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**A neo-Gricean approach to the creation of humour in
Intercultural Communication in the TV show *The Good Place***

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Breve resumen

El humor puede considerarse un elemento universal que desarrolla una función social. Sin embargo, es un fenómeno ligado al entorno cultural de los individuos. Por ello, producir interacciones humorísticas con éxito entre diferentes culturas puede resultar extremadamente complejo. Desde un punto de vista pragmático, diferentes estudios han comprobado una conexión entre la creación del humor y las máximas del principio de cooperación de Grice. Sin embargo, las teorías de Grice han sido criticadas por diferentes autores ya que sus principios pueden llegar a solaparse. Por tanto, las teorías neo-griceanas han sido elegidas para el desarrollo de este estudio, ya que ofrecen una solución a los puntos débiles de Grice. Dicho esto, dos cuestiones importantes se proponen para el desarrollo del estudio: 1. ¿Hasta qué punto se reflejan con precisión las diferencias culturales en el uso del humor en las comedias de situación? 2. En caso de apreciarse, ¿cómo se aplican las máximas de Grice en estos encuentros humorísticos interculturales?

Considerando las cuestiones a tratar, el presente estudio se ha dividido en cinco secciones. La primera sección presenta la motivación de este trabajo, los objetivos y las hipótesis planteadas. En segundo lugar, el marco teórico profundiza en diferentes temas como son la cultura, la comunicación intercultural, el humor y el Principio de cooperación de Grice, así como la teoría neo-griceana. Después, la tercera sección contiene la descripción de la metodología, el corpus utilizado, los participantes, y el procedimiento llevado a cabo. En la cuarta sección se presentan y se discuten los resultados y los datos obtenidos tras haber realizado un análisis cuantitativo y cualitativo. Finalmente, se proporcionan las conclusiones, junto con posibles limitaciones y líneas de investigación futuras.

Uno de los aspectos más importantes de una cultura es el lenguaje. Éste es distintivo de cada civilización y contribuye al desarrollo de la comunicación. En un

mundo cada día más globalizado, la comunicación intercultural se convierte cada vez en una ocurrencia más habitual en cualquier contexto. Por ello, es crucial desarrollar una competencia intercultural que nos ayude a comprender las diferencias culturales, y a adaptarnos a este tipo de situaciones. La ausencia de esa competencia puede derivar en diferentes errores pragmáticos y disonancias comunicativas.

En 1975, Grice propuso la existencia de un principio de cooperación mediante el cual, el receptor infiere el mensaje del emisor, creando una respuesta acorde y siguiendo ciertos patrones en el proceso comunicativo. Grice hace especial énfasis en diferenciar lo que el emisor dice y lo que quiere transmitir con su mensaje. Introduce, pues, el concepto de «implicatura», definiéndolo como las conclusiones que el receptor extrae del mensaje, asumiendo que está cooperando en la comunicación. Para Grice existen cuatro máximas que deben estar presentes en todo proceso comunicativo y mediante las cuales los interlocutores cooperan. Dichas máximas se dividen en cantidad, calidad, relevancia y modalidad. Sin embargo, hay diferentes procesos mediante los cuales las máximas no son observables en una conversación. Estos procesos incluyen desafiar las máximas, infringirlas, violarlas, suspenderlas o, simplemente, optar por no llevarlas a cabo.

Los argumentos presentados por Grice fueron objeto de sus detractores, quienes señalaron cómo sus principios llegaban a ser ambiguos y contradictorios. A consecuencia de este conflicto, algunos autores intentaron subsanar los puntos débiles de su teoría. Así pues, Horn (1984) reorganiza las máximas propuestas por Grice en dos principios, el Principio-Q, que engloba la máxima de cantidad y el Principio-R, que recoge las otras tres máximas. Más tarde, Levinson (1987) sugiere la existencia de tres principios similares: Principio-Q, Principio-I y Principio-M. De esta forma, las máximas propuestas por Grice quedan reducidas a tres: cantidad, relevancia y modalidad. Estas ideas neo-griceanas han sido las tomadas como referencia para llevar a cabo este estudio.

El segundo tema central de este proyecto es el humor, en especial en su función comunicativa. El foco central reside en el uso del humor en la comunicación intercultural ya que lo que es divertido en una cultura, puede llegar a causar el efecto contrario en otra. Wilkins & Eisenbraun (2009) identifican tres teorías del humor: superioridad, incoherencia o incongruencia, y liberación. Además de las diferentes teorías, Kuiper et al. (2004) informan sobre dos posibles dimensiones de este humor: lúdico-seria y afiliativo-agresiva. Ésta última se caracteriza por englobar los cuatro estilos humorísticos: auto-refuerzo, afiliativo, derrotista y agresivo. La forma en la que estas teorías, dimensiones y estilos son usados varía en función de la cultura de cada individuo.

Combinando el uso del humor en la comunicación y las máximas conversacionales de Grice, diferentes estudios han probado cómo se puede crear una situación humorística mediante el incumplimiento de las máximas. Sin embargo, el estudio de esta conexión en la comunicación intercultural es limitado. Esta es una de las motivaciones del presente estudio, que se centra en las interacciones humorísticas entre los participantes del estudio, qué tipo de humor emplean y cómo surgen dichas interacciones.

Con la intención de estudiar los diferentes usos del humor en la comunicación intercultural y su creación, se creó el corpus TGPC (*The Good Place Corpus*). El corpus TGPC se compone de ocho episodios (correspondientes al primer y último episodio de cada temporada) de la serie televisiva *The Good Place*. Una de las principales razones para la selección de esta serie es su diversidad cultural. Sus personajes principales provienen de diferentes culturas. Dichos personajes fueron seleccionados como participantes del presente estudio. Después, se buscaron los posibles comentarios humorísticos tras el visionado de los episodios y la revisión de los correspondientes guiones. Una vez finalizada la búsqueda de interacciones humorísticas, los 95 casos

reunidos fueron clasificados según el tipo de teoría de humor, dimensión y estilo empleado. Además, en aquellos casos posibles se analizó si se incumplían las máximas y de qué forma.

A continuación, los análisis cuantitativo y cualitativo fueron llevados a cabo. En cuanto a los usos del humor en la comunicación, más de la mitad de las interacciones humorísticas fueron llevadas a cabo por los participantes occidentales. Además, la teoría más usada tanto por los participantes occidentales como los orientales fue la teoría de liberación. De igual forma, la dimensión más empleada por todos los individuos fue la lúdico-seria. La mayor diferencia se encuentra en el uso de estilos del humor. Mientras que los participantes occidentales prefieren un estilo de humor agresivo, los participantes orientales se decantan por un humor derrotista.

La mayor diferencia de este estudio se encuentra en el incumplimiento de las máximas. Cabe mencionar que, de los 95 casos de humor analizados, menos de la mitad fueron resultado del incumplimiento de alguna máxima. Al igual que en el análisis de las estrategias de humor empleadas en la serie, los participantes occidentales son los que empleaban en mayor medida el incumplimiento de las máximas. Mientras que los participantes occidentales prefieren incumplir la máxima de relevancia, los participantes orientales se inclinan por el incumplimiento de la máxima de cantidad.

El análisis de los casos probó que en diferentes ocasiones el humor resultaba tras el quebrantamiento de las máximas. Sin embargo, la mayoría de los ejemplos recogen cómo el humor surge por el cumplimiento de dichas máximas. Estos resultados, apoyan la teoría de Dynel (2017) quién aborda desde un punto de vista neo-griceano cómo los participantes pueden ser cooperativos en la interacción y crear humor conscientemente. Se puede considerar entonces, que la mayor parte de las estrategias de humor analizadas en este estudio surgieron como resultado de la cooperación por parte de los participantes.

Estas diferencias en el empleo de las máximas son un reflejo de las diferencias culturales aplicadas a la comunicación. Intentando encontrar una razón para justificar estas diferencias culturales, se sugieren los diferentes modelos propuestos por Hall (1976), Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (1997) o Hofstede (2011), quienes ilustran cómo las diferencias culturales definen a cada individuo. Cabe poner especial énfasis en el aspecto comunicativo de dichos modelos.

Finalmente, se ha podido obtener una mayor perspectiva sobre el uso del humor en la comunicación. No obstante, cabe recordar que es un estudio limitado al tratarse de un lenguaje ficticio. Se podría aportar una perspectiva más completa si se estudiara en la producción del lenguaje natural, es decir, en conversaciones reales. Sería, además, interesante averiguar cómo dichos encuentros humorísticos pueden ser traducidos al español, observando si pueden mantenerse los mismos mecanismos en la creación del humor en la comunicación intercultural. Puede ser también interesante el hecho de comparar la serie escogida como objeto de estudio con otras comedias de situación. No obstante, la existencia de series que representen la diversidad cultural sigue siendo relativamente escasa.

Abstract

Communication is a phenomenon characterized differently in each culture. The use of humour in communication is culturally bound and it can be very subjective. Thus, this paper examines the use of humour strategies in Intercultural Communication. Furthermore, Attardo (1994) and Taberski (1998) proposed a theory where humour encounters arise from the non-observance of the maxims in Grice's Cooperative Principle. Hence, the humour strategies presented were also analysed according to this idea. A neo-Gricean approach was used for the analysis of the conversational maxims as it covers the main weak points of Grice's theory and his Cooperative Principle.

Keywords: humour, Intercultural Communication, Cooperative Principle, neo-Gricean pragmatics, conversational maxims.

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1. Introduction

Humour is a ubiquitous phenomenon, common to every human being. Humorous interactions date as far back as Plato's times (Attardo, 1994) and, in line with Koller's (1998) affirmations, they have a social function. Different studies (Martin et al., 1993; Yim, 2016) have proven that humour has great benefits for mental health, relieving stress and developing a positive self-image. Therefore, in these difficult times, it is common to use humour as a coping mechanism (Neziek & Derks, 2001). However, as Britvec (2020) points out, humour can also have a negative outcome as some people can use humour as a negative and harming tool, not only to hurt others but also to belittle oneself. According to Kirsh & Kuiper (2003), an incorrect use of humour can make the speaker seem individualistic. Moreover, the authors point out how the other participant might feel threatened, rejecting the other speaker. In this case, humour disrupts communication, creating a barrier, especially in culturally diverse contexts (McGhee, 1999).

