A collaborative theory of inversion: Irony in dialogue

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ABSTRACT

An inductive study was conducted in order to study inversions in dyadic conversations. An inversion is a discourse event in which the words actually spoken are understood by those involved to mean the approximate opposite of their literal meaning; it is irony that occurs in dialogue. The four tasks used in this study elicited a rich array of 71 inversion from 13 dyads. These spontaneous inversions occurred rapidly and were tightly coordinated. Inversion participants used behaviourial signals to collaboratively create a frame that facilitated comprehending the inversion. Within the frames, inversions were structured into four phases: calibration (wherein participants agreed to accept a viewpoint about the subject matter); delivery (in which the inversion was actually presented); acknowledgement (where the participants conveyed their mutual understanding and appreciation of the inversion); and closure (in which the participants signalled the closing of the inversion frame). The behaviourial signals (e.g., smiling, laughter, facial displays, head nodding and shaking, discourse shift markers) that were used to establish the inversion frame and phases were identified.

Overall, the structure of an inversion (i.e., the inversion frame and phases) is created through a collaborative verbal and nonverbal behaviourial signalling system. These signals are used by participants to establish and proceed through the inversion frame and phases.

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Dedication

To my parents, Johanna and Norman Coates, who have given me much more than was ever given to them.

CHAPTER 1

A COLLABORATIVE THEORY OF INVERSION

Inversion is used here to describe a discourse event in which the words actually spoken are understood by those involved to mean the approximate opposite of their literal meaning. Opposite is not being used in the narrow sense of antonyms one would find in a dictionary (e.g., big-small). Instead, it encompasses any intended meaning that is substantially different from what is said. Inversion can be thought of as irony, sarcasm, punning, hyperbole, and other similar events that occur in face-to-face conversation.

The use of inversion in a conversation is risky. If the other person fails to understand that an utterance is an inversion, the utterance would be taken literally, and in some situations this could be very awkward. It seems unlikely that people would use inversions in conversations if they could only hope that the other person might guess the intended meaning. An appropriate analogy might be that it is unlikely that someone would use a Greek phrase when speaking to a person who only understands English.

Moreover, the risk of relying solely on the listener's guessing ability increases when the speed of natural conversation is considered. When inversions occur in face-to-face conversation, they occur quickly--in "real time". The interactants cannot reread key phrases (as can be done with written irony) to decide on the intended interpretation

of an utterance. They must quickly move on to an appropriate continuation of the conversation. Furthermore, because even strangers can accomplish inversions, it is plausible to suggest that conversational participants must signal each other each time that they are attempting an inversion; that is, merely uttering a counterfactual statement is not sufficient to accomplish an inversion. For all of these reasons, it is probable that people develop shared codes to signal inversion in these situations.

Thus, the starting point of this thesis is that, like many conversational events, inversions occur between two or more people rather than simply emanating from one person. One person alone does not accomplish an inversion; inversions require both participants. While participants usually do not deliver the actual inversion phrase together, they do cooperate in framing parts of the conversation so that the inversion can be said, understood, and mutually closed off. I propose that these frames are cooperatively constructed. People use cooperative signals to group their conversations into a frame (literalness or inversion) that facilitates delivering and comprehending the inversion. These frames are established by one conversational participant's signalling to the other participant that he or she is going to impose brackets around a certain section of their conversation. The other person cooperates in firmly establishing these brackets by communicating the

understanding and close following that is necessary for the first person to accomplish an inversion. Within the inversion frame, spoken words will not be encoded or decoded in their literal senses. For example, if the statement "You may have the honour of going first" and the response "Gee thanks" occurred in an inversion frame, both remarks would be understood as inversions. It is as if these statements occurred in brackets preceded by a negation sign:

- ["You may have the honour of going first", "Gee thanks"]

The negation sign and brackets create an inversion frame. Note that the signals that install the negation sign and brackets frame a whole section of discourse rather than just one specific word or sentence.

Conversation as a Social System

The theoretical approach taken here casts conversation as a social system. The systems approach changes the focus of research from the individual to the behavioral interactions of the individuals in the interpersonal system. Systems theory focuses on the relationship among interactants, rather than on the individuals forming the system. Moving from the individual to the social system is particularly relevant for studying discourse because, as C. Goodwin (1986b) noted,

> there are strong grounds for conceptualizing language as intrinsically social in the sense that its

> prototypical organization includes not only an entity who produces speech but also another who attends to that talk (p. 205).

Moreover, examining the relationship among behaviours of people involved in the conversation allows us to observe the reciprocal influence occurring between system members. Both people, not only one, react to and influence each other.

A few discourse researchers have taken a systems approach. Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson (1967, ch. 4) first proposed that systems theory could be applied to interpersonal communication. They focused on the relationship between the participants (rather than on individuals) and emphasized reciprocity, mutuality, and regulatory mechanisms (e.g., feedback processes).

Black (1988) approached topical coherence in dyadic conversations as a systemic phenomenon. He examined how people optimize coherence when they talk about more than one topic in a conversation. Specifically, he proposed that a negative feedback system operates in conversations to maximize global coherence, which he demonstrated in several brief conversations.

A systems approach has also been used to focus on <u>how</u> conversation works or is structured rather than on <u>what</u> the conversation is about (i.e., the topics). Bavelas, Hagen, Lane, and Lawrie (1989) and Bavelas, Chovil, Lawrie, and Wade (1991) have proposed that speakers use a special class

of gestures (which they called interactive gestures) to include the other person in the conversation. Essentially, these gestures are part of a feedback process that helps "maintain the conversation as a social system" (Bavelas et al., 1991, p. 1).

Other researchers have focused on the content of conversation, that is, on how meaning is cooperatively constructed through discourse. Duranti (1986) and C. Goodwin (1986a) both challenged the myth that a story is told and shaped by the speaker alone. Both authors suggested that storytelling is a collaborative event because the meaning and the structure of the story will be shaped by both speaker and listener. In fact, Duranti (1986) suggested that:

> speaker and audience are equals not simply because their roles are interchangeable--in fact, they may not be in some situations--but rather because every act of speaking is directed to and must be ratified by an audience (p. 243).

Thus, an audience does not passively interpret a story.

Similarly, after examining storytelling, C. Goodwin (1986a) concluded that the "audience is both shaped by the talk it is attending and helps shape what will be made of that talk" (p. 311). Goodwin concluded that:

> The meaning that the story will be found to have thus emerges not from the actions of the speaker alone, but

> rather as the product of a collaborative process of interaction in which the audience plays a very active role (1986a, p. 283).

Thus, storytelling is an interactive process where the speaker presents his or her story and the audience responds to that story, thereby shaping the speaker's behaviour.

C. Goodwin (1986b) also examined less structured conversation. In keeping with his research on storytelling, Goodwin (1986b) found that speakers modify sentence structure in response to recipient behaviour. He concluded that talk

> emerges not from the actions of speaker alone, but rather as the collaborative product of a process of interaction between speaker and recipient(s) (1986b, p. 206).

Similarly, M. Goodwin (1980) has also examined collaboration in conversation. She found that the speaker

> takes the recipient's actions into account and produces talk that is appropriate to the action that the recipient is producing (M. Goodwin, 1980, p. 313).

Thus, the speaker modifies his or her speech to the manner, level or style appropriate for his or her recipients. In this way, the speaker's talk is shaped by his or her recipients.

Clark and Wilkes-Gibbs (1986) have proposed a

collaborative model of referring. They conducted an experiment on how references are used and understood in conversations and found that a speaker does not unilaterally decide upon the word(s) to be used to represent something. Instead, participants rework phrases (through expansion, repair, or replacement) until they "reach a version they mutually accept" (p. 1). Accordingly, speakers and addressees work together to agree upon the use of a particular noun phase to signify something. Clark and Wilkes-Gibbs (1986) concluded that

> Participants in a conversation ... are mutually responsible for establishing what the speaker meant (p. 37).

Accordingly, this collaborative process facilitates the addressee's understanding. Schober and Clark (1989) found that addressees were more accurate at understanding what was being referred to than overhearers that had listened to the speaker and the addressee establish the referents. Thus, overhearers of the conversation were at a disadvantage because they were not involved in the cooperative process of establishing a referent.

Similarly, Clark and Schaefer (1987) suggested that interactants also collaborate when they are attempting to conceal meaning from overhearers. These authors found that partners created private keys from events, processes, people, and objects in their "personal common ground" to

conceal meaning from overhearers (p. 219). Personal common ground refers to knowledge that partners shared that was not common knowledge. The director of the conversation (the person trying to convey the information) often presented private keys (referents to personal common ground) which the other participant rephrased, expanded, or repaired to show his or her understanding of the key. The director then presented another bit of information, and the process was repeated until the participant could identify the referent. Thus, through collaboration, the director was able to stop delivering information as soon as the participant had understood. In this way, the partners were able to limit the amount of information they provided and to conceal meaning from overhearers. Hence, Clark and Schaefer (1987) concluded that

> the audience design is an essential feature of language use: Speakers design what they say for the particular people they believe are or might be listening. (p. 222)

Other mechanisms that people use to aid in coordinating their conversations have been suggested by Edwards and Middleton (1986), Polanyi and Scha (1983), and Schiffrin (1988). Both Polanyi and Scha (1983) and Schiffrin (1988) have proposed that speakers mark their discourse with key words (e.g., "so", "anyways") to orient their listeners to desired aspects of the conversation. Of particular

importance to the present research is Polanyi and Scha's (1983) category of discourse shift markers. These shift markers help to structure the conversation by alerting the listener to a change or shift in the discourse. For example, when about to end a digression in the conversation, a person might say "anyways" to mark a return to the main topic. Polanyi and Scha (1983) identified and distinguished between shift markers that occur in verbal speech and those markers that occurred outside of verbal speech (e.g., changes in body orientation or gaze direction). Unfortunately, only those markers that occurred in speech were called discourse shift markers. This separation implies that those markers outside of verbal speech are not really part of the discourse. In contrast, when the term discourse shift marker is used in this thesis, it refers to all kinds of shift markers (verbal, paralinguistic, gestural, etc.).

