

Aggression in Interactional Humor: An Analysis of American Television Drama Discourse

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Abstract

ジョークは一般に、笑いをもたらすものとしてのポジティブなイメージが想起されやすく、反面その負の側面はしばしば捨象される傾向にある。しかし、ユーモア研究の分野においてはジョークの受け手の笑い以外の反応に着目するなどしてその埋もれがちな負の側面を分析する研究も散見されている。その中でも Norrick (1994) は仲間内でのユーモア使用を観察する中で、ジョークの持つ攻撃性について言及しており、普段からジョークを交わすような遠慮のない間柄ならば、攻撃性の高いジョークであってもその使用が許容され、さらにそれが仲間内の結束性を高めると指摘している。本研究ではとくに相互作用的ユーモア (interactional humor, Brône 2008) に着目し、Norrick (1994) が指摘したジョークの内包する攻撃性について、その度合いと、それが使用される二者間の関係性の強さとの相関をドラマコーパスを使用した分析において探った。分析の結果、ジョークの持つ攻撃性の度合いと人間関係性の親疎度合いとは相関があることが判明した。しかし、今回の分析で扱ったデータは人工的な会話であるドラマコーパスを使用したものであるため、今後は自然会話を対象とした追加分析が必要になると考えられる。

Key Words: interactional humor, aggression, intentionality

1. Introduction

Humorous expressions have been seen as something that make people laugh and entertain the conversation participants. However, as Billig (2005) says, they are not merely amusing. Laughter is not the only reaction humorous expressions can cause (Bell 2009, Hay 2001, Shegloff 2001). Norrick (1994) refers to such aspects of jokes and says that they also contain potential aggression in their nature. While such studies touching upon the dark side of humor can be found, those also delving into their usage in differing human relationships are still scarce. In order to explore the correlation between joke aggression and human relationship types, the present study¹ focused on analyzing interactional humor,² a kind of humorous expression which can be seen in daily transactions.

This paper is organized in the following manner. Section 2 reviews the previous studies dealing with joke aggression (Section 2.1) and interactional humor (Section 2.2). Here, the details of the subcategories of interactional humor are also described (Section 2.3, 2.4). Based on this selective overview, Section 3 presents the hypotheses concerning the association between aggression in interactional humor and human relationship types. The different degrees of aggression in the subtypes of interactional humor and the use of each phenomenon within people with differing types of relationships are here assumed. Then Section 4 shows the data and methods of the analysis conducted for examining the hypotheses. Section 5 gives the results of the hypotheses examination, and Section 6 is the conclusion.

2. Previous Studies

In this section, the notion of aggression in jokes is first touched upon by introducing Norrick (1994), and then the phenomenon of interactional humor is presented along with the details of its subcategories.

2.1 Norrick (1994)

In a study on various types of jokes in natural conversation, Norrick (1994) described jokes as having aggressive potential in two ways. The first point concerns the processing load of hearers and the other is associated with negative face (Brown and Levinson 1987) of the target and hearers.

As for the first point, Norrick (1994) states that jokes “reframe the current activity as play” when they are presented (p. 411). In other words, they disturb the hitherto serious talk by introducing a playful mood into the ongoing conversation. This would be an impairment to the efficiency of the talk. He also states that jokes demand hearers “to discard contextually obvious meanings and to look for obscure interpretations outside the current topic and activity,” and therefore offend hearers by increasing their processing workload (p. 411).

In addition, turning to the second point, Norrick (1994) indicates that jokes are a “short intelligence game” which constitute a threat to hearers (p. 411). Since jokes require some background knowledge for their appreciation, hearers are in effect suddenly tested on their possession of the needed knowledge. Consequently, it can be said that this aggressive nature in jokes can annoy hearers, let alone the jokes’ targets who are often ridiculed or teased.

The aggression in jokes which has been suggested so far may seem entirely harmful to successful communication. However, Norrick (1994) claims that reciprocation of such aggressive-natured jokes can become a “competitive game” and rather enhance rapport in particular relationships where jokes are regularly exchanged in conversation, which he calls a

“customary joking relationship” (p. 415). In his study, mocking and sarcasm are types of jokes which are treated as being particularly aggressive “in attacking an interlocutor and violating the norms of politeness,” but, such jokes can exceptionally — and when used within a customary joking relationship — “convey positive politeness or solidarity by flouting negative politeness conventions, and hence showing the relationship need not stand on formalities” (p. 429). His finding that people with the strong bonds shown by customary joking relationships allow the usage of even highly aggressive types of jokes calls out for an attention on the association between jokes with different degrees of aggression and human relationships other than those having strong relationships. The current paper deals with such issue.

