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# THE PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF IRONIES AND JOKES

## 1 INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I aim to reveal the structures of ironies and jokes. In many previous studies, it has often been said that these two linguistic phenomena have some commonalities. In Gricean theory, for example, ironies and jokes are regarded as flouting of maxims. Moreover, in mention theory, they are regarded as mention utterances. Although each theory has some exploratory power, they have some significant problems. I argue that Gricean theory has much potentiality, though the theory has not been developed in the field of the analysis of ironies and jokes. Because of this, I will utilize and develop Gricean theory in this paper. I will investigate not only the structures of ironies and jokes but also the relation between them. My analysis will expose the fact that ironies and jokes differ in their mechanisms.

Moreover, I aim to differentiate ironies and lies. In previous studies, this issue has not been tackled by any researchers. Using the conventional Gricean theory, we cannot differentiate between them because both phenomena are analyzed as flouting maxims (especially, flouting the Maxim of Quality). We must therefore discover some elements which can differentiate the two expressions. In this paper, I will also tackle this subject.

## 2 GRICEAN THEORY AND ITS PROBLEMS

Grice (1975) proposes Cooperative Principle (CP). We are expected to follow CP in order to undertake cooperative conversations. If a speaker does not follow CP, a hearer seeks a non-literal meaning which the speaker implicitly intends to convey so that we can carry on cooperative conversations. Grice calls the non-literal meaning *implicature*.

There are four maxims in CP, they are, Maxim of Quantity, Maxim of Quality, Maxim of Relation and Maxim of Manner:

## (1) Maxim of Quality

Supermaxim:

*Try to make your contribution one that is true.*

Submaxims:

1. *Do not say what you believe to be false.*
2. *Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.*

## (2) Maxim of Quantity

1. *Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).*

2. *Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.*

## (3) Maxim of Relation

*Be relevant.*

## (4) Maxim of Manner

Supermaxim: *Be perspicuous.*

Submaxims:

1. *Avoid obscurity of expression.*
2. *Avoid ambiguity.*
3. *Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).*
4. *Be orderly.*

(Grice 1975)

Grice only says that a speaker flouts the Maxim of Quality when an irony occurs. ‘Flouting maxims’ is to intentionally violate maxims. For example:

(5) [context] *X, with whom A has been on close terms until now, has betrayed a secret of A's to a business rival. A says:*

A: X is a fine friend.

(Grice 1975)

A's utterance in (5) ‘X is a fine friend’ contradicts the context. In other words, this utterance flouts the Maxim of Quality and causes an implicature. This utterance implies ‘X is not a fine friend.’ It could be stated that Grice's theory is strongly explanatory. However, his theory has two serious problems. Firstly, his theory cannot distinguish between ironies and lies. For example:

(6) A (to B) : The weather is fine today.

The interpretation of this sentence is context-dependent. For example, the sentence (6) can be interpreted as an irony in the context in which B said that it would be fine, but it is actually raining. However, the sentence (6) can be interpreted as a lie in the

## THE PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF IRONIES AND JOKES

simple context where it is raining today. Although Grice's theory does not refer to this phenomenon, it is problematic.

Moreover, this theory has a more serious problem. There are some ironies which clearly do not flout the Maxim of Quality:

(7) [Situation] *Jesse said 'I'd be promoted before you' to his colleague Peter. This elicited the following reply:*  
 Peter: Oh! You'd be promoted before me!

(Utsumi 2000)

We cannot say that Peter's utterance flouts the Maxim of Quality because we cannot judge whether Jesse will be actually promoted before Peter. Some scholars apply this theory to an analysis of jokes. Attardo (1993) analyzes jokes as violations of CP:

(8) Violation of Maxim of Quantity  
 "Excuse me, do you know what time it is?"  
 "Yes."  
 (Attardo 1993)

(9) Violation of Maxim of Relation  
 "How many surrealists does it take to screw in a light bulb?"  
 "Fish!"  
 (Attardo 1993)

(10) Violation of Maxim of Manner  
 "Do you believe in clubs for young men?"  
 "Only when kindness fails."  
 (Attributed to W.C. Fields)

(11) Violation of Maxim of Quality  
 "Why did the Vice President fly to Panama?"  
 "Because the fighting is over."  
 (Johnny Carson, Jan. 19, 1990)

The question in (8) does not ask about whether the hearer knows what time it is, but for what time it is. The answerer does not contribute the questioner as informative as required. This can be regarded as the violation of the Maxim of Quantity. The answer in (9) is not relevant to the question, that is, to the context. This can be regarded as the violation of the Maxim of Relation. The word 'club' in (10) can mean both 'a spot which is open late at night and which provides entertainment' and 'a stout stick,' and this remains ambiguous. This can be regarded as the violation of the Maxim of Manner. With regard to (11), it is not the fact that the Vice President flied to Panama. This can be regarded as the violation of the Maxim of Quality. However, this theory has the same problem as Grice's first problem. We cannot distinguish jokes from lies or other expressions.

