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COMPARATIVE LINGUISTIC AND FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS OF VERBAL
IRONY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC (USING EXAMPLES FROM
ENGLISH AND GEORGIAN FACEBOOK POSTS)

Abstract

This paper discusses the function of verbal irony on social media via comparative analysis through the scope of social and cultural peculiarities revealed in social, cultural, religious, and other characteristics of an individual or a group of people. The function is manifested through a shared language, symbols, norms, and values of the population to which they belong. The empirical data cover verbal posts shared on Facebook by English and Georgian users during the 2020 March-April COVID-19 pandemic.

The paper discusses the process of decoding irony through its psycho-emotional and functional perception demonstrated in the following components: 1. Background knowledge of the speaker/writer and listener/reader, their general perception of the world, their profession, and place in the social environment (Colston, Katz, 2005); 2. The situational character of irony (Kotthoff, 2003); 3. Insincerity or the effect of allusional pretense (Kumon Nakamura, Glucksberg, Brown, 1995) 4. The contrast of the verbal ironic statement with the implied meaning (Sperber and Wilson, 1986). From the functional perspective, the study of irony in this paper is based on the following categories suggested by Dui, Caplan, and Verner: 1. Humor 2. The elevation of the social status 3. Aggression, and 4. Emotional control (Dews, Caplan, Winner, 2009).

More specifically, the paper aims to explore the following issues: 1. How is the function of irony revealed in verbal posts on Facebook? 2. What is the socio-pragmatic function of this figure of speech in virtual reality? 3. Can we trace cultural differences in English and Georgian verbal posts on Facebook during the March-April 2020 pandemic?

Keywords: verbal irony, pandemic, shared background knowledge, social functions, CMD

1. Introduction

This study investigates the creation and functioning process of irony in written texts, specifically on Facebook. The latter has been chosen as a ground for our study due to its current relevance: the modern world is unimaginable without social media. It represents a global community that connects people from different cultural and social backgrounds and produces real-life examples of verbal demonstrations. Based on the empirical data and theoretical studies of irony, I will try to answer the following questions:

1. How is irony revealed on Facebook?
2. What function does irony play in social media?

The concept of irony According to the widely accepted definition, an ironic phrase implies the contrary to what has been said (Quintilian, 1995–98 [9.2.44],401). When employing an ironic statement, the speaker says one thing but means another. The implied meaning of this figure of speech is often negative. The first time irony caught scholars' attention in the rhetoric of antiquity known as "Socratic Irony," where the speaker pretends to be at a lower intellectual level than their debate opponent when introducing an issue (Ferrari, 2008). The audience listens to the debate and reveals the speaker to be in the winning position (Airaksinen, 2022). The pragmatic aspect of irony came into the focus of linguists in the second part of the 20th century. From that perspective, an ironic statement possesses both a primary and secondary meaning. The primary meaning is revealed through its verbal form, while the secondary meaning lies in its implicatum (Sperber and Wilson, 1986). According to this theory, irony is decoded through its secondary meaning only after the first meaning has been rejected and defined as contrary to what has been said. In this respect, irony is a role-play where the speaker, producing an ironic statement, plays the role of another person and, in such a way, distances himself/herself from what has been said. The speaker, in this case, is an "actor," who plays the role of a fool and uses acting techniques such as voice timbre, expression, and other non-verbal cues (Clark and Gerrig, 1984). The extension of this idea is expressed in Gibbs's theory of ironic pretense (Gibbs, 2006), where the speaker is exposed not as an actor, but as a pretender, who expects the listener to decode his/her deceitful attitude, and what was said. An allusion pretense theory in ironic discourse (Nakamura, Glucksberg, and Brown, 1995) is based on discussing irony through "Felicity conditions" originally described by Austin (Austin, 1962). In the "felicity condition," the promised action is achieved. For instance, when giving a word, the promisor should be predisposed to fulfil the obligation to the promisee. According to the allusional

pretense theory, there is 1) insincerity in the “felicity condition,” and 2) a violation of what is expected. The latter is realized through examples of 1. an ironic agreement; 2) rhetorical-ironic question; 3) an overly-polite request/offer (i.e. ironic hyperbole) (Nakamura, Glucksberg, Brown, 1995). Irony as a form of insincere speech act is connected to dramatic or situational irony (Attardo, 2001). Here it is realized through the situation the speaker was "caught in." Irony lies in the paradox, unintended by both parties and only created through the circumstance or situation (Nakamura, Glucksberg, Brown 1995).

