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Jocular mockery in computer-mediated communication: A contrastive study of a Spanish and English Facebook community



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Abstract: Understood as an umbrella term covering different phenomena (e.g., banter, teasing, jocular insults, etc.), mock impoliteness has long attracted the attention of scholars. However, most of this research has concentrated on English while other languages have been neglected. In addition, previous research has mostly analyzed face-to-face interaction, generally ignoring computer-mediated communication. This paper aims to redress this imbalance by analyzing a particular case of mock impoliteness – i.e., jocular mockery – in two Facebook communities (Spanish and English). More specifically, and following Haugh’s (2010) and Haugh and Bousfield’s (2012) three inter-related dimensions, this paper intends to answer three questions: (i) what triggers jocular mockery in each corpus? (ii) How is it “framed”? And (iii) how do interlocutors respond to it? To this end, two balanced datasets were gathered: one in (British) English and one in (Peninsular) Spanish, consisting of 6,215 and 6,193 words respectively. Results show that jocular mockery is pervasive in both datasets and both British and Spanish users resort to it when confronted with bragging. Likewise, both groups borrow framing strategies from face-to-face communication but also employ other means afforded by Facebook itself. They also opt for accepting it good-naturedly as a way to boost group rapport.

Keywords: jocular mockery, computer-mediated communication, Facebook, British English, Peninsular Spanish

1 Introduction

Defined as “superficially impolite” but “understood that it is not intended to cause offence” (Culpeper 1996: 352), mock impoliteness has long attracted the attention of scholars (Leech 1983; Drew 1987; Culpeper 1996, 2005; Hay 2000;

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Fox 2004; Grainger 2004; Butler 2007; Ervin-Tripp and Lampert 2009; Haugh 2010, 2011; Terkourafi 2008, among many others). Mock impoliteness, however, can be regarded as an umbrella term encompassing different – albeit closely related – phenomena such as teasing, banter, jocular insults or jocular mockery.¹

For the most part, research on jocular mockery has focused on face-to-face interaction (cf. Everts 2003; Haugh 2010; Haugh and Bousfield 2012, among others) while leaving aside other forms of communication such as computer-mediated discourse² (despite exceptions like Arendholz 2011). The present study aims to redress this imbalance by focusing on instances of jocular mockery in two Facebook communities (one integrated by speakers of Peninsular Spanish and another by British participants of approximately the same age, gender and educational background as their Spanish counterparts). Following Haugh (2010) and Haugh and Bousfield (2012),³ the current study aims to answer the following research questions: (i) What triggers jocular mockery in the Spanish and the British corpora?, (ii) How is jocular mockery framed? And (iii) How do interlocutors respond to it? It is hypothesized that British participants will make a further use of jocular mockery than their Spanish counterparts, given the high association of this type of mock impoliteness with English culture. Following this hypothesis, Spanish participants are also expected to respond to mockery either by ignoring or rejecting it rather than going along with it (Haugh 2010). As for framing, the difference in the communication channel is likely to play a role (Yus 2011).

The rest of the paper is divided into five parts. Section 2 presents an overview of the literature. It also narrows down the field by defining jocular mockery in contrast with other phenomena under the same umbrella of mock impoliteness, i.e., teasing, banter, jocular abuse or phatic use of taboo words. Section 3 describes the methodology, explaining the reasons why Facebook has been chosen over other computer-mediated communication forms as well as the procedure for gathering the data. Section 4 presents the analysis of the data. Before doing so, however, a general comparison between Facebook and its face-to-face counterpart is briefly displayed. Finally, Section 5 offers the conclusions and points to future research.

¹ See Section 2 for a definition of each of these phenomena.

² Crystal (2011) argues that the terms “computer-mediated communication” or “computer-mediated discourse” are misleading since they do not encompass other means such as Smartphones. However, it still seems the most commonly employed term up to date, which justifies its use in the present paper.

³ These authors establish three inter-related dimensions to analyze jocular mockery: what triggers or initiates it, how it is framed and finally, how recipients respond to it.

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2 Prior research in mock impoliteness: Setting the scope of the analysis

As already mentioned, mock impoliteness is a wide term encompassing different, although closely related, phenomena. This section intends to define the most frequently studied in an attempt to differentiate them from the focus of this paper, i.e., jocular mockery.

One of the most analyzed cases of mock impoliteness is ‘teasing’. Teasing has been defined as a way to make fun of someone playfully (Eisenberg 1986; Drew 1987; Norrick 1993; Boxer and Cortés-Conde 1997; Partington 2006; Dynel 2008; Martin 2010). Initially, it was argued that teasing was inherently playful but aggressive (e.g., Drew 1987; Boxer and Cortés-Conde 1997). More recently, however, it has been counter argued that “the degree of aggression in teasing is gradable” (Dynel 2009). Defined as “a specific form of teasing”, jocular mockery differs from teasing insofar as “the speaker diminishes something of relevance to someone present (either self or other) or a third party who is not co-present within a non-serious or jocular frame” (Haugh 2010: 2108). In other words, whilst teasing focuses on the addressee, jocular mockery can include self-denigrating humour. Another main difference between teasing and jocular mockery is that whilst teasing can include any way to make fun of someone (even if playfully), jocular mockery tends to act as a response move; that is, it is triggered by a previous comment or action by the target. Finally, it is important to mention that Haugh’s definition of jocular mockery does not wholly apply to Facebook, given that the participants are often co-present. For this reason, the working definition used in this paper is more restricted and could be rephrased as a specific form of teasing where the speaker diminishes something of relevance to either self or other present within a non-serious or jocular frame.

Besides teasing, another commonly studied phenomenon is ‘banter’. As opposed to teasing, banter takes place when a one-turn tease develops into a longer exchange of repartees by more than one interlocutor (Dynel 2009). In fact, banter has been compared to a verbal ping-pong match (Chiaro 1992) “aimed primarily at mutual entertainment” (Norrick 1993: 29). This distinctive character of banter differentiates it from jocular mockery, where targets respond in one of these three ways: ignoring, rejecting the comment or accepting it by laughing, repeating the mocking remark, etc. (Haugh 2010; Haugh and Bousfield 2012). In sum, there is no verbal duelling as such.

Jocular insults (aka jocular abuse) consist of employing insults in a playful, even endearing way to build up rapport among interlocutors (Labov 1972; Hay

1994; de Klerk 1997; Kienpointner 1997; Coates 2003; Zimmermann 2003; Bernal 2005, 2008; Albelda Marco 2008; Fuentes and Alcaide 2008; Mugford 2008; Schnurr and Holmes 2009; among many others). Jocular insults have often been argued to be typically linked to masculinity (see Zimmermann 2003) but can also be used by female interlocutors (e.g., Bernal 2005, 2008; Albelda Marco 2008; or Schnurr and Holmes 2009).

Insults – even if jocular – are closely linked to taboo words (e.g., ‘bitch’). It is beyond the scope of this paper to offer a detailed overview of the research conducted on taboo words, since they have been studied from many different approaches (psychological, sociological, linguistic, etc.). Taboo words can be defined as words and phrases that are generally considered inappropriate in certain contexts (Hughes 1998; McEnery et al. 2002). Leach (1964) identified three major categories of such words and phrases: words that are concerned with sex and excretion (e.g., “shit”); words having to do with religion (e.g., “Jesus”) and words which are used in “animal abuse”; that is, calling a person by the name of an animal (e.g., the aforementioned “bitch”). As jocular insults, taboo words can also be used to boost group solidarity and rapport, especially among teenagers (see Zimmermann 2005; Stenström 2006; Murphy 2009; Hernes 2011; among others). However, it is clear that neither jocular insults nor taboo words need be present when jocular mockery takes place.

To recap, in the coming analysis I shall adopt the working definition (based on Haugh 2010 and Haugh and Bousfield 2012) that jocular mockery involves a Facebook user explicitly diminishing something of relevance, for example, a photograph, comment, etc., to self or some other Facebook user within a non-serious or jocular frame.

3 Methodology 128

For the sake of clarity, this section has been divided into three sub-sections. First, I will explain the reasons for using Facebook rather than other computer-mediated forms of communication (Jucker and Dürscheid 2012). Secondly, the data-gathering procedure will be described before moving on to the description of the corpus proper. Finally, ethic issues will be tackled in the third sub-section.