Although Grice's theory has two problems, these problems are derived from the fact that Grice does not deeply analyze ironies. Similarly, Attardo (1993) does not deeply analyze jokes. She only indicates that jokes violate maxims. This fact suggests

that this theory still has potential explanatory ability.

### 3 DEVELOPED GRICEAN THEORY

In section 2, I claimed that Grice's theory has much potential ability in the analysis of jokes and ironies. Here in this section, I will develop his theory and apply it not only to ironies but also to jokes. Firstly, we may adopt the Gricean theory to ironies. Grice says that ironies flout the Maxim of Quality. However, I advocate that ironies can flout any maxims. This argument enables us to analyze (7):

(12) (=7) [Situation] *Jesse said 'I'd be promoted before you' to his colleague Peter. This elicited the following reply:*  
 Peter: Oh! You'd be promoted before me!

(Utsumi 2000)

This example cannot be regarded as flouting the Maxim of Quality in the following context: Jesse is likely to be promoted soon, while Peter is not (of course, Jesse's utterance can be also regarded as an irony). What maxim does this example flout? The answer is the Maxim of Quantity. Peter's utterance has no information because it is a repetition of Jesse's utterance.

Moreover, in this theory, the following example can be analyzed:

(13) Teacher: Rita, what will you do when you get as big as your mother?  
 Rita: Go on a diet, miss.

(Konishi and Higashimori 2004: 156)

We cannot judge the proposition of Rita's utterance as true or false, since her utterance refers to a situation in the future. This utterance cannot be regarded as flouting the Maxim of Quality because of the difficulty of assigning a truth value. Here, we can analyze that Rita's utterance is flouting the Maxim of Relation. The word 'big' in the teacher's utterance is naturally interpreted as 'big in terms of her age.' However, Rita interprets it as 'big in terms of her size and weight.' In other words, Rita selects the interpretation which does not match the context provided by the teacher.

Thus, if we apply Gricean theory to the analysis of ironies and jokes, we can analyze them as flouting maxims. However, I argue that it is inadequate because this analysis does not distinguish them from other expressions, namely, lie, metaphor, metonymy, and so on since they also flout the Maxim of Quality. Moreover, in this thesis, ironies and joke will be treated as distinct linguistic phenomena. The original Gricean theory cannot distinguish them. I argue that flouting maxims is the trigger of both ironies and jokes, and each of the rhetorical expressions has its own defining characteristics. In section 4, I will analyze ironies and identify the defining properties.

## THE PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF IRONIES AND JOKES

In section 5, I will analyze jokes and identify the defining properties.

## 4 IRONIES

In section 3, I indicated that flouting the Maxim of Quality is not the only trigger of ironies. Flouting other maxims will also trigger ironies. In this section, I will analyze ironies in detail and investigate what factors ironies have besides flouting maxims. Although I proposed that flouting the Maxim of Quality is not a necessary condition for ironies, speakers of ironies frequently do so. In other words, we have to say that ironies of this type are typical examples. Therefore, most of the examples in this section can be analyzed as flouting the Maxim of Quality.

In this section, I will categorize ironies into two groups, that is, Contextual Ironies and Non-contextual Ironies. The ironies categorized into the former are strongly context-dependent. In other words, depending on the context, an ironic utterance of the former cannot be interpreted as an irony. On the other hand, the ironies categorized into the latter are not context-dependent. Namely, an ironic utterance of the latter can be interpreted as an irony regardless of the situation. The reason why I divide ironies into two categories is that each of them has a different mechanism of understanding. I will account for their mechanisms in section 4.1 and 4.2.

4.1 *Contextual Ironies*

Firstly, consider the following examples:

(14) [situation] *A mother asked her son to clean up his messy room, but he was lost in a comic book. After a while, she discovered that his room was still messy, and said to her son:*

- This room is totally clean!
- I love children who keep their rooms clean.
- This room seems to be messy.

(Utsumi 2000)

(14a) can be regarded as flouting the Maxim of Quality because the son's room is actually messy. As a result, the utterance contradicts the objective situation of the room. In (14b), as stated above, the Maxim of Quantity is flouted. Perhaps, the information that the mother loves children who keep their rooms clean is a matter of course for the son and this utterance is uninformative. (14c) can be regarded as flouting the Maxim of Manner. Although the son's room is clearly messy, the mother uses an obscure expression of 'seems to'.

I explained the triggers of the above examples which turn them into ironies. Now,

in (14a) to (14c), we must focus on an important point. This is that whether or not the above examples are interpreted as ironies is deeply dependent on the context. For example, if (30a) is uttered in the context where the son's room is clean, it is interpreted as only describing this situation as it is and the utterance is not interpreted as an irony. Evidently, in this case, this utterance does not flout any maxim. This fact implies that we should prescribe some condition for the context in the analysis of ironies. Utsumi (2000) proposes that an expectation of the speaker must fail for an irony to be obtained. As I claimed in section 2.3, this condition is problematic. I claim that we must focus on the subjective judgement of the speaker. I propose that some kinds of irony need an appropriate situation in which it can occur. I call this 'ironic situation'. The ironic situation is defined as follows:

(15) Ironic situation: *The situation where a speaker subjectively judges that a target himself/herself or his/her action must be criticized for some reason.*

Next, I must analyze some conditions of ironic utterances. Although (14a) to (14c) are context-dependent with reference to whether these utterances can be interpreted as ironies, all utterances are not interpreted as ironies even in an ironic situation. For example (the situation is the same as in (14)):

(14) d. This room is messy.  
e. I will go to the supermarket.