Edwards and Middleton proposed that framing statements are used by the speaker to orient the listener to the structure of the conversation (e.g., "Getting back to the main point"). Moreover, Edwards and Middleton (1986) distinguished between memory and remembering in much the same way as I am distinguishing between irony and inversion. Memory is a hypothetical, cognitive construct, which is typically measured by examining input and output discrepancies. It is considered to be a characteristic of

an individual. In contrast, remembering is the observable, behaviourial process of reconstructing an event. Remembering is a social process, because it is done through talking with another person. Similarly, irony is a monadic event, which is typically studied through literary analysis or by examining people's comprehension of made-up, written examples of irony. In contrast, inversion is a social process because it is accomplished within conversation. It is the cooperative behaviour of constructing a segment of conversation where literal meaning is not sufficient for understanding.

Bateson (1972) suggested that animals vary their behaviour so that they can distinguish between fighting behaviour and play behaviour. In essence, the animals convey what Bateson called a meta-message that says "This is play". Bateson suggested that these meta-messages can also be identified in paradoxes. In his discussion of paradoxes in human communication, Bateson (1972) suggested that paradox frames are created. Within these frames, meta-messages determine how statements are to be interpreted. Bateson's, (1972) ideas can be applied to inversion. A paradox can arise when someone says an inversion because the clue that an inversion is being constructed occurs within the inversion frame itself. He conceptualised the inversion frame as a square that contains the message:

What is happening is not what it appears.

This message prevents the participants from clearly interpreting any of the statements within the frame because the initial message creates ambiguity. For example, this critical message states that "all things in this frame are untrue". In this case, the message leads to ambiguity because, if we take it as true, then all messages must be false--including the first critical message. It follows then that all the messages are true, but if this is the case then the first message must also be true, and so forth.

Thus, approaching conversation as a system results in a move away from the individual to relationships among the behaviours of the participants. For example, a negative feedback system operates in conversation to maximize global conversational coherence (Black, 1988). Interactive gestures work as part of a negative feedback process that functions to maintain the conversation as a social system (Bavelas et al., 1991). Conversational participants collaborate in such events as storytelling, referring, concealing meaning from overhearers, and in conversation in general (Clark & Wilkes-Gibbs, 1986; Clark & Schaefer, 1987). Also, speakers mark changes in the discourse with shift markers and framing statements (Edwards & Middleton, 1986; Polanyi & Scha 1983; Schiffrin, 1988).

Applying systems theory to the study of inversions resulted in the following question of interest: Given the fact that individuals can engage in inversions (but often

choose not to), what are the systemic properties that typically occur when individuals come together and engage in inversions? Some properties of interest include how people cooperate in accomplishing inversions (e.g., through structuring, and signalling).

CHAPTER 2

PREVIOUS RELATED LITERATURE

The topic closest to inversion to be found in the literature is irony, which several theorists have attempted to explain. There are four main theories of irony (standard pragmatic, pretense, echoic mention, echoic reminder) and some miscellaneous theories, all of which are primarily concerned with the comprehension of irony. (Irony and sarcasm are typically used as synonymous terms, although sarcasm is seen as more caustic than irony; they will be treated together here.)

The standard pragmatic theory of irony (usually credited to Grice, 1975, 1978) proposes that when someone says something counterfactual, listeners will interpret the remark to mean the opposite of the literal meaning. Even though, according to Grice's truthfulness maxim, speakers are under an obligation to tell the truth, they do not blatantly signal that the counterfactual statement being made is ironical. Grice (1978) suggested that

> to be ironical is, among other things, to pretend (as the etymology suggests), and while one wants the pretense to be recognized as such, to announce it as a pretense would spoil the effect. (p. 125)

Accordingly, the listener must somehow recognize the ironic statement as a violation of the truthfulness maxim and then substitute the appropriate implicatures in place of the

literal meaning in order to arrive at the ironic meaning. Although Grice (1975, 1978) suggests that a blatant lie is not the same thing as irony, he does not specify clearly how people distinguish between a blatant lie and an ironic statement.

Contrary to the standard pragmatic theory, empirical research suggests that people do not first process the literal meaning of the statement, then find discrepancies between the statement and reality, and then discover the sarcastic meaning. Gibbs (1986) presented data from three reading-time experiments which found either no significant difference in reading times between ironic and literal sentences or significantly faster reading times for ironic sentences. Gibbs (1986) concluded that

> The fact that speakers can comprehend sarcastic remarks as fast as, if not faster than, literal utterances suggests that computation of the [context independent], literal meanings of sarcastic expressions is not necessary before the literal meanings of sarcastic interpretations can be derived. (p. 13)

Like the standard pragmatic theory, pretense theory, as put forth by Clark and Gerrig (1984), also emphasizes the role of pretense in irony. To accomplish the pretense, the speaker pretends to be someone who is, for example, uninformed, injudicious, or hostile. The speaker's primary

addressee, who is part of the inner circle, is intended to see through the pretense and thereby to infer the speaker's true attitude. Those people in the outer circle, however, are intended to be duped by the pretense. Members of the outer circle can, however, become part of the inner circle. For example,

> in some of the most effective examples of irony the audience is intended to be taken in at first and to catch on only as the pretense is developed. (p. 125)

Thus, individuals who start off as duped members of the outer circle become members of the inner circle once they understand the irony.

Oddly enough, the pretense theory suggests that the listeners themselves (not the speaker) determine who become members of the inner circle and who remain members of the outer circle:

> Listeners must see how the speaker's utterance is relevant to the common ground already established between speaker and addressees. (Clark & Gerrig, 1984, p. 124)

These subtle judgements about shared knowledge will determine whether an individual decides that a particular remark was ironic or literal.

Clark and Gerrig (1984) also proposed that an asymmetry of occurrence exists between positive ironical statements

(saying "Polite, isn't he?" to mean "He is rude") and negative ironical statements (saying "Rude, isn't he?" to mean "He is polite"). They suggested that if we have more positive than negative norms, then ironists will more frequently pretend to be ignorant of the real negative situation by making more positive pretenses. For example, after someone rudely pushes his way through a crowd, an observer ironically says "Polite, isn't he?" because the positive norm of politeness is more common.

It is interesting to note that, Clark and Gerrig (1984) included a hint of signalling in their theory. They suggested that pretenses generally involve adopting a tone of voice suitable to the type of pretense. Thus, ironists will change their intonation through exaggeration or caricature when being ironic. These authors, however, did not see the change in intonation as signalling irony. Rather, they saw the speaker merely using intonation as an additional prop in a "game of deception" (p. 125).

A major limitation of pretense theory is the lack of experimental evidence to support the theory and its assumptions. The authors provide examples from Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal" to illustrate some aspects of their theory.

In contrast to standard pragmatic and pretense theorists, <u>echoic mention</u> theorists do not believe that pretense is involved in irony. Instead, they suggest that

an utterance is interpreted as ironic when it is counterfactual and it echoes a proposition that has been previously mentioned (Sperber & Wilson, 1981; Jorgensen, Miller, & Sperber, 1984). An essential part of this theory is that the proposition previously mentioned must be at odds with the ironic utterance. For example, after John incorrectly predicted that it would be a lovely day tomorrow, Bill says to him "Lovely day today. Isn't it?"

The supporters of the echoic mention theory define broadly what may be classified as an echoic mention. For example, an echoic mention may be a previous relevant topic of conversation, or it may not have occurred as a topic in conversation at all. For example, after seeing someone push her way through a crowd someone might say "That's a polite way to get through the crowd", meaning "That is a rude way of going through a crowd". If going through a crowd politely had come up previously in the conversation, the remark would be echoing a previous remark. However, the topic of going through a crowd may never have been discussed by the interactants. In the latter case, the proposition being echoed is said to be implicit.

One might reason that ironic statements with explicit antecedents should be more easily understood than those with implicit antecedents. The results of an experimental test of this hypothesis were mixed (Jorgensen et al., 1984). Only four out of the six test conditions supported the

hypothesis that counterfactual statements with explicit antecedents are judged as ironic more frequently than those statements with implicit antecedents. Thus, the role of antecedents was left unclear.

However, the speed of comprehending ironic statements may be influenced by the type of antecedent. Gibbs (1986) found that subjects took less time to understand sarcastic remarks made in contexts with explicit antecedents than those with implicit antecedents.

While agreeing with echoic mention theory, Kreuz and Glucksberg (1989) elaborated on the nature of echoic mention. They suggested that one of the primary functions of an echoic mention is that it reminds the listener of norms and expectations that have not been met and, in doing so, reveals the speaker's attitude. Kreuz and Glucksberg's (1989) theory of echoic reminder subsumes echoic mention theory. Echoic mention is a special kind of echoic reminder in which an implicit antecedent is echoed. The main difference between the two theories is that echoic reminder theory has gone beyond hypothesizing about "how the language itself is used" (i.e., it echoes propositions) to focusing on how these echoes remind us of social norms and expectations.

Like echoic mention researchers, Kreuz and Glucksberg (1989) defined echoic reminder broadly, to include many antecedent events. An antecedent remark need not occur for

an ironic statement to be an echoic reminder. An echoic reminder can simply allude to a generalized expectation. Unlike Jorgensen et al. (1984), Kreuz and Glucksberg did not suggest that ironic statements with explicit antecedents would be more easily understood. In fact, they suggested that one would not necessarily expect ironies with explicit antecedents to be more easily understood than those ironies without explicit antecedents because a generalized expectation is not explicit and yet is a powerful antecedent.

Echoic reminder theory suggests that a speaker chooses to be ironic in order to remind someone of norms or expectations that have not been fulfilled. The literal meaning of the words serves the reminding function, and the discrepancy between the literal meaning of the words and reality expresses the speaker's attitude about the deviation from what was expected. Kreuz and Glucksberg (1989) proposed that, because we have more positive norms and expectations than negative ones, we remind people more frequently that these positive social norms or expectations were not met. Accordingly, people should produce ironies with positive literal meanings more frequently than those with negative literal meanings. Moreover, Kreuz and Glucksberg (1989) suggested that negative ironic statements (e.g., "You're a bad friend" meaning "You're a good friend") can only be used in special circumstances. Negative

statements cannot merely allude to positive norms or expectation to be understood because people have positive expectations, not negative ones. Hence, an antecedent must be used to establish a negative expectation so that a negative counterfactual statement can be understood as ironic. The authors did find that positive counterfactual statements were more likely to be rated as sarcastic than negative counterfactual statements.

