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Pragmatic Aspects of Humour in Eddie Izzard's Stand-Up Routines

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# 1 Introduction

This paper presents a pragmatic analysis of Eddie Izzard's stand-up routines. The prime motivation behind it was to describe humour strategies frequently employed by Izzard to elicit laughter from his audiences. The aim of this paper is to explore how the comedian's humour is created, perceived, and understood from three principal theoretical perspectives (incongruity, superiority, and release theory), with a special focus on the stand-up genre, its communicative aspects, and the role of conceptual blending in stand-up comedy.

The genre of stand-up comedy has a long-standing history that stretches all the way to the 16th and 17th century: the origins of modern-day stand-up can be traced back to the framework of the Renaissance *Commedia dell'arte*, and more recently to the developments in comedians' live stand-up sessions and featured TV performances in the 1960s and 1970s (Schwarz 2010, 9).

In the UK, stand-up grew out of music halls and gradually became known as 'variety' after the First World War – its popularity continued into the post-war period of the 1950s until the emergence of the television medium (Double 1991; Willis 2002). The stand-up performance became much less theatrical, and, given the enormous social and political changes of the 1960s, very much controversial – hence the transition from artistic and political conservatism of the variety to the more liberal form of entertainment showcased in Britain's working class clubs (ibid.).

However, problems of strict censorship did not surpass club comics either – it was not until the 1979 opening of the Comedy Store and the 1980 birth of the Comic Strip in London that a more alternative approach to comedy could flourish and take over the 1980s' mainstream (Double 1991, 196-200). Although this radical new approach to entertainment mellowed over the decades, interest in stand-up comedy continues to expand, with venues, comedians, and audience numbers alike on the increase.

The stand-up comedian whose material will be analysed is Eddie Izzard (b. 1962), a declared transvestite whose comic career started with street performing in the 1980s. The move into comedy clubs was gradual, with his first appearance at London's Comedy Store in 1987, followed by improvisational performances at his own club, Raging Bull, in Soho in the 1990s ('The Early Years' 2014). Izzard is best known for digressive, surreal, and free-associative comedy that gained him global success after his 1993 one-man show

*Live at the Ambassadors* ('Standup' 2014). He is still very much active today and performs stand-up gigs regularly.

As for his image, Eddie Izzard is a blend of smart suits and exaggerated make-up (Figure 1). He is a transvestite comedian dressing up as himself, not as a character, and whose appearance is, as noted by Willis, not out of keeping with comic traditions, i.e. the tradition of the male to dress as a female (2002, sec. 3.2). It needs to be stressed that Izzard's overt transvestism visually enhances the comic performance he delivers on stage, the details of which will be made clear in the analysis of his stand-up material.



Figure 1. Eddie Izzard performing stand-up. *Sources: Definite Article, Glorious, Dress to Kill.*

The data source chosen for the analytical part of this paper is a collection of three DVDs: *Definite Article* (1996), *Glorious* (1997), and *Dress to Kill* (1998). All three feature Eddie Izzard performing his material on stage in front of a live audience. These recordings were chosen because they display in detail Izzard's stand-up routines and humour strategies he frequently employs to elicit laughter.

The paper is organised as follows: the following section gives a theoretical overview of the three principal humour theories, followed by a brief section concerning communicative features of the stand-up form. Section 4 gives a general account of pragmatic inferencing, while Section 5 provides an outline of conceptual blending theory. The results of the pragmatic analysis are presented in Section 6, followed by Discussion and Conclusion.

## 2 Humour Theories

In order to explain the pragmatics of humour behind Izzard's stand-up material, several approaches to the study of humour need to be presented. These include a principal group of three theories examined by linguists such as Attardo (2011), Maemura and Masahide (2012), Raskin (1985), Vandaele (2002), and Yus (2004; 2008), and are as follows:

1. incongruity theory (Schopenhauer 1909; Kant 1914),
2. superiority theory (Hobbes 1651; Bergson 1914), and
3. release theory (Freud 1916).

This classification is the starting point for explaining how humour is created, perceived, and understood from different theoretical perspectives, the nature of which will be made clear in the following subsections.

### 2.1 Incongruity Theory

Propagated as the cognitive-perceptual approach to understanding humour, incongruity theory argues that laughter, as a result of a humorous incident, is evoked by the ambiguity that arises from two contrasting meanings (Schwarz 2010, 41). In other words, humour is achieved by conflicting two opposing conceptual meanings which, through the process of cognitive reinterpretation, are recognized as incongruous and, by the same token, considered amusing.

Schopenhauer explains that the humorous effect is made possible by "the sudden perception of the incongruity between a concept and the real objects which have been thought through it *in some relation* [emphasis added]" (Schopenhauer 1909, 95). What this means is that a reorganization of existing assumptions is in order if the mismatch between our perception and cognition is to be resolved. The incongruity can thereby be made congruous, and it is precisely this resolution that triggers the ludicrous effect (Shultz 2007; Suls 1972).

Kant's understanding of humour is somewhat different: he views it as something absurd and defines laughter as "an affection rising from the sudden transformation of a strained expectation into nothing" (1914, 171). This subversion of expectations can also

be interpreted as an alternation of relevance, i.e. a preferred interpretation shifts to an alternative one which is less easily accessible and, in humour theory, comic. However, as Curcó notes, what is left implicit by the incongruous utterance is information that can be taken for granted, and not information that will be relevant or, in this case, humorous in its own right (1996, 5).

Lastly, Koestler offers additional information alongside Schopenhauer's and Kant's lines of thought: he says that humour arises when two incompatible frames of references, which are normally perceived in concepts remote from each other, suddenly get associated together (quoted in Schwarz 2010, 44). This phenomenon, known as "bisociation of matrices", is one of the foundations upon which Fauconnier and Turner (2002) developed their *conceptual blending theory*, the framework of which will be presented in Section 4.1.

## 2.2 Superiority Theory

Unlike incongruity theory and its advocates, who focus on the cognitive and perceptual elements involved in recognizing and understanding humour, superiority theorists direct their attention to humour's social-behavioural aspect: by exercising power and control over the object(s) or person(s) being laughed at, humans experience a so-called *superiority effect*, i.e. a sudden feeling of supremacy over the laughable element(s) (Curcó Cobos 1997; Schwarz 2010; Willis 2002).

