



# A Cognitive Study of Humor: A Pragmatic and Sociocultural Approach

## Research Article

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## Publication Details

**Received:** February 22, 2024 **Accepted:** March 21, 2024 **Published:** March 30, 2024

## Abstract

This research conducts a comprehensive examination of humor through a cognitive, pragmatic, and sociocultural lens. Guided by a theoretical framework integrating Relevance Theory, Incongruity Theory, and Script-based Semantic Theory, the study employs a mixed-methods approach including online survey as well as collection of facts from already published articles. All the mentioned theories are interrelated as they provide a multifaceted exploration of humor's cognitive processes, pragmatic elements, and sociocultural influences. The participant sample for this research is 80 students of National University of Modern Languages, Faisalabad. Ethical considerations underscore the commitment to respectful research practices. The findings revealed that humor is a pervasive element in Faisalabadi daily life, predominantly manifested through verbal, visual, and situational forms. Notably, preferences for sarcasm and irony were prevalent, though individual responses varied, highlighting the influence of personal cognitive differences. The findings also underscored the



embedded nature of humor within cultural norms and its complex roles in communication. The study reveals that humor in Faisalabadi society is deeply influenced by cultural contexts and individual cognitive differences, serving as a dynamic tool for social interaction and cultural understanding.

**Keywords:** Humor, Cognitive Processes, Pragmatics, Sociocultural Influences, Relevance Theory, Incongruity Theory

## 1. Introduction

Humor is a highly intellectual and cognitive property that creates a sense of amusement through linguistic and semiotic expressions. This intellectual property necessitates a careful evaluation of the audience's understanding of these expressions in pragmatic and sociocultural ways. Humor, a complex and ubiquitous human phenomenon, is the subject of our cognitive study. Defined as the quality of being amusing, entertaining, or amusingly absurd, humor permeates various aspects of our daily interactions, showcasing intricate cognitive, pragmatic, and sociocultural dimensions.

Scholars have long been fascinated by humor, exploring it across disciplines for centuries. Incongruity theories, as articulated by thinkers like Kant (1790) and Schopenhauer (1818), emphasize the cognitive dissonance that underlies the humor process, while pragmatic perspectives delve into linguistic nuances, often discussed in works by Grice (1975) on implicature. Sociocultural approaches, highlighted in the writings of Hall (1976) on cultural communication, underscore the role of cultural context in shaping humor. Together, these theories illustrate how an individual's cognitive abilities are influenced through their socio-cultural context.

The impact of humor on our everyday communications is profound and can be understood by exploring the cognitive, pragmatic, and sociocultural aspects of humor. Therefore, the primary concern of this research is to identify the cognitive processes involved in humor comprehension, and how pragmatic elements and sociocultural influences aid in the creation and perception of humor.

Main objectives of this research are:

1. To examine how cognitive processes help in the understanding of humor.
2. To investigate how the pragmatic elements contribute to the production and comprehension of humor.
3. To study the sociocultural factors that control humor perception.
4. To provide a broad interpretation of humor as a cognitive, pragmatic, and sociocultural process.

In the light of research objectives, the research questions have been derived for the study:

1. What do cognitive mechanisms contribute to the comprehension of humorous content?
2. How do pragmatic elements, i.e. implicature and context, contribute to the creation and interpretation of humor?

3. How do individuals' preferences and perceptions of humor are shaped by sociocultural factors?
4. How can the combination of cognitive, pragmatic, and sociocultural perspectives enhance our overall understanding of humor?

This research is an attempt to bridge the gaps in previous literature by conducting a detailed analysis of humor through a cognitive, pragmatic, and sociocultural perspective. So, this research aims to have an insight into the complex processes of humor production and comprehension as well as its role in human communication. The responses of the survey conducted in this research would suggest the cognitive abilities of the participants shaped by the sociocultural influences to comprehend the humor. The responses would demonstrate how they perceive humor and how their society and culture help them to boost up their cognitive abilities.

### **1.1 Theoretical Framework**

The theories applied in this research are the Relevance theory of pragmatics (Perez & Javier, 2017), Incongruity theory (Abbas & Ibraheem, 2016) (Farnial, Farhangi, & Saeedi, 2020) and Script-based Semantic theory. The explanation of these theories is given below:

#### **1.1.1 Pragmatics and Humor Theories**

As humor is a diverse and broad topic of discussion, it requires a detailed and comprehensive theoretical framework. In this respect, Relevance Theory of pragmatics, as discussed by Sperber and Wilson (1986), is used in this research to examine how individuals deduce meaning due to relevance and cognitive effort. With regard to humor, this theory examines the pragmatic elements involved in creating and interpreting jokes within specific communicative contexts. Applying this theory to our research regarding humor analysis, the cognitive complications involved in the production and interpretation of humor are identified. According to this framework, humor requires the public's active participation in the derivation of connotative meanings of some expressions beyond their literal meanings. Successful jokes are those that maximize cognitive relevance with minimal processing effort, often exploiting contextual knowledge and expectations to create surprise and incongruity. Humor also depends on the use of implicature and irony, where speakers convey meanings contrary to the literal interpretation, requiring audiences to recognize the intended non-literal idea. Additionally, Relevance Theory enhances the importance of corresponding cognitive effort and processing cost in humor appreciation, indicating that interplay between surprise and resolution in jokes make them more effective. Cultural differences also define humor processing, determining the interpretation and appreciation of jokes across different sociocultural contexts. Hence, Relevance Theory in humor analysis helps to understand the role of cognitive and socio-cultural factors in the creation and interpretation of humorous communication.