2. On the pragmatic function of irony

The following questions arise concerning the function of irony: 1. Why should a speaker need to use ironic discourse? Is this because it has an ambiguous nature, and its correct perception by the listener/reader creates a risk factor? In the “implicit meaning theory” of verbal irony (Dews and Winner, 1995), the function of irony is to soften the tone of criticism or censure. The speakers prioritize ironic utterances over straightforward speech to make it sound entertaining (Dews, Kaplan, Winner, 2009).

Thus, irony softens critique and saves the relationship with the listener (Dews, Kaplan, Winner, 2009). In this manner, the perception of verbal irony becomes less negative. Furthermore, a study exploring the social function of irony (Kotthoff, 2003), based on the empirical data from formal (Television debates) and informal (dinner among friends) contexts, revealed that irony is perceived as a humoristic act in an informal setting, whereas irony in a formal context satisfies public competition (Kotthoff, 2003)

The function of irony was also discussed by Dews, Caplan, and Winner (1995). The following functions were singled out: 1. Humor 2. The elevation of the social status 3. Aggression, and 4. Emotional control (Dews, Caplan, Winner 1995).

Irony through humor is a way of sweetening bitter language primarily used when the speaker intends to sound entertaining when criticizing something or someone. Such an expression usually earns sympathy. Alternatively, the elevation of social status through irony happens by degrading the reputation of an addressee. Here, the speaker highlights how the listener should have behaved. Aggressive irony represents a drastic and disagreeable form of criticism. It aims to insult the addressee and is frequently defined as sarcastic irony. By employing irony as a means of showing

emotional control, the speaker demonstrates irony via calm rhetoric. Thus, the listener feels less insulted (Dews, Caplan, Winner 1995).

Studies in psycholinguistics have also shown that social and cultural background influence the process of figurative language cognition (Colston, Katz, 2005). Mere knowledge of the speaker's occupation can change thought processing when decoding a verbal irony. "Psychological" or "contextual" influence manifested through a state of mind, psychological and social status, and emotional condition, as well as the shared background knowledge of a speaker and listener, plays a significant part in this process.

3. Computer-mediated discourse and social media

Verbal face-to-face (FTF) communication has always been a primal process of social interaction. However, the modern world is unimaginable without online or computer-mediated communication (CMC) through online platforms. Their popularity and importance have even grown due to COVID-19 pandemics. They eased the process of education, social interaction, etc. when face-to-face communication was a risk factor for spreading the virus. Thus, online networks have served as an aid to the gap in social relationships. They have become a means for individuals to stay in touch with their relatives, friends, colleagues, etc. (Delos Reyes, 2018). It has also been discussed, that verbal, pictorial, or video information posted on social networking sites such as Facebook, ties into the posters' identities (Hilary Mason, chief data scientist, 2012). Facebook users transfer their emotions and feelings into the contents of their Facebook posts (Delos Reyes, 2018). It is a commonly accepted fact that language is a way of unifying society through sharing ideas, expectations, emotions, and feelings (Trudgill, 2006, Delos Reyes, 2018). Furthermore, an online discussion emerged around a topical issue, and discourse choices made by the participants might reveal certain attitudes and beliefs tied to a particular society (Rusieshvili- Cartledge & Dolidze, 2021). For instance, while researching hate speech through computer-mediated communication regarding LGBT groups in the Georgian community, it has been revealed that despite some progressive changes, Georgia is still a largely male-dominated society in which gender roles remain prejudiced and stigmatized (Rusieshvili- Cartledge & Dolidze, 2021). Thus, the discourse posted online is tied to an individual, or cultural identity revealed in contextual, verbal, and paralinguistic cues (Jeffrey T. Hancock, 2004).

