



Political Satire in *Last Week Tonight*: Analyzing Verbal Humor Mechanisms

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Abstract in English

This paper examines how verbal humor mechanisms are used in the program “*Last Week Tonight*” and their role in constructing political satire. The study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach which integrates Simpson's model of satire (2003) and Attardo's general theory of verbal humor (1994). The model that is used in this study tries to understand the nature of humor and how its mechanisms work in political context. The researchers have chosen three main episodes of the program as data for the study. The study concludes that the integrated framework (SMUT–GTVH) is not merely a theoretical proposition, but it helps to understand how political satire transforms from simple jokes to a tool with real impact. The program is not only a means of entertainment but also contributes to shaping a deeper awareness of political issues.

Paper Info

Keywords

Verbal humor mechanisms, political satire, Last Week Tonight, SMUT-GTVH.

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1. Introduction

According to Knight (2004) satire is commonly understood as a form of entertainment and as a means of social critique. Political satire can be traced back historically to the comic plays of Aristophanes in ancient Greece and the sharp critiques of Swift in the eighteenth century, where satire used to entertain audiences and to offer sharp social commentary (Elliott, 1960; Knight, 2004). However, the function of satire has evolved along with the changes in media. In modern media, satire has flourished across multiple platforms. Late-night comedy programs stand for their important effect

combining humor and journalism and reaching a wide audience (Gray, Jones, & Thompson, 2009; Jones, 2010).

Paré (2024) suggests that satire functions through the use of humor, irony, exaggeration and ridicule to convey messages with a strong perspective about social or political issues. *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver* is a clear example of this approach that airs on Home Box Office. Since the debut of the program in 2014, it has become one of the most influential political satire shows of the modern era. According to Harrison (2017), the program has established John Oliver as a prominent figure who uses humor and journalistic rigor to explain complex public policies and social issues. By combining investigative journalism with humor, the program presents complex political issues in a more accessible way. This approach helps people in understanding issues clearly and may also encourage them to participate more actively in public affairs (Davisson & Donovan, 2019; Becker, 2022). Satire plays a crucial role in delivering criticism and it combines entertainment and influence public perception in presenting political issues. Despite its growing importance, there is still a need for studies that bring together the mechanisms of humor with its role in shaping public attitudes in a comprehensive way.

Some Linguistic theories of humor focus on understanding how facetiousness arises through human mental and linguistic processes. Attardo and Raskin's (1971) Script-based Semantic Theory of Humor (SSTH) and Attardo's (1994) General Theory of Verbal Humor, respectively. In contrast, other theories like Paul Simpson's (2003) SMUT model highlight the role of context and discourse in shaping irony, emphasizing how language is employed within specific communicative situations to convey the implicit meaning. However, there is no connection between the micro-level linguistic analyses with the macro-level satirical frameworks and this hinders a full understanding of how political satire works and achieves its effects. The current study seeks to fill this gap by applying a hybrid analytical approach. The sections (2.3) and (2.4) respectively will provide further details.

The current study examines political satire in *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver* from a linguistic perspective. It focuses on how the program uses verbal humor to construct satire, drawing from Simpson's SMUT framework and Attardo's General Theory of Verbal Humor. The study specifically aims to analyze how verbal humor mechanisms are structured, how they are realized linguistically, and to explore how these mechanisms contribute to the construction of political satire in the program. To achieve this, a hybrid analytical model combining SMUT and GTVH is employed.

This study is based on the following questions:

1. How are verbal humor mechanisms structured in *Last Week Tonight* according to Simpson's SMUT framework?
2. How these verbal humor mechanisms linguistically realized through Attardo's GTVH?
3. How do these mechanisms contribute to the construction of political satire in *Last Week Tonight*?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Humor

Humor is an important part of our daily lives and it appears in many ways in communication. According to Shade (1996) humor is classified into four types:

1. Figural
2. Auditory

3. Visual
4. Verbal

Verbal humor is one of the most common types because it depends on language creating fun by subverting expectations through irony, exaggeration and surprise (Shade, 1996; Berger, 2017). Berger (2017) notes that verbal humor is a widespread type of humor that relies on semantic ambiguity, word choice, pragmatic effect, and modes of expression. On the other hand, Shade, explains that verbal humor has various forms like riddles, jokes, puns, limerick, wit, parody, anecdote, irony and satire (1996). Satire is the prominent type because it utilizes language to express social and ideological contradictions. It makes verbal humor an effective tool to criticize and influence the discourse.

