

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This study explores the laughter that is shared between friends in casual conversation. In investigating laughs and the linguistic meanings surrounding them, it focuses on how friends evaluate experience in funny ways to construct their shared memberships to communities of a culture. In particular, the study demonstrates that laughter functions to rid conversational participants of tensions that occur between values in their ongoing affiliation into communities. These concerns are explored in a social semiotic perspective, and this thesis provides a comprehensive study of what will be called “convivial conversational humour” in the framework of systemic functional linguistics (SFL).

This chapter presents an introduction to the study. The chapter will begin by providing the definition of conversation that is used in this thesis and of the type of humour under analysis. It then describes the specific data that was collected and analysed in the study. The aims of the study and research questions are outlined, and the chapter concludes by presenting the scope and organisation of this thesis.

1.1 Defining the unit of study: conversation and humour

Before outlining the data and research aims of this thesis, it is important to clarify the type of language that is meant when the study refers to “casual conversation”. This section presents the definition of casual conversation that is used and defines the more specific unit of humour in conversation on which this thesis concentrates.

1.1.1 Casual conversation

Conversation is a significant and productive site for linguistic analysis. Halliday (1978) contends that text is first and foremost conversation, and it is in conversation “that reality is constructed, in the microsemiotic encounters of daily life” (p. 40). Analysts of casual conversation have shown that it is a meaningful, functionally motivated way of making sense of our social lives, and it is an area of research that is rich in analytical possibilities. In linguistics, conversation has been predominantly studied by researchers in the Conversation Analysis (CA) tradition, which originates from sociology. CA research has contributed greatly to our understanding of everyday talk as a significantly complex area of study. In CA, conversation is described as a systematic activity in which participants take turns to achieve a successful exchange (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974), and conversation analysts focus on the structure and orderliness of conversational sequences. The negotiation that takes place in conversation is considered an “interactional achievement” (Schegloff, 1981) as participants manage topics (cf. Schegloff & Sacks, 1973) and organise their discourse together, taking turns at relevant transition points in the conversational unfolding.

Levinson has defined conversation as a “familiar predominant kind of talk in which two or more participants freely alternate in speaking, which generally occurs outside specific institutional settings like religious services, law courts, classrooms and the like” (Levinson, 1983, p. 284). Audio or video recorded conversations are considered in CA, but Schegloff (2007b) has identified the topic of CA more broadly to be “talk-in-interaction” rather than conversation alone, since conversation analysts often move beyond conversation even to non-verbal types of interaction. Casual conversation rests at one end of a continuum with other types of turn-taking interactions that are involved in CA, such as service encounters, based on the relative degree of allocation of turns (Sacks et al., 1974, p.729).

The definition of conversation, and more specifically *casual* conversation, taken in this study is more precise. This thesis focuses specifically on casual spoken conversation that occurs spontaneously and naturally and which is not undertaken for the accomplishment of any particular goals. It follows Eggins and Slade’s (1997) functional definition of

casual conversation as talk “simply for the sake of talking itself” (p. 6), which is “NOT motivated by any clear pragmatic purpose” (p. 19). The casual conversations that occur in the data of this study take place between friends who have come together simply for the sake of having a chat. Their topics flow freely and are not circumscribed by institutional role relations or set fields of discourse. Furthermore, casual chat tends to be longer and more informal than pragmatically oriented talk (Eggins & Slade, 1997, p. 20), creating a fertile environment for finding humour.

1.1.1.1 Approach and motivation to study humour

The approach taken towards conversation in this thesis follows Eggins and Slade’s (1997) focus on the way that *language* enables us to do conversation, rather than simply what conversation can tell us about social life as in the sociological perspective of CA (Eggins & Slade, 1997, p. 7). Similarly to Eggins and Slade, this thesis treats conversation “as an exchange of meanings, as **text**, and recognize[s] its privileged role in the construction of social identities and interpersonal relations” (Eggins & Slade, 1997, p. 7). To do so, it also draws on the systemic functional linguistic (hereafter SFL) framework, which takes as its unit of analysis text situated in the social environment of meanings (Chapter 2 outlines the features of an SFL perspective). This thesis thus concerns itself with the functions of talk and the choices that speakers make from the system of language. In these terms, it is possible to pursue why friends in conversation may laugh at certain meanings and not others.