3.1 Why Facebook? 135

As already pointed out, the present study intends to analyze jocular mockery in computer-mediated communication to find out whether or not it parallels its

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face-to-face counterpart. The reasons why Facebook has been chosen over other ways of computer-mediated communication (e.g., mail, chat, blogs, Twitter, etc.) are manifold. First, jocular mockery seems to be essentially phatic and intended to build up solidarity and rapport amongst interlocutors rather than to inform. As such, it is more likely to be present in social networking sites where “the maintenance of social relationships is their *raison d’être* [...] as opposed to other forms of computer-mediated communication like blogs or wikis, whose main goal is often the transaction of information” (Maíz-Arévalo 2013: 50). Moreover, an affordance of social-networking sites is their relative disembodiment, which can lower barriers to interaction (Bargh et al. 2002; Tidwell and Walther 2002). In other words, tools like Facebook “may enable connections and interactions that would not otherwise occur” (Ellison et al. 2007: 1147) and shy interlocutors who might not ‘dare’ to enter jocular mockery, might feel more comfortable to do so on Facebook exchanges.⁴

Secondly, even if Facebook is essentially multimodal (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006) and images and audio-visuals form part and parcel of social-networking routines, most interactions still remain textual. This considerably helps the process of data gathering, which becomes less demanding than in face-to-face research, where time-consuming transcription is a must. Likewise, the possibilities or affordances offered by Facebook – e.g., users can upload photographs, videos, etc. – can also have an effect on how jocular mockery is carried out online as opposed to its offline counterpart. Facebook also allows users to interact non-verbally by simply clicking on the “Like” button, which has been shown to be pragmatically very convenient (Santamaría-García 2014).

Third, it can be argued (following Golato 2005) that Facebook postings are also naturally occurring data that the Facebookers used for their interactions with others (and not elicited for the purpose of a particular study). Last but not least, given my own personal background, I form part of a Facebook community where participants belong either to the (Peninsular) Spanish or (British) English culture, which allows for the gathering of data both in English and Spanish, and hence for contrastive studies like the present one.

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⁴ Boyd and Ellison (2007) prefer the term social network site as opposed to a social networking site to refer to Facebook since they consider Facebook to be a medium designed to connect people that are already within one another’s social networks rather than to initiate totally new relationships (like e-dating agencies, for example). In my opinion, Facebook can also connect people who have not had any relationship long enough to be considered as a new relationship (e.g., school mates). This would justify defining it as a social networking site, as done throughout this paper.

3.2 Data-gathering procedure

The data used in the current study was collected throughout a period of approximately one year (2014). In order to avoid biasing results by collecting specific examples, I simply connected to Facebook once or twice a week and gathered the three more recent exchanges as they appeared on my personal newsfeed,⁵ following a methodological approach that can be described as ‘netnographic’⁶ (Kozinets 2010) and qualitative (given the small number of the sample).

The corpus thus compiled consists of a total of 116 exchanges, which renders 12,408 words. The British set encompasses 53 exchanges (6,215 words). Its Spanish counterpart comprises 63 exchanges⁷ (6,193 words), which renders the corpora rather balanced, as illustrated by Table 1.

Table 1: Corpus description.

	British dataset	Spanish dataset	Total
N ^o of words	6,215	6,193	12,408
N ^o of exchanges	53	63	116

Each dataset reproduces the spontaneous exchanges carried out by participants on the Facebook’s status update wall after an initiating move (e.g., a comment, posting a photo, a video, or a combination of these). Both sets are thus completely spontaneous and no particular examples were elicited to meet research objectives. Finally, it is important to mention that the spontaneity of

⁵ The version used when compiling the corpus was the most recent one. However, it is important to point out that I never accessed the data from my Smartphone but always from my personal computer, so that the compiling process was easier; i.e., the copied text was immediately pasted into a .doc file.

⁶ Kozinets (2010: 60) describes netnography as “a participant-observational research based in online fieldwork [that] uses computer-mediated communication as a source of data to arrive at the ethnographic understanding and representation of a cultural or communal phenomenon”. This definition matches exactly the kind of approach here adopted, hence its description as netnographic.

⁷ The Spanish dataset includes more exchanges so as to make it as extensive as the British one. By including only up to 50 exchanges, the amount of words was remarkably lower, maybe as a result of Spanish users clicking “Like” rather than contributing their own words to the exchange. It is beyond the scope of this article to find out why there seems to be a preference for this option amongst the Spaniards (cf. however, Maíz-Arévalo [2013], for a plausible explanation).

the exchanges also affects their individual length, with some cases consisting of simply a two-move exchange between just two participants whereas others amount to more than ten participants and fifty comments. This depends on different factors such as the attention the post attracts, the number of friends the user has, the degree of privacy of their publication, i.e., Facebook allows users to select whether their publications are visible to the general public, acquaintances, friends, close friends, etc. Despite their undeniable importance, these contextual aspects are unfortunately beyond the scope of the present paper.

This Facebook community has approximately about 100 participants, with new people joining in and other people dropping out, which makes its number far from fixed. With respect to their age, participants range from 25 to 45 years old. Far from being a hindrance, however, this age ‘limitation’ permitted to focus on a particular age group and avoid the possible effects the age variable might have had on the data. Apart from age, the next section tackles other ethical issues concerning computer-mediated research.

3.3 Ethics concerning computer-mediated research

One of the most controversial issues regarding online research is participants’ consent. With regard to the use of this material, the advice reported by previous researchers has been followed. As argued by Paccagnella (1997) and Mann and Stewart (2000: 46), messages posted on the Internet are public acts and, even though researchers have to act with caution, there is no need to take more than the “normal precautions” such as omitting personal references (e.g., images, names, etc.). In this line, Kozinets (2010: 142) also points out that “analysing online community or culture communications or their archives is not human subjects’ research *if the researcher does not record the identity of the communicators*” (emphasis in original). This conclusion was also reached by the ProjectH Research Group, a team of scholars from various countries who studied electronic discussions (Rafaeli et al. 1994). In the current study, however, an intermediate solution has been adopted; that is, the data were gathered without informing participants a priori so as not to prejudice their behaviour. Once all the data were collected, participants were casually informed (via Facebook itself) about the research. None of them manifested any disagreement. In any case, so as to preserve anonymity and ensure confidentiality, the present study only quotes textual data as examples to illustrate the aspects under analysis. All the names or references to participants as well as photographs have been carefully removed and users are simply identified by their order of appearance in the exchange (U1, U2, etc.) and their gender (F or M) in brackets.

4 Data analysis and discussion

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4.1 Facebook and face-to-face exchanges

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Before moving on to the analysis of the examples, it is important to consider the most significant differences between Facebook and face-to-face conversational exchanges, which may be playing a role in how jocular mockery is carried out online. These differences can be summed up in the following features (cf. Maíz-Arévalo 2013: 52–53):

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(i) Disembodiment: face-to-face conversational exchanges involve not only the language interlocutors produce but also their non-verbal, body language such as gestures or facial expressions. Sitting in front of our screen (obviously without the use of a webcam) disembodies us for our interlocutors, who cannot physically see whether we are smiling, laughing, or making any other kind of gestures while typing (or reading) our messages. The absence of non-verbal behaviour, however, is not as radical as the previous sentences might lead us to believe. In fact, it is well known that computer users connote their written text with non-verbal information via other means like emoticons or oralization strategies like capitalization, repetition of characters, exclamation marks and so on (see Dresner and Herring 2010). The main difference with non-verbal information in face-to-face exchanges is that, as pointed out by Yus (2011: 165) “in text-based chat rooms there is no unintentionally nonverbal behaviour”. This has an obvious say in how jocular mockery is framed (see 4.2).

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(ii) The synchronous/asynchronous dichotomy: face-to-face conversational exchanges are typically synchronous and conversational turns flow more or less smoothly and in a relatively fast way for most casual conversations. Facebook exchanges, on the other hand, are not necessarily synchronous (except for certain applications like the chat). Thus, it is possible to observe “conversations” that extend for a couple of days; where different interlocutors post their responses a while after the initiating move was produced. This a-synchronicity, however, is increasingly diminishing; especially in the case of hyper-connected users who, via their mobile phones, are alerted every time a new comment (or “post”) has been added to a conversation where they are participating members so that they immediately post their own response. In cases like this, responses to initiating moves become practically synchronous, in a chat-like way.

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(iii) Turn-taking and the number of interlocutors: whilst control over the number of participants in an on-going conversation is relatively straightforward, this “feeling of control” is completely lost in Facebook semi-public

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389 exchanges where a user posts a video, comment, photo, etc. (or a combina-
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 290 tion of all) and is unsure how many users, if any, will respond to this
 291 initiating move. Thus, a conversational exchange on Facebook might in-
 292 volve just the first user (who initiates the conversation) but gets no re-
 293 sponse from any other user or an indeterminate number of users respond-
 294 ing and initiating other conversations within the same exchange or post.
 295 Still, analysis of the data reveals that the most frequent tendency is to
 296 have up to five or even six interlocutors, although this depends on differ-
 297 ent contextual factors (e.g., the interest of the post itself, the privacy op-
 298 tions selected by the user, etc.).

300 (iv) The degree of privacy: is closely related to the previous point, in the sense
 301 that many comments posted on the users' wall are sensitive to acquire a
 302 public nature. In other words, users' comments can be shared by other
 303 users, thus allowing more users to read their publications. Moreover, these
 304 publications remain registered as opposed to face-to-face conversational
 305 exchanges, which can also be casually overhead or even registered. How-
 306 ever, while this is routine in social networks, it only happens occasionally
 307 in face-to-face exchanges.