Humor has received considerable attention in theoretical studies with several approaches proposed to explain it. The most notably the theory of superiority, relief and incongruity. The superiority associated with Plato and Aristotle which states that humor stems from superiority over others (Morreall, 1983). Freud's theory of Relief views it as a means of releasing tension and expressing repressed thoughts indirectly (Freud, 1905/1960). In comparison, incongruity theory is the most influential one that explains humor as a result of discrepancy between reality and expectations (Morreall, 1983). Although these theories explain why humor occurs, modern linguistic theories are concerned with how it is constructed and understood. This makes it essential for analyzing political satire.

Humor plays a pivotal role in explaining how satire conveys political messages and why it is an effective rhetorical tool. Studies point to its role in everyday communication and social interaction. For example, Daniel (2009) focuses on its practical and interactive functions. Martin (2007) considers it as an essential part of human communication. From linguistic perspective, Attardo (1994) states that verbal humor is a structured phenomenon which governed by identifiable knowledge resources. Simpson (2003) argues that humor plays a role in satirical discourse and in exposing contradictions. These views illustrate that humor is not a random but a meaningful tool to influence others and convey messages.

2.2. Satire

Mohammed (2023) indicates that satire is a common expressive technique used humorously to attack or criticize a person, behavior, country, or entire society. In political contexts, satire manifests itself in the media to achieve negative goals on the part of the satire entity. Satirical expressions are formulated paradoxically, are considered critical in nature, and target moral objectives. According to Griffin (1994), satire is not merely a literary genre. It is a rhetorical device used for judgement and evaluation. It makes the audience aware of its purpose and take a stance. Similarly, Hutcheon (1994) notes that satire relies on paradox and its meaning arises from the discrepancy between what is said explicitly and what is meant implicitly. This requires the reader to play an active role to interpret the message. Simpson (2003) states that satire is utilized as a means of challenging prevailing discourse employing humor to expose contradiction in political and social ideas. Therefore, it is not merely entertainment. Rather, it is presented as deliberate communicative act that combines humor and ideological critique making it an easy way to understand and analyze political speech.

Moreover, satire is treated as a humorous technique that makes use of many strategies: insult, sarcasm, exaggeration, comparison, and the like. Generally speaking, satirists attack particular persons or organizations, social practices or events (Berger, 1993, 2017). In this sense, the researchers argue that satire is not merely a means of amusement, it is inherently critical. It seeks to expose moral, social or intellectual shortcomings. It can be said that satire is typically used to criticize social behaviors and beliefs, but it becomes more prominent when applied to political contexts. Political satire is a form of entertainment political discourse that implicitly criticizes politicians and institutions within humor. Elliott (1960) notes that satire aims to mock and expose hypocrisy and corruption, usually targeting governments, politicians, and dominant social norms. By focusing on political issues, satire helps to capture public attention in a soft and humorous way.

Several previous studies have increasingly addressed political satire as a significant communicative force rather than merely a form of entertainment. For example, Becker (2013) asserts that political satire contributes to critiquing and commenting on current events. It also represents an extension of an old satirical tradition as seen in the writing of Jonathan Swift. In this context, humor serves as a means for political and moral critique. In modern media, satire has become effective space for political debate, specifically among young people. As it attracts and encourages them to interact more deeply (Kaur & Puyok, 2021).

