RHETORICAL AND RELATIONAL STRUCTURE OF JOKES IN "SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER"

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Abstract

It is significant to be familiar with the relational indicators in the structure of jokes. This is considered as among the essential steps to disclose the underlying rhetorical and relational structure of texts in general and those of jokes in specific. In other words, relational indicators are one of the basic ways by which a reader can correctly and efficiently decode a text. This paper investigates the role of three kinds of relational indicators in a corpus of some jokes taken from "**She Stoops to Conquer**" to disclose the underlying rhetorical patterns, viz., the problem-solution patterns. The study comes out with the main finding that these patterns have different variations which are governed by the nature of their constituent elements and the way these elements interrelate. Based on its findings, the study comes out with a number of conclusions concerning how jokes are hierarchically structured and the role played by the relational indicators in such texts.

Key words: rhetorical, indicators, jokes, problem, solution, evaluation

1. Introduction

A joke is a display of humour in which words are used within a specific and well-defined narrative structure to make people laugh. It takes the form of a story, usually with dialogue, and ends in a punch line. It is in the punch line that the audience becomes aware that the story contains a second, conflicting meaning. This can be done using a pun or other word play such as irony, a logical incompatibility, nonsense or other means (https://en.wikipedia.org).

A joke is a short humorous piece of oral literature in which the funniness culminates in the final sentence, called the punchline… In fact, the main condition is that the tension should reach its highest level at the very end. It is true that jokes may appear printed, but when further transferred, there is no obligation to reproduce the text verbatim, as in the case of poetry (Hetzron, 1991: 65–66).

Jokes are usually recognized by two possible circumstances. The *first* is when the written jokes are given in a published work explicitly labeled as being a joke. The *second* is when the hearer has experienced the joke delivered in suitable circumstances.

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2. Relational Indicators of Jokes

This approach was initiated by Winter (1968) who used the term 'clause-relations' to denote a limited set of such 'predetermined semantic relations.'

Winter (1977: 192) describes the clause relation as "a clause relation is how we understand a sentence or a group of sentences in an adjoining context of another sentence or group of sentences."

These semantic relations are characterized by their ability to disclose a system of predictability of context in that given sentence within its preceding contexts, the lexical selection of the subsequent sentence is often predictable (Winter, 1977: 35).

Winter also introduces the term *member* to denote "the unit of clause or group of clauses that is in binary relation with another member" (Winter, 1982: 87). Typically, the interpretation of one member depends on the lexical selection of the other. He cites the following example to explain how the semantics of the first sentence is completed by the semantics of the second one.

Example (1):

(1) They stay in their cells for most of the day as well as the night. (ii) There is nowhere else for them to go, and still be under supervision.

Question: Why did (i) take place?

Answer: Because (ii) .

In (1) above, the interpretation of the second member (ii) is dependent on the interpretation of the first (i) in that the former provides the answer to the potential question raised by the first member:

Thus, by giving the reason why the situation in sentence (i) (the first member of the relation) takes place, sentence (ii) (the second member) is understood to be connected with the preceding one in a relation of reason (i.e., cause- consequence,).

The basic idea in the study of relational indicators is that any two contiguous stretches of text, such as clauses, sentences, or paragraphs can be connected to each other by a means of a combination of a relatively small set of binary semantic relations such as: cause- effect, purpose-means, problem-solution ...etc. (Jordan, 1992: 179).

This approach hinges on the reader-writer communicative interaction. It proves that there are various techniques by which the writer connects his clauses and encodes the message meaning in them.

These techniques are related to the linguistic observation which indicates that *rhetorical relations* can be signalled via three sorts of *relational indicators*:

a) Subordinators (termed: Vocabulary 1), b) Conjuncts (termed: Vocabulary 2), and c) certain lexical items (termed: Vocabulary 3) (Winter, 1977: 14).

The use of these three sorts of vocabulary-items in signaling clause relations can be exemplified in:

Example (2):

(i) By appealing to scientists and technologists to support his party, (ii) Mr. Wilson won many middle class votes in the election.

 (i) Mr. Wilson appealed to scientists and technologists to support his party. (ii) He, thus, won many middle class votes in the election.

 (i) Mr. Wilson's appeal to scientists and technologists were instrumental in winning many middle class votes in the election.

Example (2) above designates the way in which the three types of Relational Indicators (i.e., "by-ing", "thus" and "instrumental") are used to signal the clause relation of instrument-achievement.

