

Humour in Context: A Pragmatic Analysis of Young Sheldon

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ABSTRACT

The present study explores the pragmatic analysis of humour in the American sitcom *Young Sheldon*. It aims to analyse how humour is generated through linguistic strategies, with a focus on pragmatic mechanisms. The researcher applies multiple theories, including Attardo's general theory of verbal humour by utilising all six knowledge resources, recognising forms of humour by focusing on categories of spontaneous conversational humour, and Grice's cooperative principle, with an emphasis on non-observance of Grice's maxims. The study employs a qualitative research method to analyse specific extracts from the sitcom. The results of the study reveal that all six knowledge resources of Attardo's general theory of verbal humour have a significant role in generating humour, especially the script opposition. In addition, it uncovers the close connection between humour and the deliberate non-observance of Grice's conversational maxims. Furthermore, it shows how the utility of multiple spontaneous conversational forms of humour enhances the comedic style of the sitcom. The study concludes that the pragmatic approach is essential in television humour, since it provides valuable insights into the linguistic construction of comedy.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Article

The phenomenon of humour is not unusual; an individual sees or hears something and laughs. Humour is a universal human trait because all people like and appreciate humour, yet the kind of humour that people want can vary widely. One individual may find something humorous, while another may find it not funny or even disturbing. This depends on people's sense of humour, which is a trait that some people have and some lack (Raskin, 1985). Sitcoms are ideal subjects for linguistic analysis because they have humorous content that can be shaped by language, context, and character interaction. Young Sheldon is an American coming-of-age sitcom created by Chuck Lorre and Steven Molaro. It aired on CBC from 2017 to 2024. It is a prequel to The Big Bang Theory series. Young Sheldon explores the early life of Sheldon Cooper, who is a gifted but socially awkward child. The events of the series take place in the fictional town of Medford in East Texas in the USA during the late 1980s to mid-1990s. It is very hard for a brilliant young man who can deal with advanced mathematics and science to live in East Texas, where church and football rule (Warner Bros, 2024).

1.2 Research Questions:

- 1- How does Young Sheldon use the non-observance of Grice's maxims to generate humour in character dialogue?
- 2- In what ways do the elements of Attardo's general theory of verbal humour contribute to humour in the selected extracts from Young Sheldon?
- 3- How are the types of spontaneous conversational humour used in Young Sheldon to enhance the comedic effects?

2. Theoretical Background

This study draws on three key theoretical perspectives to analyse humour pragmatically in *Young Sheldon*: Grice's Cooperative Principle, Attardo's General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH), and Martin's taxonomy of spontaneous

conversational humour. Each theory offers a unique lens through which humour in character interaction can be identified, categorised, and explained. Together, they provide a coherent and layered framework for the analysis.

2.1 Pragmatics and the Cooperative Principle

Pragmatics concerns how language is used in context to achieve communicative goals (Yule, 2006). Central to this is Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle, which proposes that effective communication relies on four conversational maxims: Quality, Quantity, Relevance, and Manner. These maxims serve as expectations that speakers generally follow in cooperative dialogue. However, humour often arises when speakers intentionally flout these maxims—violating them in a way that prompts the listener to infer an indirect or ironic meaning (Thomas, 2013). For instance, exaggeration, irony, or ambiguous statements may flout the maxim of Quality or Manner and generate a humorous effect. This study focuses particularly on such non-observance as a primary pragmatic strategy in scripted humour.

2.2 Linguistics Theories of Humour

There are two main linguistic theories of humour: the first one is the script-based semantic theory of humour, and the second one is Attardo's general theory of verbal humour, which the study exclusively focuses on. As such, only the second one has been elaborated upon in the theoretical background, since it is directly relevant to the objectives of the current study.

General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH)

While Grice provides the pragmatic conditions for humorous communication, Attardo's General Theory of Verbal Humour (1994, 2017) offers a structural model. The GTVH identifies six Knowledge Resources (KRs) that underpin humour (script opposition, logical mechanism, situation, target, narrative strategy, and language).