Kreuz and Glucksberg (1989) also found that counterfactual statements with explicit victims were more likely to be interpreted as sarcastic than when an explicit victim was not present. For example, the statement "Awful weather" was interpreted as ironic more often when a character in the script had erroneously predicted poor weather (and, hence, was the victim of the ironic utterance) than when the character had correctly predicted nice weather (and therefore was not the victim of the ironic utterance). Victim presence also increased "sensibility" (i.e., ease of understanding) and "appropriateness" ratings of negative ironic statements.

There are also other miscellaneous theories of irony and sarcasm in the literature. Roy (1981) described irony and sarcasm as devices for control or cohesion; Bollobas (1981) saw irony as uncooperative behaviour; and Cutler (1974) described irony in terms of syntax and semantics.

Roy (1981) discussed irony as a communicative control

strategy at the individual level or as a cohesion device at the group level. Through the use of irony, an individual can achieve immediate attention and control of the conversation. The metamessage that accompanies this kind of irony is "This is control" or "This is pejorative judgement". The individual's use of this control strategy is limited by the need to give the other person conversational space,

> not because we have become so altruistic in our maturity, but because we see that if we did not we would end up with no one to talk to. (p. 408)

In other words, Roy saw individual and group needs as "conflicting goals". At the group level, irony may serve to build or maintain solidarity. Roy suggested that groups use irony to vent their frustrations and aggressions against some outside source.

In contrast, Bollobas (1981) stated that "as a form of uncooperative behaviour, irony violates the Gricean maxims of quality: it says something, but means something else" (p. 327). Bollobas used examples from Edward Albee's play "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf" to analyze irony as a "modernist game whose rules are principles of uncooperative behaviour" (p. 324). A major flaw in Bollobas's work is that if the individuals engaging in irony are following the rules that they must be uncooperative, then they must be cooperating to be uncooperative. Indeed, Watzlawick et al.

(1967, Ch. 5) provided an interesting discussion of the cooperative pattern of "one-upmanship" portrayed in the Albee play.

Finally, Cutler (1974) stipulated an approbatory condition to irony:

> a sentence can be uttered ironically if it expresses on its literal reading a desirable state of affairs in the context in which it is produced. (p. 119)

Cutler also identified two categories of irony: spontaneous, where no previous context exists before the ironic statement, and provoked, where a previous context does exist for the ironic statement and the speaker is disagreeing with the previous context.

> The category of provoked irony, then, is very large: anything previously said or implied which has since been demonstrated to be false, or which is believed by the current speaker to have been untrue or insincere, may be echoed back with a successfully applied ironic intonation. (p. 120)

Other than these observations, Cutler mostly concentrated on the syntactic and semantic aspects of irony.

Common Elements in Cited Literature

The literature just reviewed is limited by the number of fundamental assumptions that have been left untested. For example, most theorists (Clark & Gerrig, 1984; Jorgensen et al.,1984; Kreuz & Glucksberg, 1989; and Sperber & Wilson, 1984) assumed that positive ironies occur more frequently than negative ironies, but empirical support for this assumption was not given. Similarly, the existence of more positive than negative social norms is an important assumption of both pretense and echoic reminder theories, but none of the proponents has provided evidence to support this assumption.

In addition, throughout the literature, the responsibility for comprehending an ironic or sarcastic remark is placed primarily on the listener. The speaker merely makes a counterfactual statement. It is up to the listener to appeal to shared norms, echoed propositions, or possible shared knowledge to determine whether the statement is true, false, ironic, or sarcastic. Essentially, the speaker blindly throws a pass, and the listener must somehow manage to catch it. This approach is limited because it omits the possibility that speakers and listeners establish a shared code for ironic comments and then encode and decode the irony accordingly. Overall, while the literature provides interesting information on how people comprehend written irony and makes interesting speculations about

relying on social norms, it provides little information on how people actually perform inversions in natural conversation.

Hints of Irony as Collaborative

Hints of irony as a signalled, social process have occasionally appeared in the literature; some authors have touched upon the cooperative nature of conversations and irony. For example, Williams (1984) stated that, when the ironist is not detached from the irony, "then he or she becomes a participant in the ironic situation as he or she displays it" (p. 128).

Also, after her analysis of audiotaped conversations, Roy (1981) reported that

> it became clear that irony can also be a joint effort among conversationalists with a global effect on a large section of talk. (p. 420)

She also suggested that

> if the speaker is in the position of wanting to build solidarity (friendship, good feeling, and so forth) he or she can choose immediately obvious utterances and/or provide intonational and gestural cues (which are not necessary conditions for irony) to make the irony clear, thus providing Bateson's metamessage 'This is play'. (p. 421)

Furthermore, Cutler (1974) identified some patterns of intonation change that may mark irony:

> (a) the entire sentence or part of it may be nasalized; (b) the rate of speaking may be slowed; (c) exaggerated stress may be applied to one or more words--particularly, stressed syllables may be lengthened in an exaggerated fashion. (p. 117)

Some authors (e.g., Gibbs, 1986) purposely excluded intonation from their studies because they feared it would introduce a confound into their studies.

Differences between irony and inversion

The definitions of both irony and sarcasm, like my definition of inversion, contain the notion "that the intended meaning is the opposite of that expressed by the words used" (The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles, 1970, p. 1045). Inversion, however, is distinct from irony and sarcasm.

First, unlike irony and sarcasm, inversion is inherently social in nature. As described in Chapter One, a fundamental aspect of inversion is that it occurs between at least two people. In contrast, irony and sarcasm are typically studied as monadic processes which occur within, or are done by, one person. Accordingly, we have individualistic terms for irony. For example, the term "the ironist" is used to describe a person who is being ironic. Also, irony and sarcasm can be attributed to a person as an enduring personality trait. For example, we say "he is very ironic" or "she is very sarcastic". In contrast, one person

is not seen as being inherently disposed to inversion; rather the two conversational participants are seen as cooperatively constructing a frame in their conversation that permits them to introduce inversions.

Second, unlike inversion, irony and sarcasm occur in other media than speech. For example, dramatic irony occurs in literature, and verbal irony occurs in speech. Most theorists say that they are studying verbal irony (irony in speech) but use examples that would better be described as dramatic irony, that is, irony in written literature (e.g., Sperber & Wilson, 1981; Kreuz and Glucksberg, 1989; Clark & Gerrig, 1984). Typically, subjects write down their understanding of key ironic or sarcastic sentences from written hypothetical or literary examples. Roy's (1981) article on irony and control stands as an unique contribution to the literature because she analyzed audiotaped conversations.

Finally, criteria that are seen as necessary for irony are not necessary for inversion. For example, Williams (1984) described three essential conditions for irony.

> First, the situation must contain two (or more) elements (events, ideas, points of view) that are incompatible or incongruous. Second, there must be someone (X), real or imaginary, who does not see the incongruity. Of course, we need another person (Y) to notice the contradictory elements as well as the

> possibility that someone [X] does not see them. (p. 127)

This suggests that at least three people are required for irony: the speaker or writer, the unseeing victim, and the co-conspirator. Indeed, the four main theories of irony all include counterfactual statements, victims (although the victims are not always seen as ignorant), and detectors of the irony (usually subjects being tested for comprehension). In contrast, inversion does not require a victim, and the "speaker" and the "detector" are seen as co-participants.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

In order to identify the hypothesized signalling system that participants use to bracket inversions, a study was conducted to elicit spontaneous inversions in conversation.

Subjects

Twenty-six undergraduate students from the University of Victoria Psychology Department's subject pool participated voluntarily. These 13 pairs produced 71 inversions.

Procedure

Subjects were scheduled in pairs who met in the Human Interaction Lab where their interaction was videotaped.

Each dyad was asked to complete four tasks that were designed to elicit inversions. Two of the tasks involved describing or telling something absurd (such as telling the dumbest question they had ever been asked, describing pictures of bizarrely dressed women, or retelling a bizarre event from "National Lampoon's True Facts"). It was hoped that these absurd stimuli and tasks would elicit inversions. The other two tasks created an incongruity between what subjects were doing and what they would normally do. In one task, participants were asked to choose a clothing outfit to wear from three outfits they disliked. In the other task, they had to plan a meal out of disliked foods.

Instructions After an overview of the study, dyads

were told (in one order of presentation):

The first thing I'd like you to do is to look at these pictures and agree upon the three worst outfits. [The pictures were of ten outfits from magazines with "the worst dressed stars" articles. The pictures included such unusual outfits as a woman dressed in yellow feathers, with a striking resemblance to Bigbird, and a man dressed in a ragged, too small shirt.] And then I'd like you to discuss which of these outfits you would wear if you had to, and where you would you wear it to. So, if you had to wear one of these three worst outfits, which one would you wear and where would you wear it to. This may sound kind of silly, and you're right--it is! So, just have fun while you do it.

Okay, after you have finished this first task, you can go on to the next ones. Since I didn't want to keep interrupting you, the instructions to the other tasks are written on these cards. So just go through them one at a time.

Any questions? Just give me a yell if you have any trouble.

If there were any questions, the experimenter elaborated on the initial instructions. She then left the room, and subjects went through the tasks. The (written) second task instructions were

Now to move on. Each of you pick up one of the pieces of paper under this card and tell it to the other person. [Participants were either given a brief description of an absurd event from "National Lampoon's True Facts" or pictures of unusual people and situations, such as a spookily dressed man in a graveyard.] Comment on this situation. What would you have done in this situation?

The instructions for the third task read as follows:

Great! The next thing I'd like you to do is to plan a full course meal only using really awful foods that you both dislike.

Who would you invite to this meal, and how would you deliver the invitation?

The instructions for the fourth task read:

You're almost done! The last thing I'd like each of you to do is to describe a question that could win an award for the dumbest question that you've ever seen or heard. And if you can't remember one right now, you can always make one up. I. e.: Exam questions from footnotes are real winners.

What would you have liked to have answered to this question?

After the four tasks were completed, participants were taken into the control room where they were shown their videotape and given a full explanation of the study.