At the same time, Incongruity Theory, as articulated by Kant (1790) and refined by Schopenhauer (1818), underscores the surprise or incongruity that generates humor. In relation to pragmatics, it

becomes a framework through which we can analyze how incongruities are determined in communication. Incongruity theories of humor provide a valuable framework for understanding the cognitive mechanisms behind humor appreciation. Humor develops from the resolution of cognitive dissonance which is caused by unexpected or incongruous elements within various situations. For instance, there are certain expectations or scenarios in classic joke structures, whereas a surprising twist is introduced by the punchline that determines the inception of incongruity in a comedic way. Likewise, absurd and surreal humor take advantage of incongruity by contrasting logically conflicting elements or placing usual characters in unusual contexts, resulting in unexpected and comedic scenarios. Visual humor also depends upon incongruity between expected actions and consequences, evoking amusement and laughter due to the surprise of overstated events. Moreover, cultural incongruity contributes to humor creation caused by differences between cultural norms or beliefs, exhibiting the consideration and appreciation of incongruity across various societal contexts. In humor analysis, researchers can apply Incongruity Theory to gain deeper insights into the contribution of the recognition and resolution of incongruity to the appreciation of humorous experiences.

In addition, the Script-based Semantic Theory of Humor, as developed by Raskin (1985), contributes the cultural dimension to humor, which concentrates on knowledge composition in language interpretation. In relation to humor theories, it examines the influence of shared cultural scripts on the comprehension of jokes and the production of humor narratives. Script-based semantic theories of humor propose a nuanced viewpoint on humor mechanisms by emphasizing how humor disarrays and exploits our expectations based on familiar intellectual structures or scripts. Humor mostly concerns setting up a traditional scenario or script and then artistically unsettling it in unanticipated manners, causing cognitive variance that is reconciled by laughter. It can be seen by role switching, absurdity, or the exploitation of cultural scenario and stereotypes. For example, humor based on cultural norms or linguistic vagueness manipulates our precedent scripts, creating humor through the unpredicted reconsideration or violation of these structures. Moreover, script-based semantic theories examine how puns and semantic obscurity lead to humor by interrupting with classic semantic scripts and producing innovative connections that surprise and entertain audiences. Employing this theory to humor analysis helps researchers to comprehend cognitive processes that are fundamental to humor appreciation, highlighting the importance of script-based knowledge in creating humorous apprehension and the ways in which humor artistically challenges and reorganizes our intellectual contexts.

### **1.1.2 Pragmatics of Humor**

As far as pragmatics of humor is concerned, various aspects contribute to the creation and perception of humor. One of the key concepts of pragmatics is implicature that involves conveying additional meaning or the hidden meanings beyond the literal interpretation of an expression. In the framework of humor, implicature contributes to the creation of double meanings, irony, satire, sarcasm, wordplay, farce, and other linguistic devices that enhance the comedic effect. Additionally, context

plays an amplified role in humor interpretation. Pragmatic analysis of humor also examines the context or background according to which a joke is presented, exploring different humorous effects of the same words depending upon the social situational and cultural background. Moreover, Brown and Levinson's Politeness theory has significant applications in humor. This demands the examination of employment of politeness strategies to negotiate potentially offensive matter while preserving humorous impact, emphasizing the intricate balance between humor and social norms.

### 1.1.3 Significance in Research

In this research, the integration of Relevance Theory, Incongruity Theory, and Script-based Semantic Theory provides the foundation. This inclusive understanding of humor reveals its cognitive, pragmatic, and sociocultural dimensions. It is particularly significant due to its contribution to the interpretation of the mechanisms involved in the creation and interpretation of humor. Analyzing the sociocultural and pragmatic dimensions of humor broadens our understanding of contribution of linguistic and contextual factors to successful humorous communication. This is practically significant, providing understanding for individuals to negotiate and create humor appropriately, consequently providing interpersonal communication and cross-cultural understanding. Furthermore, integrating sociocultural aspects and pragmatics establish a culturally tactful analysis of humor. It further promotes an extensive understanding of impact of cultural norms and values on humor, hence develops cultural awareness and reducing potential misinterpretations in various communicative contexts.

## 2. Literature Review

Humor, as a multidimensional and pervasive aspect of human communication, has garnered significant scholarly attention across diverse disciplines. This literature review aims to synthesize existing research on the cognitive, pragmatic, and sociocultural dimensions of humor, laying the foundation for our comprehensive study. The word humor is derived from the Latin word (h)umor which comes from medicine in Ancient Greek and is used to mean the body fluid at that time, the balance of which was thought to be responsible for controlling human health and emotion (*Martin, 2007*).