Relational indicator (1) includes two types of adverbial subordinators: 1) single items such as: after, (al) though, as, because, before, besides, if, since, unless, what, when, whereas..; and ii) paired items such as: just as x, so (too) y; not so much x, as y; not x, let alone; the --er … the --er. . etc.

The rhetorical relation can be shown in the following figure:

Fig (1) The rhetorical Relation by Signals (following Jordan, 1992: 180)

The relational indicator is depicted with a dotted line to point out that a rhetorical relation can be triggered without any lexico-grammatical signaling.

3 The Rhetorical Pattern of Jokes

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The widely used pattern in discourse organization is the Problem-Solution Pattern, which was first investigated by Winter (1968 and 1976). Winter (1976) noticed that the categories of information in many technical texts are arranged according to this pattern. Winter's previous model of clause relations is used by Hoey as a point of departure to suggest a new model for discourse analysis in terms of rhetorical relations. Hoey (1973) was successful in showing how certain lexical items can signal the narrative structure of whole texts instead of confining the role of lexical items to the signaling of clause relations alone.

Hoey (1983) cites the following constructed example for the problem-solution pattern:

Example (3): "I was on sentry duty. I saw the enemy approaching. I opened fire. I beat off the attack."   (Hoey, 1983: 35)

Here, the first sentence sets up the situation, the second indicates the problem, the third offers the solution, and the fourth presents the evaluation.

In (1986: 191), Hoey presents the following made-up text to elucidate this method using a more sophisticated examples:

Example (4):

(1) Charles was a language teacher. (2) His students came to him unable to write coherently. (3) His way of dealing with this problem was to teach them discourse analysis, with the result that .(4) they now all write novels.

In (4) above, the V3 item way is a two-way signal: it signals that what follows is a solution and that what precedes is a problem. Similarly, the V3 item result is a two-way signal indicating that what follows (i.e., sentence 4) is the result, and that what precedes (i.e., sentence 3) is the solution. The new pattern can be shown graphically in the diagram below:
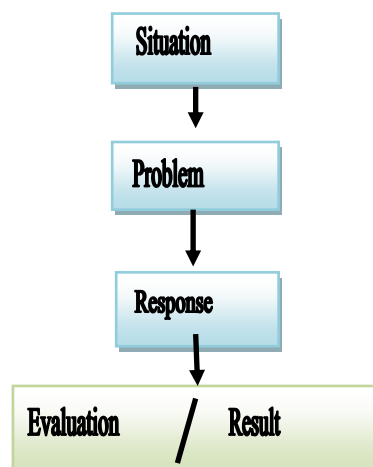
Fig (2) The Rhetorical Pattern of Jokes (after Hoey, 1979: 35)

However, seeing that his (1979) model may fall short in analyzing complex texts in real discourse, Hoey (1983) modified his earlier pattern by dividing evaluation as either positive or negative. If it is positive, the same pattern given in Figure (2) would come out; but, if the evaluation is negative, it designates another problem that may lead to an evaluation, introducing a multi-layered pattern. This pattern is represented in Figure (3):
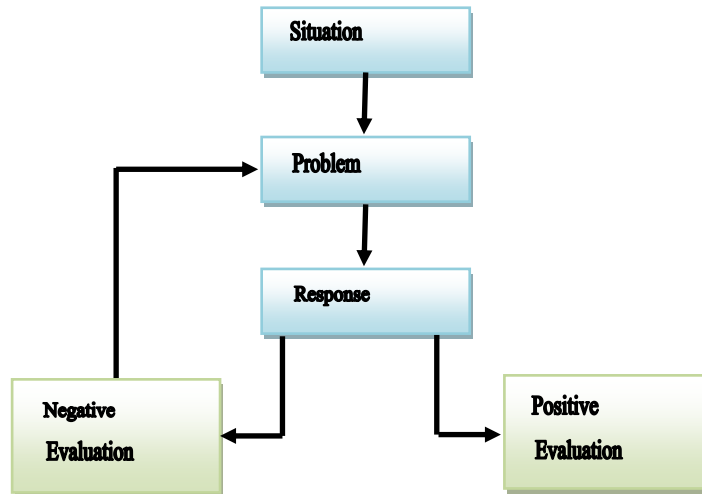

Fig. (3) The Multilayered Pattern, after Hoey (2003: 133).