(14d) can be interpreted as a direct criticism (and it is a 'non-ironic paraphrase' (Haverkate 1990)). Therefore, in my thesis, this is not regarded as an irony. (14e) cannot be interpreted as an irony, either, but as an utterance which denotes the future act of the mother. What conditions are there in ironies? I propose the following conditions (I call them Utterance Conditions):

(16) Utterance Conditions

Condition 1: *The content of all or some part of an utterance contradicts the ironic situation provided by the context at the level of what is said or what is implicated.*

Condition 2: *The content of some part of an utterance corresponds with the ironic situation provided by the context at the level of what is said or what is implicated.*

I propose that an irony can occur if and only if the situation is identified as an ironic situation and the utterance meets either of Utterance Conditions 1 or 2. The ironic situation and these conditions can be applied to the analysis of (14a) to (14e). The situation of (14) is identified as an ironic situation because the mother sees the son's room messy and judges that the son must be criticized. (14a) clearly meets Utterance Condition 1 because the situation denotes that the son's room is messy and it contradicts with the content of the utterance. (14b) meets Utterance Condition 1

## THE PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF IRONIES AND JOKES

because a part of the utterance ‘keep their rooms clean’ contradicts the situation. (14c) meets Utterance Condition 2 because a part of the utterance ‘to be messy’ (that is, ‘this room is messy’) corresponds with the situation. (14d) does not meet neither Utterance Condition 1 nor 2 because the utterance ‘totally’ corresponds with the ironic situation. (14e) does not meet neither Utterance Condition 1 nor 2 because the utterance neither contradicts nor corresponds with the ironic situation.

We can apply this analysis to other examples. Consider the following:

(17) [Situation] *In a library, a young man calls a friend of his on his cellphone and talks loudly. A woman says to him:*

- Could you do me the favor of shutting up?
- Couldn’t you do me the favor of shutting up?
- Could you do me the favor of keeping speaking?

(The Utterances: Haverkate 1990)

The situation is an ironic situation because the woman judges that the young man who is talking loudly must be criticized with regard to his act. In my theory, all the utterances from (17a) to (17c) can be interpreted as ironies. (17a) and (17b) meet Utterance Condition 1 because a part of the utterances ‘shutting up’ contradicts the situation. (17c) meets Utterance Condition 2 because a part of the utterance ‘keeping speaking’ corresponds with the ironic situation.

In the next section, I will exhibit some examples which cannot be analyzed in the mechanism proposed in this section and claim that these examples have some different conditions to allow their occurrence.

I can summarize the discussion in this section as follows:

(18) *After the situation is identified as an ironic situation proposed in (15), contextual ironies must meet Utterance Conditions 1 or 2 proposed in (16).*

#### 4.2 Non-contextual Ironies

In the previous section, I proposed that an irony can be obtained if and only if the situation is identified as an ironic situation and the utterance meets either of Utterance Conditions 1 or 2. However, I do not think that the theory proposed in section 4.1 covers all ironies. In this section, I analyze some additional examples which cannot be covered by the theory provided in the previous section.

Firstly, consider the following examples:

(19) Your friend asked me to lend him the nice little sum of \$100,000.  
(Haverkate 1990)

(20) As I reached the bank at closing time, the bank clerk helpfully shut the door in my face. (Wilson 2006)

(19) can be regarded as flouting the Maxim of Quality because the phrase ‘the nice little sum of \$100,000’ is not believed to be true. As a result, it can be interpreted as criticizing the friend that asked the speaker to lend him a very large sum of \$100,000. Of course, if the hearer believes that \$100,000 is a small sum, this utterance cannot be regarded as flouting the Maxim of Quality and cannot be interpreted as an irony but only an assertive utterance. (20) can be regarded as flouting the Maxim of Quality because the adverb ‘helpfully’ contradicts the speaker’s true feeling. After all, it is interpreted as criticizing that the bank clerk closed the door without waiting for him. Needless to say, for example, if the hearer assumes that closing the bank at the closing time is helpful for some reason, the utterance cannot be interpreted as an irony but as a simple assertive utterance. Both (19) and (20) have a characteristic which are not found in (14) and (17); the property that the utterances can be interpreted as ironies regardless of the situation. In other words, these ironies do not need an ironic situation proposed in section 4.1 before the utterance in question is produced. What conditions are there? I will consider this problem.

I claim that the utterances of these ironies invoke the ironic situations in themselves, while the examples provided in section 4.1 should be given the ironic situations in advance. The utterance (19) invokes the ironic situation in which the man asks his friend to lend him too large amount of money. The utterance (20) can invoke the ironic situation that bank clerks do not wait for their customers at all. I propose that invoking ironic situations is the condition for this second type of ironies. However, I must indicate why this invoking process happens. It is not the case that all the utterances can invoke ironic situations. I will consider the conditions for utterances invoking ironic situations.