Hobbes considers humorous laughter to be the result of people's sudden glory arising from "the apprehension of some deformed thing in another, *by comparison whereof* [emphasis added] they suddenly applaud themselves" (1651, 36). Simply put, by mocking what they consider inferior, humans enhance their feelings of self-worth. This notion of contrast, as Willis observes, is also applicable to self-deprecating humour, because laughter can be directed at our (inferior) past selves (2002, sec. 1.1).

By comparison, Bergson sees laughter as "a liberating social force aimed at those who do not operate in a flexible, context-sensitive way" (1914, 16). What this means is that humour arises as a result of superiority feelings elicited by incongruous social behaviours – laughing at other people's faults and foibles serves as a social corrective, and plays an important role in maintaining social order (Schwarz 2010, 49).

Last but not least, Vandaele (2002) integrates superiority with incongruity theory: he links the problem-solving aspect of incongruity theory with the heightened self-esteem notion of superiority theory. Basically, incongruity creates a difficulty which can be resolved, and its subsequent solution causes feelings of superiority (Vandaele 2002, 225). Thus, understanding a joke leads to superiority feelings and relieves social pressures imposed by the incongruity (ibid.). It is precisely this *relief* that interests supporters of the release theory of humour, the basics of which will be covered in the following paragraphs.

## 2.3 Release Theory

Release theory, or tension-relief theory, as it is commonly referred to, takes on a rather psychoanalytical approach to humour. More specifically, it views laughter as a means of releasing tension accumulated by socially imposed constraints (Ferrar 1993, 13). While superiority theory addresses the emotional undertones of humour, most notably in the form of supremacy feelings, release theorists focus more on humour's psychological and physiological effects (Curcó Cobos 1997, 20).

Unsatisfied with either theories' account of laughter, Spencer defines it as "the sudden overflow of an arrested mental excitement" which he calls *surplus nervous energy* (Hirano 2010). This suppressed excess of unnecessary energy is then readily discharged in the form of laughter to make one feel liberated from whatever constrained them in the first place (Curcó Cobos 1997, 21-22).

Freud further elaborates Spencer's notion of discharge by linking it with forbidden feelings and thoughts: "the static [psychic] energy utilized in the inhibition has now suddenly become superfluous and neutralized because a forbidden idea came into existence … and is therefore ready to be discharged through laughter" (Freud 1916, 229-30). In other words, humour becomes an outlet for entertaining taboo topics, thereby relieving us from imposed censorship pressures.

By overcoming these barriers humans exhibit a surplus of energy expressed in the form of laughter. The psychological release from previously repressed ideas triggers the physiological reaction, i.e. the ludicrous effect. However, in spite of its extensive elaboration of humour mechanics, Freud's findings fail to explain the workings of

humour *per se*, making release theory insufficient for a practical analysis of humorous phenomena.

The ludicrous effect, be it a result of incongruity, superiority, or release-related stimuli, is of central importance to all three humour theories. Although each offers a detailed perspective on humour, none gives a fully comprehensive outlook on the subject. Furthermore, some elements overlap, making it difficult to discern between the theories. Therefore, all three will be employed in the pragmatic analysis of Eddie Izzard's stand-up, making this study as inclusive as it can possibly be under the given circumstances.

## 3 Communicative Aspects of Stand-Up Comedy

Before presenting pragmatic aspects of humour in Eddie Izzard's stand-up routines, certain characteristics of the stand-up genre need to be addressed. More specifically, some of its key communicative features will be explained in order to better understand the interactive processes involved in the model of stand-up comedy.

A stand-up act, as Double defines it, is a theatrical performance delivered within the context of formalized entertainment which involves a solo performer speaking directly to an audience with the intention of provoking laughter (1991, 4). The performer, i.e. the comedian, uses various verbal as well as non-verbal techniques to present his/her prepared material on stage in front of a live audience. It is this combination of material and performance, along with comedians' personal style and comedy skills, that makes the stand-up form a specific type of oral communication (Schwarz 2010, 89).

Moreover, linguistic performance is characterized as highly rehearsed, and it usually involves a series of well-planned texts which comprise of (a sometimes large) amount of pre-structured jokes (Attardo 2001, 62). This preconceived material is then routinely acted out in a theatrical performance, wherein the comedian, as noted by Veltrusky, will often impersonate various characters, usually by miming their gestures and complicated actions; by moving constantly from one spot to another; and by continuously changing pitch, loudness, and the speed of delivery in the course of the staged characters' dialogues, in accordance with the alternation of the speakers (quoted in Willis 2002, sec. 3.2).

By performing their humorous monologue on stage, comedians directly interact with an audience. Far from being mere passive recipients, audience members are actively

engaged in the communicative process, responding to stand-up comics' material by clapping, laughing, and/or heckling (Schwarz 2010, 321; Willis 2002, sec. Conclusion). This feedback not only allows comedians to assess whether their receiving audiences are (un)amused; it also prompts them to *react* accordingly, thereby exemplifying their spontaneous stand-up qualities: more often than not comedians will cleverly ad-lib portions of their routine material, or craftily improvise certain parts of the performance *in response to* [emphasis added] audiences' (lack of) reaction (Schwarz 2010, 96).

In short, a comedian's monologue is a hybrid of verbal and non-verbal phenomena whose humorous onstage performance reflects both linguistic and paralinguistic aspects of interactive oral communication, whereby comedians' intended meanings and suggested (comic) ideas are presently processed and mentally interpreted by a receiving audience. Exactly how meaning is conveyed and subsequently interpreted as humorous depends largely on co-textual and contextual factors, and this is where the role of pragmatic inferencing comes into play.

**4 Pragmatic Inferencing**

Since utterances are produced, processed, and consequently understood by various interlocutors across different types of linguistic and situational environments, their meanings are subject to constant communicative revaluation: the relative nature of these expressions thus accounts for ambiguity in language use, since the list of possible inferences to be drawn from an utterance is often open-ended (Wilson 1998, 7).

Despite the potentially infinite number of inferences that a given utterance may evoke, interlocutors are nonetheless able to communicate their intended meanings by virtue of pragmatic competence: they recognize co-textually and contextually relevant meanings through the process of selective interpretation, thereby pragmatically limiting the range of possible inferences implied or otherwise communicated by the speaker(s) (Fraser 2010, 15). Thus, audiences are able to correctly infer the intended (humorous) meaning of the comedian's utterance, and formally acknowledge it with laughter.

However, as pragmatic competence is conditioned by interlocutors' background knowledge, general cognitive abilities, and information from the immediate discourse context, its scope becomes highly individualised, which would also explain the varying

degree in audiences' reactions to the material – while some find it amusing, others are left in bemusement (Coulson and Oakley 2000, 178; Willis 2002, sec. 5.3.3).