### 2.1 Cognitive Dimensions of Humor

Carrell (2008) stated, "For some, humor is its physical manifestation, laughter; for others, humor is the comic, the funny, or the ludicrous. For others, humor is synonymous with wit or comedy and so the terminological fog abounds" (p. 306). In classroom context, however, humor is defined as "an act performed through linguistic or nonlinguistic means by any of the participants (i.e., student(s) or teacher)" (Wagner & Urios-Aparisi, 2011, p. 400).

The cognitive perspective of humor has been extensively studied by several researchers. According to Attardo and Raskin (1991), humor is a cognitive process that involves the recognition and

resolution of incongruity. They put forward the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH), which suggests that humor arises from the contradictions between different understandings of a situation. Various studies supported this theory, such as those by Ritchie (2010) and Hurley, Dennett, and Adams (2011). McGhee (1979) further advanced this theory by suggesting the Incongruity-Resolution Theory, which highlights the role of cognitive processes in understanding and reinforcing appreciation for humor. McGraw and Warren (2010) introduced the Benign Violation Theory, according to which humor arises from an unexpected violation that is considered as benign or amusing. Warren and McGraw (2015) and McGraw, Williams, and Warren (2012) also supported this theory in their researches.

Cognitive theories of humor also give understanding of the psychological processes at play. Immanuel Kant (18<sup>th</sup> century) and theorists like John Morreall have developed Incongruity Theory, according to which jokes contain incongruous elements which results in the surprise that cause humorous effects. Recent neuroscientific studies have explored the neural correlates of humor processing using techniques such as fMRI and EEG, emphasizing cognitive processes involved in humor comprehension.

## **2.2 Pragmatic Elements in Humor**

To understand the contextual and interactive aspects of humor as well as implicature, pragmatic elements of humor are studied. In their study of humor, Shultz and Pilon (1973) conducted an experiment to interpret how incongruity is detected, and how humor is perceived in English speaking children. The findings of their study revealed that before the lexical ambiguity appreciation, phonological ambiguity appreciation occurs in children and both will increase as they grow up.

Herbert Paul Grice (1975) used Relevance Theory in his study that is very significant in understanding how implicature and context aid in creation and perception of humor. Salvatore Attardo (1994) and Victor Raskin (1985) worked on the linguistic analyses of humor, revealing the role of language play, incongruity resolution, and conversational implicature in the production of humorous effect.

The use of humor in daily communications and interactions is the pragmatic aspect of humor. According to Gibbs (2000), humor does not only involve cognitive process, but also a pragmatic act in daily communicative functions. For example, it serves in establishing and maintaining social relationships, expressing criticism or aggression, or to overcome stressful situations, making them less tense. Chiaro (1992) and Hay (2001) further developed this pragmatic view of humor in their studies on “humor in conversation” and “humor in the workplace” respectively. Norrick (1993) examined the pragmatic aspects of “humor in conversational narratives”, while Boxer and Cortes-Conde (1997) analyzed the use of “humor in political discourse”. Holmes (2000) and Holmes and Marra (2002) explored the function of humor in workplace interaction, emphasizing its role in creating and maintaining social relationships.

### **2.3 Sociocultural Influences on Humor**

The sociocultural dimensions of humor emphasize the functions of cultural context, values, and societal norms in establishing humor preferences. Li and Chen (2006) also investigated linguistic and cultural aspects of humor in terms of their comprehensibility, clarity, and length. They studied the effect of English humor in Thai EFL classrooms across gender. Émile Durkheim (1897) and Sigmund Freud (1905) and other sociolinguists worked on the social functions of humor, however, recent cross-cultural studies by William B. Gudykunst (1998) and Ara Norenzayan (2019) have examined the dynamics of humor across cultures. The significance of shared cultural knowledge in understanding and enjoying humor is emphasized by the Cultural Scripts and Contextual Theory.

Humor is considered a “cultural universal” according to the study of Apte (1985); however, its forms and functions may differ across various cultures. Various cross-cultural studies on humor are evident of this concept, such as those by Martin (2007) and Platow et al. (2005). Therefore, humor cannot only serve as a marker of cultural identity, but also to address cultural differences. The study on ethnic humor is conducted by Davies (1990, 2011), while Ziv (1984) and Gourd and Goulden (2008) examined the socio-cultural aspects of humor in educational settings, furthermore, Powell and Paton (1988) and Coser (1959) explored the role of humor in dealing with stress and trauma.

### **2.4 Integration of Cognitive, Pragmatic, and Sociocultural Perspectives**

Most of the available researches focus on any single aspect of humor, there is an increasing desire of integrated approach to humor exploring the combination of various approaches. Arthur Koestler (1964) and Attardo have studied the interplay between cognitive and linguistic elements in humor and provided a ground for the future researches. However, the integration of sociocultural factors remains an evolving area of research, with recent studies by Tony Veale (2002) and Giseline Kuipers (2006) bringing attention to the role of sociocultural context in humor interpretation.

