

**Humour in Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* Series - Application of
Psychological and Linguistic Theories of Humour**

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Tässä pro gradu -tutkielmassa käsitellään huumoria Terry Pratchettin *Discworld*-romaaneissa. Tutkielmassa pyritään vastaamaan seuraaviin tutkimusongelmiin: mikä tekee kirjoista kerätyt esimerkit hauskoiksi, miksi jotkin esimerkit ovat hausکمپia kuin toiset, mitä tekniikoita huumorin luomiseen on käytetty, ovatko jotkin tekniikat yleisempiä kuin muut sekä kuinka hyvin nykyiset huumoriteoriat ovat sovellettavissa tutkimusaineistoon ja ovatko kyseiset teoriat riittäviä.

Tutkielma koostuu teoriaosuudesta sekä analyysiosuudesta. Huumoriteorioista esitellään kolme suurinta psykologista teoriaryhmää (ylemmyys-, huojennus- ja inkongruenssiteoriat) sekä kaksi tunnetuinta lingvististä huumoriteoriaa (Semantic Script Theory of Humour ja General Theory of Verbal Humour). Tutkimusaineisto sisältää 521 esimerkkiä, jotka on kerätty 25 ensimmäisestä *Discworld*-romaanista. Aineistoa analysoidaan teoriaosuudessa esiteltävien psykologisten sekä lingvististen huumoriteorioiden avulla, ja teorioihin pohjautuvia hypoteeseja testataan löydöksillä. Esimerkeistä arvioidaan hauskuus viisiportaisella asteikolla, vihamielisyys (kohde, hyökkäystyyli ja sympatia kohdetta kohtaan) sekä hävyttömyys (tabuaihe ja voimakkuus viisiportaisella asteikolla). Lisäksi esimerkit analysoidaan lingvististen teorioiden avulla ja jaotellaan ryhmiin tekniikoiden perusteella.

Analyysin tulokset osoittavat useimmat hypoteesit paikkansapitäviksi. Hauskuutta parantaa vihamielinen ja hävytön sisältö, oivaltava ja tuore idea, hyvin toteutettu lingvistinen rakenne sekä kohtuullisen vaativa päättelyprosessi. Negatiivisia tekijöitä ovat vihamielisten ja hävyttömien elementtien täysi puuttuminen, toisto ja keinotekoisuus sekä liian helppo tai vaikea päättelyprosessi. Sen sijaan tulokset kumoavat hypoteesin, jonka mukaan voimakas hävyttömyys tai vihamielisyys sympatiaa osakseen saavia kohteita vastaan vaikuttaisivat negatiivisesti hauskuuteen.

Tutkimuksessa käy ilmi, että huumorin hauskuus riippuu monen tekijän kokonaisuudesta, jossa yksikään osa ei saa olla ala-arvoinen. Tutkielmassa ehdotetaan, että huumorin hauskuuteen vaikuttavat eniten onnistunut idea sekä kielellinen toteutus, joiden jälkeen vihamieliset elementit ovat hieman tärkeämpiä kuin hävytön sisältö. Tutkimustulokset viittaavat siihen, että nykyiset huumoriteoriat eivät yksinään riitä monimutkaisten humorististen tekstien analysoimiseen ja hauskuuden selittämiseen. Sen sijaan yhdistelemällä niiden tarjoamia mahdollisuuksia, voidaan huumoria tutkia varsin kattavasti.

Avainsanat: huumori, Terry Pratchett, Discworld, psykologiset ja lingvistiset huumoriteoriat, SSTH, GTVH

Table of contents

1. Introduction.....	1
2. Humour research.....	4
2.1 Defining humour and problematic issues.....	4
2.2 Humour research.....	8
3. Theories of humour.....	11
3.1 Psychological theories of humour.....	11
3.1.1 Hostility theories.....	12
3.1.2 Release theories.....	14
3.1.3 Incongruity theories.....	20
3.2 Linguistic theories of humour.....	28
3.2.1 The Semantic Script Theory of Humour (the SSTH).....	28
3.2.2 The General Theory of Verbal Humour (the GTVH).....	38
3.2.3 Further developments of linguistic theories.....	43
4. Materials and methods.....	46
4.1 Terry Pratchett and the <i>Discworld</i> novels.....	46
4.2 The approach to the present study.....	48
5. Psychological dimensions.....	54
5.1 Hostile content.....	54
5.1.1 Targets.....	55
5.1.2 Types of hostility.....	57
5.1.3 Sympathy with the targets.....	59
5.1.4 Discussion.....	60
5.2 Obscene content.....	62
5.2.1 Taboos.....	63
5.2.2 The level of explicitness.....	65
5.2.3 Discussion.....	66
6. Linguistic techniques and structures.....	69
6.1 Ambiguity and incongruity at different linguistic levels.....	69
6.1.1 Lower linguistic levels.....	69
6.1.2 Higher linguistic levels.....	74
6.1.3 Discussion.....	78
6.2 Script analysis of the examples.....	81
6.2.1 Scripts.....	82
6.2.2 Script overlap.....	83
6.2.3 Script opposition.....	84
6.2.4 Script-switch triggers.....	88
6.2.5 Discussion.....	89
6.3 Knowledge resources and lines.....	90
6.3.1 Script opposition (SO).....	90
6.3.2 Logical mechanism (LM).....	91
6.3.3 Situation (SI).....	98
6.3.4 Target (TA).....	98
6.3.5 Narrative strategy (NS).....	99

6.3.6 Language (LA).....	100
7. Discussion.....	103
8. Conclusion.....	108
Bibliography.....	110
Works cited.....	110
Primary sources.....	112
Appendix 1: List of groups in the corpus.....	113

1. Introduction

Humour and laughter have always interested people and even early philosophers tried to analyse it. The reason for the intriguing nature of humour is its central place in our every day life and, indeed, the fact that it is one of the things that separate us from other animals, as does language, for instance. Humour research, as a more serious academic discipline, began to gain popularity in the 1960s and the 1970s, although humour was for quite a long time considered a rather peculiar and even trivial subject of study. The first studies were mainly conducted by psychologists, who very early acknowledged the need for cooperation with scholars from other fields of study, such as anthropology, sociology and linguistics.

The aim of this thesis is to discover reasons for funniness of humour found in Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* novels. My research questions are:

- 1) Why are the examples gathered from the *Discworld* novels funny? What makes some examples funnier than others?
- 2) What kind of linguistic devices are used in the examples? Are certain techniques more common than others?
- 3) To what extent can the available theories of humour be applied in the analysis of the *Discworld* data? Are these theories sufficient?

I will examine the data *primarily* from the linguistic point of view, but as humour perception and appreciation is a complex process involving both cognitive and emotional aspects, I will also include a psychological side to the analysis. My particular interest lies in the different linguistic techniques or devices used to create humorous texts. My objective is to analyse the data with the help of several theories of humour which will be presented in the first part of the thesis. The theories are also evaluated in the process to see whether they are sufficient.

Certain observations must be made at this point. First, as the discussion in chapter 2 will demonstrate, the perception and appreciation of humour is highly subjective and therefore my personal taste for humour will inevitably affect the study. Second, I must stress that the study is not primarily quantitative, although I will give numbers concerning findings in the

analysis of the corpus material in chapters 5 and 6. Nor do I expect to be able to give an exhaustive list of all the different types of humour found in the novels, but probably an extensive presentation of them. Third, my main point of interest being the linguistic techniques involved in the production of humour, the study is not motivated by any clearly definable objectives but rather by an everlasting, never-dying curiosity. However, any research on humour may give insights which can lead to useful applications of the results.

The material for the study was gathered from the first 25 *Discworld* novels written by Terry Pratchett and the occurrences of humorous text were compiled into a corpus of examples. I divided the examples roughly into different groups depending on the general type of humour in question (e.g. involving homophony, antonymy, register, metaphors) (for the list of groups, see appendix 1).

I will conduct the analysis with the help of several theories of humour, both psychological and linguistic, which are presented in chapter 3. In addition, I will also use textbooks on humour (with no specific theory), as well as articles and dissertations related to humour research. For information on Terry Pratchett, the *Discworld* series and its humorous contents I have mostly resorted to internet sites. Examples outside the *Discworld* series have been selected from internet forums or heard personally unless the source is indicated. *Discworld* examples may contain asterisks, which mark footnotes in the novels. The theories presented in chapter 3 make hypotheses and propose reasons for funniness in text. The analysis of my corpus with the tools provided by these theories is expected to give answers to the research questions. I will outline the specific approach to this study and explain the methods of analysing the corpus data in section 4.2.

Related, although somewhat different, studies have been conducted in the University of Tampere. Päivi Mansikkamäki studies one of the *Discworld* novels in her pro gradu thesis *Parody of Religion, Especially of Christianity and Biblical Tales, in Terry Pratchett's Small*.

Gods (2001), but the study adopts a more literary approach than the present one. Laura Johansson uses solely psychological theories of humour in her thesis *Humour and Handicap in Mark Haddon's The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (2008). Lea Soininen's thesis *On Linguistic Means of Producing Humour in Jokes* (1997) addresses exclusively joke-type humour. Reija Parvala, in her thesis "*Funny Bits*" - *Aspects of Linguistic Humour in Roald Dahl's James and the Giant Peach, The Witches and Matilda* (1999), applies formal linguistic theories of humour (the SSTH and the GTVH, see chapter 3) in the analysis, but concentrates on the humour in children's literature, which is of no particular interest to me. Since the language of humour is not yet a very popular topic for research in Finland and since my primary source supplies excellent material for this kind of study, I hope that the thesis will provide some insights to the humour research and offer ideas and topics for further research.

The structure of the thesis is as follows. Chapter 2 addresses several central issues concerning the field of study, such as problems involving the definition of humour, and gives an introduction to the history of humour research. Chapter 3 presents several psychological and linguistic theories of humour that will be used in the analysis of corpus material. Chapter 4 presents the materials and methods of the analysis. Chapters 5 and 6 form the main body of the thesis. Sections 5.1 and 5.2 address the psychological dimensions of the humour in the examples; their hostile and obscene content, respectively. The linguistic techniques and structures in the examples are examined in chapter 6. Section 6.1 addresses the ambiguity and incongruity at different linguistic levels, section 6.2 presents the application of script analysis to the examples and section 6.3 examines the data gathered with more advanced linguistic theories. Chapter 7 presents observations on findings in relation to the research questions and hypotheses, as well as other ideas that emerge in the process of study, and chapter 8 concludes the discussion.

2. Humour research

In this chapter, I present the field of study. Section 2.1 first discusses the concept of humour, especially the problems concerning its definition and the difficulties involved in the research. Section 2.2 gives an introduction to the history of humour research and its different aspects, and lists some of the most important currents and publications in the field of study.

2.1 Defining humour and problematic issues

Humour and laughter have intrigued philosophers and researchers of different fields of study since antiquity, but the attempts to analyse the essence of humour have encountered numerous problems, which have resulted in a relatively chaotic collection of often incompatible theories. The lack of cooperation and effort to be clear has led to misunderstandings and further problems. Raskin (1985, 7) maintains that the most serious problems involve the writers' loose, circular or incomplete definitions of humour, the inconsistent use of terminology (1985, 8) and the lack of principles of taxonomy in their classification of humour (1985, 29).

First, as Raskin (1985, 30) points out, researchers tend to concentrate their study exclusively on the aspects of humour which are of particular interest to their specific field of study and ignore the others. In addition, writers on humour often proclaim that their own work is "the only 'natural' and 'commonsensical' approach to the phenomenon" and are readily opposed to any ideas different from theirs, whereas they fail to define their own proposals clearly (Raskin 1985, 45).

Second, the inconsistency of terminology employed in articles and studies on humour adds to the chaos. Raskin (1985, 8) lists several examples of terms such as *humour*, *laughter*, *the funny*, *the comic*, *the ludicrous*, *joke* and *wit*, which are most often used by different authors with no agreement whatsoever. Raskin himself (1985, 8) uses the term *humour* in "the

least restricted sense, interchangeably with *the funny*." I wish to point out that my approach in this thesis is similar unless indicated otherwise. I am not as audacious as to attempt a clear-cut definition of humour, but content myself with stating that the above relation between *humour* and *the funny*, at least for me, entails the essence of it.

Third, Raskin (1985, 29) maintains that the classification systems of most writers on humour lack principles of taxonomy, for instance, within one classification system one "type of humour" might be labelled with the intention (e.g. *ridicule*) and another with the technique (e.g. *pun*). My own task of dividing the corpus data into the groups also proved to be problematic with my loose classification with rubrics such as *homophony*, *antonymy*, *word-formation*, *redundancy*, *register* and even *unexpected*. However, the grouping was finally done according to the techniques used in the examples and while some rubrics changed, most remained the same.

Finally, the task of defining humour and answering the utmost question "why do we laugh" is rendered arduous if not impossible by the subjective nature of humour. People do laugh at different things, and the things we find humorous or funny depend on quite a number of variables. For instance, a given person's taste for humour is most likely influenced by their cultural background and it will also change as the person in question gains in age and life experience. It can also vary from one situation to another, for example according to the company in which the person is or the mood they are in.

This has led to discussion on the individual sense of humour or the lack thereof, especially within cultures where humour is highly esteemed and "a great sense of humour" is a much sought-for quality in a person. However, Raskin (1985, 2) maintains that the ability to appreciate and enjoy humour is a universal human trait, whereas the individuals' responses to humour are the result of their exercising of this ability in varying degrees. He (1985, 3) continues by comparing this pair of *competence* and *performance* to the similar concepts

concerning language introduced by Noam Chomsky in his *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*.

As for the endlessly varied forms in which humour emerges, Raskin (1985, 3-6) discusses the numerous variables that contribute to a *humour act* which he defines simply as "an individual occurrence of a funny stimulus". These factors for a verbal joke are: the speaker, the hearer, the text, the speaker's and the hearer's life experience and their shared life experience, the psychological types of the participants, the situational context, and the culture or society within which the humour act occurs (Raskin 1985, 5-6). For a verbal joke to be successful, the numerous components must promote humour perception. Even a single unfavourable component may cause the joke to fail. Indeed, Raskin (1985, 6) maintains that the variables above render humour research very difficult, and all-embracing generalisations are nearly impossible to make. However, one may examine these variables to a certain degree and try to find out how they could affect the outcome of the humour act. Failure to "get the joke" may result from various shortcomings in the components. For instance, the *experiences* of the human participants are very important, such as the supposedly universal familiarity with humour as a fairly usual but special mode of communication (Raskin 1985, 15-16). Our life experience and knowledge of the world necessarily affect our interpretations of humorous stimuli. The variable *society* also plays a great role in humour perception and appreciation. If the participants share a social background, the chances are higher for a joke to be successful (Raskin 1985, 16-17). The mutual background may naturally be anything, from the rather vague "Western culture", for instance, to the culture of a nation, of a religion, of a workplace or a group of friends. The aspects represented by the variables of the humour act are incorporated in theories of humour that are important to this study, and are therefore discussed at various points further on in this study.

Raskin (1985, 12-13) discusses an intriguing list of accompanying but not obligatory factors for humour suggested by Sigmund Freud and how these basic conditions are widely

recognised by various writers on humour. One of the positive "predispositions" is a generally cheerful mood of the participant(s) (Raskin 1985, 12). Since humour and laughter usually also strengthen a cheerful mood, this can create a virtuous circle. Probably everyone has experienced this kind of euphoric comic mood where even the tiniest stimulus may trigger fits of hysteric laughter. It has also been suggested that the contagious nature of laughter spreads the pleasurable feeling, and that humour therefore has great social value (Rapp 1951, 52).

The hearer is also more likely to laugh/experience comic pleasure if they are expecting humour to occur, and very often the speaker uses special devices to get the "receiver attuned" (Raskin 1985, 12; scare quotes mine). These tips may vary from overt statements ("This is a joke.") and clichés ("A funny thing happened to me...") to gestures, expressions and the tone of voice. Nash (1985, 6) stresses that the expectation of humour is important in avoiding misunderstandings, and he maintains that if the speaker fails to signal their intention to joke, laughter is compromised.

Of the factors that tend to hamper humour, two negative catalysts concern mental activity. People seem to be less inclined to perceive humour if they are occupied with a task demanding intense concentration, but this may be quantitative - a stronger funny stimulus or a clearer attuning cue could restore the favourable circumstances (Raskin 1985, 13). In addition, if the hearer makes a considerable effort to understand the joke, laughter has a tendency to disappear (Raskin 1985, 13). Everyone must know from their own experience that one either "gets it" or not, that striving is quite useless and the possible explanation of the joke is often annoying. Furthermore, if the situation gives rise to other strong emotions, comic pleasure is likely to diminish or be even cancelled (Raskin 1985, 13). For instance, even if the joke is not meant to be offensive, the hearer may be angered by it or feel empathy for its target. Raskin (1985, 13) quotes Bergson: "the comic demands something like a momentary anesthesia of the heart."

Further conditions concerning how the joke is told must be taken into consideration. Raskin (1985, 18) lists a number of things the teller should remember: the joke should not be too long or short, too trivial or detailed, neither should it be too hard to understand nor its punchline given away too easily. The above-mentioned cues for indicating that humour is about to occur are often vital. Fry (1963, 32) makes two additional and very interesting observations: first, the power of the joke is often increased if the teller is mildly amused by their story, but the opposite is true if they laugh immoderately. Second, a joke tends to severely lose its power when it is *heard* the second time, but it may remain very funny no matter how many times you *tell* it. I will discuss these points as well as other conditions in sections under 3.1 addressing psychological theories and in chapter 7 discussing the data gathered in the analysis.

Furthermore, in addition to the problem of defining the conditions for humour (i.e. necessary, sufficient or accompanying factors), different writers may have quite different "humours" on their mind. Different types of humour include, for example, unintended or intended humour and verbal humour or non-verbal humour (Raskin 1985, 27). Raskin (1985, 6) argues that these numerous difficulties have made certain writers even defeatists in the face of humour research. Moreover, as Chapman and Foot (1977, xi) point out, some have strongly recommended that "the key" to the humour be never discovered or disclosed, that this phenomenon be left un-meddled with. However, an ever-growing number of researchers have stubbornly continued with their work, and the development of their field of study is outlined in the next section.

2.2 Humour research

Although it has long interested academics of several different disciplines, humour research as a scholarly and serious study did not begin until the 1970s. In 1976, the first international

conference of humour and laughter was organised in Cardiff. During and after the gathering, the "new" field of study attracted not only the attention of academics of various disciplines, but also gained quite substantial press coverage, most often not very favourable views, which Chapman and Foot (1977, xii) see "br[inging] home the fact that 'humour' and 'laughter' are not yet recognized by many as legitimate topics for serious study". Foss (1977, xiv) reports that media's "usual reaction . . . of amazement and amused disbelief" was occasionally shared by even psychologists themselves.

Another rather detrimental thing is the fact that in their attempts to analyse humour researchers invariably manage to "kill" it, which results in unfunny books and articles. E.B. White, quoted in Levine (1977, 127), has said: "Humo[u]r can be dissected, as a frog can, but the thing dies in the process and the innards are discouraging to any but the pure scientific mind." Raskin (1985, 7) comments on a number of authors' peculiar need to apologise for this and on the practice of giving a multitude of examples which unfortunately has not "rendered the stuff in between any funnier." However negative the attitudes toward the topic for study or discouraging the difficulties the research presents, humour researchers have always found enough reasons to continue their efforts to reveal the secrets of the phenomenon.

Although most academics attending the first conference were psychologists, several papers were also presented by researchers from other fields of study, such as anthropology, education, psychiatry, sociology and linguistics (Chapman and Foot 1977, xi). Most scholars conducted their research according to their specific needs and interests, often driven by problems of their own field of study and trying to find real uses for information gained by research on humour. For instance, laughter may be used in therapy, both physical and psychiatric and humour may prove a useful tool in education or in other situations of human encounter. Studying the linguistic techniques of producing humour will also undoubtedly help people of creative professions, such as comedians, scriptwriters and novelists.

Humour researchers from numerous fields of study have presented their insights not only in conferences and conventions but also in various scholarly publications. The flagship is the quarterly journal of the International Society for Humor Studies, *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research* (published from 1988) but articles on humour can also be found in the journals of other fields of study. In addition, there are numerous collections of articles and a number of authors have published longer books even if it has been somewhat difficult to find funding for research or an interested publisher.

Raskin (1985, 19-24) discusses several current trends in humour research. For instance, a number of researchers (e.g. Rapp) have been interested in the evolution of humour (Raskin 1985, 21-24). I will return to several evolution routes in the sections addressing the psychological theories of humour. Others have been intrigued by physiology of humour, especially laughter, and its relation to the development of humour competence and children's humour (e.g. McGhee) (Raskin 1985, 20-21). Several academics have even participated in a long and occasionally rather heated debate concerning the nature of humour (and human beings) declaring the phenomenon to be either good or bad (Raskin 1985, 9-11).

In the next chapter, I will discuss several theories of humour, some of which are informal while others more systematic. Many of the sources used in the theoretical part of this thesis are published in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The reason for the use of these "old" postulations is that they present the basic ideas which have later been further developed. Many authors of overviews of humour theories have opted for a similar approach. For instance, Martin (2007, 32) maintains that the presentation of older research "set[s] the stage for the discussion of more recent investigations". Furthermore, the validity of the original ideas in the field of study is supported by the fact that one of the first collections of articles on humour research (Chapman and Foot 1976), which provides many sources for this study, is still in use in its new edition published in 1996.

3. Theories of humour

In this chapter, I will present several theories of humour. Section 3.1 introduces three large groups of psychological theories of humour. Since I am especially interested in the linguistic techniques in creating humour, section 3.2 focuses on linguistic theories of humour, which are more formal and detailed and, more importantly, particularly pertinent to the present study.

3.1 Psychological theories of humour

Since the most passionate interest for humour research originated amongst psychologists, it is not surprising that the earliest attempts to formulate theories which could be used in analysing humour were also made in the field of psychology. These researchers are, however, naturally more interested in the role of humour, and especially laughter, in the life of human beings, not particularly in the language and technicalities of the production of humour. However, since in humour perception and appreciation the linguistic components are intertwined with the emotional ones, psychological theories are also needed in my study. Indeed, several aspects of these theories are also present in the linguistic theories of humour and, moreover, a presentation of the most central psychological theories will undoubtedly provide the reader with useful background information concerning the phenomenon.

Raskin (1985, 31) maintains that most academics agree on dividing psychological theories into three large categories: *social-behavioural*, *psychoanalytical* and *cognitive-perceptual*. These classes are usually associated with *disparagement*, *suppression/repression* and *incongruity*, respectively. According to Raskin (1985, 30), one can attain a better approximation of what humour is if the unavoidably partial theories are combined. Foss (1977, xiii) agrees that all three main orientations must be taken into consideration if all the aspects of humour are to be covered. The three groups of psychological theories will be presented in the following sections.

3.1.1 Hostility theories

Although researchers of this line have given their individual approaches various names, for example referring to *hostility*, *superiority*, *aggression*, *derision*, *malice* or *disparagement*, they all seem to base their theories on the idea of a power struggle between human beings. Raskin (1985, 36) points out that many advocates of this type of analysis consider themselves followers of the British philosopher Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes (quoted in Raskin 1985, 36) believed that the passion of laughter results from the pleasure experienced when one suddenly conceives the idea of some eminence in oneself compared to the infirmity of others.