Afterwards, they were asked to sign a permission form in which they chose the uses that could be made of the videotape (see Appendix A).

Analysis

First, a micro-analysis of the videotapes was conducted to identify inversions (see Appendix B). The areas where inversions occurred were then transcribed. (The reliability of this identification will be reported below.)

The transcription method was based on the meaning of the behaviours. That is, the transcription method used went beyond merely giving a physical description of the behaviours to translating (or glossing) the meaning of the nonverbal and paralinguistic behaviours (see Chovil, 1989); for example, the participant's head nod was translated as meaning "I'm following you" in this context. (The reliability of this method will be reported below). This transcription system is based upon the meaning of the verbal, nonverbal, and paralinguistic behaviours rather than being just a descriptive catalogue of the behaviours that occurred. Accordingly, certain continuous behaviours (e.g., eye position and body position) were only transcribed when a change produced a communicative meaning for the behaviour. Adaptors (e.g., wiping lips with tongue or scratching the nose) were not scored.

Meaningful behaviours that occurred before, during, and after the inversion were transcribed. Transcription began

where the topic of the inversion was first introduced. (When the first mention of this topic was followed by other topics before the inversion, only the relevant topic segment of the conversation was scored; transcription resumed when the inversion topic was re-introduced.) Transcription ended when the dyad resumed serious discussion and moved onto a different topic.

Behaviours were not tabulated according to what second or portion of a second they occurred in. Rather, behaviours were scored in relation to each other. It was more important to be able to say that behaviour X started at the end of the word "for" and continued until just before behaviour Y than to say that behaviour X occurred from 4:56:75 to 4:57:02 and behaviour Y occurred at 4:57:30. Thus, this system preserved the sequential (and temporal) relationship among behaviours without forcing them into a digital time frame. Time of occurrence was only recorded as a marker to facilitate finding the inversions on the videotapes.

Once inversions had been identified and the appropriate sections had been transcribed using the translation method, the next step was to look for patterns in the data, that is, typical signals used in inversions. These patterns are described in the Results chapter (4).

Reliability

Interjudge reliability was established for three levels

of analysis: identifying inversions, translating the meaning of behaviours, and identifying inversion phases (described in Results, below). Reliability was established across a sample of dyads and a sample of tasks.

After a short training period, a second scorer was given approximately 15% of the data to score for inversions. The two scorers had good agreement on identifying inversions: 92%.

Next, reliability was assessed for translating the meaning of nonverbal and paralinguistic behaviours. Reliability of translation was assessed on inversion messages and non-inversion messages for 24% of the data. Some messages contained words, others were totally nonverbal. The second scorer was given times and other useful markers (e.g., the words) to identify the section of the tape to be scored. The scorer then indicated what message was being communicated by placing each message into a general category and a specific category. There were two general categories to chose from: mock or serious. The scorer then had to chose from 14 specific categories (see Appendix C). The reliability for translating the meaning of messages was also good: 100% for general category, 88% for specific category. The probability of agreement due to chance alone was low (general category, $p=.25$; specific category, $p=.005$).

Reliability was also assessed for identifying inversion

phases (i.e., agreement, inversion, understanding, and closure). For approximately 10% of the data, the scorer was given a transcription of inversions and asked to indicate where the various phases occurred in each inversion. The identification of inversion phases was also highly reliable: 96%.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The main focus of the analysis was to discover how inversions in natural conversation are accomplished. I propose that inversion is a cooperative event in which participants use signals to cooperatively construct inversion frames. One person signals to the other person that he or she is going to attempt an inversion and that the inversion is not meant to be literal. This essentially installs a negation sign and an opening bracket into the discourse, thereby creating an inversion frame. Once the coming inversion has been signalled, the inversion is said. Then the participants communicate to each other that they both understand and appreciate the inversion. The inversion participants then close the inversion frame by installing the final bracket.

The following is a spontaneous inversion from the hated foods task (see Examples 4.0 & 4.1). At this point in the conversation, the subjects had already agreed upon the hated foods to be served at the meal, and O (the other participant) had already said who she would invite to the awful meal; I (the inverter) was having trouble thinking of someone she would invite. The inversion starts when she remembers someone she could invite:

I: "Ahh. Okay. Th the sergeant that I know who was

Example 4.0

Legend: The person who said the inversion is the inverter, I, the other participant is O. Words are transcribed, in bold face, on the first line, and any nonverbal behaviours are described in the line immediately below. Where a nonverbal behaviour occurred in relation to the words is marked with a dotted line with the behaviour appearing underneath in brackets, that is

\- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

{the behaviour occurred from here}.

A brief translation of the nonverbal behaviour is also included. The inverter's behaviours appear first followed by those of the other person. The actual inversion phrase is marked with asterisks. The examples are described more fully in the paragraphs in the body of the text.

Example 4.1

I: **Ahh. OK. Th-the sergeant that I know who was really nasty. He didn't want any women**
O:

I: **on his course so he did his best to get them off.**
{Nodding: "you understand the situation }
O:
{Face: disapproval of sergeant }

I: ***Yes to thank him for all of his help in training.***
{Brow: not really} {Brow: unhelpful}{Laughs & smiles: humour}
O: **Ah. OK.**
{Nodding: understanding
and following}

I:
O:
{Smile: understanding}

I: **Yeah. Yeah.**
{Smile: acknowledgement}
O: {Smile: understanding}

I: **Okay.**
{Picks up card: "Let's move on"}
O:

really nasty. He didn't want any women on his course so he did his best to get them off."

At the same time I says "on his course so he did his best to get them off", she is also nodding in a manner that conveys "you understand the situation". By the time I says "so he. . . ", O is indicating her understanding through a facial display showing disapproval, which she holds for the rest of I's phrase. O then says

O: **"Ahh. Okay.**

O is nodding when she says "okay", and she continues to nod, to show that she is following I's story, until after I says

"Yes to thank him". Thus, through nodding, a facial display, and their words, the participants have agreed that the sergeant was unhelpful and nasty. I now knows that O would not expect her to thank the sergeant. She then moves on to say her inversion:

I: **"Yes, to thank him for all of his help in training."**

The mockery aspect of the inversion is communicated clearly through nonverbal aspects of her language. When I says "thank", she raises her eyebrows to convey that "we both know I wouldn't be thanking him". Furthermore, I raises her eyebrow raise over "of his help", meaning "we both know he didn't help". Finally, she indicates that her statement is meant to be humorous by smiling as she starts to say "in training".

O shows that she is following the inversion by nodding, and then shows her acknowledgement of the inversion by raising her eyebrows and making a facial display indicating that to invite the sergeant would be both humorous and nasty. Over the final words of I's clause ("in training"), O continues to display her understanding of the inversion by smiling and laughing. At this point both I and O are showing their mutual acknowledgement of the inversion through mutual smiling, and I adds

I: **"Yeah. Yeah."**

Both of them keep smiling, thereby continuing to communicate their understanding and appreciation of the inversion. I then starts to pick up the instructions for the next task and, while doing so, she says

I: **"Okay."**

In combination with saying "okay", her picking up the card acts as a discourse shift marker indicating the end of the inversion. In fact, both I and O have already stopped smiling by the time I starts to say "okay". Altogether, this marks the final closure of the inversion frame.

Inversion phases

Most of the inversions in the data could be clearly divided into the four different phases seen in the example above: calibration, delivery, acknowledgement, and closure. These phases consistently occurred in a fixed sequence. First, the calibration phase followed in rapid succession by

the delivery phase, then by the acknowledgement phase, and lastly the closure phase. Occasionally, the phases overlapped or the calibration phase might be omitted (if calibration could be assumed). The delivery, acknowledgement, and closure phases were present in all successful inversions (see Table 4.1).

Calibration Phase

In the calibration phase, participants agree that they share a viewpoint or understanding about some topic; that is, they come to a mutual acceptance of some aspect of the subject matter (e.g., the sergeant was a bad guy). Having agreed upon this viewpoint, the participants are then free to take greater liberties with the delivery of conversational content, without risk of subsequent misunderstanding. Accordingly, this common ground can then become the subject matter of the inversion. Thus, the calibration phase establishes the opening bracket of the inversion. The negation sign, that is, the signals conveying that what is going to be said means the approximate opposite of its literal interpretation, is also installed in this phase, although it continues into the delivery phase (see Table 4.2).

In the calibration phase, the opening bracket of the inversion frame and the negation sign were typically established through smiling by only the inverter, only the other person, or mutual (i.e., simultaneous) smiling; facial

Table 4.1

Number of Successful Inversions With Each Phase

Phase	Frequency	%
Calibration	56/67	84
Delivery	67/67	100
Acknowledgement	65/67	97
Closure	51/56	91

Note: In cases where more than one inversion shared the same closure (i.e., inversion-inversion sequences), all but one of these inversions were subtracted out of the denominator.

Table 4.2

PHASES	**Calibration:**	**Delivery:**	**Acknowledgement:**	**Closure:**
	Participants indicate agreement.	Inverter says inversion.	Other participant indicates understanding and the inverter acknowledges.	Participants indicate end of inversion frame.
FUNCTION				
	Opening bracket installed.	Negation sign installed.	Confirms mutual understanding.	Participants install final bracket.
TYPICAL BEHAVIOURIAL SIGNALS	Smiling -Mutual -Inverter -Other	Smiling -Mutual -Inverter	Smiling -Mutual	Discourse Shift Markers
	Laughter -Other		Laughter -Mutual -Inverter -Other	Behaviours from the other phases decreased in this phase
	Facial Display -Inverter -Other	Facial Display -Inverter		
	Head Nod -Inverter -Other		Head Nod -Inverter -Other	
	Head Shakes -Inverter -Other	Paralinguistic Mockery		

displays and head nods by the inverter; and facial displays and head nods or shakes by the other person (see Table 4.3). These behaviours effectively encourage inversions to occur because they communicate "I'm with you" and "Go on". Once assured of this close tracking, the inverter can then proceed to attempt an inversion and expect that the other person will follow and understand it.