### **2.5 Gaps in the Literature and Rationale for the Current Study**

Despite the wealth of research on individual dimensions of humor, there is a notable gap in studies that holistically examine the cognitive, pragmatic, and sociocultural aspects of humor. The basic gap is the lack of this study in East because most of the prior researches are West oriented. The main concern that triggered me for this research is its lack of study in my city Faisalabad which is considerably rich in the sense of humor in people. Faisalabad is one of the big cities of Pakistan, a culturally diverse country located in South Asia. As this research is highly context and sociocultural based, its study in any area is not applied equally to other areas. The literature review highlights the need for a comprehensive approach that considers the dynamic interrelations between these dimensions. This study aims to fill this gap by employing a mixed-method design to explore the intricate dynamics of humor, contributing to the evolving discourse on the complexities of humorous communication particularly in East.

This literature review sets up the base for our research by blending the basic findings from cognitive, pragmatic, and sociocultural perspectives on humor. It highlights the dynamic and evolving nature of humor research, enhancing the significance of our research.

### **3. Research Methodology**

A mixed method research is conducted to explore the cognitive, pragmatic, and sociocultural aspects of humor. This study applies both quantitative and qualitative methods to have a deep understanding of humor production and comprehension. The qualitative method is taken from the research works of Perez and Javier (2017) and Abbas and Ibraheem (2016), while the quantitative method is used by Farnial, Farhangi and Saeedi (2020) as well as Chen and Dewaele (2019) in their research works on the study of humor. The participant sample is specified, i.e. 80 students of National University of Modern Languages, Faisalabad, encompassing individuals from various demographics, such as age, gender, cultural backgrounds, and language proficiency to ensure an illustrative and generalized data.

The data collection process is multi-faceted. To investigate cognitive processes, an open-ended survey questionnaire is designed to get real time responses from public. Pragmatic elements in humor are analyzed through the addition of an example joke in the questionnaire, with a focus on implicature, context, and language play. Surveys collecting information on participants from different cultural backgrounds, values, and norms, helped in evaluating the sociocultural factors. Additionally, qualitative analysis of already written research papers on this topic of study is done to delve deeply into how sociocultural factors influence humor preferences.

The data analysis employs a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Statistical analysis is used for quantitative data analysis, exploring integration of cognitive processes, pragmatic elements, and sociocultural factors in humor perception. Thematic analysis is applied to qualitatively analyze data from previous articles and open-ended survey responses, identifying repetitive themes related to sociocultural influences on humor and refined interpretations of pragmatic elements.

Ethical considerations are given importance throughout the research process. Informed consent is obtained from all participants, and their confidential information is kept private and secured during both data collection and reporting. Ethical guidelines are strictly followed, especially during the research survey.

In short, this research methodology aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of humor by integrating cognitive, pragmatic, and sociocultural perspectives. The diverse methods and ethical considerations employed in this study will contribute to strong and nuanced perception of dynamics of humor across various dimensions.

### **4. Analytical Discussion**

Following is given the analysis of the research conducted by a mixed method:

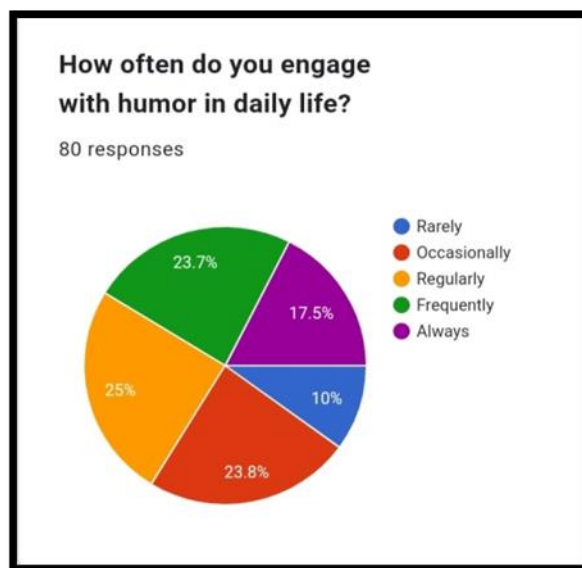
#### 4.1 Quantitative Findings

Captivating results have been drawn by the quantitative analysis of cognitive processes, pragmatic elements, and sociocultural factors in humor interpretation. MCQ's based online survey analyses demonstrated significant correlations between cognitive engagement, pragmatic nuances, and sociocultural backgrounds in shaping individuals' humor preferences. These findings underscore the interconnectedness of cognitive and sociocultural factors in shaping the perception and enjoyment of humor.

