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YULIIA SAVINA

*PhD in Philology, Associate Professor,
Translation Department,
Dnipro University of Technology*

MULTIMODALITY OF INCONGRUITY AS COGNITIVE MECHANISM OF CREATING HUMOUR: CASE STUDY OF POLITICAL STAND-UP COMEDY

Проблема гумору складна і виходить за межі естетики. Сміх є продуктом взаємодії між окремими людьми, соціальними групами, культурами та епохами, має широке значення, що привертає увагу представників різних наукових галузей. Під час розгляду гумору, важливо враховувати модальність, яка відображає ставлення мовця до висловлюваного та суб'єктивне вираження цього ставлення. Незалежно від жанру чи стилю, гумор пропонує адресату естетичне зображення світу, створене автором для передачі свого комунікативного наміру та бачення. Основним механізмом створення гумору є інконгруентність, яка характеризується як невідповідність встановленим нормам, що породжує комічний ефект. Ця невідповідність присутня в усіх формах гумору, чи то усна, письмова чи мультимодальна, наприклад, стендап-комедія. Представники жанру стендап-комедії використовують різні способи вираження, зокрема, розмовні слова, мову тіла, міміку, жести та паузи, сприяючи сприйняттю комічного. Тому аналіз стендап-комедії вимагає врахування мультимодальності інконгруентності на різних рівнях вираження.

Мета статті – дослідити мультимодальність інконгруентності як когнітивний механізм створення гумору в стендап-комедії та охарактеризувати специфіку інконгруентності у творах цього жанру з урахуванням його особливостей щодо форм вираження гумору. Досягнення мети дослідження передбачає виконання таких завдань: 1) подати визначення модальності як способу вираження свого ставлення до навколишнього світу; 2) показати специфіку стендап-комедії як мультимодального жанру; 3) представити ідею мультимодальності інконгруентності як когнітивного механізму створення гумору на прикладі жанру стендап-комедії.

Матеріалом дослідження слугують стендап-монологи Джорджа Карліна (2010, 2011), Енді Хейнса (2023) та Джо Кілгаллона (2019) на політичну тематику. У представлених стендап-монологів виділено загалом 100 випадків інконгруентності, 52% з яких – валоративна, 36% – логіко-поняттєва та 12% – онтологічна.

Когнітивна природа комічного в політичній стендап-комедії розглядається як комплексне явище. *Методи* аналізу мультимодальних засобів створення комічного в політичній стендап-комедії визначаються складним поліпарадигмальним підходом, який органічно поєднує методи та процедури аналізу чотирьох наукових парадигм – дискурсивної, лінгвокогнітивної, лінгвопоетичної та аналізу невербальної комунікації.

Результати дослідження демонструють, що інконгруентність, когнітивний механізм створення гумору, є мультимодальним явищем у жанрі стендап-комедії. Мультимодальність передбачає оцінку мовцем змісту висловлювання та відношення суб'єкта до дії, коли в одному контексті співіснують численні семіотичні модуси, які формують сутність висловлювання і виражають ставлення мовця до висловлюваного. Стендап-комедія, яка характеризується тим, що один виконавець безпосередньо спілкується з аудиторією, потребує як вербальної, так і невербальної комунікації, що за своєю суттю робить її мультимодальною. Інконгруентність, ключовий механізм створення гумору, ґрунтується на контрасті та відхиленні від норм та поділяється на онтологічну, логіко-поняттєву і валоративну. Стендап-комедія використовує всі перелічені типи інконгруентності. Найбільш використовуваною є валоративна інконгруентність (52%), яка підкреслює суперечності в політичній реальності та встановлених соціальних нормах. Для створення цього типу інконгруентності коміки використо-

вують різні лінгвістичні засоби, такі як узагальнення, риторичні запитання, метафори, повтори та паралелізм, а також екстралінгвістичні засоби, такі як модуляція голосу та міміка. Логіко-поняттєва інконгруентність (36%) підкреслює нелогічність політики та міркувань виборців, часто використовуючи риторичні запитання та цитати, а також певний тон голосу та вираз обличчя. Онтологічна інконгруентність (12%) передбачає порушення правил буття та введення уявних елементів, що служать для висвітлення абсурдності політики. У політичній стендап-комедії онтологічна інконгруентність використовується рідше, її застосовують для висвітлення абсурдів, таких як ритуал присяги на Біблії в офіційній обстановці. Створюючи онтологічну інконгруентність, коміки використовують, зокрема, інтертекстуальність і певний невербальний стиль подачі. Таким чином, висміюючи суспільні норми, викриваючи політичну ірраціональність і створюючи гумор, політична стендап-комедія використовує різні типи інконгруентності. Як лінгвістичні, так і екстралінгвістичні елементи є важливими засобами створення інконгруентності, що робить політичну стендап-комедію мультимодальним явищем.

Ключові слова: політична стендап-комедія, гумор, модальність, мультимодальність, мультимодальність інконгруентності, лінгвістичні та екстралінгвістичні засоби створення інконгруентності.