However, Raskin (1985, 37) maintains that although some researchers (for instance Ludovici, one of the most ardent haters of humour) have taken a pessimistic view on the nature of human being and declared humour to be bad, several others, while recognising hostility as the basis of humour, do not necessarily share the negative view of the phenomenon itself. For example, Rapp, who bases his theory of evolution of humour on hostility, argues that whether the mishaps of others are perceived to be funny depends on the degree of their gravity and furthermore on the culture in question (Raskin 1985, 37). Rapp (1951, 33-35) points out that while most often the mishaps should be minor, children, early literature and "primitive" civilisations provide many examples of the fact that the impulse to laugh at even serious misfortunes may very well be ineradicable.

In his theory Rapp (1951, 27) suggests that humour evolved from direct and physical forms of battle between human beings, and he proposes three parallel routes for this transition: ridicule, humour of suppression or repression, and the duel of wits. The last two will be discussed in the following sections treating release theories and incongruity theories, respectively. According to Rapp (1951, 42-43) physical fight was substituted with *deliberate ridicule* of the opponent, and this may have perhaps even provided the loser with a means of getting back at the winner with mind over muscle. However, Rapp (1951, 57) continues that

eventually this coarse form of humour became more civilised and developed into *affectionate ridicule*. Nash (1985, 82) provides an observation on humour in literature and states that quite a few instances of literary caricature and parody show affectionate criticism and may be even considered tributes to the "target". Rapp (1951, 67) suggests that the final stage of the development of ridicule as a form of humour is the ability to laugh at oneself, *self-disparagement*.

Ross (1998, 53-60) calls attention to the complicated relationships between the *teller*, the *tellee* and the *butt* (i.e. the target) of humour. She (1998, 54-55) argues that even though the object of ridicule is often a less powerful or less prestigious social group and the jokes carry stereotypes, this kind of humour is not necessarily meant as an attack on the victim in the joke. Ross (1998, 55) suggests that the teller may use irony in order to mock a phenomenon, to criticise for example racism, but there is still a risk that the joke may not be perceived as intended if the tellee takes it literally. On the other hand, the less powerful groups can also attack the "superior" groups either by clearly targeting them (as in example (1)) or by self-deprecating humour (as in example (2)) (Ross 1998, 57-59).

- (1) What is the difference between a catfish and a lawyer?
One is a scum-sucking bottom dweller, and the other is a fish. (Ross 1998, 58)
- (2) "I never believed in Santa Claus because I knew no white dude would come into my neighbourhood after dark." Dick Gregory (Ross 1998, 59)

Indeed, Raskin (1985, 37) observes that many contemporary psychologists have focused on the relationships between different parties and underline the importance of the group in the appreciation of humour. La Fave et al. (1976, 66) discuss *identification classes* or *reference groups* to which the individual relates or aspires, and make a general hypothesis that the more positive the tellee's attitude towards the teller and/or the teller's behaviour, and/or the more negative the tellee's attitude towards the butt and/or the behaviour of the butt, the greater the amusement. Zillmann and Cantor (1976, 95) express the same idea in layman's terms:

"Ugliness, stupidity, weaknesses and other inadequacies appear funnier in those we hate than in those we love. Misfortunes and setbacks seem more amusing when they befall the 'right people'."

Gruner (1997, 80) insists that *all* humour is based on and can be explained by the notion of a battle or a game, and that it consists of two elements: *the contest* where there is a winner and a loser and the *"sudden perception"* of the result of that contest. He maintains that the removal of the first element causes the humour to vanish from the text or incident whereas the loss of suddenness radically diminishes the funniness. Gruner (1997, 148) believes that many researchers deny the hostile element in humour probably because they refuse to believe in the beast inside us. He postulates that competitiveness and aggression is an inherent biological part of humans but in "polite society" we must suppress our urges (Gruner 1997, 19) and therefore we have developed humour as a means to express our feelings through "permitted disrespect" or "playful aggression" (Gruner 1997, 164). Gruner (1997, 147-148) insists that there is no "innocent" humour although the amount of aggression varies, because even in the "neutral" jokes we laugh at stupidity. Gruner's ideas are quite interesting since they seem to combine many aspects of humour, the hostility but also the element of suppression, to which I turn attention in the next section.

3.1.2 Release theories

Raskin (1985, 38) states that the basic principle of the theories in this group is that "laughter provides relief for mental, nervous and/or psychic energy and thus ensures homeostasis after a struggle, tension, strain, etc." The release theorists maintain that we are bound by various constraints or at least expected to behave according to the rules of society (imposed by an authority or shaped by group expectations), and therefore we experience relief and pleasure when we manage to release ourselves from these "chains" (Raskin 1985, 38-39).

This kind of rebellion can be seen in one of the evolution routes suggested by Rapp (1951, 115), that is, humour of suppression or repression. Raskin (1985, 23) points out that humour is used to get back at the "winner" who denies the "loser" something. Raskin (1985, 23) suggests that as society imposes its norms on individuals, they may find the best therapy in the suppression humour. However, at first, humour was not a very popular technique in psychotherapy even though when used, it often yields great results (Mindess 1976, 332). In recent years therapeutic humour has become more popular and many specialists of health care (among other social-sector workers) actively promote it with the help of organisations such as the Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor, founded in 1987.

Since release humour can be seen as a "way to remain sane", it should not be surprising that in certain professions self-therapeutic gallows humour really flourishes. Army and hospital staff, for instance, are quite notorious for their uninhibited language use and special humour which may not be perceived as funny or appropriate by outsiders who do not need to confront the very taboos joked about in stressful situations on a daily basis. Joking is also often a part of a healing process after a tragedy as in example (3).

- (3) What was the last thing going through Mr. Smith's head sitting in the 90th floor of the WTC?
The 91st floor.

Furthermore, although humour can be used in coping with serious tragedies, it is extensively used in coming to terms with any imaginable fear or problem in life. Loeb and Wood (1986, 280) point out that joking is a mechanism used for addressing the issues that are too frightening or embarrassing to consider openly and directly, and that these problematic topics vary according to the stage of human development. McGhee (1986, 29) postulates accordingly that people tend to prefer and most appreciate jokes about the sources of anxiety specific to the point of life-span where they are.

The concept of release from constraints is conspicuous in *obscene humour*. Raskin

(1985, 39) maintains that release humour often liberates us from an inhibition and with an obscene joke we are able to yield to an impulse or an urge that we otherwise try to control. Thus, as Ross (1998, 61) points out, whereas ridicule could be seen as a form of battle between individuals or groups, release humour is rather a battle within a given individual. Naturally, taboos vary according to the society in question, and attitudes may change with time, but in most cultures the forbidden or at least somehow limited subjects seem to include sex, excreta, religion, violence, death and possibly substance abuse. Example (4) is likely to offend the very religious while others may consider it funny. On the other hand, example (5) toys with such a strong taboo that while it may produce laughter (discussed further in this section) it is likely to horrify most people.

- (4) Jesus walks into a bar and asks for a glass of water. The bartender replies: "No you cheap sod, you pay full prize for wine like everyone else!"
- (5) What's the difference between Santa Claus and a Jew?
Santa Claus goes down the chimney.

Ross (1998, 61-71) discusses jokes about taboo subjects and the limits within which one is able to operate, that is, whether the divergence from the expected behaviour is excessive and thus the attempt to break the rules perceived as offensive rather than humorous or funny. Indeed, Ross (1998, 61) points out that the stance of the teller is once again important, and she also discusses several features which may render humour on taboos either acceptable or inappropriate: whether the language is explicit or innuendos and euphemisms are used, whether the reference is general and fictional or specific and factual. As I already mentioned in section 2.1, the humorous setting, the time and place and the teller's indication that they are about to joke are also important in humour perception. However, even with a clear humorous context the teller may be offended instead of amused by the joke. Ross (1998, 70) interestingly points out that sometimes the opposite may happen; the context can evoke laughter in the teller when the teller meant the statement to be taken seriously. Furthermore,

Raskin (1985, 23-24) provides an interesting observation on the limits as he points out that a "modicum of freedom" is necessary; people rarely joke about strictly forbidden subjects if the restrictions are forcefully maintained and punishments severe.

Another type of release humour is found in *nonsensical jokes* since they severely contradict conventions, rules and our knowledge of the world (Raskin 1985, 39). If in obscene humour the rebellion against social norms was manifested by the taboo subject, in absurd humour it is the incongruous parts of the joke that challenge the "framework". The degree and type of incongruity varies as some jokes may lack all sense, others challenge the conventional formula of a well-known joke type, for example. People may not exactly *understand* nonsensical jokes but these may still produce release laughter, as in example (6).

- (6) A man is told that a nearby service station sells home-distilled spirits under the counter. He decides to get a bottle and goes to the station. The man walks to the counter and says: "I hear you sell spirits here." The employee replies: "Oh, we're closed."

Nonsense jokes are often characterised by a build-up of tension followed by an anticlimax or they are left unfinished. Absurd humour may also break conventions of language behaviour (Ross 1998, 29). In example (7) the second speaker breaches Grice's Maxim of Relation, whereas in example (8) the joke breaks the conventions of humour itself (the format of a knock-knock joke).

- (7) "Have a nice day!" "Thank you but I have other plans." (Ross 1998, 41)

- (8) "Knock knock!" "It's fucking open!"

Raskin (1985, 39) emphasises that humour challenges the network of conventions, beliefs and assumptions by introducing something inappropriate, usually abruptly, and this is closely connected to incongruity theories and the Semantic Script Theory of Humour with its *scripts* and *script-switch triggers*. These will be discussed in sections 3.1.3 and 3.2.1, respectively.

Since in this study I am interested in laughter that occurs with humorous (verbal and written) stimuli, I will not discuss all the details of laughter, its functions or reasons for it.

However, a number of observations on non-comic release laughter are relevant because it appears to be sometimes connected with comic pleasure. Several studies have shown that an increase in tension and arousal and the release of it is connected to humour appreciation. Godkewitsch (1976, 133-135) proposes that excitement, a certain state of arousal, is integral to humour perception; in experiments subjects' physiological indices (e.g. heart rate and skin conductance) as well as verbal self-reports of arousal (i.e. "I feel active and lively.") seem to correlate with funniness ratings.

One of the most well-known release theories, *the arousal-safety theory* proposes that a person experiences heightened arousal and if the stimulus is assessed to be safe, laughter occurs, whereas if the stimulus is too strong or evaluated dangerous, other reactions may occur (Rothbart, quoted in McGhee 1977a, 27). According to Rothbart (1977, 87-88) most studies on the subject suggest that there is a linear correspondence between the level of arousal and the magnitude of humour appreciation, although some results point to an inverted-U relation as a moderate amount of arousal seems to lead to more pleasure whereas minimum or extreme arousal may be disadvantageous.

The "safety mechanism" can also be applied to examining the effects of derogatory humour. Rothbart (1977, 89) suggests that when the target of hostile humour is the tellee or a person or a subject matter with which the tellee identifies themselves, the stimulus may be evaluated too threatening and the mechanism does not allow the release to manifest itself in humour appreciation but in a negative reaction. On the other hand, Rothbart hypothesises that experienced safety could vary in degrees and therefore the possible inhibition of humour appreciation may range from slight to total interference.

Raskin (1985, 20) lists several other feelings than pleasure with which laughter can occur or which it may express: shame, shyness, nervousness, discomfiture, anger. For example, "laughing off" one's fears can be a learned technique to master negative feelings (the

"whistling in the dark" phenomenon) but also a spontaneous reaction to anxiety (Levine 1977, 130). Even though this type of laughter most often occurs in uncomfortable situations where the individual is at least not consciously having fun, it seems that it can mix with comic pleasure. Indeed, it is intriguing how people are capable of laughing at jokes on taboos that are quite distasteful. The individual reactions are naturally subjective, but at least in theory one should be able to laugh at (and even enjoy) grotesque humour, even when it is very specific, and when explicit language is used. At times I shock myself by bursting out in laughter after hearing a very obscene and even offensive joke (for instance about such extreme taboos as incest or the Holocaust); I might laugh at brilliant wordplay, the sheer audacity of treating the taboo and/or the laughter may be a way in which the shock manifests itself.

It seems that laughter may be induced by several reasons and their combinations, by horror, indignation, shame or such negative feelings, by release of stress, by intellectual pleasure of figuring out the joke. For instance, after hearing an obscene joke one may react with release laughter caused by anger but also by relief when a taboo is breached. In addition to this non-comic release laughter, the hearer can also experience comic pleasure caused by cognitive appreciation of the joke. Furthermore, the hearer may also find their own comic pleasure and/or laughter inappropriate, which can lead to a new wave of release laughter. This kind of humour is a double-edged sword as it can induce a good fit of laughter but given the numerous variables (e.g. the situation, the experiences and psychological types of the participants) where it can go wrong, its risk to fail is high.

Many researchers have come to realise this complexity of humour and their proposals for theories often combine two or more lines of study (e.g. arousal and cognitive stimuli or hostility and incongruity). I will discuss a number attempts to integrate several research topics further in the next section, which turns the attention to the cognitive processes involved in

humour perception.

3.1.3 Incongruity theories

Although many researchers have included elements of release and hostility theories in their work, the most popular line of psychological theories of humour has been that of *incongruity*. According to this school, humour arises from a certain discrepancy in a situation, an unexpected "glitch". Raskin (1985, 31) quotes Mindess and explains that in jokes "we are led along one line of thought and then booted out of it". Incongruity theories propose that in a joke (or a humorous situation) there are two incongruous elements which are also linked in a way. In other words, the elements should not be entirely incongruous or the humour will not be perceived (Raskin 1985, 31-32).

Punning jokes serve as neat examples to show these simultaneous and equally indispensable parts, the similarity and the incongruity. Ross (1998, 7-8) explains that jokes often entail ambiguous words or other linguistic structures with which the teller is misled only to be surprised with a *punchline*. Often the joke is constructed so that the first meaning, usually also the more commonly used one, is clearly hinted by the context and the real meaning is revealed by the surprising line, the *trigger*.

- (9) The largest and blackest cockerel Nanny had ever seen had settled on Mrs Gogol's shoulder. It turned on her the most intelligent stare she had ever seen on a bird. "My word," she said, taken aback. "That's the biggest cock I've ever seen, and I've seen a few in my time." (Pratchett 1991b, 174)

Example (9) plays with the double-meaning of the word "cock", the normal meaning 'rooster' being offered to the reader through the description of the bird and the sexual slang meaning being revealed by Nanny Ogg's remark.

The idea of the importance of the two parts, similarity and dissimilarity, can be seen in the work of several researchers who have distinguished between two phases in incongruous humour. Shultz (1976, 13) explains that first the *incongruity* is perceived and then possibly it

is solved which brings *resolution* to the incongruity. According to his classification we deal with *nonsense* if only the first stage is fulfilled whereas in the case of both stages taking place we have *humour*.

Given the difficulty in defining humour and the number of different and frequently overlapping theorisations for humour perception and appreciation, drawing the line between different types or classes of "humour" (e.g. nonsense, humour, wit, etc.) is practically in the power of the researcher in question. I myself do not wish to leave "nonsense" outside of "humour" since this type of funny stimulus has the potential to produce release laughter (see section 3.1.2). Indeed, Rothbart (1977, 91) admits that there is some disagreement among the researchers whether the both phases of the two-stage model should be present to create humour or whether incongruity alone suffices, that is, whether nonsense is humour, funny.

However, conducting studies according to the two-stage model seems to offer intriguing insights into humour perception and appreciation and its popularity with researchers testifies for this. Rothbart and Pien (1977, 37-38) propose that resolution is gradable; there can be complete resolution or none at all but it can also be partial in varying degrees. They maintain that a complex joke may contain several incongruities and possible resolutions and that a resolution itself may produce further incongruities which may or may not be resolved. They also discuss differing opinions and propositions of researchers concerning the relation between the degree of resolution and humour appreciation. Some have come to the conclusion that this relation is linear but Rothbart and Pien (1977, 38) themselves propose that remaining unresolved incongruity may also add to appreciation.

Rothbart (1977, 88) also argues that processing the incongruity can be intertwined with the arousal-safety theory. Searching for resolution builds the tension which is released when the meaning is understood, the strain of mental labour heightens the arousal and finding a solution is the safety signal.

Incongruity theories represent the third route of humour evolution proposed by Rapp. He maintains that the physical contest evolved into "a duel of wits" where the opponents tested each other's cognitive skills, first with riddles and later with more elaborate puns and other forms of verbal humour (Rapp 1951, 70).

Similar development can be seen in the humour perception of children. McGhee (1977a, 28) maintains that the earliest instances of smiling and laughter in children may be explained by arousal and release theories, for example in the case of a peek-a-boo game. Incongruity theories apply to older children as their perception of the world and things as well as their linguistic competence evolve, they begin to form class concepts and schemas and spot incongruities at about the age of three to four. McGhee (1977b, 199) also points out that approximately up to the age of six children's humour involves solely the incongruity phase and only later also the resolution part as children begin to detect linguistic ambiguities. However, he stresses that the precise timing of the onset of this transition remains unclear.

Further changes and variations in humour appreciation seem to appear during the maturation of an individual. Although McGhee (1986, 28) admits that further research on adolescents' humour perception and appreciation is needed, he points out that the emergence of formal operational thinking (introducing new capacities for abstract thinking and hypothetical reasoning) leads to understanding new forms of humour such as satire or irony. I myself would never allow a child or a teenager to watch a television programme with ironic humour such as *South Park* unless the person in question had shown ability to handle this type of humour. Even many adults tend to take the content literally in which case the humour seems at times very disparaging and hostile. For instance, will the watcher take the jokes to be on the minorities or on our society's unequal treatment of them? Indeed, Nash (1985, 153) stresses that irony is a vulnerable type of humour since there is always a strong possibility that the intended message will not be understood by the recipient.

Several factors may hinder humour perception and appreciation. Many researchers have stressed the importance of the suddenness and the surprising quality of the change of meaning; humour tends to lose at least some of its effectiveness if the switch from one meaning to the other is not acute and sudden or when the joke is heard the second time. Raskin (1985, 146) explains that the timing and construction of most effective jokes shows that the punchline contains or implies the trigger which causes the surprising switch of meaning and that this is most effective if the first meaning has been strongly established prior to the punchline. Freud (1976 [1905], 207) maintains that jokes cannot succeed in their full potential when they are not new to the hearer and the hampering effect of lack of surprise explains why jokes tend to disappear quickly, only to allow new ones to be circulated.

Another negative catalyst for humour perception mentioned in section 2.1 is the inordinate amount of problem-solving by the hearer. Ross (1998, 8) points out that the joke may fail if the teller cannot grasp the double meaning of the key structure in the joke. The failure in either recognising the incongruity or finding the resolution may be caused by the teller's set of mind. Rothbart (1976, 51-52) proposes that processing the incongruous information in the humorous stimulus solely as a problem to solve may lead to learning processes, hence a playful set of mind is extremely important for the stimulus to be interpreted as something to enjoy. Rothbart's "thinking outside of the problem-solving sphere" is very similar to McGhee's concept of "fantasy-assimilation". McGhee (1977a, 27-30) maintains that the development of this way of processing new information enables us to appreciate humour; instead of trying to assimilate or accommodate new data and existing schemas we "fantasy-assimilate", fitting the incongruous elements while understanding they do not match. Rothbart and Pien (1977, 38) also report that McGhee proposes that the difficulty of resolution may have curvilinear relation to humour appreciation and hence very simple or too difficult resolutions diminish the effect of humour.

In his synthesis of hostility and incongruity theories, Suls (1977, 42-43) explains how the humour perception process may encounter similar obstacles. If the tellee sympathises with the butt of disparagement humour to the degree that they take the joke incongruity as a real attack instead of examining it in the fantasy-assimilation set, the process may terminate at the first stage of the two-stage model; the incongruity as a joke is not perceived nor its deciphering initiated. Furthermore, if the tellee strongly sympathises or identifies themselves with the butt of the derogatory joke, they may not be able to retrieve sufficient information to resolve the incongruity. Here the resolution stage is not fulfilled as the tellee does not perceive the connection between the information given in the set-up of the joke and its punchline or finds it unsatisfactory.

- (10) Why are there so many Italians in America?
One swam over and the others walked over on the oil slick.
(Gruner 1997, 83)

The joke in example (10) is clearly hostile as it demonstrates xenophobia, in this case directed towards Italian immigrants. If the set-up is taken to be an attack, the process may be terminated at the stage of incongruity perception. The second part of the joke contains the idea of dirtiness, a stereotype popular in many "guinea" jokes, and a tellee sympathising with the disparaged party may consider the content of the punchline unsatisfactory and therefore the incongruity remains unsolved. I myself have noticed that the wording of the set-up is important. Even if I recognise the joke to be of hostile variety I usually continue the analysing process even though the topic may affect my evaluation of the joke. On the other hand, if the set-up contains specific words the use of which I personally consider unacceptable (e.g. 'nigger', 'slut') I am prone to take it as an attack and refuse to co-operate with the teller.

Furthermore, Ross (1998, 8) points out that although the tellee may perceive the ambiguity and "solve the problem" they can nevertheless find the joke unamusing if they think the wordplay is laboured or corny. However, this kind of situation may nevertheless

produce *social laughter* if the tellee values the teller and their relationship even if he does not appreciate the joke.

The whole process of transmission of a humorous (verbal) stimulus with the numerous reactions is outlined in a tentative dynamic model formulated by Giles et al. According to them, the starting point in the *intentional communication of humour* between individuals is the teller or *encoder* who in a specific social situation decides to encode humour for a certain reason and forms the message according to the knowledge they have of the situation, the tellee (*decoder*), and so forth (Giles et al. 1976, 140-142).

The decoding process begins with arousal initiated by the encoder's message which is here assumed to have been interpreted as humour by the decoder. In next phase the decoder either perceives the incongruity or fails in the attempt. If the incongruity is detected, the next stage is understanding it; if resolution is not attained, the process fails. Resolving the incongruity causes relief but for the humorous message to be truly successful, it must be also positively evaluated by the decoder. The end responses are heavily affected by the relationship between the encoder and the decoder in question (Giles et al. 1976, 143-146).

The possible outcomes of different scenarios range from laughter emitted for various reasons to giving negative feedback to the encoder for making an unintelligible or unamusing joke. Reasons behind laughter include enjoying the joke, saving one's face and hiding the negative evaluation of the encoder from them.

Ross (1998, 8) stresses that the structural ambiguity in humour occurs at many different levels. As I tried to organise the *Discworld* data into groups according to the level in which the double meaning manifests itself, I noticed that while some samples fell neatly into one category or another, many contained a hazier level, carried ambiguity at several levels or involved more complex phenomena than structural ambiguity. However, the groups or levels of the "simpler type" of ambiguity suggested by Ross (1998, 8) include *phonology*,

graphology, morphology, lexis and syntax and the groups of the more complex ambiguity (i.e. incongruity in language use) are *semantics, pragmatics, discourse and register* (Ross 1998, 30). The labels and subcategories I use in my corpus are listed in appendix 1, and section 6.1 focuses on the ambiguity and incongruity at different linguistic levels.