Those that do recognize comedians' intended meanings by means of pragmatic inferencing processes cognitively link relevant co-textual and contextual elements, which are immediately conceivable in the current discourse space, with readily available mental representations of the scenarios acted out on stage.[1] These preconceived representations, which Fauconnier calls *mental spaces,* contain specific frames or conceptual partitions of individuals' perceived, imagined, remembered, or otherwise understood scenes, to which audience members refer in order to effectively process incoming information implied by stand-up comics' linguistic and theatrical performance(s) (Coulson and Oakley 2003, 52).

In order to better explain the connection between mental spaces and pragmatic inferencing processes, a closer look at conceptual blending theory needs to be taken before embarking on a practical humour analysis. The following subsection will briefly outline some of blending theory's general notions and pragmatic principles as presented by Fauconnier and Turner in their joint effort *The Way We Think* (2002).

## 5 Conceptual Blending Theory

Mental spaces are frequently used to partition incoming information about elements in speakers' referential representations by dividing it into concepts relevant to different aspects of a particular scenario (Coulson and Oakley 2000, 177). As such, they can be thought of as small temporary containers for relevant information about a specific domain (Coulson 1999, sec. 1). Although the representations in these spaces are quite minimal, their elaboration is nevertheless constrained by a substantial body of interlocutors' long-term background knowledge (Coulson 1997, 189).

Mental spaces are structured by *elements* that represent each of the discourse entities, and simple *frames* which represent relationships between them (Coulson 2005, 107). Since elements or objects in one mental space often correspond to elements or objects in other spaces, they can be linked together via *mappings* based on a number of different sorts of relations, including identity, similarity, analogy, and other pragmatic functions (Coulson and Oakley 2003, 53). These abstract correspondences between

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1. Langacker defines current discourse space (CDS) as a mental space "comprising those elements and relations construed as being shared by the speaker and hearer as a basis for communication at a given moment in the flow of discourse" (quoted in Feyaerts 2006, 66).

elements and frames in different spaces take place in the *conceptual integration network* (CIN), an array of metal spaces in which the processes of conceptual blending unfold (Coulson 2005, 109).

The conceptual landscape of a basic blend consists of two or more *input* spaces, a *generic* space containing structure common to all spaces in the network, and a *blended* space containing structures from each input and often an emergent structure of its own (Coulson 1999, sec. 1.1). Blends thus dynamically combine partial structures from each of the input spaces to produce an integrated mental scene containing concepts from multiple domains, thus reflecting the processes of conceptual integration or *conceptual blending* (Coulson 2005, 109).

As the imaginative process of meaning construction by which speakers create novel conceptualisations of events, blending is a potent tool for creating comic situations – that is why blending processes are seen as an inherent feature of humour, since humour frequently involves unlikely combinations of (un)related conceptual structures (Coulson 1999, sec. 1.2). Koestler, as already mentioned in Section 2.1, suggests that it is precisely this "bisociation" of two habitually incompatible matrices that produces the comic effect, and points out that both the content of the joke (*material*) and the way in which it develops (*performance*) affect its comic potential (quoted in Coulson 1999, sec. 1.2).

Thus, when two seemingly incompatible matrices are integrated, the result is more often than not humorous. However, part of the fun resides in getting the joke in the first place – by "unpacking" the blend, speakers are able to reconstruct the input spaces and solve the puzzle, but the initial challenge remains to activate the appropriate, i.e. relevant information in response to the suggested imagery and/or verbal c(l)ues (Coulson 1999, sec. 6). In stand-up comedy, the comic must provide enough information so that the audiences can recognize the input spaces, and this is often done on the basis of pragmatic inferencing. By linking relevant co-textual and contextual elements provided by the stand-up comic with information available in their long-term background knowledge, the audiences are able to draw relevant inferences, and get to the butt of the comic's joke.

The main inference occurs in the blended space, and frequently results in a frame readjustment, i.e. one sense is discarded in favour of another, thereby triggering a different set of presuppositions (Barcelona 2003, 87). The pragmatic reinterpretation of input spaces leads to an overall conceptual readjustment of the blended space, with potentially humorous consequences. The conceptual readjustment is made easier by

pragmatic pointers or clues towards plausible inferential pathways in the interpretation of a joke – these pathways are more often than not metonymic in nature, and as such constrain the range of possible inferences to be drawn from an explicit proposition (Barcelona 2003, 97). In other words, conceptual metonymy is vital to establishing connections between networks of mental spaces, and has an added inferential effect on the selective projection and interpretation of inferences (Coulson and Oakley 2003, 78).

Conceptual blending theory is, like most theories of meaning, an interpretive model (Coulson and Oakley 2000, 192). Therefore, this study will present blending with respect to other pragmatic vehicles for humour in Izzard's stand-up routines. The illustrative details of these processes are not included for the sake of academic brevity, and neither are the details about metonymic inferences and the connections between them.

## 6 Pragmatic Analysis of Humour in *Definite Article*, *Glorious,* and *Dress to Kill*

Upon reviewing the contents of the said DVDs, it becomes apparent that Izzard creates humour by frequently employing incongruity, superiority, release, and blending tactics in his stand-up routines, often combining them with (improvised) elements of linguistic and paralinguistic performance(s) to elicit laughter from the audiences.

Since it is beyond the scope of this paper to clarify *all* the pragmatic aspects of humour present in Izzard's comedy, the author will focus only on a selected number of examples that will serve to illustrate pragmatic features of humour observable in Izzard's stand-up performances. In addition, one example may serve to illustrate several pragmatic strategies in order to show different theoretical approaches to the same humorous phenomenon.

For the purpose of this paper, the author uses modified transcription conventions employed by Schwarz (2010, 354-56) in order to indicate verbal as well as non-verbal elements in Izzard's stand-up performances. The actual transcript conventions may be found in Table 1 in the appendix to this study.