Other studies show that political satire plays a significant role in shaping audience responses to political information. As Burgers and Brugman (2021) point out that satirical news combines entertainment, information and opinion. It evokes a stronger emotional response than traditional news and motivate critical thinking. While not educationally superior to traditional news, political satire enhances engagement and encourages critical thinking. This, in turn, contributes in raising political awareness and stimulating community participation.

Furthermore, Political satire has been extensively examined for its role in shaping public opinion and promoting political participation. Several studies highlight its influence across different media platforms. For example, Kaur and Puyok (2021) explored how the youth engage with political satire on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Their findings, based on a survey of 50 participants in Kuala Lumpur, suggest that political satire significantly enhances the political understanding and interests of the youths. Another study was conducted by Al-Ghezzezy (2023). This study focused on how Iraqi comedian Ahmed Al-Basheer uses political satire to mock the government and address social issues. It highlights his use of linguistic techniques like phonological coinage, word collocation, blending, derivation and irony to critique the president, politicians and police. His satire provides Iraqi citizens with temporary relief and a sense of regained dignity. In brief, both studies contribute valuable insights into how political satire functions in different setting. The first study focused on the impact of political satire on social media in Kuala Lumpur while Al-Ghezzezy study examined how Ahmed Al-Basheer uses political satire in Iraq through various linguistic techniques.

2.3. Linguistic Approaches to Humor and Satire

2.3.1. Salvatore Attardo's General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH):

Salvatore Attardo and Victor Raskin introduced the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) in 1991 as an extension of earlier linguistic approaches to humor. The model builds upon Raskin's (1985) Script-based Semantic Theory of Humor (SSTH),

which explains humor in terms of the interaction between opposing semantic scripts. The GTVH expands the SSTH by providing a framework for analyzing the structure of humor in verbal communication based on six hierarchically organized “Knowledge Resources” (KRs):

- **Script Opposition (SO):** This is the most fundamental KR. It refers to the juxtaposition of two opposing semantic scripts. A script is a structured chunk of information about a concept or situation, and humor emerges when a text can be interpreted in two different ways. The opposition can be between a real script and unreal one, normal and abnormal, or good and evil (Attardo & Raskin, 1991).
- **Logical Mechanism (LM):** This KR describes the cognitive rule that connects the two opposing scripts in a humorous way. It explains how to make the contradiction acceptable in humorous contexts through many techniques include exaggeration, false analogy, juxtaposition and role-reversal (Attardo, 2001).
- **Situation (SI):** This KR includes the props of the joke, providing the tangible scenario where humor unfolds. It refers to the contextual elements of the joke, including the time, place, participants, and general background knowledge necessary to understand the humor (Attardo & Raskin, 1991).
- **Target (TA):** This KR identifies the person, group, or institution that is being ridiculed or made fun of. The target can be a specific individual, a social stereotype, or a cultural norm. in political satire, the target is often a politician, a political party, or a governmental policy (Attardo, 2001).
- **Narrative Strategy (NS):** This KR describes the narrative organization of the humorous text. It includes elements such as direct speech, dialogue, narration, question-answer formats, or the overall structure of the joke’s presentation. It determines how the joke is told or delivered (Attardo, 2001).
- **Language (LA):** This KR deals with the specific linguistic choices that contribute to the humor. It includes wordplay, phonological features, syntactic structures, lexical choices and stylistic variations (Attardo & Raskin, 1991).

2.3.2. Paul Simpson’s Satirical Humor Uptake Theory (SMUT):

Simpson (2003) proposes the SMUT model as a framework for the analysis of satirical discourse from a linguistic and stylistic perspective. This model focuses on how satire functions through the interaction of context, audience uptake, and the target of critique. It goes beyond simply defining humor to understanding its mechanisms and effects (Simpson, 2003).

Simpson (2003) develops this theoretical framework by identifying four key components which define the satire and its rhetorical characteristics. The four components include: Setting (S), Method (M), Uptake (U) and Target (T). These elements contribute to the effective construction of satire. This model is based on understanding how satirical discourse is built, how the audience interacts with it, and how criticism is directed through humor.