4 Semantic Categories of Jokes

Jokes are classified by Mihalcea and Pulman (2007: 6) in terms of their semantic categories as follows:

a) Human-centric Vocabulary: Jokes usually make reference to human related-scenarios signaled by the frequent use of words like "*you, I ,man, woman ,guy* etc ." So, laughter is considered to be caused by our own behavior.

 b) Negation: Jokes, as humorous texts, often include negative word forms like "*doesn't, isn't ,don't* etc "as in "*money can't buy you friends ,but you do get a better class of enemy* ".

c) Negative Orientation: Besides the grammatical negative word form, jokes contain a large number of lexical words with negative polarity, for example, adjectives "*bad ,illegal ,wrong* etc" or nouns with negative load "*error ,mistake , failure* etc".

d) Human Weakness: Joke usually contain events that are often related to the human's weak moments including nouns like "*ignorance ,stupidity ,trouble* etc." or verbs such as "quit, steal, lie, drink, etc." This property also proves the fact that laughter is caused by our own behavior and situations .

e) Professional Community: Some kinds of jokes are directed to certain professional communities that are usually related to comic situations which are experienced by a specific academic group like lawyers, programmers, policemen, etc.

5 Practical Analysis of Jokes

The practical analysis of the jokes has taken the following scheme:

The data used for the purpose of analysis are taken from. However, This section encompasses a sample analysis of a joke and then followed by some jokes taken from Oliver Goldsmith's play '**She Stoops To Conquer**' representatives for the shortage of space.

The study will analyze jokes into two stages: First, the form of narrative interrogation where the components of the rhetorical pattern of the jokes are set apart. Second, a detailed analysis of each sentence of the joke is provided. The loci of the analysis will be on (i) how sentences are linked to each other, (ii) where, exactly, the components of the rhetorical patterns are situated and how they are related to each other and finally, (iii) what are the types and meanings of the relational indicators that signal and relate the rhetorical components to each other.

Following are two examples to illustrate how the jokes in "She Stoops to Conquer" are going to be analyzed:

Sample analysis:

(1) **I was waiting for a flight to Texas along with four service men in desert camouflage.(2)Over the top pocket of their uniform shirts was the branch of the military in which they served, followed by their last names.(3)They were U.S .Navy, Ramirez, U.S .Army, Larkin and U.S. army O'brien. (4)The fourth man was not a soldier.(5)A have his shirt pocket it read, "D.O.D. civilian, coward."**

1- The Narrative Interrogation of the Joke:

The Situation: The speaker is waiting for a flight to Texas along with four servicemen in desert camouflage uniforms. Over the top-pocket of their uniform shirts is the branch of the military in which they serve.

The problem: The fourth man wasn't a soldier ?

The Evaluation: The fourth man is "D.O.D. civilian, coward ".

2- The Relational Indicator signallings

Sentence (1): This sentence constitutes the situation that is signaled by some lexical items like **a flight and Texas** indicating that the narrator is waiting in an airport with the intention of traveling to Texas. The other participants in this situation are four servicemen. The topic of the situation is that the four men are in desert camouflage uniforms that attract the narrator's attention who keeps on describing this uniforms.

Sentence (2): The situation continues and the narrator tries to waste the time of waiting by making a detailed description of the men's uniform. The repetition of the item **uniform** emphasizes the fact that they are from the same army. The narrator concentrates on the area on the top of the uniform shirt on which their names and Military branch are written. The repetition of the lexical item **uniform** gives a hint that a problematic question will be raised later by their writings.

Sentence (3) : The narrator rounds off his description of the situation by enumerating the names and the military branches of the first three men .

Sentence (4): This sentence includes the problem signaled by the negative phrase **wasn't a soldier** this makes the readers asking themselves what he is then! If he wear uniform but not a soldier! The problem is linked to the situation by the two key lexical items *fourth* and *soldiers.* The item *'soldier'* collocates with *servicemen , military , uniform , navy and served.* **Four** and **fourth** in the situation and problem respectively are linked by repetition.

Sentence (5): Sentence 5 shows the synonymous repetition of the same area in the uniform of the fourth men signaled by the items *above* and *shirt pocket .*The narrator notices that the fourth man is identified by a **civilian coward.** So, sentence (5) constitutes a negative evaluation that refers to the fact that the origin of all the military members is the same. Their origin is civilian coward disguised in military uniforms and not qualified to be soldiers proving the aforementioned lexical item in sentence (1), i.e., *camouflage .*

3 Analysis of some Jokes Extracted from 'She Stoops to Conquer'

Joke 1

MRS. HARD: Well ,we must not snub the poor boy now, for I believe we shan´t have him long among us. Anybody that looks in his face may see he´s consumptive.