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Humour is undeniably one of the most challenging issues in the context of general humanitarian problems [Баскай, 2016; Лобова, 2013; Dziemidok, 2012; Mintz, 1985; Sjöbohm, 2008; Turano, Strapparava, 2022]. Laughter arises and persists at the point of intersection between individuals and social groups, cultures and epochs, both at the centre and the margins of society [Лобова, 2013, p. 3]. The importance of humour extends beyond the realm of aesthetic research and has garnered the interest of professionals in various fields, including theorists and historians of certain art forms, sociologists, psychologists, as well as anthropologists, ethnographers, and educational theorists [Dziemidok, 2012, p. 5].

The contemporary linguistics understand the modality as not only relation of the utterance to the reality [Бондар, 1999; Гончарук, Дикан, 2022; Ковалів, 2007; Скибицька, 2000; Чолкан, 1996; Bybee, Perkins, Pagliuca, 1994] but also more generally as a means of forming its meaning [Ковальова, Яворська, 2022; Охріменко, 2000; Перішко, Велика, Птуха, 2023; Сікорська, 2006; Шабат, 2000; Calbert, 1975, Kirvalidze, 2006], including the humorous one. Thus, when discussing humour, it is appropriate to consider modality as a means of expressing the speaker's attitude, or more broadly, as "subjective" expressions [Narrog, 2005, p. 169]. Communication is inherently connected with conveying the subjective attitudes of those involved towards the subject being depicted. Regardless of its genre or style, humorous texts present a unique and aesthetically pleasing depiction of the world, precisely fashioned by the author in response to their communicative purpose and subjective viewpoint. As humour is a product of creative imagination, it is crucial to remain objective and grounded in reality, as one's imagination derives from the objective realm. The humorous text thus serves as a representation of a referential aspect of extralinguistic reality, carefully structured in alignment with the author's subjective perspective, i.e., their worldview [Kirvalidze, 2006, p. 138].

The humorous effect is created through incongruity [Баскай, 2016; Самохіна, 2015; Nikonova, Boiko, Savina, 2019], which refers to any deviation from the norm. It elicits a comic response by causing the interpreter to react to an unexpected inconsistency with established norms of the communicative situation, including the reference situation reflected by the utterance [Содель, 2019, p. 96].

Incongruity can be found in all types of humorous written or spoken texts, including the multimodal stand-up comedy genre. Multimodality is a relatively newly explored phenomenon connected with the interaction of verbal and non-verbal means of communication in different texts [Коваленко, 2022; Макарук, 2014, 2021; Baldry, Thibault, 2006; Bateman, Schmidt, 2014; Unsworth, Clérigh, 2009], including humorous ones [Батура, Свірідова, 2022]. Multimodality of stand-up comedy means that multiple forms of expression are employed to achieve comic effect. This form of comedy uses various modes of expression, encompassing spoken language, body

language, facial expressions, gestures and timing. Comedians utilise various modes to deliver their jokes and engage with the audience, enhancing the humorous experience. Therefore, when discussing stand-up comedy, one must also mention the multimodality of incongruity, which can be observed at different levels of expression.

The objective of this research is to describe multimodality of incongruity as a cognitive mechanism of creating humour in stand-up comedy and to characterise the specifics of incongruity in the works of this genre taking into account its specifics in terms of forms of expressing humour.

According to the aim, the following research *tasks* have been set: 1) to provide the definition of modality as the way of expressing one's attitudes towards the surrounding world; 2) to present the specifics of stand-up comedy as a multimodal genre; 3) to present the idea of multimodality of incongruity as a cognitive mechanism of creating humour based on the example of the stand-up comedy genre.

The database of the presented research is the stand-up monologues by George Carlin (2010, 2011), Andy Haynes (2023) and Joe Kilgallon (2019) on political issues. In the presented stand-up monologues, total 100 cases of incongruity are distinguished, 52% of which are valorative, 36% – logical and notional, and 12% – ontological one (see Table 1).

Table 1

Typology of incongruity in political stand-up comedy

Type of incongruity	Number of examples	Share
Ontological	12	12%
Logical and notional	36	36%
Valorative	52	52%
Total	100	100%

The cognitive nature of the comic in political stand-up comedy is analysed as a complex phenomenon. The methods of analysis of the multimodal means of creating the comic in political stand-up comedy are determined by a complex polyparadigmatic approach that organically incorporates the *methods* and procedures of analysis of four scientific paradigms – discursive, linguocognitive, linguopoetic as well as non-verbal communication analysis. The application of the methods of discursive and linguocognitive analysis of the multimodal means of creating the comic in political stand-up comedy suggests an analysis of the type of incongruity as cognitive grounds of the comic. At the second stage, the verbal representation of the comic was analysed. The interpretative and textual analysis of the examples of political stand-up comedy helped to distinguish the verbal embodiment of the comic in these texts which makes the reader laugh or smile, that is, creates a comic effect. Non-verbal communication analysis refers to the means of exchanging information and meaning through non-verbal cues such as body language, facial expressions, gestures, posture, eye contact, and other non-verbal signals. Analysing non-verbal communication is important in understanding the multimodality of incongruity as it is created in the language and is supported by extralingual means which can serve as a hint for the audience.

In modern linguistics, the concept of modality can be traced back to K. Brugmann who defined imperative and subjunctive grammatical moods as a statement about a mental mood of the speaker, a subjective state with respect to which the verbalized event constitutes the determining objective side element to which the state is related [Narrog, 2005, p. 169]. Later, O. Jespersen, influenced by K. Brugmann, discusses moods as syntactic categories that convey the speaker's specific mental attitudes regarding the sentence content [Jespersen, 1992, p. 313].