"Getting the joke" depends on numerous variables as explained in the previous sections. For instance, it involves the personality and cultural background of the teller/encoder and tellee/decoder, the situation and circumstances where the joke is encountered, the subject of the joke and the way it is presented, the wording, gestures and tone, the cognitive faculties of the tellee (and why not the teller too?) which include not only the pure linguistic competence concerning the language in question but also the knowledge of language conventions and, rather, the whole world.

The importance of general and also more specific knowledge of the world in understanding humour is clear in the following examples. In example (11) the joke is lost to a decoder who is not familiar with some basic philosophy or famous quotes and who therefore is incapable of recognising the intertextuality in the joke.

- (11) Descartes is sitting in a bar. The bartender asks him if he'd like another drink. Descartes replies, "I think not". And *poof*, he disappears.

Without the crucial background information (i.e. the famous quote "cogito ergo sum") the tellee will fail in the decoding process even if they otherwise were fully capable of figuring out this type of joke construction. Example (12) shows how knowledge of current and past happenings is paramount for understanding the joke made by Jon Stewart, the host of the 2006 Academy Awards.

- (12) "Bjork couldn't be here tonight. She was trying on her Oscar dress and Dick Cheney shot her."

In order to make sense of the joke the decoder must be familiar with two items of news or "scandals" which are not only from very different categories of news (i.e. entertainment and

politics) but also separated from each other by several years. The infamous swan dress worn by singer/actor Bjork was one of the hot topics after the 2001 Academy Awards and it has been considered one of the worst Oscar dresses in history. The other incident to know is the hunting accident in which Dick Cheney, the vice president of George W. Bush's administration, was involved in February 2006, shortly before the gala where the joke was made. Cheney wounded a fellow hunter while trying to shoot a bird. The decoder needs to know both incidents in order to recognise the part in common (i.e. 'bird') in the set-up and the punchline.

Humour researchers of various fields have attempted to study humour and laughter from very different angles and viewpoints and even to formulate theories with which further research could be done. Some have concentrated on one element (e.g. arousal) but many have chosen to combine several levels, for example arousal and incongruity or hostility and incongruity.

McGhee (1977a, 27) suggests that simpler elements be examined separately and based on the findings from these studies more elaborate combinations of levels could be constructed which may result in more complex explanations of humour. Indeed, while incongruity theories have been popular in humour research, it is quite clear that concentrating exclusively on the cognitive processes will not encompass the humour experience as a whole. McGhee (1977a, 28-29) maintains that humour may be defined as a "cognitive-affective experience" where cognitive processing but also contextual factors and individual's emotional states are important.

Raskin (1985, 41) emphasises that although theories of humour are abundant, "attempts to account systematically for the structure of a humo[u]r act have been notoriously scarce". Raskin (1985, 15) criticises the earlier theories for offering lists of conditions for humour stimulus that are inadequate and he stresses that a proposed theory should offer

conditions for humour that are both necessary and sufficient for it to be truly valuable. Raskin's proposal for a linguistic theory of humour, the Semantic Script Theory of Humour, will be discussed in section 3.2.1.

As for myself, I am inclined to think that a fairly extensive and multifaceted approach is needed in the analysis of my corpus data and therefore I believe that while the more systematic linguistic theories offer the primary tools for the work with some of the research questions, the psychological approaches must be used in conjunction to answer the others.

3.2 Linguistic theories of humour

Although linguists became more interested in humour research already in the 1970s, it was not until the mid-1980s that any attempt was made to formulate a linguistic theory of humour. In the following sections, I will present a number of linguistic theories of humour developed during the last two decades. Sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 discuss the two best known theories, the Semantic Script Theory of Humour and the General Theory of Verbal Humour, respectively. Section 3.2.3 presents further developments of linguistic theories of humour, mostly research on several aspects of the GTVH.

3.2.1 The Semantic Script Theory of Humour (the SSTH)

The goal of the *Semantic Script Theory of Humour* (or the SSTH) is to explain why some texts are funny and others not, and give the necessary and sufficient linguistic conditions for the text to be funny. Being a linguistic theory, it is naturally limited to verbal humour, and furthermore, it may be more suitable for application to relatively short joke-type texts than to more sophisticated types of humour (Raskin 1985, 45-47).

Raskin (1985, 48-51) maintains that a theory should mirror the native speaker's competence to pass judgement on the subject in question, for instance, grammaticality or

meaningfulness, and therefore the SSTH should model the native speaker's intuition in assessing funniness of the texts. I will address the issue of the label '*native speaker*' in more detail in section 4.2, but suffice it to say for now that in this study I consider myself to be an equivalent of a native speaker.

Since the SSTH is a semantic theory applied to the study of verbal humour, several linguistic concepts and phenomena need clarifying. Raskin (1985, 62-66) discusses the disagreement among scholars concerning the *meaning* of words and sentences. Does a word or a sentence have a meaning in isolation or does it depend on context, either explicitly given or "imaginary", supplied from the hearer's experience? Raskin (1985, 62-63) argues that context must be taken into account when studying the intended meaning, since no sentence is in isolation when language is used in communication.

Different schools of linguistics have opted for different approaches concerning the boundary between linguistic meaning and extralinguistic meaning. Some have chosen to adopt a clear-cut separation of *semantic competence*, which is "meaning proper" studied by *semantics*, from *semantic performance*, which is the knowledge of extralinguistic meaning and studied by *pragmatics*. Others include both sides of meaning in semantics and consider them interdependent. Some have argued that a formal description of the speakers' knowledge of the world is unattainable and a theory including this information is therefore impossible. However, Raskin's approach in the SSTH is to recognise the boundary between linguistic and extralinguistic knowledge, but the theory pushes this boundary to include much of the latter (Raskin 1985, 62-67).

As for the meaning of words in the lexicon of a language, Raskin (1985, 68) points out that *extralexical information* is not usually included in the lexicon. However, these semantic properties evoked by the words are very important in deciphering the meaning of sentences. Raskin (1985, 97-98) argues that this kind of information which the hearer retrieves from his

knowledge of the world after hearing a word helps to answer a number of linguistic problems. For example, the sentence "Mary saw a black cat and immediately turned home" evokes information about black cats being unlucky even though the dictionary entries of the words do not list this information (Raskin 1985, 68). Raskin maintains that while a given word does have a core meaning, certain stable features, its meaning varies according to its use in specific situations, and therefore *both the inherent properties and the meaning in use* should be accommodated in the theory (1985, 78-79).

In order to incorporate knowledge of world in the lexicon Raskin (1985, 79-80) proposes a format which consists of the lexicon and the combinatorial rules. The *lexicon* contains the information on the meaning of the words in scripts that also incorporate knowledge of the world. The *combinatorial rules* determine the semantic interpretation of the sentence by combining the meanings of its parts. The content which the combinatorial rules are combining or interpreting affects the various operations at work, such as detecting possible ambiguity or anomaly and interpreting implicatures or discovering presuppositions. These operations will be further discussed later in this section.

The *script* (also known as "schema" or "frame") is a "large chunk of semantic information surrounding the word or evoked by it" (Raskin 1985, 81). These semantic structures also include knowledge of the world, which Raskin calls *extralexical* despite the fact that it is indeed included in lexicon (Raskin 1985, 69). Every script is a graph which contains *lexical nodes* and *semantic links* between them, and these individual scripts form one continuous graph of the lexicon (Raskin 1985, 81). Moreover, certain nodes in the scripts are emphasised because they are more pertinent to the meaning of a connected node, and the relations between the nodes enable the speaker to make connections between words that belong to certain semantic fields and to assess for example relations of hyponymy and equivalence (Raskin 1985, 82-83). Figure 1 presents a simplified example of a fragment of the

continuous graph with several lexical nodes in italics and semantic links named by convenience terms.

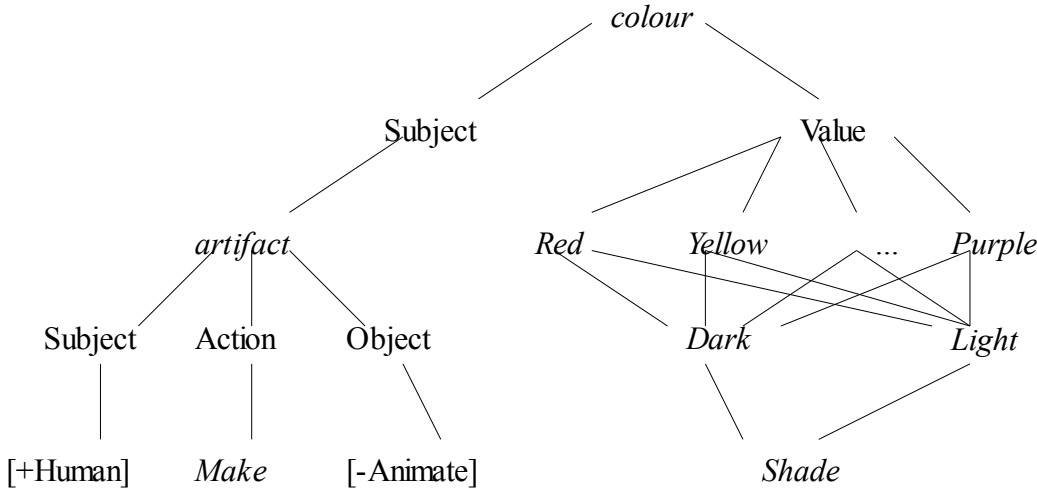


Figure 1: A fragment of the continuous graph (Raskin 1985, 81).

Since the lexicon is one continuous graph, in principle, every word evokes everything in the graph and the complex links help the language user to attain the extralexical information stored in the graph. However, in practice, every word usually evokes its specific, somewhat limited *domain* since the most adjacent nodes at the end of the shortest links are more strongly evoked (Raskin 1985, 83-84). Raskin proposes for the purpose of the analysis of humour an approach that takes into consideration the central word-itself node and one "circle" of surrounding nodes. Figure 2 is a simplified format of a script and its features.

LOVER
 Subject: [+Human] [+Adult] [+Sex: x]
 Activity: Make love
 Object: [+Human] [+Adult] [+Sex: x]
 Place: Secluded
 Time: > Once
 = Regularly
 Condition: If subject or object married, spouse(s) should not know
 (> stands for 'past', = for 'present')

Figure 2: An example of a script (Raskin 1985, 85).

Every person has their individual storage of scripts because their linguistic competences vary and their experience and knowledge of the world is different from each other. This naturally affects humour perception as well. Raskin (1985, 81) explains that there are different kinds of scripts which form our individual *repertoires*: the scripts of "*common sense*" (i.e. standard routines or procedures in a given situation), *restricted* scripts (shared by certain groups of people, such as family or friends) and *individual* scripts (determined by subjective experience).

Ambiguous words present possible problems to the interpretation of a sentence as, in principle, they evoke several domains, but the combinatorial rules work to combine the information in the scripts to find one or more compatible combinations. This usually eliminates numerous theoretically possible combinations automatically and many of these do not even actually occur to the language user, who often chooses one interpretation over the others with the help of the context (Raskin 1985, 85-87). Indeed, Attardo (2001, 16) points out that psycholinguistic studies have shown that the processing of possible and probable meanings is extremely fast; every sense of a word is activated after it is heard or read in between 100 and 350 milliseconds.

In addition to filtering out the syntactically inappropriate scripts, the combinatorial rules indeed first choose the most probable, *unmarked* script (for example the most frequently used) over *marked*, less probable scripts unless the context prompts them to choose differently, in which case the combinatorial rules may do temporary remarking for the text in question (Raskin 1985, 88-89). On the basis of features in the scripts the combinatorial rules will also discover (probable) presuppositions (i.e. statements that must be known for interpretation of the sentence) and generate (probable) inferences (i.e. conclusions drawn on the information in the scripts), as well as formulate questions for which answers will be sought from the available information (Raskin 1985, 90). Other operations include collecting

additional information in two "storages": scripts for lexical nodes connected to the ones in the text are stored in *associations* whereas the semantic interpretation of the text is placed in *world information* where the new data is compared with the already existing information (Raskin 1985, 90-91).

If the existing world information contradicts the produced semantic interpretation of the text, the combinatorial rules may consider the text anomalous or try to resolve it by another possible script, but they may also change the *mode of communication* from the default bona-fide mode to the non-bona-fide mode (Raskin 1985, 91). In the *bona-fide mode*, used for conveying information, the participants are supposed to co-operate in serious, unambiguous communication, whereas the purpose of the *non-bona-fide mode* is to create an effect with the help of the text; this is most likely interpreted as humour since other modes of non-bona-fide communication are either less frequent (play acting) or socially less acceptable (lying) (Raskin 1985, 100-101). Miscommunication can be expected when the speaker and the hearer fail to co-operate within the same mode of communication.

Raskin proposes *maxims* for co-operative principle in the joke-telling mode which differ from Grice's maxims for bona-fide communication:

- (1) Maxim of Quantity: Give exactly as much information as is necessary for 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, 103).

According to Raskin (1985, 99), the main hypothesis of the SSTH is that a text is a single-joke-carrying text if *both* the following conditions are satisfied: the text is partially or fully *compatible* with two different scripts and these two scripts are *opposite* in a special sense (which is defined later in this section). Here we see the same basic idea which was introduced by the incongruity theories: the incongruous but also linked parts of the text.

Script overlap is typically hidden in the joke at first. The set-up evokes one script, but when something odd is brought to the situation as the joke continues, another script is evoked by these clues. Once the new script is found, the oddness (e.g. violations of one or more maxims of joking) in the text disappears (Raskin 1985, 105). However, there are different degrees of overlap. With *full overlap*, which is rare, the text is perfectly compatible with both scripts and nothing in it seems odd. Most jokes involve *partial overlap* where one script is more easily compatible with the text than the other. In the case of *truly partial overlap*, once both scripts are evoked, some parts of the text are incompatible with one of them or both. It is important to understand that in non-bona-fide communication this does not render the text meaningless (Raskin 1985, 105-107).

According to the main hypothesis of the SSTH, script overlap is a necessary factor for the text to be funny but not sufficient alone: *script oppositeness* is needed as well (Raskin 1985, 100). Raskin (1985, 108) explains that a joke describes a certain situation that can be considered "real" but evokes another "unreal" one which does not take place and is partially or fully incompatible with the former. For instance, the joke in example (13) has the real situation of "the man was not going to live during the entire week" and the unreal situation "the man was going to live during the entire week".

- (13) A rogue who was being led out to execution on a Monday remarked:
"Well, this week's beginning nicely." (Raskin 1985, 25)

Script opposition manifests itself in several different ways. First, there are three basic types of opposition between the real and unreal situations, although the boundaries between them are not impermeable: *actual/non-actual*, *normal/abnormal* and *possible/impossible*. The actual/non-actual type distinguishes between the actual, existing situation in the joke setting and the evoked incompatible situation, which cannot be true. In jokes with normal/abnormal opposition, an expected state of affairs is contrasted with an unexpected one. The third type distinguishes between a possible or plausible situation and an impossible or much less

plausible situation (Raskin 1985, 111-112).

There are other dimensions in the oppositeness. The unreal script may exist externally (parallel to the real script) or internally (introduced by the hero of the joke) and, in more sophisticated jokes, one of the opposing scripts can be introduced by implication or allusion (Raskin 1985, 112-113). Moreover, the distance between the scripts varies between two poles: some are very closely connected as they are negations of each other, others may have very little in common and are brought together by accidental homonymy, for instance. Most jokes are somewhere between the two extremes (Raskin 1985, 113). Finally, there is a small number of binary categories of rather fixed topics essential to human life. These include dichotomies such as true/false, good/bad, life/death, obscene/non-obscene and money/no or little money (Raskin 1985, 113-114).

The text of the joke contains something that renders the unreal less unreal and prompts the hearer to discard the first interpretation and search for another script; indeed, in non-bona-fide mode the second interpretation is readily accepted even if it may be forced or overextended. According to Raskin, in a simple joke, the *script-switch trigger* (or trigger) belongs to one of the two types: ambiguity or contradiction (Raskin 1985, 114-115).

Ambiguous triggers are words that mean several things; the first script is an unmarked one while the second, when evoked, diminishes the oddness in the text. Sometimes the actual trigger is supported by an *auxiliary trigger*, a word which is associated with the second script and which therefore reinforces this interpretation. *Quasi-ambiguity* involves purely phonetical relations between words, which are often also intentionally misused in some way. Simple jokes such as puns are created by ambiguous triggers (Raskin 1985, 114-116).

Contradiction triggers are slightly more complicated and operate differently from the ambiguous triggers; they are compatible with the text but also contradict it. For instance, in example (13) above the trigger 'beginning' is compatible with 'Monday' and 'week' but as the

man is going to be executed and hence his week actually ends, there is a contradiction. Sometimes the text surreptitiously prepares the second interpretation by introducing words that facilitate the discovery. Furthermore, the trigger may be a whole sentence rather than an individual word (Raskin 1985, 116). All things considered, in principle, simpler jokes carry overtly expressed triggers and the more complex jokes have rather disguised triggers or no triggers at all (Raskin 1985, 117).

I will now quite briefly present the proceeding of operations in the analysis of a joke and bring together the various concepts and phenomena discussed in this section. Along the lines of Raskin (1985, 117), the information on script overlap and script oppositeness should contain the following four elements: the two scripts with their features, the type of overlap (partial/full), the type of oppositeness ((non)actual, (ab)normal or (im)possible opposition) between the "real" and "unreal" situations, external/internal/implied "unreal situation", the distance of opposition and possible binary category) and the type of trigger (ambiguous/contradiction).

According to Raskin (1985, 118), the script analysis is based on the following three components:

- (1) A continuous lexical graph with domains corresponding to the words of the text
- (2) Combinatorial rules combining these domains (scripts) into one or more larger scripts compatible with the text
- (3) A system for marking certain scripts as opposite.

All scripts, both unmarked and marked ones, are listed for every word of the text. For instance, the word "home" evokes the following scripts (named with tentative labels): 'residence', 'social', 'habitat', 'origin', 'disabled' and 'objective'. There are connections between the activated areas of the graph and these are important for the functioning of the combinatorial rules (Raskin 1985, 118-120).

The combinatorial rules attempt to produce an interpretation of the text based on the scripts and the available grammar as they proceed from clause to clause and from sentence to sentence in the text. They will search for common scripts evoked by the words in a clause and accordingly change markings and choose or reject certain scripts. Possible ambiguity at this stage is registered and the combinatorial rules move to the next clause, where new information may solve the former ambiguities. When the whole sentence is analysed the combinatorial rules produce presuppositions, inferences and questions concerning it. These are compared with the existing information in the "world information" storage and the new information attained from the text either supplements the old if compatible with it or is signalled conflicting if not (Raskin 1985, 120-123).

The next sentences are analysed similarly clause by clause but the combinatorial rules will continually relate the new information to the first sentence which facilitates the interpretation. New presuppositions and inferences emerge and former questions may be answered. Having analysed the whole text, the combinatorial rules detect something strange in it based on all the inferences stored in "world information" and start to search for an alternative interpretation. At this stage they make an important decision if they cannot resolve the question: they switch from the default bona-fide mode to non-bona-fide and start to look for a competing, potentially opposed script (Raskin 1985, 123-125).

The strategy built into combinatorial rules is following: look for another script evoked by more than one word in the text, beginning from the end. If a concealed script is found, check whether it is at least partially compatible with the text. If compatible, check whether suitable type of oppositeness can be found. If suitable oppositeness is found, recognise the text as a joke. However, if no concealed script is found after going back to the text, check whether there is any suitable type of oppositeness left. If not, register defeat. Also, if the found script is not compatible with the text, register defeat. In case of defeat, recognise the

text as not being a joke but belonging to another non-bona-fide communication, probably lying. The analysis of a joke will lead to the end result which confirms that the text is a joke, gives the two overlapping scripts and the type of their oppositeness (Raskin 1985, 125-127).

Raskin (1985, 133-138) outlines possible complications concerning the applicability of the SSTH. First, some jokes contain several simple jokes, which may exist on their own but can also be built on the others which give them the necessary material. Raskin maintains that these compound jokes may be analysed with the SSTH but the script analysis has to be applied several times. Second, many jokes involve non-elementary scripts that are evoked from the world information of more restricted nature in the language user's repertoires. Jokes involving allusions, also in form of parody, especially run a risk to fail if the restricted scripts are not available to the hearer. However, according to Raskin, the script analysis is applicable although more effort is required from combinatorial rules in inferencing, for example.

Given the fact that the SSTH is best applicable to relatively short single-joke-carrying jokes, and that my corpus contains also more sophisticated humour, another more elaborate theory is needed in my study. The General Theory of Verbal Humour, which is a revised version of the SSTH, proposes to be such a theory and I will present it in next section.

3.2.2 The General Theory of Verbal Humour (the GTVH)

The General Theory of Verbal Humour (or the GTVH), formulated by Salvatore Attardo and Victor Raskin, is a revised and extended version of Raskin's SSTH and of Attardo's five-level joke representation model. The latter has not been addressed so far and will also in this section be referred to only when relevant to the discussion of the GTVH. The GTVH proposes to widen the scope of the theory and the model mentioned above, and to take into account linguistics more broadly, including text linguistics, theory of narrativity and pragmatics. It aims at answering the question "what is humour?" instead of questions such as "why does

humour exist?" or "how do people use humour?", and in this respect it is related to the incongruity theories (as are the earlier formulations of the authors), but should not nevertheless be counted among the group, since it does not share many of the psychological aspects of the other theorisations (Attardo and Raskin 1991, 330-331). Furthermore, the GTVH is not a model for joke production. Attardo and Raskin (1991, 327) point out that while the GTVH proposes a hierarchy among the parameters of jokes, the order of these levels does not have temporal value.

The starting point for the GTVH is joke similarity and differences between jokes, as the examination of these lead to the discovery of *six parameters of jokes*, knowledge bodies or databases which inform the joke, that the theory calls *knowledge resources* (KRs). A joke can be told in many, even myriad, ways and it still is a version of the one, same joke and the parts that differ in the versions correspond to the parameters (Attardo and Raskin 1991, 295-297). In addition to script opposition (SO), presented in the SSTH, and which includes the element of overlapping, five other KRs are specified: language (LA), narrative strategy (NS), target (TA), situation (SI) and logical mechanism (LM).

The parameter *language* (LA) means the different language options in which the joke can be presented. The paraphrases may even seem quite different but form essentially the same joke, and this will be recognised by the decoder. Variation can happen at any level, from phonetics to pragmatics, but some choices are limited or eliminated by other parameters, especially on the linguistic levels that are closely connected with meaning (i.e. lexis, semantics, pragmatics). Attardo and Raskin point out that compared with ordinary utterances, jokes belong to noncasual language, which means that they contain an additional layer of meaning. In the case of jokes, the wanted effect is causing laughter. The punchline, which is one of the most important features in a joke, belongs to this parameter, where the wording and the placement of the punchline is executed (Attardo and Raskin 1991, 298-299).