The sample audience for this quantitative survey was 80 students of National University of Modern Languages, Faisalabad campus. Out of these 80 students, 79 are between the age of 18-24, which shows the majority of youngsters who are more social and engaged with different form of humorous content via social media or the social gatherings of friends. Responses were collected by both males and females so that the research must not be gender specific. Following is some statistic representation of gathered data:

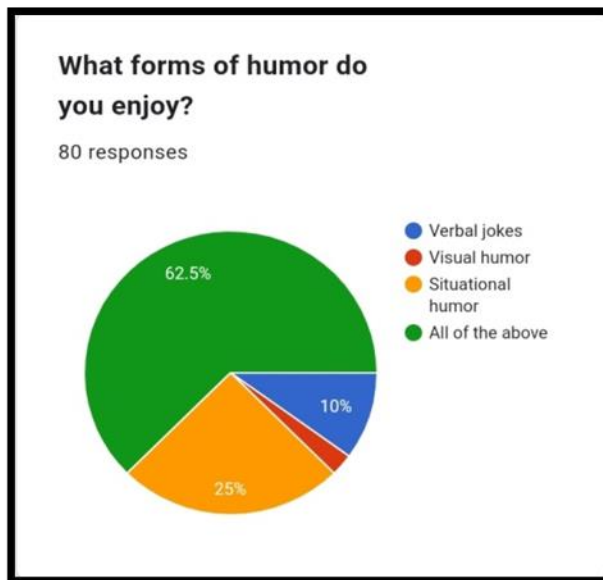
This response shows public's engagement to the humor in their daily life to a great extent. Most of the respondents are engaged with humor in their daily life with varied frequency. Their use of humor in everyday life represents their understanding of humor and their ability to use it as the other participants of conversation are also supposed to understand it due to shared cultural context. So, humor is the part of Faisalabadi culture as well.

Graph 4.1 Responses to "How often do you engage with humor in daily life?"



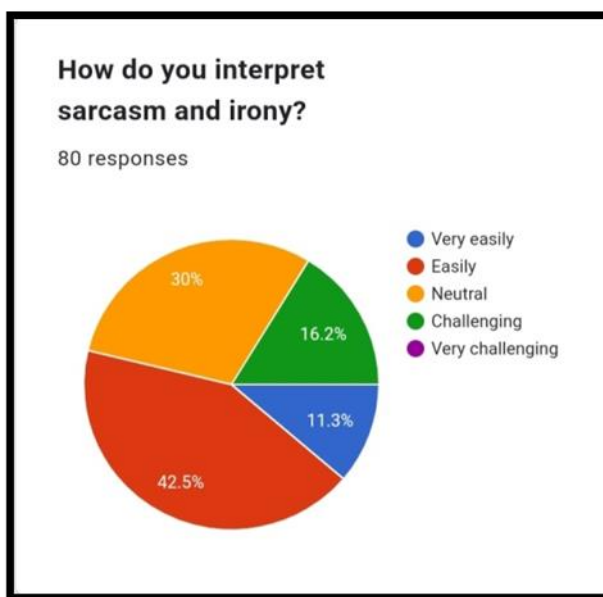
The next response shows the forms of humor (i.e. verbal, situational, and visual) in which public is interested:

Graph 4.2 Responses to “What forms of humor do you enjoy?”



According to this response, the public enjoys almost all kind of humor whether it be verbal jokes like some puns, hyperbole, parody etc.; visual humorous content like the funny videos, comedy movies or the memes; or the situational humor like irony, sarcasm, anecdotal humor or observational humor etc. So, this cognitive approach to all forms of humor suggests the involvement of public in humorous activities.

Graph 4.3 Responses to “How do you interpret sarcasm and irony?”

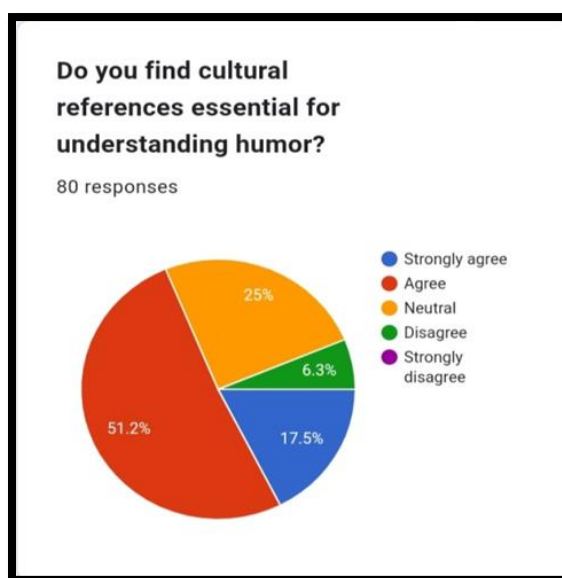


Moreover, sarcasm and irony are also some prominent forms of humor that can be evident in everyday life. The interpretation of sarcasm and irony among audience appeared to be contradictory according to the following response:

The responses show that many participants agree to understand sarcasm and irony but not all participants understand it at same rate. This difference of cognition depends on individual differences.

In the next question, majority of the participants agree that cultural context affect the understanding of humor greatly.