### 6.1 Incongruity Tactics

Izzard often pretends to misunderstand linguistic expressions by subverting their contextually salient meanings. In Chapter 5 of *Glorious*, titled *Hopscotch and Honey,* he

exemplifies this by hyper-understanding the lexico-conceptual structure of the word *beekeeper:*

(1) {holds out hand} BEE:KEEPERS AS WELL. beekeepers, <yes>.

beekeepers. >they- they've got to want to be<,

((enthusiastically)) >"I want to be a beekeeper<…

I wanna {holds imaginary container} keep.. bees. ((audience laughs))

I wanna- >don't want 'em to get away<,

{stares lucidly} I wanna <keep 'em>. ((audience laughs))

they have TOO MUCH FREEDOM. ((audience laughs))

I want bees on elastic {points to hand},

so when they get pollen {points at imaginary pollen},

{points back at hand} they COME BACK HERE. ((audience laughs))

Izzard's alternative interpretation of the phrase *to keep bees* ("to physically confine bees"), is incompatible with the audience's preferred interpretation ("to house bees in apiaries"), and causes incongruity – the audience need to activate the intended sense of the verb *keep* ("to hold or store in a given place"), implied by Izzard's hand gesticulation and expressive voice quality, to correctly infer the comedian's intended message. In addition, the comments *they have too much freedom* and *I don't want them to get away* are co-textual implications which activate the intended sense of the verb *keep* ("to restrain or constrain"), and allow the audience to pragmatically infer Izzard's humorous message. Thus, it is through the pragmatic reinterpretation of the stand-up performance that the audience are able to successfully resolve the incongruity and appreciate its comic quality.

In terms of blending tactics, this example can be analysed as follows: in the first input space there is the conventional meaning of the word *beekeeper;* in the second input space there is the other meaning, construed by the alternative sense of the verb *keep* ("to contain") plus the suffix *-er* ("the person who carries out the action"); the second meaning is additionally triggered by Izzard's theatrical performance, which is a non-verbal input to the blend; the two meanings are opposed in the blended space and create an incongruity; this incongruity is resolved by logically connecting elements from multimodal inputs, whereby the audience consequently arrive at the intended humour behind Izzard's stand-up performance, and subsequently acknowledge it with laughter.

A similar reinterpretation process is needed to understand Izzard's intended use of the phrase *to follow in somebody's footsteps* to describe the avid beekeeper in question:

(2) {points to his left side} my father was a beekeeper before me,
{points to the left again} HIS father was a beekeeper before him.
I wanna walk in their footsteps..,
and their footsteps were like this",
{starts to run on stage} "AAAAAAAAAAAAAAH. ((audience laughs))
AAAAAAH. I'm covered in bee:s. {stops centre-stage} °aaaaaaaaaaaaah°.
{hands still in air} covered in bee:s". ((audience continues laughing))

Izzard subverts the expected idiomatic interpretation ("to continue the same tradition or do the same job that somebody has done before") in favour of an alternative hyper-interpretation ("to imitate somebody's style of walking") to create a resolvable incongruity: the intended sense of the expression is theatrically implied by Izzard's physical movement and (non-)verbal vocalisation, which allow the audience to infer the literal meaning of the utterance – it is through pragmatic revaluation of the multimodal stand-up performance that the incongruous becomes congruous, which makes it an important tool for understanding Izzard's incongruity-related humour techniques.

Furthermore, this is also a blending example: it contains one input space with the figurative meaning of tradition, which is co-textually activated by the word *father;* and another input space with the literal meaning, which is spatially signalled by Izzard's non-verbal performance. These two meanings create an unexpected incongruity in the blended space, which the audience resolve by logically linking multimodal elements from both inputs. Moreover, running the blend results in both idiomatic and literal interpretation, because the word *their* in the phrase *to walk in their footsteps* refers to the blend *beekeepers,* and therefore triggers both meanings simultaneously: "doing the same job" thus implies "containing bees", and "walking the same way" infers "running away from bees" – by adding information from the previous multimodal stand-up routine and using its internal logic, Izzard creates the present performance, thereby exhibiting a logical progression of routines which rely on incongruity tactics to construct humour.

Apart from intentionally misinterpreting words and phrases, Izzard also pretends to misunderstand familiar concepts. For example, in Chapter 14 of *Definite Article,* titled *From Einstein to Pavlov,* he redefines the famous mass–energy equivalence formula:

(3) >so anyway he did, he came up with the e equals m c squared<,
and there must've been some physicist at the time going.. {examines formula}
((surprised)) "E equals m c squared? I had F equals m c squared,
°oh damn! {walks away in dismay} ((audience laughs))
{returns pointing to formula} (2.0) so: close°" ((audience laughs))
(5.0) f for {looks to the left} <fudge>. ((audience laughs))

Here the incongruity arises as a result of two conflicting meanings: while the audience interpret the formula in terms of Einstein's theory of relativity concept ("energy equals mass times the speed of light squared"), Izzard proposes an alternative interpretation ("improbable physics concept") that thwarts the audience's expectations. Faced with a conceptual mismatch, the audience have to reorganize their existing assumptions about the theory of relativity concept, and to establish meaningful connections between their preferred interpretation and the alternative interpretation offered by Izzard to get to the humorous resolution. Thus, it is through conceptual (re)adjustment that the incongruous is made congruous, therefore leading to a ludicrous effect.

Izzard's unexpected formulation ("fudge equals mass times the speed of light squared") is a blend – its first input space contains the mass–energy equivalence formula with which Einstein sought to calculate the energy of an object ("the correlation between mass and energy"), while the second input space contains the other physicist's algebraic equation with which s/he attempts to calculate an unknown variable ("the multiplication of mass and the speed of light squared"). Thus, Izzard's physicist is working on the opposite end of the equivalence formula, unsure of what s/he is supposed to be looking for – unlike Einstein – which consequently gives rise to comic incongruity. Moreover, the comment *so close* implies the close relationship of *F* and *E* in the English alphabet – the other physicist's laughable result is only alphabetically close to Einstein's, and far away from being mathematically meaningful or relevant. The formulation $F = mc^2$ is therefore a meaningless and unimportant string of letters made by a physicist who has no idea what s/he is doing. In addition, the utterance *f for fudge* could be interpreted as a euphemism

for *fuck* on the basis of Izzard's soft-spoken voice, thereby making the joke even funnier – Izzard uses the quality of his voice to infer this, which is also a multimodality effect.

Because they are aware of the relationship the mass–energy equivalence formula stands for, the audience know the right way of looking at Einstein's equation. Izzard's physicist, on the other hand, is unaware of the internal logic behind the mathematical expression, and wrongly interprets the $E = mc^2$ formula. Thus, it can be said that the audience mocks the *in*-expert physicist in question precisely because of this *in*-congruous quality s/he possesses in the blend – the audience laugh both because they feel superior, and because they are able to resolve the incongruity at hand, which is why this example is also analysable in terms of superiority theory as presented in Section 2.2.