Narrative strategy (NS) means the "genre" of the joke, the form in which it is presented, such as expository, a riddle, a question-and answer sequence or a triple sequence. Attardo and Raskin also place implicit strategies (i.e. missing links in the jokes that the decoder has to discover) in this parameter (Attardo and Raskin 1991, 300-301).

Target (TA) simply means the butt of the joke. The choice of the target is restricted in that it must suit the stereotype depicted in the joke. However, this does not mean that the butt and the comic script associated with it have any correspondence to *reality*, as it hardly ever does, but the connection must be available to the teller and the tellee, even if they do not believe it to be true (Attardo and Raskin 1991, 301). According to Attardo and Raskin (1991, 302), target is the only optional one among the six parameters or KRs, as some jokes do not have a clear butt. Gruner (1997), of course, disagrees, since his theory claims that all humour is hostile, but I side with the authors of the GTVH, which becomes clear in the approach that I take in the analysis of the *Discworld* data. However, in later studies it has been suggested that logical mechanism may also be optional (Attardo 2001, 25). This point will be discussed in next section.

Situation (SI) means the "props" needed in describing the activity in the joke. In most jokes, the activity is the central element and it contains the participants, objects and instruments. Situation must be suitable, recognisable for general activities performed in a set way (Attardo and Raskin 1991, 302-303).

Logical mechanism (LM) is the most problematic parameter of all six. It has been studied extensively since the invention of the GTVH, and a number of developments and ideas are presented in the next section. This KR concerns the mechanism of the joke, the cognitive process needed to resolve the incongruity in the joke, such as a figure-ground reversal (e.g. in light-bulb jokes where the table on which a person is standing is turned by other people), a chiasmus (i.e. inverted parallelism of two clauses) or a "garden path" where

the tellee is led to a wrong interpretation by suggestions in the joke, only to be corrected after the punchline (Attardo and Raskin 1991, 303-306). In addition to "basic" mechanisms, jokes quite often contain faulty logic and paralogical elements (which may also occur independently of basic mechanisms), which require the inferential processes to "cheat", to ignore unrealistic elements in the joke (Attardo and Raskin 1991, 304). It should be remembered that illogicality is permissible in the non-bona-fide mode, as already mentioned in the previous section. A list of known logical mechanisms is presented in the next section.

Script opposition (SO) is extensively explained by the SSTH, addressed in previous section. Attardo and Raskin (1991, 308) maintain that SO can basically be understood as an interpretation of the text of a joke, for instance, the nondumb/dumb opposition (which is also an opposition of normal/abnormal and good/bad) in example (14) below. They also point out that the SSTH listed the good/bad opposition among other binary categories, such as life/death and money/no money, whereas the GTVH suggests that the latter are subcases of good/bad. The SSTH incorporates the other five KRs within SO and does not attempt to analyse them further (Attardo and Raskin 1991, 326). The six KRs in example (14) are: LA (the text of the joke), NS (a riddle), TA (Poles), SI (changing a light bulb), LM (figure-ground reversal) and SO (dumbness) (Attardo and Raskin 1991, 322).

- (14) How many Poles does it take to screw in a light bulb?
Five. One to hold the light bulb and four to turn the table he's standing on.
(Attardo and Raskin 1991, 295)

The GTVH proposes a hierarchy among the knowledge resources based on three aspects: the *binary relations* between the KRs, their nature as *content or a tool* and relative degrees of *joke similarity* (Attardo and Raskin 1991, 293). Figure 3 presents the suggested hierarchy of the six KRs.

SO → LM → SI → TA → NS → LA

Figure 3: Hierarchy of the KRs

In principle, each KR is affected and restrained by the KRs above it and affects and restrains the KRs below it, but the relations between specific KRs are more complex and differ to a great degree. The KRs may function and affect each other in four ways. In a number of cases a KR is *independent* of another (e.g. LM does not influence TA), in several others a KR imposes only *stylistic preference* on another (e.g. SO influences LA) (Attardo and Raskin 1991, 318). However, a KR may also restrict the choices made in another KR more extensively, *constrain* it (e.g. SO constrains TA) or altogether *rigidly determine* the available choices in the other KR (e.g. LA determines every other KR) (Attardo and Raskin 1991, 318-319). The asymmetrical relations lead to a partial ordering, as the KRs which constrain or rigidly determine other KRs are placed on lower levels in the hierarchy.

The remaining ordering is discovered by further observations on the KRs. Attardo and Raskin (1991, 321) distinguish between content-oriented and tool-oriented KRs. They maintain that in example (14), the joke is more about dumb Poles changing light bulbs than about figure-ground reversal, riddles and language options. Therefore the *content KRs* (i.e. SO, SI, TA) could be considered more essential and higher in the hierarchy than the *tool KRs* (i.e. LM, NS, LA). However, Attardo and Raskin (1991, 324) modify this categorisation to the degree that they argue that LM is a tool for SO only.

Since differences in parameters create differences between jokes, *joke similarity* may also be used to discover the ordering of the KRs. Attardo and Raskin (1991, 323) assume that KRs causing less difference should situate lower in the hierarchy. However, judgement of the relative degrees of difference between jokes is not always easy. Attardo and Raskin (1991, 323-324) point out that while differences in LA and NS change jokes considerably less than changes in SO, other KRs are more problematic and individual opinions on joke similarity probably vary. The tentative hierarchy is based on all three aspects presented above.

The five-level model introduced the concept of joke variants and invariants, and the

"variance relation is indexed by the argument KRs that the two jokes share". For instance, jokes that differ only in their language parameters are {SO, LM, SI, TA, NS} variants. The SSTH addressed {SO} invariants, the five-level model {SO, LM} invariants, whereas the template for a joke in the GTVH is {SO, LM, SI, TA, NS, LA} (Attardo and Raskin 1991, 328-329).

The more general, less strictly linguistics-based nature of the GTVH means that several fields of study contribute to the study of the knowledge resources. Table 1 presents the main disciplines involved in the study of each parameter. It should be noted that only script opposition, logical mechanism and language share the discipline of linguistics.

Knowledge resource	Standard disciplines
Script opposition (SO)	linguistics, philosophy, anthropology, psychology
Logical mechanism (LM)	linguistics, psychology, philosophy, mathematics, rhetoric
Situation (SI)	philosophy, sociology, psychology
Target (TA)	anthropology, philosophy, sociology, psychology, political science, history
Narrative strategy (NS)	literary studies, folklore, rhetoric
Language (LA)	linguistics, mathematics, computer science

Table 1: The six KRs and the contributing academic disciplines (adapted from Attardo and Raskin 1991, 330).

3.2.3 Further developments of linguistic theories

Further research on linguistic theories of humour have concentrated on several knowledge resources of the GTVH. Attardo (2001, 23-24) points out that narrative strategy and situation have been virtually ignored, basically because they do not offer much to work on aside from taxonomy or lists of "props". Other KRs have been studied more; LA for its punchline, which I will discuss later in this section, and most extensively the problematic LM from many angles. Studies on TA have shown that aside from groups or individuals, the target can also be

ideological, for instance an institution or an ideology such as "marriage" and "romantic love" (Attardo 2001, 24). This is pertinent to my analysis of the examples, in section 5.1 concerning the hostile content and in section 6.3.4 with the discussion on TAs.

Logical mechanism is by far the most studied one of the six knowledge resources. New logical mechanisms have emerged in studies which have examined the LMs in jokes, longer texts and cartoons, for instance. Attardo et al. (2002, 18) give a list of all the known LMs, reproduced in table 2. A number of LMs will be explained in more detail in section 6.3.2 when I discuss the part of analysis conducted with the GTVH.

role reversal	role exchanges	potency mappings
vacuous reversal	juxtaposition	Chiasmus
garden-path	figure-ground reversal	faulty reasoning
almost situations	analogy	self-undermining
inferring consequences	reasoning from false premises	missing link
coincidence	parallelism	implicit parallelism
proportion	ignoring the obvious	false analogy
exaggeration	field restriction	Cratyism
meta-humour	vicious circle	referential ambiguity

Table 2: List of known LMs.

Moreover, further research on LM has suggested that this KR is optional like target. Attardo et al. (2002, 25) maintain that this is proved by the existence of absurd nonsense humour which does not offer resolution to the incongruity. Furthermore, Attardo et al. (2002, 25-26) refer to Rothbart and Pien's claim that resolution may be complete or (fully) partial (see section 3.1.3) and postulate that consequently any resolution, either full, partial or zero counts as a LM. Attardo et al. (2002, 28) also point out that since a joke can contain multiple SOs, multiple LMs are also possible.

However, LM has remained problematic and has elicited critique from a number of scholars. For instance, Davies (2004, 379) argues that while admittedly there are logical mechanisms in jokes, studying (i.e. listing) them does not produce valuable insights and therefore this knowledge resource should be discarded. On the other hand, other scholars have

opted to retain the LM while refining the GTVH. One of the most recent advancements is the Ontological Semantic Theory of Humour (the OSH), developed by Victor Raskin, Christian F. Hempelmann and Julia M. Taylor. This theory is a work in progress and therefore will not be included in this thesis.

Research on LA has concentrated on the punchline. Attardo (2001) proposes an interesting theory which could be applied to longer texts in order to reveal how the occurrences of humorous passages intertwine with more serious narrative. Since the examples in my corpus are extracted from the surrounding narrative, most of this theory is not pertinent to my study, but a number of aspects concerning the punchlines may prove to be useful.

Attardo distinguishes several types of *lines* or *disjunctors*: punchlines, jablines and diffuse disjunctors. A *punchline* is a disjunctor in a final position in a joke which forces the reinterpretation of the text. The function of a *jabline* is similar while the textual position is different. Jablines do not disrupt the narrative and they may be either essential to the plot or non-essential but still non-antagonist (Attardo 2001, 82-83). With some humour, such as texts employing register or irony, it is impossible to pinpoint any clear line which produces the humorous effect, whereas there are small jablines, *diffuse disjunctors*, distributed in the text (Attardo 2001, 103).

Furthermore, Attardo discusses the distance between lines and one of his concepts, a *bridge* where lines are separated by a considerable distance, may be used in my study. Attardo (2001, 58-59) points out that while it is well-known that a surface structure of a text quickly disappears from memory, studies have shown that readers recognise earlier structures and appreciate the humour created later with the help of them even after several pages of text. Although this is more pertinent to the study of longer texts, there are several examples in the *Discworld* corpus where a bridge can be distinguished.

4. Materials and methods

In this chapter, I outline the specific approach to my study, based on the theories presented in the previous chapter, and present the source material from which the corpus was compiled. In section 4.1, after a brief presentation of the author and his work, I will discuss several general observations on the humorous content of the *Discworld* novels. In section 4.2, I explain the method for the analysis of the corpus data, present the chosen ways to address the research questions and produce several hypotheses based on the theories discussed.

4.1 Terry Pratchett and the *Discworld* novels

The choice for the primary source material was clear for me since the idea for the subject itself originated from my reading the *Discworld* novel *The Light Fantastic*. As I read the joke presented in example (15) I realised that the cause for my amusement was the distorted language and I was immediately intrigued to find out in which ways language can be used to create humour.

- (15) . . .the famous Discworld sunlight. . .poured like molten gold* across the sleeping landscape. . . *Not precisely, of course. Trees didn't burst into flame, people didn't suddenly become very rich and extremely dead. . .
(Pratchett 1986, 167)

Terry Pratchett is one of the most read British authors of today, and he has been awarded several prizes for his literary accomplishments. He was the best-selling author in the United Kingdom in the 1990s. He is known for his work in comic fantasy literature, both for adults and children, and his large fan base is not restricted by age or gender. There are 33 *Discworld* novels for adults (at the time of publishing this thesis, March 2011) and they have been translated to over thirty languages, although I rather suspect that they lose much in translation, especially on humour which is the trademark of the series.

Because I wanted to bring as much material as possible to my corpus, I decided to include in it the humorous instances of the first 25 *Discworld* novels. The corpus forms a

fairly homogeneous whole as the humorous data is collected from one series by one author and, in addition, novels of one genre. Although the first novel of the series, *The Colour of Magic*, was published in 1983 and the last one in my corpus, *The Truth*, in 2000, the general style has not changed considerably during the two decades; all the novels are fantasy literature with humour to spice it up, and they offer insights to our society and humanity.

The *Discworld* novels contain common themes and topics that run through the series. Many aspects of our society and human nature are discussed or criticised with using humour, such as religion, business, politics and attitudes towards other people, especially those who differ from us. In addition, the novels regularly allude to either other pieces of literature (e.g. other fantasy literature, fairy tales, horror stories, well known literature classics) or popular culture (e.g. films, music). Many analogies are made to historical events as well as to persons, places and things in our world. In many cases humour is primarily used to entertain but in others there is clearly a message behind it meant to "teach a lesson".

The examples in the corpus illustrate a vast array of different ways in which language is manipulated to create humour. Ambiguity and incongruity was detected at linguistic levels ranging from phonology to register, and inside one level there were numerous different ways in which the ambiguity or incongruity was constructed. For instance, there are many pun-like jokes based on homophony and homonymy or polysemy, as well as examples of humorous word-formation, play with phrasal verbs, idioms, synonymous and antonymous words. However, often the discrepancy follows from an allusion either to our world or to a piece of literature or a film. These examples most often contain something in addition to the allusion but there are even straight quotes. In addition, the incongruity may be a single one or layered, involving several levels. Appendix 1 lists the groups in which the examples were divided.

The corpus includes the humorous pieces of text found in the *Discworld* novels. I included examples which I recognised as at least potentially humorous, meant to have this

effect by the author and which could be considered "jokes". That is to say that not every piece of text which was humorous was included automatically in the corpus; the more literary or narrative ways to create humorous effect, such as description of characters, were omitted. Furthermore, I unfortunately also grew tired of a number of recurring jokes and therefore did not include every instance of them. Moreover, several pieces of text involving intertextuality were excluded from the corpus as they were not "joke-type" (e.g. allusions to fairy tales and fantasy literature in *Witches Abroad*) as well as a number of other allusions, such as the tabloid headlines in *The Truth*.

Altogether, there are 521 examples in the corpus. The number of examples gathered from different novels (placed in parentheses after the title, below) vary substantially (i.e. from 41 to 1, the average being ca. 20): *The Colour of Magic* (20), *The Light Fantastic* (27), *Equal Rites* (8), *Mort* (40), *Sourcery* (41), *Wyrd Sisters* (28), *Pyramids* (34), *Guards! Guards!* (33), *Eric* (14), *Moving Pictures* (13), *Reaper Man* (40), *Witches Abroad* (27), *Small Gods* (22), *Lords and Ladies* (18), *Men at Arms* (12), *Soul Music* (28), *Interesting Times* (7), *Maskerade* (1), *Feet of Clay* (7), *Hogfather* (4), *Jingo* (12), *The Last Continent* (4), *Carpe Jugulum* (13), *The Fifth Elephant* (33), *The Truth* (35). The discussion above on excluding some humorous fragments from the corpus may, at least to some extent, explain the unbalanced distribution of the examples. Further possible reasons will be discussed in section 6.1.3 when types of humour preferred in each book are examined.

4.2 The approach to the present study

The purpose of this study is to answer the research questions. The study is conducted with the help of theories presented in the earlier sections. The use of the chosen theories will also reveal their applicability or the limits thereof in the process of the analysis. Indeed, I do not propose a theory of humour of my own, but study my data testing the theories and hypotheses

produced by earlier research on humour.

As mentioned in section 3.2.1, in this study I consider myself as an equivalent of a native speaker. I deem my linguistic competence in English to be of such a standard that I am able to understand the language used in the *Discworld* novels and hence able to detect the jokes they contain. This task was further facilitated by my expecting humour and therefore by my readiness to search for incongruities and switch to non-bona-fide mode. Furthermore, I believe to possess fairly extensive general knowledge of the world and also of more specific areas, such as literature and motion pictures, and therefore these more restricted scripts available to me help me in recognising allusions in the novels. Finally, as for my sense of humour, I consider myself "omnivore", that is to say that I enjoy many kinds of humour ranging from puns to irony and I am able to laugh at practically any subject matter. Indeed, Gruner (1997, 91) explains that according to Raskin, people who have "no sense of humour" treat every subject as "real talk", in bona-fide mode, whereas some people can treat any topic in the "play frame", the majority of people situating somewhere between these extremes. However, I must concede that this study is unavoidably subjective, since I am the only decoder and my competence and preferences necessarily affect the results.

The corpus consists of the humorous pieces of text found in the *Discworld* novels. The examples were organised in groups according to the general "technique", or the linguistic level which contains ambiguity or incongruity. The entire corpus was analysed and a number of examples are presented in detail in chapters 5 and 6 along with observations, in a more concise way, on the groups analysed. The selection of examples presented in chapters 5 and 6 was based on two objectives. First, they should adequately illustrate the point discussed and second, if allowed by the first consideration, I opted for examples with high funniness ratings.

As mentioned before, I believe a multifaceted approach, which takes into account both the linguistic and the psychological theories, is needed to answer my research questions.

McGhee's argument that humour is a cognitive-affective experience is endorsed by Gruner (1997, 109), who stresses that the reaction to humour is both intellectual and emotional. Consequently, I must include in my approach several aspects of the psychological theories discussed under section 3.1. The use of multiple theories is further encouraged by Gruner's (1997, 12) critique on the SSTH as he observes that it must be partial, since it is a *semantic* theory of humour. While the psychological dimension concerning especially the emotions involved in processing humour will be useful in answering questions on funniness, the linguistic theories will provide the specific tools for analysing the language used in creating humour. Several aspects of the various theories discussed in the previous sections were incorporated into the process of the analysis described below, and they also produced several hypotheses discussed later in this section.

The process of analysis was conducted in the following manner. The examples in the corpus were labelled in several ways, they were assessed for hostility, explicitness of content and for funniness. By hostility I mean the probable reason for encoding the humorous text; I evaluated the examples to be "non-hostile" if the purpose was merely to make the decoder laugh, and "hostile" if I considered that the intended effect surpassed this basic purpose, which means that the author meant to criticise something. The hostile examples were then further analysed to locate the target and to see whether I sympathised with it. Finally, I determined the type of hostility, whether it was an attack, affectionate ridicule or self-disparagement.

The element of suppression of the release theories manifests itself in the assessment of the content of the examples. I evaluated the explicitness of content on a five-point scale, giving higher marks for examples that involved "taboos" or vulgar language in the following manner: 0="clean", 1=either subject or language potentially offensive but implicit, 2=both subject and language potentially offensive but implicit, or either subject or language

potentially offensive and explicit, 3=both subject and language potentially offensive, one implicit, other explicit and 4=both subject and language potentially offensive and explicit.

The following five-point scale was used for evaluating the funniness of the examples: 0=stupid, 1=marginally funny, 2=moderately funny, 3=very funny and 4=extremely funny. These assessments are naturally more subjective than the two above.

The SSTH was applied to the examples, firstly to find out whether it worked properly, and secondly to reveal the incongruities and structures in the examples. I used *The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* because it adequately describes English in use today. In a few cases where the OALD was not sufficient, I resorted to *The Oxford English Dictionary Online*. First, I defined the overlapping and opposing scripts and marked down whether the overlap was full, partial or truly partial. Next, I gathered information on the real and unreal situations and their opposition. This included discovering the type of opposition (i.e. (non)actual, (ab)normal or (im)possible), the form of introduction of the unreal situation (i.e. external, internal or implied), the semantic distance between the two situations and the possible dichotomy (e.g. obscene/ non obscene). Finally, I examined the triggers in the examples and labelled them quasi-ambiguous, ambiguous or contradiction triggers, with further information where required.

The GTVH was applied to the corpus data to find out what kind of knowledge resources and especially logical mechanisms and lines the examples contained. After the entire procedure described above, I studied the relations between the gathered data to discover correlations between the "variables".

The information gathered in the analysis was expected to offer answers to the research questions. As for the more straightforward one, the second research question (i.e. what kind of linguistic devices are used in the examples and whether certain techniques are more common than others), answers were expected to rise in the process of assigning the examples to

different groups and of analysing them with the help of the linguistic theories. To find out whether certain techniques are more common than others, I examined the relative sizes of the groups and techniques as well as the distribution of the data gathered with the linguistic theories. The answer to the first research question (i.e. why the examples are funny) was to be found by applying the theories to the corpus and observing whether their hypotheses and proposed reasons for funniness proved to be true. Moreover, to answer the second part of the first research question (i.e. what makes some examples funnier than others), the relations between the different variables (e.g. techniques, hostility, offensive content) were studied in order to discover possible correlations. The third research question (i.e. whether the available theories of humour are applicable to the *Discworld* data and whether they are sufficient) was answered in the process of study. It follows from the research questions and the methods used in answering them that this study is to a certain degree quantitative. However, the subjective nature of the study undermines the reliability of the results, which means that they cannot be taken as universal facts but as tentative suggestions.

Several hypotheses were made based on the theories presented and former studies conducted in humour research. As for the applicability and sufficiency of the theories, I expected that they can all be used in the analysis, the linguistic theories especially in discovering techniques but in answering the first research question, the psychological theories would be invaluable. I suspected that the SSTH would not work well with the more sophisticated examples and supposed that the GTVH would be more suitable to these examples. Higher ratings in funniness were expected to coincide with several findings. The content of the examples should be somewhat obscene (arousing) and the topic important to the stage of life which I am in (e.g. concerning relationships, studies and work, social phenomena). Hostility was also expected to produce higher appreciation if I did not sympathise with the target and especially when I felt antipathy towards it. The examples

should also be of a moderate level of difficulty, not heard before and preferably "witty novelties". The examples scoring lower in funniness were expected to be too hostile (i.e. an attack on a target sympathised with would not be considered safe) or too vulgar (i.e. involving too strong a taboo or very offensive language) or, on the other hand, to be quite neutral in these respects. Furthermore, content not close to my interests was expected to lower appreciation. Low funniness ratings were also expected of examples considered too easy or too difficult, forced or corny, or heard before.

5. Psychological dimensions

In this chapter, I discuss the psychological dimensions of the humour in the *Discworld* novels; hostility in section 5.1 and obscene content in section 5.2. While the aspects of the incongruity theories contribute to section 6.1 examining the techniques of the examples, hostility theories and release theories provide the theoretical background for the analysis in this chapter. Hostility theories contribute to my examination of the hostile content, the purpose of the jokes, and release theories to analysing the obscene content of the examples. The analysis is executed with the methods presented in section 4.2 in order to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses. A number of answers, clues and speculations will be discussed in the following sections but summarised conclusions will not be presented until chapter 7.

5.1 Hostile content

In this section, I examine the hostile content of the examples, that is, the purpose of the humour in them. The examples were labelled either as being neutral or carrying a hostile intention, in the form of a more pointed attack, softer affectionate ridicule or a type of self-disparagement where the author probably included himself among the target. In addition, the targets were named and my sympathy with them was noted, being either positive, neutral or negative. Naturally, the classification is subjective, being done by myself as the only analyser, and moreover because it is based on my interpretation of the intended purpose without knowing the actual intentions of the author. However, this is exactly what any other reader would do, and my interpretations reveal how the encoded messages are processed by the decoder. 228 examples were deemed neutral, as it seemed that their sole purpose was to produce laughter.