The types of jokes which were analyzed in the present study will be shown in detail in the next section.

2.2 Brône (2008)

Brône (2008) did a study³ on interactional humor, which is a type of joke used in conversations. He defined it as “responsive conversational turns as they connect to a previously made utterance (p. 2027).” It utilizes ambiguous elements in the interlocutor’s previous utterance, and involves a clash of viewpoints. To explain the viewpoint clash, a layered analytical model was developed by combining the notions of layering (Clark 1996) and mental space (Fauconnier [1985] 1994, 1997, Ritchie 2006). He gives an example of teasing as in (1) to describe the notion of layering.

- (1) Ken: and I’m cheap, ---
Margaret: I’ve always felt that about you,
Ken: oh shut up,
(-- laughs) 15 bob a lesson at home,
(Clark, 1996: 353, cited in Brône 2008: 2030)

Example (1) is a conversation between a couple (Ken and Margaret) about the husband’s work as a tutor. Ken describes himself as low-cost, and his wife teases him by showing agreement. However, Margaret’s utterance does not reflect her actual thoughts, since she intended it to be a tease. Ken is also aware that her remark does not reflect her actual opinion. Therefore, a dual nature exists in Margaret’s teasing, which can be symbolized by layers with different levels: “at the level of the actual communicative situation, Margaret and Ken jointly pretend (layer 1) that, at the second level, implied Margaret seriously claims she thinks that implied Ken is cheap (layer 2)” (Brône 2008: 2030).

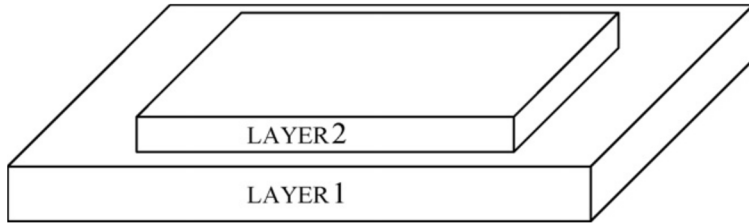


Figure 1. Clark's three-dimensional model of layering. (Brône 2008: 2030)

Brône (2008) explains that the two layers have a vertical relationship as is shown in Figure 1, and in this case, layer 2 is constructed upon layer 1, which means that the pretended situation is realized on the basis of the actual situation in the real world. According to Brône (2008), verbal acts with such multi-layered construction are not limited to teasing, but also include phenomena categorized as “nonserious language,” including fiction (novels, movies, plays, etc.), irony, sarcasm, overstatement, understatement, counterfactuals, rhetorical questions, etc., and interactional humor can be included in the list of such acts (Brône 2008: 2030). To provide a clearer account of this multi-layered construction, Brône (2008) employs Fauconnier's ([1985] 1994, 1997) notion of mental space. Fauconnier (1997: 11) defines mental spaces as “partial structures that proliferate when we think and talk, allowing a fine-grained partitioning of our discourse and knowledge structures,” and since Brône (2008) sees an affinity with the concept of layering, an alternative representation using mental spaces was created as shown in Figure 2.