308 Bearing these differences in mind, in the present analysis I shall adopt the
 309 following definition of jocular mockery: jocular mockery involves a Facebook
 310 user explicitly diminishing something of relevance – e.g., a photograph, com-
 311 ment, etc. – to self or some other Facebook user within a non-serious or jocular
 312 frame, as illustrated by Examples 1 and 2 in English and Spanish, respectively:

313 (1) (Context: User 1 is a big fan of travelling and often posts pictures in differ-
 314 ent places. In this photograph, he is lying down in a garden hammock,
 315 reading a magazine. His photograph is accompanied by an invitation to
 316 come and stay).
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318 U1 (m): You're welcome to come and stay.

319 U2 (f): Green.... That's how I am right now....

320 U3 (m): Oh Show off

321 U4 (f): Looks like a hard life ...

322 U5 (f): Oh We will be coming

323 U6 (f): It looks peaceful ... What have you done with the child?

324 U1 (m): [Child's name] was having a nap, and I finally got round to getting
 325 the hammock up.

326 U1 (m): And you really are all welcome, but not at the same time!

327 U1 (m): [Addressing U5] I hope so!

328 U7 (m): Those verges could do with a trim.

U1 (m): Come any time, [addressing U7]. Bring your verge-trimmers!	350
U8 (f): show off!!!	352
U9 (f): Bit of a dog's life eh!	355
U10 (f): Living the good life!!!	359
U11 (f): Where are you?	362
U1 (m): Doha, [addressing U11]. good to see you're keeping up!	366
U12 (f): Don't worry, I'm coming.	368
U13 (f): How the other half live! X	370
U1 (m): And very much looking forward to it, [Addressing U12]!	373

In Example 1, jocular mockery is targeted at U1, who is mockingly accused of bragging (by U2, U3 and U8), met with ironic remarks (by U4, U9 and U13) or what might be considered friendly threats (by U5 and U12) to actually come and visit. Another user (U7) diminishes the whole scene by focusing upon the need to cut those “verges”. The mockery is good-naturedly accepted by U1 by clicking on Like after every single comment (except his own), which shows that he has interpreted it as jocular and is far from offended (at least apparently).⁸ Apart from showing he likes the comments, he also responds by agreeing with them (as when he invites U7 to bring his own verge-trimmers) or by looking forward to his friends' actual visit.

(2) (Context: User 1 has uploaded a couple of pictures taken during an important – and private – academic ceremony. He has probably been invited thanks to his own academic position, rather important. Among the photographs, there is also a selfie, which is the one the other users comment on).	386
U1 (m): En la investidura honoris causa de [Name]	388
U2 (m): [Addressing U1] en la primera foto pareces el DJ del acto ;-)	389
U1 (m): Sí. O un guardaespaldas.	390
U3 (f): que elegante vas!	392
U4 (f): ohhhh que elegancia!!!! que glamour!!! ☺ ☺ ☺	395

(Translation):	406
U1 (m): in [Name]'s honoris causa investiture	407
U2 (m): [Addressing U1] in the first picture you look like the event's DJ ;-)	409
U1 (m): Yes. Or a bodyguard.	411
U3 (f): how elegant you are!	415
U4 (f): ohhhh what elegance!!!! what glamour!!! ☺ ☺ ☺	418

⁸ As pointed out by Haugh and Bousfield (2012: 1103), “we can draw upon the understandings displayed by participants in subsequent turns”.

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As in Example 1, User 1 wants to share with this Facebook community this personal happy moment. Given the elitist nature of the event, U1 (as in Example 1), may be accused of bragging and his contribution diminished jokingly by the rest of the participants. In fact, U2 compares him to a DJ (U1 is wearing a pair of sunglasses on top of his forehead) and accompanies his comment by a winking emoticon, which helps frame it as jocular. As in the previous example, U1 accepts the mockery (by clicking on Like) and even agrees with it by adding another possibility (i.e., he looks like a body guard). In this frame, it is difficult to know whether or not U4 is seriously complimenting U1. The typographic repetitions (“ohhhh”) as well as the emoticons seem to point to jocular mockery once again.

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4.2 What triggers jocular mockery?

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Jocular mockery is usually a response move to an initiating move⁹ by the target (Drew 1987; Norrick 1993; Everts 2003; Haugh 2011). In the case of Facebook exchanges, this initiating move can be a photograph, a video, a comment, or a combination of all of them. This section will exclusively focus on the initiating moves which have generated jocular mockery. First, it is important to revisit some figures, even if the analysis will adopt a qualitative approach (see Table 2).

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Table 2: Corpus description.

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	British dataset	Spanish dataset	Total
Nº of words	6,215	6,193	12,408
Nº of exchanges	53	63	116
Nº of exchanges containing jocular mockery	12	12	25

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The first hypothesis – i.e., Spanish users will employ jocular mockery less often than their British counterparts – thus proves wrong since, in both English and Spanish, the number of exchanges containing examples of jocular mockery is exactly the same (although the Spanish set included ten more exchanges for the reasons already explained in Section 3.2, which yields a slightly inferior ratio: 22.6 % versus 19 %). The rest of the sample (41 and 51 cases, respectively)

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⁹ According to Tsui (1994), conversational moves can be of three kinds: initiating, responding and follow-ups.

had to be discarded because there were no occurrences of jocular mockery. The limited size of the corpus does not allow for a quantitative analysis. However, general tendencies will be commented on when observed, since this can shed some light for future research on a larger dataset.

Inspection of the examples reveals that initiating moves that trigger jocular mockery can belong to one of these two types: *updates* or *thoughts*.¹⁰

4.2.1 Updates

Updates serve to display new personal information users consider relevant enough to be shared with their Facebook community. The updates found in both sets consist of either a photograph or a commented photograph. It is possible to distinguish the different categories: (i) Information about a new location (e.g., holidays), (ii) Information about a new possession, (iii) Information about a personal achievement (e.g., an award), (iv) Attendance to an event (e.g., party, concert, etc.), (v) Change of profile/cover photograph and (vi) Misfortunes (e.g., accident).

(i) Information about a new location

Only three examples were found (one in the English set and two in its Spanish counterpart) where users' inform their Facebook community of their new location, e.g., holidays. Example 1 (already commented) is the only example in the British set. In Spanish, this update and the jocular mockery it causes is illustrated by Examples 3 and 4:

(3) (Context: User 1 has posted four photographs of her holidays. Three of them are long shots of her in different landscapes. One is a close-up where she appears next to a baby sheep. She has not accompanied the photos by any comment, just the location provided by Facebook itself).

U2 (f): Qué guapa! Si es que las vacaciones sientan de lo lindo...

U1 (f): Pero lo dices por la oveja, ¿no?

U2 (f): ☺

¹⁰ Facebook allows (and invites) its users to 'update' their status by giving some news or by sharing their thoughts. In this paper, however, I shall distinguish between newsworthy updates where users give personal news (or *updates*, for short) and *thoughts*, in which users share their own (or others') reflections.

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(Translation):

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U2 (f): How pretty! Holidays do feel good...

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U1 (f): But you are talking about the sheep, right?

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U2 (f): ☺

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(4) (Context: U1 has posted a photo of U3 having a drink in a terrace in a Spanish village, where they have been for the weekend. The photo quality, however, is not very good and U3 looks slightly distorted).

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U1 (f): terracismo en Toro, muuuuy guay

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U2 (m): Yo creo que estás en Toledo emulando a El Greco.

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U3 (m): sí, me temo k me coloqué mal el jet extender ese del teletienda.

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(Translation):

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U1 (f): In a terrace in Toro, veeeeery cool

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U2 (m): I think you are in Toledo imitating the Greco.

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U3 (m): Yes, I'm afraid I was wearing the TV shop jet extender in the wrong place.

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Closer examination reveals important differences between the English and the Spanish examples. As already pointed out, the British user is accused of bragging (albeit jocularly) by several interlocutors while neither of the Spanish users is. In fact, Example 2 shows it is U1 who jocularly diminishes herself as a modest way to respond to U2's compliment. In (3), it is probably the poor quality of the picture what has triggered U2's jocular mockery of U3, who did not even post the photograph but was merely tagged in it and hence, could not be accused of bragging as such.

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(ii) Information about a new possession

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Both the British and the Spanish users in the sample under study are observed to post a photograph of new possessions (either just the object itself or their wearing it, e.g., new clothes). Four examples (two in each set) were found, reproduced as (5) to (9) below:

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(5) (Context: U1 has posted a photo of her new training shoes, still in their box. All her friends know she is not the "sports" type, which is why she laughs at her recently acquired new hobby: jogging).

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U1 (f): Run forest run!

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U2 (f): Loooooove!!!!