HARD: Ay, if growing too fat be one of the symptoms.

1-The Narrative Interrogation of the Joke:

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The Situation: The speaker is Mrs. Hardcastle urging her husband not to snub her son because he looks sick and thus they may lose him at any time . The irony is what Mr. Hardcastle says ,namely is that her son is winning extra weight continuously.

The Problem: Mrs. Hardcastle´ s son looks consumptive .

The Response: They shan´t have him long among them.

The Evaluation: Her son is growing too fat which contradicts his being sick.

2-The Relational Indicator Signaling:

Sentence 1: This sentence constitutes the situation by using the lexical items 'snub' which indicates an attitude refused by Mrs. Hardcastle . The other lexical phrase is 'the poor boy' which signals the boy´s unhealthy condition.

Sentence 2: It constitutes the topic of the joke ,namely, the son being sick through the lexical item 'consumptive'.

Sentence 3: It is started by the relational indicator : the adverbial 'for' giving the reason of the situation talked about . It adds to the problem a dramatic dimension by Mrs. Hardcastle´s hint that she expects to lose the boy because he is very sick.

Sentence 4: It is connected with the relational indicator 'if' which is an adverbial subordinator. This sentence changes the scene by the ironical fact said by Mrs. Hardcastle which is that the boy is growing too fat contradicting his being sick! The lexical items used here are' growing too fat' and 'symptoms' which are related to the topic of sickness and diagnosis. This sentence constitutes a negative evaluation.

3-The Classification of the Joke:

According to Mihalcea and Pulman (2007: 6) ,in terms of their semantic categories ,this joke can be classified as both ' negative joke ' because it contains negative words like 'must not' and' 'shan´t' and it can be classified as 'human weakness' joke because it discusses the unhealthy appearance of the character .

Joke 2.

 MRS. HARD: Here we live in an old rumbling mansion, that looks for all the world like an   inn ,but that we never see company. Our best visitors are old Mrs. Oddfish, the curate´s   wife ,and little Cripplegate, the lame dancing -master: And all our

entertainment your old stories of Prince Eugene and Duke of Marlborough. I hate such old -fashioned trumpery.

1-The Narrative Interrogation of the Joke :

The Situation: Mrs. Hardcastle is grumbling describing their house as being old-fashioned looking like an inn but with a very disappointing company .

The Problem: Their house is like an inn but it does not offer good companies .

The Response and (Negative Evaluation): Mrs. Hardcastle hates their house because it looks old-fashioned and it offers trivialities because of the bad company who visit them . Everything is boring in their house.

2-The Relational Indicator Signaling:

Sentence 1(clause 1): This sentence tells us the situation of the joke starting with the adverbial 'here' indicating the place talked about . Also the two lexical items 'old' and 'rumbling' showing the negative viewpoint of Mrs. Hardcastle towards the house.

Sentence 1 (clause 2): It constitutes the problem starting with the conjunction 'that' describing the house as being' an inn' which is a negative description.

Sentence 1 (clause 3), Sentences 2 and 3:

These constitute the response of Mrs. Hardcastle of their house .The conjunction 'but' gives the sense of ' contradiction ' between the reality and the supposed: Although the house looks like an inn ,they never enjoy good company ,rather the visitors are old-fashioned just like the house.

The Negative Evaluation: This sentence uses the relational indicators : 'hate', 'old-fashioned' and 'trumpery' which reflect the negative viewpoint of Mrs. Hardcastle towards the house.

3-The Classification of the Joke: It encompasses qualities of three categories:

1. Negative Orientation: It is shown through the items :' old',' rumbling' and 'trumpery'.

2. Human Weakness: It is shown through the use of the word:' lame'.

3 .Professional Community: It is shown through the use of the words:' dancing- master ', curate´s wife' , Prince Eugene' and ,' Duke of Marlborough'.

Joke 3.

HARD: Then to be plain with you, Kate I expect the young gentleman I have chosen to be your husband from town this very day . I have his father´s letter , in which he informs me his son is set out, and he intends to follow himself shortly after.

HARD: Bravely resolved ! In the mean time I´ll go prepare the servants for his reception : as we seldom see company they want as much training as a company of recruits day ´s muster.

1-The Narrative Interrogation of the Joke:

The Situation: Mr. Hardcastle is expecting a suitor for his daughter .He has to manage certain arrangements for the suitor especially preparing the servants who need a training because they had not received guests for a long time.

The Problem: It is that the suitor is set out and the servants need a great deal of training because they rarely see guests.