Using a systemic functional approach also entails a social semiotic perspective on language. SFL contends that all semiotic activity, including language, is intrinsically social and occurs through interaction, and so language is modelled as a social system for making meaning. Other semiotic systems, such as image and gesture, have also been modelled within this framework. Therefore, this thesis considers the conversational interaction and the interactants in these terms, building a social semiotic model to account for the relations of affiliation that are found to be negotiated in humour. It also approaches laughter as a semiotic system co-articulating meaning with language in culture.

In pursuing an analysis of casual conversation from this functional, semiotic perspective, two points of interest further narrow the object of study to conversational humour: relations of identity and affiliation, and laughter. Particularly intriguing to this study was Eggins and Slade's (1997) claim that casual conversation is "a critical linguistic site for the negotiation of such important dimensions of our social identity as gender, generational location, sexuality, social class membership, ethnicity, and subcultural and group affiliations" (p. 6). They showed that, through conversation, we negotiate who we are. It is fascinating that close friends taking part in chat could complete such complex negotiations that ultimately shape the society and culture in which they are conversing. But this claim demands further research to explore what exactly the different strategies *are* by which we may do so. Moreover, Eggins and Slade (1997) proposed that "casual conversations between close friends involve as much probing of differences between friends as confirming the similarities which brought them together as friends in the first place" (p. 12). This thesis endeavours to locate where the most salient sites for the negotiation of social identity take place and how the probing of similarities and differences fit into this picture in the conversational data of friends.

Significantly, laughter served as a signal to these sites, as the data collected was characterised by constant laughter. These sequences of laughter and talk stood out from the rest of the conversation in that the participants were clearly sharing enjoyment together and working through something that could not be negotiated in the same way as their serious talk. Furthermore, friends laughed often, but there was very little "joking" to be detected. Instead, the meanings surrounding laughter expressed evaluation, and the speakers seemed to be reacting to tensions concerning different *values*. Upon closer inspection, the laughter exhibited a kind of social negotiation in casual conversation in which the speakers managed their values, both similar and different, together. This talk could thus be informative of how speakers identify themselves in a culture based on shared values, on how they define their social identities and affiliate. The data itself motivated the current research study by presenting an intriguing signal in laughter which proliferates through the data set.

By focusing on laughter, theoretical issues concerning the relationship between laughter and what we may call 'humour' necessarily became relevant points for discussion. These issues are unpacked through the literature review in Chapter 2, Sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2,

in which the view taken here is situated in a background of humour studies. The talk surrounding laughter in the data set is characterised in this thesis as a form of humour that is about evaluations and affiliations. The fact that this talk is not typified by explicit “joking” aligns with findings about conversational humour between friends. Though the concept of conversational humour has not yet been clearly defined, and often researchers still fit into this category jokes, puns, sarcasm and irony (e.g. Attardo, 1993; Chiaro, 1992; Gibbs, 2000; Norrick, 1993a; Sacks, 1972), humour in conversation between friends is not typified by canned jokes, puns or wordplay, or any kind of structured, recognizable joke genre leading to a punchline as shown, for instance, by Coates (2007). Spontaneous, spoken conversational humour is characterised by banal comments, humorous stories, banter and “when speakers pick up a point and play with it creatively” (Coates, 2007, p. 31). Conversational humour, and particularly that shared by friends, is not even *funny* in a generalizable sense. Those outside of the conversational context will have a difficult time interpreting why a particular comment may be taken as humorous by the interlocutors.

Because of this opacity in conversational humour (Coates, 2007), researchers have often used the signal of *laughter* as their “contextualisation cue for humor par excellence” (Kotthoff, 2000, p. 64) to identify and interpret it in ongoing text. Laughter is thus an explicit signal for locating sites of humour in conversation, and participants clearly construct humour to achieve an effect that laughter provides. In this way, conversational humour between friends brings laughter and humour together as mutually meaningful aspects of the phenomenon. For this reason, the full interaction must be taken into consideration for a comprehensive description of this phenomenon, including both the speaker who initiates the humour and the hearer who provides a reaction.

The position taken towards the relationship between laughter and humour, then, is that in conversations between friends, laughter is the most explicit signal that humour involving affiliative negotiations may be present. That is not to say that there is no humour in sequences of talk without laughter, but using laughter delimits the research to exploring only those instances where speakers “laugh out loud” together, and these are the sites that are investigated for affiliation. It is also not contended here that laughter always occurs with humorous instances, but that the focus taken in this thesis is the humorous talk that is specifically reacted to with laughter. This view furthermore highlights the role of

laughter in these cases as a meaningful tool for interaction, which is explored in Chapter 3. The linguistic study thus centres on sequences surrounding laughter, which will be termed “convivial conversational humour”.