- **Setting (S):** It refers to the context and circumstances in which the satirical discourse is produced and received. It refers to non-linguistic factors such as political, social, or cultural contexts that help in shaping the satire. This includes the medium of delivery (e.g., television, print, digital), genre conventions (such as news parody and stand-up comedy), and the shared cultural and political knowledge that the satirist assumes the audience possesses. These combined establish the parameters for interpreting the satirical message (Simpson, 2003).

- **Method (M):** This element refers to the linguistic and rhetorical techniques that a satirist uses to construct the humorous criticism. It includes irony, parody, exaggeration, understatement and contradiction. It contributes to how the message is conveyed and contradictions are highlighted in a humorous and critical way (Simpson, 2003).
- **Uptake (U):** This element focuses on the audience's interpretation and interpretation with satirical messages. The effectiveness of satire depends on the audience's understanding of underlying criticism and humor (Simpson, 2003).
- **Target (T):** This component identifies what is being criticized in the satire whether it is an individual, a group, or an idea. Identifying the target helps audiences to understand the critical stance (Simpson, 2003).

2.4. An Integrated Model of Analysis

Analyzing the political satire presented in the program under study requires a theoretical framework capable of addressing both the discursive strategies at the macro level and the linguistic mechanisms of humor at the micro level. On the one hand, Simpson's (2003) SMUT model is effective for studying discursive, social, and political contexts. On the other hand, Attardo's (1994) GTVH model provides detailed tools for the linguistic-pragmatic analysis of the verbal humor that drives the satirical message. Combining these two frameworks provides a comprehensive view of the mechanisms of satire combining discursive and linguistic analysis.

Attardo (1994), in his GTVH model proposes (1994) a micro-analytical approach for examining verbal humor through six knowledge resources. They are: Script Opposition, Logical Mechanism, Situation, Target, Narrative Strategy, and Language. These components make it possible to analyze how humorous utterances are linguistically structured and interpreted. Besides, Simpson's (2003) SMUT model operates at a broader, macro level. This model focuses on the contextual and discursive dimensions of satire through four elements. They are: Setting, Method, Uptake and Target. These two models are combined in this study to form a two-tiered analytical framework. The GTVH model is used to study the internal linguistic structure of humor. The SMUT model identifies the context and purpose of satire. This integration allows for a more nuanced analysis of how satirical discourse functions, both structurally and contextually.

3. Methodology

The selection criteria focused on episodes that dealt with significant political or social issues. The following episodes were selected and analyzed:

- A. Traffic Stops (Season 11, Episode 25)
- B. U.S. Supreme Court Corruption (Season 11, Episode 1)
- C. Sinclair Broadcast Group (Season 4, Episode 18)

The episodes were extracted from the program's official YouTube channel. The episodes watched in their entirety, then transcribed to facilitate analysis.

The integrated analytical model was adopted to analyze satirical discourse in this study. The model was employed to study political satire from both contextual and linguistic perspective. The procedures below were followed in conducting the analysis:

- 1- Eight excerpts extracted from the three episodes were analyzed, focusing on passages containing clear political satire. The unit of analysis in this study consists of the monologic speeches presented by John Oliver. These clips rely on political satire to comment on the situations and statements of other parties. The quotations were identified after carefully watching the episodes and extracting the instances where the satirical discourse appears.
- 2- The humor elements in each quote were categorized descriptively and analytically. The components of the integrated model were determined based on the definitions of each element in the two models and by referring to the context and implicit meaning of the discourse.
- 3- Each extract was analyzed simultaneously using both models, observing GTVH elements (script opposition, logical mechanism, situation, target, narrative strategy, and language) in parallel with SMUT elements (setting, uptake, method, and target). This direct integration of analysis allowed for the examination of irony from two perspectives simultaneously: linguistic structure and pragmatic context.
- 4- Finally, the results were interpreted in an integrated manner by linking the linguistic and contextual levels, providing a deeper understanding of how political satire is constructed and functions in the studied episodes

4. Findings and Analysis

This section sets forth the analysis adopted in the present study. Selected humorous instances are examined in the program *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*. The current section displays the results of the study. The analysis is based on the integrated SMUT– GTVH framework .It reveals how satirical targets, methods and contexts interact with linguistic mechanisms to shape Oliver’s speech with a satirical critique way.