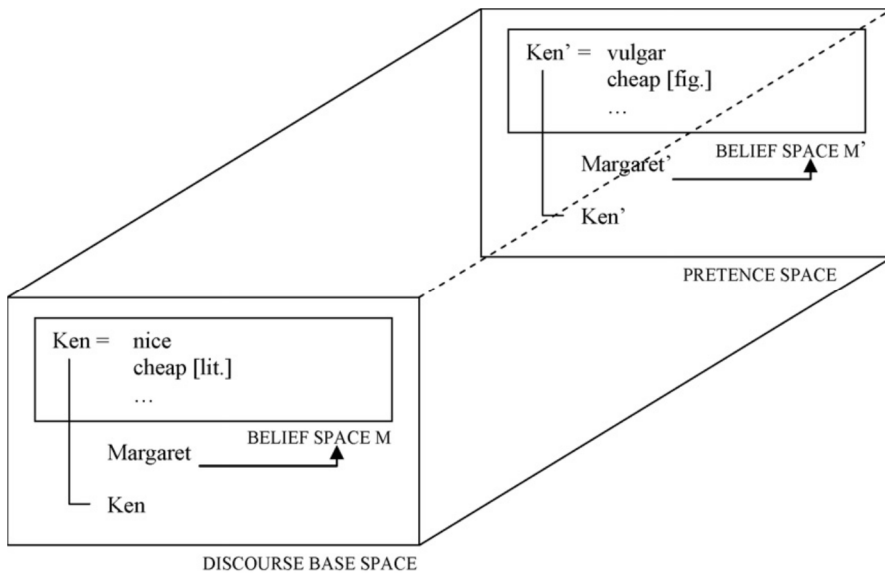


Figure 2. Layered mental space configuration for example (1) (Brône 2008 : 2031)

The teasing instance in example (1) is here illustrated as differing discourse spaces with horizontal instead of vertical relations.⁴ The discourse base space and the pretence space corresponds to layer 1 and layer 2 respectively in Clark's terminology (Brône 2008). By referring to Brandt and Brandt (2005), Brône explains that the base space is a model representing the speaker's act of taking part in meaning construction, and that the fictional pretence space is interpreted depending on the base space. Such duality which is illustrated here is what is exploited in interactional humor, and as Brône (2008) explains, it has two interrelated subcategories. Their difference lies in the existence or nonexistence of the intention on the speaker's part while utilizing the ambiguous element.

Brône named the form which accompanied intention as hyper-understanding and the other one as misunderstanding. He describes hyper-understanding as a phenomenon that “revolves around a speaker's ability to exploit potential weak spots (ambiguity) in a previous speaker's utterance by echoing the latter's words with a fundamentally different reading,” and misunderstanding as a phenomenon which involves a genuine — and not pretended — misinterpretation (p. 2027). Examples of each phenomenon are shown in (2) and (3) below.⁵

(2) Hyper-understanding

[Ep21_S3: At Central Perk. Joey and Chandler are discussing stage names.]

Chandler: How about...Joey...Pepponi?

Joey: No, still too ethnic. My agent thinks I should have a name that's more neutral.⁶

Chandler: Joey...Switzerland?

At a coffee house named Central Perk, Chandler and Joey are thinking of a good stage name for Joey to use. Chandler makes a suggestion, but Joey turns it down, saying that his agent wants his name to be neutral in the sense of being not so clearly Italian. Although Chandler understands what Joey meant, he pretends that he took the other meaning of that phrase, i.e. “politically neutral.” Therefore, in this case, Chandler is intentionally utilizing the ambiguous element *neutral* in Joey's words, and he is creating a hyper-understanding by exploiting the polysemous nature of the word *neutral*.

(3) Misunderstanding

[Ep6_S2: At the theater. The main members finished watching Joey's play.]

Chandler: (staring at a woman across the room) Ross, ten o'clock.

Ross: Is it? Feels like two.

After watching a play at a theater, Chandler finds an attractive woman in the direction of *ten o'clock* and mentions it to another friend Ross. However, Ross takes him literally and fails to give the right reaction. The homonymous nature of the words *ten o'clock* is the cause of Ross's misunderstanding in this case, and since Ross unintentionally mistook the meaning of the ambiguous element in Chandler's words, Ross is doing the misunderstanding.

The above two are the subtypes which Brône (2008) had referred to, but in a later study another subcategory was mentioned.

2.3 Feyaerts et al. (2015)

While dealing with interactional humor, Feyaerts et al. (2015) mentioned of a third subcategory which they labeled as *intra-speaker hyper-understanding*. As it includes *hyper-understanding* in its label, this phenomenon involves intention on the speaker's part, but what is different is that the utilized ambiguous element is located in the speaker's own previous utterance instead of that of the interlocutor. An example of the intra-speaker hyper-understanding phenomenon is presented in (4) below.

- (4) Intra-speaker hyper-understanding
[Ep24_S2 At Monica's apartment. The men are gathered at the balcony.]
Ross: (sigh)...I have to go to China.
Joey: The country?
Ross: No no, this big pile of dishes in my mom's breakfront.