J. Lyons characterised modality as the grammatical representation of the speaker's attitude [Lyons, 1968, p. 308], or more explicitly, the speaker's opinion or attitude concerning the statement the sentence conveys or the situation the statement describes [Lyons, 1977, p. 452]. Numerous subsequent studies on modality provided its definitions in line with J. Lyons, e.g., understanding modality as the speaker's attitude [Calbert, 1975, p. 51], or the grammaticalization of the speaker's subjective attitudes or opinions [Bybee, Perkins, Pagliuca, 1994, p. 176].

Modern researches demonstrate that modality, a structure connecting the subject and the speaker's attitude, exists in subjective-objective relations. It serves as a linguistic tool for assessing relationships within objective reality, influencing how each speaker expresses their assessment performing a speech act [Перішко, Велика, Птуха, 2023, p. 265]. Hence, modality is viewed as a functional and semantic category [Ковалів, 2007, p. 63] contributing to the realization of intention and filling the utterance with subjective meanings in the context of communication [Гончарук, Дикан, 2022, p. 31]. Modal meanings also extend beyond the range of "objectivity-subjectivity" to include the grammaticalized concept of reality / unreality shaping communication and aligning with the speaker's intention [Шабат, 2000, p. 5], emphasising a direct connection to the pragmatic aspect of the utterance. These communicative and intentional meanings overlay actual semantic content modifying it to anchor the utterance in the reference situation and integrate it into the text [Чолкан, 1996, p. 154].

The Swiss linguist S. Bally considered modality to be the soul of the sentence, therefore, so he considered various shades of judgment, feeling and will as the number of modal meanings. Based on his concept, the communicative form of expression is seen as the main component of modal meaning [Bally, 1944]. Thus, every statement, every relation of the speaker to reality expressed by means of language always has some modal status, i.e., "non-modal statements do not exist at all and cannot exist in principle" [Бондар, 1999, p. 16]. Therefore, modality could be considered as a category that conveys the relation of the content of the statement (or action) to reality [Скибицька, 2000, p. 195], "the speaker's assessment of the content of the utterance" [Охріменко, 2000, p. 190], as well as "the relation of the subject of the action to the action" [Сікорська, 2006, p. 20]. All three types of modality complement each other and cover the general concept of modality [Сікорська, 2006, p. 20].

Modality is seen from another angle in the case of *multimodality*; however, it cannot be considered separate from the initially considered concept of modality. Multimodality is the coexistence of more than one semiotic mode within a given context. In a more general sense, multimodality is "an everyday reality. It is the experience of life, meaning that we experience everyday life in multimodal terms through sight, sound or movement" [Коваленко, 2022, p. 48]. Even the simplest conversation includes speech, intonation, gestures, etc. In fact, there is no such thing as a monomodal text [Baldry, Thibault, 2006, p. 41].

R. Barthes anticipated the study of multimodality when he argued that a written text in a static discourse of words and images either draws attention to aspects of meaning that, although perhaps latently, are already present in the image it accompanies (that is, language anchors the image); or it represents information that complements the dimensions of meaning in the image (that is, the language conveys the image). It was R. Barthes who highlighted the peculiarities of the analysis of different modes, emphasised that on television, in the cinema, in advertising, the meaning of signs depends on the interaction of image, sound and the type of drawing [Barthes, 1997, pp. 32–51]. Since that time, clarifications and alternatives have been proposed [Bateman, Schmidt, 2014; Unsworth, Clérigh, 2009]. C. Forceville suggested that images can anchor written text as well as vice versa, and that the lines between anchoring and relaying are blurred. Furthermore, since more than two modes can interact in the formation of meaning, the concepts of anchoring and relaying deserve to be extended beyond word-image connections [Forceville, 1996, p. 73].

When considering multimodality, the focus is on meaning. Virtually everything affects it: from the selection of lexical units, their graphic representation to the involvement of appropriate illustrations and their location, taking into account additional characteristics that play an important role in written speech. These are spaces, intervals, additional decorative elements, etc. Multimodality allows to focus on the entire spectrum of semantically significant resources that are used during communication, and their choice depends on the selected channel, specific communication situation and technical capabilities [Макарук, 2021, p. 318]. Verbal and non-verbal means have different spheres of expression but the same sphere of meaning. Therefore, they are characterized by paradigmatic relationships [Макарук, 2014, p. 77]. A clear inventory of all means also seems unrealistic, since information technologies create inexhaustible communicative possibilities. Therefore, inventorying the entire spectrum of the means of multimodality is hardly possible, because the creative potential of individuals is limitless [Макарук, 2021, pp. 318–319].

Hence, taking into account the fact that humorous communication is most often intended and has certain aims, even from these ideas it can be suggested that multimodality is not only presenting information via different channels of communication but also such organisation of communication that is able to properly represent the author's attitude towards the object of communication as well as translation of this attitude to the audience. Such suggestion is supported by the fact that the reflection of humour in the consciousness of each speaker covers not only linguistic units, but is embodied to a greater extent in a combination of verbal and non-verbal components. Moreover, "the creation of any communicative meanings remains incomplete without taking into account this interaction" [Коваленко, 2022, p. 50]. Humour mainly refers to the emotional response generated by the audience when interacting with verbal, visual and other signs.