5.1.1 Targets

293 examples (i.e. 56 percent of the corpus) were labelled as hostile. The targeted people and phenomena fall into several categories representing defects of society (ruthlessness in politics, business and religion, rigid norms and hypocrisy, inequality), flaws in human nature and behaviour (various vices, weaknesses, abuse of others or self) and less serious flaws of character (stupidity, ugliness). There are twenty subclasses which are presented in examples (16) - (35). The number of examples in each category is placed in parentheses after the name of the subclass.

Rulers or tyrants (their abusive conduct) (14)

- (16) . . .if per capita was a problem, decapita could be arranged.
(Pratchett 1991a, 71)

Powerful or rich people (their abusive conduct) (24)

- (17) Being Ymor's right-hand man was like being gently flogged to death with scented bootlaces. (Pratchett 1983, 29)

Religion (silliness, cruelty) (16)

- (18) He knew from experience that true and obvious ideas, such as the ineffable wisdom and judgment of the Great God Om, seemed so obscure to many people that you actually had to kill them before they saw the error of their ways . . . (Pratchett 1992a, 32)

Greed (business, corruption) (18)

- (19) "Why not? You can tell as many lies as you like if it's *advertising*. That's allowed," said Sacharissa. (Pratchett 2000, 326)

Inequality (conditions, welfare) (9)

- (20) The Ephobians believed that every man should have the vote.* *Provided that he wasn't poor, foreign nor disqualified by reason of being mad, frivolous or a woman. (Pratchett 1992a, 163)

Norms and etiquette (hypocrisy, conservatism, political correctness) (17)

- (21) *Compenydyum of Sex Majick* . . . can only be read by wizards who are over eighty and, if possible, dead. (Pratchett 1988a, 16)

Lack of respect for education and knowledge (3)

- (22) "It would seem that you have no useful skill or talent whatsoever," he said.
"Have you thought of going into teaching?" (Pratchett 1987b, 216)

Cruelty (abuse, violence) (23)

- (23) ". . . otherwise you will die. In an interesting fashion. Over a period."
(Pratchett 1983, 43)

Discrimination and prejudice (racism, sexism, ageism, etc.) (20)

- (24) Racism was not a problem on the Discworld, because - what with trolls and dwarfs and so on - speciesism was more interesting. Black and white lived in perfect harmony and and ganged up on green. (Pratchett 1991b, 167)

Lack of empathy (coldness, betrayal, evil) (6)

- (25) ". . . Isn't he dead yet?"
"He's got fever."
"Put him out of our misery." (Pratchett 1992a, 253)

Human cruelty to animals and exploitation of nature (9)

- (26) The vermine is a small black and white relative of the lemming . . . its skin is rare and highly valued, especially by the vermine itself; the selfish little bastard will do anything rather than let go of it. (Pratchett 1988a, 29)

Bad behaviour (rudeness, cursing, immature and obnoxious behaviour) (14)

- (27) "Good morning, Mister Magpie," said Agnes automatically.
"Bugger off, you bastard," said Nanny, and reached down for a stick to throw.
(Pratchett 1998b, 124)

Dishonesty (minor lying, covering up) (8)

- (28) "Sorry I'm late, gentlemen," he lied, rubbing his hands briskly.
(Pratchett 1986, 111)

Pomposity by "high" (vanity, condescending behaviour) (18)

- (29) . . . if you needed to know who thought they were who in Ankh-Morpork it [*Twurp's Peerage*] was invaluable. (Pratchett 1999, 44)

Pomposity by "low" (vanity, pose) (7)

- (30) "I am learned in the ways of demons. Obey my every command or I will return thee unto the boiling hell from which you came. Thou came, sorry. Thou came'st, in fact. And I really mean it." (Pratchett 1990a, 20)

Shallowness (fakeness, materialism) (7)

- (31) In fact it really was amazing what could be done with several ounces of heavy metal, some irritated molluscs, a few dead rodents and a lot of thread wound out of insects' bottoms. (Pratchett 1987b, 235)

Addictions (alcoholism, gluttony, etc.) (18)

- (32) He wished he'd had time to drink dinner. (Pratchett 1989b, 62)

Mental weaknesses (laziness, cowardice, etc.) (12)

- (33) Slippers flapping and nightshirts billowing the other wizards followed him, falling over one another in their eagerness to be last. (Pratchett 1986, 15)

Stupidity (incompetence, naivety) (27)

- (34) One or two of the old barrows had been exposed over the years, their huge stones attracting their own folklore. If you left your unshod horse at one of them overnight and placed a six-pence on the stone, in the morning the six-pence would be gone and you'd never see your horse again, either... (Pratchett 1998b, 285)

Ugliness (dirtiness, bad taste) (23)

- (35) For one thing, she's not beautiful. There's a certain set to the jaw and arch to the nose that might, with a following wind and in the right light, be called handsome by a good-natured liar. (Pratchett 1992b, 9)

5.1.2 Types of hostility

As for the types of hostility, 73 percent of examples were considered as attacks, 21 percent as affectionate ridicule and 6 percent as including self-ridicule. The examples in which I calculated the author identifying himself with the target carry humour mostly aimed at common foibles of human nature. These minor flaws include for example stupidity, vanity, inability to keep resolutions and not knowing what is good for you. In addition to these, more serious flaws of character are criticised, such as selfishness in behaviour towards others and saying inconsiderate things without thinking. Succumbing to silly norms and etiquette imposed by society is also ridiculed. Example (36) illustrates a case of self-ridicule involving mental weakness.

- (36) Anything was possible last night. That was the trouble with last nights. They were always followed by this mornings. (Pratchett 1992a, 324)

Affectionate ridicule is used in every group of targets, excepting lack of respect for education, but this may be explained by the small size of the group. Affectionate ridicule is not much used in the case of more serious flaws, but is quite common in the examples involving norms, minor dishonesty, addictions and prominent with pomposity by "low" and especially with stupidity. In the examples concerning stupidity, affectionate ridicule is used when the flaw can be characterised as silliness rather than sheer idiocy often with negative consequences. The specific characters carrying the ridiculed flaw also strongly influence the type of hostility used. Many characters appear in several novels throughout the series and they are quite clearly portrayed in either negative or positive light. For instance, the stupid remarks and behaviour of the witch Nanny Ogg, as well as her liberal attitudes towards drinking and promiscuity, are most often treated with affectionate ridicule, whereas the behaviour of the vain, gluttonous and patriarchal wizards usually receives a harsher treatment.

The critique is most often conveyed implicitly by irony or sarcasm (as in examples (22) and (26)) or depicted by the characters' incorrect behaviour (as in example (27)). Naturally the reader has to decide whether the attack is on the abused party in the joke or the abuser but, as Gruner (1997, 65) points out, if the joke is hyperbolised, "any sensible, logical person would be *compelled* to recognize that this material *cannot be taken seriously*." However, the attack can also be quite clear, although expressed more implicitly, as in examples (17) and (32), but explicit attacks, such as example (37), are rare.

- (37) He was, he would be the first to admit, a coward, an incompetent, and not even very good at being a failure. . . (Pratchett 1983, 240)

Two interesting points concerning hostility in the examples caught my attention. Firstly, 11 percent of the examples carry an attack in such a form that it is more difficult to decide whether there is "enlightened" critique or whether the joke is rather truly offensive,

promoting a vice. This is most common with the groups 'power', 'cruelty', 'discrimination' and 'bad behaviour'. In example (27), Nanny Ogg's bad behaviour in contrast with Agnes's politeness is funny, and rudeness may seem to be acceptable, but the reader can decide that this kind of behaviour is actually criticised by the author. Secondly, the examples criticising ugliness differ from the ones in other groups in that this flaw is definitely not comparable to the others since it is superficial and not exactly harmful. These attacks are, in my opinion, ethically suspect since they do not criticise the discrimination of ugly people but promote it. There are a number of characters that are victims of this kind of ridicule, most prominently a younger witch Magrat, who is plain and has a bad taste in clothes and make-up, and Corporal Nobby Nobbs of the City Watch, who is admittedly fairly repulsive in many respects, but with whom I tend to sympathise when he is mistreated. Examples (38) and (39) illustrate these two kinds of suspect attacks, discrimination of Nobby and ridicule of Magrat's unattractiveness, respectively.

- (38) "No, sir. Not size. Nobby Nobbs is shorter than many dwarfs, and we don't call *him* a dwarf."
"We don't call him human, either," said Vimes. (Pratchett 1999, 42)
- (39) He touched his forelock. He'd been brought up to be respectful to women, and Magrat fell broadly into this category. (Pratchett 1991b, 41-42)

5.1.3 Sympathy with the targets

As for my sympathy with the targets, I labelled it to be negative, neutral or positive according to each particular case instead of the phenomenon as a whole (e.g. discrimination, addiction). For instance, when alcohol consumption is the target, as in examples (40) and (41), I sympathise in the former case but not in the latter.

- (40) Nanny Ogg was standing morosely with a pint in her hand, a hitherto unheard-of combination. (Pratchett 1998b, 95)
- (41) No, what he didn't like about heroes was that they were usually suicidally gloomy when sober and homicidally insane when drunk. (Pratchett 1983, 50)

My sympathy with the characters varies also. For example, whereas I side with Nobby in several cases, in others I willingly revel in his ridicule, as in example (42) exposing his stupidity.

- (42) "They always gives *me* bath salts," complained Nobby. "And bath lumps and tons of bath stuff and I can't think why, 'cos it's not as if I hardly ever *has* a bath. You'd think they'd take the hint, wouldn't you?" (Pratchett 1996b, 181)

Altogether, the sympathy labels correlate with the distribution of the types of hostility to a great degree, although the number of cases with negative sympathy is slightly smaller than that of the attacks. When in doubt whether the attack is directed against the phenomenon or the victim in the joke, I have chosen to believe that the former is the case. Slight variation within target groups can be noticed in the following categories, where neutral or positive sympathy labels are more numerous than attacks: 'bad behaviour', 'addictions', 'shallowness' and 'ugliness'. The last one is explained by the discussion above and the others mostly by my sympathy with the characters and the "harmless" nature of the flaws depicted in the examples. Interestingly, negative sympathy labels outnumber the attacks in the norms category, which may show that I despise hypocritical and conservative ways of society even more than the author of the novels.

5.1.4 Discussion

Hostility theorists postulate that hostile elements enhance humour appreciation or that they are even crucial to it, which seems to be supported by the funniness ratings for hostile examples in the corpus. Table 3 shows in percentages the funniness ratings I gave to completely neutral examples (i.e. non-hostile, non-obscene, indicated by H0 O0) and to hostile examples without a taboo subject.

Type	F0	F1	F2	F3	F4
H0 O0	15(%)	30(%)	39(%)	13(%)	3(%)
Hostile O0	2(%)	15(%)	37(%)	35(%)	11(%)

Table 3: Funniness ratings for neutral and for hostile, non-obscene examples.

In comparison with neutral examples, the hostile ones are clearly more often rated high on funniness (i.e. F3-F4, very funny or extremely funny) and more seldom low (i.e. F0-F1, stupid or marginally funny). Altogether, examples with a hostile content, either alone or accompanied by a taboo subject, rate quite high in funniness. Several target groups draw considerably more often higher funniness ratings (i.e. very funny or extremely funny for ca. two times out of three): tyrants, powerful people, lack of respect for education, cruelty, cruelty to animals and mental weaknesses. This is partly explained by my interest in the social phenomena in question (e.g. conduct of people in high positions, human and animal welfare), but I would have expected critique on other groups, such as pomposity by "high" and especially religion, to also score higher. However, the linguistic side of these examples was quite often not as witty as in the others, which indicates that hostility cannot be the sole reason for funniness.

Table 4 presents information on high funniness ratings for hostile examples.

Type	F3	Attack	Aff. rid.	Self-rid.	F4	Attack	Aff. rid.	Self-rid.
Hos. O0	55	40	11	4	18	14	4	-
Ho. Ob.	61	49	12	-	25	18	4	3
Total	116 (40% of hostile)	89 (42% of attacks)	23 (37% of aff. rid.)	4 (29% of self-rid.)	43 (15% of hostile)	32 (15% of attacks)	8 (13% of aff. rid.)	3 (18% of self-rid.)

Table 4: High funniness ratings for hostile examples.

As for the types of hostility, there is no clear variation from the percentages for hostile examples as a whole. Of all the hostile examples, 55 percent were labelled F3 or F4, whereas

self-ridicule scored slightly lower with 47 percent, affectionate ridicule with 50 percent and attacks marginally higher with 57 percent. Table 4 shows that the inclusion of the second psychological element, obscene content, enhances humour appreciation to a small degree. I will discuss taboo subjects and their effect on funniness in more detail in section 5.2.

Examples with a hostile element rarely scored low in funniness; 28 examples were labelled "marginally funny" and only 6 were "stupid". The reason for a low rating is the low quality of the linguistic content and technique of the joke. My sympathy with the targets does not seem to affect my appreciation of the examples, at least not noticeably. I must point out that I do enjoy the humour in, for instance, examples (38) and (39) even though I deem it inappropriate. To go further, I also appreciate humour in examples concerning my own reference groups, as in example (22). Of course, in this case I, a future teacher, interpret the joke to be on the lack of respect for teachers. However, example (43) criticising laziness does attack in the process my reference group and I nevertheless find it highly amusing.

(43) The river slunk sullenly in the bottom of its bed, like a student around 11 a.m.
(Pratchett 1993, 27)

Gruner (1997, 85-86) discusses various ways in which one can react to ridicule against one's own group, one of which is to exclude oneself of those ridiculed, and another to acknowledge one's faults which are exposed and goodnatureedly enjoy the joke. With example (43) I could laugh at those other students who are lazy but since I absolutely admit this flaw in myself and recognise myself in the joke, I enjoy it as self-disparagement. Factors affecting my appreciation of the humour in the corpus will be discussed in more detail in chapter 7, as the data presented in chapters 5 and 6 is brought together.

5.2 Obscene content

In this section I address the obscene content found in the examples. I determined whether the examples carried taboo topics and/or potentially offensive language and labelled them

accordingly. The specific taboo category was marked, as well as the level of explicitness, that is, whether the subject was implied or explicit and whether the language used in the example was explicit, the subject clearly expressed, for instance with words such as 'kill' and 'shit', or whether more implicit rephrasing was used. Swearwords were also labelled explicit.

5.2.1 Taboos

I assigned 203 examples (i.e. 39 percent of the corpus) to nine taboo groups and to six groups which were combinations of taboos in the main categories. These latter cases are either real combinations of two taboos or contain two separate taboos. The subjects of the groups are probably taboos in most cultures at least if they are explicitly expressed, but I must point out that I chose to leave out religion. However, the examples which criticise religion often involve other taboos and I assigned them to the corresponding groups accordingly. Examples (44) - (58) illustrate cases of the taboo categories. The number of examples found in each group is placed in parentheses after the headings.

Sex (31)

- (44) And he was family; Nanny Ogg had had an adventurous youth and wasn't very good at counting, but she was pretty certain he was her son. (Pratchett 1992b, 68)

Excreta (any kind) (29)

- (45) Nothing ate scalbies, except other scalbies. Scalbies ate things that made a vulture sick. Scalbies would *eat* vulture sick. (Pratchett 1992a, 243)

Disease (physical or mental) (6)

- (46) . . .clothes bought by one's parents, but so expensive and and of such good quality that they never wore out and were handed down, like old china and silverware and gout. (Pratchett 1989b, 402)

Violence (fighting, torture, etc.) (30)

- (47) He gripped his knife at waist height. . . . A professional would strike upwards; the way to a man's heart was through his stomach. (Pratchett 1994a, 277)

Death (32)

- (48) The moments that change your life are the ones that happen suddenly, like the one where you die. (Pratchett 1990b, 78)

Substance abuse (mostly alcoholism) (12)

- (49) It was eight in the morning, a time when drinkers are trying either to forget who they are or to remember where they live. (Pratchett 1994a, 259)

Cannibalism (2)

- (50) Humans have always wasted handy protein ever since they started wondering who had lived in it. (Pratchett 1992a, 285)

Body parts (nakedness, not sex related) (12)

- (51) Lord Vetinari seldom had balls. There was a popular song about it, in fact. (Pratchett 1989b, 212)

Swearwords (cursing) (8)

- (52) And this particular camel . . . was called You Bastard. (Pratchett 1989a, 204)

Violence/death (31)

- (53) At one point he'd considered asking to be exorcized but had drawn back from this because the Church traditionally used fairly terminal methods for this . . . (Pratchett 1998b, 233)

Violence/body parts (3)

- (54) "I remember what we hang them up by," said Carrot.
"Oh," said Nobby weakly. "Where?"
"We hang them up by the town hall," said Carrot. (Pratchett 1989b, 72)

Violence/substance abuse (1)

- (55) No, what he didn't like about heroes was that they were usually suicidally gloomy when sober and homicidally insane when drunk. (Pratchett 1983, 50) (=example (41))

Sex/death (3)

- (56) . . . while grinning like a necrophiliac in a morgue. (Pratchett 1986, 244)

Sex/violence (1)

- (57) The point was that everyone else had someone, even if in Nobby's case it was probably against their will. (Pratchett 1993, 54)

Sex/disease (2)

- (58) Ignorant and credulous people, whose island might once been visited by some itinerant merchant vessel that traded pearls and coconuts for such fruits of civilization as glass beads, mirrors, axes and sexual diseases. . ."
(Pratchett 1996b, 220)

The taboos correlate with hostility targets to a certain degree. Examples with violence and violent death target very often tyrants, powerful people, religion, cruelty, cruelty to animals and lack of empathy. Substance abuse is closely connected to addiction, excreta and swearwords to bad behaviour and sex and body parts quite often to norms. However, in many cases no connection exists; either one or the other of the psychological dimensions is labelled neutral or the taboo and the target may have nothing in common as in example (59).

- (59) "And then go down to the docks and hire a troll and tell him to stand in the corner and if anyone else comes in and tries to play..." he paused, and then remembered, "Pathway to Paradise, I think they said it's called... he's to pull their head off." (Pratchett 1994a, 191-192)

The target in example (59) is ugliness (bad taste), specifically the overused, clichéd song "Stairway to Heaven" by Led Zeppelin and street guitarists' love for it. The taboo, however, is clearly violent death. Furthermore, certain taboos tend to occur with certain characters; sex (promiscuity, dirty mind) and substance abuse (alcohol) with Nanny Ogg, sex (celibacy) with wizards and sex (various forms) with members of the City Watch.

5.2.2 The level of explicitness

The way the taboos are presented and the language used in the process were labelled either implicit or explicit and the examples assigned to four levels of strength or explicitness, from the most implicit O1 to the most explicit O4. The larger taboo groups, from which conclusions can be drawn, show that the obscene subjects are more often (ca. two times out of three) implied and presented in implicit language. However, with violence and violence/death, explicit language is as common as implicit. The implied taboos are often side remarks that do

not advance the narrative, such as in example (60) and, furthermore, in many cases slips of the tongue or misunderstandings, as in example (61).

- (60) He liked the time just before a winter's dawn. It was generally foggy, which made it hard to see the city, and for a few hours there was no sound but the occasional brief scream. (Pratchett 2000, 95)
- (61) "Vampires are very anal-retentive, you see?"
"I shouldn't like meeting one that was the opposite," said Nanny.
(Pratchett 1998b, 161)

Most often implicit language, such as paraphrasing, is used for increasing funniness or indeed for creating the joke, as in example (62). However, in the rarer instances explicit language, as in example (63), also serves this purpose and gives a shock, which possibly leads to higher arousal and higher appreciation, naturally depending on the decoder.

- (62) . . . in *The Shades* a nightwatchman who had lost his way rang his bell and cried out: "Twelve o'clock and all's arrrrrgghhhh..." (Pratchett 1987b, 182)
- (63) Rincewind knew what orgasms were, of course, he'd had a few in his time, sometimes even in company. . . (Pratchett 1986, 217)

5.2.3 Discussion

In a third of the taboo cases, the example is labelled neutral for hostility. Since there is no critique as purpose for joking in these examples, I assume that incorporating a taboo to the text is a tool used by the author to enhance funniness created by linguistic devices. In fact, I most often rated these examples higher on funniness than those involving neither hostility nor obscenity. Table 5 presents in percentages how these examples were rated for funniness; the examples devoid of both psychological dimensions and those with only obscene content.

Type	F0	F1	F2	F3	F4
H0 O0	15(%)	30(%)	39(%)	13(%)	3(%)
H0 Obscene	2(%)	20(%)	41(%)	30(%)	7(%)

Table 5: Funniness ratings for neutral and for non-hostile, obscene examples.

Low funniness ratings (F0/F1) are clearly more numerous when there is no obscene content and reversely higher funniness ratings (F3/F4) abound when there is a taboo subject involved. Moreover, as pointed out in the section 5.1, the taboos seem to further increase funniness in examples which do have a hostile element, and vice versa, which corroborates proposals by various hostility and release theorists. Table 6 illustrates high funniness ratings for examples with obscene content, both for those without a hostile element and those with one.

Type	F3	O1	O2	O3	O4	F4	O1	O2	O3	O4
H0 O.	21	5	8	4	4	5	-	2	1	2
H. O.	61	10	22	21	8	25	2	11	3	9
Total	82 (40% of ob.)	15 (34% of O1)	30 (36% of O2)	25 (53% of O3)	12 (41% of O4)	30 (15% of ob.)	2 (5% of O1)	13 (16% of O2)	4 (9% of O3)	11 (38% of O4)

Table 6: High funniness ratings for examples with obscene content.

Whereas a taboo enhanced appreciation of a hostile example somewhat moderately, a hostile element clearly reinforces the effect of a taboo. The strength or explicitness of the obscene content also seems to promote appreciation. While only 39 percent of the most implicitly obscene examples (i.e. O1) are very or extremely funny, the proportion increases noticeably with explicitness; 52 percent of the O2, 62 percent of the O3 and 79 percent of the O4 are very or extremely funny. There are four taboo groups in which examples most often (i.e. ca. two times out of three) received a high funniness rating: sex, violence, swearwords and violence/death.

Altogether, low scores in funniness for examples containing a taboo, either with or without a hostile element, are rare. Only 18 examples scored F1 in funniness (i.e. "marginally funny") and 4 examples were labelled F0 (i.e. "stupid"). Mostly these examples are in one way or another subpar in their idea or their technical realisation. The various hindrances to humour appreciation which have been discussed in earlier chapters are examined with less

funny examples from the corpus in chapter 7. However, apart from these "stupid" jokes which usually produce only embarrassment (and, possibly, social laughter), there is one exception, example (56), which I consider tasteless because of its strong taboo, necrophilia. This is indeed the only example in the corpus with obscene content that is beyond my omnivorous taste for humour. It is interesting that this example should strike me so objectionable since the taboo is not acted out in the example but is described in the form of simile, whereas I tolerate and even much enjoy many other "distasteful" taboo subjects in other examples, even very explicitly described ones. Funniness ratings are further discussed with the hypotheses in chapter 7 where all the data obtained in the analysis is brought together.