The primary goal of an ironic discourse in computer-mediated communication (as well as in face-to-face communication) is to avoid miscommunication and provide a common ground of information for an addressee's comprehension, which might be positive or negative (Hancock, 2004; Clark, 1996). Positive evidence is revealed in explicit reactions of an addressee, such as laughing or smiling, or an extension of an ironic utterance provided by the speaker. It also means that the speaker's/writer's irony has been interpreted correctly. Alternatively, the negative evidence suggests that the addressee has inferred and responded to only the literal meaning of an expression and thus, failed to detect irony (Coates, 1991; Gibbs, 2000; Hancock, 2004). Considering the above mentioned, ironists rely on several cues when employing this device in their expression, intending to accomplish such communicative functions as being humorous or expressing a negative viewpoint (Hancock, 2004). Those cues are relatively few in CMC, compared with FTF, as in a text-based CMC setting, the reader cannot rely on paralinguistic cues (voice, intonation, facial expression). However, some non-verbal conventions such as emoticons might signal ironic intent in text-based interactions (Walther & D'Addario, 2001; Hancock, 2004), which is a further field of our study. Facebook, and its post-sharing-commenting system, is an online or computer-mediated communication analogy through written interaction. Furthermore, the poster's or comment writer's choice of wording and style depends on the circumstances and the writer's needs (Trudgill, 2006; Delos Reyes, 2018).

Therefore, the following questions arise through the researched empirical data on the above-mentioned social networking site:

Is a "pretense" form of irony revealed through verbal posts posted on Facebook?

Does the discourse selected for the analysis contain examples of hyperbolic, rhetorical, situational irony, and ironic agreement?

Does the shared background knowledge of a writer/reader influence the decoding process of irony on social media?

4. Methodology

The study aims at revealing the socio-pragmatic function of irony in virtual reality. The empirical data were collected from verbal posts of English and Georgian Facebook users, shared during March-May, 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, the first wave of the pandemic in Georgia. The examples were collected from 15 profile feeds of Facebook users referring to the pandemic. Thus,

posts shared by individuals on Facebook refer to their hardships, impressions, hopes, and expectations when faced with an emerging situation. The users often criticized the country's policies and each other via different forms of ironic expressions. Examples of verbal posts and comments were collected from the personal pages of 7 English and 8 Georgian Facebook user accounts. To reveal whether ironic cues were correctly detected by the addressees, the study examined two-sided communication between the post writers and their readers who commented on those posts. 14 English and 16 Georgian verbal posts with 150 comments posted as responses to the posts were collected (each post was accompanied by 3 to 5 comments, on average) and distributed into 5 principal thematic categories discussed among the users of Facebook through the selected time scope.

The first stage of the qualitative content analysis revealed the semantic means and linguistic peculiarities of an ironic speech act employed in Facebook posts, linguistically manifested through irony triggers of pretense, sarcasm incitements, and wordplay (Rusieshvili- Cartledge & Dolidze, 2021). They were grouped into categories of ironic agreement, rhetorical- ironic questions, ironic hyperbole and situational irony. These groups were examined regarding the post writer's identity construction by employing four functional categories of humor, the elevation of social status, aggression, and emotional control (Dews, Caplan, Winner 1995). Comments on the posts were grouped according to the commenters' positive and negative attitudes to the issue and studied semantic and functional values concerning the original post.

The quantitative method was employed to reveal the number of English and Georgian posts distributed in each thematic category with the positive/negative evidence in comments. The statistical data regarding linguistic means and strategies employed when posting verbal texts on Facebook were also explored.

5. Results and discussion

This research and its findings aim to reveal the functions of irony on social networking sites and how they are produced via interaction through Facebook posts. Sharing ideas on this platform is a communicative act as it combines posting opinions and receiving answers via comments. Thus, it is not only possible to analyze how certain users apply irony when sharing ideas, but also how adequately those ironic statements are received and decoded by their audience- it is hard to find a witty post without a discussion through comments. Posting on Facebook is a two-way

communication and creates an opportunity to discuss the production and acquisition stages of irony. 15 Facebook user feeds were researched (7 English and 8 Georgian). The research covers a specific time scope of March-May 2020. Selected users gave their permission for their verbal posts to be used in the research on the grounds of staying unanimous. Writing posts on Facebook and commenting are forms of live interaction in a virtual world, and enable us to discuss the forms of irony and their function from the perspective of both a speaker and a listener. Analyzing the Facebook posts of English and Georgian users allowed us to compare:

1. The topics of discussion emerging during March-May, 2020
2. The aim of the speakers (the initial post-writer)
3. Whether the speaker aimed to sound ironic and supported by the audience with positive or negative evidence.

The content of the English and Georgian verbal posts on Facebook covered specific topics of discussion and thus, was distributed into the following thematic categories: 1. Protests on social issues and policy 2. Isolation and paranoia 3. Kill-time appeal 4. Politics and Religion: 5. Pandemic creativity.