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U1 (f): Might as well get in the olympics spirit innitttt!

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U2 (f): That's right mate!....they are some sexy, badass trainers :)	575
U3 (f): Did your sneakers go out? ;p	580
U4 (f): They're almost as sexy as mine :-) x	583
U1 (f): Oi! Ami ne jutay! U wanna smack! Watch how i come home all trim and able to do that killer 20 min work out!	585

In (5), the initiating turn by U1 already sets the mood for a humorous exchange, since she is comparing herself to Forrest Gump. Self-diminishing jocular mockery may thus avoid her being 'accused' of bragging (as U1 was in (1) above). U3 takes up her initial mockery by implying that the training shoes went out jogging on their own, since U1 is not particularly keen on sports. This seems to set the whole mood for another joking remark by U4. The whole exchange is closed by U1, who wholeheartedly accepts the jocular remarks by ironizing on her strenuous 20 minute workout.

(6) (Context: U1 has posted a close-up photo of her new tattoo, which is situated in a very 'private' part of her body – i.e. her backside. U2 is the 'artist' who performed it, also a friend of U1).	596
U1 (f): Masterpiece thanks to [U2's name]	600
U2 (m): In this case, the real masterpiece was not the painting but the canvas...	603
U1 (f): U pervert :p	606
U2 (m): ☺	610

As in Example 3, jocular mockery seems to act as a way for U1 to respond to the preceding compliment paid by U2. U1 returns his compliment by jocularly diminishing him ('U pervert :P'). The whole exchange may be argued to play on a flirty tune, especially given the intimacy developed between both users after U2 has seen the so called "canvas".

Quite interestingly, both British examples merely display a photograph of the new possession as opposed to the Spanish ones, where the user is also depicted. In (7), User 1 has posted what she probably considers a very becoming photograph of herself in a new dress, maybe expecting to get complimented (cf. Lorenzo Dus 2001; Sifianou 2001). In fact, she does get several compliments and what could be considered jocular mockery in U5's comment, which imitates the Chinese pronunciation of Spanish words:

(7) (Context: U1 has posted a photo wearing her new dress, which is typically Chinese and given to her while holidaying in China, as she says herself).	625
	627
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- 630 U1 (f): Regalo de mi amigo [Chinese name], un cielo
 631 U2 (f): Q guapa!
 635 U3 (f): Guapa!
 638 U4 (f): ooooooh!!!!
 640 U5 (f): lequete espectacular
 643 U1 (f): ☺

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647

(Translation):

- 650 U1 (f): a present from my friend, a sweetheart
 651 U2 (f): How pretty!
 655 U3 (f): Pretty!
 658 U4 (f): ooooooh!!!!
 660 U5 (f): leally spectacular
 663 U1 (f): ☺

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Finally, new possessions do not need to be material objects but can include other things such as a new pet, as in (8) below, where both U2 and U3 pay their compliments but U3 also introduces his jocular mockery by establishing an unbecoming comparison:

- 670 (8) (Context: U1 has posted a photo of herself holding her kitty, which she has
 672 recently been given).
 673 U2 (f): ¡Míralas qué contentas, la madre y el bebé! Es una preciosidad, me
 676 encanta!
 678 U3 (m): es muy guapa sí, pero aquí se parece un poco... bueno te dejo esta
 680 web para unas risas <http://www.catsthatlooklikehitler.com/>

681

682

(Translation):

- 683 U2 (f): Look how happy they look, the mum and the baby! She's a beauty, I
 686 love it!
 688 U3 (m): She's very pretty, yes, but here she looks a bit like... well here is the
 690 web for some laughter <http://www.catsthatlooklikehitler.com/>

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(iii) Information about a personal achievement (e.g., an award)

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New locations or possessions can trigger jocular mockery when (mis)interpreted as bragging by the other interlocutors; hence, commenting on a personal achievement is also likely to trigger jocular mockery, especially if it is presented without taking into consideration the maxim of Modesty (Leech 1983). Interestingly enough, only one example was found in the Spanish dataset (9) as op-

posed to four in its British counterpart, illustrated by (10) and (11). Scarcity of the data makes it impossible to determine whether this may be showing a cultural difference or whether this imbalance is due to the limitation of the sample.¹¹

- (9) (Context: User 1 has been awarded “best employee of the year”. He has uploaded the photograph receiving the diploma and thanking everybody involved). 702
 703
 704
- U1 (m): Todo un honor, no creo que me lo merezca, porque todos mis compañeros son fantásticos pero me ha hecho muchísima ilusión. Gracias, gracias a todos! 705
 708
 709
- U2 (m): Enhorabuena, claro que te lo mereces. 710
- U3 (f): qué bien, qué contenta estoy por ti!!!! 713
- U4 (f): Super enhorabuenaaaaa!!!! 716
- U5 (f): así se hace, olé olé y olé 720
- U6 (m): muy bien, sí, si no fuera porque eres del Madrid... 722
- U1 (m): eso sí [addressing U6], eso hasta la muerteeee!!!! 725
 728
- (Translation): 729
- U1 (m): Such a great honour, I don’t think I deserve it, because all my colleagues are fantastic but I feel so happy about it. Thanks, thanks everyone! 730
 733
 734
- U2 (m): Congratulations, of course you deserve it. 736
- U3 (f): How great, I’m so happy for you!!!! 739
- U4 (f): Super congratulationssssss!!!! 742
- U5 (f): That’s the way it’s done, ole ole and ole 746
- U6 (m): very nice, yes, if you weren’t a Madrid supporter... 749
- U1 (m): indeed [Addressing U6], and I’ll be so till I dieeeee!!!! 750

In (9), User 1 is careful to precede the news about his award with a modest remark (“I don’t think I deserve it”) and a generous comment about his colleagues (“because all my colleagues are fantastic”). After the expected congratulations, U6 attacks him jocularly by presenting him as a perfectly capable person except for his football preferences (U6 supports a rival team). In (10), in contrast, U1 does not seem to modestly tone down his message (he rather does the opposite), which might explain the immediate jocular mockery it at-

¹¹ The analysis of compliments has revealed, however, that British speakers seem to attach more importance to skills and achievements to pay a compliment whereas Spanish speakers seem more focused upon personal appearance and possessions (e.g., Ramajo Cuesta 2011).

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tracts and which he good-naturedly accepts by clicking on “Like” after each comment (see Section 4.4):

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(10) (Context: U1 has posted a photograph of himself practicing what looks like a yoga position).
U1 (m): I didn’t know I was that flexible
U2 (f): Impressive :-0
U3 (m): I won’t be impressed till you levitate, man
U1 (m): haha, very funny

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In Example 11, a proud mother jocularly mocks her daughter by stating her “priorities”. It may well be a modest way to avoid being seen as bragging about her successful daughter. Jocular mockery (by U5) is addressed against U1 (and not her daughter, who joins in the joking mood but appreciates everybody’s complimentary comments in the final turn).

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(11) (Context: U1 has just posted the comment in turn 1 about her daughter (User 7), who has done very well in her university entrance exams).
U1 (f): Well done [U7]!! Passed her university entrance exams. I want her to study International Relations/Politics - interesting things like that, but she doesn’t seem to share my enthusiasm for fascinating issues like the Greek/French election results. Lady Gaga’s concert dates seem to hold more interest for her!!!
U2 (f): Well done girl!! Well done!! So what does she want to study then [U1]?? How you doing?? Am planning a wee visit to Madrid one weekend to see you! Are you going to Glasgow any time in the summer? Xxx
U3 (f): Well done [U7]- and well done [U1]- you’re a great mum!
U4 (f): Congrats super [U7]! :D I’m very glad for you. [U1] don’t despair, I would also go to the concert right now and celebrate, and I’m sure you too!! You’ll see, she’ll decide wisely. I love U7, she is great!! Kisses
U5 (f): Well done [U7]! Don’t take any notice of [U1], study what you want and be happy!!!!!!! And enjoy Lady Gaga!
U6 (f): take credit that she passed you fed her all these years and great tht she can go to uni and study, welll done both of you!
U7 (f): Lady Gaga ALWAYS comes first hahah and THANK YOU everybody!! i’ve studied really hard for this!! so lets hope I can study something I’ll enjoy! :D

(iv) Attendance to an event (e.g., party, concert, etc.)