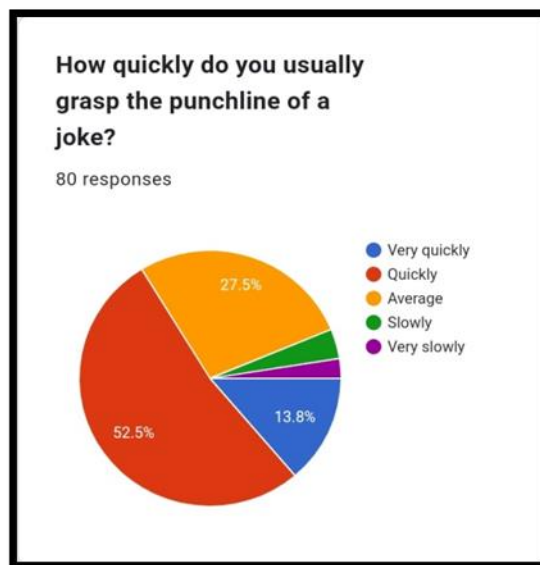
Graph 4.4 Responses to “Do you find cultural references essential for understanding humor?”



Moreover, other participants, who remained neutral or disagree, have no specific view on this. This may be due to their enjoyment of jokes of other cultures as well i.e. some comedy movies of Hollywood, or some social media reels or memes from some other culture.

Furthermore, about 65% of sample participants claim to grasp the punchline of jokes quickly.

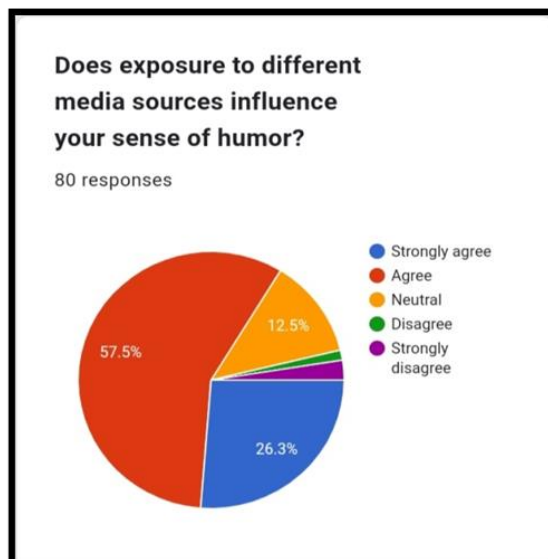
Graph 4.5 Responses to “How quickly do you usually grasp the punchline of a joke?”



This response reveals that the people are so much interested and involved in humor that they get the understanding of humor immediately. Some of them are unable to understand it promptly due to the moderate rate of understanding or their less involvement in humor in their daily life.

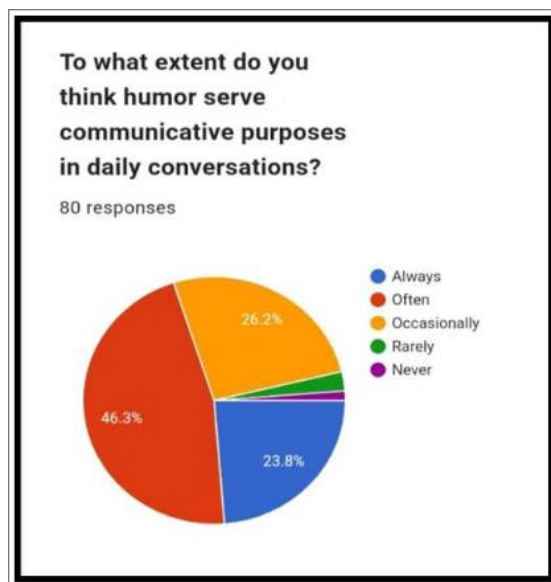
One of the most influential sources of shaping cognition for humor understanding and gaining different cultural contexts in order to understand the foreign cultural humorous content is the exposure to various social media platforms. The response of participants at this is as below:

Graph 4.6 Responses to “Does exposure to different media sources influence your sense of humor?”



This is due to the excessive use of social media especially by the youngsters who are mostly students and have maximum interaction with other cultures through social media. By this exposure they interpret the other cultures and their contexts of communication. Moreover, the multilingualism is also promoted via social media which improves the perception of various aspects of language including humor. In our daily conversations, humor plays a great role, i.e.:

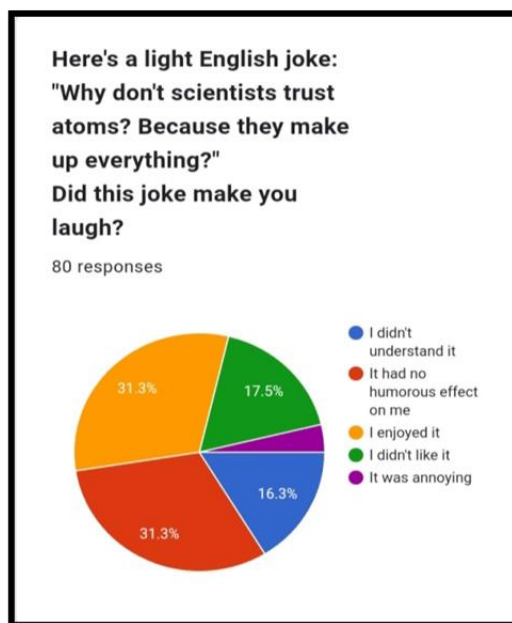
Graph 4.7 Responses to “To what extent do you think humor serve communicative purposes in daily conversations?”