Thus, humour can be considered a subjective phenomenon that is very much culturally bound (Reimann, 2010). It is thanks to research that we can get an answer as to why these differences occur within the same setting (McGraw, 2011). Hence, mastering the humour techniques of a totally different culture without failing in communication can be extremely difficult. Nonetheless, it is a very important skill that can help managing interaction in intercultural settings (Rogerson-Revell, 2007).

Framing humour within a pragmatic dimension, different authors (Attardo, 1994; Taberski, 1998; Pan, 2012; Xue & Kuang, 2017) have previously studied the connection between humour and Grice's Cooperative Principle and its conversational maxims. Most of the authors agree that there is a close relation between the creation of humour and the non-observance of the Cooperative Principle. However, none of these works have an intercultural setting as the focus of their analysis.

Therefore, this paper aims to analyse the use of humour in Intercultural Communication and its connection to Grice's Cooperative Principle. In an attempt to bring together humour, culture, and linguistics, and as to narrow down the scope of the study, the following research questions are presented:

RQ1: To what extent does the media, or more specifically TV sitcoms, portray the cultural differences that emanate from the use of humour strategies in intercultural communication?

RQ2: How are Grice's maxims applied in each of the humorous encounters found in intercultural communication?

Considering the previous research mentioned, the following hypotheses are posed:

Hypothesis 1: trying to accurately portray different cultures in a TV show and staying true to a culture can be difficult. However, it can be accomplished by doing a thorough research on Intercultural Communication to try and illustrate reality. Nevertheless, sometimes when sitcoms and humorous TV shows try to portray different cultures they might fail. Therefore, a sitcom may do a realistic characterisation of certain cultures but there are also high chances that the writers can reduce their characters to cultural stereotypes.

Hypothesis 2: humoristic encounters often arise after failing to comply with Grice's maxims (Attardo, 1994; Taberski, 1998). Taking this affirmation and linking it with the diverse use of humour strategies in Intercultural Communication, differences might be found in the production of conversational maxims depending on the cultural background. In other words, the way that conversational maxims are carried out might be linked to the cultural background of the interlocutors.

The remainder of this paper is organised as follows. After presenting the introduction, section 2 provides a theoretical background which examines the concepts of culture, and humour, as well as Grice's Cooperative Principle and their connection. Section 3 presents the methodology used for the development of this study, including the data, participants, and procedures. Section 4 analyses and discusses in depth the results obtained. Lastly, section 5 presents the conclusions of this study.

2. Theoretical background

This section offers the conceptual framework for the development of this research. Thus, it has been divided into three main subsections. The first section talks about the concept of culture and Intercultural Communication. The second section offers a review of Grice's Cooperative Principle and its conversational maxims. Finally, the third section deals with humour, its role in Intercultural Communication and its connection to Grice's conversational maxims.

2.1. Culture and Intercultural Communication

In 1976, Edward T. Hall explained how there is nothing in life that is not affected by culture. The way we move, how we think and act, problem solving strategies, financial and governmental organizations, everything is culturally shaped. Thus, the concept of *culture* is crucial in life (Jahoda, 2012). Although it may seem simple, as Spencer-Oatey (2012) states, the concept of *culture* is difficult to define, and many scholars have tried to describe the term throughout history.

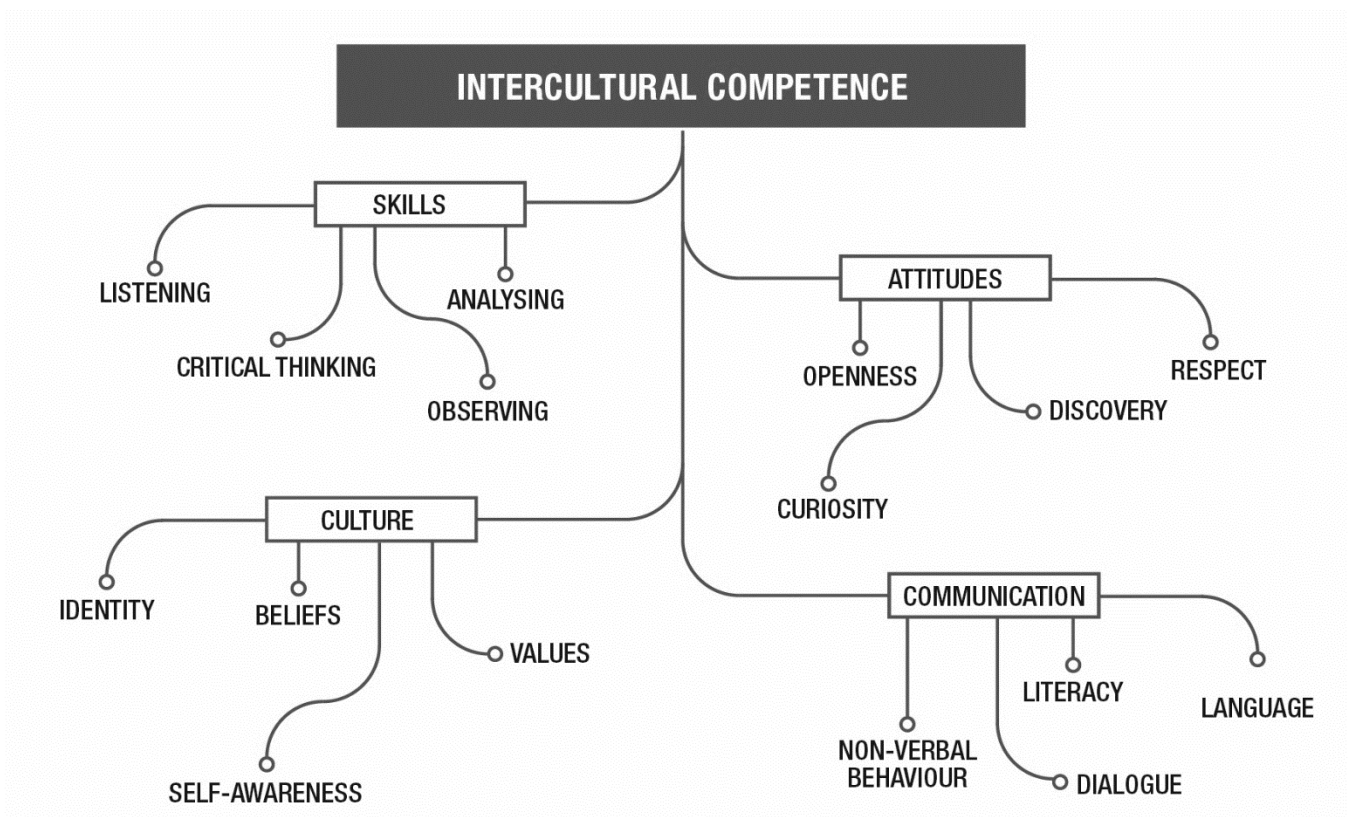
Early definitions such as Arnold's (1873 as cited in Jahoda 2012: 290) describe culture as "acquainting ourselves with the best that has been known and said in the world, and thus with the history of the human spirit". However, for Kroeber & Kluckholm (1952: 181), culture is a series "of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups". Hofstede's (2011: 3) definition claims that culture is "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others". Other scholars such as Kidd & Teagle (2012: 6) simply describe culture as "the way of life of a group of people". Along these lines, Samovar et al (2014: 11) state that "culture provides the rules for playing the game of life". Overall, culture can be defined as the set of features (i.e. values, communication styles, etc.) that are shared by a group or community, and which are distinctive of each group.

As Hall (1976) affirms, culture is made of a series of elements. Some of these elements are easily visible, and some are deeply rooted within a culture and harder to perceive. For this study, the focus is on one of the visible aspects, language. Some other elements that create culture include food, beliefs, personal attitudes, values; however, that is beyond the scope of this paper. Therefore, language is an expression of culture used to communicate. Communication is then a basic form of human interaction that varies from culture to culture (Kulich & Condon, 2015) and both notions, culture and communication, are tightly interlinked.

In a globalised world, different cultures come together in the same settings and establishing a successful communication can be complex as cultural differences might set a challenge (Taylor, 2006). When engaging in a conversation with individuals from different cultures, the main goal is to achieve a common understanding so as to lessen the cultural differences. Therefore, a skill that every individual can benefit from is

Intercultural Competence. Byram (2000: 297) defines Intercultural Competence as “the ability to interact effectively with people of cultures other than one’s own”. One has to be aware of the differences among individuals and be critical with oneself to develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to successfully communicate (Deardoff, 2006). Thus, it is crucial to develop one’s intercultural competence as to avoid misunderstandings in communication, i.e. being able to understand and adapt to those situations where cultural differences are present. Furthermore, the European Union emphasises the need to develop our intercultural competence for the creation of a common intercultural space (Stier, 2009).

*Figure 1: McKinnon, R. (2019) 'What is intercultural competence?'.
Monash University.*



Intercultural Communication (hereinafter referred to as IC) deals with interaction among people from different cultural backgrounds. IC research reached a peak in the sixties and seventies (Dirven & Pütz, 1993). However, IC has continued being a major focus of research as it deals with the mutual interaction of language and culture in multicultural environments (Reimann, 2010). Moreover, IC is not only object of linguistic research, as Stier (2009) points out, it has also attracted the concern of other disciplines such as psychology, sociology, education, etc.

Before developing the concept of IC any further, it is important to differentiate it from Cross-cultural Communication. A cross-cultural approach to communication examines different cultures “based on the investigation of certain aspects of language use, such as speech acts, behaviour patterns, and language behaviour” (Kecskes, 2017: 400). In brief, it can be defined as the comparison or contrastive study of specific features of communication among cultures (Gudykunst, 2003). In other words, it looks for similarities or differences among different cultures. Thus, the main difference between both terms is that IC focuses on the interaction between people from different cultures, taking a more socio-cognitive approach.