Quite interestingly, updates where users share their attendance to a particular event have been found only in the Spanish dataset (5 cases) as opposed to the British data, with no examples. The limited size of the sample makes it unfeasible to argue whether this may be showing a cultural difference, opening up a new avenue for further research. As in other examples, users may employ self-diminishing jocular mockery, as in (12). In Examples like 2 above and 13, it is other users who display jocular mockery:

(12) (Context: U1 has posted a group photo at a party where U2 does not look particularly attractive). 826
828

U2 (m): No sé si parezco un loco que se ha colado en la fiesta, o más bien alguien de integración que tú misma llevabas, para hacer tu buena obra de la semana. 830
832
833

U1 (f): Voto por lo segundo. Super a favor de la integración. Tienes que añadir esa cara a tu repertorio docente habitual. Alumnos cagaos patas abajo, lo estoy viendo. 835
837
838

U3 (m): Veo que la jarra de alcohol está vacía... 840

U4 (f): no tengo palabras, no tengo palabras... 842

U5 (f): ¿U1? ¿U1, eres tú? Responde: ese que está al lado de U2, ¿¿¿¿eres tú???? 845
848

U6 (f): No nos olvidemos de que U2 ha conseguido la curva praxiteriana a la altura del cuello. Todo un desafío ;-)

U1 (f): Yo creo que es todo un Photochó [sic] de éstos... 853
856

(Translation): 857

U2 (m): I don't know whether I look like a madman who's sneaked in the party or someone from an integration programme you brought yourself, to do your good deed of the week. 859
862

U1 (f): I vote for the second option. Super in favour of integration. You have to add that face to your teaching repertoire. Students scared shitless, I already see it. 863
866
867

U3 (m): I see the buzz jug is empty... 869

U4 (f): I have no words, I have no words... 871

U5 (f): [Addressing U2]U2? U2, is it you? Answer: that one next to U1, is it you???? 875
877

U6 (f): Let us not forget U1 has managed a Praxitelean curve in her neck. A real challenge ;-)

U1 (f): I think it is so a Photochow [sic] 882
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885 (13) (Context: U1 has uploaded a group photograph where he appears next to
 887 a singer, whose concert the group has just attended. U2 was in the concert
 888 but missed this specific moment. The photograph's quality is rather poor,
 889 with the flashlight distorting it slightly).

890 U1 (m): Momentazo

891 U2 (f): qué chula la foto, tiene así como aura, no? :-p

892 U1 (m): claro que tiene aura, si estábamos con diosssssssss

893

894

(Traducción):

900 U1 (m): Great moment

901 U2 (f): what a cool pic, it's got a kind of aura, hasn't it? :-p

902 U1 (m): of course it's got aura, we were next to godddddd

903

(v) Change of profile/cover photograph

910 Profile photographs are important to users, since it is a way to construct their
 911 own self-identity (e.g., Gibbs et al. 2006; Leary and Allen 2011). As argued by
 912 Vázquez (2012):¹² “Nadie es tan feo como en su DNI ni tan guapo como en su
 913 foto de perfil [en Facebook]”.¹³ In addition, new profile photographs attract
 914 other users' curiosity, especially since they get alerted by Facebook whenever
 915 a friend changes their profile photograph. The data reveals that new profile
 916 photographs often attract compliments. In fact, they may be perceived not only
 917 as a way to construct a flattering self-identity but also to “fish for compliments”
 918 (cf. Lorenzo-Dus 2001; Sifianou 2001). In the sample, there are only two exam-
 919 ples (one in each dataset) where a change of profile photograph has triggered
 920 jocular mockery by other users, as illustrated by (14) and (15):
 921

922 (14) (Context: U1 has uploaded a photograph of his youth where he appears
 923 particularly attractive; a plausible reason for uploading the photograph in
 924 the first place. This ‘bragging’ is met with jocular mockery by the rest of
 925 the users. U3 is his twin brother).

926 U1 (m): Que guapo ¿Quién es??

927 U2 (f): tú no

928 U3 (m): [U3's name]

929 U4 (m): es U1....es U3 quien esssssssss...!!!

930 U1 (m): Es el mas guapo de los dos, ósea [sic] yo jajajaja

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¹² Available at http://elpais.com/diario/2012/02/05/eps/1328426821_850215.html. *El País* is one of the most prestigious newspapers in Spain.

¹³ “No one is as ugly as they look in their passport photograph or as attractive as they look in their FB profile photograph” (my translation).

(Translation):	342
U1 (m): How handsome. Who is it?	943
U2 (f): Not you	948
U3 (m): It's U3 [addressing himself]	950
U4 (m): It's U1.... It's U3 who is ittttt...!!!	952
U1 (m): It's the most handsome of the two, that is, me hahahaha	956
(15) (Context: User 1 has just changed her profile photograph, without making any comments).	959
U2 (f): Mate get rid of that profile pic, no justice mate - fat face syndrome in it !! Sorry had to be honest, love ya xx	960
U1 (f): lol I wana die laughing and I'm in a fucking public [sic] place!!! thanks for that [Addressing U2]!!! I'll do it babe don't worry! for all of you who were accidently included in this, sorry about that she's actually my best friend!! and as you can see utterly honest!!	963
U2 (f): Lol, sorry everyone - it's just how we are, all said with love I promise x	964
	968
	969
	970
	971
	974
In (15), U1 not only takes U2's apparently impolite comment rather good-heartedly (she even thanks her for her honesty) but feels the need to reassert the rest of the participants that they are "best friends" and therefore allowed to truly speak their minds, as also noted by U2 herself in the final public apology. For the rest of the participants there stands out the relational connection between U1 and U2, who emerge as such good friends that can be brutally honest via mockery in a semi-public milieu like Facebook. In terms of face work, Example 15 reveals that jocular mockery can be "simultaneously both threatening and supporting" to face (Haugh 2010: 2114).	975
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(vi) Misfortunes (e.g., accident)	984
As the name indicates, these are updates where users inform about a (personal) misfortune. Only one example is found in the English dataset (16):	985
	986
(16) (Context: U1 has posted a photograph of her foot in a cast).	988
U1 (f): Foot is fractured now- got a cast, and crutches!	990
U2 (f): Ow! That's not good :(Try to rest although I know that's easier said than done!	992
U3 (f): Poor thing, hope you'll recover soon!	995
U4 (m): :(998
U5 (f): !!!!!!!	999
	1002
	1

- ~~1005~~ U6 (f): Ouch! I hope your foot gets better soon! x
~~1009~~ U7 (f): Ouch is right!
~~1011~~ U8 (m): How did you manage that?
~~1015~~ U9 (f): Shit! I can do grocery for you. Just let me know
~~1019~~ U1 (f): dd [sic] it in the gym in a class running backwards
~~1020~~ U10 (f): That is such a bummer!
~~1023~~ U11 (m): time to change gyms i think..get well soon love !!!
~~1028~~ U12 (m): Get well soon...master those crutches..they will get you to the front
1029 of all queues

1030 As expected, U1's misfortune is met by sympathetic comments, some of which
1031 are merely typographic (U4 and U5). However, mingled with sympathy there
1032 are examples of jocular mockery trying to downplay the "disgrace" and hence
1033 cheer up the target (by U11 and U12).

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4.2.2 Thoughts

1035 Facebook's interface and its question "What's on your mind?"¹⁴ in the status
1036 update seems to encourage some participants to share their deep reflections
1037 and quotes from famous authors, which might trigger their friends' jocular com-
1038 ments. In the present sample, only four examples were found (one in Spanish
1039 and three in the British set). Examples 17–19 serve to illustrate this phenom-
1040 enon:

- 1041 (17) (Context: U1 opens up the exchange by posting a quote by Neil Strauss).
~~1043~~ U1 (f): "In life, people tend to wait for good things to come to them. And by
1046 waiting, they miss out. Usually, what you wish for doesn't fall in your
1047 lap; it falls somewhere nearby, and you have to recognize it, stand
1048 up, and put in the time and work it takes to get to it. This isn't
1049 because the universe is cruel. It's because the universe is smart. It
1050 has its own cat-string theory and knows we don't appreciate things
1051 that fall into our laps." Neil Strauss
~~1052~~ U2 (m): Blimey! Where are you finding these deep lyrics? Hope you're good.
1055 You never let me know!
~~1058~~ U1 (f): hehe! nah! just been chatting to my flat mate who told me about Neil
1059 strauss' book the Game...the art/technique of picking up birds..I'm

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14 Its Spanish equivalent is "¿Qué estás pensando?", which translates as 'what are you thinking about?'

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(Translation):

U1 (f): First day of holidays and I've been working in front of my computer all the morning, who said teachers don't work?

U2 (f): I did...hahaha. You are Miss Busy Diary, aw... stop a bit!

U1 (f): Bah, I'd love to stop, well, these holidays I'll stop for a little bit. By the way, are we having class next Monday? Kisses

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In (18), jocular mockery is used by U3 – who seems to invade the girl friends' intimacy – by referring to their relationship as typically female and non-existent among male friends. In (19), U1's indirect complaint¹⁵ is jocularly diminished by U2, who tries to cheer her up (in a similar way to that of Example 16 above).

To sum up, both updates and thoughts can act as initiators that trigger jocular mockery. Table 3 below summarizes occurrences, reflecting interesting differences further research is intended to pursue in a larger corpus of data.

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1155

Table 3: Types of update in the two datasets.