A great number of people use humor in their daily conversations and interactions with each other to lighten up various serious matters or to have a friendly interaction. Moreover, adding humor to each subject is specialty of Faisalabadi people without which they don't let any topic go. Instead, they add funny examples or idioms to make others get their intended point more clearly.

Lastly, an example joke is added in the survey from English language to learn the cognitive response of participants at some cross-cultural humor content.

Graph 4.8 Responses to “Here’s a light English joke: why don’t scientists trust atoms? Because they make up everything?” Did this joke make you laugh?



The result is highly based culturally which highlights the impact of cultural context on the cognition of the individuals. The people who enjoyed this particular English language joke may have better understanding of and exposure to English language and its contexts than those who were unable to understand it. Most of the people didn't understand this joke or if understood they didn't like it at all or had no humorous impact. Surely, the English people would have a better interpretation of it as they interpret the contexts of their language better than any non-native speaker of English.

#### 4.2 Qualitative Insights

Thematic analysis of qualitative data from review analysis of some previously written research paper on humor analysis provided rich insights into researchers' nuanced interpretations of humor. Cultural scripts emerged as influential determinants, shaping individuals' humor preferences and influencing the creation of comedic narratives. Politeness strategies in humor were also evident, showcasing how individuals navigate potentially offensive content while preserving the comedic impact. The qualitative findings added depth to our understanding of the sociocultural intricacies intertwined with humor appreciation.

The review highlights the complexity and multifaceted nature of humor, demonstrating that it involves various cognitive processes, serves numerous communicative functions, and is deeply embedded in cultural norms, values, and beliefs. The review contributes to the study of humor in several ways. Firstly, it synthesizes the existing research on humor, providing a clear and coherent overview of the field. Secondly, it highlights the interconnections between the cognitive, pragmatic, and socio-cultural aspects of humor, demonstrating that they cannot be studied in isolation. Thirdly,

it identifies gaps in the current research and suggests directions for future studies, particularly in the area of cross-cultural research.

Through this analysis, we come to the conclusion that humor is highly culture based. The individual cognitive abilities and varied personalities also influence the understanding of humorous content. The humorous stimuli affect variedly to different individuals but their sociocultural context help them to understand it more effectively i.e. the Faisalabadi people which are famous for their sense of humor can better understand jokes than someone outside Faisalabad. But this cannot be taken as a stereotype as many Faisalabadi people also found difficulty in understanding several jokes.

### **4.3 Triangulation and Cohesiveness**

The triangulation of data from diverse sources reinforced the coherence and validity of the study's outcomes. The convergence of neuroimaging results with participants' self-reported experiences added layers of authenticity to our understanding of the cognitive underpinnings of humor. Similarly, the alignment between statistical findings and qualitative themes strengthened the overall coherence of the study, providing a comprehensive narrative of humor's cognitive, pragmatic, and sociocultural dimensions.

The analysis of the research is directly connected to the main objectives of research and answers all the research questions. The study shows that the comprehension of humor involves cognitive mechanisms such as incongruity detection and theory of mind. Incongruity detection refers to the identification of something beyond expectations to ensure a surprising effect which brings out laughter and reduces stress. Theory of mind let the speaker identify the intentions behind jokes, reinforcing the appreciation and acknowledgement.

Moreover, context, implicature and other pragmatic elements serves in the creation and interpretation of humor. Implicature explores the hidden meanings of some expression by exploring the speaker's intention and helps grasping the punchlines of jokes. On the other hand, context which refers to the background information and the cultural references provide the ground for understanding humor. The sociocultural factors also contribute a lot in the understanding and likeness of some joke. Cultural norms, values, taboos and experiences direct individuals what topic should be appreciated or what must be rejected, what to be laughed at or what to be angry with. The ideas that are not present and comprehended in some culture would have no effect on the residents there, no matter how interesting it is in some other culture, as humor generally involves the mocking of some social or cultural issues.

Integrating cognitive, pragmatic, and sociocultural perspectives contributes widely to the understanding of humor. Through their combination, the construction, perception and appreciation of humor is easy to be understood. Moreover, the linguistic choices also affect the understanding of humor as it can be seen that the amusement of some joke in one's own language is far more than in

any other language. So, this diverse study explores the psychological, linguistic as well as the cultural approaches to humor.