1.1.2 Convivial conversational humour

The particular humour that is focused upon in this thesis is defined on its own terms, since it is not captured by any humour definition in linguistics thus far. Consider the following example from the data set of this thesis:

G: It's *nice* out!

P: *Yeah!*...So uh gaw... in Quebec it's so↓ frickin cold

G: (L)

P: like *ugh* “I *hate* this!” (CL-G) “I want to go back to *Toronto*” == yeah

G: == (L) where == it's mild.

P: == Now everybody's like “yeah ↑it's so cold” I'm like “it's↓ not == cold”

G: == (L) It's not cold at all

Example 1.1: Convivial conversational humour (from Table 1.2 in Appendix A)

(Pitch rises and drops are marked by ↓↑ arrows and tracked through its duration by underline; laughter is marked by (L) or (CL) for continuous laughter by the named participant; overlap is marked by == in sets of two turns; see Transcription Conventions key for further coding).

This sequence exhibits the kind of conversational humour on which this thesis concentrates. Though there is laughter throughout this sequence, speaker P's utterances cannot be considered widely recognisable as funny. Rather, P presents evaluations of the weather in her home province of Quebec in relation to that of the city of Toronto; G reacts with laughter when P presents particularly negative evaluations towards Quebec and then Toronto as *cold* when it is in fact *mild*. These laughs indicate that values they are negotiating are somehow humorously incongruous, particularly for these interactants as members of the Canadian culture who have experienced, and can appreciate, the actual weather in a shared perspective. They connect around Toronto being positively valued as “mild”, as is evident in G's agreement, “It's not cold at all”, and create solidarity as members of the same social network of Torontonians. This is an example of convivial conversational humour, which is here defined as the type of solidarity-oriented humour

characteristic of conversation between friends¹ in which laughter proliferates and through which they connect around shared values. This is the type of humour that conversational outsiders would consider “unfunny” and difficult to interpret, but it is a highly informative type of talk. The constant laughter of friends throughout their conversational interactions, and especially the fact that this laughter is surrounded by expressions of evaluation, signals a significant site for examining how we manage such aspects as cultural values, identity and affiliation in everyday talk.

1.2 Data

This section describes the data that has been collected and analysed for this thesis. Since this study involves naturalistic conversational data, it is important to describe how it was collected and what types of factors affect the nature of the data. The collection of spontaneous, naturalistic conversational talk is described, including the nature of the participants and the effect of the role of researcher-participant. Finally, the conventions used for transcribing the conversational data are given.

1.2.1 Collection of data

Over the course of a year, data was collected of spontaneously occurring casual conversations between myself and different groups of Canadian friends both in Canada and abroad. Participants were recorded in a range of situational encounters in Toronto, Canada and Kaohsiung, Taiwan over 12 months in 2005 with a digital audio recorder. There are 11 conversation recordings that total about 12 hours of data. About 2 hours, 35 minutes of this data were transcribed, and data was chosen from this to form the 21 tables of analysis of this thesis. Sections of talk that included laughter were transcribed and divided into conversational exchanges, then into more specific humorous phases according to the analysis that will be detailed in Chapter 3, Section 3.2.3.

¹ This is similar to Provine’s (2000) “convivial humor”, but is specific to conversation between friends.

1.2.1.1 Participants

The participants in the study are Canadian-born subjects (with the known exception of one participant who had emigrated from Brazil), either living in Canada or in temporary residence overseas at the time of the recording. The range of ages is narrow, from 20 to 30 years of age, and most participants are undergraduate university students or are in post-university jobs. The conversations range in terms of the number of participants involved and they include both single-gender and mixed-gender talk. It must be noted in establishing the viability of the data that it is undoubtedly affected by the ideological configurations of the participants, most markedly in terms of nationality, age, class and gender. The scope of this study is thus necessarily limited by these aspects, and the broad similarities between many of the participants (e.g. middle class status) would clearly affect the topics of conversation and uses of humour at stake in the data.