In this scene, Ross is telling his friends about a business trip he will be going on soon. Since the *China* which Ross had said is clearly referring to the name of a country but nevertheless Joey tries to verify the meaning, Ross pretends that he had conveyed a different meaning with that word, i.e. tableware, in order to tease him. In this case, Ross had intentionally used the ambiguity of a previously uttered element, and since it is located in his own previous utterance, it can be said that Ross is performing an intra-speaker hyper-understanding.

2.4 The Fourth Subcategory

As we have seen, in the previous studies interaction humor had been said to have three subcategories. However, as I was investigating a drama corpus, there were some cases which could not be fitted into the three subcategories. In such cases, the speaker unintentionally utilized an ambiguous element which was located in his/her own previous utterance. Therefore, I labeled

them as *intra-speaker misunderstanding*. An example of this phenomenon is shown in (5) below.

- (5) Intra-speaker misunderstanding
[Ep10_S3 At Monica's apartment. Everyone except Joey is talking in the living room.]
Phoebe: Me too! Oh! Did you ever see *An Officer and a Gentleman*?
Rachel: Yeah!
Phoebe: Well, he's kinda like the guy I went to see that with.

Phoebe is trying to explain about a man, and in doing so, she is asking her friends if they had seen a film (*An Officer and a Gentleman*). Normally, if such a question is asked in this situation, the hearers would expect an answer saying that one of the actors or characters in the film resemble the man she is trying to explain. However, in her follow-up, she reveals that the man has similar characteristics to a person who does not appear in the film itself. Therefore, in this case, since Phoebe is unintentionally utilizing the ambiguity of the inference that her own previous question creates, it can be said that she is doing an intra-speaker misunderstanding.

Now we have seen that interactional humor has four types of subcategories. In the next section, the aggression entailed in them will be discussed by adapting the findings in Norrick's (1994) observations.

3. Interactional Humor and Aggression

As mentioned in Section 2.1, Norrick (1994) explained the potential aggression jokes have as their being a disturbance to the ongoing serious conversation and the potential offense caused to the target and the hearers. Now when we think of the case of interactional humor, it can be said that all four types contain the basic aggression of jokes which disturb serious communication, since they would inevitably be a digression from the main topic of the conversation. However, what makes them different would lie in the existence or non-existence of intention in their usages of ambiguous elements. Table 1 shows the organization of the four subcategories according to the two points that divide them.

		The location of the ambiguous element	
		Interlocutor's utterance	Speaker's utterance
Does the utilization involve intention?	yes	Hyper-understanding	Intra-speaker hyper-understanding
	no	Misunderstanding	Intra-speaker misunderstanding

Table 1. Organization of the four subcategories of interactional humor

When we look at Table 1 horizontally, the four subcategories can be divided into two types according to the existence and nonexistence of intention on the speaker's part. Those which involve intention are hyper-understanding and intra-speaker hyper-understanding, and those which do not are misunderstanding and intra-speaker misunderstanding.

Considering from the point of aggression, the types which involve intention can be thought as to be more aggressive compared to those that do not, in that they are deliberately performed. Hence, hyper-understanding and intra-speaker hyper-understanding can be grouped as the highly aggressive types, and misunderstanding and intra-speaker misunderstanding as the less aggressive types, as far as these four types are concerned.

In addition to the notion of aggression, Norrick (1994) also made an observation about aggressive types of jokes being accepted in relationships with strong bonds. This view could lead to an assumption of a proportional relation between the accepted degree of aggression in jokes and the degree of closeness within human relationships. More specifically, jokes with a high degree of aggression would be often used between people having very strong relationships, while jokes with a lesser degree of aggression would often be used between people with weaker relationships. Combining this assumption with the supposed differing level of aggression in the two groups of interactional humor, the two hypotheses shown below were constructed.

Hypothesis (A): There is a tendency that the stronger the relationship between the offender⁷ and the target⁸ is, the more use of aggressive types can be seen.

Hypothesis (B): There is a tendency that the weaker the relationship between the offender and the target is, the more use of less aggressive types can be seen.

In order to verify these hypotheses, an analysis of a drama corpus was conducted, which will be presented in the following sections.