Initiating move	Type of "update"	British dataset	Spanish dataset
Updates	New location	1	2
	New possession	2	2
	Personal achievement	4	1
	Event attendance	0	5
	Change of profile photo	1	1
	Misfortune	1	0
Thoughts		3	1
TOTAL		12	12

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4.3 How is jocular mockery framed online?

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To make sure their mockery is understood as playful and not merely hurtful; speakers in face-to-face exchanges may follow certain routines that help the addressee interpret the comment in the jocular light it was intended. It goes

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¹⁵ Indirect complaints have been defined as "those in which the complainant complains to the addressee about an absent part, something or someone" (Márquez Reiter 2013: 232). In this case, U1 complains about the prejudice some people have against teachers' alleged privileges.

without saying that the target (or other interlocutors) may still be offended despite the jocular framing. According to Haugh (2010) and Haugh and Bousfield (2012), jocular mockery can be framed via “lexical exaggeration, formulaicity, topic shift markers, contrastiveness, prosodic cues, inviting laughter, and facial or gestural cues”. As the examples above show, such routines are often found in combination, as in Example 1 repeated here for the sake of clarity as (20):

- (20) (Context: User 1 is a big fan of travelling and often posts pictures in different places. In this photograph, he is lying down in a garden hammock, reading a magazine. His photograph is accompanied by an invitation to come and stay). 1200
 1211
 1212
 1213
 U1 (m): You’re welcome to come and stay. 1216
 U2 (f): Green.... That’s how I am right now.... 1219
 U3 (m): Oh Show off 1220
 U4 (f): Looks like a hard life ... 1223
 U5 (f): Oh We will be coming 1226
 U6 (f): It looks peaceful ... What have you done with the child? 1230
 U1 (m): [Child’s name] was having a nap, and I finally got round to getting the hammock up. 1233
 1235
 U1 (m): And you really are all welcome, but not at the same time! 1236
 U1 (m): [Addressing U5] I hope so! 1240
 U7 (m): Those verges could do with a trim. 1242
 U1 (m): Come any time, [addressing U7]. Bring your verge-trimmers! 1246
 U8 (f): show off!!! 1249
 U9 (f): Bit of a dog’s life eh! 1251
 U10 (f): Living the good life!!! 1256
 U11 (f): Where are you? 1259
 U1 (m): Doha, [addressing U11]. good to see you’re keeping up! 1260
 U12 (f): Don’t worry, I’m coming. 1263
 U13 (f): How the other half live! X 1266
 U1 (m): And very much looking forward to it, [Addressing U12]! 1269

In this example, users choose to frame their jocular mockery by means of formulae like “Oh Show off” (U3 and U8), contrastive irony (U4, U9, U13) or topic shift (“those verges could do with a trim” by U7). 1272
 1273
 1274

Another way to frame jocular mockery is lexical exaggeration which, according to Huang (2012: 144) may be defined as “a figure of speech in which something is deliberately exaggerated by being made to sound e.g., better, more exciting, and more dangerous, to increase impact or to attract attention”. 1275
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- Lexical exaggeration is employed by U3 in (21) and by U2 in (13), repeated here for the sake of clarity as (22), where U2 combines her lexical exaggeration with a final ‘tongue-out’ emoticon:
- 1279 Lexical exaggeration is employed by U3 in (21) and by U2 in (13), repeated here
 1280 for the sake of clarity as (22), where U2 combines her lexical exaggeration with
 1281 a final ‘tongue-out’ emoticon:
- 1282 (21) (Context: U1 has posted a photo of a lobster roll before eating it. In turn
 1284 4 she is mockingly complaining about her family’s abusing use of her
 1285 holidays).
 1286 U1 (f): Got my lobster roll, finally!
 1289 U2 (f): lobster salad at Trump Tower yesterday....just wasn’t the same!
 1292 U3 (f): how’s the impromptu vacation?
 1295 U1 (f): Family’s taking advantage of me and sent me to Maine to file paper-
 1298 work. I insisted on a lobster roll as payment. :)
 1300 **U3 (f): Only one? I think that requires at least a dozen**
 1302 U1 (f): Well, my dad got the birthday discount. ;)
- 1306 (22) (Context: U1 has uploaded a group photograph where he appears next to
 1307 a singer, whose concert the group has just attended. U2 was in the concert
 1308 but missed this specific moment. The photograph’s quality is rather poor,
 1309 with the flashlight distorting it slightly).
 1310 U1 (m): Momentazo
 1313 **U2 (f): qué chula la foto, tiene así como aura, no? :-p**
 1316 U1 (m): claro que tiene aura, si estábamos con diosssssssss
 1319
 1320 (Translation):
 1321 U1 (m): Great momento
 1325 **U2 (f): What a cool picture, it’s got like aura, hasn’t it? :-p**
 1328 U1 (m): of course it’s got aura, we were with godddddd
- 1330 Haugh and Bousfield (2012) point out to formulaic expressions as another way
 1331 to signal jocular mockery (e.g., conventional impoliteness formulae like ‘ass-
 1332 hole’). In the set at hand, these expressions are rather scant, with only four
 1333 occurrences in three examples of the British set: (1), (6) and (17). In (17), partial-
 1334 ly repeated below as (23), U2 frames jocular mockery by employing a formula
 1335 (‘Blimey!’) but also by resorting to lexical exaggeration (‘these deep lyrics’):
- 1336 (23) (Context: U1 opens up the exchange by posting a quote by Neil Strauss).
 1339 U1 (f): “In life, people tend to wait for good things to come to them. And by
 1341 waiting, they miss out. Usually, what you wish for doesn’t fall in your
 1342 lap; it falls somewhere nearby, and you have to recognize it, stand
 1343 up, and put in the time and work it takes to get to it. This isn’t
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- because the universe is cruel. It's because the universe is smart. It has its own cat-string theory and knows we don't appreciate things that fall into our laps." Neil Strauss 1344
1345
1346
- U2 (m): **Blimey! Where are you finding these deep lyrics?** Hope you're good. You never let me know! 1349
1350
- Users may also change the topic by means of topic shift markers as in (24) below, where U2 asks about someone unknown who appears in the background rather than commenting on her two friends posing in the foreground: 1351
1352
1353
- (24) (Context: U1 has posted a group photo at a party, an unknown guy appears in the background. He is not particularly attractive). 1355
1356
- U2 (f): ..y el guapo de ahí detrás?¿?jaaaaaaaa..menuda fiestuki con [Name] uycia!jaja 1359
1360
- U1 (f): jajajaaja es el primo de mister potato! 1361
- U3 (f): que guapas estais las dos, os veo como siempre. 1365
- U1 (f): Oye como me alegra que nos veas así! Jajajaja 1369
1370
- (Translation): 1371
- (U2) **And that handsome one behind? Hahahaha...**what a party with Name and cia! haha 1371
1374
- (U1) Hahahahaha it's Mr. Potato's cousin! 1375
- (U3) How pretty you both look, as usual 1378
- (U1) Hey, I'm so glad you see us that way! Hahahaha 1389
- Other examples of topic shifting (marked by the conjunction *pero*, 'but') are: 1381
- (25) (Context: User 1 has posted four photographs of her holidays. Three of them are long shots of her in different landscape. One is a close-up where she appears next to a baby lamb. She has not accompanied the photos by any comment, just the location provided by Facebook itself). 1381
1384
1385
1386
- U2 (f): Qué guapa! Si es que las vacaciones sientan de lo lindo... 1389
- U1 (f): **Pero lo dices por la oveja, ¿no?** 1390
- U2 (f): ☺ 1393
1396
- (Translation): 1397
- U2 (f): How pretty! Holidays do feel good... 1399
- U1 (f): **But you are talking about the sheep, right?** 1401
- U2 (f): ☺ 1405
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- 1408 (26) (Context: U1 has posted a photo of herself holding her kitty, which she has
1409 recently been given).
1410 U2 (f): ¡Míralas qué contentas, la madre y el bebé! Es una preciosidad, me
1413 encanta!
1416 U3 (m): es muy guapa sí, **pero aquí se parece un poco... bueno te dejo**
1417 **esta web para unas risas <http://www.catsthatlooklikehitler.com/>**
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1419 (Translation):
1420 U2 (f): Look how happy they look, the mum and the baby! She's a beauty, I
1423 love it!
1426 U3 (m): She's very pretty, yes, **but here she looks a bit like... well here is**
1427 **the web for some laughter <http://www.catsthatlooklikehitler.com/>**

1428 Given Facebook's disembodied nature, typographic manipulation of the text
1429 seems the most commonly used device to frame jocular mockery in both data-
1430 sets, which points to a certain degree of internationalization (at least in Western
1431 countries) of Internet conventions (Crystal 2001; Yus 2011). This typographic
1432 deformation may appear in the form of emoticons (see Examples 2, 5, 6, 13,
1433 among others), repetition of letters or interrogative and exclamative signs to
1434 emulate an emphatic pronunciation, both in English and in Spanish (see Ta-
1435 ble 4).¹⁶

1436 **Table 4:** Examples of typographic deformation in both datasets.