Izzard likes to play with familiar concepts, and in Chapter 3, titled *Squeezy Squeezy Thing,* he reframes the common process of examining fruit in a supermarket. More specifically, he focuses on one particular aspect of testing fruit's ripeness:

(4) it's a test- squeezy thing that you've seen French chefs do on television,
{imitates squeezing fruit} "<o:h squeezy, o:h>.." ((weak audience laughter))
but.. I have no frame of reference, so I'm going {squeezes fruit} <°o:h°>.
{looks to the left} is that good? erm. ((audience laughs))
{squeezes fruit} I'm squeezing about this much,
{looks to the right} is that good squeezing? ((audience laughs))

Again, the incongruity arises as a result of two incompatible interpretations: the expected meaning that the audience have in mind ("testing ripeness") is intentionally subverted by a less accessible meaning ("exerting pressure") inferred by the comedian, which causes the humorous reaction. Izzard uses pragmatic multimodal pointers, i.e. linguistic and paralinguistic clues, to imply his intended message, thereby allowing the audience to arrive at the intended meaning of his message on the basis of pragmatic inferencing.

Izzard's subversion relies on the fact that people squeeze fruit in order to test its ripeness – their assessment is based on tactile experiences, i.e. familiar memories of how a ripe fruit of some sort should feel like. In the blend Izzard lacks this *frame of reference,* and hence cannot compare what he is feeling to a previous tactile memory, thus rendering his squeezing useless. Izzard comically exaggerates this by involving others in the testing process, as if they could possibly give him their own tactile memories, which is ludicrous

and hence amusing. In addition, by demonstrating his squeezing technique *(I'm squeezing about this much)* and asking if it is appropriate *(is that good squeezing?),* Izzard refers to the type of squeezing, as if there were a correct way of doing it. The humour in the blend is created by multimodal means, whereby the comedian's stage input is blended with the linguistic input to reveal Izzard's apparent unfamiliarity with either what he is doing or how it should feel like, which strikes the audience as comic and thus provokes laughter.

Izzard frequently relies on theatrical performance to create humour. In particular, he does a lot of improvisations based on miming techniques. In Chapter 11 of *Glorious,* titled *Robin the Saint,* he enacts a scene between Bin, a wannabe Robin Hood character, and a horseman travelling through Sherwood Forest. In the scene the horseman refuses to give Bin money on the account that s/he is well-situated, which disrupts Bin's plans. It is at the end of the scene that Izzard's horse-riding technique takes a rather unexpected turn:

(5) ((in Bin's voice)) {looks left} >"I can't- that's no good,
   {pointing to the left} I can't steal from people who are comfortable
   {points to the right} and give to the moderately impoverished,
   that's not gonna…< {simultaneously points to both sides} ((audience laughs))
   (2.0) it's not gonna swing, is it?"
   (2.0) ((in horseman's voice)) {on horseback} "well it's not my fault.
   I'm just here on my pogo stick." {starts jumping} ((audience laughs))

The contextually preferred interpretation ("riding on a horse") is substituted for a less obvious pragmatic inference ("riding a pogo stick") through theatrical performance: by using the same physical movement, i.e. riding motion, Izzard spatially implies an alternative interpretation to infer a less salient meaning, which is in contrast to the meaning inferred by the audience. It is precisely this substitution that facilitates the comic situation, which the audience correctly infer through the process of pragmatic revaluation signalled by Izzard's immediate non-verbal cues and improvised verbal performance.

Here the incongruity arises as a result of a frame clash: Izzard's two make-believe worlds ("horseman in Sherwood Forest" and "person riding a pogo stick") are juxtaposed on stage via conceptual metonymy. More specifically, Izzard's stage action of riding on a horse and riding a pogo stick look the same – one progressive motion can thus be used to denote both conceptual frames at the same time (Figure 2). It is this metonymical link and

the overall multimodal input that allow Izzard to subvert the contextually activated horse-riding frame in favour of a less obvious jumping frame so as to facilitate a comic situation, and to consequently elicit a humorous response from the audience.



Figure 2. Izzard in *Robin the Saint* from riding on a horse to jumping on a pogo stick. *Source: Glorious.*

Paralanguage is also a part of Izzard's observed ad-libbing techniques – he frequently does comic improvisations based on paralinguistic elements of his (non-)verbal performance, which often rely on incongruity tactics. In Chapter 3, titled *Noah on Speed,* Izzard's theatrical imitation of sawing becomes a vehicle for another imitation:

(6) {sawing in small strokes} but sawing, i- it has a difficult start-off,
     {sawing strokes increase} and then it goes into the better bit
     and then in the end it's back into… {sawing in fast strokes} ((sawing noise))
     ((audience laughs))
     and after a while Noah realized he was actually punching a baboon.
     ((sawing noise turns into baboon call)) {poking imaginary baboon on the left}
     ((audience laughs)) {moves left}
     ((as baboon)) {defending} "stop hitting me! {moves right to poke the baboon}
     {moves left} ((as baboon)) {defending} leave me alone, I'm trying to sleep!"
     ((audience laughs))

Through Izzard's erroneous non-verbal vocalisation the audience infer a contextually salient interpretation ("sawing sound"), which Izzard subverts for an alternative interpretation ("monkey sound"), thereby creating a referential ambiguity – because it is perceived in a concept pragmatically incompatible with the one evoked by (para)linguistic evidence, the onomatopoeic expression becomes incongruous, and subsequently triggers a comic response. The audience are able to infer Izzard's intended meaning through the processes of pragmatic reinterpretation and conceptual readjustment, thereby arriving at the comedian's humorous implication and consequently acknowledging it with laughter.

Again, as in the previous example, the incongruity arises as a result of a frame clash: the two make-believe worlds ("Noah sawing wood" and "Noah poking a baboon") are juxtaposed via metonymic links. More specifically, the sawing frame and the monkey frame are metonymically connected via the same stage action and onomatopoeic sound – this combination of movement and noise allows Izzard to subvert the audience's preferred interpretation of his stage and (para)linguistic performance ("sawing wood") in favour of a less obvious but pragmatically inferred meaning ("punching a baboon"). Izzard is thus able to construct humour on the basis of multimodal means by combining verbal and non-verbal inputs to create a comic situation, making him a versatile and skilled performer whose stand-up routines are progressive, innovative, and downright amusing.