4. Data and Methods

The data used for the analysis was taken from the first season of the American situational comedy (sitcom) series *Friends*. Since its start in 1994, it has achieved a worldwide popularity and lasted for ten years. The first season is composed of 24 episodes of a 23-minute drama, making a total of 9.2 hours. The main characters are six adults living in Manhattan, who are all in a friendly relationship and see each other almost every day. They are leading lives of varied patterns and characteristics: the good-humored paleontologist Ross, the spoiled but kind-hearted Rachel, the sarcastic humorist and data analyst Chandler, the competitive but skilled chef Monica, the womanizer and struggling actor Joey, and the eccentric masseuse and musician Phoebe. The series take the form of a sitcom, and therefore displays abundant humorous scenes and interactions.

To analyze interactional humor in the *Friends* corpus,⁹ the four steps shown below were taken.

1. Select the utterances made directly before canned laughter as humorous expressions.
2. Among the expressions collected in step 1, select those which involve a utilization of an ambiguous element as interactional humor, and divide them into the four subcategories.
3. Identify the offender and target in each token of interactional humor.
4. Identify the relationship type between the offender and the target, and calculate the usage ratio of the four subcategories in each type of relationship.

In step 1, the parts directly followed by insertions of canned laughter¹⁰ were marked in the drama transcription, in order to identify the speech and behavior causing direct humorous effects.¹¹ In step 2, of the utterances perceived as eliciting canned laughter, those which utilized ambiguities contained in a previous utterance were identified as interactional humor. In doing this, only verbal expressions were selected. Then according to the location of the ambiguous element and the existence or nonexistence of intentionality in its usage, the instances were divided into the four subcategories. In step 3, the characters of the offender and target were identified for each token. In the last step, the relationship type between the offender and the target were divided into four types, and the usage ratio of each type of interactional humor was calculated.

The four relationship types¹² between the offenders and the targets were labeled as *none*, *weak*, *strong*, and *very strong*. *None* was coded for the relationship between offenders and targets who met for the first time, such as one of the main characters who works in a coffee shop and her customer. *Weak* was coded for the relationship between offenders and targets who have known

each other for a short time, or those who do not (yet) meet in their private lives, such as new couples and workmates. *Strong* was coded for the relationship between offenders and targets who are friends, such as Rachel and Phoebe, who are among the main characters. *Very strong* was coded for the relationship between close friends or relatives, such as Chandler and Joey who are roommates, and Monica and Ross who are siblings. The detailed content of the coding of relationships between characters is shown in Table 2.¹³

Table 2. Relationship between characters in *Friends*

Relationship	Combination of characters in <i>Friends</i>
Very strong	Relatives (siblings): Monica and Ross Phoebe and Ursula
	Relatives (parent and child): Monica/Ross and Mr. /Mrs. Geller Joey and Mr./Mrs. Tribbiani Rachel and Mr. Green
	(former) Couple: Ross and Carol (ex-wife) Rachel and Barry (ex-fiancé) Chandler and Janice (ex-girlfriend) Phoebe and David/Roger (ex-boyfriend)
	Close friends: Chandler and Joey (roommate) Rachel and Monica (roommate)
	Rivals: Ross and Susan (ex-husband of Carol, and Carol's new lesbian partner)
Strong	Friends: Monica and Phoebe/Chandler/Joey Rachel and Phoebe/Chandler/Joey/Ross Phoebe and Chandler/Joey/Ross Ross and Chandler/Joey
Weak	New couple: Monica and Paul/Ethan Chandler and Aurora Ross and Celia Rachel and Carl Phoebe and Max
	New friends: Monica and the person who steals her credit card

	Doctor and patient: Ross and Dr. Oberman Barry and Robbie
	Customers in shop: Rachel and woman customer
	Workmates: Chandler and Shelly/Mr. Douglas
	Acquaintances: Monica and Angela Mrs. Bing and host of TV show Ross and Mrs. Bing Roger and Phoebe's friends
	Estranged parent and child: Chandler and Mrs. Bing
None	First meeting: Chandler and Paul/Ursula/nurse Monica and nurse Joey and Ursula Phoebe and Fran & Jamie/Luisa Rachel and coffee shop customer

By calculating the usage ratio of each type of interactional humor in the four types of relationships, the validity of the hypotheses was examined. First of all, the number of each of the four types of interactional humor was identified in each of the four relationship types. Then the relative frequency of usage for a particular type of interactional humor compared to the total number of usages of the types sharing the location of the utilized ambiguous element (hyper-understanding and misunderstanding/intra-speaker hyper-understanding and intra-speaker misunderstanding) was calculated. An example formula for calculating the relative frequency of hyper-understanding usage in relationship type *strong* is shown in (6).