Satirical Examples:

Extract 1: “Police aren’t just looking for crimes they're looking for money ... as soon as their balance sheet gets worse magically it seems so do the driving skills of the people in their community.”

(Oliver, 2024b, 8:54 - 9:08)

Setting (SMUT) and Situation (GTVH)

The context explores political and social issues in the United States, focusing on traffic stops. This episode shows the weak oversight of police and local governments. It criticizes police officers for abusing their power to raise funds rather than enforce the law.

Method (SMUT) and Logical Mechanism (GTVH)

The style relies on political satire. Logical mechanism is based on incongruity between the security goal of checkpoints and their use for financial exploitation.

Uptake (SMUT) and Script Opposition (GTVH)

The joke in this situation is based on the discrepancy between the supposed role of the law and the practices of exploiting loopholes for financial gain. The paradox highlights the critical nature of satire in the discourse.

Target (SMUT) and Target (GTVH)

Police is the target, local authorities, and municipalities. The criticism in this extract is directed at the abuse of power for financial gain. It highlights the weakness of official control.

Narrative Strategy (GTVH)

The speaker relies on exaggeration and sarcasm in highlight the gap between authority and the true purpose of the stops. In highlighting the relationship between the budget deficit and police behavior this enhances the satirical tone. So, this creating a critical paradox about the system and its fairness.

Language (GTVH)

In this extract language is direct and sarcastic, such as the use of “magically” and “looking for money.” It highlights a contradiction between comic reality and perceived power. It also highlights the abuse of power satirically.

Extract 2: “Yes there are so many of you the point is, we have to stop the abusive practices associated with traffic stops it’s so obvious even a child can see it a child a child.”

(Oliver, 2024b, 26:49 - 27:4)

Setting (SMUT) and Situation (GTVH)

Here the speech addresses a discussion about the need to stop the abusive practices associated with traffic stops. The situation is used here to shed light on a very obvious issue, to the point that even a child could see it.

Method (SMUT) and Logical Mechanism (GTVH)

The comedic style relies on exaggeration and repetition emphasizes that the issue is so obvious that any child could understand it. The repetition of the word “child” is a humorous element highlights how overly clear the issue is.

Uptake (SMUT) and Script Opposition (GTVH)

Satire lies in the contradiction between the necessity of the clarity regarding the issue the fact that some people fail to see it. The researchers believe that the text highlights how something simple and straightforward, like this issue, can be presented as if it were difficult to understand or hard to see.

Target (SMUT) and Target (GTVH)

The text criticizes those who are unaware of arbitrary practices in traffic stops. The satirical element lies in exaggeration that this issue is obvious and evident.

Narrative Strategy (GTVH)

The exaggeration of the repeated word “child” represents narrative strategy to ensure the clarity of the case. Meaning that, the issue is so clear and even a child could understand it.

Language (GTVH)

Simplicity and directness characterized the language here with the redundant word “child” reinforcing the satire case. The phrase “even a child can see it” is used to illustrate how obvious the issue is. This leads to increase humor and contrast between the simplicity of understanding and the complexity of the actions that some individuals face.

Extract 3: “Cops will constantly bring up ... Timothy McVey ... only caught after the bombing which to be honest feels a little more like a Miss than a hit.”

(Oliver, 2024b, 7:44 - 8:02)

Setting (SMUT) and Situation (GTVH)

Police and their approach are criticized in dealing with crimes because they focus on the discussion of terrorists after the events happened. Here the satire reveals the police’s lack of judicial authority and their extremely late appearance.

Method (SMUT) and Logical Mechanism (GTVH)

The discussion on the counterterrorism relies on irony and paradox. The surprise come on the discussion of McVey after it was too late. This creates new expectations.