Consider the following example:

(21) I congratulate you on this stupid remark. (Haverkate 1990)

The example can be regarded as the flouting Maxim of Quality because the speaker does not have the intention to congratulate the hearer. This can be interpreted as an irony regardless of the context. In other words, no matter who is the referent of ‘you’, no matter what is the content of ‘this stupid remark’, this can be understood as criticizing someone who makes a remark. And the phrase ‘this stupid remark’ can invoke the ironic situation where someone makes a stupid remark. Therefore, we can categorize it in the same category as (19) and (20). I will investigate the commonality among (19) to (21).

In this type of ironies, the contradiction between the speaker’s and hearer’s recognition and some part of the linguistic expression must explicitly arise in the sentence. In (19), if the utterance is interpreted as an irony, the speaker and the hearer should recognize that \$100,000 is very expensive. This recognition contradicts the expression ‘nice little sum.’ In (20), if the utterance is interpreted as an irony, the speaker and the hearer should recognize that it is unhelpful for them to close the bank

## THE PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF IRONIES AND JOKES

right at closing time. This recognition contradicts the expression ‘helpfully’. In (21), if the utterance is interpreted as an irony, the speaker and the hearer will recognize that the person who makes a stupid remark must be criticized. This recognition contradicts the verb ‘congratulate.’

The discussion so far is summarized as follows:

- (22) *The ironic utterances must explicitly represent a contradiction between the speaker’s and the hearer’s recognition and some part of the linguistic expression, and*
- (23) *Non-contextual ironies must invoke an ironic situation by themselves.*

#### 4.3 *Differentiation between ironies and lies*

In this subsection, I will attempt to differentiate between ironies and lies. Haverkate (1990) suggests that the speaker of a lie does not intend to convey the fact that the speaker lies, while the speaker of an irony intends to convey it. In other words, a lie is a lie if and only if the fact that the speaker lies is not intended to be conveyed to hearers. However, I argue that this condition is weak. Consider the following example:

- (24) [Context] *Today, it is raining, though John forecasted that it would be sunny and said it to Mary. Because of John’s forecasting, Mary went out without her umbrella. She meets him and says:*  
Mary: It is sunny today.
- (25) [Context] *Today, it is raining and both John and Mary saw it, though she does not know that he saw it. She jokingly says to him:*  
Mary: It is sunny today.

In this context of (25), John interprets Mary’s utterance as a lie. This example is a failure of a lie. In other words, an irony and this example share a commonality that the hearer (that is, in (25), John) can perceive that the speaker (that is, Mary) lies. However, while Mary’s utterance in (24) can be interpreted as an irony, Mary’s utterance in (25) cannot be interpreted as an irony. This example reveals that Haverkate’s condition cannot divide them.

How can we distinguish them? I argue that the key to dividing them is the concept of Ironic Situations, defined in (15). To divide these three examples into ironies and lies, I add the following condition to Haverkate’s condition:

- (26) *Contextual Ironies must include an Ironic Situation in their context previous contexts.*

In order to confirm my condition, consider the following example:

(27) [Context] *Today, it is rainy and Mary sees it, while John has not. John asks her as follows and Mary replies:*  
 John: How is the weather today?  
 Mary: It is sunny today.

The contents of Mary's utterance in (24)(26) and (27) do not have any difference. However, it is accepted as an irony in (24), while it is accepted as a lie in (27). (27) does not meet Haverkate's condition because John cannot perceive the fact that Mary lies. On the other hand, (24) meets both Haverkate's condition and my condition given in (26) because John can perceive the fact that Mary lies and invoke an ironic situation where John's forecasting is false, and Mary does not take her umbrella because of John's words.

I summarize the discussion in this subsection as follows:

(28) *Lies obtain if and only if the fact that the speaker lies is not conveyed to hearers, while Contextual Irony obtains if and only if the fact that the speaker lies is conveyed to hearers, and*  
 (29) *Lies do not include any Ironic Situation in their previous contexts, while Contextual Ironies must include some Ironic Situation in their previous contexts.*

## 5 JOKES

As stated in section 3, jokes can be regarded as flouting maxims and I argue that we must distinguish jokes from ironies. However, since both ironies and jokes can be analyzed as flouting maxims, the present analysis as it is does not distinguish jokes in this section from ironies. I will analyze jokes and investigate their defining characteristics. Although many jokes can also be interpreted as ironies, I will select examples which are not regarded as ironies in this section according to the purpose of distinguishing jokes from ironies.

Moreover, I advocate that there are more kinds of jokes than ironies and each kind of joke has a different mechanism, though they share a commonality of flouting maxims.