(6) Relative frequency of hyper-understandings in relationship type *strong*

$$\frac{\text{The number of hyper-understandings in relationship type } strong}{\text{The number of hyper-understandings and misunderstandings in relationship type } strong} \times 100$$

5. Results

Following the steps presented in the previous section, a total of 2846¹⁴ speeches and behavior causing direct humorous effects were found in the *Friends* corpus, and 243 of them were identified as interactional humor, as shown in Figure 3. The other types of humor include non-verbal humor involving movements of the body and situational absurdity. Among the

subtypes of interactional humor, hyper-understanding provides the largest number, followed by misunderstanding, intra-speaker hyper-understanding, and intra-speaker misunderstanding.

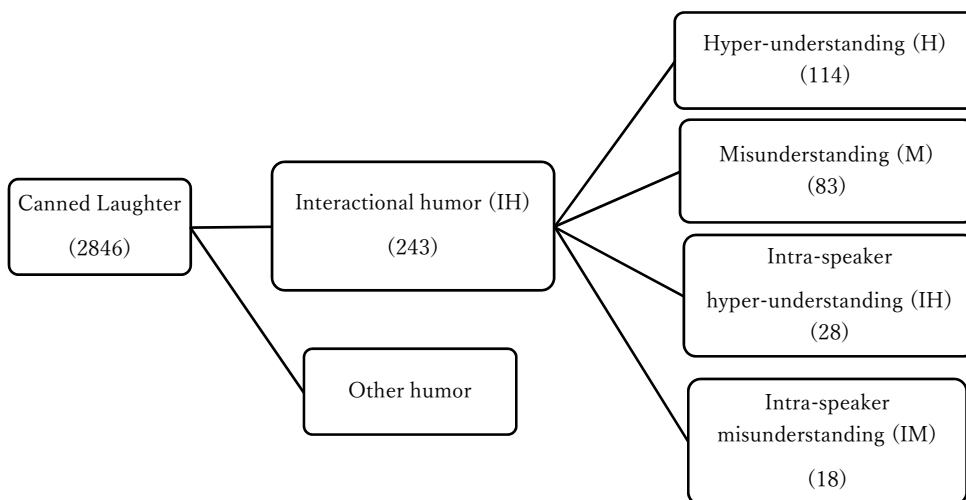


Figure 3. Types of humorous expressions in *Friends*

These examples were then divided by relationship type, as shown in Table 3. Since the television series *Friends* mostly shows scenes with the six main characters, the majority of conversation revolves around them. Thus, the absolute frequencies of instances of the four types of interactional humor are naturally largest in the relationship types which hold between them, namely *strong* and *very strong*. By using the formula presented in the previous section, the relative frequencies of each type of interactional humor in each relationship type were calculated and shown in Table 3, next to the rows presenting numbers of absolute frequencies.

Table 3. Absolute and relative frequency of phenomena per relationship type

	Hyper-understanding (H)		Mis-understanding (M)		Intra-speaker hyper-understanding (IH)		Intra-speaker mis-understanding (IM)	
none	2	22(%)	7	78(%)	0	0(%)	1	100(%)
weak	6	40(%)	9	60(%)	4	50(%)	2	50(%)
strong	69	58(%)	49	42(%)	14	52(%)	13	48(%)
very strong	37	67(%)	18	33(%)	10	83(%)	2	17(%)

The relative frequencies of each phenomenon in each relationship type will be illustrated as graphs for hypotheses examination starting from the next section.

5.1 Hypothesis regarding the highly aggressive types

Hypothesis (A), which is concerned with the correlation between the frequency of the highly aggressive types of interactional humor and the degree of closeness in relationships between the offender and the target, was examined by calculating the frequency rate of the use of hyper-understanding and intra-speaker hyper-understanding in each of the four types of relationships.