All the modes affect the meaning, forming its essence. This also applies to semiotic resources (visual, linguistic, written, etc.), the use of which is limited by the possibility of individual communication channels and the thematic orientation of each specific information block. The meaning of certain units (verbal or non-verbal ones) can be understood only from the context. Therefore, these units are not universal, but mostly contextually dependent, as they are in different distributions and contexts and have different communicative and pragmatic potential and certain stylistic features [Макарук, 2014, p. 77], so speaking about the multimodality of humour, it is worth to determine the context in which it is created.

In this research, multimodality is studied based on incongruity in *stand-up comedy*. Stand-up comedy originates from an ancient concept that gave rise to a relatively contemporary form of art, first emerging in the United States and subsequently disseminating to various other regions [Sjöbohm, 2008, p. 4]. A strict, limiting definition of standup comedy would describe "an encounter between a single, standing performer behaving comically and/or saying funny things directly to an audience, unsupported by very much in the way of costume, prop, setting, or dramatic vehicle" [Mintz, 1985, p. 2].

Every artistic text, including one belonging to the stand-up comedy genre, proposes a distinct and aesthetic representation of the world shaped by the author in response to one's communicative purpose and personal worldview. Since humour originates from the author's imagination, it is inherently based on objective reality as it serves as the sole source for one's creativity. Thus, the humorous text serves as a portrayal of a referential fragment of extralinguistic reality, artfully organised to align with the author's unique vision of the world [Kirvalidze, 2006, p. 138]. Stand-up comedians frequently craft narratives rooted in, or influenced by, their genuine life encounters, occasionally delving into subjects far from comedic (as encapsulated in the famous phrase, "Comedy equals tragedy plus time"). They seamlessly integrate humorous anecdotes into their routines, which are intricately interconnected as part of a larger performance linked both to one another and to the storyline they unfold [Turano, Strapparava, 2022, p. 5206].

The cognitive mechanism of creating the comic in humorous text is *incongruity*. Incongruity (contrast, deviation from the norm) is a key concept in the theory of cognitive dissonance which arises in the mind of one person as a result of psychological dissatisfaction and reaction to a certain situation, the action of other persons – individuals or the whole society [Савіна, 2021, p. 114]. Incongruity is studied in the theory of structural balance [Heider, 1956] and the congruity theory [Osgood, Tannenbaum, 1955].

The creation of the comic in the text is based on various types of incongruity (nonsense, contrast, deviation, adjacent use of opposite or inappropriate meanings and assessments, etc.) and has four main meanings and is considered as: 1) something unexpected (surprise); 2) certain contrast between concepts or ideas that are not usually considered together (comparison); 3) something different from what usually happens (something atypical); 4) something that deviates from the sphere of beliefs about how things should be (violations) [Nikonova, Boiko, Savina, 2019, p. 91].

In humorous texts of stand-up comedy, the comic effect is achieved by using special linguistic and non-linguistic means. Linguistic means include all linguostylistic means: phonetic, lexical, and stylistic ones, which express the comic. In addition to linguistic means and techniques for creating comic effects, there are also non-linguistic ones. Most often, they are used as a means of enhancing the comic and increasing expressiveness of the language. Such devices are pauses

during the conversation, laughter, unusual sounds and various linguistic features of the speaker. Paralinguistic means provide additional information not only about what the speaker is saying reflecting his social, age and character traits, but also about what information they wanted to convey to the listener. Their function is to introduce additional information into the speech flow [Батура, Свірідова, 2022, pp. 558–560].

Valorative incongruity (52%), which is one of the basic types of incongruity in political stand-up comedy, is created as inconsistency of the described reality with the well-established norms of society. Its wide representation in the genre of political stand-up comedy is connected with the fact that politics is about society's well-being, so the drawbacks of politics directly affect society.

For example, in his monologue about people complaining about politicians (2011), George Carlin says the following: *Now, there's one thing you might have noticed I don't complain about: politicians. **Everybody complains about politicians. Everybody says they suck. Well, where do people think these politicians come from? They don't fall out of the sky. They don't pass through a membrane from another reality. They come from American parents and American families, American homes, American schools, American churches, American businesses and American universities, and they are elected by American citizens. This is the best we can do folks. This is what we have to offer. It's what our system produces: Garbage in, garbage out*** [Carlin, 2011]. Violation of the valorative norms in the presented extract is twofold: first, the comic dwells upon the problems of American politics that are raised by the problems of the society, and, second, he tells the audience that they are the same as others who can produce only bad politicians.

The language means creating incongruity are presented by generalisation (**Everybody complains about politicians. Everybody says they suck**), rhetorical question (*Well, where do people think these politicians come from?*), metaphors (*They don't **fall out of the sky. They don't pass through a membrane from another reality***), repetitions (*They come from **American** parents and **American** families, **American** homes, **American** schools, **American** churches, **American** businesses and **American** universities, and they are elected by **American** citizens*) as well as parallelism (*Garbage in, garbage out*).