Uptake (SMUT) and Script Opposition (GTVH)

The text is based on the assumption that police prevent crimes before they happened . In reality the opposite is true. The discrepancy highlights the shortcomings of the police and creates a comedic effect.

Target (SMUT) and Target (GTVH)

In this extract, the target is the police and authorities, particularly their failure to act proactive measures. McVey is used as a symbol through which their failure is highlighted. This leaves a gap for broader criticism for these practices.

Narrative Strategy (GTVH)

In this text the narrative relies on short, funny and satirical comments. The comedy arises from the contrast between the image that police are highly intelligent and the reality of “McVey” was arrested after the explosion.

Language (GTVH)

The language is concise and ironic, using words like “miss” and “hit” to emphasize the contrast between expectation and reality. The text gives a sense of spontaneous thought and clearly reinforces the ironic tone.

Extract 4: “The court’s public approval rating has dropped to a 50-year low... It’s hard to think of anything people have less confidence in right now, aside from maybe the window seats in Boeing planes.”

(Oliver, 2024a, 1:37 - 1:49)

Setting (SMUT) and Situation (GTVH)

The US Supreme Court is mocked in this text for its declining confidence. The window on Boeing airplanes as a symbol of technological insecurity have become an icon of decline of trust in institutions and democracy.

Method (SMUT) and Logical Mechanism (GTVH)

The text relies on a surprised comparison to airplane seats. This turns serious criticism to biting satire of court’s prestige.

Uptake (SMUT) and Script Opposition (GTVH)

The irony stems from the contrast between the court’s once-trustworthy image and its declining credibility. The comparison to Boeing seats reveals the fragility of this trust.

Target (SMUT) and Target (GTVH)

The text criticizes the US Supreme Court and its justices for decisions that have contributed to decline its legitimacy.

Narrative Strategy (GTVH)

The strategy based on juxtaposition, comparing a serious issue which is the collapse of trust in the court with a trivial matter which is airplane seats. This highlights the seriousness of the situation in a satirical way by comparing a serious case with a trivial one.

Language (GTVH)

The language is sharp and concise, building serious anticipation before it surprises with an ironic ending. The focus on the word “trust” links between the court and aviation. The wordplay enhances the irony and reveals it clearly.

Extract 5: “One-third of the Court was appointed-sometimes under dubious circumstances-by a man who never won the popular vote.”

(Oliver, 2024a, 2:00 - 2:06)

Setting (SMUT) and Situation (GTVH)

The context is political and it focuses on the legitimacy of the U.S. Supreme Court. It criticizes the appointment of a third of its members under controversial circumstances. On the other hand, the broader context is the election of a president who did not win the popular vote but appointed as the court's justices.

Method (SMUT) and Logical Mechanism (GTVH)

The method relies on paradox between ideal democracy and a flawed reality in appointing justices in the United States.

Uptake (SMUT) and Script Opposition (GTVH)

The humor is built on the contrast between ideal democracy and political reality. It shows the conflict between democratic values and the mechanisms for appropriating judges.

Target (SMUT) and Target (GTVH)

In this text, the target is the American political system and the President's power to appoint judges. It also illustrates the absence of institutional oversight.

Narrative Strategy (GTVH)

The strategy is based on the contrast between popular weakness and the power of the universe. The phrase "dubious circumstances" reinforces doubts indicating the flaws of judicial and political spheres.

Language (GTVH)

In the text above, the language is direct and sharp. Strong sarcasm is created by phrases such as "dubious circumstances" and "a man who did not win the popular vote." Structure of the sentence highlights the contrast between the perceived legitimacy and shocking reality reveals the truth.

Extract 6: "Sinclair may be the most influential Media company that you've never heard of not only are they the largest owner of local TV stations in the country they could soon get even bigger."

(Oliver, 2017, 2:49 - 2:57)

Setting (SMUT) and Situation (GTVH)

The text highlights "Sinclair" as the largest owner of local TV stations in the U.S. It also points to the possibility of future expansion.