### 5.1 Jokes of Unrelated Interpretations

In this section, I analyze a type of joke, which I call 'Jokes of Unrelated Interpretations.' First, consider the following example:

## THE PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF IRONIES AND JOKES

(30) A: How long will your brother be in jail?  
 B: Thirty days.  
 A: What's the charge?  
 B: No charge. Everything's free. (Higashimori 2011: 7)

We can claim that flouting the Maxim of Relation is observed in (30). In this context, the meaning of the word 'charge' in the third utterance must be interpreted as 'crime'. However, B in uttering the fourth sentence interprets the meaning of the word as 'fee'.

This type of ambiguity should be distinguished from a simple misunderstanding of ambiguous word meanings. Consider the following:

(31) A: I went to the bank.  
 B: Did you need some money?  
 A: Oh, I went to the bank of the river.

Superficially, this example is similar to (30) because the meaning of the word 'bank' in the first utterance is misinterpreted as 'financial institution.' The speaker A believes the meaning of the word as 'land along the side of a river or lake' in this context. However, this example does not have a humorous effect. This can be regarded as a case of simple misunderstanding. What difference do they have?

I argue that (30) and (31) have a crucial difference. The word 'charge' in (30) is potentially ambiguous, while the word 'bank' in (31) is truly ambiguous. Though the word 'charge' has many senses, in the context of (30), we are forced to interpret the word in the third sentence as meaning 'crime'. I call this case potentially ambiguous. This is a case where the word or phrase in question is ambiguous, but is strongly biased to a particular meaning because of the surrounding context. On the other hand, in (31), we are not forced to interpret the word 'bank' as 'land along the side of a river or lake'. I call this case truly ambiguous. It is a case when the ambiguity is not biased in any direction. From this, we can regard potential ambiguity as the factor for this type of jokes. By the way, I define potential ambiguity as follows:

(32) Potential Ambiguity:

*An expression has a potential ambiguity if and only if the expression is originally ambiguous but can be forced to be interpreted as being disambiguated by the context or the speaker's and hearer's encyclopedic knowledge.*

(30) is based on the potential ambiguity at the level of lexical meanings. However, this ambiguity occurs at various levels. Also, we are not only forced to interpret the word or phrase in question by the context, but also by the speaker's and hearer's encyclopedic knowledge. Now, consider the following example:

(33) A lady went into a clothing store and asked, “May I try on that dress in the shop window?” “Well,” replied the sales clerk doubtfully, “don’t you think it would be better to use the dressing room?” (Yus 2008)

The joke in (33) is based on the syntactic ambiguity in the utterance ‘May I try on that dress in the shop window?’ This sentence can be analyzed either as [try on that dress] [in the shop window] or [try on that dress in the shop window]. That is, the locational PP can be taken to modify either the action of the event or the nominal ‘that dress’. We assume that we try on something in the dressing room at a clothing store. Consequently, we must interpret this utterance as employing the latter syntactic structure. However, the clerk intentionally interprets it as having the former structure. Needless to say, this can be regarded as flouting the Maxim of Relation because the last utterance is not an expected response to the appropriate interpretation of the first utterance.

Moreover, a potential ambiguity may occur at the pragmatic level. We can analyze the following examples in the same way as (30) and (33):

(34) Dad: Why did you get such a low score in that test?  
 Kid: Absence.  
 Dad: You were absent on the day of the test?  
 Kid: No, but the boy who sits next to me was. (Higashimori 2011: 10)

(35) Customer: "Excuse me, but I saw your thumb in my soup when you were carrying it."  
 Waitress: "Oh, that's okay. The soup isn't hot."

(<https://eikaiwa.dmm.com/blog/39080/>)

The kid’s utterance ‘Absence’ in (34) is pragmatically interpreted as ‘the kid’s absence’ in this context. This interpretation is strongly favored, since it matches the reason for the situation of ‘getting a low score’. However, the kid flouts the Maxim of Relation by making an unexpected utterance and forces the hearers to interpret the utterance as ‘absence of the boy who sits next to the kid’. In other words, the kid’s utterance has a potential ambiguity at the pragmatic level because the subject does not appear on the surface (but the interpretation can be specified by the context).

Similarly, a pragmatically potential ambiguity is involved in (35). We can specify that the customer intends to convey his anger of the waitress’s thumb being in his soup. However, the waitress intentionally interprets the customer’s utterance as expressing his worry about her burn. Although this interpretation can occur in another context, it is not plausible in the context of (35).

I summarize the discussion in this section as follows:

(36) *In unrelated interpretative jokes, the speaker flouts the Maxim of Relation.*  
 (37) *An utterance of this type must have a potential ambiguity which I defined in*

(32).