The Negative Evaluation: It is that the servants are awkward.

2-The Relational Indicator Signaling:

Sentence 1: It constitutes the situation of the joke by the news of Mr. Hardcastle when he tells his daughter of the arrival of the suitor followed by his father.The lexical item 'husband' shows Mr. Hardcastle's intention towards the suitor.

Sentence 2: It constitutes the problem faced by Mr. Hardcastle which is to prepare the servants for the reception. The problem lies in that they rarely receive guests. The lexical item 'seldom' indicates the condition of the servants and the house in general.

Sentence 3: It indicates the extremely negative evaluation of Mr. Hardcastle towards his servants. This is done by the use of the image of new soldiers who need a great deal of training in their first day´s muster.

3-The Classification of the Joke:

It may belong to different categories:

1.   Negative Orientation: This is done implicitly through the use of the image of the soldiers hinting to their lack of training ,and explicitly through the use of negative words like 'seldom' .

2. Professional Community: this is also done through the use of the same image .

Joke 4

TONY: No offence; but question for question is all fair, you know. Pray, gentlemen, is not this same Hardcastle a cross-grained, old-fashioned, whimsical fellow, with an ugly face, a daughter, and a pretty son?

HASTINGS: We have not see the gentleman; but he has the family you mention.

1- **The Narrative Interrogation of the Joke:**

The situation: Tony is talking with Hastings and Tony describing Mr. Hardcastle and his daughter of unreal horrible description as a cross-grained, old fashioned and whimsical fellow with ugly faced daughter.

The Problem: Tony is enquiring about Mr. Hardcastle and whether he was the same person he used to be acquainted with.

The response: Hastings refused Tony's description of Mr. Hardcastle because he hasn't seen him yet.

2-**The Relational Indicator Signaling:**

Sentence 1: This sentence constitutes the situation of the joke in which Tony is trying to ask Hastings a question about Hardcastle. This question seems to be related to a previous one made by Hastings himself. The phrase 'no offence' is a downtoner adjunct utilized to achieve some sort of politeness.

Sentence 2 (clause 1): This sentence stands for the problem of the joke. Tony is enquiring about Hardcastle. He is trying to know whether it was the same person they knew previously of not.

Sentences 2 (clause 2) and sentence 3: This part represents an extremely negative evaluation through the use of Tony against Hardcastle. This can be show via the use of the lexical items 'cross-grained', 'old-fashioned', 'whimsical fellow' and 'ugly face'. This sentence ends with a positive evaluation to Hardcastle's son by using the lexical item 'pretty'. In sentence 3 the negative evaluation continues through the use of the negative particle 'not'.

3-**The classification of the joke:**

This joke belongs to three categories:

1-**Negative orientation:** This is fulfilled through the use of the lexical items 'cross-grained', 'old-fashioned', 'whimsical fellow' and 'ugly face'.

2-**Professional community:** This can be justified through the use of the lexical item 'gentleman'.

Joke 5

Hardcastle: *You must must not be so talkative, Diggory. You must be all attention to the guests. You must hear us talk, and not think of talking; you must see us drink, and not think of drinking; you must see us eat, and not think of eating.*

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DIGGORY: By the laws, your worship, that's perfectly impossible. Whenever Diggory sees eating, he's always wishing for a mouthful himself.

1- **The Narrative Interrogation of the Joke:**

The situation: The speaker is Mr. Hardcastle giving his instructions to is servant, Diggory not to be talkative, give all his attention to the guests, if he hears them talk, he must not think of talking, or see them eating, he must not think of eating.

The Problem: The speaker is Mr. Hardcastle who orders his servant to give all attention to the guests and not to think of talking, eating or drinking.

The Response: Diggory (the servant) is unable to stop himself from thinking of eating and always wishing for a mouthful.

2-The Relational Indicator Signaling:

Sentence 1: It constitutes a negative evaluation of Mr. Hardcastle toward his servant, Diggory using negative lexical item, i.e., talkative.

Sentences 2 and 3: These sentences constitute the situation in which the writer uses repetition of the coordinator 'and' to indicate successive instructions given by Mr. Hardcastle to his servant Diggory in terms of a direct order initiated by the phrase 'you must' indicating that the guests are very important.

Sentence 4: This sentences constitutes the core of the joke and signaled by the use of the negative word 'impossible' to show that following Mr. Hardcastle's instructions by his servant is something impossible.