Method (SMUT) and Logical Mechanism (GTVH)

The satire is evident in describing Sinclair as the most influential company. Nevertheless, many people haven't heard of it.

Uptake (SMUT) and Script Opposition (GTVH)

It supposed that big media company should be known to the public. Here Sinclair is very strong but almost unknown. This opposed what is expected.

Target (SMUT) and Target (GTVH)

The target here is Sinclair and the media system to allow one company to dominate numerous stations. This raises worry about media control.

Narrative Strategy (GTVH)

Simple and clear sentences are utilized to show Sinclair's hidden power. Sinclair reveals its mystery and possible developing in a satirical way.

Language (GTVH)

Opposing phrases like "most influential" vs. "never heard" and "may be" are used to generate doubt and to invite people about hidden control over the media.

Extract 7: "Are all Peanut M&M's just snake eggs painted different colors? do foxes walk on their hind legs when no one is looking? Is there only one Olsen twin who's moving back and forth? ... all of those things could very well be true."

(Oliver, 2017, 9:30 - 9:48)

Setting (SMUT) and Situation (GTVH)

Sinclair stations are mocked by John Oliver for forcing their anchors to present misleading news. The mockery focuses on repeating the allegations against Michael Flynn during the local news program.

Method (SMUT) and Logical Mechanism (GTVH)

The comedic style relies on exaggeration and irony. In this way, the argument is reduced to ridiculousness revealing its lack of strength.

Uptake (SMUT) and Script Opposition (GTVH)

The contradiction arises from combining a serious political topic (the FBI investigation) with sarcastic and childish examples. This makes the claim trivial, as if it is a joke of children.

Target (SMUT) and Target (GTVH)

Sinclair faces criticisms for promoting unrealistic and misleading information and using vague phrases such as (could very well be true). This makes it appear unprofessional and weakens confidence in what is offered.

Narrative Strategy (GTVH)

The narrative escalates in bizarreness. The idea becomes increasingly absurd: it begins with M&M, then continues with foxes and the Olsen twins. The scene develops comically until the premise becomes absurd.

Language (GTVH)

The language is simple and straightforward here yet it is rich with humorous imagery. Examples like “snake eggs” and “foxes walk on hind legs” add comedic touch. This transforms serious speech into a humorous situation.

Extract 8: “Tonight, Mahershala Ali on the cover of GQ Kareem Abdul Jabar sneezed in an airport and happy birthday to Fared Zakaria! this has been your terrorism alert desk.”

(Oliver, 2017, 16:22 - 16:34)

Setting (SMUT) and Situation (GTVH)

The quote illustrates the “terrorism alert desk” segment that claims to present itself as serious security news. However, this argument is mocked through an exaggerated and ridiculous example where Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's sneeze is portrayed in a wrong way as a terrorist threat. This leads to a misunderstanding of the situation.

Method (SMUT) and Logical Mechanism (GTVH)

The comic logic is based on exaggeration to the point of absurdity. A simple sneeze is treated as a global threat. In doing so, the text reveals how the media amplifies things and creates imaginary dangers.

Uptake (SMUT) and Script Opposition (GTVH)

The irony of a serious security disclosure with a simple sneeze. This creates a scene of comedy and exposes the misleading and exaggerated news.

Target (SMUT) and Target (GTVH)

The text criticizes the media for inciting unwarranted panic. The media tends to exaggerate trivial events as if they were major threats. The aim here is to satire the transformation of news into a means for inciting fear nothing else.

Narrative Strategy (GTVH)

The text relies on chaos and irony through combining trivial events “a magazine cover, a sneeze, a birthday” with serious case as terrorism. This discrepancy illustrates the

absurdity of the media where trivial matters are given a formal tone to produce satirical effect.

Language (GTVH)

At the beginning, the language is simple and formal then the heavy phrases are used “terrorism alert desk.” This, creates a linguistic paradox enhances irony between serious form and ridiculous content.