English dataset	Spanish dataset
What is it called for girls???? Lol	Yo... jajaja
Show of!!!!	Ohhh que elegancia!!!! que glamour!!! ☺
Might as well get in the olympics spirit innittttt!	☺ ☺
Lady Gaga's concert dates seem to hold more interest for her!!!	Todo un desafío ;-) Tiene como aura, no? :-p

1456 Finally, typographic deformation may be used to imitate a foreign accent,
1457 as in (7), repeated here as (27) and where U5 (in bold) deforms the text to
1458 imitate the Chinese pronunciation of Spanish words:

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¹⁶ All these examples have already been quoted above in full. To avoid repetitions and for the sake of space, only utterances which exemplify typographic manipulation have been quoted on this occasion.

(27) (Context: U1 has posted a photo wearing her new dress, which is typically Chinese and given to her while holidaying in China, as she says herself).	1459
U1 (f): Regalo de mi amigo [Chinese name], un cielo	1461
U2 (f): Q guapa!	1462
U3 (f): Guapa!	1469
U4 (f): ooooooh!!!!	1472
U5 (f): lequete espectacular	1476
U1 (f): ☺	1479
(Traducción):	1480
U1 (f): a present from my friend, a sweetheart	1481
U2 (f): How pretty!	1482
U3 (f): Pretty!	1486
U4 (f): ooooooh!!!!	1487
U5 (f): leally spectacular	1496
U1 (f): ☺	1498

In summary, despite Facebook's disembodied nature, users resort to a wide range of strategies to frame jocular mockery both in the English and the Spanish sets; namely, topic shifting, lexical exaggeration, formulaicity and typographic deformation of the text. As examples above show, these strategies may appear in isolation but they are most often combined (e.g., typographic deformation and lexical exaggeration). As for differences between both datasets, a more quantitative analysis on a larger corpus would be needed. At this stage, results are not conclusive and no qualitative differences could be found.

4.4 How do targets respond to jocular mockery? 1508

According to Haugh (2010: 2018), there are three main ways to respond to jocular mockery in face-to-face exchanges: 1509

- (i) Ignore it (e.g., by pretending not to have heard anything) 1512
- (ii) Reject it as untrue or exaggerated (e.g., by explicitly stating so) 1513
- (iii) Accept it (e.g., by laughing, agreeing with it, repeating the mocking remark, etc.) 1517

Inspection of the data reveals the following tendencies in both datasets (see Table 5). 1518

As can be observed, there are no examples where jocular mockery gets rejected by its target. In fact, rejecting what comes as a joke may even act 1559

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Table 5: Responses to jocular mockery.

		British dataset	Spanish dataset
Type of response	Ignoring	1	2
	Rejecting	0	0
	Accepting	11	10
TOTAL		12	12

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against the target's own positive face, who might be seen as taking things "too seriously" (Fox 2004; Goddard 2009). Furthermore, jocular mockery can act as a way to reinforce intimacy and rapport among the interlocutors (Haugh and Bousfield 2012). Hence, rejecting it explicitly may endanger this rapport and promote distance. This may explain why rejecting does not occur in these Facebook exchanges, whose *raison d'être* is keeping social relations among its users.

With regard to ignoring jocular mockery, it is difficult to determine whether a participant is intentionally ignoring it when s/he does not provide any kind of answer (not even clicking on the Like button, which implies acceptance of the mockery). This may be due to the asynchronicity of the exchange, where less active users might feel it is too late to respond to jocular mockery produced in the past. In the case of very active users, however, it might be argued that the absence of a comment may be intentional, as in (28), where the two girls might feel their intimacy has been invaded by U3, whose comment they choose to ignore.

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(28) (Context: U1 is very excited about the visit of her best friend, U2).

U1 (f): like a kid waiting to open xmas presis with the arrival of my bestest friend gita tonight! Yaaaaay!

U2 (f): I'm so excited too, can't wait to see ya.....swear this been the longest time I haven't seen you!!! Here I come.....x x

U1 (f): yippeee! Been too long! Counting the hours!

U3 (m): So if men spoke like this, it would be bromance on another level. What is it called for girls??? Lol! Enjoy yourselves

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A similar case is illustrated by (29) in the Spanish set, where the very active U1 chooses not to respond to U3's comment; she "liked" U2's comment some minutes before U3 made his, which shows that she might have been offended by U3's unfortunate comparison:

- (29) (Context: U1 has posted a photo of herself holding her kitty). 1598
- U2 (f): ¡Míralas qué contentas, la madre y el bebé! Es una preciosidad, me encanta! 1600
- U3 (m): es muy guapa sí, pero aquí se parece un poco... bueno te dejo esta web para unas risas <http://www.catsthatlooklikehitler.com/> 1603
- (Translation): 1607
- U2 (f): Look how happy they look, the mum and the baby! She's a beauty, I love it! 1609
- U3 (m): She's very pretty, yes, but here she looks a bit like... well here is the web for some laughter <http://www.catsthatlooklikehitler.com/> 1613
- Finally, in (30) U1 follows up U2's second part of the comment (in bold) while not saying anything else about what triggered her initial reflection: 1617
- (30) (Context: U1, a teacher, has posted the comment in turn 1, feeling rather upset that she has to be working in front of the computer when it is her first day of the summer holiday. She vents her annoyance on those who claim teachers have long holidays and hardly work. U1 and U2 go to dancing classes together. U1 is not sure whether they will have dancing class next Monday). 1620
- U1 (f): Primer día de vacaciones y toda la mañana trabajando delante del ordenador, ¿quién dijo que los profes no curramos? 1622
- U2 (f): Yo... jajaja. Si es que ers Dña. Agenda Apretada, **ains... para un poco!** 1623
- U1 (f): **uf, ya me gustaría parar, bueno, estas vacaciones pararé un poquito.** Por cierto, ¿nos vemos el lunes en clase o no tenemos? Besitos 1633
- (Translation): 1637
- U1 (f): First day of holidays and I've been working in front of my computer all the morning, who said teachers don't work? 1639
- U2 (f): I did...hahaha. You are Miss Busy Diary, **aw... stop a bit!** 1643
- U1 (f): **Bah, I'd love to stop, well, these holidays I'll stop for a little bit.** By the way, are we having class next Monday? Kisses 1648
- As reflected in Table 4, accepting jocular mockery is the most common option in both datasets. In face-to-face conversations, accepting jocular mockery may be expressed by laughter (Drew 1987; Everts 2003; Glenn 2003) and agreement and repetition (fully or partially) of the mocking comment (Haugh and Bousfield 2012: 1105). In the case of Facebook exchanges, simply clicking on the Like button may be used to indicate acceptance and appreciation (Santamaría-