In 16% of the successful inversions, the calibration phase was missing (see Table 4.1). The calibration phase seemed to be missing when the context made it unnecessary. For example, after reading the task instructions, it was unnecessary for the inversion participants to agree that someone would have to go first. They both knew that one person had to start, and that it was hard to go first. Thus, inversions about going first (e.g., "You may have the honour of going first") often did not have a calibration phase.

Delivery phase

The delivery phase occurs after the calibration phase. Usually, it was immediately after, but if calibration had been established earlier, the inverter might return to the topic and immediately begin the delivery phase. In the delivery phase, one person delivers the actual inversion about the topic they agreed on:

"Yes to thank him for all of his help".

While saying the inversion, the inverter communicates to the

Table 4.3

Calibration Phase Behaviourial Patterns in Successful Inversions

Behaviour	Frequency	%
Mutual smiling	16	40%
Inverter smiling	12	30%
Other smiling	17	43%
Mutual laughter	7	18%
Inverter laughter	5	13%
Other laughter	12	30%
Inverter facial display	10	25%
Other facial display	13	33%
Inverter head nod	9	23%
Other head nod	10	25%
Inverter head shake	2	5%
Other head shake	10	25%
Paralinguistic mockery	0	0%
Paralinguistic d.s.m.	0	0%
Paralinguistic emphasis	7	18%
Discourse shift markers	0	0%

Note. Laughter and smiling were not included in tabulating the percentages if the subjects were doing these behaviours to a previous topic (e.g., a joke in task two). N=40.

other person that he or she means approximately the opposite of what he or she is saying (e.g., the inverter raises her eyebrows to indicate that she wouldn't be thanking her unhelpful sergeant).

Signals used in the delivery phase

The Mutual smiling and inverter smiling of the calibration phase often continued into the delivery phase. These behaviours helped to reinforce a negation of the literal meaning of the inversion. Smiling, for example, signalled that the inversion was not meant to be interpreted literally; instead, it was meant to be amusing. Mutual smiling communicated that both inversion participants were following and appreciating the inversion. Paralinguistic mockery (e.g., using a singsong voice) and inverter facial displays (e.g., rolling the eyes when saying a serious sounding statement) also established or emphasized the negation sign (see Table 4.4). In general, these behaviours were used to present the subject matter of the inversion in an unnatural manner by exaggerating, minimizing, or changing some aspect of the statement, much like a cartoon caricature is a parody of who it represents.

Inversion types

Six different types of inversion were found in the data, ranging from blatant to very subtle. Reversals were inversions in which a person describes a specific trait or quality when he or she means roughly the opposite; for

Table 4.4

Delivery Phase Behaviourial Patterns in Successful Inversions

Behaviour	Frequency	%
Mutual smiling	36	54%
Inverter smiling	22	33%
Other smiling	17	25%
Mutual laughter	7	10%
Inverter laughter	7	10%
Other laughter	8	12%
Inverter facial display	18	29%
Other facial display	0	0%
Inverter head nod	8	3%
Other head nod	0	9%
Inverter head shake	0	6%
Other head shake	0	0%
Paralinguistic mockery	9	13%
Paralinguistic d.s.m.	0	0%
Paralinguistic emphasis	2	67%
Discourse shift markers	2	3%

Note. N=67

example, saying "What a nice dress" to mean "What a bizarre dress". Forty-four percent of the inversions used this general format.

Possibility inversions occurred when something was presented as possible when the participants knew it was impossible. For example, after reading a "True Fact" about a security guard accusing a pregnant woman of hiding a stolen basketball under her shirt, the inverter wondered if the security guard had "a little trouble getting [the basketball] from [the pregnant woman]". Both participants knew that the woman did not have the basketball and, therefore, it was impossible for the guard to get one from her. Approximately 11% of the inversions in the data used the possibility format.

Minimizations included inversions where the inverter presented his or her point as if it were unimportant or barely adequate. For example, one person suggested that "crackers with a pig brain dip" would be a suitable appetizer for a meal of hated foods. The other person expressed her agreement by an inversion suggesting that pig brain dip was barely adequate to get on the hated foods list: "Okay, that'll do". These inversions tended to be quite subtle. Twenty percent of the inversions were minimizations.

Exaggerations were inversions that exaggerated some feature of the subject matter. For example, when asked for

one dumb question, the inverter said "I know tons". Eleven percent of the inversions were exaggerations.

Escalations were multiple inversions wherein an aspect of the subject matter was exaggerated from one inversion to the next. One person built upon a previous statement to make it grander, grosser, etc. than the previous statement. The inversions that were escalations often became increasingly subtle as the inversions progressed. Escalations counted for 10% of the inversions in the data. Below is a typical example of an inversion where escalation occurred (because both participants were both inverter and other, they will be identified here by gender, to tell them apart (see Example 4.2).

Man: "Meat would be kidney pie"

Woman: "I like liver."

Over the last word in the second inverter's clause ("I like liver"), she shrugs her shoulders meaning "So, I don't know what we can use." At the same time the woman says that she likes liver, the man indicates gesturally to the second inverter that he is going to tell her something.

Woman: "That's gross! No just the kidneys you can get"

Man: "You can have cooked kidney? Cause we both like liver."

Woman: "Yeah kidney."

Man: "Kidney's awful."

Example 4.2

I: Meat would be_ _ _ _ _ _ _kidney pie.
{Gesture: idea}
O: I like liver. That's gross! No just the kidneys you can
{Shrug: I don't know}

I: You can have cooked kidney? Cause we both like liver.
O: get Yeah kidney.

I: Kidney's awful. * A big piece of kidney.*
{Gesture: this size}
O: Disgusting.
_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
{Smiles: humour }
_*The whole kidney.*
{Gesture: bigger}
{Smiles: humourous}

I: So, a big chunk of kidney.

Woman: "Disgusting."

At this point, the participants clearly agree with one another that kidney is awful. They can then move on to the first inversion:

Man: "A big piece of kidney".

At the same time the man says big, he makes a gesture indicating a very large kidney. The woman shows her acknowledgement of the inversion through smiling and laughing and by adding another inversion:

Woman: "The whole kidney."

At the same time the woman says "the whole kidney", she makes a gesture showing an even larger kidney than the one the man had previously shown. Both participants smile through the inversion which shows following of the inversion. The mutual smiling ends as soon as the participants have held them long enough to show their acknowledgement of the second inversion.

Man: "So, a big chunk of kidney."

The inversion frame is closed through the use of the discourse shift marker "so". After this point in the conversation, serious dialogue resumes once again.

The size of the kidney that should be served escalated from a big piece of kidney in the first inversion to the whole kidney in the second inversion.

It is interesting to note that the only researcher who examined irony in natural conversations also saw

escalations. Roy (1981) stated that

> the irony escalates from something which is simply not, but could be true,. . . through something which could be true for the speaker, but not in this situation,. . . to something which is totally outrageous. (p. 420).

The last type, personal insults, are inversions in which one person overtly criticises the other person. Personal insults were relatively uncommon in the data collected; they accounted for 3% of the inversions. This was probably due to the fact that only two of the 13 dyads were composed of friends. Strangers may find it too risky to use a personal insult as an inversion.

In the following example of a personal insult, the dyad was trying to come up with the dumbest question they had ever seen or heard (see Example 4.3). The calibration phase consists of the inverter and the other agreeing that they disagree on whether Psychology 100 has dumb exam questions. The example starts as the inverter suggests that Psychology 100 has the dumbest exam questions:

I: **"Psych. one hundred. Ahh".**

O: **"I liked those they were good. Easy".**

As the other starts to say "were good. Easy", the inverter starts to smile. This smile foreshadows the inversion. The participant then joins in with the smiling as she says "easy". The subjects are then ready to move into the

Example 4.3

I: Psych 100. Ahh. {Smile: this is going to be humorous}

O: I liked those they were good. Easy. {Smile: I'm with you}

I: {Still smiling: humorous }{Smiles & laughs: I'm joking"}
{Gesture: *"You're a brown noser"*}

O: {Still smiling: I'm following" } No. {Smiles & laughs: understanding}

I: No. Uhmm.
{Still smiling}

O: No like psych 100 they didn't do anything that wasn't fair. Ohh.

delivery phase. I makes an emblematic gesture (rubbing thumb against nose) meaning "You're a brown noser". Both participants smile through the inversion.

O: "No."

At this point, the participants are in the acknowledgement phase of the inversion. The inverter starts to laugh immediately after the participant denies that she is a brown noser. At this point, both participants have indicated their understanding of the inversion by smiling and laughing. Then the other adds, seriously,

O: "No, like Psych 100, they didn't do anything that wasn't fair.

I: "No. Uhmm."

O: "Ohh."

At this point, the inverter clearly shows that his insult was not meant literally as he agrees with his partner that Psychology 100 was a fair course (i.e., the inverter says "no" meaning "I agree with you"). From here, the participants close the inversion frame by clearly marking their transition back to literal speech (i.e., with the discourse shift markers "uhmm" and "ohh").

Acknowledgement phase

Similarly, in the acknowledgement phase of inversion, participants let each other know that the inversion has been successfully understood. Successful inversions are marked by the other participant signalling his or her understanding

of the inversion and the inverter acknowledging and confirming the participant's understanding (e.g., through mutual laughter and smiling).

Behaviours that were used to communicate understanding and appreciation of the inversion by the other and acknowledgment of that understanding by the inverter included: mutual smiling; inverter, other or mutual laughter; inverter head nodding, and participant head nodding. Mutual, rather than individual, behaviours were often used to confirm the understanding of the inversion statement. In fact, 92% of inversions had at least one mutual behaviour signalling understanding (see Table 4.5). These behaviours essentially communicated the message "We're in tune" or "We both understand".