Furthermore, the interpretation of evaluative meanings in APPRAISAL (Martin & White, 2005) and “evaluative couplings” (see Chapter 4) as an analyst will depend on the institutional position that one is reading from (Martin & Rose, 2007, p. 118). This position corresponds with the configuration of categories shared by the other participants. Thus, when claims are made about the data of this thesis, they are always considered with regard to these background differences. However, while linguists have studied how the use of humour may differ in terms of these categories (for instance, in terms of gender, cf. Hay, 2000; Holmes, 2006; Mullany, 2004; Stubbe, Holmes, Vine & Marra, 2000), the thesis does not centre on the implication of ideological differences. Instead, there is a discussion of how ideological differences are always present in friendship negotiations in the model of affiliation (Chapter 5, Section 5.2.1.4).

While the study is confined to close friendship groups, the participants also make evident that they share some additional institutional roles such as job colleagues, family members, or students at a shared institution. As I have established, the participants came together for the metapurpose of having a chat, and the contexts of interaction included casual get-togethers over pie, dinner, drinks, walks, or fast food outings which took place in both indoor and outdoor settings in personal homes, residence dorms, restaurants, and residential outdoor areas. The sites chosen were highly accessible for lengthy

conversation but varied in situational consistency, as participants may have been outdoors or playing music or watching television during taping.

The participants were informed that the recordings would be used in a future postgraduate project, but at the time the topic of humour was not yet known. This reduced the likelihood that orientations to humour would be especially affected by the recording. For privacy and ethical purposes, all names have been changed.

1.2.1.2 Insider analysis

Most of the recordings included the researcher as participant, in friendship and additional roles with most of the interactants. Labov (1972) finds that this presents an “observer’s paradox”, as the presence of a researcher in the conversation may affect the naturalism of the circumstances and risks manipulating the discourse, whether this is intentional or not. However, as Eggins (1990, p. 136) has argued, the risks are offset by the advantage of having an insider take part in the interaction and thereby contribute to the naturalness and comfort of the participants, as the researcher shares a friendly relationship with them. Eggins also explains that, as close friends, the researcher and participants have familiar established behaviours, so any attempts at manipulating the conversation would be easily detected and checked.

The inside knowledge that the researcher-participant brings into the interaction is also a great benefit to the analysis, especially that of conversational humour, as it is often impossible for outsiders to grasp the meaning of the humour without having “been there”. Thus, the participation of the researcher was constantly justified, and the instigation of laughter could be easily deciphered (Priego-Valverde, 2003, p. 62).

While it may seem that the presence of the tape recorder would create a level of discomfort by bringing in the research context, in the data it was absorbed into the conversation (Eggins, 1990) and actually added to humour analysis since participants often made the tension from the recording device explicit and worked it out through laughter; as Hay (1995) argues, it even becomes a part of the interest². In terms of

² See Table 3.1 in Appendix A for example.

interpretation, there are both transcriptions in the tables in Appendix A and in Appendix B and the actual recorded clips that can be played back and reviewed by an academic audience in Appendix C. Unfortunately, the nature of the audio recordings excluded visual paralanguage such as gesture and facial expression, which could lend to the interpretation of humour. Norrick (2004b), for example, notes that conversational humour should be considered as an “oral joke performance” which includes voice, gesture, timing and other cues. As expected, the data has nevertheless provided a wealth of information for the linguistic study of humour in spoken interaction.

1.3 Research Questions and Aims

Based on the data and the sequences of convivial conversational humour that are of interest in this study, a number of research aims can be outlined for this thesis. Firstly, this thesis aims to explain what is “funny” in conversational humour between friends, since speakers appear to laugh when a joke in the traditional sense cannot be found in surrounding text. The cause of laughter in these conversational sequences will be explored to answer the research question, *What do friends laugh at in conversation?* In other words, by focusing on what features in the linguistic text cause the participants to react with laughter, the tension or mechanism behind convivial conversational humour may be identified. This exploration will include an in-depth linguistic analysis of the phenomenon of convivial conversational humour, incorporating relevant levels of the linguistic hierarchy in relation to aspects of social context.

Secondly, it aims to describe laughter in social semiotic terms. This is because, in the conversations in the data, laughter seems to be to be a salient way that interactants make *meaning* in their social environment. Laughter is taken as the point of departure and is considered a meaning-making, or semiotic, tool that interacts with language in conversational humour. The second research question proposed is this: *What does laughter actually do (i.e. its meaning potential)?* As shown in Chapter 3, Section 3.1.1.1, this perspective differs from previous treatments of laughter as a paralinguistic feature that contributes to the context of an utterance without meaning potential of its own. By

focusing on the semiotic possibilities of a laugh, the full range of meanings made in convivial conversational humorous interactions may be revealed.