Sentence 5: This sentence represents the problem of the situation started with the condition particle 'whenever' to reveal Diggory's weakness that if he sees food, he cannot stop thinking of eating.

3. The classification of the Joke:

The joke belongs to three categories:

1- Human-centric vocabulary that can be indicated through the frequent use of the first person pronoun.

2- Human weakness signaled by using the lexical item 'talkative'.

3- Negation that can be shown by using negative words like 'must not eat' and 'must not think'.

Joke 6

Marlow: (Aside) A very impudent fellow this! But he is a character, and I'll humour him a little. Sir, my service to you. [drinks]

Hastings: (Aside) I see this fellow wants to give us his company, and forgets that he's an innkeeper, before he has learned to be a gentleman.

1- **The Narrative Interrogation of the Joke:**

The situation: Marlow and Hastings speak aside about Mr. Hard describing him as impudent fellow and wants to give them his company forgetting that he is an innkeeper (as they believe).

The problem: The problem here lies in that Marlow and Hastings think that Mr. Hard is insolent and wants to give them his company forgetting that he is an innkeeper.

2- **The Relational Indicator Signaling:**

Sentence 1 in both Aside talk of Marlow and Hastings paraphrases the situation of the joke in which Mr. Hard tries to offer them his company while they refuse implicitly and try to make fun of him.

Sentence 2 of the first Aside and the whole of the second Aside constitute the problem where Mr. Hard offers his company to Marlow and Hastings while they refuse thinking that he is just an innkeeper.

The negative evaluation can be seen in Marlow's words through the lexical items 'impudent fellow' and 'a character'. A similar negative evaluation is expressed in Hastings words by giving Mr. Hard a feature of an innkeeper rather than a gentleman.

3-**The classification of the joke:**

This joke embraces characteristics of more than category:

1-**Negative orientation:** This is shown through the use of the lexical items 'impudent' and 'a character'.

2-**Professional community:** This can be seen through the comic scene built by using 'innkeeper' which is one of the professional communities related to comic situations.

Joke 7

Hastings: After the disappointment of the day, welcome once more, Charles, to the comforts of a clean room and a good fire. Upon my word, a very well-looking house; antique but creditable.

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Marlow: The usual fate of a large mansion. Having first ruined the master by good housekeeping, it at last comes to levy contributions as an inn.

1- **The Narrative Interrogation of the Joke:**

The situation: Hastings and Marlow are talking to each other describing Mr. Hard's house as comfortable of a clean room and a good fire and a very well-looking house: antique but creditable.

The problem: Hastings and Marlow believe that Mr. Hard's house is an inn describing it as comfortable with a clean room and a good fire and a very well-looking house; antique and creditable.

2- The Relational Indicator Signaling:

Sentence 1: It constitutes a description of Mr. Hard's house where Hastings and Marlow are supposed to take comfort after a long day of travel. The writer uses adjectives such as 'comfort, good and clean' to give a hint that the place is comfortable.

Sentence 2: It is connected to the previous sentence. Hastings goes on describing the house, but the use of the coordinator 'but' shows a kind of contradiction in that the house seems creditable though it is old and antique.

Sentence 3 and 4: These two sentences raise a dramatic irony that can be shown through the use of contrastive items such as 'mansion-inn and master-housekeeping'. Marlow and Hastings think that the house is an inn but the reality it is the reverse.

3- The Classification of the Joke:

This joke is classified within:

1-Negative orientation which can be indicated through lexical items such as 'disappointment;.

2- Professional community which can be signaled by using the nouns 'housekeeping' and 'master'.

Conclusion

First of all the study tried to uncover each component of Hoey's rhetorical pattern analysis. Then, the study has examined whether it is applicable to those components found in jokes or not. The function of situation is set as providing enough background information for the intended readers to understand the problem being presented. Hence, the writer may do

without a situation if the background information is already known to the readers. This is applied to the structure of jokes and it was fruitful in providing the readers with an indication of the setting before moving into the main problem.

The study, also, comes out with the following conclusions:

1- Jokes are composed of complex structures containing setting of the story, problem, response, and the evaluation or solution of the problem. All of these items can be found within a short story of afew sentences represented totally by a joke.

2- The clause that usually causes laughter is the one that is analyzed as being the evaluation of the pattern which gives the solution in funny way.

3- The problem – solution pattern cannot be applied on some jokes in identical way.

4- The structure of some jokes presents the evaluation from the very beginning, while some of them prove to be evaluated in negative way by reaching the case of multi-layered pattern, because the evaluation will continue the circle by moving back to the problem.

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