The inversion and acknowledgement phases often overlapped. For example, if an inversion was well set up, the other person might be able to guess the inverter's meaning before the inversion was said in full. Accordingly, the participant may start communicating his or her understanding and appreciation of the inversion (e.g., through nodding and smiling) during the delivery phase. In this case, the delivery phase and the acknowledgement phase would overlap. Also, the other person could indicate his or her understanding of the inversion by saying another inversion in response to the first one (escalation). For example, one person says

Table 4.5

Acknowledgement Phase Behaviourial Patterns in Successful Inversions

Behaviour	Frequency	%
Mutual smiling	52	80%
Inverter smiling	10	15%
Other smiling	14	22%
Mutual laughter	25	38%
Inverter laughter	19	29%
Other laughter	18	28%
Inverter facial display	2	3%
Other facial display	6	9%
Inverter head nod	8	12%
Other head nod	8	12%
Inverter head shake	3	5%
Other head shake	1	2%
Paralinguistic mockery	0	0%
Paralinguistic d.s.m.	0	0%
Paralinguistic emphasis	1	2%
Discourse shift markers	1	2%

Note. N=65

"You may have the honour of going first",

meaning "I'm giving you have the hard task of going first", and the other person responds

"Gee thanks"

meaning "I am not grateful". Here, the second inversion in the sequence is not only an inversion, it also communicates understanding. The second person had to understand the first person's inversion to be able to make an appropriate continuation. Thus, the acknowledgement phase from the first inversion overlaps with the delivery phase of the second inversion.

Closure phase

Finally, in the closure phase, participants signal each other that the inversion frame has ended and that serious discussion is resuming (e.g., "So, what else should we have for dinner?"). In the closure phase, the closing bracket of the inversion frame is installed.

After the participants had confirmed their mutual understanding of the inversions, subjects installed the final or closing bracket of the inversion. In the closure phase, the absence of or decrease in the rate of behaviours that were prominent in the earlier phases characterized the transition back to literal speech. Behaviours such as mutual smiling, inverter smiling, other smiling, mutual laughter, inverter laughter, other laughter, inverter head nodding, other head nodding, inverter head shaking, and

other head shaking all decreased in this phase (see Tables 4.6 and 4.7). Typically, discourse shift markers (see Polanyi & Scha, 1983; Schiffrin, 1988) such as "so" and "back to the main point" also signalled the final closure of the inversion frame. In fact, at least one discourse shift marker occurred in 82% of all inversions. These markers succinctly marked the closure of the inversion frame and the resumption of serious or literal speech. Inversions within the same frame shared the same closure frame (as the frame only needed to be closed once).

The phases of inversion are like a pass in a basketball game. By the end of the calibration phase, the conversational participants have told each other to expect a pass, and they are now free to throw one. The negation signals where the ball is going. The inversion can be conceptualized as the actual throwing of the ball. When one person passes the ball, he or she can actually see if the ball was caught (i.e., if the pass was successful). Similarly, participants convey understanding of the inversion in the acknowledgement phase. The closing of the inversion frame is equivalent to the player who caught the pass moving onto the next aspect of the game.

Failed Inversions

The complexity and precision of inversions was demonstrated by the occasional failed inversions in the data, (e.g., when the inversion was misunderstood and

Table 4.6

Closure Phase Behaviourial Patterns in Successful Inversions

Behaviour	Frequency	%
Mutual smiling	16	29%
Inverter smiling	9	16%
Other smiling	12	21%
Mutual laughter	1	2%
Inverter laughter	7	13%
Other laughter	4	7%
Inverter facial display	2	4%
Other facial display	3	5%
Inverter head nod	3	5%
Other head nod	4	7%
Inverter head shake	1	2%
Other head shake	1	2%
Paralinguistic mockery	0	0%
Paralinguistic d.s.m.	2	4%
Paralinguistic emphasis	1	2%
Discourse Shift Markers	46	82%

Note. N=56

Table 4.7

Number of Inversions With the Specified Behaviourial Package in Each Inversion Phase

Phase	N	%
Calibration	37/40	93
Delivery	56/67	84
Acknowledgement	60/65	92
Closure	48/56	86

Note. When participants were laughing etc. at task materials these inversions were not included in the calculation of the opening bracket. Otherwise, percentages were based on the total number of inversions that signalled that specific stage.

interpreted as literal). Inversions can fail at any of the four inversion phases. The calibration, delivery, acknowledgement, and closure of the inversion must be signalled and appropriately timed. Yet, only four of the 71 inversions in the data failed. One failed because it was not finished, another failed because it was mistimed, and two failed because the other person just did not understand the inversion.

Only two of the four failed inversions had calibration phases (versus 84% of successful inversions). The pattern of behaviours in these two calibration phases of failed inversions differed from calibration phases of successful inversions in that less mutual smiling, less other smiling, and less other laughter occurred in the calibration phase of failed inversions than the successful inversions (see Table 4.8).

The pattern of behaviours in the delivery phase of failed inversions differed from those of successful inversions in that substantially less mutual smiling and mutual laughter occurred in the failed inversions (see Table 4.9). An inversion can fail even if it is delivered with a clear tone of mockery. For example, one inversion failed mainly because the remark was mistimed. In this example (see Example 4.4), the dyad are talking about dumb exam questions, and the inverter is in the process of giving an example:

Table 4.8

Calibration Phase Behaviourial Patterns in Failed Inversions as Compared to Successful Inversions

Behaviour	Failed	Successful
Mutual smiling	0/2	16/40
Inverter smiling	1/2	12/40
Other smiling	0/2	17/40
Mutual laughter	0/2	7/40
Inverter laughter	0/2	5/40
Other laughter	0/2	12/40
Inverter facial display	1/2	10/40
Other facial display	0/2	13/40
Inverter head nod	1/2	9/40
Other head nod	0/2	10/40
Inverter head shake	0/2	2/40
Other head shake	1/2	10/40
Paralinguistic mockery	0/2	0/40
Paralinguistic d.s.m.	0/2	0/40
Paralinguistic emphasis	1/2	7/40
Discourse shift markers	0/2	0/40

Note. Laughter and smiling were not included in tabulating the percentages if the subjects were doing these behaviours to a previous topic (e.g., a joke in task two).

Table 4.9

Delivery Phase Behaviourial Patterns in Failed Inversions as Compared to Successful Inversions

Behaviour	Failed	Successful
Mutual smiling	0/4	36/67
Inverter smiling	2/4	22/67
Other smiling	1/4	17/67
Mutual laughter	0/4	7/67
Inverter laughter	0/4	7/67
Other laughter	0/4	8/67
Inverter facial display	3/4	18/67
Other facial display	0/4	0/67
Inverter head nod	1/4	2/67
Other head nod	0/4	6/67
Inverter head shake	0/4	4/67
Other head shake	0/4	0/67
Paralinguistic mockery	1/4	9/67
Paralinguistic d.s.m.	0/4	0/67
Paralinguistic emphasis	1/4	2/67
Discourse shift markers	2/4	2/67

Example 4.4

I: When Adolf Hitler was a small child his father was involved in "blank".
O:

I: It's like yeah!
{Brow: boring}{Facial display: stupid}
O:

I: * I care!*
{Paralinguistic: I don't care}
(Smiles & laughs: that was a joke}
O: He was a shoemaker or something like that.
{Facial display: confusion}

I: "When Adolf Hitler was a small child his father was involved in blank. It's like"

The inverter raises her eyebrows over "it's like", meaning "this is boring". I continues

I: "Yeah."

At the same time as the inverter says "yeah", she makes a facial display to indicate that "this question is really stupid". Notice the absence of smiling which would have indicated to the other participant that she was about to say something amusing (i.e., an inversion).

O: "He was a shoemaker or something like that."

I: " I care."

At the same time that the inverter says "I care", her intonation signals the negation of the literal meaning of her words (i.e., she means "I don't care"). While understanding that "I care" is an inversion, the other person seems to be unsure whether the inversion applies to her answer to the inverter's question or to the inverter's question. The other communicates her confusion through a facial display. During this facial display, the inverter smiles and laughs, indicating that her inversion was meant to be a joke and not an insult, but what she was joking about still remained ambiguous. It is likely that if the inverter had indicated that she was going to say something amusing with a smile as well as with intonation, it would have been easier for the participant to understand which

remark the inversion referred to. Moreover, it is likely that the inversion would have been successful if the inverter had delivered her inversion (i.e., "I care") before the participant had started her answer (i.e., "He was a shoemaker.."). Rather than resolving the confusion, the inverter quickly closed the inversion frame and moved back to serious conversation.

Once a misunderstanding had occurred, participants either ignored the blunder and carried on with the conversation (as in the example above), or the participants engaged in a lengthy explanation of the inversion until they reached an understanding of what was meant by the inversion. (Three times a failed inversions was ignored and one time it was explained). The inversions which had these processes had complicated acknowledgement phases in which the meaning of the inversion was either re-negotiated as literal, or actively explained. For example, after reading a joke the inverter said:

I: **"That's from National Lampoon's true facts. July 20, Saturday."**

The inverter means that the joke is obviously not true because it is from National Lampoon (see Example 4.5). The other, however, does not understand the inversion:

O: **"That's true. That's interesting."**

The other shows her surprise by raising her eyebrows over "true".

Example 4.5

I: That's from National Lampoon's true facts. July 20th. Saturday.
O: That's true.

{Brow: surprise}

I: *I don't know whether I believe that.*
O: That's interesting. It says it's a true fact?

I: Well National Lampoon's true facts. I don't know how true their true facts are.
{Smiles: "you understand what I mean"
O: {Smiles: understanding }

I: No.
{Still smiling}
O: Probably not very true.
{Still smiling }

I: "I don't know whether I believe that."

O: "It says its a true fact?"

I: "Well National Lampoon's true facts. I don't know how true their true facts are."

O: "Probably not very true."

I: "No."

At the same time as the inverter said "well" she started to smile and held the smile until the other said probably. The other started to smile when the inverter said "don't" and held it until after "no". The inverter resumed her smile when she said "no". The mutual smiling from "don't" to "probably" shows that the dyad are now following and understanding each other. The acknowledgement phase in this example continued until the two interactants had clearly defined what was meant by the inversion. Understanding was nonverbally indicated through mutual smiling.

Less mutual smiling, and mutual laughing, and more inverter smiling and inverter laughing occurred in the acknowledgement phases of the failed inversions than the successful inversions (see Table 4.10).

Patterns of behaviours in the closure phases of the failed and successful inversions were roughly similar. The failed inversions did, however, tend to mark the closure phases with fewer discourse shift markers (see Table 4.11).