The multimodality of incongruity is created by supporting the language means by extralingual ones. In order to highlight the created incongruity, the above-mentioned generalization is expressed using a specific voice tone imitating tiredness of perceiving one and the same boring information, and metaphor is accompanied by using the facial expression as if the speaker really speaks about something miraculous in order to stress that situation is ordinary and people just do not understand the rules of the society. The comic uses the voice speaking first slowly and softly as presenting the well-known fact. Further, the part *They come from American [...] and they are elected by American citizens* is presented quickly as it is the enumeration of American spheres of life that are, according to the author, already corrupted, and the speaker sounds irritated as he really is, trying to explain that the corrupted politics really come from the corrupted society. In this part of the speech, the comic also illustrates enumeration by quickly bending the fingers of the hand which makes the idea presented more obvious. At the part *[...] and they are elected by American citizens* the speaker raises the eyebrows and looks at the audience which is, literally, American citizens. Then he uses a long pause before the conclusion. The last part of the extract (*This is the best we can do folks. This is what we have to offer. It's what our system produces: Garbage in, garbage out*) is spoken directly towards the audience which means that they are the part of this corrupted world, and so they all are equally bad. The phrase *Garbage in, garbage out* is divided into two intonational parts in order to stress the parallelism of its parts and is said with obvious disgust on the face (see Figure 1).

In the passage continuing the previous example, George Carlin says the following also creating valorative incongruity: *Term limits ain't going to do any good; you're just going to end up with a brand-new bunch of selfish, ignorant Americans. So, maybe, maybe, maybe, **it's not the politicians who suck. Maybe something else sucks around here... like, the public. Yeah, the public sucks. There's a nice campaign slogan for somebody: "The Public Sucks"*** [Carlin, 2011]. Here, he dwells upon the idea that if the politicians are so bad, the society that elects them is no better which creates a violation of the valorative norms again, as traditionally such ideas are not expressed directly in public.



Figure 1. George Carlin with facial expression of disgust [Carlin, 2011]

The linguistic means of creating logical and notional incongruity in this example are similar as in the previous one: repetitions (*maybe, maybe, maybe*), parallelism (*So, maybe, maybe, maybe, **it's not the politicians who suck. Maybe something else sucks** around here... like, the public*), and irony (*There's **a nice campaign slogan** for somebody: "The Public Sucks"*).

The extralingual means supporting creating incongruity are, first of all, in imitating thinking on the problem right now in order to make the audience think together with the speaker. At the phrase *So, maybe, maybe, maybe, it's not the politicians who suck*, the speaker looks and points the finger at the audience (see Figure 2) with a look as if they have the same secret knowledge, so he pretends to reveal a secret everyone already knows. The game is strengthened by the intonation as in the repetition *maybe, maybe, maybe* each word is spoken louder and more confidently. Further, incongruity is achieved using certain mimics with squinting of the eyes and looking somewhere in the audience without a certain point, and then pointing with a finger to all the audience uttering the words *Yeah, the public sucks. There's a nice campaign slogan for somebody: "The Public Sucks"*. Here, the speaker directly addresses the audience not separating them from "the public" he is speaking about. The phrase *There's a nice campaign slogan for somebody* is spoken with mocking intonation, and then, after a pause, at the part *"The Public Sucks"*, the speaker sounds like the typical ignorant person complaining the politics and doing nothing.



Figure 2. George Carlin pointing with finger at the audience [Carlin, 2011]

The previous thoughts are supported by the following: *Because if it's really just the fault of these politicians then **where are all the other bright people of conscience? Where are all the bright honest intelligent Americans ready to step in and save nation and lead the way?** We don't have people like that!* [Carlin, 2011] Here, George Carlin created valorative incongruity based on mocking people who pretend to be perfect citizens (like *bright people of conscience, the bright honest intelligent Americans ready to step in and save nation and lead the way*) who go to politics and become literally the same as others thus revealing their real hypocrisy.

In the language level, valorative incongruity is created using, first of all, rhetorical questions (*Because if it's really just the fault of these politicians then **where are all the other bright people of conscience? Where are all the bright honest intelligent Americans ready to step in and save nation and lead the way?***) and epithets (*bright people of conscience, bright honest intelligent Americans*) as well as irony throughout the utterance.

The ironical tone of the utterance is supported by the mocking tone of voice illustrating that the speaker does not believe in the existence of such people who are really ready to go to politics and save their country. The audience observes the intonational contrast between a part *Because if it's really just the fault of these politicians* uttered in doomy voice and the part *then where are all the other bright people of conscience* uttered, in contrast, hopefully as is the speaker believes that there are lots of such people just waiting when their time will come. To illustrate contrast, he also uses body language turning different sides for different intonational parts of the utterance, and using hands to support the questioning intonation. Then he works with space at the words *ready to step in and save nation and lead the way* imitating stepping forwards and then stops and, after pause, angrily says *We don't have people like that!* creating the contrast between people's words and actions being mocked in his monologue.

George Carlin's monologues dealing with societal issues are supported by his typical scenic characteristics. In particular, the scene itself is dark and decorated in a militaristic way, the typical colours are black and dark brown, and even his clothes are black. The comic uses the image of an old man complaining about everything and using rude language which makes its humour specific for certain audience having less prejudice and social stereotypes. All these characteristics also help to create humour based on the image of the speaker.

Another stand-up comic, Andy Haynes (2023) mocks the social and political stereotypes of the traditional societies like, for example, gender stereotypes about men and women also creating valorative incongruity: *I identify as male. **But I'm like... you know... like I asked for help. I'm that kind of guy. All my friends that are men never ask for help. They could be drowning and you'd be like "Do you need help?", and they'd be like "I'm not gay"*** [Haynes, 2023]. In this monologue, the speaker mocks the idea that men in traditional societies refuse to get help in order to avoid looking weak calling weakness the quality of a gay people.