Bennett (1998) simplifies the concept of IC as the attempt of two cultures which are unlikely to understand each other. However, when talking about IC there are two concepts that must be identified *pragmatic failure* and *communicative dissonance*. Miscommunication occurs when the participants of the interaction have different views or alignments leaving room to discrepancies in the interpretation of the message. A pragmatic failure is “a communication attempt [that] is unsuccessful because what the speaker intends to express differs from what the hearer believes to have been expressed” (House, Kasper & Ross, 2014: 4). This occurs specially in those cases when the message is not explicit (van Opzeeland, 2017), and as a consequence the hearer is not able to

decipher what is meant by the speaker. For Irmann (2005), these pragmatic failures lead to misunderstandings that may result in communicative dissonances. Zamborlin (2007: 1) defines dissonances as “circumstances in which speakers, deliberately or not, organize the linguistic action in such a way that hearers perceive it as conflicting with the harmonious flow of the conversation”.

According to Irmann (2005), the main cause of miscommunication is rooted in the deep features of cultural backgrounds. It seems that for communication to be successful, the participants of the interaction should collaborate and adjust as to understand each other and convey the right message. Therefore, the next point of this paper focuses on Grice’s Cooperative Principle.

2.2. The Cooperative Principle

One of the main objectives of communication is to trade information between participants (Hadi, 2012). In those conversations, individuals often adapt to the other speaker to avoid miscommunication (Davies, 2000). In 1975, Grice proposed the existence of a Cooperative Principle where the hearer can infer the intended meaning of the speaker and generate an answer, following certain patterns or regularities in conversation. In other words, Grice’s Cooperative Principle is concerned with how the hearer decides what the speaker means, and thus, how a successful conversation takes place.

Although this theory has attracted many scholars, some authors have questioned Grice’s view. Thomas (1997a) questions the assumption that all the participants of an interaction share a common interest in the conversation. If one of the interlocutors is not engaged in the event, they might not fulfil the linguistic and pragmatic norms, failing to comply the Cooperative Principle. Similarly, Eelen (2001) challenges the cooperativeness

of conversations highlighting that one of the features of a genuine conversation is being cooperative. Hadi (2010: 70) defines Grice’s theory as “too biased towards the notion of cooperation in human conversation”. These opposing views led to the rise of neo-Gricean pragmatics, which will be further discussed in section 2.2.2.

Throughout his work, Grice (1975) makes a distinction between what the speaker *says* and what the speaker *means* by introducing the concept of *implicature*. According to Levinson (1983), an implicature is a general assumption of interactional cooperation. Essentially, as Murray (2010) describes, implicatures represent conclusions drawn by the hearer due to the assumption they hold that the speaker is cooperative. This is illustrated in Davies (2007: 2309):

(1) A: Is there another pint of milk?

B: I’m going to the supermarket in five minutes

In this example, participant A has to infer the meaning from B who implicates in their answer that there is no milk, but they will buy some soon. Through an implicature, the message can still be interpreted even if the meaning is not literal (Noertjahjo, Arifin & Ariani, 2017). Furthermore, these conversational implicatures have some defining features, Huang (2014: 32) summarises them as follows:

Table 1: Properties of Conversational Implicatures, adapted from Huang (2014: 32)

	Implicatures can be cancelled if they are inconsistent with:
Defeasability or cancellability	- Semantic entailments
	- Background assumptions
	- Contexts

Non-detachability	Any linguistic expression with the same semantic content tends to carry the same conversational implicature.
Calculability	Conversational implicatures can transparently be derived via the co-operative principle and its component maxims.
Non-conventionality	Conversational implicatures are non-coded in nature, that is, they rely on the saying of what is said but they are not part of what is said.
Reinforceability	They can be made explicit without producing too much of a sense of redundancy.
Universality	They tend to be universal, being motivated rather than arbitrary.

Daily conversations convey information that goes beyond what is explicitly said by an utterance (Blome-Tillman, 2013). An implicature helps to convey the meaning implicated by the non-literal meaning of the utterance. Conversational implicatures arise in certain contexts, therefore, the following section focuses on Grice's conversational maxims.

2.2.1 Grice's Maxims

Grice (1975: 45) summarises his Cooperative Principle in the lines "make your contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged". This statement led to the acknowledgment of four conversational maxims:

Maxim of Quantity:

- Make your contribution as informative as required in the circumstances of the exchange.
- Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Maxim of Quality:

- Do not say what you believe to be false.
- Do not say what you lack evidence for.

Maxim of Relevance:

- Be relevant.

Maxim of Manner:

- Avoid obscurity of expression.
- Avoid ambiguity.
- Be brief.
- Be orderly.

According to Grice's claims, for a conversation to be successful all maxims must be present in the interaction, implying the cooperation of the interlocutors. However, that is not always the case. Thus, there are different processes through which the maxims cannot be observed. As attested by Thomas (1997b) these include:

Flouting a maxim:

A maxim is flouted when the speaker intentionally fails to observe the maxim as to create an implicature. Although it can be similar to the violation of a maxim, by flouting a maxim the participant shows that they are still cooperating.

(2) A: Who was that with you last night?

B: Did you know you were wearing odd socks?

Example 2, (ibid.) represents the flouting of the maxim of relation. B has clearly understood A's question but is choosing not to answer such question and change the subject.

Violating a maxim:

To violate a maxim, the speaker breaks the maxim intentionally in the conversation to create a misunderstanding or achieve another purpose. This can be done, for example, by deliberately lying to the interlocutor.

(3) A: How much did that new dress cost, darling?

B: Less than the last one.

In this example from Cutting (2002: 40) B is violating the maxim of quantity by giving less information than what A expects.

Infringing a maxim:

A maxim is infringed when the speaker fails to observe the maxim and they have no intention of generating an implicature and no intention of misleading the other participant. This usually occurs due to a failure in linguistic performance. Rost (2013: 44) portrays the infringement of a maxim in example 4 where a native English speaker (A) has an encounter with a non-native speaker (B). In this case, speaker B is not trying to create an implicature, however B does not mean to mislead the other participant either, they simply do not understand what A meant.

(4) A: I'm not sure what kind of wood you would want me to use for the shelves.

B: Yes, we want to have wood shelves.

Suspending a maxim:

The speaker does not cooperate, but the hearer does not expect them to actively participate in the conversation. Overall, the participants have no expectations that the maxims will be observed. According to Thomas (1995) this includes hiding the truth to the interlocutor and can rarely be seen. An example presented in his work explains how the participants do not comply with the maxims; however, they are not expected to observe the maxim either. This occurs in cases such as when a person remains silent in a trial, as they are not obliged to give any information that may implicate them in a crime.

Opting out of a maxim:

A speaker opts out of a maxim when they indicate that they are not willing to cooperate in the way that is required. A speaker can opt out of a maxim by using hedges such as *as far as I know...*, *as you probably already know...*, *I don't know if this makes sense, but...* Dornerus (2006: 7) illustrates this in a situation where a doctor who has to follow their patient's confidentiality is asked to reveal certain information about that patient. In this case the doctor will reply:

(5) I'm sorry but I can't tell you anything.

By using the hedge *I'm sorry, but...* the doctor opts out of the maxim. They are not giving any information, although they may seem to be unwilling to cooperate with the other speaker.

2.2.2. Neo-Gricean approach

In section 2.2. it has been noted that Grice's views have been questioned by several authors before (Eelen, 2001; Hadi, 2010). Once Grice's theory has been discussed in detail, the focus is now on those opposing theories who have become more relevant.

As Huang (2017) points out, several scholars consider some of Grice's ideas ambiguous, deceptive, and contradictory. For Horn (1988: 130) "Grice's original framework is clearly at best incomplete and at worst inadequate (...). It is simultaneously too weak, in allowing the derivation of virtually anything by encompassing directly opposite maxims". Several neo-Gricean authors (Chierchia, 2004; Carston, 2005; Horn, 2005) have carried out research on different aspects of this theory. In his work, Huang (2017) summarized the main problems that neo-Griceans found in Grice's theories. Firstly, they criticized how Grice organized the different types of conversational implicatures. Grice made a distinction between generalized conversational implicatures (GCIs) and particularized general implicatures (PCIs), neo-Griceans focused specially on GCIs. They recognised how some of the properties suggested by Grice (see Table 1) were not fulfilled. Secondly, they criticized how different mechanisms were used to cancel or project implicatures, including appositive clauses, as-clauses, or epithets. Their third criticism was aimed at how conversational implicatures can interfere onto the semantic content of an utterance. Finally, different scholars (Saul, 2002; Recanati, 2010) have also offered narrower and broader approaches of the initial Gricean theory.

However, some of the topics that have just been mentioned are beyond the scope of this paper. Therefore, this section will focus on the reinterpretation of Grice's conversational maxims. The main criticism here is aimed at Grice's approach on how the maxims control human interaction (Andresen, 2013) as some of the maxims overlap and can be difficult to distinguish them, making Grice's theory too restrictive.

This neo-Gricean approach reinterprets Grice's conversational maxims and reduces the number of maxims. In 1984, Horn moves to a new and more extensive taxonomy than that of the Gricean maxims and suggested the existence of two principles: the Q-principle and the R-principle. The Q-principle covers the maxim of quantity. This principle is concerned with the content, the speaker has to make their contribution sufficient, say as much as you can so that the hearer can understand. The R-principle encompasses the maxims of relation, quality and manner, and is concerned with the form. In this case, the speaker must make their contribution necessary but saying no more than what they must. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Q-principle is hearer-based while the R-principle is speaker based. In this case, the Cooperative Principle has been reduced to a principle of economy where the speaker might use shorter expressions that are easy to produce. Similarly, the hearer might prefer expressions that are easier to understand even if these are longer utterances. Huang (2009: 123) illustrates Horn's Q-principle in example (6) and (7). The Q-principle somehow limits what should be said. Examples (8) and (9) represent implicatures under the R-principle, in this case the expression is unmarked but describes a case including extra information.

(6) Some of the boys were hiding behind the wall.

+>¹ Not many/most/all of the boys were hiding behind the wall.

(7) I love most Beatles songs.

+> I do not love all Beatles songs.

(8) John broke a finger yesterday.

+> The finger was one of John's own.