6. Linguistic techniques and structures

In this chapter, I focus on the linguistic side of the humour in the *Discworld* examples. In section 6.1, I examine the ambiguous and incongruous elements in the examples that occur at different linguistic levels. Although incongruity theories that provide the theoretical background for this are psychological theories of humour, I have chosen to present the analysis conducted with them in this chapter because they resemble the SSTH and the GTVH in the central idea of similarity and dissimilarity. Section 6.2 presents discoveries obtained by the script analysis of the examples. In section 6.3, I examine the data produced by the application of the GTVH and Attardo's later development of line research.

6.1 Ambiguity and incongruity at different linguistic levels

In this section, I discuss the different linguistic levels at which the ambiguity and incongruity manifest and present the groups in which I divided the examples in the corpus (see appendix 1), starting from the lowest level. Although the "central point" of the humour, that is, the part which makes the example funny, is located, this will not necessarily explain why or how it makes the example funny, and these questions are answered in the last two sections of this chapter.

6.1.1 Lower linguistic levels

The lowest linguistic level carrying ambiguity is *phonology*, in which I distinguished four subcategories: homophony, oronymy, paronymy and homophony involving other languages. *Homophony*, illustrated by example (64), involves two words whose pronunciation is identical, in this particular case the words 'reign' in the example and 'rain' evoked by the text share the same phonetic form.

- (64) He didn't administer a reign of terror, just the occasional light shower.
(Pratchett 1988a, 77)

Oronymy (a term coined by Gyles Brandreth), means a case of phonetically identical sequences which are not limited by word boundaries. In example (65), the word 'picket' has the same phonetic representation as the two words in the verb phrase 'pick it', which is alluded to in the joke.

(65) There is a saying: it won't get better if you picket. (Pratchett 1999, 326)

It must be noted that in this example the joke may be lost if, instead of reading it, you *hear* it (at least if it is detached from the immediate context involving striking by the employees of the City Watch), whereas example (64) would make sense whether you read or hear it because of the fixed expression 'reign of terror'. However, this phenomenon is not category-related.

I use the term *paronymy* to describe cases, such as in example (66), where the pronunciation of two words or phrases is similar but not identical. The degree of similarity varies to a certain degree, which is illustrated by the comparison of examples (66) and (67).

(66) [Nobby, who (quite surprisingly) is a descendant of a noble family, has been drinking in a bar.]
"What's up with the corporal? He's a half-pint man. That's eight pints he's had."
Fred Colon leaned closer and spoke out of the corner of his mouth. "Keep it to yourself, Ron, but it's because he's a peer."
"Is that a fact? I'll go and put down some fresh sawdust."
(Pratchett 1996a, 173-174)

(67) . . . *Magrat is shown wearing a posh dress, she has been acting like a Courgette.*
. . . (Pratchett 1991b, 251)

The characters' misuse of language and malapropisms, such as in example (67) are quite common in this subcategory, and they also occur at other levels.

The examples in the last subcategory, *homophony involving foreign languages*, contain ambiguous elements requiring knowledge of other languages. These can also be instances of either homophony, oronymy or paronymy. In example (68) the word 'crap' is a paronym of the French word 'crêpe'.

(68) "At least they can't muck up a decent pancake," she said. "What'd they call them here?"
"Crap suzette, I think," said Nanny." (Pratchett 1991b, 89)

The group *graphology* was divided in two categories: cases which work *only when written*, as in example (69) and examples where the humour is not lost even if *heard*, such as in example (70).

- (69) "A -ing *werewolf*? Are you -ing *crazy*?"
"Uh... why does your partner keep saying 'ing', Mr Pin?" said a chair.
"You must be out of your -ing *minds*!" Tulip growled.
"Speech impediment," said Pin. (Pratchett 2000, 92)
- (70) The Count spun round. "Why do you always turn up behind me like that!"
"The old Count alwayth... ecthpected it on me, marthter. It'th a profethional thing."
"Well, stop it."
"Yeth, marthter."
"And the ridiculous voice, too. Go and ring the dinner gong."
"Yeth, marrrtthhter." (Pratchett 1998b, 246)

In example (69), the assumption caused by the elliptical and aggressive speech is that Mr Tulip is using the f-word, especially since the character has been doing this for seventy pages of the novel every time he appears. The incongruous question evokes a new interpretation; the hyphen marks ellipsis in speech instead of an implicit way of describing offensive cursing in writing. In example (70), the exaggeration of Igor's lisp contradicts his assent to his master's will. Examples in this group also often involve play with alphabet, such as in example (71).

- (71) It [Klatchian coffee] made you knurd.* *In a truly magical universe everything has its opposite. (Pratchett 1988a, 139)

In the group *morphology*, I distinguished three subcategories: word-formation, word-formation with "synonymy" and word-formation with "antonymy". Derivational affixes are the most common tools used in word-formation in the corpus, especially suffixes which do not change the lexical category. These are, in order of prevalence, *-ing*, *-ness*, *-ee*, *-hood*, *-ism*, *-osity*, *-ist*, *-ette* and *-ship*. Prefixes, as well as suffixes which change the lexical category are much rarer. There are a number of examples where a noun or even an utterance ('ahem' and 'ook') is converted to a verb, which then is further modified by derivation (e.g. 'ahemmer') or inflection (e.g. 'dragoned'). Compounds are rare. Example (72) illustrates a case where a

single derivational suffix is used, while example (73) presents a coinage, now widely in use, which includes both a prefix and a suffix.

(72) The sound of the monsters of the river beginning the long journey to handbaghood broke out behind Teppic as he sloshed up the far bank. (Pratchett 1989a, 331)

(73) Mustrum Ridcully, Archchancellor of Unseen University, was a shameless autocondimentor. (Pratchett 1991a, 66)

By word-formation with *synonymy* and *antonymy* I mean techniques which involve elements which are similar or dissimilar to the elements which they replace in the coined word. It could be argued that the inclusion of this semantic layer renders these two subcategories more complex, but I do not consider them combinations of two levels, and hence have chosen to place them at this level. Examples (74) and (75) illustrate cases of word-formation with a synonymous and an antonymous element, respectively.

(74) She wasn't at all certain about the meaning of the word 'decadent'. She'd dismissed the possibility that it meant 'having ten teeth' in the same sense that Nanny Ogg, for example, was unident. (Pratchett 1991b, 96)

(75) "Use your left hand, do you?"
"Er, I use both," said Brutha. "But not very well, everyone says."
"Ah," said Didactylos. "Ambi-sinister?"
"What?"
"He means incompetent with both hands," said Om. (Pratchett 1992a, 181)

The group *lexis* was divided in two subclasses: *homonymy/polysemy* (i.e. words sharing the same spelling and pronunciation but having different meanings) and *phrasal verbs/ idioms*. I did not distinguish homonymy from polysemy at this point of the analysis since separate numbers would not have provided much information, but the origin of the words is pertinent to the script analysis in next section. Examples (76) and (77) present cases of homonymy and polysemy, respectively.

(76) [It read on the organ] Mnftd. by Bergholt Stuttley Johnson, Ankh-Morpork. "It's a Johnson," she breathed. "I haven't got my hands on a Johnson for ages..." (Pratchett 1998b, 331-332)

- (77) Pyramids had bankrupted the country, drained it drier than even the river did. The only curse they could afford to put on a tomb these days was 'Bugger off'. (Pratchett 1989a, 20)

Example (78) presents a technique including a phrasal verb, whereas example (79) involves a misunderstood idiom.

- (78) "If you preface your next remark with nuncle, i'faith or marry, it will go hard with you."
The Fool moved his lips silently, and then said, "How do you feel about Prithee?" The duke knew when to allow some slack.
"Prithee I can live with," he said. "So can you. But no capering."
(Pratchett 1988b, 60)

- (79) "Got a girl into trouble?" . . .
"All the time," said Carrot. "Just about every night, really."
(Pratchett 1989b, 73)

Syntax is a surprisingly small group with three subcategories: deixis, structural ambiguity and grammar misuse. *Deixis*, illustrated in example (80), contains cases where a pronoun is used to refer to a certain element of the text and where the ambiguity causes different interpretations.

- (80) "A carter assaulted Constable Swires last night for clamping his cart."
"Assault?"
"Tried to stamp on him, sir." Vimes had a mental picture of Constable Swires, a gnome six inches tall but a mile high in pent-up aggression. "How is he?"
"Well, the man can speak, but it'll be a little while before he can climb back on a cart again." (Pratchett 1999, 74)

Similarly in the subcategory *structural ambiguity*, illustrated by example (81), ambiguous surface structure of the text results in varying interpretations.

- (81) "It's not a -ing harpsichord, it's a -ing virginal," growled Mr Tulip. "One -ing string to a note instead of two! So called because it was an instrument for -ing young ladies!"
"My word, was it?" said one of the chairs. "I thought it was just a sort of early piano!" (Pratchett 2000, 90)

Bearing in mind the discussion on example (69) concerning Mr Tulip's language use, '-ing', or rather the evoked word 'fucking', in example (81) may be either an adverb used for emphasis or a verb. One interesting point is that the resolution of example (69) undermines the basis for

example (81); the fact that Mr Tulip is not swearing produces retrospectively a further incongruity, but since the joke in example (81) takes place two pages before this revelation, it does not harm the joke at the moment of its occurrence. Furthermore, such unresolved incongruities or illogical elements are allowed in non-bona-fide communication.

The subcategory *grammar misuse*, illustrated by example (82), contains cases where grammatical errors, especially involving inflection, create incongruities. The novels contain a plenty of grammatical mistakes made in speech, but the ones that merely portrayed the characters' normal speech were excluded from the corpus while the "joke-producing" ones were included.

- (82) "But he's becoming more real. Extremely real. Nearly as real as Death and you don't get much realler. Not much realler at all." (Pratchett 1987b, 237)

6.1.2 Higher linguistic levels

The first "higher" linguistic level, *semantics*, is by far the most complex of all with its many subclasses and abundant examples. Subcategories at this level are: "synonymy" (with either replacement or concatenation), "antonymy" (with either replacement or concatenation), literal/figurative meaning, connotations, collocations, redundancy, contradiction, contrasting pairs and metaphors/similes. Examples in the *synonymy* categories involve elements which are semantically similar to other words or phrases which may appear in the joke or be accessible by inference. These synonymous, or rather related, elements may either replace another ones in the examples, as in example (83) or appear in conjunction with them, as in example (84).

- (83) Nhumrod breathed out. Ah. This was familiar ground. Voices were right up Nhumrod's cloister. (Pratchett 1992a, 12)
- (84) Hurting old ladies in cold blood wasn't his cup of tea, and actually hurting witches in blood of any temperature whatsoever failed to be an entire twelve-course banquet. (Pratchett 1988b, 141)

Antonymy works in a similar way, but the replacing or juxtaposed element is

semantically opposite to or different from the original one. Examples (85) and (86) illustrate cases of antonymy with replacement and concatenation, respectively.

(85) . . . as fine a bunch of women as you could ever hope to avoid...
(Pratchett 1991b, 26)

(86) ...the stones that were missing him by inches and, in some cases, hitting him by kilograms. (Pratchett 1988a, 143)

Many examples in the semantics group play with the difference between the *literal* and *figurative meaning* of a word or a phrase. However, I included in this subcategory only the examples which did not belong to other subclasses such as in the idioms. The second sentence in example (87) may refer to the continuously altering condition of the patient or it may be taken literally, referring to being sick in a concrete way.

(87) "The tiger's been ill, master. Backwards and forwards all night."
(Pratchett 1988a, 136)

Connotations are the implicit, additional and often emotionally coloured meanings associated with words, whereas *collocation* defines which words can be used together and which words occur more often with each other. Examples (88) and (89) illustrate incongruity in connotation and collocation, respectively.

(88) The gutters of the city gurgled softly as the detritus of the night was carried along, in some cases protesting feebly. (Pratchett 1989b, 33)

(89) The weathercocks of Ankh-Morpork creaked around in the wind. . . . On the roof of the Thieves' Guild a *real* if rather deceased unlicensed thief turned gently . . . (Pratchett 1997, 15)

The group *redundancy* contains examples where more information is given than necessary or an obvious thing is over-explained, such as in example (90).

(90) "What now, Sarge?"
"We - we spread out," he said. "Yes. We spread out. That's what we do." They moved carefully through the bracken. The sergeant crouched behind a handy log, and said, "Right. Very good. You've got the general idea. Now let's spread out again, and this time we spread out separately." (Pratchett 1988b, 55)

Contradiction involves cases where something in the text is illogical. The judgement

may be produced by information retrieved from the lexicon (i.e. obvious anomalies concerning the scripts) or from world-information and restricted repertoires (i.e. general and specific knowledge of the world gathered by the decoder). The latter is illustrated by example (91).

- (91) "Brutha!" Guilt jerked Brutha upright like a hooked fish. He turned around, and sagged with relief. It wasn't Vorbis, it was only God.
(Pratchett 1992a, 130)

Contrasting pairs also contain a surprising, contradictory element, but within this subcategory the examples are constructed of two parts which differ from each other.

- (92) This part of Ankh-Morpork was known as The Shades, an inner-city area sorely in need either of governmental help or, for preference, a flamethrower.
(Pratchett 1987b, 71)

The subcategory *metaphors/similes*, illustrated by example (93), contains cases which compare something described in the text to another thing. Many forms are used, such as X is Y, X is like Y, X like Y, X as Y. A number of writers argue that metaphors are not humour, but I differ in this opinion since some are clearly funny. The actual funniness of the examples in this group is further discussed at the end of this section.

- (93) Gaspode had a way of turning up silently like a small puff of methane in a crowded room, and with the latter's distressing ability to fill up all available space. (Pratchett 1993, 275)

I divided the group *pragmatics/discourse analysis* into three subcategories: violation of the co-operative principle/odd forms of discourse, lists with an incongruous final and "the unexpected". Example (94) demonstrates breaking rules of language conventions in discourse. The conversation between King Verence and the witch Granny Weatherwax contains unexpected lines and responses that deviate from conventions of a polite dialogue.

- (94) "I thought that sort of thing was, you know," the king grinned sickly,
"folklore?"
"Of course it's folklore, you stupid man!"
"I *do* happen to be king, you know," said Verence reproachfully.
"You stupid king, your majesty."
"Thank you." (Pratchett 1992b, 163)

Lists with an incongruous final, such as in example (95), group cases where an enumeration ends with an surprising element.

- (95) As it was, she organized the temple-cleaning, statue-polishing and stoning-of-suspected-adulteresses rotas with a terrible efficiency. (Pratchett 1992a, 27)

The unexpected, illustrated by example (96), includes cases where the decoder is led to assume something but is then surprised by an inappropriate situation, action or remark. This category does not include puns, although the scheme is similar.

- (96) By now the whole of downtown Morpork was alight, and the richer and worthier citizens of Ankh on the far bank were bravely responding to the situation by feverishly demolishing the bridges. (Pratchett 1983, 17)

The level *sociolinguistics* contains humour created by unsuitable *register*. As Ross (1998, 44-45) points out, the incongruity may be caused by inclusion of elements of either too high or low register or by a combination of both. In example (97), there is rather scientific vocabulary which might not be expected from a witch threatening to turn someone into a frog.

- (97) "One word from me and you'll be hopping around looking for some princess with an amphibian fixation -" (Pratchett 1994a, 242)

In example (98), the casual language of the remarks in the footnotes creates a high contrast to the actual text. Example (99) illustrates a case of alternating registers.

- (98) . . . and where actual evidence had been a bit sparse he had, in the best traditions of the keen ethnic historian, inferred from revealed self-evident wisdom¹ and extrapolated from associated sources². ¹ Made it up. ² Had read a lot of stuff that other people had made up, too. (Pratchett 1992b, 263)

- (99) The universe contains any amount of horrible ways to be woken up. . . A dog's wet nose is not strictly speaking the worst of the bunch, but it has its own peculiar dreadfulness which connoisseurs of the ghastly and dog owners everywhere have come to know and dread. (Pratchett 1990b, 194-195)

The groups *intertextuality* and *allusions to our world* contain examples where, for instance, another text (in example (100)), a song (in example (101)), a film, a location, or an invention or aspect of modern life (in example (102)) is alluded to. Humour perception naturally requires that the specific script is available to the decoder.

- (100) The apple-seller gambit had never worked more than once in the entire history of witchcraft, as far as she knew, but it was traditional. (Pratchett 1988b, 139)
- (101) "Can you hear that thunder?" said Ridcully, as a rumble rolled across the city. "We'd better take cover..." (Pratchett 1998a, 401)
- (102) There were others in the elevator as it rumbled downwards. Mostly they were diplomats that Vimes didn't recognize, but there was also, now, in a roped-off corner, a quartet of dwarf musicians playing pleasant yet slightly annoying music that ate its way into Vimes's head as the interminable descend went on. (Pratchett 1999, 278)

Finally, there were numerous examples which *combined* ambiguity and incongruity at several, most often two, linguistic levels. The ambiguous or incongruous elements may be both at lower or higher levels, or at both. One of the more complex combinations is presented in example (103) describing a bar for supernatural beings.

- (103) For the vampires, it was a place to hang up. For the werewolves, it was where you let your hair down. For the bogeymen, it was a place to come out of the closet. For the ghouls, it did a decent meat pasty and chips. (Pratchett 2000, 227)

In example (103), the three idioms at the beginning of the example can all be taken literally but they also share the idea of being able to feel comfortable and be your own self, whereas the incongruous final (at first) does not. However, the connotations of the word 'ghoul' provide information on the mythical creature's habit of eating rotten (human) flesh, which contradicts a normal definition of a 'decent meat pasty', but explains why the ghouls like this particular pub.

6.1.3 Discussion

Table 7 presents funniness rating averages for examples in each subcategory. The categories are divided into two groups. For comparison, the average funniness rating for the whole corpus is 2.2.

Funniness <2.2	Funniness 2.2≥
homophony 1.6	phrasal verbs/idioms 2.3
oronymy 2.0	structural ambiguity 3.0
paronymy 1.9	grammar misuse 2.3
foreign languages 1.4	antonymy with replacement 2.3
graphology (only written) 1.5	antonymy with concatenation 2.7
graphology (spoken ok) 2.1	literal/figurative 2.7
word-formation 2.0	connotation 2.4
word-formation with synonymy 1.3	collocation 2.5
word-formation with antonymy 1.9	redundancy 3.1
homonymy/polysemy 1.9	contradiction 2.8
deixis 2.0	contrasting pairs 2.8
synonymy with replacement 1.5	odd discourse 2.4
synonymy with concatenation 2.1	lists with an incongruous final 3.2
metaphors/similes 2.0	the unexpected 2.9
allusions to our world 1.8	register 2.8
combinations 2.0	intertextuality 2.2

Table 7: Funniness average for the groups.

It seems that the examples in the groups of lower-level ambiguity or incongruity are rated lower in funniness. The exceptions are phrasal verbs/idioms, structural ambiguity and grammar misuse. In the case of phrasal verbs/idioms, an explanation for this may be that the funny (F3-F4) examples clearly outnumber the unfunny (F0-F1) ones. The other two categories are too small to draw any conclusions. The categories from the higher linguistic levels that scored lower than average in funniness are synonymy with replacement, synonymy with concatenation, metaphors/similes and allusions to our world. Of these the last category is too small to draw conclusions. With the others, it was quite obvious that while some of the examples were witty and funny, many were "just stupid", especially with synonymy with replacement, where the unfunny examples outnumbered the funny ones. Although the numbers suggest that ambiguity and incongruity at a higher linguistic level enhance humour

appreciation, I must stress that very funny examples occur throughout the corpus and, furthermore, the hostile and obscene dimensions also affect the funniness.

Although the analysis of the levels at which the ambiguity or incongruity manifests is the central theme of this section, one can also observe a number of general "techniques" which are not level-restricted. *Puns* can be based on phonological, lexical, semantic or syntactic ambiguity, *contradictions* occur with graphology, semantics and discourse, for instance, and the "more sophisticated" jokes, where the cause for the humour is more difficult to define, can be found in the categories metaphors/similes, register and allusions. Naturally, the techniques above correlate with the types of triggers used in the examples and their prevalence and funniness are discussed in section 6.2. Another observation is that the incongruity in the examples most often concerned the idea in the joke instead of its structure.

The sizes of the categories vary extensively, the average being 16 examples in one subcategory. The subcategories with numerous examples are word-formation, homonymy/polysemy, phrasal verbs/idioms, synonymy and antonymy with replacement, connotations, contradiction, metaphors/similes and combinations (see appendix 1 for detailed information). 31 percent of the examples are at the lower linguistic levels and 69 at the higher. Interestingly, novels which contain more lower-level jokes than the average are among the fifteen earliest ones. Moreover, the last ten novels contain noticeably fewer puns than the earlier ones. Three novels in the last ten analysed (i.e. *Soul Music*, *The Fifth Elephant* and *The Truth*) provided numerous examples to the corpus, and these instances of humour are well balanced between the different levels and techniques. The other seven, however, have few examples each, which may illustrate a different style of writing. Gruner (1997, 134) points out that Otten observed in his study that Shakespeare used more punning in his earlier plays than in his later work. It seems that Pratchett's use of different techniques in his novels has similarly developed towards a more versatile and balanced approach over the years.

Finally, it must be observed that the funniness of an example does not primarily depend on the level or technique, but on the quality of the idea behind the joke. Gruner (1997, 138) explains the distinction between good and bad puns with his theory of winning and losing. While I concur that hostile (or obscene) content often enhances the funniness in the examples, I maintain that it is nevertheless not obligatory. Attardo and Raskin (1991, 306-307) maintain that puns may be decent jokes if their logical mechanisms are nontrivial, if the ambiguity is not totally accidental. The alternating sharp wit and artificial, forced play with language can be seen throughout the categories and techniques; they all have a number of very lame and a few absolutely hilarious examples. This point is further discussed in chapter 7.

6.2 Script analysis of the examples

I applied script analysis to the examples to see whether the SSTH would work and to gather information on the scripts, types of overlap, opposition and triggers within the corpus. I did this according to the procedure outlined in section 4.2 and the particular steps will be discussed in more detail throughout this section. As expected, the SSTH was not applicable to all the examples in the corpus, and to some with difficulty. Script analysis of puns at any linguistic level (e.g. phonology, lexis, semantics) and jokes involving contradiction (e.g. connotations, collocations, redundancy, contradiction) was generally quite easy, but problems arose with word-formation, synonymy/antonymy, metaphors/similes, register, intertextuality/allusions and combinations involving these groups. A number of examples in the latter categories could be "squeezed" to conform to the theory but with the rest it was implausible. Altogether, 356 examples (i.e. 68 percent) were analysed with the SSTH while 165 were cast aside. The exclusion of these examples affects the quantitative side of the study and has been taken into account in the percentages. The drawbacks of the SSTH are discussed

with the examination of the particular part of the analysis where they emerge, as well as in section 6.2.5.

6.2.1 Scripts

First, I discovered the scripts evoked by the examples; "script 1" is the one evoked first and "script 2" second. Table 8 lists the scripts of several examples presented in section 6.1.