1. Protests on social issues and policy

Example 1. (Georgian user): Kill me if you want to, but my short wit can't grip the idea of curfew! Can anyone tell me what it means?!

Comment: Yeah, hope they don't ban breathing!

In this example, the ironic effect is achieved through a role play, utilizing Socratic irony. The user purposefully diminishes her capacity of understanding (“my short wit”) the regulations in contrast with those who can (in this case, the government that introduced the curfew), pretending not to understand the matter. The tone of the post could be assessed through a certain punctuation sequence the post writer chose to follow. The writer used an exclamation mark at the end of the first sentence and unconventional punctuation, combining the question and exclamation marks at the end of the second sentence. We can assume that the speaker intends to reveal his/her ridicule of the emerging situation. Thus, judging by the choice of “loud and expressive” punctuation and certain word combinations (“Kill me if you want to” or “my short wit can't grip the idea”), it could be presumed that this example falls into the category of aggressive irony. It finishes with a rhetorical question (Can anyone tell me what it means?!), which is not a call for an answer. The comment on the post employs hyperbolic irony through the idea that a ban on breathing is absurd, although

possible, considering the imposed inadequate regulations. The comment is a logical continuation of the dialog, which means that the post writer's goal has been achieved, revealing positive evidence of a commenter and his/her comprehension of the speaker's intended meaning. Shared background knowledge has played its part. The author of the comment reciprocated by employing an ironic remark and thus, logically continued the dialog.

Example 2. (English user): *Toilet papering someone's house would be a massive flex right now.*

Comment: *or a massive loss...*

This example describes a global deficit of household items since people started hoarding them. An example of the "global panic" was the disappearance of toilet paper from the stalls- the reason why toilet-papering a house would be a means of showing off. The post refers to pranking neighbors by literally toilet-papering their properties, a jocular exploit frequently featured in movies. The irony in this post is coiled by juxtaposing the odd fact of the disappearance of the toilet paper from the stalls to an imaginary prank of toilet-papering someone's house. This, before pandemics, would have been defined as an exasperating deed. However, during pandemics, it is interpreted as an act of showing off. The comment on the post continues the spirit by changing the "flex" with the "loss" analogy, which also would be true considering the given situation. The logical links between the second example and the comment reveal that both parties share the same background knowledge; they understand what "toilet-papering a house" means and why it is a "flex" in the context of the pandemic. However, it is hard to trace whether the commenter employs positive or negative evidence in their comment as the latter can be interpreted as literal and gives a lack of evidence whether he/she decodes the irony implied by the post writer. Thus, this example shows the importance of paralinguistic cues (vocal or physical) when decoding the irony present in FTF communication but lacking in CMC.

2. Isolation and paranoia

This is to express the users' inadequate state of mind created by self-isolation. The authors of such examples had a creative approach combining humor and self-irony.

Example 3. (English user): *Day 403 of self-isolation. The trash pile behind my desk has begun to display signs of sentience. It wants me to feed it Twix wrappers and empty water bottles. It hungers!*

Comment: *Paranoia in action!*

Hyperbole and self- distancing are the means of expressing irony in this example manifested through impersonating a trash pile that hungers and displays signs of sentience. The paranoid horror caused by isolation is understood by the reader in his comment.

3. Kill time appeal during isolation

Example 4. (English user): Internet: "What are you doing to better yourself during this period of self-isolation? "Me: "I'm experimenting with new forms of laziness. I've identified a new type of procrastination. I call it "compound procrastination" - it's when you get distracted from doing the thing that was distracting you from doing what you were supposed to be doing, and so getting back to your actual work requires finishing multiple layers of additional irrelevant tasks that you've assigned yourself instead of working.

Comment: relatable. This happens to me when I am supposed to be cleaning.

In this example, irony is shown by the incongruity between the terms “experimenting” and “forms of laziness.” The writer hyperbolizes the condition by bringing in the chain of “compound procrastination,” violating felicity conditions through utilizing humor. This is also an example of situational irony brought on by the pandemic. The writer also exposes emotional control over the existing situations, and his intentions are decoded by the reader, who shares his state of mind by bringing his own example: “This happens to me when I’m supposed to be cleaning.” This example can also be considered a form of informal humoristic communication.