### 5.2 *Assumptive Jokes*

In this section, I will analyze jokes which are based on the hearers' assumptions. In this type of jokes, the flouting of maxims takes place indirectly. Let us consider the following examples and investigate the conditions for their invoking of funny effects:

(38) The CEO was scheduled to speak at an important convention so he asked one of his employees, Jenkins, to write him a punch, 20-minute speech. When the CEO returned from the big event, he was furious. "What's the idea of writing me an hour-long speech," he demanded. "Half the audience walked out before I finished." Jenkins was baffled. "I wrote you a 20-minute speech," he replied. "I also gave you the two extra copies you asked for." [\(http://eigoden.co.jp/joke/\)](http://eigoden.co.jp/joke/)

(39) A married man was unfortunate enough to fall into the hands of some aliens. They tried to communicate with him in the space ship but they could not understand each other. The man, afraid of being made their meal, thought quickly and desperately cried out, "Please don't eat me! I have a wife and kids...eat them instead!" [\(http://eigoden.co.jp/joke/\)](http://eigoden.co.jp/joke/)

In (38), the last utterance of Jenkins implies that the CEO gave a 60-minute speech because he read the manuscript that Jenkins wrote three times in total. We can analyze that the example indirectly flouts the Maxim of Quality and is based on an assumption which is supplied by our encyclopedic knowledge. In other words, the hearers of this joke assume that it is natural to read a manuscript only once and not to read other copies of it. This assumption enables us to notice a flouting of the Maxim of Quality.

We can analyze (39) in the same way as (38). The last utterance conflicts with our assumption that the husband will not give his wife and kids to aliens instead of him. And the conflict can be regarded as flouting the Maxim of Quality because most of us believe that husbands will not victimize their beloved ones.

On the other hand, the sources which form our assumptions are not only our encyclopedic knowledge, but also the context. Needless to say, many assumptive jokes are based on assumptions which are formed by both our encyclopedic knowledge and context. To illustrate that an assumption is made from a context as well as our encyclopedic knowledge, consider the following examples:

(40) A mother went into her son's room early one morning to wake up. "Rise and shine, son!" she said. "It's time for school." "I don't want to go to school," said the son.

"Give me two reasons why you don't want to go," said the mother.

"Well, the kids hate me, and the teachers hate me, too!"

"Those aren't good reasons I should go," said the son.

"Well, for one, you're fifty-four years old, and for another, you're the principal!"

(Live ABC 2010: 19)

(41) A jealous husband hired a private detective to check on the movements of his wife. The husband wanted more than a written report; he wanted video of his wife's activities. A week later, the detective returned with a video. They sat down together to watch it. Although the quality was less than professional, the man saw his wife meeting another man. He saw the two of them laughing in the park. He saw them enjoying themselves at an outdoor cafe. He saw them dancing in a dimly lit nightclub. He saw the man and his wife participate in a dozen activities with utter glee. "I just can't believe this," the distraught husband said. The detective said, "What's not to believe? It's right up there on the screen!" The husband replied, "I can't believe that my wife could be so much fun!"

(<http://eigoden.co.jp/joke/>)

In (40), the context forces us to assume that the son is a student. The last utterance reveals that the son is fifty-four years old and a principal. This indirectly flouts the Maxim of Quality because the hearers of this story are forced to believe that the son is a student. The difference between (38) (39) and (40) is in the main source of the assumption. The main source of the assumption in (38) and (39) is our encyclopedic knowledge, while it is the context in (40).

(41) also has a similar mechanism to (40). In the context, the husband suspects that his wife is having an affair with someone. We assume that if his wife is doing so, he will be very angry or sad about it. However, his last utterance demonstrates that he is pleased with her behavior. This utterance conflicts with our assumption which has been made from the context. On the other hand, this can be regarded as flouting the Maxim of Quality because we believe that the husband is angry or sad if his wife has an affair with someone.

We can summarize the discussion in this section as follows:

(42) *In the case of assumptive jokes, an indirect flouting of the Maxim of Quality is observed.*

(43) *The assumption which is made from the context and our encyclopedic knowledge must conflict with the content of the utterance working as a punch line or what it implies.*

5.3 *Puns*

In this section, I will analyze what are called ‘Puns’. Although you may think that this type of jokes is completely alien from the jokes which I analyzed in sections 5.1 and 5.2, they can also be analyzed in the Gricean theory. Consider the following examples:

(44) What did Godzilla eat when he arrived in New York?  
 The Big Apple. (Rissinger and Yates 1999: 54)

(45) What did the bee say when it returned to the hive?  
 Honey, I’m home. (Higashimori 2011: 9)

We can analyze that the utterance ‘The Big Apple’ in (44) has two meanings. The first meaning is ‘New York’ because ‘Big Apple’ is a nickname of New York. The second meaning is a kind of fruit. This can be regarded as flouting the Maxim of Manner because this utterance violates a submaxim of it, ‘Avoid ambiguity’. Moreover, this ambiguity is not resolved. The reason why this ambiguity is not resolved is that both of the two interpretations are relevant to the context. The first interpretation can be invoked from ‘New York’, while the second interpretation can be invoked from the word ‘eat’.

(45) can be analyzed in an identical way with (44). We can analyze that the word ‘honey’ has two senses: ‘a title for calling someone you love’ and ‘a sweet sticky substance produced by bees’. Both of these two interpretations are relevant to the context because the former can be activated by the bee’s action of ‘returning to the hive’ and the latter can be activated by ‘the bee’ itself. This ambiguity is not resolved within the content of the joke. This can also be regarded as flouting a submaxim of the Maxim of Manner.