Number of example	Script 1	Script 2
(65)	DEMONSTRATION	SCAB
(66)	STATUS	URINE
(67)	FLIRT	VEGETABLE
(70)	SUBMISSION	DEFIANCE
(71)	DRUNK	VERY SOBER
(76)	MUSICAL INSTRUMENT	PENIS
(77)	SPELL	SWEARWORD
(78)	ACCEPT	SURVIVE
(79)	PREGNANCY	PROBLEMS
(80)	CONSTABLE	CARTER
(81)	MUSIC	SEX
(92)	ASSISTANCE	EXTERMINATION

Table 8: Scripts of several examples.

In 8 percent of the cases, the example contains two pairs of scripts, such as in example (104). Consequently, in the examples analysed there were altogether 385 pairs of scripts. Raskin claimed that several pairs of scripts make jokes more "sophisticated" and, indeed, these examples often rate high on funniness with 59 percent of F3-F4 ratings compared to 49 percent for all the examples analysed.

- (104) "Will you come to my room tonight?" hissed Ginger. "Please? You can wake me up if I start sleepwalking again."
 "Well, er, yes, but your landlady might not like it - " Victor began.
 "Oh, Mrs Cosmopolite is very broadminded," said Ginger.
 "She is?"
 "She'll just think we're having sex," said Ginger.
 "Ah," said Victor hollowly. "That's all right, then." (Pratchett 1990b, 214)

In the example above, the first pair of scripts is VISIT TO HAVE SEX and INNOCENT VISIT. Victor is afraid that the landlady may think he has indecent intents but Ginger seems to

assure him that Mrs Cosmopolite knows that men can visit women without such agendas. The second pair of scripts, LANDLADY THINKING THERE IS SEX IS BAD and LANDLADY THINKING THERE IS SEX IS GOOD, reveals the difference between Victor and Ginger's concerns about the situation; Ginger would rather conceal her strange somnambulism.

6.2.2 Script overlap

Next, I found out whether the *script overlap* was full, partial or truly partial. *Full overlap*, where both scripts are perfectly compatible with the text is rare in the corpus (only 7 percent), which corroborates Raskin's claim. Example (105) illustrates full overlap.

- (105) He fumbled under his robe and produced something that looked, to Fergmen's eye, very much like a torture instrument. This must have communicated itself to Urn, who said very slowly and kindly: "This is an ad-just-ab-ble span-ner."
"Yes?"
"It's for twisting nuts off."
Fergmen nodded miserably. (Pratchett 1992a, 331)
(METAL FASTENER, TESTICLES)

With *partial overlap*, such as in example (106), neither script is incompatible but one of them is more compatible with the text. Interestingly, this is even rarer, with 4 percent.

- (106) "But once you realize that there are only a limited number of birth dates a person can have, and that people do tend to think the same way, cyphers are really not very hard." (Pratchett 1999, 80-81)
(A FEW BIRTHDATES, ONE BIRTHDATE)

Truly partial overlap, where one or both of the scripts are partially or fully incompatible with the text, is by far the most frequent with 89 percent. Example (107) illustrates a case of (partial) incompatibility of one script (THEFT) and example (108) of both scripts (ENLISTMENT, FAECES).

- (107) ". . . Rincewind, all the shops have been smashed open. There was a whole bunch of people across the street helping themselves to musical instruments, can you believe that?"
"Yeah," said Rincewind, picking up a knife and testing its blade thoughtfully.
"Luters, I expect." (Pratchett 1986, 238)

(108) . . . Corporal Nobbs, the worst thing ever to hit a uniform if you didn't count seagulls." (Pratchett 2000, 114)

The scripts present two situations, one of which is "real" and the other "unreal". I marked these and compared them with the order in which the scripts are evoked. Script 1 presents the real situation more often than script 2, and the real script is more often favoured by the overlap. However, the examples with unreal script favoured rate marginally higher in funniness, as do the examples where the unreal situation is evoked second. Higher funniness ratings with the emphasis on the unreal situation indicate that rendering the incongruous part meaningful is important; it should not be a mere side remark. Moreover, examples with full overlap rate much higher than average. This seems to verify the hypotheses of several researchers that full resolution, resolving the incongruity completely, enhances humour appreciation. However, we will see later in this thesis that unresolved incongruity may also produce intense mirth.

6.2.3 Script opposition

The basic type of *opposition*, (non)actual, (ab)normal or (im)possible, was not always easy to distinguish, as Raskin pointed out, since the boundaries are not strict. However, I assigned 49 percent of the examples (e.g. example (105)) in the (non)actual category, 26 percent (e.g. example (107) in (ab)normal and 20 percent (e.g. example (106) in (im)possible. I must point out that one of the two situations in an example is not necessarily unreal. Indeed, in 13 percent of the cases, such as in example (109), *both* situations are real.

(109) There were temples, their doors wide open, filling the streets with the sounds of gongs, cymbals and, in the case of some of the more conservative fundamentalist religions, the brief screams of the victims. (Pratchett 1987b, 30) (MUSIC, HUMAN SACRIFICE)

The lack of unreal situation is usual with homonymy/polysemy, phrasal verbs/idioms, connotations, contrasting pairs and lists with incongruous finals since the examples in these

categories are often constructed of comparison between two or several semantically different but connected elements. With these examples, it is often hard to say which type of opposition is in question, although it is not (non)actual. In example (109), the type is (ab)normal but this or (im)possible is not always suitable, and a basic type of opposition could not be assigned for 5 percent of the cases. Because the SSTH claims that the scripts must be "opposite in a special sense" (an opposition between a real and an unreal situation, with the other levels of abstractness), these examples seem to challenge the main hypothesis of the theory. However, the central idea is intact with two overlapping and opposite scripts, and this awkward anomaly could be corrected with a minor modification of the requirements for the script opposition.

The unreal situation can be introduced externally, internally or by implication. In example (110), the second, nonactual script PUSTULE is produced *externally*, as it exists parallelly to the actual script PRECIOUS STONE and is not explicitly stated in the text.

- (110) The great rivers were represented by veins of jade, the deserts by powdered diamond and the most notable cities were picked out in precious stones; Ankh-Morpork, for instance, was a carbuncle. (Pratchett 1987b, 246)

Ankh-Morpork is a great city and hence represented by a precious stone on the map, but since it is a repugnantly dirty city, comparing it to a pustule is also valid.

Raskin (1985, 113) states that *internal* introduction is practically lying, or would be in bona-fide mode, and this claim is endorsed by the fact that in the corpus it often occurs in examples concerning stupidity or misunderstandings and is very obvious with examples involving irony (e.g. example (111)). Indeed, Nash (1985, 152) points out that the difference between sarcasm and irony is that in the latter, the speaker states something that is not true.

- (111) Sergeant Colon had had a broad education. He'd been to the School of My Dad Always Said, the College of It Stands to Reason, and was now a post-graduate student at the University of What Some Bloke In the Pub Told Me. (Pratchett 1997, 40)

In the more sophisticated cases of humour, such as in example (112), the unreal situation is *implied* to.

- (112) "And you were... moving about in a funny way. Like you were having trouble with your trousers," said Glod. . . . "You're *certain* you've got no elvish in you, are you?" said Glod. "Once or twice I thought you were acting a bit... elvish."
(Pratchett 1994a, 175)
(ELF, ELVIS PRESLEY)

Implied introduction is common in humour that is based on intertextuality or other allusions, but since I excluded nearly every example of these groups from the script analysis, it is rare (10 percent). Internal and external introduction are equally common (45 percent each). Examples with internal introduction rate slightly higher on funniness than the others. One reason for this may be my personal fondness of irony.

I also defined the semantic *distance* between the real and unreal situations. 41 percent of the script oppositions are of a *short* distance, where the scripts or situations are closely connected or practically antonymous, such as in example (106). A *medium* distance, as in example (110) are slightly more numerous (44 percent). A *long* distance makes the connection between the situations almost accidental; these cases, as in example (107) are rarer (15 percent of the cases). The origin of words is pertinent to this point; with cases of homonymy (i.e. different sources), there is a long semantic distance and with polysemy (i.e. words with different meanings but originating from the same source), there is a medium distance because the meanings are yet related. The funniness ratings revealed clear differences; short or medium distance produced higher ratings than average and long distance much lower, with F3-F4 labels for only 25 percent of cases compared to 49 percent average. The "accidentally" juxtaposed scripts are often found in low-quality puns, and their correlation with triggers is discussed in section 6.2.4.

The opposition may also be of a dichotomous nature. I did not label the good/bad opposition since Attardo and Raskin (1991, 308) maintain that it can be treated as an umbrella term for the other binary categories. However, I did mark the following binary categories: life/death, money/no money and (non)obscene for sex, bodyparts and excreta. Naturally, the

death-related and obscene script oppositions correlate with the obscenity labels (i.e. any category involving death or sex).

The obscene or death-related situation may be either the real or unreal one. The real situations, illustrated by example (113) are rarer (26 percent) than the unreal ones (49 percent), such as in examples (76), (79) and (81).

- (113) There didn't seem to be any black-clad slavers around, at least vertically.
(Pratchett 1988a, 92)
(ALIVE SLAVERS, DEAD SLAVERS)

In 25 percent of the cases both situations are obscene or death-related, as in examples (114) and (115), respectively.

- (114) ...her goats . . . lay in their cosy flatulence in the outhouse.
(Pratchett 1988b, 80)
(INTESTINAL GAS IS AGREEABLE, I. G. IS DISAGREEABLE)
- (115) Windle had hitherto seen trolls only in the more select parts of the city, where they moved with exaggerated caution in case they accidentally clubbed someone to death and ate them. (Pratchett 1991a, 48)
(BRUTALITY CAN BE ACCIDENTAL, B. CANNOT BE ACCIDENTAL)

This would seem to affect the credibility of the theory since there is not a non-obscene or life-related script in the joke. However, these cases could be treated as the doubly real situations above; the anomaly could be corrected with minor changes to the conditions of opposition. Furthermore, Raskin (1985, 165) distinguishes four different types in sexual humour, one of which is based on an opposition of specific sexual scripts, such as abnormal and normal genital size, sexual prowess or normal and forbidden sex. This approach could be extended to other obscene jokes as well as to the death-related jokes. Cases where both situations are obscene or death-related rate high on funniness. The same is true with examples where the real situation is obscene, whereas with life/death dichotomy there is no noticeable difference. One reason for higher funniness may be the same as with the overlap favouring the real situation; a taboo is truly incorporated in the joke, it is not just a passing remark.

6.2.4 Script-switch triggers

Before I examine the *script-switch* in the examples, I must call attention to one point. In my opinion, Raskin's term 'trigger' is rather misleading, at least in many cases involving ambiguity. The part of the text which triggers the change of interpretation (i.e. the punchline) is not always the ambiguous element itself. Attardo (1994, 95-96) calls the punchline 'a disjuncter' and the element that justifies the script-switch in "verbal jokes" (i.e. with ambiguity) 'a connector'. Therefore, the trigger should probably not be called ambiguous (or other); it is the mechanism of the joke which is ambiguous, not the punchline. For the present study, however, I have resolved to use Raskin's terminology since I wish to avoid misunderstandings and, as I stated in section 4.2, I do not propose a theory of my own. I will discuss the cases where the punchline is also the connector in section 6.3.6 when I examine the lines in the knowledge resource 'language'.

The *quasi-ambiguous* triggers, such as the word 'elvish' in example (112) are quite rare (8 percent) and occur mostly with paronymy, and also correlate to a high degree with both a long semantic distance between the scripts and lower funniness ratings. The *ambiguous* ones, such as the word 'carbuncle' in example (110) are more common (29 percent of the triggers) and the examples containing this type of trigger are noticeably less funny than average. *Contradiction* triggers, as in example (115) are the most common type (57 percent) and produce a higher than average funniness ratings. This type of trigger is most common in examples containing incongruity at a higher linguistic level and, consequently, the high ratings are expected. A number of examples also contain an *auxiliary trigger*; for instance, the word 'organ' in example (76) assists in evoking the unreal script PENIS, although it is also compatible with the real script MUSICAL INSTRUMENT. In 6 percent of the cases, I could not pinpoint a trigger. These were mostly allusions or metaphors/similes. The dissipated triggers of this type of humour are discussed in section 6.3.6 when the knowledge resource

'language' is addressed.

6.2.5 Discussion

Only a few examples in the problematic categories in the corpus mentioned at the beginning of this section could be analysed with the SSTH. Attardo and Raskin (1991, 333-334) point out Morreall's concerns about the applicability of the SSTH (and of the GTVH, for that matter) to several types of verbal humour, for instance, verbal slips creating new unintended words, abuse of morphemic patterns, many pragmatic incongruities and parodies. These seem to largely coincide with the problematic categories in the *Discworld* corpus: word-formations, use of synonymous (or even antonymous) words, metaphors/similes, register and allusions.

The problematic examples that could be analysed, at least partially, with the SSTH often involve a clear contradicting idea. For instance, with many cases of synonymy, there is no real incongruity but only play with related words. Many allusive examples manifest a similar situation; some seem to merely test the extent of the decoder's repertoire of restricted scripts, whereas others create a contrast with the help of the allusion. In *Jingo*, where example (116) is taken from, Corporal Nobbs, under disguise of being a woman, has got acquainted with a girl and fallen in love. After the undercover operation he has to leave and he plans on writing to the girl, but under persuasion of a friend decides to never contact her again.

(116) "It's a far, far better thing I do now than I have ever done before," said Nobby.
(Pratchett 1997, 410)

Example (116) alludes to the closing line of Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*. At the end of the novel, Sydney Carton sacrifices himself for the happiness of the woman he loves and goes to guillotine in place of his love's husband. At first the funniness arises from the striking contrast between the two scripts; LEAVE GIRL ALONE can hardly be compared in unselfishness to SACRIFYING OWN LIFE. However, considering Nobby's obnoxiousness adds to the funniness as the contrast diminishes: he does do a good deed!

Table 9 presents percentages of unfunny, moderately funny and highly funny examples in the analysed portion of the corpus, separately for every aspect of the script analysis.

	F0-F1 percentage	F2 percentage	F3-F4 percentage
All analysed	16	35	49
Full overlap	4	27	69
Partial overlap	27	20	53
Truly partial overlap	15	36	49
Multiple pairs	7	34	59
(Non)actual opposit.	13	35	52
(Ab)normal opposit.	19	31	50
(Im)possible opposit.	17	38	45
? Opposition type	24	29	47
External introduction	18	37	45
Internal introduction	13	35	52
Implied	19	29	52
Real situation first	14	39	47
Unreal situation first	16	32	52
Both are real	20	27	53
Quasi-ambiguous	21	58	21
Ambiguous	25	39	36
Contradiction	11	31	58
? Trigger type	12	21	67
Short distance	9	36	55
Medium distance	16	32	52
Long distance	33	42	25

Table 9: Funniness ratings for several aspects of script analysis.

6.3 Knowledge resources and lines

In this section, I examine the examples with the tools provided by the GTVH and Attardo's method for studying lines. I will present the information gathered in the hierarchical order of the KRs, from top to bottom. I pay particular attention to the knowledge resources 'logical mechanism' and 'language'.

6.3.1 Script opposition (SO)

The *Discworld* data proved to be problematic even for the GTVH, in the case of the highest knowledge resource, *script opposition* (SO). In the examples that could be analysed with the

SSTH, the concrete, textual level of the scripts coincides quite often with the abstract, dichotomous level that the GTVH examines as the SO, such as life/death or smart/stupid. These "easy" cases were labelled accordingly. On the other hand, there were examples where the SO had to be retrieved by a detour by the hostile or obscene nature of the content. Generally, as long as the joke was quite simple, just hostile or obscene, finding the SO was not unbearably difficult. Fewer categories were used in the labelling, since the number of abstract level SOs should be kept low. For instance, many forms of abuse were grouped together.

However, not all cases were as straightforward. Problems arose with the "neutral" examples and the specific varieties of humour which elicited Morreall's critique on the theory (see section 6.2.5), the ones that did not conform to the SSTH. A number of these cases could be stretched to have a SO, to be about 'stupidity', for example, but still approximately one hundred examples remained problematic. One solution would be labelling them 'logical'/'illogical' or even 'good'/'bad'.

To this chaos is added the fact that many complex jokes involve multiple sources of funniness active at the same time; for instance hostility, sexual content, parody, etc. Attardo (2001, 100) admits that the SSTH and the GTVH are unable to "elegantly handle this type of hyperdetermined humo[u]r". In these cases I selected the strongest, most obvious source for the SO, which most often was the hostile content, and therefore the SO used for the rest of the analysis was the flaw depicted. In the cases with clear separate script oppositions, they were both analysed.

6.3.2 Logical mechanism (LM)

The second highest knowledge resource is *logical mechanism* (LM). Many examples contain one LM which is immediately identifiable whereas others required more thorough

considering. Moreover, there are 27 examples which carry two LMs; obviously these cases include the ones with two SOs, but in addition there are a number of examples that clearly employ two LMs even with one SO. For instance, an example may combine analogy or cratylism and another LM. Attardo et al. (2002, 18-19) propose a tentative taxonomy dividing LMs to several groups. I will present the LMs that are found in the *Discworld* corpus according to this taxonomy.

First, there are several types of *reversals* which are very common with examples using antonymy or other contrasting techniques. In *chiasmus*, illustrated by example (117), two elements of the text are inverted, often creating a change of meaning. There are different forms of chiasmus; for instance, the whole inverted structure may be explicit or some parts can be omitted. This LM occurs most noticeably with contrasting pairs.

- (117) Greebo's grin gradually faded, until there was nothing left but the cat. This was nearly as spooky as the opposite way round. (Pratchett 1988b, 186)

In *role reversal*, such as in example (118), the roles of participants are switched. *Role exchange* involves a changed role; for instance in example (119), there is a change from good to bad.

- (118) "Ah, Drumknott," said Lord Vetinari, "just go and tell the head of the Musicians' Guild he wants a word with me, will you?" (Pratchett 1994a, 233)

- (119) But it was miraculous, the dwarf bread. No-one ever went hungry when they had some dwarf bread to avoid. You only had to look at it for a moment, and instantly you could think of dozens of things you'd rather eat. (Pratchett 1991b, 118)

Another type of reversal is called *potency mapping* where elements of one script are brought to another script. This may happen in varying degrees. Example (120) illustrates a case of personification of an abstract concept. This LM is prominent in the corpus (15 percent of the cases) and it occurs most often with word-formations, but also with other categories.

- (120) [T]he little man's total obliviousness to all forms of danger somehow made danger so discouraged that it gave up and went away. (Pratchett 1986, 26)

Situated between reversals and parallelisms are examples that use *juxtaposition*, such as in example (121), where contradicting elements are brought together directly. This is one of the simplest LMs and it is common with collocations.

- (121) A desk was awash with paperwork, Mr Sonky having followed the usual 'put it down somewhere' method of filing. (Pratchett 1999, 93-94)

Several types of *parallelism* form another group of LMs. These are common with examples using synonymy and with lists with incongruous final. Parallelism may be either *explicit* or *implicit*, such as in examples (122) and (123), respectively.

- (122) "You're a thief?" said the father. "A murderer? To creep in thus, are you a *tax-gatherer*?" (Pratchett 1987b, 80)

- (123) "Yes, and there was a bit of a... fracas... at some cookery meeting last night..."
"A fracas, eh?"
"Well, probably more of a rumpus, really." (Pratchett 2000, 106)

Proportion, for instance in example (124), is basically a double parallelism in the form 'a relates to b as c relates to d'.

- (124) He'd have given the world for a horse, and a moderately-sized continent for a pony. (Pratchett 1989a, 195)

Another group involves different types of *correct reasoning*. Even though these LMs stretch the concept of logic, the reasoning process involved is not fundamentally faulty. Example (125) illustrates a case of *reasoning from false premises*, where Nanny Ogg's reasoning is logical even if erroneous.

- (125) "By gor', that's a bloody enormous cat."
"It's a lion," said Granny Weatherwax, looking at the stuffed head over the fireplace.
"Must've hit the wall at a hell of a speed, whatever it was," said Nanny Ogg. (Pratchett 1991b, 28)

Two other types of correct reasoning, *almost situation* and *missing link*, are presented by examples (126) and (127), respectively.

- (126) She was out of breath, and wore only a shawl over a nightdress that, if Magrat had anything to reveal, would have been very revealing. (Pratchett 1988b, 89)

- (127) Some jobs offer increments. This one offered – well, quite the reverse. . .
(Pratchett 1987b, 44)

In example (127), the actual "reverse" would be 'decrement', which is antonym of 'increment'. However, the scene of mucking in the novel leads the decoder to opt for the prefix ex- over de- and produce the script FAECES which is not spelled out in the joke.

Example (128) illustrates a case of *coincidence*.

- (128) "It's all down to dimensions, I heard, like what we see is only the tip of the whatever, you know, the thing that is mostly underwater—"
"Hippopotamus?"
"Alligator?"
"Ocean?" (Pratchett 1988a, 152)

The first two suggestions are by coincidence fitting; they are technically correct although not the answer that is expected. However, the third one does not fit; this second LM is false analogy, discussed further in this section.

A very common (20 percent of cases) LM of correct reasoning is *analogy*, illustrated by example (129).

- (129) [S]enior wizards developed a distinctive 50" waist, 25" leg shape that suggested someone who sat on a wall and required royal assistance to be put together again. (Pratchett 1994a, 258)

Analogy (or false analogy) is the LM in examples with metaphors/similes if the likening part is the punchline; otherwise some other LM is employed. The allusive examples also have analogy as the LM, although there may be an additional one. Moreover, analogy is very prominent with examples involving synonymy.

Although Attardo et al. (2002) do not list the next two LMs in their taxonomy (they do not explain the omission), I would include them in the group of correct reasoning. *Inferring consequences* means that either the consequence or the cause of an explicit consequence must be inferred, illustrated by examples (130) and (131), respectively.

- (130) . . . he always sold the figs, because although it was possible to live on figs you soon wished you didn't. (Pratchett 2000, 12)

- (131) Only Nanny Ogg's warning hand on Granny Weatherwax's arm was keeping a dozen jovial drinkers from unnatural amphibianhood. (Pratchett 1991b, 158)

Vicious circle, such as in example (132), is a feedback mechanism where two things affect one another creating a continuous action or preventing it from happening. This LM could also be argued to belong to the group of meta-forms which will be discussed further in this section.

- (132) "It demonstrates the friendly alliance between the University and the civil government which, I may say, seems to consist of their promising to do anything we ask provided we promise not to ask them to do anything."
(Pratchett 1997, 35-36)

LMs in the group *faulty reasoning* entail more paralogical elements. The reasoning processes in these cases are based on far more dubious grounds than in the examples containing a LM belonging to the correct reasoning group, although in non-bona-fide mode this is nevertheless acceptable. The basic type of this group, simply called *faulty reasoning* is illustrated by example (133).

- (133) "Where there is punishment, there is always a crime," said Vorbis. "Sometimes the crime follows the punishment, which only serves to prove the foresight of the Great God." (Pratchett 1992a, 133-134)

One of the most common LMs in the corpus (20 percent of cases) is *cratylism* which occurs in puns. Another similar one is *referential ambiguity* where, for instance, pronouns are ambiguous. However, there are 15 examples which are weak puns with quasi-ambiguous triggers, that cannot be considered to have a LM because there is practically no semantic relation.