The exaggeration is achieved, first of all, by describing imaginary hyperbolised situation (*They could be drowning and you'd be like "Do you need help?", and they'd be like "I'm not gay"*) as well as by the repetition of the word *help* throughout this fragment.

Multimodality of the utterance is created by the speaker using extralingual means. In particular, saying *But I'm like... you know... like I asked for help*, the speaker uses long pauses imitating a lack of confidence, and mimics of the person disappointed in oneself to characterise oneself as a non-masculine man as it is expected by society. The phrase *I'm not gay* is highlighted by imitating the hysterical crying and gesticulating like a stereotypical over-masculine man (see Figure 3), as that is how, according to the speaker, such people look like.

Valorative incongruity is also created in the following fragment: *I'm a liberal obviously. I don't like it. **It's not fun to be liberal. If you're liberal you know we're not having as much fun because we have to care about everything*** [Haynes, 2023]. Here, violation of valorative norms is in exaggeration of the situation when the members of conservative societies are not concerned with the issues liberals care about. In this fragment, the speaker does not concretise the issue just exaggerating that liberals care "about everything" meaning that conservatives do not.



Figure 3. Andy Haynes imitating the hysterical crying [Haynes, 2023]

At the language level, only repetitions (*I'm a **liberal** obviously. [...] It's not fun to be **liberal**. If you're **liberal** [...]*) and generalisation (*we have to care about **everything***). The idea is supported more at the discourse level by creating the opposition between liberals and conservatives as two different cultural groups.

The extralingual modus is provided by sad facial expression speaking about the lack of fun in being liberal. Introducing this idea, at the words *I'm a liberal obviously*, the speaker sadly looks down (see Figure 4) and uses numerous pauses, then, at the phrase *I don't like it*, he looks at the audience with exaggerated sadness like little children do, and, finally, looking directly at the audience when addressing them after long pause in *because **we** have to care about everything*, here changing the intonation into irritated and even insulted, thus creating emotional ties with them and also persuading at the rightness of this political position.



Figure 4. Andy Haynes playing the state of being upset [Haynes, 2023]

The monologue continues as follows further explaining why being conservative is not for the “good” people: *The conservatives don’t have to do that. They’re like, “Wow, **what a beautiful 75-degree Martin Luther King Day**. I was not going to celebrate but now I am”* [Haynes, 2023]. Valorative incongruity here is created in the contrast of the time of the year (*Martin Luther King Day* which is in January, winter) and the temperature (*75-degree Fahrenheit* which is 23 degrees Celsius) why calling it *beautiful* means that personal comfort for conservatives is more important than the problem of climate change.

Thus, on the language level valorative incongruity is created using realia (*75-degree, Martin Luther King Day*), epithet (*what a **beautiful 75-degree Martin Luther King Day***) together with oxymoron (*what a beautiful **75-degree Martin Luther King Day***).

Extralingual means used in this part of the monologue represent the absurdity of the situation described: the speaker uses an impassive facial expression and intonation at the phrase *Wow, what a beautiful 75-degree Martin Luther King Day*, and then even smiling and happy tone in *I was not going to celebrate but now I am* in order to illustrate the conservatives not even noticing the problem but perceiving the situation as normal one.

Speaking about Andy Haynes’ standups, he, in contrast to George Carlin, uses positive scene decorations in brown colours with pictures of blue clouds. His clothes are typical for the modern young man including breeches and hoodie in light brown colour. His facial expression is also non-aggressive, more typical for the people who just they treat the phenomena leniently like today’s young people; he also avoids aggressive body behaviour. As a result, the positive picture is contrasted with the negative phenomena he mocks in his monologues.

Logical and notional incongruity (36%) is a violation of the established norms of how the real word operates. It means that logical and notional incongruity is based on the wrong interpretation of the word order by the characters of the joke. In political stand-up comedy, it is used in order to characterise the illogical nature of politics and the politicians’ voters.

For example, logical and notional incongruity is presented in the monologue by Joe Kilgallon (2019): *I heard this from one woman during the last elections. I couldn’t remember what she was talking about but she’s like Mitch McConnell. So, “I’m going for Mitch McConnell because he’s **pro-family**. And I like my candidates to be **pro-family**”. Which leads me to ask this question: “**Who the hell is running on the anti-family platform?**”* [Kilgallon, 2019]. In the presented example, the speaker mocks the voter for not understanding that she values something that is expressed by literally any of the politicians, so her decision based on such a criterion is simply stupid.

The language means of creating logical and notional incongruity are fewer: citation (*“I’m going for Mitch McConnell because he’s **pro-family**. And I like my candidates to be **pro-family**”*) and rhetorical question (*Who the hell is running on the anti-family platform?*) because violation of common sense is mostly expressed at the discourse level by describing the absurd situation.

The absurdity of the described situation is also expressed by extralinguistic means. In particular, at the beginning of the utterance, the speaker smiles as if he is going to tell another funny story (see Figure 5). He stops smiling at the words *pro-family* both times and starts speaking in a mocking tone, and further goes to nearly screaming at the words *Who the hell is running on the anti-family platform?* which helps him to illustrate his surprise created by the woman’s silly reasoning.