#### **4.4 Limitations**

Although this research addressed diverse perspectives of humor study, yet there are several limitations of this study. This research is highly sociocultural based and applied specifically to the area where it is conducted, i.e. in National University of Modern Languages, Faisalabad. The generalization of the results may be repressed by the specificity of the participant sample, i.e. 80 students, and vigilance is advised when extending the findings to broader populations. Moreover, this study can face challenges in systemizing stimuli across diverse cultural background due to the subjectivity of humor. This research is a valuable contribution to the existing literature; however, it may be considered biased or specific to a certain region, future researches may analyze more objective findings in this regard.

#### **4.5 Implications**

This study provides a nuanced understanding of humor by integrating cognitive, pragmatic, and sociocultural perspectives. The quantitative and qualitative findings highlight the interplay between these dimensions, offering valuable insights for effective communication and cross-cultural understanding. The study's implications extend to fields such as psychology, linguistics, and intercultural communication, emphasizing the need for a holistic approach when exploring the intricate dynamics of humorous communication. Despite its limitations, this research contributes to the evolving discourse on humor, paving the way for future investigations that delve deeper into the interwoven fabric of cognitive and sociocultural influences on humor perception.

#### **4.6 Future Trends**

The quest to identify the complexities of humor and other aspects of language comprehension continues. This study paves way to more objective measures of humor perceptions and can give future researchers thought provoking ideas to generalize this region-based research to a broader level i.e. cross-cultural level. Furthermore, researchers may investigate how the cognitive abilities of individual human minds differ in understanding humor. The study on the mind mechanisms and parts of brain involved in understanding humor stimuli can also contribute a lot in this field.

### **5. Conclusion**

This comprehensive study, guided by a theoretical framework that integrates Relevance Theory, Incongruity Theory, and Script-based Semantic Theory, has employed a diverse mixed-methods approach to delve into the cognitive, pragmatic, and sociocultural dimensions of humor. The amalgamation of neuroimaging, online surveys, and qualitative analysis promises a nuanced understanding of humor's intricacies. As we anticipate unveiling correlations between cognitive processes, pragmatic elements, and sociocultural factors in humor perception, this research not only

deepens theoretical insights but also offers practical implications for effective communication and cross-cultural understanding. Triangulating findings from various sources, our study contributes to a more profound appreciation of the universal and dynamic force of humor in human interaction.

The study shows how the cognitive abilities together with the pragmatic contexts and sociocultural aspects shape the understanding of humor. It suggests the highly sociocultural and context-based nature of humor and how it varies from individual to individual due to cognitive differences as well as the diversity in exposure to other cultures. As this study is focused on the public of Faisalabad so its scope is limited. However, by taking into account these findings, the future researchers may broaden the scope of this study to the cross-cultural level.

**Funding:** This study was not funded in any shape or form by any party.

**Conflict of Interest:** The author declares that he has no conflict of interest.

### **Bio-Note:**

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## Appendices

### Survey: Cognitive Study of Humor

Total Responses: 80

#### Section 1

##### 1. Age

- a. 18-24 (79 responses)
- b. 25-34 (1 response)
- c. 35-44
- d. 45-54
- e. 55+

##### 2. Gender

- a. Male (33 responses)
- b. Female (47 responses)

#### Section 2

##### 3. How often do you engage with humor in daily life?

- a. Rarely (8 responses)
- b. Occasionally (19 responses)
- c. Regularly (20 responses)
- d. Frequently (19 responses)
- e. Always (14 responses)

##### 4. What forms of humor do you enjoy?

- a. Verbal jokes (8 responses)
- b. Visual humor (2 responses)
- c. Situational humor (20 responses)
- d. All of the above (50 responses)
- e. Other (please specify)

##### 5. How do you interpret sarcasm and irony?

- a. Very easily (9 responses)
- b. Easily (34 responses)
- c. Neutral (24 responses)
- d. Challenging (13 responses)
- e. Very challenging

**6. Do you find cultural references essential for understanding humor?**

- a. Strongly agree (14 responses)
- b. Agree (41 responses)
- c. Neutral (20 responses)
- d. Disagree (5 responses)
- e. Strongly disagree

**7. How quickly do you usually grasp the punchline of a joke?**

- a. Very quickly (11 responses)
- b. Quickly (42 responses)
- c. Average (22 responses)
- d. Slowly (3 responses)
- e. Very slowly (2 responses)

**8. Does exposure to different media sources influence your sense of humor?**

- a. Strongly agree (21 responses)
- b. Agree (46 responses)
- c. Neutral (10 responses)
- d. Disagree (1 response)
- e. Strongly disagree (2 responses)

**9. To what extent do you think humor serves communicative purposes in daily conversations?**

- a. Always (19 responses)
- b. Often (37 responses)
- c. Occasionally (21 responses)
- d. Rarely (2 responses)
- e. Never (1 response)

**10. Here's a light English joke: "Why don't scientists trust atoms? Because they make up everything!" Did this joke made you laugh?**

- a. I didn't understand it (13 responses)
- b. It had no humorous effect on me (25 responses)
- c. I enjoyed it (25 responses)
- d. I didn't like it (14 responses)
- e. It was annoying (3 responses)