Exaggeration and *ignoring the obvious* (also called 'obvious error') are two rather self-explanatory types of faulty reasoning, illustrated by examples (134) and (135), respectively.

- (134) "And you know where it is?"
"Yes," lied Granny, whose grasp of geography was slightly worse than her knowledge of sub-atomic physics. (Pratchett 1987a, 92)

- (135) On making gentle inquiries of a family watching disconsolately as the smoke from the fire was turned to steam, William ascertained that the blaze had been mysteriously caused by mysterious spontaneous combustion in an overflowing mysterious chip pan full of boiling fat. (Pratchett 2000, 271)

False analogy, such as in example (136), differs from a valid, correct analogy in that the comparison is stretched or marginal.

- (136) "Kings are a bit magical, mind. They can cure dandruff and that. . . ." (Pratchett 1992b, 103-104)

The last group of LMs is called *meta-forms*, also a group involving reasoning processes, and where the decoder's expectations are manipulated and deceived. *Self-undermining*, for instance in example (137), is basically an oxymoron or a paradox.

- (137) Witches are not by nature gregarious, at least with other witches, and they certainly don't have leaders. Granny Weatherwax was the most highly-regarded of the leaders they didn't have. (Pratchett 1988b, 8)

Example (138) illustrates *garden path* as it demonstrates how an unreal obscene script may be forcefully suggested by the wording of the joke.

- (138) In the jungles of central Klatch there are, indeed, lost kingdoms of mysterious Amazonian princesses who capture male explorers for specifically masculine duties. These are indeed rigorous and exhausting and the luckless victims do not last long.* *This is because wiring plugs, putting up shelves, sorting out the funny noise in attics and mowing lawns can eventually reduce even the strongest constitution. (Pratchett 1990a, 44)

Hints such as 'Amazonian princesses' and 'masculine duties' lead the reader to procure by inference the first script SEX SLAVE, whereas the punchline evokes the real script CHORES. In this example the decoders are ridiculed for their dirty minds. Further incongruity arises as the chores listed in the example can hardly be done in a jungle; the second LM is potency mapping.

Table 10 presents funniness average for the LMs in the corpus as well as for the main groups. I have included juxtaposition in the parallelism group since it is listed by Attardo et al. as a type of direct spatial relationships. The average for the whole corpus is F2.2 and the LMs are divided accordingly into two groups.

Funniness <2.2	Funniness 2.2≥	
Role reversal 2.1	Chiasmus 2.4	Faulty reasoning 2.9
Implicit parallelism 2.0	Role exchange 2.8	Exaggeration 2.7
Missing link 1.6	Potency mapping 2.2	Ignoring the obvious 2.7
Analogy 1.8	Juxtaposition 2.4	False analogy 2.2
Vicious circle 2.0	Explicit parallelism 2.7	Self-undermining 2.5
Cratylism 2.1	Proportion 2.6	Garden path 3.2
Referential ambiguity 2.0	Reasoning from f. p. 2.9	REVERSALS 2.3
Zero LM 1.3	Almost situation 2.5	PARALLELISMS 2.5
CORRECT REASONING 2.1	Coincidence 4.0	FAULTY REAS. 2.3
	Inferring consequences 2.8	META-FORMS 2.8

Table 10: Funniness average for the logical mechanisms in the corpus.

The further funniness added by the unresolved incongruity in the example (138), for instance, is rather counter-proof to the findings in section 6.2.2 concerning the enhancing nature of full resolution. Attardo et al. (2002, 9) suggest that LMs with correct reasoning may lead to better resolution of incongruities than those with faulty reasoning. Since the examples with a LM belonging to the faulty reasoning group rate higher than the ones with correct reasoning LMs, it could be argued that unresolved incongruities add to funniness. However, the fact that the examples with zero LM (i.e. with zero resolution) rate very low in funniness suggests that some resolution is required. Moreover, the large category of analogies which rate quite low (often for reasons not related to the structure) lower the average of the group of correct reasoning, and no decisive conclusions can be drawn based on the present study. Altogether, it seems that all the reasoning groups promote higher appreciation since most of the highest-scoring LMs belong to them. Simpler contrasts and parallelisms score lower.

Although this KR is admittedly very interesting and the examination of it provided further proof that humour in *Discworld* novels is very complex, in my opinion it does not offer intrinsically valuable insights alone. The specific type of LM does not dictate the funniness of a joke, other variables are more important. Perhaps it is not essential to focus on the numerous specific LMs but simply to study how the general LM type groups may affect

humour perception and appreciation.

6.3.3 Situation (SI)

For *situation* (SI), I did not list the "props" of the joke since it would have been simply impractical and would not provide much interesting information. However, I labelled this KR "strange" if there was something amiss, that is, if the content seemed strongly artificial. 59 examples were considered odd in this way, a number of them very clearly so, and these cases also scored a meagre 1.4 in average funniness. These examples occur most often in puns, metaphors and allusions, and are obviously inserted to the text forcefully. However, I must admit that eight cases rated F3 and one F4, and their funniness is largely based on the surprising quality of their content.

6.3.4 Target (TA)

The knowledge resource *target* (TA), which has attracted the attention of many humour researchers, proved to be a more interesting parameter. The findings mostly correlate with the ones presented in section 5.1; specific flaws criticised (SOs) occur with certain characters (TAs). In 18 examples no specific party was targeted in the text, and I labelled the target more hazily "people" which means that the TA is an ideological target.

However, two peculiar things surfaced in the analysis. First, in seven examples the TA does not fit well to the SO, contrary to the requirements by the theory. For instance, in example (139), the target is a very surprising one.

(139) The fact is that camels are far more intelligent than dolphins*. *Never trust a species that grins all the time. It's up to something. (Pratchett 1989a, 203)

Dolphins are not usually associated with deviousness, quite the contrary. However, this incongruity does not ruin the joke; in fact, the faulty assumption creates it. Only in three examples where a character is targeted for a negative behaviour which is not typical of them,

this obviously hampers the funniness. However, it is clear that the more appropriate the connection between the SO and the TA, the higher the funniness ratings are; examples with a good connection scored 2.9 on average, "normal" connection 2.4 and strange only 1.9.

Furthermore, I identified a possible TA in 29 examples which I did not label hostile. These "anomalies" most often involve marginal cases of stupidity/incompetence or mental weaknesses in examples which do not concentrate on these flaws. Another type of examples carrying these "hidden targets" is the cases with sexual taboo content. I did not list bawdiness as a hostility target (if not involving abuse, discrimination, etc.) because it is generally not criticised in the novels but rather described affectionately or positively. Finding this type of targets could be stretched even further, which is what Gruner (1997) insist, but in my opinion this pushes the notion of hostile humour too far.

6.3.5 Narrative strategy (NS)

Six labels were used in describing the *narrative strategies* (NS) in the examples. These and their combinations can be roughly divided to three general types. 59 percent of the examples are instances of descriptive text; they are either *narrative* (advancing the plot), *expository* (essentially side remarks and descriptions of characters or situations as facts) or a combination of these two. In 29 percent of the examples, the NS is "dialogue", labelled either *monologue* (produced by one character), *dialogue* (conversation between two or, very seldom, several characters), *thoughts* (inner monologue), *text* (e.g. a menu, graffiti) or a combination of these. The last general type consisted of any combinations of the two first types (e.g. narrative and dialogue), covering 12 percent of the examples. Since the examples are collected from novels, it is not surprising that there are no instances of narrative strategies normally associated with jokes, such as riddles or question-answer sequences.

The examples with descriptive type of NS rate highest in funniness, closely followed

by the ones containing a NS of the combination type, whereas the examples with a dialogue type of NS score noticeably lower than average. The probable explanation for this is the "special style" in writing in the funny examples, which belongs to the lowest parameter, language.

6.3.6 Language (LA)

The special language use was one of the components examined with the knowledge resource *language* (LA). With this I mean the author's calculated choice of words and grammatical structures which create a humorous effect compared to an "ordinary" or rather neutral style. Nash (1985, 130-136) explains that humorists deliberately use words that are not the usual, neutral or 'core' words, and which are coloured by different connotations, formality, and value.

The special style naturally occurs in register examples, but also in other categories in the corpus. It is present in examples (129), (135) and (138), for instance. 20 percent of the examples contain this type of specifically humorous language, and it occurs almost exclusively with the narrative/expository type of NSs. The special style increases funniness of its own accord, which explains at least in part why the narrative type examples are funnier than the dialogue type.

As for the lines in the examples, I labelled them either punchlines, jablines or diffuse disjunctors (i.e. series of small jabs). The end-position *punchlines* are the most common type in the corpus (69 percent). 26 percent of examples contain a *jabline*, which occurs at any other position, illustrated by example (140), and only 5 percent of the examples have a *diffuse disjunctor*, such as example (141).

(140) He'd always taken pains, usually those of other people, to fill life with certainties. (Pratchett 1994b, 290)

(141) They [camels] are so much brighter that they soon realized that the most prudent thing any intelligent animal can do, if it would prefer its descendants not to spend a lot of time on a slab with electrodes clamped to their brains or

sticking mines on the bottom of ships or being patronized rigid by zoologists, is to make bloody certain humans don't find out about it. So they long ago plumped for a lifestyle that, in return for a certain amount of portorage and being prodded with sticks, allowed them adequate food and grooming and the chance to spit in a human's eye and get away with it.
(Pratchett 1989a, 203-204)

Moreover, I examined the examples of the ambiguous type more closely to determine how often the punchline is also the 'connector', the ambiguous element itself. Attardo (1994, 105) presents numbers from two studies proving that *cooccurring connector/disjunctors* is less frequent than cases where the disjunctors occurs after the connector; "non-distinct" disjunctors occurred in 19 percent of the jokes in both studies. In my study the ratio was higher, 29 percent.

Examples containing punchlines rate highest in funniness, followed by cases with diffuse disjunctors and those with jablines. Examples where the punchline was also the connector most often rated F2 (i.e. relatively funny). According to Raskin (1985, 146), the line is most effective when it occurs after the first meaning is strongly established. Moreover, Attardo (1994, 105) presents an assumption that the decoding process is more complex when the disjunctors is non-distinct. It is possible that the more demanding processing may have affected my appreciation negatively. Table 11 presents the funniness ratings for these categories in percentages.

	F0-F1 percentage	F2 percentage	F3-F4 percentage
All examples	23	37	40
Punchline	19	37	44
Jabline	31	35	34
Diffuse disjunctors	27	38	35
Punchline/connector	25	43	32

Table 11: Funniness ratings for lines.

I also compared funniness ratings with the length of the line. Long lines (i.e. structures longer than one phrase or a long phrase with numerous modifiers) score higher than average,

whereas short lines rate lower than average. Furthermore, I discovered that "batteries" of lines, that is, sequences of accumulative lines as in example (142) enhance funniness substantially; 84 percent of battery cases were rated very or extremely funny compared to the average of 40 percent. Again, the special style is the probable cause for these ratings, since the longer examples and longer lines usually contain this humorous language use.

- (142) Moving his hands carefully, Dibbler opened the *special* section of his tray, the high-class one that contained sausages whose contents were 1) meat, 2) from a known four-footed creature, 3) probably land-dwelling. (Pratchett 2000, 108)

There were also five examples which could be said to contain a *bridge*. These were instances where the distance between the setup of the joke and the punchline was quite long, the longest space between the two parts being four pages. Example (143) illustrates a relatively short bridge of 21 lines.

- (143) Crash hadn't been christened Crash. He was the son of a rich dealer in hay and feedstuffs, but he despised his father . . . [...] Jimbo was Crash's best friend and wished he was one of the people. "It's good enough to start with," said Crash. "So you and Noddy, you two get guitars. And Scum, you... you can play the drums."
"Dunno how," said Scum. It was actually his name. (Pratchett 1994a, 196)

The funniness ratings of the bridge examples vary from F0 to F3, and this particular component does not seem to affect humour appreciation much; other variables are more important.

Altogether, the GTVH worked better than the SSTH despite the issues with the script oppositions because the other KRs could still be used in the analysis. It is well compatible with the other theories and was quite satisfactory and useful at least for the purposes of this study. Research on relations between several KRs, for instance SO and NS (e.g. stupidity in dialogue, worse flaws in expository) or SO and LM (e.g. stupidity and faulty reasoning) could be worthwhile. The most important KRs for funniness seem to be SO, TA and LA, and these parameters and their relations should probably be examined more thoroughly.

7. Discussion

The analysis discussed in chapters 5 and 6 produced answers to my research questions and mostly confirmed my hypotheses. To answer the first research question, that is, to find out why the examples gathered from the *Discworld* novels are funny and what makes some examples funnier than others, I studied the relations between the funniness ratings and the different elements in the examples (i.e. hostile and obscene content, linguistic levels of ambiguity and incongruity, techniques and structures).

My hypotheses concerning examples rating *high* on funniness were confirmed. Examples where the decoding process is moderately demanding usually scored high on funniness. Indeed, Attardo et al. (2002, 29) point out the enhancing role of a reasonable amount of problem solving in the decoding process, for instance in jokes that rely on the hearer's inferencing abilities.

Another important factor is that the jokes should not have been heard before, which was proved by the freshness of the idea in numerous examples which rated high on funniness. Example (144) illustrates this kind of "witty novelty" in a simile describing the sound of footsteps in snow.

(144) It was louder now, a crisp rhythm like someone eating celery very fast.
(Pratchett 1986, 107)

The hypotheses concerning the psychological dimensions in the funniest examples proved to be correct. I expected examples with topics close to my interests to score higher on funniness, and indeed those that involved hostile content criticising for instance social evils or with a topic such as relationships, work, studying, eating and drinking often rated high. Altogether, potentially offensive content, either hostile or obscene, enhanced appreciation, as expected. Interestingly, the results indicated that hostile content promoted humour appreciation more than taboo subjects.

However, good quality of the linguistic content seemed to be more important than the

psychological dimensions. Although the hostile and obscene elements are clearly enhancing factors (proved by the high number of examples scoring F3 or F4), they are not sufficient for funniness, and in many cases not even necessary. Example (145) illustrates a case of superb linguistic content in a neutral example (non-hostile, non-obscene), which renders the other elements unnecessary.

(145) But the Archchancellor had stalked off. "mumblemumblemumble," said the Dean defiantly, a rebel without a pause. (Pratchett 1994a, 173)

The intertextual allusion in example (145) is to the film *Rebel without a Cause*, starred by James Dean, and the hints are given in the joke by homonymy (the actor's last name and the academic title of the character) and by a rhyme, which is not random but semantically connected to the character's action in the example. Example (145) is a fairly complex and sophisticated one and I must point out that there were also rather simple neutral jokes that rated high in funniness, such as example (146).

(146) Someone said "Ook", very faintly. (Pratchett 1987a, 276)

The fact that the only character communicating with the utterance 'ook' is the orang-utan Librarian of Unseen University contradicts the use of the pronoun 'someone'.

Altogether, many of the real gems in the corpus, such as example (147), were examples that contained every enhancing aspect: a good idea, a well-designed linguistic structure and both hostile and obscene content.

(147) "I wonder what's the difference between ordinary councillors and privy councillors?" wondered the merchant aloud. The assassin scowled at him. "I think," he said, "it is because you're expected to eat shit."
(Pratchett 1989b, 293)

With *low* funniness ratings, my findings contradicted a number of the hypotheses, while others were confirmed. In sections 2.1 and 3.1.3, I discussed several negative catalysts for humour perception and appreciation. Indeed, the corpus data contains many examples of recurring, forced and corny jokes, which were rated low on funniness. One instance of

recursion is the use of the affix -ing in word-formation. While some of the examples are admittedly witty, the technique itself loses some of its power when used excessively. The worst case of a recurring joke (presented in examples (148) and (149)) can be found in *Pyramids* where two examples within one book have the same content, with only a slight change in wording. I consider this to be worse than recycling the same joke in different novels, which also takes place.

(148) ". . . Truly, the world is the mollusc of your choice..."
(Pratchett 1989a, 50)

(149) "The world is our pthing with pearls in it, if we like."
(Pratchett 1989a, 275)

The corpus also contains a fair share of "groaners": forced, laboured or corny jokes, usually weak puns, illustrated by examples (150) and (151).

(150) "Olé," said Windle.
"Oook?"
"No, not 'with milk'," said Windle. (Pratchett 1991a, 187)

(151) "Night shift, is it?" Vimes looked down at his night shirt.
(Pratchett 1989b, 178)

Low funniness ratings also occurred with too easy or too difficult decoding processes. Example (152) illustrates a case where the author has downright spoiled the joke with an explanation. Example (153), which is a very similar instance of a misunderstanding in discourse, allows the decoder to resolve the incongruity on their own. Both examples concern a god-like pharao talking to his subjects.

(152) "You must consider yourself a very fortunate man. . . "
. . . "I...will, O...sire," mumbled Ptaclusp, interpreting this as an order.
(Pratchett 1989a, 131)

(153) "Erk", he said. . . .
"What's your name?" said Teppic.
"Aaaargle," said the man, terrified.
"Well, jolly good" . . . (Pratchett 1989a, 134)

On the other hand, example (154) contains (at least for me) too difficult a decoding process; it

rather results in problem-solving. The idea is admittedly fairly good but the time it takes to figure it out impedes appreciation.

(154) In the silence Mr Pin *heard* the unseen drinkers calculating the likely number of friends of Mr Tulip. It was not a calculation that would involve a simple thinker taking off their shoes. (Pratchett 2000, 228)

The expectations concerning the psychological content in the less funny examples were intriguingly challenged. Topics which were not of particular interest to me did not exactly hamper funniness of the examples. More importantly, the hypothesis that too hostile or too obscene examples would undermine appreciation proved to be false. Even examples that attacked my reference groups or targets that I sympathised with were rated high; my enjoyment of the humour did not depend on my evaluation of the correctness of the hostility. Moreover, only one obscene example was distasteful in my opinion, and explicitness of the taboo subject and the language used in the examples seemed to only increase appreciation. Undoubtedly, other decoders would rate the hostile and obscene examples differently, whereas I seem to appreciate hostile humour and enjoy ribaldry.

However, the other hypothesis concerning the psychological dimensions was confirmed; non-hostile, non-obscene examples were significantly more often rated "stupid" or "marginally funny" (45 percent of neutral examples compared to the average 23 percent of the whole corpus). However, as already mentioned, if the linguistic part of the example is well-executed, the psychological content is not obligatory.

Furthermore, provocative content is not a sufficient factor for funniness, which is proved by numerous cases, such as example (155), which rated low in funniness even though they were both hostile and contained a taboo.

(155) So what? Wizards aren't supposed to – to go out with girls, they're celebrate... (Pratchett 1987b, 169)

Indeed, the good quality of the linguistic content in the examples seemed to be very important, and several aspects of it were examined to answer not only the first research

question but the second as well (i.e. what kind of linguistic devices are used in the examples and whether certain techniques are more common than others). The corpus proved to be a truly diverse collection of different types of humour; there was ambiguity and incongruity at all linguistic levels, as well as jokes based on ambiguity, contradiction and allusion. Examples where the ambiguity or incongruity was at a higher linguistic level were both more common and rated higher in funniness. Techniques using contradiction were more prevalent in the corpus than puns. Moreover, it seemed that the author's use of techniques has become more varying and balanced in the later novels. A good idea proved to be more important for a joke to be successful than the technique.

Answers to the third research question, that is, to what extent can the available theories of humour be applied in the analysis of the *Discworld* data and whether these theories are sufficient, were found in the course of the analysis. As expected, both psychological and linguistic theories of humour were needed, the psychological ones mainly in answering the first research question, the linguistic ones to answer both the first and the second. All theorisations were quite compatible although they concentrate on different aspects of humour. The SSTH was not applicable to several types of examples, as expected. The GTVH worked better while the script oppositions were still problematic in many cases. Until a better theory is created (perhaps the OSTH offers a solution) it is the best choice for a tool to study humour from many angles. However, the KRs need to be analysed in more depth; in fact, bringing elements from psychological theories will enrich the study. Altogether, I found the combination of the various theories satisfactorily sufficient for the purposes of this study.

8. Conclusion

The results of this study are tentative but nevertheless revealing. While bearing in mind the subjective nature of this study, I would like to present suggestions based on the findings concerning funniness of humour, at least in the *Discworld* novels. Successful jokes cannot be mere puzzles to solve, nor can they be contortions of language only; there must be a good idea, an appropriate technique, and preferably provocative content. No element should be seriously amiss, and a good combination of them all will enhance funniness. Furthermore, it seems that the linguistic part, especially the idea of a humorous text but also a special style is the most important element, then the hostile content and after this the obscene content.

Several ideas for further research issued forth in the course of this study. The obvious one would be to allow other decoders to assess the hostility and obscenity in the same corpus material and rate the funniness in the examples to see whether the results were similar. Another study could be conducted to see how Pratchett's *Discworld* novels for younger readers differ from the ones directed to adult audiences. I would expect fewer hostile and obscene elements, and it would be intriguing to see how the techniques differ, considering the development of the humour perception in children and adolescents. One could also compare two or more books more thoroughly as longer humorous texts using Attardo's proposal of line analysis. Moreover, it would be interesting to compare the English originals and their translations to study what kind of problems the humour in the *Discworld* novels create for translators.

Martin (2007, 32) points out that the tendency in humour research today is once again to focus on a specific part of humour, creating "mini-theories" instead of attempting an all-embracing theory of humour. However, scholars tend to utilise many lines of humour research in their studies, instead of dismissing theories of others, as it was common in the earlier days of humour research. Since obviously none of the available theories is able to single-handedly

explain funniness in jokes, in my opinion the logical approach is to employ the particular strengths of each of them in conjunction. I believe that this study has proved that humour is a very complex phenomenon and that research on such many-sided humorous texts as the *Discworld* novels requires an approach that addresses all of its dimensions.

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Appendix 1: List of groups in the corpus

The number of examples in the category is placed in parentheses after the heading.

Phonology (27)

- Homophony (7)
- Oronymy (2)
- Paronymy (11)
- Homophony involving foreign languages (7)

Graphology (12)

- Work only if read (4)
- Work also if heard (8)

Morphology (53)

- Word-formation (34)
- Word-formation with "synonymy" (9)
- Word-formation with "antonymy" (10)

Lexis (62)

- Homonymy/polysemy (36)
- Phrasal verbs/idioms (26)

Syntax (10)

- Deixis (3)
- Structural ambiguity (3)
- Grammar misuse (4)

Semantics (247)

- "Synonymy"
 - Replacement (30)
 - Concatenation (13)
- "Antonymy"
 - Replacement (25)
 - Concatenation (6)
- Literal/figurative meaning (9)
- Connotations (34)
- Collocations (16)
- Redundancy (7)
- Contradiction (61)
- Contrasting pairs (12)
- Metaphors/similes (34)

Pragmatics/discourse analysis (28)

- Violation of the co-operative principle/odd forms of discourse (8)
- Lists with an incongruous final (9)
- The unexpected (11)

Sociolinguistics (12)

- Register (12)

Intertextuality (12)

Allusions to our world (5)

Combinations (53)