4. Appeal on politics and religion

Example 5. (Georgian user): "If only I were a box tree- I would have been cut and taken somewhere!

Comment: That successfully you could also have been a priest with a jeep- nobody would stand in your way!

This post was shared a few days before Palm Sunday- a religious holiday celebrated in Georgia. On Palm Sundays in Georgia, branches of the box trees are usually cut, blessed with holy water in churches, and taken by people to their homes. The reason why Georgians celebrate Palm Sundays by sharing box-tree branches is that palm trees are rare in Georgia, and are substituted with evergreen box trees. The writer’s goal is to highlight his discontent over the government’s regulation, according to which not more than two passengers could be transported by one car, even if they were family members and lived in one space. The writer’s protest is revealed by his wishing to be a box tree, and in such a way, to be taken somewhere freely. The comment on this post meets

the writer's purpose and criticizes the clergy who not only drive expensive cars but also took advantage by violating rules of transportation during the COVID-19 pandemic, while the government turned a blind eye to that while other citizens might have been fined for violating regulations. The function of irony is for the poster and commenter to tell the truth through humor. Their intention to sound humorous and entertaining is manifested through bringing analogies of a box tree (which could freely be transported by people) and "a priest with a jeep" (who could also drive in their vehicles during the pandemic not worrying about consequences).

Example 6. (English user): Me, a global politics teacher: "Okay. So, there are two types of responses to the coronavirus threat: proactive, and reactive. Proactive countries took measures to prevent the spread of the disease before it arrived. Reactive countries took measures after the disease had already arrived. Guess who's better off?"

Politico headline: 'Our country wasn't built to be shut down': Trump pushes back against health experts"

Me: "Okay. So, there are three types of responses. . ."

The function of irony in this example is to be revealed through emotional control ("Okay. So, there are three types of responses" -1. proactive, 2. Reactive, and 3. Trump's response). The writer also elevates his social status by bringing up Trump's third type of response without assessing it verbally. He degrades Donald Trump's reputation by giving his "silent opinion" on its absurdity. In other words, he criticizes Donald Trump's position without actually saying a word. What is said is opposite to what is meant. This unexpectedness creates irony. Alternatively, by defying Trump's position as absurd, the poster creates the ground for irony, as means of the elevation of his/her status- he/she understands Trump's response is absurd, whereas Mr. President, the first political figure in charge-doesn't. The word "OKAY," (in the last sentence of "Okay. So, there are 3 types of responses") is a demonstration of a pretense through calm rhetoric, which also reveals the function of irony as emotional control. as if the speaker is accepting this absurdity as his/her reality, however, as a global politic teacher (or an expert in the field) questions the effectiveness of the third strategy (or Trump's response in a Politico Headline to health experts: "Our country wasn't built to be shut down"), and thus, pretends to be accepting.

Example 7. (English user): If your COVID-19 response is anything other than "don't worry, God will save us, and if He doesn't, that's good anyway because we'll go to Heaven and it's His plan", then you are an atheist. Self-isolating? Atheist. Taking medicine? Atheist. Washing your

hands? Atheist. Hoping your loved ones don't die? Atheist. I mean, you can keep pretending to be religious, if you want, but like, it's kind of silly at this point. Actions speak louder than words, and your actions demonstrate where you put your faith when it counts. So maybe we could just all drop the pretense at once, and it would just be okay.

***Comment:** This reminds me of something my grandpa used to say. "Trust in God, but lock your car."*

This is an example of aggressive or sarcastic irony, where the writer criticizes a group of people with "blind faith" and exposes them to hypocrisy by debasing an addressee. The function of the irony here is to reveal hidden aggression. A post writer also elevates his status by diminishing an addressee. The person who commented on this post continues the idea logically, showing the importance of shared background knowledge and meeting expectations on behalf of the initial post author. Aggression in the discourse is manifested through the repetition of "You are an atheist!" on any response but "Don't worry, god will save us". The post insults people with blind faith (who would prefer to confirm their religiousness than take effective measures against the virus) by calling their position silly.

5. Pandemic creativity

Interestingly, March-May 2020 Pandemic awakened some creativity in Georgian Facebook users, revealing the deliberate modification of famous poems. Example 8 also reveals situational irony caused by pandemics, and the comment on it shows that the writer's intention was successfully decoded through shared background knowledge.