Thirdly, this thesis aims to examine why friends laugh together so much in conversation. It is concerned with the functions behind their use of humour and with why they may choose to use laughter to negotiate particular meanings in relation to other possible strategies of talk. Thus, it poses the research question, *Why do friends laugh so much in conversational talk?* More specifically, it is concerned with the orientation towards positive social relations that is evident in conversational humour and seems to occur in the data set. In this way, it pursues what Martin (2004a) has referred to as “positive discourse analysis” (PDA), a perspective that focuses on how people negotiate community relations and also redistribute power in discourse without necessarily struggling against it (pp. 184–185). This is offered as a complementary perspective to critical discourse analysis (CDA) work which has mainly focused on hegemony, exposing how power is naturalised and struggled against in discourse. In terms of power, while the focus on hegemony in CDA is presented as a matter of domination and struggle by Martin (2004a), a PDA concern with community is a matter of relations of inclusion and exclusion. Moreover, PDA concerns the ways that values are coded in semiosis and how writers or speakers get readers to align and form communities around attitudes towards things (Martin, 2004a, p. 191). The construal of alignment and solidarity are thus also key areas for analysing discourse in PDA, and may be shown to feature prominently in the data of convivial conversational humour in this thesis. This thesis therefore adopts a PDA perspective in its examination of why friends laugh so much in conversational talk (as opposed to the CDA perspective of Egging & Slade (1997) for example), focusing specifically on alignment and the forming of communities through humour. In addition to the work that has so far been done on how people commune (cf. Humphrey, forthcoming; Martin, 2004b; Stenglin, 2004), the way that friends laugh together may also be a highly significant site for PDA.

In relation to these three points of concern, this thesis has an overall goal that extends beyond the concern with convivial conversational humour alone. Because convivial conversational humour concerns evaluations, it should necessarily have a distinct impact on participants’ construal of themselves as members of a culture that is defined by the values it supports. More specifically, laughter somehow aids in bringing speakers

together through their talk about community values. In uncovering these social relations, this thesis has the overall aim to demonstrate, through the analysis of conversational texts between Canadian friends, how conversational humour is one (but not the only) strategy for the construal of *affiliation*.

Furthermore, the theoretical aims of this thesis include providing a comprehensive and semiotic account of this particular type of humour shared between friends in conversation to add to the body of linguistic humour research (which is reviewed in Chapter 2). It also attempts to offer a semiotic model of affiliation to account for the social relations behind such discourses as conversational humour to contribute to SFL theory and to theories of humour. As I will demonstrate in Chapter 2, since there has been relatively little research overall on humour and relations of community and affiliation in the SFL framework, this thesis aims to fill this gap.

1.4 Scope and organisation of this thesis

The chapters of this thesis are organised according to the research questions outlined above, and they follow in sequence according to how the prominent features of convivial conversational humour were discovered and analysed in the study. Broadly, this sequence begins with a discussion of *laughter* (Chapter 3), followed by a discussion of *linguistic patterns in text* that provide evidence of the cause of laughter (Chapter 4), followed by a description of the *social patterns* at stake in convivial conversational humour (Chapter 5). The thesis is divided into six chapters in total.

Chapter 2 situates the current study in its background of research on humour in linguistics and introduces the theoretical framework that is utilized in this study. The chapter first reviews the traditions of humour theory and their application in linguistics and then narrows its focus to the body of linguistic studies of conversational humour in particular that are most relevant to this thesis. It then explores the systemic functional linguistic framework, including the fundamental hierarchies and complementarities that have enabled the analysis of convivial conversational humour, and surveys studies of humour

in an SFL framework. Finally, Chapter 2 outlines the methodology undertaken in this thesis, making clear the different features of the tables that are provided in Appendix A.