Table 4.10

Acknowledgement Phase Behaviourial Patterns in Failed inversions as Compared to Successful Inversions

Behaviour	Failed	Successful
Mutual smiling	2/4	52/65
Inverter smiling	3/4	10/65
Other smiling	1/4	14/65
Mutual laughter	0/4	25/65
Inverter laughter	2/4	19/65
Other laughter	1/4	18/65
Inverter facial display	2/4	2/65
Other facial display	2/4	6/65
Inverter head nod	1/4	8/65
Other head nod	1/4	8/65
Inverter head shake	0/4	3/65
Other head shake	0/4	1/65
Paralinguistic mockery	0/4	0/65
Paralinguistic d.s.m.	0/4	0/65
Paralinguistic emphasis	0/4	1/65
Discourse shift markers	0/4	1/65

Note. In cases where there were extended understanding phases, rates are based on indication of initial understanding and appreciation (not on final understanding).

Table 4.11

Closure Phase Behaviourial Patterns in Failed Inversions as Compared to Successful Inversions

Behaviour	Failed	Successful
Mutual smiling	1/4	16/56
Inverter smiling	2/4	9/56
Other smiling	1/4	12/56
Mutual laughter	0/4	1/56
Inverter laughter	0/4	7/56
Other laughter	1/4	4/56
Inverter facial display	1/4	2/56
Other facial display	0/4	3/56
Inverter head nod	1/4	3/56
Other head nod	0/4	4/56
Inverter head shake	0/4	1/56
Other head shake	0/4	1/56
Paralinguistic mockery	0/4	0/56
Paralinguistic d.s.m.	0/4	2/56
Paralinguistic emphasis	0/4	1/56
Discourse Shift Markers	2/4	46/56

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this thesis was to develop a theory of inversion as a collaborative, dyadic event. To do so presented several methodological requirements. First, it was necessary to elicit spontaneous inversions for analysis. The tasks used, with their themes of incongruity or absurdity, turned out to be quite effective, eliciting 71 spontaneous inversions from 13 dyads. This frequency is surprising for several reasons: We think of inversions as atypical events; 11 of the dyads were strangers to each other; and the participants' main goal was presumably to accomplish the tasks assigned, not to digress into inversions. Yet each pair managed to produce, on average, over five inversions in the short time they talked; moreover, virtually all of these were successful. It was also interesting that six different kinds of inversion (reversal, possibility, minimization, exaggeration, escalation, and personal insult) could be identified in the data.

The theoretical approach taken required an exacting microanalysis of the region around each inversion. This analysis revealed that the inversions were rapidly accomplished and tightly coordinated. The inversions had a fixed sequential phase structure which proceeded swiftly and smoothly. The four inversion phases were calibration, delivery, acknowledgement, and closure. The participants

calibrated by agreeing to accept a viewpoint about the subject matter; then the inverter delivered the inversion; next, the other person conveyed his or her understanding of the inversion and the inverter acknowledged this understanding; finally, the inversion participants closed the inversion frame and resumed serious discussion. Occasionally, the phases overlapped or the calibration phase was missing.

A signalling system facilitated the inversion participants passing through the phases. The inverter did not simply throw a pass and expect the other person to somehow catch it. Instead, the participants cooperated in keeping together by signalling to each other through each phase. Behaviours that were used in the calibration phase included smiling by the inverter, the other person, or mutual smiling; facial displays and head nods by the inverter; and facial displays and head nods or shakes by the other person. The mutual smiling and inverter smiling of the calibration phase continued to be important in the delivery phase. Other behaviours used in signalling in the delivery phase included paralinguistic mockery and inverter facial displays. Behaviours that were used to signal understanding in the acknowledgement phase included mutual smiling; inverter, other, or mutual laughter; inverter head nodding and participant head nodding. In the closure phase, the absence of or decrease in the rate of behaviours present

in the earlier phases characterized the transition back to literal speech. Behaviours such as mutual smiling, inverter smiling, other smiling, mutual laughter, inverter laughter, other laughter, inverter head nodding, other head nodding, inverter head shaking, and other head shaking all decreased in this phase. Discourse shift markers such as "so" and "back to the main point" also signalled the final closure of the inversion frame. Most inversions had the behaviourial signalling system just described (see Table 4.11).

A social science approach to inversion requires that conclusions from the data be consensual, that is, it was necessary to demonstrate inter-judge reliability for the important inferences made from the data. High reliability between independent scorers was in fact established for (1) identifying inversions; (2) translating the meaning of nonverbal behaviours; and (3) identifying the inversion phases.

Relation to Previous Literature

Previous work has concentrated largely on the comprehension of written irony in non-social situations. The only exception was Roy (1981). However, Roy (1981) did not microanalyze conversations to examine the processes by which irony is accomplished. Instead, she focused on irony as a control device for individuals or groups. In her examination of irony in conversation, Roy (1981) did find escalation of the irony, as was found here.

Polanyi and Scha's (1983) and Schiffrin's (1988) work on discourse markers aided in the discovery of these markers being used here to signal the closing of the inversion frame. In the present data, nonverbal discourse markers were found to function in the same way as Polyani and Scha's (1983) verbal markers.

As noted in chapter two, Bateson's (1972) analysis of paradoxes could also be applied to inversions. His conclusion that messages that negate the literal or usual meaning of a message were inherently ambiguous was based upon the assumption that negation sign would be installed within the inversion frame. However, I am proposing that the negation sign (which indicates that the frame being established is an inversion frame) can occur in front of or behind, as well as within, an inversion frame. Bateson (1972) failed to recognize that the temporal relationship between the negation sign and the brackets defining the inversion frame is crucial. Only when the negation sign and the inversion are delivered as a single unit does a paradox exist. In such a case, it may be impossible to comprehend the meaning of the inversion. (The ambiguity occurs because if the messages within the frame mean approximately the opposite of their literal meaning, then the message signalling this reversal must also mean the opposite of its literal meaning, and so on. The result is that everything within the frame becomes uninterpretable.) Thus, the

placement of the negation sign is important to the ease of understanding.

In the data collected, almost all of the negation signs occurred before the delivering of the inversion. The infrequency of the negation sign within and behind formats may be due to the fact that all but two of the 13 dyads comprised strangers who, recognizing the inherent ambiguity of these formats, chose the clearest signalling format.

Not marking an utterance as an inversion until after it has been said may increase the riskiness of the inversion. The comments could be taken literally, and the person attempting to introduce the inversion into the conversation would certainly lose face or insult the other person. Perhaps this format can only be used when one is saying something that is unambiguously intended to be an inversion, for example, because the other person is a close friend or because the inversion is inherently obvious (such as going first on a hated task). In these situations, people can still cooperate in constructing the negation sign because they can easily see the already familiar signals.

For example, when two acquaintances were discussing roommates, person A remarked that she was going to live alone for awhile. Person B said:

B: **"Yeah, rumour is out that you're really hard to live with."**

After a slight pause, person A smiled meaning "You're

joking". The other person then joined in the smiling meaning "Yes I am joking". The inversion participants then laughed together indicating understanding and appreciation of the inversion. In this example, the negation sign was given after the inversion was said and, indeed, was done by the other, not the inverter (i.e., by person A smiling and person B joining in). Both participants were able to follow the inversion, to cooperatively construct the negation sign, and to signal their appreciation of the inversion.

Future Directions

Several interesting questions have been raised by this thesis. For example, do inversion participants change the signals they use when they are not in face-to-face communication? When people are talking on the telephone, for instance, do they modify how they signal the inversion to compensate for the fact that visible nonverbal behaviours (e.g., smiling, facial displays) cannot be seen by the other person? It is plausible that, when talking on the telephone, inversion participants rely more on signals that can be heard by the other person (e.g., paralinguistic emphasis and mockery, laughing, verbal discourse shift markers).

Furthermore, if people use a restricted signalling system to accomplish inversions on the telephone, do participants, especially strangers, find it more difficult to accomplish an inversion via the telephone than in face-

to-face communication? If it is more difficult to coordinate an inversion while talking on the phone, then these conversations should elicit fewer inversions (and more failed inversions) than face-to-face conversations.

Another interesting question is whether people overhearing the inversion understand it. When watching and scoring these data, we noticed that we often missed identifying inversions the first few times through. Even though, as outside observers solely interested in locating inversions, we were not distracted by doing the task or responding to the other person, the inversion would slip past us. Besides demonstrating how smoothly inversions are accomplished, this suggests that the unique calibration that occurs between inversion participants is important for successfully understanding the inversion. If this is the case, then a future study should show that overhearers should have a different understanding of the inversion than the inversion participants.

It would also be interesting to interfere with the phase structure of the inversions. What happens when one or more of the phases are missing (e.g., subjects don't get to calibrate, acknowledge the inversion, or close the inversion frame)? Phases of the inversion could also be removed for external observers (e.g., by editing out parts of the tape, such as an earlier calibration phase). This should affect both whether the observer can understand the inversion and

whether the observer would judge the participants as having been together following and understanding each other.

The different types of inversions elicited in the present study could also be expanded on. For example, tasks could be varied in an attempt to elicit different kinds of inversions.

Unlike the irony literature which suggested that ironic utterances tended to be said to or in the vicinity of victims, very few inversions in the present data had victims who were present (the victims were people in the photographs, dinner guests etc.). Rather than being a source of pain to the victim, inversions tended to be a source of enjoyment to all people present. Inversions were cooperative jokes not pejorative judgements. Inversions which were against the other person or a third party could be located to see if the signals and phases are the same as those identified in this data. One source of these inversions might be political debates.

Another extension of this thesis would be to apply the systems approach to other phenomena which are typically seen as being individual acts or traits. Brenneis and Lein (1977), for example, examined children's arguments and found them to be tightly coordinated and structured dyadic events. Similarly, Edwards and Middleton (1986) made a distinction between memory (a cognitive structure) and remembering (a social process). Another, broad area that could be explored

is information transmission: Is information acquired differently or better when imparted in a dyadic setting with an actively involved speaker and listener than in a unilateral format in which there is no social involvement in the transmission?

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APPENDIX A

Permission Form Specifying Videotape Usage

Project: Inversion

Linda Coates

Please indicate below the way(s) in which we may use the videotape made during this experiment. You may select some and not others -- or none at all. Your experimenter will answer any questions you may have about these options.

