't you cry for me
Now I've made it to the White House- that's in Washington, DC

'All my Allergies' pokes fun not at the melodic quality of Nirvana's 'All Apologies' , it simply trivializes the 'angst' so poignantly exhibited by Kurt Cobain, the sui8cidal idol of the grunge generation by diminishing it to the fright hypochondriacs experience in relation to a minor ailment such as an allergy. The crescendo in Cobain's exposure of despair and apologetic submission before fright-inducing existential questions is resumed and twisted into trivialization by an enumeration of a hypochondriac's discomforts.

(8) "**All My Allergies**" Parody by Rick Duncan

Pollen bothers me
All my allergies
Can't eat milk or cheese
Cats just make me sneeze
When my chest feels tight
Can't sleep through the night
Smoking bothers me
All my allergies

It's no fun
It's no fun, I use a ton
Not just one
Use a ton
Of tissues
Achoo!

I wish that I could breath
Drugs I would not need
I have as much joy
As a bubble boy
Flowers are in bloom
Now I'm really doomed
Cough drops my nose stops
Choking on the atmosphere-
My enemy

Callin all pharmacies

Callin' all pharmacies
Callin' all pharmacies
Callin' all pharmacies

This self-consciousness is an important source of humour and, at the same time, it contributes to the production's subtext as a parody of detective TV shows. This type of postmodern self-reflexivity is a distancing technique which is meant to prevent the audience from an emotional immersion in the imaginary world of the show.

8.9. The 'flaunting' danger

It becomes clear that exaggeration plays a double role in the act of re-presentation: on the one hand, it is a flaunting strategy, insofar as the parodist captures the essential features of his target and amplifies them, so as to facilitate the audience's recognition of the re-presented individual; on the other hand, the parodist's insistence on the more easily recognizable features of the target (for instance, he overdoes the target's propensity for a verbal habit) introduces an element of difference between the *re-presentation* and the *original presentation* (i.e. the object of the parody). This double role played by exaggeration is further evidence of the close links that exist between the two complementary acts in parodic re-presentation – flaunting and distanciation.

The intended parody may fail because of insufficient flaunting of the re-presentation; for example when the actor's allusions to the target are not clear enough to be picked up by the audience, who is therefore unable to detect parodical content. A second type of failure occurs when the receivers are not familiar with the target that is being parodied; under these circumstances, however good the imitation, the flaunting will be ineffective and the parody will not attain its goal. It is possible that the receivers be amused by the actor's performance, but they will not be able to associate this humour with the more complex act of parody. Finally, the parodic act as a whole can fail if the flaunting is overdone. In such a case, "the hearer may interpret the flaunting of the intentional re-presentation as mere mimicry, as flaunting for the art of flaunting or for humor's sake" (Rossen-Knill and Henry 1997: 734). In other words, the receiver will attend too much to the comic mimicry and lose sight of the critical dimension underlying the parodic representation.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Since contemporary studies in pragmatics can no longer be confined to the investigation of 'texts' or 'conversation' alone, but have extended to cognitive, societal, cultural, political and historical 'contexts' of discourse, the present book is intended to be integrated in the broader exploration of communication, with particular emphasis laid on the communicative role cognition and culture play in verbal communication.

As a consequence, this book has endeavoured to familiarise readers with key notions in the field of pragmatics – speech acts, conversational implicatures, face-threatening acts and politeness strategies while anchoring them in both the context of use and the users' cognitive knowledge about the world. The ceaseless interaction between linguistic devices, illocutionary force designators and intentions harboured by speakers and intended to be grasped as such by hearers is deeply rooted in the way humans mentally conceptualise the world and in the socially and culturally inculcated models they assimilate and disseminate. Verbal communication is not destined to adjust to the surrounding reality but also to contribute to its dynamic reshaping.

Because utterances and consequently, dialogues or conversations are associated with specific goals and intentions, they are constantly employed – be it awarely or not – to either preserve or modify ongoing situations and adapt the roles of the participants to the uninterrupted articulation of social bonds. Bearing this aim in mind, the book has focused on instances where interweavings of mental patterns and cultural input enable language users to adequately uptake intentions and correctly grasp attitudes and social stances in whatever is said or implied. Mental organisation of knowledge in the form of cognitive schemata or cultural models significantly facilitates the process of inferencing. Such a claim is far from minimising the efficiency of classifying speech acts, weighing the degree of (non)-observance of language-related rules and conditions used in conversations (the CP, the maxims) or underestimating the contribution of phenomena related to

indirectness and politeness. Along the same line of thought, shedding light on the way verbal exchanges rely on mental representations and cultural models and norms has required deeper insight into figurative language and figurative patterns of thought underlying language. Therefore, Chapters 6, 7 and 8 have been devoted to the discussion of metaphor, irony and parody from several cognitive perspectives.

It has been in my intention to highlight the way linguistic structures embed clues meant to unveil communicative strategies and goals, inferencing processes and affect-laden processes such as expectation consolidation or suspension. In addition, I have endeavoured to show how language exchanges exploit the interaction between intrapersonal mental schematic representations and extrapersonal, socially shared cultural representations, while equally contributing to the dynamics of such representations. I wholly agree with Verschueren that pragmatics is indeed 'a theory of linguistic adaptation' (1999), meant to investigate how humans adapt to language and how language adapts to humans in everyday interaction. Such an adaptability-centred view can expand further areas of research such as argumentation, political rhetoric, language acquisition, social psychology, and, last but not least, language disorders.

Certain key notions pertaining to pragmatic approaches to language, such as deixis, presupposition, logical entailment, have been deliberately left out, as they have been considered less connected to the cognitive component of verbal communication. In addition, it has not been within the scope of this book to probe into pragmatic approaches which are basically discourse-oriented such as Conversation Analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis or argumentation studies, to name just a few.

Hopefully this book has clarified fundamental notions and tenets of pragmatics both by comparing definitions and approaches set forth by various scholars, and by illustrating them with detailed analyses of a wide range of texts, from sitcom dialogues to excerpts from women's magazines. I would like to believe that the generalisability of the viewpoints and approaches dealt with in this book resides in their applicability. Such applicability may have further implications, both methodological and pedagogical. Methodological implications may involve refined textually-substantiated analyses of texts pertaining to a plethora of genres – from poetry to TV shows, from self-help books to sermons, from classical dramatic dialogues to doctor-patient, lawyer-client or student-teacher real life interactions. Pedagogical implications may lead teachers of English as a second language to better assess the cognitive and functional dimension of language structures and accordingly design materials involving students' awareness of speech act typology, conventional and conversational implicatures, politeness strategies as well as of

figurative expressions and thought patterns.

Envisaging language as a system of communication constantly backed by a cognitive- cultural system of representations is prioritary in an age of globalization. Not only does it uproot principles underlying social interactions, but it also empowers scholars to delve into attitudes and belief systems, as well as into systematic world views espoused by interlocutors from various cultural backgrounds. Investigating issues concerning cross-cultural communication is momentous nowadays with the effacement of national boundaries and the boost of intercultural communication. Understanding local and global social conventions, norms and rituals and paying due attention to concepts such as face, prestige, ethnicity and gender, will undoubtedly enable comprehenders and researchers alike to better understand verbal interactions and cultural routines, as well as to avoid rigid stereotyping and excessive pigeonholing.

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