Another example of logical and notional incongruity is the part of the monologue by Joe Kilgallon (2019) dealing with the voters’ concern about the USA’s debt: *What about do people talk right now? It is the economy, the debt. I got the debt is a big issue. I don’t care about it, I don’t think it matters but I think it is hysterical that everyone’s like, “**Oh my God, the debt is at 17 trillion dollars!**” Oh, just scare if you want, **to hit a trillion scare you? Why is 17 trillion is a magic number for all of a sudden?*** [Kilgallon, 2019]. In the presented example, the speaker mocks the voters’ logic that the bigger the number is, the more they are concerned not taking into account the fact that a sum of a trillion dollars is the sum no ordinary person can really imagine. So, for ordinary people, the sum of the debt is only numbers, and such voter cannot really understand the situation but tries to look smarter when speaking about it.



Figure 5. Joe Kilgallon starting his monologue [Kilgallon, 2019]

Like in the previous example, not many language means are used in the process of creating logical and notional incongruity, in particular, they include only metaphoric epithet (*17 trillion is a magic number*) and repetition (*"Oh my God, the debt is at 17 trillion dollars!" [...] Why is 17 trillion is a magic number for all of a sudden*), the very idea of the joke is expressed at the discourse level.

Non-verbally, the speaker supports the joke by imitating the mimics of the terrified person and the changes of the voice: mocking one citing the voter (*Oh my God, the debt is at 17 trillion dollars!*) (see Figure 6), then pause for the audience to understand it, and then the phrase *Oh, just scare if you want [...]*, and the ironical one asking the voter about the reason of one's concern (*[...] to hit a trillion scare you? Why is 17 trillion is a magic number for all of a sudden?*) which expresses his attitude towards the described situation.



Figure 6. Joe Kilgallon imitating the mimics of the terrified person [Kilgallon, 2019]

The scene in Joe Kilgallon's stand-ups is darkened, so the audience sees no decorations concentrating the attention on the comic's person. Joe Kilgallon looks like "the guy next door", he

uses casual clothes and speaks without pretending just as one would speak with one's friend, and this makes his monologues closer to the audience.

The least used in political stand-up comedy is ontological incongruity (12%), which is a violation of the rules of being and is often based on the introduction of imaginary creatures in the text. Since politics does not presuppose the situations of the spiritual world where some imaginary creatures exist, ontological incongruity is not often used in political stand-up comedy.

However, it can be used, for example, when describing manipulating religion for political purposes as in the following fragment from George Carlin's monologue (2010): *Swearing on the Bible, you understand that [...] They tell you to raise your right hand and put your left hand on the Bible. Does this stuff really matter, which hand? [...] Suppose you put your right hand on the Bible and you raise your left hand. Would that count? Or would God say, "Sorry, wrong hand, try again"?* [Carlin, 2010]. In this fragment, ontological incongruity is based upon the fact that swearing on the Bible for the elected president or in the court is considered by society as the prove that the person is honest. At the same time, this process was transformed into a strictly regulated procedure as if God requires to follow it; and that is what George Carlin mocks in this fragment.

The basic language means of creating ontological incongruity in the presented text fragment is intertextuality as the phrase *Sorry, wrong hand, try again* is a parody of the phrase the user gets when, for example, one enters an incorrect password using the computer or the ATM.

The extralingual support of the ontological incongruity is the face of the speaker demonstrating a sincere interest in the issue. He tries to look curious, like the discoverer of the matters not discovered yet making the idea sound like absurd, in order to make the people think about how the procedure of swearing in the Bible really influences the swearer's behaviour.

The research *conducted* postulates that incongruity as a cognitive mechanism of comic creation is multimodal in the genre of stand-up comedy. Multimodality is considered within the general idea of modality, which can be understood as the speaker's assessment of the content of the utterance as well as the relationship of the subject of the action to the action; and multimodality is thus the coexistence of more than one semiotic mode within a given context, where all modes affect the meaning, form its essence, and thus all modes are used to express the speaker's attitude towards the content of the utterance. Since stand-up comedy is seen as an encounter between a single, standing performer who acts comically and/or says funny things directly to an audience, without much in the way of costume, props, set or dramatic vehicle, it is important for stand-up comedians to use both verbal and non-verbal means of communication, making this genre, by definition, multimodal.

Incongruity as a cognitive mechanism of comic creation is based on contrast, deviation from the norm; and according to the norms violated, it is classified into ontological, logical and notional, and valorative. All of these types of incongruity can be found in political stand-up comedy. Valorative incongruity is the most common (52%). This type of incongruity involves the inconsistency of the political reality described with established social norms. It is often used in political stand-up comedy because politics affects the well-being of society. Comedians use various linguistic techniques such as generalisation, rhetorical questioning, metaphor, repetition and parallelism to create this type of incongruity. They also use extralinguistic means like voice modulation, facial expressions, and gestures to emphasize and illustrate the existence of incongruity. Logical and notional incongruity (36%) arises from the violation of established norms of how the real world operates or from characters in the joke misunderstanding the order of events. In political stand-up comedy, it is used to highlight the illogical nature of politics and voters' reasoning. Comedians often employ rhetorical questions and citations to create this type of incongruity. Extralinguistic means, such as tone of voice and facial expressions, are used to convey the absurdity of the situation. Ontological incongruity (12%) involves the violation of rules of existence and the introduction of imaginary creatures or situations. In political stand-up comedy, ontological incongruity is less commonly used, but it can be employed to highlight absurdities, such as the ritual of swearing on the Bible in a formal setting. Comedians use intertextuality to create this incongruity, and their facial expressions and delivery style support the humour emphasising the incongruity.