5. Discussion

The current study aims to identify how verbal humor functions in political satire in *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*. An integrated SMUT-GTVH framework is used for analyzing. Major findings reveal that Oliver’s satire is based on a systematic coordination of different elements and is not limited to isolated jokes. Rather, it serves to critique institutions and re-present the nature of politics from a satirical perspective. This study differs from others in that it does not limit itself to analyze the structure of a joke alone. Instead, it combines Simpson's model of satirical discourse with Attardo's theory of verbal humor. It aims to provide a comprehensive view of political satire, which combines linguistic, cognitive and ideological aspects. This integration gives humor a depth that previous studies have not provided. It also focuses on a linguistic construction and its political effectiveness through the interaction of rhetorical strategies and linguistic tactics.

Last Week Tonight's SMUT-GTVH analysis reveals how elements of SMUT provide context for understanding Oliver's satire. On the other side, GTVH tools explain the linguistic and cognitive details of humor and mechanisms of forming ironic paradox. The analysis reveals that the program works as tool for rethinking knowledge with GTVH highlighting the gap between official narrative and reality. In the episode “traffic stops” the clash between the police’s role as protectors and their role as a source of revenue expose these practices. The critique is presented humorously that combines satire and political analysis.

The elements of the integrated model help to simplify complex issues and direct critical thinking toward specific aim. The Method and Narrative Strategy like exaggeration and irony play a clear role in shaping the satirical structure of the discourse. Selecting precise language and vivid images makes these cases easier and clearer. Moreover, the Uptake element highlights the relationship between satire and critical analysis within the program.

To sum up, the political satire in the program under this study is not just for entertainment. In a clever way, it presents ideas that combines substances and humor which raises political issues critically in a non-confrontational and indirect manner.

6. Conclusion

After analyzing the talks of the selected episodes, the study reached the following conclusions in harmony with research objectives and questions raised in the study.

1-One of the most important findings of this study is that the integrated model of Paul Simpson’s (2003) SMUT and Salvatore Attardo’s (1994) GTVH succeeds in providing explanation of political satire in a comprehensive way. Applying the integrated framework has shown an important insight the complex structure of Oliver’s satire and its communicative power.

2- At the macro level, the SMUT model identifies the ideological context of speech. This clear in setting, target, uptake and method, contributing to clarifying the critical message and identify the target.

3- At the micro level, GTVH mechanisms elucidate how humor is connected linguistically through the contradiction between formal discourse and reality. This enhances the power of satire as an effective communication tool.

4-The results also show that political satire in *Last week Tonight* is not just as form of entertainment. Rather, it operates as a form of critical discourse that challenges dominant political narratives and present political issues from alternative perspectives.

5-It is recommended to conduct future research on the use of linguistic humor and irony in shaping political discourse within satirical media.

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المستخلص

تهدف هذه الورقة البحثية الى تحليل كيفية بناء آليات الفكاهة اللفظية وتطبيقها في السخرية السياسية في برنامج "لاست ويك تونايت" مع جون أوليفر، كما تركز الدراسة على دور هذه الآليات في بناء السخرية السياسية. تتبنى الدراسة منهجاً وصفيًا نوعياً يدمج نموذج سيمبسون للسخرية (2003) ونظرية أثار دو العامة للفكاهة اللفظية (1994). ويهدف المنهج المعتمد الى استكشاف طبيعة هذه الفكاهة وفهم كيفية عمل آلياتها ضمن سياقها السياسي. تم اختيار عينة الدراسة من ثلاث حلقات رئيسية من البرنامج. وتخلص الدراسة الى ان الإطار المتكامل (SMUT-GTVH) ليس مجرد مفهوم نظري بل يساعد على فهم كيفية تحول السخرية السياسية من مجرد نكات الى أداة ذات تأثير حقيقي. لا يقتصر البرنامج على كونه وسيلة ترفيه، بل يساهم ايضاً في تشكيل الوعي بالقضايا السياسية بشكل أعمق.