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- García 2014). Accepting the joke can also be typographically signalled exclusively by means of a smiling emoticon or an onomatopoeic representation of laughter, as in (31), (32) and (33):
- 1659 (31) (Context: User 1 has posted four photographs of her holidays. Three of
1661 them are long shots of her in different landscape. One is a close-up where
1662 she appears next to a baby lamb. She has not accompanied the photos by
1663 any comment, just the location provided by Facebook itself).
1665 U2 (f): Qué guapa! Si es que las vacaciones sientan de lo lindo...
1668 U1 (f): Pero lo dices por la oveja, ¿no?
1670 **U2 (f): ☺**
1673
1674 (Translation):
1675 U2 (f): How pretty! Holidays do feel good...
1678 U1 (f): But you are talking about the sheep, right?
1681 **U2 (f): ☺**
- 1685 (32) (Context: U1 has posted a close-up photo of her new tattoo, which is situat-
1686 ed in a very ‘private’ part of her body – i.e. her backside. U2 is the ‘artist’
1687 who performed it, also a friend of U1).
1689 U1 (f): Masterpiece thanks to [U2’s name]
1691 U2 (m): In this case, the real masterpiece was not the painting but the can-
1694 vas...
1695 U1 (f): U pervert :p
1698 **U2 (m): ☺**
- 1702 (33) (Context: U1 has posted a photograph of himself practicing what looks like
1703 a yoga position).
1705 U1 (m): I didn’t know I was that flexible
1708 U2 (f): Impressive :-0
1710 U3 (m): I won’t be impressed till you levitate, man
1713 **U1 (m): haha, very funny**
- 1716 As in face-to-face exchanges, Facebookers may also repeat the previous mock-
1717 ery. This repetition, however, frequently includes exaggerating it (marked in
1718 bold):
- 1720 (34) (Context: User 1 has been awarded “best employee of the year”. He has
1721 uploaded the photograph receiving the diploma and thanking everybody
1722 involved).
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- U1 (m): Todo un honor, no creo que me lo merezca, porque todos mis compañeros son fantásticos pero me ha hecho muchísima ilusión. Gracias, gracias a todos! 1723
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- U2 (m): Enhorabuena, claro que te lo mereces. 1729
- U3 (f): qué bien, qué contenta estoy por ti!!!! 1731
- U4 (f): Super enhorabuenaaaaa!!!! 1735
- U5 (f): así se hace, olé olé y olé 1739
- U6 (m): muy bien, sí, si no fuera porque eres del Madrid... 1740
- U1 (m): eso sí [addressing U6], eso hasta la muerteeeee!!!!** 1743
1746
- (Translation): 1747
- U1 (m): Such a great honour, I don't think I deserve it, because all my colleagues are fantastic but I feel so happy about it. Thanks, thanks everyone! 1750
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- U2 (m): Congratulations, of course you deserve it. 1753
- U3 (f): How great, I'm so happy for you!!!! 1758
- U4 (f): Super congratulationssssss!!!! 1760
- U5 (f): That's the way it's done, ole ole and ole 1762
- U6 (m): very nice, yes, if you weren't a Madrid supporter... 1765
- U1 (m): indeed [Addressing U6], and I'll be so till I dieeeee!!!!** 1769
- In (35) there is not only repetition of the joke by the target, who in this way shows she is going along with it, but also amplification of the joke by including swear words and exaggerating her other "housewife" qualities (not only cooking). Her message is also preceded by the conventional typographic sign for laughter ("lol"): 1771
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- (35) (Context: U1 has posted a photo of her first homemade cupcakes). 1776
- U1 (f): strawberry cup cakes with butter frosting...after 4 attempts looks like we have a winner! 1780
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- U2 (f): yummy! 1782
- U3 (f): I am so proud of you! 1785
- U1 (f): I knew you'd be proud! look what you've turned me into [U3]!!!! 1789
- U4 (f): U got my address to send me some? Yum yum 1791
- U5 (f): Just for me, you shouldn't have, lol x 1795
- U1 (f): lol think you gotta get on a plane for my cupcakes [U4]! Knitting, baking! wtf?! I think i'm ready for motherhood! [Addressing U5]! U gonna b impressed!** 1799
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- As shown by (35) above, strategies may appear in combination, as in (17), partially quoted here as (36). In U1's response, she combines typographic signs for 1802
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1804 laughter ('hehe!'), elaborates on U1's comment, exaggerates ('OMG I've been a
1805 victim!!!) and closes up her message by laughing at herself ('lol'):

- 1806 (36) (Context: U1 opens up the exchange by posting a quote by Neil Strauss).
 1807 U1 (f): "In life, people tend to wait for good things to come to them. And by
 1811 waiting, they miss out. Usually, what you wish for doesn't fall in your
 1812 lap; it falls somewhere nearby, and you have to recognize it, stand
 1813 up, and put in the time and work it takes to get to it. This isn't
 1814 because the universe is cruel. It's because the universe is smart. It
 1815 has its own cat-string theory and knows we don't appreciate things
 1816 that fall into our laps." Neil Strauss
 1817 U2 (m): Blimey! Where are you finding these deep lyrics? Hope you're good.
 1820 You never let me know!
 1821 U1 (f): **hehe! nah! just been chatting to my flat mate who told me about**
 1824 **Neil strauss' book the Game...the art/technique of picking up**
 1825 **birds..I'm still in shock with some of the techniques he just dis-**
 1826 **cussed with me! OMG I've been a victim!!! lol**

1827 In Spanish, strategies can also be similarly combined to respond to jocular
 1828 mockery, as in Example 37, where U1 responds by repeating and exaggerating
 1829 U2's previous comment, as well as by typographically deforming the final word
 1830 to add emphasis (in bold):

- 1831 (37) (Context: U1 has uploaded a group photograph where he appears next to
 1832 a singer, whose concert the group has just attended. U2 was in the concert
 1834 but missed this specific moment. The photograph's quality is rather poor,
 1835 with the flashlight distorting it slightly).
 1836 U1 (m): Momentazo
 1837 U2 (f): qué chula la foto, tiene así como aura, no? :-p
 1841 U1 (m): **claro que tiene aura, si estábamos con diosssssssss**
 1845
 1846 (Translation):
 1847 U1 (m): Great moment
 1850 U2 (f): what a cool pic, it's got a kind of aura, hasn't it? :-p
 1851 U1 (m): **of course it's got aura, we were next to godddddd**

1856 In summary, targets of jocular mockery can respond to it by using the same
 1857 strategies as in face-to-face communication: ignoring, rejecting or accepting it.
 1858 Rejecting mockery, however, may be perceived by the rest of the users as a
 1859 disruption of group rapport, which might explain why it is not present in either
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dataset and why accepting it becomes the most frequent option. To show their acceptance, users may opt for strategies borrowed from face-to-face exchanges such as laughter, agreement, repetition (with frequent exaggeration) or a combination of responses. However, other strategies are afforded by Facebook itself, such as providing users with the very convenient ‘Like’ option, which allows them to express their acceptance and appreciation without the need for further elaboration.

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5 Conclusions

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This paper has compared jocular mockery in two Facebook communities (a British and a (Peninsular) Spanish group). More specifically, I intended to answer the three following questions: (i) What triggers jocular mockery in the Spanish and the British corpora?, (ii) How is jocular mockery “framed” by the participants? And (iii) How do interlocutors respond to it?

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With regard to the first question – i.e., what triggers jocular mockery in each dataset? – it can be concluded that contrary to initial expectations jocular mockery is used in both datasets with practically the same frequency (22.6% in the British set versus 19% in the Spanish one). Initiating moves that trigger jocular mockery include both *updates* and *thoughts*. *Updates* may in turn include information about new locations, new possessions, personal achievements, event attendance, change of profile/cover photograph and misfortunes. The data reveal that new locations, new possessions and personal achievements can trigger jocular mockery when (mis)interpreted as bragging by the other interlocutors, especially if presented without taking into consideration the maxim of Modesty (Leech 1983). The analysis also displays three interesting differences: first, new possessions are usually presented as objects by the British users whilst Spaniards also depict themselves next to their new possessions. Secondly, personal achievements were practically absent from the Spanish dataset (only one example was found) as opposed to its British counterpart (with four cases). Finally, event attendance as a trigger of jocular mockery is only present in the Spanish examples. Scarcity of the data makes it impossible to determine whether this may be showing deeper cultural differences or it is merely due to the limitation of the sample. Future research is intended to zero in on these contrasts. Apart from *updates*, the analysis shows that jocular mockery can also be triggered by *thoughts*; most likely prompted by Facebook’s question ‘What’s on your mind?’. *Thoughts*, however, are scant in the Spanish set as opposed to the British one, where deep reflections are met with jocular

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mockery, according to the ethos of “not taking oneself too seriously” (cf. Goddard 2009).

As for the second research question – i.e., ‘how is jocular mockery framed?’ – results show that the difference in the communication channel plays an important role, with non-verbal cues like laughter or intonation being replaced by typographic means (Crystal 2001; Yus 2011). However, other strategies present in face-to-face exchanges – e.g., topic-shifting, lexical exaggeration or formulaicity – are displayed in both datasets, which points to Facebook’s hybrid language¹⁷ (Crystal 2001). As for the differences found between both datasets, a more quantitative analysis on a larger corpus would be needed. At this stage, results are not conclusive and no qualitative differences could be found, which opens up a new avenue for further research.

Finally, and in response to the third research question – ‘How do interlocutors respond to jocular mockery?’ – the data also run contrary to the initial expectations. Thus, rather than ignoring or rejecting it, users in both datasets prefer accepting jocular mockery, even if they are privately offended by it. Given that jocular mockery “appears to be behavior designed to strengthen and confirm (amongst other things) the social bonds of friendship” (Haugh and Bousfield 2012: 1112), rejecting it may be regarded as a disruption of social rapport, which is the *raison d’être* of social networking sites like Facebook. In fact, explicitly rejecting jocular mockery online may be just as impactful as doing so in a face-to-face encounter (Wood and Smith 2005: 20). As for the sub-strategies users adopt to accept jocular mockery, they ‘borrow’ those from face-to-face exchanges, i.e., laughter, agreement, repetition (with frequent exaggeration) or a combination of responses. However, other strategies are afforded by Facebook itself, such as providing users with the very convenient ‘Like’ option (Santamaría García 2014).

To finish, it must be admitted that the limitation in size of both datasets renders these results merely preliminary and in need of further research based on a larger corpus. However, preliminary results may also shed light on what future research might confirm. The study of jocular mockery in computer-mediated communication may thus appear as untrodden territory, opening up new avenues for further research such as the role played by variables like gender, age or the form of computer-mediated communication chosen by users (Twitter, blogs, YouTube, etc.).

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¹⁷ Crystal (2001) describes language in most computer-mediated communication as ‘hybrid’, that is, a mixture between written and oral language. Yus (2011) refers to this feature as the ‘oralization’ of computer-mediated discourse.

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