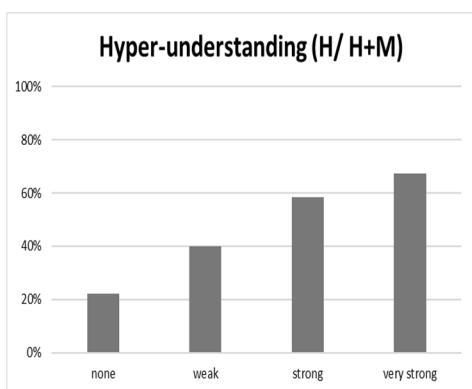


Figure 4. Usage ratio of hyper-understanding

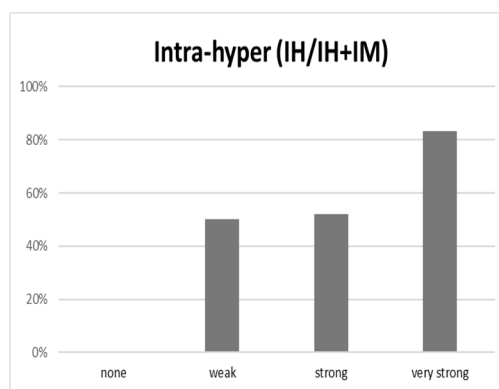


Figure 5. Usage ratio of intra-speaker hyper-understanding

Figure 4 and Figure 5 are graphs¹⁵ representing the calculation results of the relative frequency of hyper-understanding and intra-speaker hyper-understanding usage in each of the four relationship types respectively. It shows an increase in the frequency rate as the degree of closeness rises. The two variables have a strong correlation (hyper-understanding $r=0.99$ and intra-speaker hyper-understanding $r=0.94$). Thus, hypothesis (A) assuming a proportional relationship between the usage frequency of the highly aggressive types of interactional humor and the degree of closeness in the relationship between the offender and the target is verified in the *Friends* corpus data. It can be thought that the high degree of aggression involved in these two subcategories makes it preferable for employment between relationships that are connected strongly enough to be not easily damaged by such powerful aggressive impact.

5.2 Hypothesis regarding the less aggressive types

Hypothesis (B) concerns the correlation between the frequency of the less aggressive types

of interactional humor usage and the degree of closeness in a relationship between the offender and the target. In the same way as was done with hypothesis (A), this second hypothesis was examined by calculating the frequency rate of the use of misunderstanding and intra-speaker misunderstanding in each of the four types of relationship.

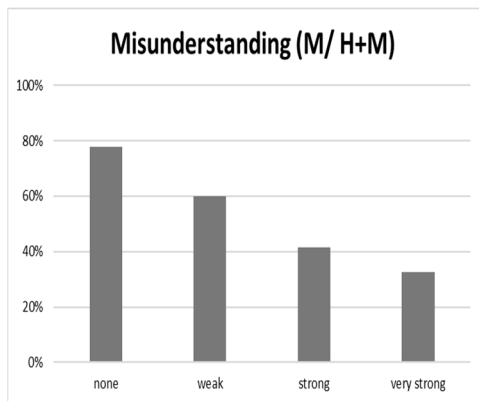


Figure 6. Usage ratio of misunderstanding

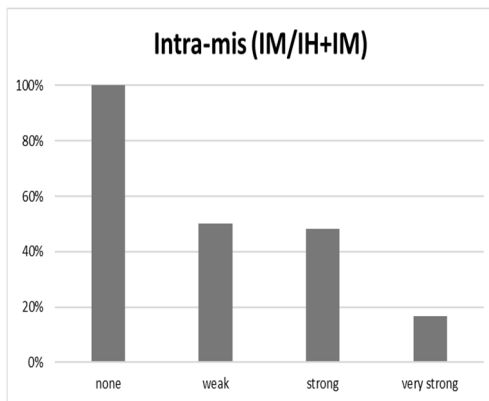


Figure 7. Usage ratio of intra-speaker misunderstanding

Figure 6 and Figure 7 are graphs representing the calculation result of the frequency of misunderstanding and intra-speaker misunderstanding usage in each of the four relationship types respectively. The most frequent use of both subcategories is employed within the *none* relationship type, and a decrease in the frequency rate is seen as the degree of closeness enhances. The two variables have a strong correlation (misunderstanding $r=-0.94$ and intra-speaker misunderstanding $r=-0.94$). Thus, from the *Friends* corpus data, hypothesis (B) assuming an inverse proportional relationship between the usage frequency of the less aggressive types of interactional humor and the degree of closeness in the relationship between the offender and the target is verified.

The non-existence of intentional aggression upon the performance of less aggressive types of the phenomena renders it suitable for use between relationships that have not yet created connections which can bear aggressive speech. In addition to this aggression-related factor, it can be inferred that the lack of shared knowledge and personal information between the offender and the target is the reason for the high frequency of use within weakly connected relationships.