¹ '+>' stands for "con conversationally implicate"

(9) The snake slid through the grass and disappeared.

+> The snake first slid through the grass and then disappeared.

Later in 1987, Levinson modifies Horn's principles and suggests the existence of three principles: the Q-principle, the I-principle, and the M-principle. Levinson maintains Horn's Q-principle, modifies the R-principle, and introduces a third M-principle. The new I-principle deals with the amount of information, the speaker should say as much as they must. The M-principle is one where "two coextensive expressions differing in formal markedness tend to become associated with complementary subsets of the original extension" (Carston, 2004: 3). It is a principle for minimization where general terms or obscure expressions should not be used without a reason. In the following examples extracted from Huang (2009: 125-126), (10) and (11) illustrate Levinson's Q-principle, (12) and (13) are instances of his I-principle. Finally, (14) and (15) display implicatures under the M-principle.

(10) Mary believed that the fire burned all night.

+> The fire might or might not burn all night – the speaker does not know which.

(11) We teach French, German and Russian here.

+> We do not, for example, teach Spanish here.

(12) If you do the shopping, I will give you ten euros.

+> If and only if you do the shopping will I give you ten euros.

(13) John pressed the spring and the drawer opened.

+> John pressed the spring and then the drawer opened.

+> John pressed the spring in order to make the drawer open.

(14) Mary ceased to be in the bathroom and came to be in the bedroom.

+> Mary went from the bathroom to the bedroom in an unusual way.

(15) James caused he car to stop.

+> James stopped the car in an unusual form.

Table 2: Reinterpretation of the maxims in neo-Gricean pragmatics

Grice's maxims			
Quantity	Quality	Relevance	Manner
- make your contribution as informative as required	- do not say what you believe to be false	- be relevant	- avoid obscurity
- do not make your contribution more informative than is required	- do not say what you lack evidence for		- avoid ambiguity
			- be brief
			- be orderly



Neo-Gricean Approach		
Quantity	Relevance	Manner (Levinson's contribution to Horn's theory)

<p>- make your contribution as informative as required</p> <p>- do not make your contribution more informative than is required</p>	<p>- be relevant</p>	<p>- be brief</p> <p>- be orderly</p>
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Once both Grice’s and the neo-Gricean approach have been examined, it has been determined that the neo-Gricean perspective is more convenient for the development of this project as it addresses and solves the weakest points of Grice’s theory. Furthermore, it can also offer a more contemporary approach to research.

2.3. Humour

Similar to what happened with the concept of culture, trying to provide a clear definition of *humour* has been a tough task for scholars (Moalla, 2014). In her work, Priego-Valverde (2009: 166) defines humour as “a variety of utterances which make participants laugh, and which, consequently, may be regarded by the participants as humorous”. However, humorous interactions do not always result in laughs. In simple terms, Oshima (2018: 207) defines humour as an “unexpected action or speech, which is different from one’s norms”. One thing most experts agree on is how humorous interactions can be registered in different settings (Collinson, 2002). Marra & Holmes (2007) draw attention to the different functions of humour such as entertainment, social or psychological, among others. Therefore, considering that humour is multifunctional (Holmes, 2000, as

cited in Attardo, 2017) and as to narrow the scope of this paper, the focus for this research is on the communicative function of humour.

When engaging in communication, humour may be used as a conversation starter, to build relationships or to save someone's face (Reimann, 2010). However, as previously mentioned, humour is deeply connected to culture, i.e. it is culture-specific. To be able to participate in humorous interactions, the speaker must be culturally competent and be aware of the cultural differences (Oshima, 2018). That way, communication will be effective. It needs to be highlighted how culture is not the only concept that affects the comprehension of humour. Other factors such as context, personality, gender, age, and experience play an important role as well (Reimann, 2010). Therefore, the concept of humour in Intercultural Communication will be dealt with in the following section.

2.3.1. Humour in Intercultural Communication

Interacting with humour can be challenging as what is funny in a certain culture may be offensive in a different one. The role of humour in Intercultural Communication has been previously studied by several scholars (Cheng, 2003; Miczo & Welter, 2006; Bell, 2007). As Norrick (2010) states, the study of humour in interaction has been progressing regularly since 1970. Subscribing Chen's (2003) ideas, humour is achieved in a social context that is enclosed in a cultural context. The concept of what is amusing varies across cultures. Therefore, there are different strategies that speakers can use to convey humour in a conversation.

Wilkins & Eisenbraun (2009) identify three theories of humour according to their functions. The *relief theory* allows us to release psychological tensions and energy. This theory has established some of the medical basis for the use of humour as a stress-relief

mechanism. Morreall (2012, para. 36) illustrates this theory with a poem written by Harry Graham in 2009 named “Waste”. In example (16), the last lines make us deconstruct the poem which starts as a caring nephew writing a letter turned into an inconsiderate individual. The reader might feel pitiful about the aunt but releases some nervous energy as a humorous instance has been created.

(16) I had written to Aunt Maud

Who was on a trip abroad

When I heard she’d died of cramp,

Just too late to save the stamp.

The *incongruity theory* might be the most outstanding and frequently used one. In this case, individuals find amusing those things that are unexpected or surprising, the expected pattern of conversation has been violated but in a non-threatening way. To illustrate this theory, Straus (2014: 11) suggests the following example, reproduced here as Example (17). Here, the individual in the pub uses terms that are normally used to describe dog’s actions. However, he uses such words to describe a family creating a semantic incongruity and obtaining a joke as a result. He also mentions how standard patterns such as puns, “knock, knock...” or “what do you call a...” jokes, that are mostly considered childish, result in incongruous humoristic encounters most of the times.

(17) This guy walks into a pub, sits down, and says, “Give me two beers, I’ve had a rough day at work.”

The bartender says, “Sorry to hear that, what do you do?”

The guy says, “I take care of the corgis— you know, the dogs the royal family owns.”

The bartender says, “Tough job, huh?”

The guy says, “Well, all that inbreeding has led to low intelligence and bad temperament. And the dogs aren’t that smart either.”

Lastly, there is the *superiority theory*. According to Brandon (2005) this is one of the oldest theories dating as far back as Plato’s times. This theory states how one might make fun or laugh about others and their adversities to feel better about oneself. In example (18), the speaker is mocking the other character, not only making fun of her appearance but also trying to imitate her accent.²

(18) E: “I am just a big, beautiful, utterly perfect cartoon giraffe.”

Once humour theories have been delimited, the focus is now on the dimensions of humour. In Kuiper et al. (2004: 139-140) humour is classified along three different dimensions. The first dimension sees humour as a positive “socially-skilled strategy”. This involves the ability to create casual instances of humour. Individuals who use this type of humour are easy-going, intuitive and they tend to adapt easily in social interactions. The other two dimensions are negative. The second dimension deals with the type of humour where the speaker can sound impolite and aggressive, especially towards the other interlocutor(s). The third and final dimension is considered as “social compensatory”. In this case, the speaker does not have the tools to participate in humorous

² This example has been taken from the TGPC. In this scene two of the characters are at a party, E is drunk and when the other character leaves the scene, she makes fun of her.

interactions, they are unable to tell jokes or understand what the other speaker intends as funny.

Similarly, Miczo & Welter (2006) classify humour in two dimensions instead of three. These two dimensions are *playful-serious humour* and *affiliative-aggressive humour*. The playful-serious dimension is similar to Kuiper et al.'s (2004) positive category. In this classification, this type of humour is usually performed when the speaker feels in a comfortable context, a behaviour displayed for its own purpose. On the other hand, the affiliative-aggressive dimension can be linked to Kuiper et al.'s (ibid.) negative ones. Here, the speaker intends to evoke a reaction by targeting others as the subject of their humour.

Connecting both classifications, this last affiliative-aggressive dimension can be subdivided by the four styles of humour: self-enhancing, affiliative, self-defeating and aggressive (ibid.). *Self-enhancing humour* “enables us to reduce negative emotions and maintain a positive and realistic view in adverse situations” (Mendiburo-Seguel, Paez, & Martínez-Sánchez, 2015: 2). Concurring with Martin et al. (2003), this type of humour is frequently used as a coping mechanism and to regulate emotions. Ford et al. (2017: 6), exemplifies this by using an illustration from Charles Schulz's famous comic *Peanuts* (19). It goes along the lines of an incongruous event and finds amusement in goofy jokes to cope with the situation and feel better about oneself.

(19) Q: If I had seven oranges in one hand and eight oranges in the other, what would I have?

A: Big hands!

Affiliative humour is defined by Miczo & Weller (2006: 140) as that one “employed to raise group morale, identity, and cohesiveness by reducing conflicts and

increasing others' feelings of well-being". It has an interpersonal approach, relying on more spontaneous events to defuse any tensions (Martin et al. 2003). Fried & Carson (2018) point out how this type of humour is frequently performed by stand-up comedians and TV programs such as *The Tonight Show* or *The Ellen DeGeneres Show* among many others. These shows use humour to connect with people, lightening up their moods and creating a safe atmosphere.

Self-defeating humour is usually used by individuals to cover up one's feelings and is connected to a negative view of the self (Mendiburo-Seguel, Paez, & Martínez-Sánchez, 2015). In a study carried out by Ford et al. (2017: 7), the following example (20) was proposed as an illustration of a self-defeating humorous encounter. In this case, the speaker is targeting themselves as the subject of their own joke and ridiculing their own weaknesses.

(20) How do some people manage to understand the mathematical principles behind the cosmos? I can't even add up a restaurant bill.