Example 8. (Georgian user):

The further you are – the more pleasure I feel

*I love in your essence – **complete isolation** (my dream hidden)*

Neither has it been touched by a sunbeam

*And nor accessed -as **vaccination** (as the Garden of Eden)*

***Comment:** Anushka has already spilt the oil. There will be no quarantine.*

The writer of the post used the famous Georgian poem "The further you are" by Galaktion Tabidze, as a basis for his ironic statement. He maintained the style and rhythm of the poem and substituted certain words with COVID-19 terminology (substituted words are in bold italics while

the original version is given in brackets). Thus, the modified lines are dedicated to the COVID-19 virus and the vaccination process planned during the period under question. The writer of the comment shares the spirit of the post and creates a similar humoristic and simultaneously ironic analogy by modifying Bulgakov's famous line from "Master and Margarita." This relevant interpretation is realized through shared educational and situational background knowledge. The comment represents positive evidence of decoding an ironic act as it continues the same pattern, constructing his/her response on fiction. The function of irony here is to elevate social status and share humor during hard times. The first is revealed through an indirect indication of failed governmental policies in connection with vaccination and the COVID-19 virus in general, and this critique is "sweetened" by the humor of using a famous poem as a basis for expressing an attitude. Additionally, it reveals a jocular attitude to the emerged, tragi-comic situation.

6. Conclusions

The study has discussed the functioning and decoding processes of irony on Social Media. The primary aim of the investigation was to show how irony is manifested through the psycho-emotional paradigm: 1. background knowledge shared between creator and decoder, 2. The situational character of irony, 3. Insincerity or pretense expressed in ironic phrases, 4. The contrast of the ironic statement with its implied meaning. Additionally, the function of irony was investigated utilizing 4 categories: humor, the elevation of social status, aggression, and emotional control (Dews, Caplan, Winner 1995), and comments according to the positive and negative shreds of evidence (Hancock,2004; Clark, 1996). Based on the findings of the survey and Facebook post-comment interaction, it can be argued that irony was a powerful tool when forming ideas on Facebook during the March-May 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. The function of irony was to soften criticism, and it was perceived as a humoristic act, as a means of "sweetening the bitter" in 85% of the researched data (30 posts and 150 comments). Post writers and comment authors prioritized ironic utterances over straightforward speech to make it sound entertaining. Irony as a means of defacement opened up creative levels through literature and poetry only in Georgian users' Facebook posts, revealed in 5% of the researched data.

Both English and Georgian users of Facebook covered the topics of politics, religion, social issues, and government policy in March-May 2020. This indicates that the COVID-19 pandemic created the same issues for different socio-cultural realities, and thus, a common ground for

discussion among English and Georgian Facebook users, with 5 English and 4 Georgian posts protesting social issues and policy; 4 English and 4 Georgian posts on paranoia caused by self-isolation; 3 English and 3 Georgian posts concerning the kill time appeal during Co-vid 19 first wave; 2 English and 3 Georgian posts referring to politics and religion. Writer's/reader's educational, cultural and psycho-emotional background played an important part when decoding irony.

The study of 30 English and Georgian Facebook posts with 150 comments (3-5 comments on each post on average), has shown that 80 % of the examples shared the categories of ironic hyperbole (35%) and situational irony (45%), while the rest covered ironical agreements (10%) and rhetorical-ironic questions (10 %).

Post/comment writers used pretense and insincerity through what they said when coiling ironic statements in 55% of the post and comment examples.

All four categories of humor (50 % of English and Georgian posts and comments), the elevation of social status (25%), aggression (10%), and emotional control (15 %) are revealed as functions of irony in Facebook posts of Georgian and English users. Some examples reveal a combination of these functional categories. Lastly, Facebook users frequently hyperbolized utterances to attain ironic flavor in both English and Georgian posts/comments.

Following the results of the study, it can be claimed that this social networking site is a space where both (English and Georgian) cultures feel comfortable when revealing their positions on social or political matters through the post-commenting system. Posts are creative and utilize different forms of ironic expressions, serving functional cues of humor, status elevation, aggression, and emotional control.

The researched empirical data revealed the prevalence (96%) of positive evidence through post and comment interaction. This means that the vast majority of the readers/commenters correctly inferred irony in the speakers' verbal posts extending the poster's irony by bringing their examples through ironic wordplay, humor, or agreement.

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