6. Conclusion

The present study investigated the association between aggression in humor and human relationship strength by exploring the use of interactional humor. Data used for the analysis was the script from the first season of the American television drama series *Friends*. The four types of

interactional humor phenomena were identified in the data, and the offenders and the targets in each case were distinguished as well. The relationships between the offenders and targets were then categorized into four types as very strong, strong, weak, and none, according to their degrees of intimacy and kinship. It was assumed that the highly aggressive types would be used more between people with stronger bonds while the less aggressive types would be used more between those with weak or no bonds.

Results showed that the highly aggressive types were used most within the relationship type very strong, and least used within the relationship type none. On the other hand, the less aggressive types showed an opposite tendency in their usage. Therefore, supportive results were obtained for the assumption that the highly aggressive types are more used between people with stronger bonds, and that the less aggressive types are more used between people with weaker bonds. It can be said that a correlation exists between degrees of joke aggression and degrees of closeness in human relationships, as far as the *Friends* corpus is concerned.

Although the findings from the present study have revealed one aspect of the association between joke aggression and human relationships, analysis has been carried out for only one corpus. Since *Friends* has achieved popularity around the world, it can be said that the humorous exchanges seen in the drama reflect those in real life conversation to at least some extent, but nevertheless it is artificial. Further studies dealing with a wider range of corpora including natural conversation will be required.

Notes

¹ This paper is a revised version of my master's thesis (Otake, 2015).

The content of this paper has been presented at two conferences (The 38th conference of The Japanese Association of Sociolinguistic Sciences and the 19th annual conference of The Pragmatics Society of Japan)

² The Japanese label of interactional humor is an original translation of the author.

³ Brône (2008) conducted a study using the data from the British television sitcom series *Blackadder* (scripts taken from Curtis, Richard, Elton, Ben, Lloyd, John, Atkinson, Rowan (1998), *Blackadder. The Whole Damn Dynasty*. Penguin Books, London).

⁴ A unified account for both intentional and non-intentional phenomena is possible with this analytical model.

⁵ The examples of interactional humor shown in this paper are taken from the *Friends* corpus used as data in the present study.

⁶ Parts underlined with wavy lines are the ambiguous elements, and the parts underlined with straight lines

are the parts where the realization of the phenomena can be confirmed.

- ⁷ The offenders of each interactional humor phenomenon are those who, in the case of hyper-understanding and intra-speaker hyper-understanding, intentionally exploit the ambiguity in an utterance. As for misunderstanding and intra-speaker misunderstanding, the naming of offender would be slightly awkward for the person who conducts these phenomena, since the use of ambiguity is unintended. However, for the purpose of standardization in terms, offender will be used to refer to the person who exploits an ambiguous element in an utterance, regardless of the distinction of intentionality.
- ⁸ The targets for hyper-understanding and intra-speaker hyper-understanding are, those who the offenders direct their aggression. In the case of hyper-understanding, targets are abused of the ambiguities in their own utterances, and in the case of intra-speaker hyper-understanding, they are typically led by the offender to fall into a temporal state of misunderstanding. Targets for the misunderstanding and intra-speaker misunderstanding phenomenon are those who could not convey their communicative intentions by being misinterpreted of their ambiguous element in their utterance by the offender.
- ⁹ Conversations from the drama series had been transcribed by watching the series, with support from the *Friends* fan site providing free transcripts. <http://www.livesinabox.com/friends/>
- ¹⁰ Canned laughter is an artificial laughter inserted in shows.
- ¹¹ In Brône (2008), the method for distinguishing utterances which cause direct humorous effect was not explained. Therefore, canned laughter had been considered as an indicator for utterances causing direct humorous effect, as for the analysis in this thesis.
- ¹² There were some instances in which the offender and the target were identical, which formed a self-deprecating type of humor. Such instances are excluded for the present analysis, since the relationship between the offender and target is unmeasurable.
- ¹³ The present study identified the orientation (positive/negative) in the four relationship types (none, weak, strong, very strong) upon data coding, but such difference was not reflected upon the examination results. Examination concerning such details will be conducted as a continuation of this study.
- ¹⁴ The number of canned laughter.
- ¹⁵ The phenomena labels are abbreviated in the graph titles.

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