Moreover, this phenomenon can also occur at the phonetical level. Let us consider the following example:

(46) “Which is the strongest day of the week?” “Saturday and Sunday. All the other days are weak days.” (Konishi and Higashimori 2004: 1725)

The phrase ‘weak days’ in the last utterance is homophonous: it can refer to ‘weak days’ and ‘weekdays’. Both of the two phrases are relevant in the present context because the former can be invoked from ‘the strongest’ and the latter can be invoked from ‘all the other days’. Of course, this can be regarded as flouting the submaxim of the Maxim of Manner, ‘Avoid ambiguity’.

We can summarize our present discussion as follows:

(47) *Puns must flout the submaxim of the Maxim of Manner, ‘Avoid ambiguity’.*

(48) *Puns must have two relevant interpretations. The ambiguity must not be resolved within the context of the joke.*

#### 5.4 *Interim Summary*

In sections 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3, I demonstrated that jokes are divided into three categories; ‘Jokes of Unrelated Interpretations’, ‘Assumptive Jokes’, and ‘Puns’. In addition, these categories have different defining characteristics. I summarize them as follows:

(49) **Jokes of Unrelated Interpretations**

*Jokes of Unrelated Interpretations can occur if and only if the speaker flouts the Maxim of Relation and the utterance must have a potential ambiguity which I defined in (32).*

(50) **Assumptive Jokes**

*Assumptive Jokes can occur if and only if the speaker indirectly flouts the Maxim of Quality and the assumption which is formed from the context or our encyclopedic knowledge conflicts with the content of the utterance or what it implies.*

(51) **Puns**

*Puns can occur if and only if the speaker flouts the submaxim of the Maxim of Manner, ‘Avoid ambiguity’. The utterance must have two relevant interpretations, and the ambiguity must not be resolved within the context of the joke.*

In the next section, I will show that my proposals provided by sections 4 and 5 can account for the structures of ironic jokes.

## 6 THE ANALYSIS OF IRONIC JOKES

In this section, I will analyze ironic jokes, using the analytic principles provided in sections 4 and 5. In section 1, I stated that I intend to investigate the relation between ironies and jokes. For my sake, it is very important to analyze and clarify the structures of ironic jokes because ironic jokes are, as it were, the intermediates between ironies and jokes and ironic jokes frequently appear in our everyday conversation. The examples in this section are selected from the jokes in which the speakers are likely to intend to criticize someone.

## THE PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF IRONIES AND JOKES

Firstly, consider the following example:

(52) She has two views of a secret. Either it's not worth keeping, or it's too good to keep. (<http://eigoden.co.jp/joke/>)

(53) Short skirts have a tendency to make men polite. Have you ever seen a man get on a bus ahead of one? (<https://eikaiwa.dmm.com/blog/39080/>)

We can analyze that (52) has two different effects, that is, an ironic effect and a funny effect. My proposals provided in sections 4 and 5 enable us to account for the reason that the example has two different effects. Firstly, the example can invoke an ironic situation where 'she has a loose tongue' because the second sentence implies that she easily gives away someone's secrets. She is the target of criticism, and in that sense, the example is an instance of irony. Next, the example meets the condition of Assumptive Jokes. Although we assume that 'a secret' means 'something that we must not tell others', the second sentence implies that she tells a secret to others. The content of the second sentence does not correspond with the property of a secret at all. This can be regarded as an indirect flouting of the Maxim of Quality and our assumption conflicts the implicature of the second sentence.

(53) can be analyzed in the same way as (52). By the first sentence, we can assume that the content of the following sentence is polite. However, the content of the second sentence is impolite because the sentence implies that men try to look up short skirts. The assumption which was made from the first sentence conflicts with the content of the second sentence. This can be also regarded as indirectly flouting the Maxim of Quantity. In other words, (53) meets the defining conditions of Assumptive Jokes. Moreover, this example can invoke an ironic situation where men try to look up short skirts. This action must be criticized.

This analysis can lead to a prediction that other types of jokes proposed in section 5 have similar structures to (52) and (53), namely, Assumptive Ironic Jokes. I will next analyze the examples of Jokes of Unrelated Interpretations and Puns. Secondly, consider the following examples. These examples are the ones of Unrelated Interpretations:

(54) Andy: My teacher's a peach.  
 Mandy: You mean she's sweet?  
 Andy: No, I mean she has a heart of stone. (Howell 2003: 49)

(55) (=13))  
 Teacher: Rita, what will you do when you get as big as your mother?  
 Rita: Go on a diet, miss. (Konishi and Higashimori 2004: 156)

In (54), the normal, that is, relevant interpretation of the word 'peach' is 'sweet' in our everyday conversation. However, Andy reveals that she intends to mean the word as 'a heart of stone'. This is because the core of a peach is very hard and stone-like,

which reminds Andy of his teacher who has a heart of stone. Although the word ‘peach’ has a potential ambiguity proposed in (32), Andy intentionally leads Mandy to the irrelevant interpretation. It can be regarded as flouting the Maxim of Relation. Since the example flouts the Maxim of Relation and the word ‘peach’ has a potential ambiguity, the example meets the defining characteristics of Jokes of Unrelated Interpretations. The example can invoke an ironic situation where the teacher has a heart of stone, meaning that, she is cruel, and she is taken as the victim of the ironic statement.