Your tape would be identified only by subject number. The sheet that connects your name with this subject number will be kept separate in a secure place. Obviously, however, videotapes are not anonymous to anyone who knows you.

_____ analysis by the research team (Linda Coates, R. Bavelas and assistants)

_____ viewing by other subjects who rate various verbal and nonverbal aspects.

_____ playing as an example for professional audiences (e.g., at a professional presentation at another university).

_____ playing as an example for classes at U. Vic.

_____ still photographs in journal articles or books.

_____ none of the above; please erase the tape.

Signature_____

Date_____

Project_____

Experiment Number_____

Subject or Group Number_____

APPENDIX B

Instructions for Identifying and Transcribing Inversions

An inversion is a discourse event in which people convey a message which is approximately the opposite of the literal meaning of the words actually said. I am hypothesizing that inversions are possible because people signal each other that an inversion is being constructed.

Identifying Inversions

1. Watch the dyad all the way through.

Follow the content of the conversions closely. Usually, you will have to be aware of what has been previously said in order to identify the inversions. Frequently, segments in the tape that seem playful will be inversions. Out of the ordinary intonation (e.g., singsong quality, too flat, too stressed, etc), smiling, and laughter will often serve as good cues to identify an inversion. Remember, inversions in conversation are often very subtle.

2. When you think that something might be an inversion, rewind the tape slightly (so that you can understand the current context or topic of conversation).

3. Write a sentence summing up any relevant background information (e.g., the dyad is talking about appetizers that they do not like).

4. Transcribe the event. e.g.:

A: I don't like fish.

B: Oh yeah, like shellfish.

* A: So, a nice appetizer would be raw fish.

5. Indicate the suspected inversion sentence(s) with an asterisk.

6. Write out a paraphrase of the message.

For example, "We both think that a terrible appetizer would be sushi".

7. Examine the transcribed words. Being as explicit as you can, write down the literal (i.e., dictionary) meaning of the words. Be careful that you are examining the words in isolation (i.e., do not look at intonation, facial displays etc.). For example,

"Sushi is a good appetizer."

8. Do the paraphrased and the literal messages have the same meaning? For example,

The paraphrased message (sushi is terrible) does not have the same meaning as the literal message (sushi is good). So, you would proceed to number nine.

Yes,--> then this is not an inversion.

9. No, --> Is there some notion of opposite between the literal meaning of the words and the message?

Yes, --> a sense of opposite exists between these messages (e.g., terrible/bad versus good) --> Inversion

No, --> This is not an inversion

(probably, it is an indirect speech act)

Other Examples:

1. The dyad was just about to start a new task.

*A: You may have the pleasure of going first.

*B: Gee thanks.

Literal: I am generously giving you the honour of going first.

Para: I am giving you the hateful task of going first.

These messages have different meanings and contain some notion of opposite (i.e., honour versus hateful)

Literal: Thank you for letting me go first.

Para: I am not thankful that you let me go first.

The messages contain some notion of opposites (i.e., thankful versus ungrateful).

2. "A" had just finished telling a joke about a woman who had been falsely arrested for shoplifting -- the store thought her stomach was one of their basketballs.

*B: Makes sense to me.

Literal: It is reasonable to confuse a pregnant woman with a woman having a basketball under her shirt.

Para: It does not make sense to confuse a pregnant woman with a woman having a basketball under her shirt.

Common Types of Inversion

The following list of types of inversions is not

exhaustive. This list is only intended to give you some more help for identifying inversions.

1. Minimizes: after agreeing that a food is terrible, the dyad includes it in their hated foods meal. Someone says "that would do, yes"

2. Exaggerates: when asked for one dumb exam question, the person says "I know tons"

3. Reversal: the person says something negative when he means something positive, or vice versa (e.g., says terrible meaning wonderful or says wonderful meaning terrible)

4. Presents something as true/possible when she knows it can't be true/possible (e.g., calls a black woman a gypsy when we know gypsy's are hispanic)

TRANSCRIBING INVERSIONS

Once you have identified an inversion:

1. Go back and find where the participants calibrate (where the dyad has established that they concur on a specific point or idea that the inversion was based on).

For example, A says "I hate turnips", and B says "Me too".

2. Transcribe the event starting with the calibration phase, through the inversion, to the point where the dyad is resuming serious discussion.

Note: If the agreement occurs a long time before the inversion, transcribe the calibration phase and then skip ahead to just prior to the inversion.

3. Group the transcription into the following phases:

a) calibration

b) delivery

c) acknowledgement

d) closure

Note: all of these phases may not be present in every inversion.

5. Note on the side of the margin whether the inversion was successful or unsuccessful.

6. Categorize the inversion into one of the meaning categories (e.g., mock seriousness etc.).

SYMBOLS USED IN SCORING:

Horizontal lines indicate that the behaviour is continuing; endings of these behaviours are indicated by vertical lines.

Eyes - only score eyes when they are translatable

- if the eyes used as part of a facial display, score the whole behaviour as a facial display

Head

Nods: include a translation (e.g., yes; agree with me; I'm following you; etc.).

Shakes: include a translation (e.g., no; this possibility doesn't exist; I'm erasing the possibility; that is too much; etc.).

Laughter: include translation.

L = laughter

Smiles: include translation.

S = small to medium smile

F/S = full smile

General Non-verbal

C-G = C-gesture = a gesture; the translation of the gesture should appear beneath (or occasionally on top of) the appropriate line.

I-G = I-Gesture = interactive gesture; the translation of the gesture should appear beneath (or occasionally on top of) the appropriate line.

Gestures may also be indicated by describing the movement and then providing a translation.

F/D = Facial display; should include a translation

E/B/R = Eyebrow raise; translation should appear in the appropriate position.

E/B/D = Eyebrows pushed down; translation should appear in the appropriate position.

Body position = only write down when the individuals are in synchrony with one another.

Paralinguistics

Transcribe any special quality about how the words were said (e.g., playfully, sing-song like, seriously, etc.).

Verbal

Write approximately one word per box, a long word may take two boxes etc..

Watch carefully for overlapping speech. Vertically line up the appropriate words or partial words.

GENERAL TRANSLATION RULES:

The critical aspect is how behaviours (e.g., gestures, words, facial displays, etc.) relate to each other. In the transcription, I want to capture the sequential relationships among behaviours. As such, time is not used as a strict guideline for transcribing behaviours (time-lines may not give the degree of accuracy required because it is hard to place behaviours on the time-line and time does not necessarily tell us how behaviours relate to each other. I am not interested in what behaviour occurred at what time. The interesting aspect is WHEN the behaviours

occurred in RELATION to each other).

Down play the physical descriptions of the behaviours (which muscles moved where is not of interest), a brief description of the behaviour will suffice (e.g., content gesture; eyebrow raise; hand slap; etc.).

EMPHASIZE the transcriptions of behaviours. The meaning contributed to the overall message is the vital component of the behaviour. INVERSIONS, after all, ARE A MANIPULATION OF MEANING, AND SO MEANING MUST BE CLOSELY EXAMINED.

Think of the behaviours as sub-parts of a whole. Speech is a skilled task and we do it as a whole, but sub-parts do exist.

Use phonemic clauses and time whenever you think they are helpful in deciding where a behaviour occurred. Remember to line up the behaviours that occur together.

Instructions for Scoring Meaning:

In general, messages can be divided into two main categories of meaning: MOCK, and SERIOUS.

Mock messages are those where the statement has a meaning other than its customary or grammatical one. What you may notice first is the mockery aspect of the message. The next aspect of the message that you might notice is mockery of which subtype. As such, the message mimics a serious message but is a parody or mockery.
Messages in the mock category are **inversions.**

You can think of these inversions as being caricatures where features of someone are exaggerated etc. to show mockery in some way. One aspect of the message is that of showing mock excitement, intelligence, concern etc.. Another aspect of the message is the portrayal of a specific person/event/situation (e.g., first you realize that someone is faking concern etc. then you realize that the person is Prime Minister Mulroney).

Serious messages are those where a statement has a meaning equivalent to the customary or grammatical one. If a message is a serious one, then it is a non-inversion.

Sub-types of Messages:

Serious excitement: -includes delight, happiness etc.
-e.g., while starting another task excitedly saying "Now, which one would you wear?" and meaning the next

task is exciting and fun

Mock excitement: -includes pretences of delight, happiness etc.

-e.g., excitedly saying "Now, which one would you wear?" and meaning "I don't want to do the next task" or "The next task is boring"

Serious naivety: -unseeing, ignorant, simple/dumb

-e.g., after hearing an incriminating excuse given to a police officer for speeding, A says "I don't think that would give her any bonus points with the police. Do you?" A's response is naive in that she genuinely entertains the possibility that the speeder's incriminating excuse could get her out of trouble.

Mock naivety: -pretence of being unseeing, ignorant, "the dumb blonde routine"

- after hearing an incriminating excuse given to a police officer for speeding, A says "I don't think that would give her any bonus points with the police. Do you?". A's response is mock naivety in

that she makes fun of entertaining the possibility that the speeder's incriminating excuse could get her out of trouble.

Serious horror: -includes terror, fright etc.
- e.g., "That's awful" meaning that is horrible.

Mock horror: -includes pretences of terror, fright etc.
- e.g., Saying "that's awful" and meaning "that's no big deal" or "that's good"

Serious politeness: -earnest consideration
-after someone helped you, you say "thank you"

Mock politeness: -parody of politeness norms
-after someone hindered you, you say "thank you" meaning "you hindered me"

Serious message: - literal
- e.g., After hearing a story that is bizarre but conceivable you say "I can believe that happened".

Mock seriousness: -pretence of being literal
-e.g., After hearing a story that is bizarre and questioning the

source of the 'true' story you say "I can believe that happened" meaning "I don't believe that".

Serious personal insult: -insult directed at a victim who is present
- Saying "You're a nerd" and meaning the person is a social misfit.

Mock personal insult: -what could be an insult is said to the other person, but it is a playful jibe--not a true insult
-e.g., saying "you're a nerd" and meaning "you're hip/cool"

Serious thinking: -telling someone (verbally or nonverbally) that you are thinking

Mock thinking: - using the facial displays etc. that usually mean "I am thinking" to show that the situation is not thought provoking--the answer is obvious etc.

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