### 6.2 Superiority Tactics

In *Dress to Kill* Izzard exhibits some of his finest superiority-related humour tactics. In Chapter 17, titled *One Step for Man,* he explains why the United Kingdom never joined in the 1960s' space race, and stages an imaginary British Moon mission to prove the point:

(7) we didn't have enough money to put a <man>..
    in a tracksuit up a LADDER! ((audience laughs))
    (2.0) I mean I would've been there
    {moves left} "GO: MAN, go."
    {climbs ladder on right} "I'm goin', I'm goin', 'ang on." ((audience laughs))
    {looks down} "just hang on to the ladder!" ((audience continues laughing))

In comparison to American and Soviet missions, British efforts to venture into space were modest due to lack of government funding. Izzard over-exaggerates the problematic funding situation by presenting a comic attempt to send a man to the Moon without the use of expensive equipment, thereby creating an absurd situation which causes a ludicrous effect. This superiority tactic aims to expose UK's *inferior* position, implied by Izzard's humorous fantasy, and consequently evokes supremacy feelings that the (American) audience exhibit by laughter.

Being English, Izzard ridicules his own kind here – he mockingly presents British technological inferiority in the form of a ladder expedition *in contrast to* the advantageous Apollo programme, thus exhibiting a self-deprecating strategy to create superiority-motivated humour. This contrast is expressed in the cosmonaut concept, i.e. the ladder-climbing tracksuit man is an inferior version of an equipped astronaut flying off into space. Also, Izzard's climbing motion is a pragmatic inference with which he implies slow upward movement, as opposed to the rocket speed of a spacecraft launch. Thus, the inferiority is presented and interpreted on the lexico-conceptual level through pragmatic inferencing.

Izzard's staged rendering of an improbable space expedition is a multimodal blend that features several frames of a generic spaceflight scene. Each of these frames allows for two separate input spaces, i.e. the American and British one: the body suit ("space suit" vs. "tracksuit"), spacecraft ("rocket" vs. "ladder"), equipment ("professional" vs. "mundane"), and ascent ("space launch" vs. "ladder climbing"). These two separate input spaces are simultaneously projected onto their respective overarching frames and onto the overall spaceflight scene via metonymic multimodal connections, resulting in a ludicrous blend that the audience find amusing and consequently greet with laughter.

Another example of superiority-related humour can be observed in Chapter 4, titled *American Dream,* where Izzard caricaturizes the lack of historical places in the US:

(8) {centre-stage} and, erm… I grew up in Europe,
where the history comes from.. and erm. ((audience laughs))
((audience claps)) (2.0) oh yeah.
you tear your history do:wn man!
thirty years old, let's {hammering} SMASH it to the floor
and put {lowers hands} a CAR PARK here. ((weak audience laughter))

Izzard juxtaposes Europe and North America in terms of preserved cultural heritage, and posits that the Old Continent's varied abundance in historical legacy results from a more sensitive conservational approach, as opposed to US' appropriated nonchalance towards antiquities. The lack of appreciation for historical landmarks is pragmatically implied by Izzard's hammering motion, whereby he infers the violent destruction of North American cultural heritage, and its subsequent replacement with contemporary architecture. Thus, Izzard comically caricaturizes US' insensitive behaviour towards cultural history as incongruous in comparison with expected conservational practices, thereby inferring European superiority in preserving its historical contents.

In this case, blending operates on the attitudinal disanalogy between the European and North American approach to heritage: while Izzard links the preservation of history with the European input space, he counters the practice in the North American input space by physically staging US' apparent destructive behaviour towards legacy. The devastating lack of appreciation for historical contents is signalled by multimodal means, i.e. Izzard's smashing motion. For Izzard, the lack of conservation leads to a lack of heritage, and that is why he is able to say that history comes from Europe. By doing so, he jocularly mocks the American audience, eliciting only a weak laughter at the end of the excerpt.

Furthermore, Izzard ridicules the American concept of history by referring to a restoration effort he witnessed on television while on the US leg of his *Dress to Kill* tour:

(9) I have seen it in stories, I saw- {scratches right ear} >you know<
    something in- erm, e:rm, a programme on,
    something in.. MIAMI!
    and they were saying
    {points with both hands to left} "we've redecorated this building
    to how it looked over {turns right bending backwards}
    <FIFTY YEARS AGO>". ((audience laughs))
    >and people are going< {turns quickly to the left}
    ((in dismay)) "NO:, SURELY NOT, NO:! ((weak audience laughter))
    <no one was {swipes with left hand} ALIVE then>". ((audience laughs))

By putting stress on the historical time to which the building was renovated, i.e. fifty years ago, Izzard infers a sense of playful ridicule pragmatically implied by his verbal performance – he intentionally employs a louder voice volume and slower speech delivery to dramatically overstate the time period. By doing so, he mockingly implies the relative shortness of a fifty-year span in humankind history, thereby provoking a subtle ludicrous effect. In addition, he enacts American people's overreaction to hearing this piece of information by negating the existence of human life prior to that historical period, thus comically exaggerating the imagined scenario to create a humorous situation, which consequently elicits a ludicrous reaction from the audience. The observed use of paralinguistic techniques and stage performance is a multimodal strategy with which Izzard additionally emphasizes the laughable element, i.e. the short-sighted view that Americans have on history, thereby also facilitating superiority-motivated humour.

Here the blend arises as a result of time compression: whereas the known history of humankind stretches over several millennia, Izzard's staged audience conceptualise it as a short time period lasting up to half a century. The imagined American audience react with disbelief when presented with the fact that a man-made building was renovated to how it looked over fifty years ago, because they (erroneously) believe that humanity did not exist at that time. The idea that no humans were alive more than fifty years ago is absurd, and thus triggers a ludicrous response from the real, i.e. physical audience. Because they know the correct way of looking at humankind history, the real audience feel superior to Izzard's make-believe audience, and therefore exhibit superiority feelings by laughing at their uninformed and hence inferior counterpart.

In Chapter 5, titled *Empire,* Izzard discusses the subject of cousin marriage among royals. More specifically, he addresses the detrimental genetics behind the practice, and exemplifies the case in point with a humorous portrayal of a royalty member:

(10) (1.0) {dancing} that's why there's no, you know,
    crazy royals-, {stops dancing} they're all kind of
    {handshakes} ((posh accent)) "hello, hello, what do you do
    ((surprised)) oh you're a PLUMBER!
    ((delightfully)) what on <E:arth> is that?" {grins} ((audience laughs))

In this case humour arises on the basis of knowledge comparison: whereas the audience know who a plumber is ("a person specializing in plumbing systems"), a staged royalty member has no clue as to what the word *plumber* actually refers. More specifically, s/he is practically unfamiliar with the concept denoted by the word, thereby exhibiting lack of common knowledge, which makes this noble individual intellectually inferior to the common folk. As a result, the audience express their superiority feelings by laughing at the make-believe person of rank, thereby acknowledging their intellectual supremacy not only over the staged individual, but also over members of royalty in general.