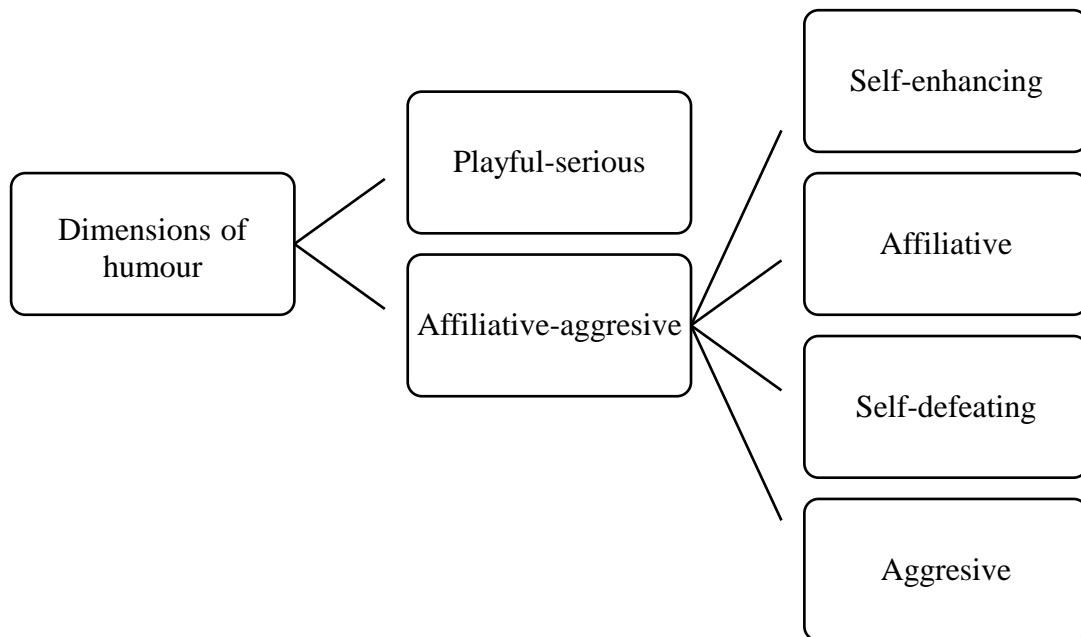
Finally, *aggressive humour* uses negative strategies, such as irony or sarcasm, and there is almost no control as to how it is going to affect others (Mizco & Weller, 2006; Mendiburo-Seguel, Paez, & Martínez-Sánchez, 2015). Take the following example³:

(21) E: Are you gonna talk, or just walk around like a nerd trying to get a personal best on his Fitbit?

In this example, E is irritated at another character for not speaking. She targets him as the subject of her humour by being sarcastic.

³ Example (21) has been taken from the TGP corpus. E is at a party with another character, and she reveals a secret to him. He is in a state of shock and starts walking around nervously. As he is not talking at such news, she gets annoyed.

Figure 2: Summary - dimensions and styles of humour



In the words of Holmes & Marra (2002: 1684) “attitudes and values are crucial in distinguishing cognitively salient social groups”. The use of certain humour strategies represents us as individuals and our culture (Schermer et al., 2019). Now, as Yue et al. (2016) point out, the use of these strategies is different among Western and Eastern cultures. Therefore, humour perceptions are different among cultures.

According to Jiang et al. (2019), Westerners tend to use humour as a coping mechanism. However, they have a more positive view about it than individuals from Eastern cultures (Yue et al. 2016). For Westerners, humour is an indispensable feature of life. Nevertheless, people from Eastern countries do not seem to be so fond of humour. Surprisingly, as Jiang et al. (2019), point out, Eastern people tend to be more adaptive, although they are less likely to use humour as a managing strategy.

A study carried out by (Kalliny, Cruthirds, & Minor, 2006) showed that although there were similar results among the use of affiliative and aggressive humour styles,

Western citizens did a higher use of self-enhancing and self-defeating humour strategies. However, a more recent study conducted by Schermer et al. (2019) showed a consistent pattern where both Western and Eastern cultures had a preference for affiliative humour strategies, finding more similarities than differences among cultures. This difference among both studies might show a change in tendencies towards the use of humour across cultures. For now, the next topic to focus on is the creation of humour by breaking conversational maxims.

2.3.2. Humour and Grice's Maxims

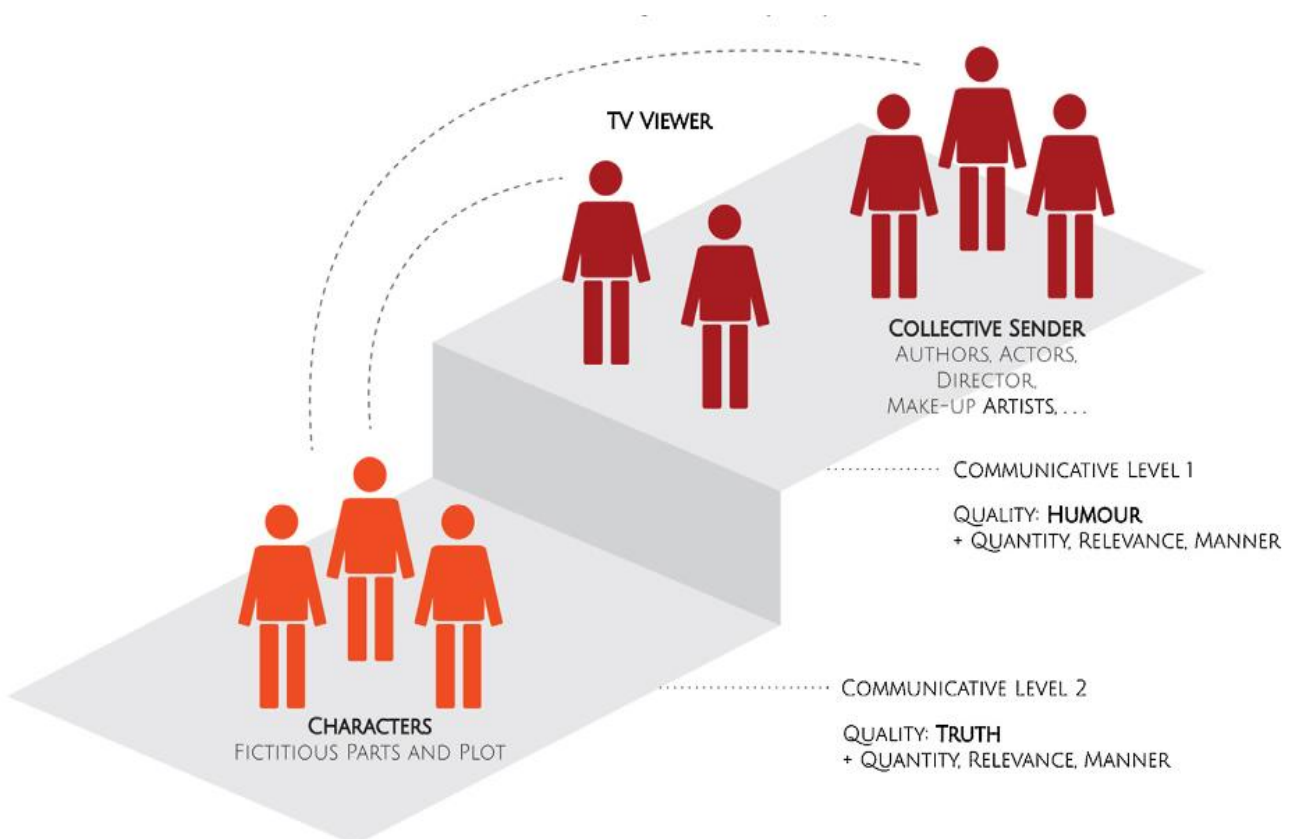
Previous studies of humour have focused on the interaction in the workplace (Vinton, 1989; Romero & Cruthirds, 2006; Smith & Khojasteh, 2014). Thus, the study of humour in sitcoms is limited. However, in 1985, Raskin suggested that the creation of humour in interaction was subjected to the Cooperative Principle due to the communicative function of humour. Attardo (1997) also suggested that the creation of humour implied the infringement of Grice's theory (See Section 2.2.1. for non-observation of the maxims). Although the studies available about this topic are limited, some authors (Latan, 2013; Kuang & Zhao, 2017) have been able to carry out research and come to the conclusion that humorous interactions are created when Grice's maxims are non-observable.

Within the genre of TV series, Chaipreukkul (2013) analysed humorous interactions in the sitcom *The Big Bang Theory* and concluded that when Grice's maxims were non-observable, humour was created. In this case, the strategies used to create humour were flouting, infringing, and violating the maxims. Similarly, Carolina (2015) identified similar processes in the show *How I Met You Mother* where the speakers failed to comply with the Cooperative Principle creating a smooth and humorous encounter. In

2017, Kuang & Zhao carried out a similar study with a local Chinese sitcom. Their results showed that most humorous actions occurred when the characters flouted the maxims. The second most used strategy was violating the maxims followed by the infringement of maxims to create humour. However, none of the humorous interactions suspended nor opted out of the maxims. Therefore, conversational humour is produced when one of the participants decides not to follow the maxims (Lili, 2012).

From a neo-Gricean point of view, Brock (2016) tries to provide a framework on humour and the maxims in sitcoms. He suggests the existence of a “humour maxim” that is created when a character breaks the maxim of quality as can be seen in figure 3.

Figure 3: A participation framework for sitcoms with Maxims by Jana Pflaeging from Brock (2016: 61)



This maxim ensures a successful humorous encounter in communication by complying with the following principles (Brock, 2016: 59):

- Humorous intent is announced or otherwise signalled.
- Text patterns for humorous communication and humour maxim are activated.
- Text is delivered.
- Text does not produce mirth within known text patterns of humorous communication.
- Failed humour.
- Humour maxim does not appear to be suspended, so recipient considers whether producer may be flouting it.
- Taking into account various kinds of information, including contextual cues, recipient may arrive at meta-humorous reading, particularly if other factors confirm this.

The humour maxim can be considered more abstract, and it can trigger implicatures but shows that, in this case, humour can be considered cooperative as the main goal of the interaction is to actually create humour.

On a similar neo-Gricean perspective, Dynel (2017) points out how some scholars have previously linked the emergence of humour and the lack of truthfulness in interaction. She noted how actually, sometimes humour arises from the fulfilment of the maxims. However, there are some cases where individuals break the maxims, in those cases, it is also usual to see the unfulfillment of several maxims instead of restricting the failure of the maxims to only one per encounter.

3. Methodology

This section aims to describe the data, procedures and tools selected for the development of this study. For the sake of clarity, this section is subdivided into two subsections, the first section offers an explanation as to why the TV show *The Good Place* was chosen along with a description of the participants. The other subsection deals with the data gathering procedure and a description of the corpus.