Chapter 3 presents a social semiotic analysis of laughter, which is taken as the point of departure for the analysis of convivial conversational humour, and it describes and exemplifies how humorous phases were extracted in relation to the laughs that occur in conversation. Laughter is presented as a social semiotic system that co-articulates meaning with language in convivial conversational humour. It is considered through a semogenetic, or timescale, perspective (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 17) in terms of ontogenesis (how laughter develops in individuals from infants to adults) and phylogenesis (how laughter has evolved in culture over time to make meaning). Following systemic functional semiotic research (Martin, 2008b, p. 30), the semiotic potential of laughter is then put forward by expounding the meanings that it makes in systems at the level of content (Hjelmslev, 1963), which are found to be overwhelmingly interpersonal ones, and by providing a system network for the choices in the sounds of a laugh at the level of expression. An analysis of laughter expressions is then given to exemplify the way that choices in this expression system make different kinds of meaning in context. After having introduced laughter as the signal to humour in conversations between friends, the second half of Chapter 3 explores how analysable units of humour were extracted from whole conversational texts through laughter and the notion of “phases” (Gregory & Malcolm, 1995 [1981]). It is shown that laughter does not abide by the boundaries of a typical conversational exchange but instead indicates a new unit of humour to be uncovered. The chapter then provides an example of how humorous phases were analysed to connect the methodology outlined in Chapter 2 with how humour actually unfolds with laughter in interaction. This chapter answers the research question, *What does laughter actually do?* by exhibiting its semiotic potential and its role in demarcating humorous phases of conversational talk.

In Chapter 4, the linguistic text surrounding laughter is the focus, and it aims to answer the research question, *What do friends laugh at in conversation?* First, it shows how meanings unfold prosodically for bonding (Stenglin, 2004) in a humorous phase until laughter changes the terms of this bonding. Linguistic “couplings” of attitude with experiential meaning (Martin, 2000a), or “evaluative couplings”, are identified as the linguistic evidence for the cause of laughter in these phases, and couplings that are both

explicit and implicit are described in relation to the APPRAISAL theory (Martin & White, 2005) of evaluative meaning. The chapter then makes evident where and how couplings can occur in humorous phases by outlining and exemplifying the strategies used by conversational speakers for presenting implicit evaluative couplings. These include couplings that are provoked, flagged or afforded (Martin & White, 2005, p.67) by strategies such as idioms, allusions and resources of the APPRAISAL system of ENGAGEMENT. Other indicators of attitude in humour are also described. Thus, it is shown in this chapter that friends laugh at evaluative couplings that create some sort of tension for them in discourse, and the nature of this tension is identified in the following chapter.

In Chapter 5, a model of affiliation is proposed as a theoretical tool for interpreting the social functions behind convivial conversational humour and answers the research question, *Why do friends laugh so much in conversational talk?* Affiliation describes how conversational participants negotiate their community values as co-members of a culture, managing tensions that occur between different social networks of values through laughter and other discursive strategies. It brings together laughter, the linguistic variable of “coupling”, and a social semiotic theory of social “bonds” as the units with which we negotiate who we are and how we ongoingly relate to one another. The chapter develops this dimension within SFL theory by dividing the discussion into two sections, presenting it first as a social process that is constantly negotiated in the dynamic unfolding of text, and then presenting the relations involved in affiliation on the cline of individuation in SFL. First, the social semiotic perspective of affiliation is explored by introducing bonds and the notions of identity relevant to this theory, and the different strategies of affiliation that have been identified thus far in the research are described and exemplified. Then, the individuation cline is populated with the relevant relations of community involved when we take an affiliation perspective, and each level of this cline is explored to exhibit how participants negotiate their community, subcultural and cultural identities in talk.

The final chapter of this thesis concludes this study of convivial conversational humour by summarising the accomplishments and implications of this research on linguistic theory and by proposing potential research directions for the future. The first section outlines the contributions and also the challenges that this study presents to SFL and the linguistic study of humour. By introducing the new dimension of affiliation, this thesis has implications on the theoretical dimensions of SFL in that it both provides a new way

to describe relations of community in the theory and challenges its existing parameters and the way that we consider implicit meanings in APPRAISAL. The contribution that this work makes to research on humour in linguistics through its incorporation of SFL tools is then described. In the second section, future directions for research on the topics discussed in this thesis are explored. It is suggested that the modelling of affiliation as a cline could be reconsidered in theoretical terms through a process-oriented perspective. Then, it is proposed that other types of humour may be considered with the affiliation model, exemplified through the notion of characterisation, while laughter and visual paralanguage could also be further pursued. Finally, studies that have applied the affiliation model thus far are presented to show its successful application in other contexts and modes besides the one focused upon in this thesis.