I can analyze (55) in the same way as (54). As stated in section 3, this example can be regarded as flouting the Maxim of Relation because the word ‘big’ in the teacher’s utterance is interpreted as ‘big in terms of her size and weight’, though the word relevantly means ‘big in terms of her ages’. This meets the defining conditions of Jokes of Unrelated Interpretations. Moreover, Rita’s utterance can activate an ironic situation where her mother is fat. This analysis exposes that the structures of (54) and (55) are parallel with (52) and (53).

Finally, let us consider the examples of Puns:

(56) Why did the teacher go to the eye doctor?  
She had problems with her pupils. (Yoe 2001: 118)

(57) What is the difference between Princess Diana and Tiger Woods?  
Tiger Woods had a better driver. (Higashimori 2011: 2)

(56) meets the defining conditions of Puns. The word ‘pupil’ in the second sentence can be interpreted in two ways, namely, ‘the small black round area in the middle of our eyes’ or ‘students’ and both interpretations are relevant because the former interpretation can be activated by the phrase ‘the eye doctor’ and the latter interpretation can be activated by the fact that she is a teacher. This can be regarded as flouting a submaxim of the Maxim of Manner, ‘Avoid ambiguity’, and the ambiguity in this conversation is not resolved. Moreover, the example can activate an ironic situation where her students cause problems.

(56) has a similar structure to (57). The second sentence denotes that ‘Tiger Woods had a better driver, but Princess Diana had a worse driver.’ The word ‘driver’ has two meanings: the former is ‘a golf club’ and the latter is ‘an operator of a car’. This ambiguity is not resolved because both interpretations are relevant. This can be regarded as flouting a submaxim of the Maxim of Manner, ‘Avoid ambiguity’. The example meets the defining conditions of Puns. Moreover, it can invoke an ironic situation where the operator of Princess Diana’s car was unskilled.

The discussion in this section revealed that we can analyze ironic jokes of Jokes of Unrelated Interpretations, Assumptive Jokes, and Puns in the same way. I can summarize the discussion in this section as follows:

## THE PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF IRONIES AND JOKES

- (58) *An Ironic joke meets the defining conditions of Jokes of Unrelated Interpretations, Assumptive jokes, or Puns.*
- (59) *An ironic joke can invoke an ironic situation.*

From the analysis, it is clear that ironies and the ironic aspect of ironic jokes have a difference from each other. In this section, I analyzed the examples which can be categorized into Non-contextual ironies because the examples (52) to (57) are not surrounded by any ironic situations before the conversations start. I proposed the two defining characteristics of Non-contextual ironies in section 4.2: ‘The ironic utterances must explicitly represent a contradiction between the speaker’s and the hearer’s recognition and some part of the linguistic expression’ and ‘non-contextual ironies must invoke an ironic situation by themselves’. Although the examples analyzed in this section meet the latter condition, they do not meet the former condition. In other words, an ironic joke partially meets the property of an irony. This is how these two rhetorical means are differentiated from each other.

I conclude that an ironic joke has all the properties of a kind of joke and a partial property of an irony. Some consequences which this fact may imply will be stated in the next section.

## 7 CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I proposed the defining conditions of ironies, jokes, and ironic jokes, using the Gricean theory. I conclude the discussion in this thesis as follows:

- (60) Ironies  
*Ironies can be categorized into Contextual Ironies and Non-contextual Ironies. Each category has the defining conditions and is regarded as flouting maxims.*
- (61) Jokes  
*Jokes can be categorized into Jokes of Unrelated Interpretations, Assumptive Jokes, and Puns. Each category has the defining conditions and is regarded as flouting maxims.*
- (62) Ironic Jokes  
*Ironic jokes have both of the effects of ironies and jokes. An ironic joke has both of the characteristics of one category among jokes and a part of ironies.*

The approach in this thesis can suggest some potentiality of the study of ironies and jokes. I will state any remaining issues and the potentiality of my analysis in this section.

The first point is the certainty of my analysis, especially, of jokes. The analysis in this thesis might be unreliable because I did not confirm whether the examples under my investigation are considered funny or not. This was clue to a lack of time and resources. Analyzing the examples which are regarded as funnier jokes can make the

investigation more reliable.

The second point is related to the defining of jokes. As stated in section 1.2, defining jokes is very difficult, while defining ironies is relatively easier. Therefore, many scholars have analyzed jokes without defining them. I defined jokes as expressions which have funny effects. Although this definition may be a general definition, the ‘funny effect’ has a difficulty. What makes you feel something is funny is different for each person. Therefore, I selected examples of jokes from joke books or examples of jokes mentioned in previous studies. If researchers make progress in their research of jokes, defining jokes will become possible.

The research of ironies and jokes still has many issues. It is my hope that my analysis and proposals in this thesis are helpful for the future research of ironies and jokes.

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