3.1. Why *The Good Place*?

In order to analyse intercultural humour strategies in communication, the sitcom *The Good Place* was chosen as the main subject of study. In one of its articles, the magazine *Time* (Berman, 2020) has labelled the TV show *The Good Place* as “the last great sitcom on Network TV”. This TV show presents a very carefully crafted world to the audience from the very first minute. The programme shows four different characters navigating their way through the afterlife. While it does offer some good laughs, the show also deals with topics such as philosophy, ethics, and religion.

One of the key aspects of this show for the purpose of this study is that the main characters come from different cultural backgrounds. This cultural diversity is the main reason why this show has become so popular. Among the different main characters, we find Eleanor Shellstrop and Michael who are both white Americans, played by Kristen Bell and Ted Danson respectively. Tahani Al-Jamil portrayed by Jameela Jamil is a Pakistani-English woman and Jason Mendoza is a Filipino-American man played by Manny Jacinto. Finally, William Jackson Harper gives life to Chidi Anagonye a Nigerian man who was brought up in Senegal.

In the TV show *The Good Place*, two of the characters (Eleanor and Michael) being North American belong to Western culture. On the other hand, Chidi, who was brought up in Nigeria, and Tahani, a mixed Pakistani-English woman who was raised in England, can be both considered Eastern. However, the other main characters Jason is mixed, being Filipino-American. He does not fall under any classification clearly; he is half-Eastern and half-Western. Humorous actions carried out by supporting characters have also been taken into account in the study. In those cases, all of the characters were North American and included in the Western section. It will be interesting to see into which side the creators of the show lean into during the development of the characters.

3.2. Data gathering process and corpus description

Once the object of the study was selected, a sample of episodes was gathered. To have an ample dataset that also described the evolution of the show and its characters, a total of eight episodes were selected. Those scripts correspond to the first and last episodes of each season, there being a total of four seasons. These episodes were selected to ensure that all characters were present and made several contributions that could be analysed. Moreover, this TV show was selected as the scripts are easily accessible on different websites⁴.

Table 3: Corpus description

CODE	TITLE	LENGTH	N° WORDS
S1E01	Everything is Fine	22 min	3,317
S1E13	Michael's Gambit	22 min	3,625
S2E01	Everything is Great!	43 min	6,372
S2E12	Somewhere Else	22 min	3,182

⁴ Scripts retrieved from https://subslikescript.com/series/The_Good_Place-4955642 & <https://transcripts.foreverdreaming.org/viewforum.php?f=713>. Last accessed 07/09/2021.

S3E01	Everything is Bonzer!	43 min	3,421
S3E12	Pandemonium	22 min	3,151
S4E01	A Girl from Arizona (1)	23 min	3,725
S4E13	Whenever You're Ready	53 min	6,908
TOTAL		250 min	33,701

After selecting the episodes and obtaining the scripts, a corpus was created, and named *The Good Place Corpus* (TGPC). Each episode was given a code that identifies which season and number of episode it belongs to. For example, the first episode from the first season is identified as *S1E01*. After introducing all of the episodes, a total of 33,701 words and around four hours of data was collected for the analysis.

After retrieving the different scripts from each episode, and to have a more comprehensive study, a quantitative and qualitative approach was used for this research. Once all the scripts were collected, these were read, and the episodes were watched as to identify and contextualise the different humorous interventions of each character. After establishing all the humoristic encounters, they were analysed according to those strategies explained in section 2.3. To continue the research and as to offer an answer for the second research question previously conferred, those same encounters were analysed trying to identify if the conversational maxims were observed or not (i.e. if the speakers succeed in communication or, whether they flout, violate, infringe, suspend, or opt out of the maxims) following the neo-Gricean approach as stated in section 2.2.2. The results and data obtained in the analysis will be discussed in detailed in the following section.

4. Results and findings

This section aims to present the results of both the quantitative and qualitative analyses. Furthermore, the results will be compared and discussed in depth to discuss the differences or similarities found among the humorous encounters. Thus, different illustrative examples will be provided.

4.1. Quantitative analysis

For this analysis, the humorous interactions found in the different episodes analysed were examined according to those strategies illustrated in Section 2.3., i.e. the extracts were analysed according to theory, dimension and style of humour. From a general point of view, a total of 95 humorous encounters were found in the analysis. From those interactions, 69 (72.63%) were produced by Western characters, the remaining 26 (27.37%) were produced by Eastern characters. Out of those 95 samples, 27 (28.42%) corresponded to humorous encounters related to the Relief theory, 53 (55.78%) belong to the Incongruity theory, and 16 (16.84%) of them are associated to the Superiority theory. In relation to the dimensions of humour, 60 (63.16%) of the instances were considered as playful-serious. Meanwhile, 35 (36.84%) of the instances were representative of the affiliative-aggressive dimension. Studying this affiliative-aggressive dimension in more depth, out of the four possible styles of humour, 5 (14.29%) belonged to self-enhancing humour, 4 (14.29%) were affiliative humour, 7 (20%) belonged to a self-defeating style and, finally, 18 (51.43%) were examples of an aggressive style of humour.

Table 4: Total humour strategies used by the participants

		TOTAL	
		n	%
Cultural background	Western	69	72.63
	Eastern	26	27.37
Theory	Relief	27	28.42
	Incongruity	53	55.78
	Superiority	16	16.84
Dimension	Playful-serious	60	63.16
	Affiliative-aggressive	35	36.84
Style	Self-enhancing	5	14.29
	Affiliative	4	14.29
	Self-defeating	7	20
	Aggressive	18	51.43

To observe the differences between Western and Eastern interaction, a more detailed analysis was conducted. Regarding the theories of humour, Western characters were more likely to use the Incongruity theory (37 instances [53.62%]), followed by the Relief theory (21 instances [30.43%]), and finally the Superiority theory (11 instances, [15.94%]). From the results obtained, Eastern characters followed a similar pattern were 16 (61.54%) of the examples found belonged to the Incongruity theory, 6 (23.07%) to the Relief theory and finally, 4 instances (15.38%) were related to the Superiority theory. Looking at the dimensions of humour, 59.52% of the Western contributions analysed belonged to the playful-serious dimension. The affiliative-aggressive dimension was preferred by 40.58% of the Western characters. On the other hand, 73.07% of the Eastern characters were more likely to use playful-serious humour while the 26.92% chose an affiliative-aggressive strategy. Both groups had a preference for the playful-serious

dimension, however, that preference was much higher in the Eastern group. The last point is related to the styles of humour used by the characters. Aggressive humour was the main style used by Western individuals (16 [57.14%]), followed by self-enhancing humour (5 [17.86%]), self-defeating humour (4 [14.29%]), and finally, affiliative humour (3 [10.71%]). The situation changed when looking at the data obtained from the Eastern characters. The preference in this case was the use of self-defeating humour (3 [42.86%]), followed by aggressive humour (2 [28.57%]) and affiliative humour (1 [14.29%]). There were no instances of self-enhancing humour in Eastern characters.

Table 5: Humour strategies used by Western and Eastern characters.

		WESTERN		EASTERN	
		n	%	n	%
Theory	Relief	21	30.43	6	23.07
	Incongruity	37	53.62	16	61.54
	Superiority	11	15.94	4	15.38
Dimension	Playful-serious	41	59.42	19	73.07
	Affiliative-aggressive	28	40.58	7	26.92
Style	Self-enhancing	5	17.86	0	0
	Affiliative	3	10.71	1	14.29
	Self-defeating	4	14.29	3	42.86
	Aggressive	16	57.14	2	28.57

Once the humour strategies were analysed, the next step was to examine these encounters and observe if any of the maxims illustrated by the neo-Griceans were observable or not, creating, as a result, a humorous interaction between the characters. After analysing the humorous encounters, less than half of the instances (41 [43.16%]) were created by the non-observance of a maxim. Of those situations in which the maxims

could not be observed there was a striking difference depending on the cultural background of the participants. Western characters were more likely to create humour (31 [75.61%]) than Eastern characters (10 [24.39]) by breaking the maxims. Regarding the maxims, the absence of the maxims of relevance (18 [43.90%]) and quantity (17 [41.46%]) was more common than the absence of the maxim of manner (6 [14.64%]). Out of the processes in which maxims could not be observed in this encounters, the preferred method was flouting the maxims (21 [51.22%]), infringing the maxims (11 [26.83%]), violating the maxims (7 [17.07%]) and suspending the maxims (2 [4.88%]). There were no instances where the participants tried to opt out of the maxims as an attempt to create humour.

Table 6: Total maxims and their non-observance

		TOTAL	
		n	%
Cultural background	Western	31	75.61
	Eastern	10	24.39
Maxim	Quantity	17	41.46
	Relevance	18	43.90
	Manner	6	14.64
Non-observance	Flouting	21	51.22
	Violating	7	17.07
	Infringing	11	26.83
	Suspending	2	4.88
	Opting out	0	0

Having a more detailed look at both cultures the differences offered intriguing results. Western characters were more likely to flout the maxims (18 [58.06%]), followed by a similar figures for violating (6 [19.36%]) and infringing (5 [16.13%]) the maxims. The least preferred process of these characters was the suspension of the maxims (2 [6.45%]). Regarding the maxims the most non-observable maxim was the relevance one (14 [45.16%]), followed by the maxim of quantity (12 [38.71%]) and, finally, the maxim of manner (5 [16.13%]). However, the Eastern participants presented slightly different results. In this case, they were more prone to infringe the maxims (6 [60%]), flouting them (3 [30%]) and violating them (1 [10%]). The most non-observable maxim was the maxim of quantity (5 [50%]), followed by the maxim of relevance (4 [40%]) and finally the maxim of manner (1 [10%]).

Table 7: Maxims and their non-observance by Western and Eastern characters.