This example can also be explained using release theory: by mocking persons of superior social status, Izzard is subverting their assigned superordinate position, thereby releasing accumulated social tension. More specifically, Izzard ("an inferior") defies the expected social etiquette by poking fun at a royal member ("a superior"), disrespectfully portraying a person of nobility as a daft and clueless individual, in the effort to liberate the audience and himself from behavioural pressures ("social conformity") imposed by the society – the undermining of royalty ("authority") thus becomes a vehicle for releasing tension accumulated by imposed constraints of the social hierarchy, which manifests itself in the form of energy discharge, i.e. laughter.

Ultimately, this humorous scene may be explained in terms of blending theory: Izzard's make-believe royalty member is a multimodal part-whole representation of the royalty. More specifically, the staged individual represents Izzard's imaginary concept of royalty in that s/he simultaneously incorporates its two separate mental frames, namely the "accent" frame and the "knowledge" frame. The former is inferred paralinguistically by Izzard's posh voice quality, and the latter linguistically by the phrase *what on Earth is that?,* whereby the word *that* refers to the word *plumber* – the unfamiliarity and surprise with which the staged individual reacts prompt the audience to infer that the royalty lack common knowledge and are therefore intellectually inferiority to them, which is why the audience react with superiority feelings, i.e. laughter.

Izzard's observed superiority tactics are multimodal in that Izzard creates, infers, and ultimately conveys his intended comic ideas and humorous messages on the basis of multimodal means – the witty quality of Izzard's superiority-motivated tactics stems from associative multimodal input, whereby Izzard often complements verbal elements of his linguistic performance with non-verbal stage performance, and *vice versa,* to construe the comedy dynamics for an engaging and utmost entertaining stand-up show *par excellence.*

*6.3 Release Tactics*

Last but not least, Izzard routinely includes taboo topics in his stand-up performances. More specifically, Izzard likes to discuss cross-dressing on stage by referring to himself as an obvious example. In Chapter 2, titled *Male Tomboy,* he touches upon the subject of cross-dressers' sexual preference, and provides an alternative term to *transvestite* in order to clarify the often misconceived notion about transvestites' sexual orientation:

(11) {points ahead} 'cause, 'cause if you're a transvestite,

you're actually a {steps left pointing ahead} MALE TOMBOY.

that's where the sexuality.. {steps to right} is, ((audience laughs))

yeah. {steps to left} it's NOT-  {points left} it's NOT DRAG QUEEN.

{still pointing to left} no, >gay men have got that covered<.

and, er:m… {steps to right} ((weak audience laughter))

{points ahead} this is male TOMboy, and..

{scratches nose} >people do get them mixed up.

they put transvestite there {points to left}

{spreads hands to sides} "°no, no, no, no°".

{indicates gap} little bit of a crowbar< {widens gap} separation,

thank you. ((weak audience laughter))

{nods} >and gay men would I think agree<. ((weak audience laughter))

and, er… it's- it's {points to left} MA:LE lesbian,

{pointing to left again} THAT's really where it is, okay? ((audience laughs))

By representing transvestites as male tomboys and lesbians, Izzard is trying to explain the difference between male cross-dressers and drag queens: according to Izzard, the first are predominantly heterosexual, but are often mistaken to be homosexual as the latter because of the way both groups dress. Here Izzard views the term *transvestite* ("male in feminine clothing") in relation to its counterpart *tomboy* ("female in masculine clothing") with regard to apparel and sexuality – both groups dress as the opposite sex and are, by definition, heterosexual. In doing so, Izzard offers an alternative description ("male tomboy") to the usual definition of *transvestite* ("male cross-dresser"), adding the notion of sexuality to the already delicate subject of cross-dressing.

Moreover, Izzard uses the term *lesbian* in a new fashion to further clarify the distinction between transvestites' and drag queens' sexual orientation: while it is true that lesbians and most drag queens are homosexual, this is not the case with the majority of transvestites – by implying that lesbians are "females who prefer the *female* sex" instead of "females who prefer the same sex", Izzard is able to refer to transvestites as being the *male* counterpart of lesbians. Thus, it is this liking of females that connects transvestites to lesbians, hence the coined term *male lesbian.*

Izzard's viewpoints are humorous in that they are an unexpected combination of otherwise familiar concepts (*transvestite, male, tomboy, lesbian*) put together into a novel structure (*male tomboy, male lesbian*) in the hope of clarifying the issue of transvestites' sexual orientation. Izzard hereby addresses a somewhat sensitive topic in a comic way, making it less serious and more amusing – the resulting laughter is, so to say, a discharge of built-up nervous energy relating to the audience's supressed ideas, thoughts, and feelings about the taboo at hand, i.e. Izzard's overt transvestism.

Furthermore, this whole excerpt is a blend: it features three separate input spaces – tomboy, drag queen, and lesbian – juxtaposed in terms of gender ("male" vs. "female"), sexual orientation ("heterosexual" vs. "homosexual"), and type of clothing ("masculine" vs. "feminine"). These three frames are metonymically mapped onto the target concept – transvestite – to create a unique mixture: the resulting blend is a simultaneous projection of selected elements from each of the input spaces, with an emergent structure of its own. Because of its unique quality and hybrid character, the audience find the conceptual blend funny, and hence react with laughter.