In conclusion, political stand-up comedy uses different types of incongruity to challenge social norms, highlight the illogical aspects of politics and create humour. Linguistic and extralinguistic means are both essential tools for comedians to create incongruity, making humour in the genre of political stand-up comedy a multimodal phenomenon.

The prospective direction for further research in the chosen direction is to analyse the specifics of the representation of multimodal incongruity in the translation of texts belonging to political stand-up comedy, taking into account both linguistic and extralinguistic means of creating incongruity.

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MULTIMODALITY OF INCONGRUITY AS COGNITIVE MECHANISM OF CREATING HUMOUR: CASE STUDY OF POLITICAL STAND-UP COMEDY

Yuliia O. Savina, Dnipro University of Technology (Ukraine)

e-mail: savinajulia@ukr.net

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Key words: *political stand-up comedy, humour, modality, multimodality, multimodality of incongruity, linguistic and extralinguistic means of creating incongruity.*

The problem of humour is complex and transcends aesthetic boundaries. Laughter is a product of interactions between individuals, social groups, cultures and epochs, with a far-reaching significance that attracts the attention of various scientific fields. When discussing humour, it is essential to consider the modality, which reflects the speaker's attitude and subjective expressions. Regardless of genre or style, humour offers an aesthetic representation of the world, created by the author to convey his or her communicative intent and perspective. The core mechanism of humour is incongruity, characterized by inconsistencies with established norms that produce a comic effect. This incongruity is present in all forms of humour, whether oral, written or multimodal, as in stand-up comedy. Stand-up comedy uses different modes of expression, including spoken words, body language, facial expressions, gestures and timing, to enhance the comedic experience. Therefore, when discussing stand-up comedy, it's important to consider the multimodality of incongruity at different levels of expression.

The aim of the current research is to describe the multimodality of incongruity as a cognitive mechanism of creating humour in stand-up comedy and to characterize the specifics of incongruity in works of this genre, taking into account its specifics in terms of forms of expression of humour. In order to achieve the research objective, the following research tasks will be carried out 1) to provide the definition of modality as a way of expressing one's attitude towards the surrounding world; 2) to present the specifics of stand-up comedy as a multimodal genre; 3) to present the idea of multimodality of incongruity as a cognitive mechanism of creating humour using the example of the stand-up comedy genre.

The research material of the presented research is the stand-up monologues of George Carlin (2010, 2011), Andy Haynes (2023) and Joe Kilgallon (2019) on political issues. In the presented stand-up monologues, a total of 100 cases of incongruity are distinguished, of which 52% are valorative, 36% are logical and notional, and 12% are ontological.

The cognitive nature of comic in political stand-up comedy is examined as a complex phenomenon. Analyzing the multimodal means used to create comedy in this context requires a polyparadigmatic approach that encompasses four scientific paradigms – discursive, linguocognitive, linguopoetic, and non-verbal communication analysis. Such a comprehensive *methodological approach* enables a deeper understanding of this complex and multifaceted subject matter.

The research indicates that humour creation via cognitive mechanisms like incongruity is a phenomenon spanning multiple modes within the stand-up comedy genre. Multimodality encompasses the evaluation of utterance content by the speaker, as well as the subject's relationship to the action, with multiple semiotic modes coexisting in a context that shapes the essence and conveys the speaker's attitudes. Stand-up comedy requires both verbal and non-verbal communication, making it a multimodal form of performance where a single performer engages directly with the audience. The core mechanism for creating humour in this genre is incongruity, which stems from contrast and deviation from norms, including ontological, logical, notional, and valorative incongruity. These types of incongruity are commonly used in political stand-up comedy, making it a unique and dynamic form of entertainment. Value incongruity, which is the primarily employed method (52%), exposes disparities between political realities and established social norms. Comedians utilise various linguistic techniques, including generalisation, rhetorical questions, metaphors, repetitions, and parallelism, alongside extralinguistic methods such as voice modulation and facial expressions, voice tone, pauses, different kinds of intonational contrast, body language to establish incongruity of this nature. Logical and notional incongruity (36%) highlights the irrationality of politics and voter's reasoning, using rhetorical questions, citations, and certain tone of voice and facial expressions. Ontological incongruity refers to the introduction of imaginary elements which violate the rules of existence and are used to emphasize absurdities. Although less frequent in political stand-up comedy, it can still be used to highlight absurdities, such as the ritual of swearing on the Bible in a formal setting. It is shown that the scenic characteristics (positive or negative character, colours, decor), the way of dressing are also essential, because they all contribute to the creation of humour based on the image of the speaker. Comedians utilize intertextuality and their delivery style to create and emphasize this form of incongruity. In conclusion, political stand-up comedy utilises different forms of incongruity to deride social conventions, reveal political absurdities, and generate amusement. Both linguistic and extralinguistic elements are important tools for comedians in creating incongruity, making political stand-up comedy a multimodal phenomenon.

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