		WESTERN		EASTERN	
		n	%	n	%
Maxim	Quantity	12	38.71	5	50
	Relevance	14	45.16	4	40
	Manner	5	16.13	1	10
Non-observance	Flouting	18	58.06	3	30
	Violating	6	19.36	1	10
	Infringing	5	16.13	6	60
	Suspending	2	6.45	0	0
	Opting out	0	0	0	0

Nevertheless, following Dynel's (2017) ideas presented in 2.3.2. it can be appreciated how out of the 95 instances used for this study, 54 (56.84%) of them

succeeded in cooperating with the maxims. From those occurrences, 38 (70.37%) were carried out by the Western individuals. Meanwhile, Eastern individuals succeeded in observing the maxims in 16 (29.63%) cases.

4.2. Qualitative analysis

Following the results presented in the quantitative analysis, this section aims to provide a qualitative interpretation of such results. The samples obtained were analysed to find similar patterns and differences among the participants of the study. To display the examples in a clear way, first the differences between Western and Eastern humorous strategies used will be illustrated by season. After that, the analysis of the maxims will be discussed.

Starting with the first season, Western characters had a preference for humour related to the Incongruity theory. Example (22) belongs to the beginning of the show. Eleanor (E) has just died, and Michael (M) welcomes her into 'The Good Place'. It can be seen how Eleanor creates humour by introducing a contradictory idea into the dialogue, releasing some tension. Furthermore, this example also portrays a playful-serious dimension as the speaker is comfortable in the setting to create humour.

(22) M: Okay, let's take a walk, shall we?

E: Oh, did I have a purse? No, I'm dead, right. Okay.

The Relief theory is the second most used by Western characters as in (23). This encounter takes place when Eleanor and Chidi (C), her soulmate, first met. By creating this humorous interaction Eleanor is releasing the psychological tension that is between both characters who barely know each other. This example also illustrates the use of

affiliative-aggressive humour. In this case, Eleanor follows a more affiliative style as she is trying to raise the group morale and bring some positivity to the situation.

(23) C: I'm Chidi Anagonye, and you are my soul mate.

E: Cool, bring it in, man.

Finally, some instances of Superiority theory carried out by Western characters can also be found in this first season. In (24) Tahani is saying goodbye to Eleanor. As Tahani (T) is taller than her, Eleanor relies on calling her a *skyscraper* to create humour but also release some tension in a sensitive moment. This example portrays how some of the dimensions can also overlap and are more difficult to analyse. On the one hand, this can be considered a playful-serious encounter as both characters are friends and are comfortable with each other to carry out this type of interaction. However, it can also be considered a case of affiliative-aggressive humour where Eleanor is being more aggressive towards Tahani by referring to her height and targeting her as the subject of her humour.

(24) T: I will miss you so much.

E: I'll miss you too, you sexy skyscraper.

In season two, Western characters follow a similar scheme to that of season one. Incongruity theory is displayed in most of the interactions as it can be seen in (25) where Shawn (S), Michael's boss, creates humour by violating the expected pattern of conversation by using an interjection to leave. This example illustrates a playful-serious dimension as both characters know each other but they are comfortable in the setting and the speaker is displaying this behaviour with an intention.

(25) M: You know, I think if...

S: Toodleoo.

One of the most significant examples of the Relief theory in this season is carried out by Eleanor. In (26) Eleanor has come back to 'The Good Place' and Michael asks her to give a speech at a party. She feels pressured and tension and by creating humour, that tension is released for her. This example can be considered an affiliative-aggressive dimension as Eleanor is targeting her doubt towards Michael to create humour. This example was taken as representative of self-enhancing style as Eleanor is using the situation as a coping mechanism to reduce the negative emotions she is feeling in that moment.

(26) M: I was just hoping that you could say a few words at tonight's welcome party. You know, just to introduce yourself.

E: How can I say no? Can I say no? It doesn't feel like I can say no. But if I can: Michael, I'm saying no.

To finish this season an example of Superiority theory can be found in (27). Here, Eleanor directs her humour towards a third person, Tomas, Tahani's new soulmate. This is clearly an affiliative-aggressive dimension as Tomas is the target of Eleanor's contribution. Furthermore, this is an aggressive style of humour as Eleanor performs the utterance without knowing how it may affect the other person.

(27) Tomas: Tahani. There you are. I've been worried sick about you.

E: That's her soul mate? Is there a second one of him that stands on his shoulders?

In the third season, Western characters do not display any preference for Relief or Superiority theories. However, once again, there is a clear leaning towards incongruous

encounters. To portray this, example (28) will be used. This extract can be found at the end of season three, Michael is nervous and produces this utterance to create humour. It can be considered as an unexpected answer to the Judge which creates a humorous situation. Furthermore, this affiliative-aggressive use of humour corresponds to a self-defeating style as Michael is using himself to cover up his feelings, creating a funny interaction in the end.

(28) M: Is my tie getting tighter, or is my neck getting fatter somehow? Oh, this is what we do. We tell the judge we have to cancel the experiment because I have a fat neck.

Finally, the fourth season follows the same sequence as the first two. The majority of instances belong to the Incongruity theory. Example (29) is carried out by minor characters. Here, Michael asks Chris about his shirt, seeing that he appears shirtless in the scene, one might expect that someone will ask him to put on a shirt or cover up. However, the Judge interferes in the pattern of conversation and unexpectedly tells him to keep being shirtless. In the scene the characters seem to be comfortable in the situation; therefore, this can be considered a playful-serious encounter.

(29) M: And I'm sorry, where's your shirt?

Chris: I think it got stuck in the skin suit.

Judge: Well, keep it there.

The Relief theory is the second preferred by Western characters in this last season. In this simple example (30) Michael is sad about everyone leaving and “farewell parties”, when Tahani acknowledges that she does not want to leave he releases the tension by developing a humorous situation. This example portrays a playful-serious dimension.

(30) T: Wait. I don't want to leave.

M: Great! Then stay. New party, everyone. A staying party.

Finally, the Superiority theory is barely used by any of the characters. The only sample of this type of interaction can be seen in (31) where Eleanor is mad at someone for giving her a reasonable answer and she directs her humour towards the other person. Nevertheless, she does this by using an affiliative-aggressive dimension and an aggressive style, targeting others as the subject of her humour.

(31) E: Fine. Stupid... ethical...reasonable argument. I wish you were a cake. Push you over.

Moving onto the Eastern characters there is no big difference in the use of Relief and Superiority theories. However, there is a preference for the use of the Incongruity theory. Nonetheless, most of the instances where the Incongruity theory is employed are performed by Jason's character. It is important to highlight this fact as Jason portrays a "foolish" character. This can be seen in (32) where Jason (J) is happy about their friends going to the 'Bad Place' as it means that he can stay. In a prototypical situation one would expect him to be sad about his friends going to an unknown dangerous place. Furthermore, as in a comfortable setting, this can be considered a playful-serious use of humour.

(32) E: Okay, that means... that means that... what does that mean?

J: It means... I get to stay here with my wife forever! We did it, Eleanor! USA!
USA! USA! USA! USA!

Just as in the first season, Eastern characters lean into a higher use of incongruous humour while there is not much presence of interactions that belong to the Relief nor the

Superiority theory. Following the lines of the first season, Jason is the character with most humorous encounters. Again, (33) shows how Jason uses the Incongruity theory by unexpectedly interrupting Michael when he is talking about going to a different place. Similarly, this instance is an example of a playful serious dimension.

(33) M: It's only four people. And it's clearly the best way to see if bad people can become good without knowing anything about what's waiting for them in the afterlife.

J: Shotgun.

Along the same lines in the third season there is a significant preference for the use of Incongruity theory. In this case, (34) reflects one of Chidi's humorous moments. His character is known to be a very indecisive one; thus, when he is buying some pastries and the baker asks for his order, he changes the direction of the conversation by blurting out his feelings. The audience would expect him to give a proper answer by asking for a muffin, some cookies, etc. However, he creates a humorous situation in a playful-serious way.

(34) Baker: You alright there, mate?

C: OK. I've made my decision. I want to... start crying!

This Incongruity theory can be seen again in Jason's conversation with Chidi (35). In this situation Chidi is about to leave and he is getting his memory erased. However, what Jason is worried about is if Chidi will remember pizza or not. Once again, this instance belongs to a playful-serious dimension.

(35) J: Will you remember when we ordered the pizza?

C: No.

J: Will you remember pizza?

Finally in the last season there is no samples of humour related to the Superiority theory. However, there are some instances of the Relief theory. Nevertheless, once again, the Incongruity theory is the preferred strategy used by Eastern characters. This example (36) takes place once Chidi knows he is ready to leave the 'Good Place' but Eleanor tries to make him stay longer. While they are having dinner Eleanor reminds him of a sentence he once told her. However, he is not aware of that and creates a playful-serious situation by saying something unexpected and changing the conversation.

(36) E: "Working out the terms of moral justification is an unending task." That's what I was thinking about. That sentence.

C: You want to eat that sentence for dinner? Can we eat words, 'cause I asked Janet about this and ...

To portray an example of humour that uses a Superiority theory carried out by Eastern characters, Tahani is the main character who displays this situation. In (37) it can be appreciated that Tahani tries to make fun of others in order to bring herself up and feel better about herself. Nevertheless, she does so by using a playful-serious dimension.

(37) T: I just wanted to prove my parents wrong, stick it to my sister, get fame and attention. My only real goal was to snog Ryan Gosling at the Met Ball. Which I did. Couple of times, actually...

Once the humour strategies have been examined, the next step was to analyse how, and which maxims were non-observable in order to create a humorous interaction. The differences showed in the quantitative analysis will now be illustrated with different

examples. Starting with the Western characters of the study, the most frequent used process for the non-observance of a maxim was flouting. In (38) Simone flouts the maxim of relevance. When Simone is first welcome to the 'Good Place' by Eleanor she is given sometime to adapt. However, one day when some of the characters are together having a conversation, a voice comes out from a speaker, and she reacts. Thus, although the rest of the characters are acting worried, she suddenly announces how she is going to eat a knife.

(38) Simone: That's probably my doctor. Oh, this is all in my head. I'm gonna go eat a knife.

Taking a look back at example (25), repeated here as (39) for the sake of clarity, this encounter violates the maxim of relevance. Shawn deliberately fails to observe the maxim by suddenly uttering an interjection. It is not a flout as his intention is clear and he does not want to cooperate to maintain the conversation with Michael.