In addition to blending, Izzard relies on multimodality to denote the categorical distinction between transvestites and drag queens: by moving from side to side on stage (Figure 3) and later indicating the in-between gap (Figure 4), Izzard both physically and visually implies a sense of distance between the two conceptual spaces, thereby also inferring the conceptual distinction between transvestites and drag queens. Izzard hence additionally emphasizes the humorous element, i.e. the (in)distinct difference between two distinct domains. By complementing his verbal performance with non-verbal stage action, Izzard once again shows his proficiency at implementing combined multimodal humour strategies to progressively create a comic situation, exhibiting in the process the full range of his unique qualities as a skilled and innovative stand-up performer.
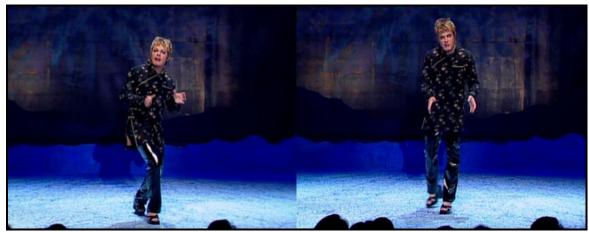
Figure 3. Eddie Izzard as seen in *Male Tomboy,* moving from his left side to his right. *Source: Dress to Kill.*



Figure 4. Izzard indicating a "little bit of a crowbar separation" in *Male Tomboy. Source: Dress to Kill.*

## 7 Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to study humour strategies frequently employed by comedian Eddie Izzard to elicit laughter from his audiences. More specifically, this paper explored how Izzard's humour is created, perceived, and understood from the perspectives of incongruity, superiority, release, and blending theory.

The pragmatic analysis of a selected number of examples from *Definite Article, Glorious,* and *Dress to Kill* shows that Izzard employs combinations of incongruity, superiority, release, and/or blending tactics to elicit laughter from his audiences – these tactics are multimodal in that Izzard creates, infers, and ultimately conveys his intended comic ideas and humorous messages on the basis of multimodal means. The witty quality of Izzard's humour tactics stems from associative multimodal input, whereby Izzard often complements linguistic performance with stage performance, and *vice versa,* to construe a progressively amusing stand-up show *par excellence.*

The paper also addressed the importance of pragmatic inferencing in recognizing Izzard's suggested comic ideas and intended humorous meanings: through the process of selective interpretation, the audiences are able to single out co-textually and contextually relevant meanings, pragmatically implied by (non)verbal elements in Izzard's linguistic and paralinguistic performance(s), to get to the butt of the comedian's jokes, and formally acknowledge them with laughter and/or applause.

The roles of blending and multimodality, it is suggested, contribute to the overall understanding of stand-up humour, since they allow for a more detailed analysis of both the material and the performance, and as such should be integrated within the theoretical humour framework in the hopes of providing a more comprehensive outlook on stand-up comedy dynamics. Izzard's combined strategies call for an integrated approach to humour study, not only concerning the genre of stand-up comedy, but also similar types of equally humorous phenomena, e.g. comedy films, sitcoms, cartoons, and the like.

In conclusion, humour is anything but simple – it is an interactive construct which, however straightforward it may appear, operates on all sorts of intricate relationships and complex connections among various types of cognitive mechanisms; it is conditioned by interlocutors' referential knowledge, general cognitive abilities, and the information from the immediate discourse environment; in stand-up, it is a combination of varied linguistic techniques and communicative strategies; it is a product of the human need to reveal incongruities, emphasize superiority, or release tension; it aims to make the familiar appear different, exciting, and amusing. So, yeah…

**Abstract**

The primary objective of this paper is to describe humour strategies frequently employed by comedian Eddie Izzard to elicit laughter from his audiences. A group of three principal humour theories is taken into account: *incongruity, superiority,* and *release theory,* along with the *theory of conceptual blending,* to explore how the comedian's humour is created, perceived, and understood from various linguistic perspectives. Certain characteristics of the stand-up genre are also addressed, namely its key communicative features and the interactive processes involved in the model of stand-up comedy. This paper also explores the role of *pragmatic inferencing* in processing the comedian's intended meanings and suggested comic ideas, and links it with verbal as well as non-verbal elements in Izzard's stand-up performances. The pragmatic analysis of a selected number of examples shows that Izzard employs a combination of incongruity, superiority, release, and/or blending tactics, coupled with improvised elements of linguistic and paralinguistic performance(s), to elicit laughter from his audiences. These tactics are *multimodal* in that Izzard creates, infers, and ultimately conveys his intended comic ideas and humorous messages on the basis of multimodal means – the witty quality of Izzard's humour tactics stems from associative multimodal input, whereby Izzard often complements verbal elements of his linguistic performance with non-verbal stage performance, and *vice versa,* to construe the comedy dynamics for an engaging and utmost entertaining stand-up show *par excellence.* The role of blending, it is suggested, contributes to the overall understanding of stand-up humour, since it allows for a more detailed analysis of both the material and the stand-up performance – not only does it explain *multimodality,* but it integrates it with(in) the theoretical humour framework, and allows for an inclusive view of comedy dynamics. By showing how meaning in stand-up comedy is conveyed and interpreted as humorous, this paper hopes to contribute to the pragmatic study of the stand-up genre and the study of humorous phenomena in general.

**Keywords:** humour, blending, pragmatics, stand-up comedy, multimodality.

**Appendix**

Table 1. Transcription conventions. *Source: Schwarz (2010, 354-56).*

| | |
|---|---|
| she's out. | A **period** shows **falling tone** in the preceding element, suggesting finality. |
| oh yeah? | A **question mark** shows **rising tone** in the preceding element (cf. yes-no question intonation). |
| so,<br>now, | A **comma** indicates a level, **continuing intonation**, suggesting **non-finality**. |
| bu- but | A **single dash** indicates a **cut-off** (often with a glottal stop), indicating truncated intonation units. |
| DAMN | The use of **capitals** shows **heavy stress** or indicates that **speech is louder than surrounding discourse**. |
| °dearest° | **Utterances spoken more softly** than the surrounding discourse are framed by **degree signs**. |
| says "oh" | **Double quotes** mark speech set off by a **shift in the speaker's voice**. |
| (2.0) | **Numbers in parentheses** indicate **timed pauses**. |
| .. | If the duration of the pauses is not crucial and not timed:<br>A **truncated ellipsis** is used to indicate **pauses of one-half second or less**. |
| … | An **ellipsis** is used to indicate **pauses of more than a half second**. |
| ha:rd | The **colon** indicates the **prolonging of the prior sound or syllable**. |
| <no way> | **Angle brackets pointing outward** denote **words or phrases** that are **spoken more slowly** than the surrounding discourse. |
| >watch out< | **Angle brackets pointing inward** indicate **words or phrases spoken more quickly** than surrounding discourse. |
| (hard work) | If there is a **likely interpretation**, the **questionable words** will appear within the **parentheses**. |
| ((laugh)) | Aspects of utterance, such as **whispers**, **coughing**, and **laughter**, are indicated with **double parentheses**. |
| {points at board} | **Nonverbal behaviour**, such as **movements** and **looks**, are indicated with braces. |

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