(39) M: You know, I think if...

S: Toodleoo.

Moving onto the infringement of the maxims, (40) is an example of a minor Western character infringing the maxim of relevance. Here, Chuck takes literally the expression "bite more off than you can chew", and although Michael is talking about how his plan was developed, Chuck intervenes with an irrelevant question. He has no intention of misleading the other participant, he has failed to observe the maxim as he did not understand the other speaker correctly.

(40) M: In version one...making them soul mates, we probably bit off more than we could chew.

Chuck: We could bite them? I didn't know we were allowed to bite them.

Nevertheless, the preferences of the Eastern characters were different from those of the Western individuals. The most used process by Eastern individuals was the infringement of a maxim. Taking one of the previous examples to illustrate this, instance (37), here repeated as (41) to ensure clarity, infringes the maxim of quantity. In this encounter Tahani is asked if she feels ready to leave the 'Good Place'. However, she gives more information than necessary by making her intervention longer than what the other participant might expect. She has no intention of misleading the other participant of the conversation, but her character is very talkative. Thus, she fails to observe the maxim but obtains a humorous interaction as a result.

(41) T: I just wanted to prove my parents wrong, stick it to my sister, get fame and attention. My only real goal was to snog Ryan Gosling at the Met Ball. Which I did. Couple of times, actually...

Example (42) can be considered a flouting of the maxim of quantity. When invited to a party, Tahani tries to adapt to her soulmate's fashion style. However, she is used to a very different way of dressing up. When asked about how she feels she offers more information than expected by Tomas by expressing her deeper thoughts about her appearance.

(42) Tomas: You all right, my dear?

T: Yes, just not used to dressing like a plumberess. Is that what you call a female plumber, or is it a toilet sweep? Or clog wench?

Lastly, (43) demonstrates how Chidi violates the maxim of quantity in one of his encounters with Michael. In this example, Chidi intentionally fails to observe the maxim

to stop Michael from asking more questions. A simple 'no' might have been the expected answer, however he keeps giving information about what he has or has not heard.

(43) M: Hey, you guys hadn't made a decision yet, had you?

C: No! We did not. No one said anything. I didn't hear anything, and I certainly didn't say anything. That's for darn sure.

Considering the data reported in the quantitative analysis, Dynel's (2017) ideas that followed a neo-Gricean perspective are supported. Along these lines, most of the humorous encounters have arisen from the fulfilment of the maxims. Some examples will now be provided to illustrate this phenomenon. In (44) Eleanor creates a humorous moment by being cooperative. She is getting to know Chidi, and she uses self-enhancing humour to feel better about herself for not knowing as many languages as Chidi. Furthermore, she is taking in a way of knowing "other" languages too. She does something similar in (45). Again, while talking to Chidi about their lives when they were alive, she is surprised by how many places Chidi has been to. She does not want to seem uncooperative; thus, she responds in her own way but collaborating in the fulfilment of the maxims and creating humour at the same time.

(44) C: Yes, I grew up in Senegal, so my native language is French, but I went to American schools, so I also speak English. And German, and Greek and Latin, just in case it ever comes back.

E: Cool. I once got 12 out of 12 on a BuzzFeed quiz called "Do You Know All the Slang Words the Kardashians Invented?"

(45) C: What about you?

E: Uh, well, I... I was born in Phoenix, Arizona. And then I went to school in Tempe, Arizona. And then I moved back to Phoenix, Arizona.

Similarly, in (46) she creates a humorous moment by being somehow aggressive towards Jason. However, she is not failing any of the maxims and she is being cooperative in the production of the conversation.

(46) J: Eleanor, I told you that first night that we were in a prank show.

E: Oh, yeah. You did! Great job, man.

In (47) Michael is narrating to Eleanor how she died and why she is in the 'Good Place'. He cooperates by answering Eleanor's question and being truthful, successfully observing and fulfilling the maxims. However, the way he answered her question might be unexpected and he creates a situation where a playful-serious dimension is used to create a humorous moment.

(47) E: That's how I died?

M: No, sorry, there's more.

Moving onto the rest of the characters, in (48) Tahani is giving a speech at a dinner party. She is creating a humorous moment by being aggressive towards the guests. She is angry and uncomfortable because of the clothes she is wearing. However, people are expecting her to continue her speech, she cooperates by doing so, even if it is at their expenses.

(48) T: I am Tahani. Tahani am me. You all look so beautiful tonight, with your regular sized pockets and...regular sized soul mates.

In (49) Tahani is reconnecting to one the characters. They had met before but a little accident happened. In this case while they are both having a conversation, Tahani plays with the words he has just pronounced to create a simple but humorous interaction. She is being cooperative as she is contributing to the conversation with truthfulness.

(49) Glenn: Tahani! This is so neat. I haven't seen you since I was exploded into goo. I didn't get any me on you, did I?

T: You did, but it's all goo under the bridge.

This occurrences of fulfilling the maxims are not exclusive of main characters, minor characters such as the Judge also cooperate in the observation of the maxims. In (50) the Judge announces she is going to make some announcements. Her message might be an unexpected one but as a results she delivers this humorous moment to the audience who might be expecting a serious moment in the show.

(50) Judge: Hi, guys. Couple quick announcements. Would anyone eat chips and guac if I put it out? It's good. It's homemade.

Finally, in (51) it can be appreciated how, again, the participant is cooperating in the conversation. In this case Linda, an old lady, has been asked if she has any questions. Taking into account the fact that she is in a place where she can have anything and everything, she asks for the fitness centre. Her question may come as a surprise to some of the audience, but she is cooperating by asking a question.

(51) M: I know this can be a little overwhelming, but you'll get used to it. Do you have any questions?

L: Is there a fitness center?

5. Conclusions

As stated in the introduction of this paper, humour is a culturally bound phenomenon (Reiman, 2010). Therefore, as Rogerson-Revell (2007) points out, trying to successfully create a humorous interaction with people from different cultures can be difficult. The present study has examined humorous interactions in Intercultural Communication from a neo-Gricean approach in eight episodes from the TV series *The Good Place*. Selecting the different characters of the show as the participants of the study has allowed for the examination of cultural differences in the production of humour.

The main objective of the study was to analyse the differences or similarities between cultures in the creation of humour. The results showed that although both groups participated in humorous situations, the Western characters were more likely to use humour as a tool in conversation than Eastern characters. This results go in line with Yue et al.'s (2016) ideas on how Westerns have a more positive stance towards the use of humour than Eastern individuals. Nevertheless, the use of humorous strategies was very similar in both cultures, supporting Schermer et al.'s (2019) study which found more similarities than differences in the creation of humour by different cultures. Lastly, it is important to note that there was a difference in the styles of humour used by the participants. While Western individuals used aggressive humour more frequently, Easterns preferred to use self-defeating humour.

The second objective of this study was to observe if, as authors like Attardo (1994) or Pan (2012) propose, there is a connection between humour and conversational maxims. They defend that humour arises in conversation when one of Grice's maxims cannot be observed. The main goal was also to examine if there might be a cultural link to the use

of conversational maxims. Although not all the humorous encounters were a result of a non-observance of the maxims, some of the instances did occur after one of the participants failed to observe the maxims. The results showed that those encounters where the maxims were not observable, the participants flouted, violated or infringed the maxims. These results support studies such as those carried out by Chaipreukkul (2013) or Kuang & Zhao (2017) who after examining different sitcoms, came to the conclusion that humour was created when characters flouted, violated or infringed the maxims. Furthermore, the way characters did not observe the maxims was different depending on their cultural background. Western individuals preferred flouting the maxim of relevance rather than infringing the maxim of manner. On the other hand, Eastern participants leaned towards the infringement of the maxim of quantity rather than violating the maxim of manner. As a result, it could be said that there is a cultural bound in the way maxims are not observed in communication, and, in this case in humorous encounters.

However, although it has been proven that some of the humorous encounters have been created by the non-observance of the maxims, most of the total humorous encounters were the result of a compliance of the maxims where the participants were being cooperative. This proved the neo-Gricean approach suggested by Dynel (2017) where she recounted how although, traditionally, humour has been created by failing to observe a maxim, it can also come from the fulfilment of them.

Trying to find the rationale behind these cultural differences, different theories might come into mind. The analysed cultures belong to different categories in Hall's (1976) theory of low context and high context cultures. US Americans, Canadians, Australians, Germans are individuals that belong to a low context culture. According to Hall (ibid.), individuals from low context cultures tend to have shorter relationships, they communicate directly, and little is taken for granted. This means that although speakers

need more explanation, the chances of producing a misunderstanding are lower. However, individuals from high context cultures require more contextual clues and more information is taken for granted. They have a higher use of nonverbal communication, and they are also more indirect in their conversations. This can be confusing if one of the participants does not understand the underlying principles of a culture. This is the case of individuals from Asian countries, Southern European countries, and Arab countries, among others. Applying this to the analysis presented in this study, humour for the occidental participants may rely more on vocabulary and speech itself while the other characters need more contextual clues such as the environment, relationship, etcetera. A similar approach can be taken by following Hofstede's (2011) model or Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (1997) ideas.

It is important to note that this has been a limited study where different characters from a TV show and their communicative styles have been analysed. Likewise, it should also be considered how this is fictional language, precisely design to create humour. It would be interesting to see what the results might show if the study was carried out on real-life individuals in a natural occurring conversation. This is the result of the study of 8 episodes in total; however, the results might change if the total 53 episodes of the show were to be analysed. One of the problems encountered in the making of this project was the fact that when analysing the humour theories, dimensions and styles used by the participants, some of them overlapped, making the analysis more difficult. Moreover, the existence of sitcoms with culturally diverse characters is limited. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to compare the characters from different TV shows, such as *The Big Bang Theory*, *Brooklyn 99*, or *The Office*, and compare their processes of creating humour. Furthermore, this paper has opened the line to study a possible link between Grice's Cooperative Principle, its conversational maxims and how different cultures use this

theory in different ways. Moreover, it would be interesting to see how these humour strategies can be translated into different languages, examining if these strategies are kept after the translation process or if by any chance they might change.

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