Attardo (1994) claims that script opposition is the relationship between two overlapping scripts in a text, but the overlapping alone is not enough to create humour because some texts have overlapping, as in metaphors and allegories, but they do not generate humour. For humour to occur, the overlapping scripts must satisfy the conditions of opposition. Raskin (1985) divides script oppositions into three abstract levels: good/bad, normal/abnormal, and actual/not actual. Attardo (2017) asserts that the logical mechanism refers to clever reasoning or twists connecting two scripts. It depends on the resolution of the incongruity, but it is a non-serious resolution and optional because the incongruity itself is sufficient to generate humour. In other words, it only helps to clarify the incongruity in the text.

The third one is the situation that represents the setting, characters, and objects involved in humour (background scripts). It is also known as a macro-script because it specifies the surroundings in which the events of the joke take place. The fourth is the target, which specifies the person or group assigned as the butt of joke, for instance, stereotypes about professions and culture. It is the easiest one to understand, which mainly explains how jokes are aggressive acts and how these acts have targets. The fifth one is the narrative strategy, which is the format of humour, as in riddles and story dialogue. It considers the organisation of the text in a narrative sense. The last one is the language that refers specific words, timing, and phrasing that make the joke work. It contains a phonological, morphological, syntactic, and lexical description of the text (Attardo, 2017).

2.3 Spontaneous Conversational Humour

Martin (2007) identifies humour as largely spontaneous and conversational, rather than formal or scripted like jokes. His framework includes types such as irony, sarcasm, self-deprecation, teasing, and clever replies to rhetorical questions. These forms rely on context, tone, and shared knowledge, making them highly relevant to sitcom analysis, where character relationships and situational context shape how humour is received.

In the context of *Young Sheldon*, spontaneous humour is frequently embedded in natural dialogue, where characters make sarcastic comments, tease each other, or use overstatement for comic effect. Recognising these forms adds depth to the analysis by categorising the nature of the humour beyond structure and pragmatics.

2.4 Synthesising the Theories

Together, these three frameworks allow for a multidimensional analysis of humour in *Young Sheldon*. Grice's theory explains the pragmatic mechanics, Attardo's GTVH outlines the structural construction, and Martin's typology classifies the style and function of the humour. By integrating these perspectives, the study captures both the intentionality and form of humorous expression, offering a comprehensive approach to understanding how humour is constructed and communicated in the sitcom.

3. Methodology

The present study employs a qualitative approach. The researcher selects the extracts based on their representativeness of the sitcom's humour. For data collection, transcripts of these episodes are created and coded for extracts. Each extract is analysed according to Attardo's general theory of verbal humour by utilising all six knowledge resources, recognising forms of humour by focusing on categories of spontaneous conversational humour, and Grice's cooperative principle, with an emphasis on non-observance of Grice's maxims.

4. Analysis and Discussion of Humor in the TV Sitcom Young Sheldon

In this section, the researcher analyses selected extracts of dialogue and interactions in detail, applying all six knowledge resources of the general theory of verbal humour, recognising forms of humour, and focusing on the non-observance of Grice's maxims.

Extract 1:

“Sheldon: Would you like to play a driving game?

Mary: Not really. I always lose.

Sheldon: I know. That’s why it’s fun. (laughs) How about license plate with prime numbers – followed by cons?

Mary: Why don’t we just talk?

Sheldon: Very well.

Mary: You understand that some people are gonna be intimidated by you ‘cause of how smart you are?

Sheldon: Or maybe they’ll recognize my intellect and make me their leader.

Mary: Lord, look after my son. Don’t let him get stuffed in a gym bag.”

(Young Sheldon, S1, E1)

The first extract is from the pilot episode of season one. Sheldon Cooper is the main character of the show, who is extremely smart and has a very high IQ. He is a child prodigy who struggles with social interactions and emotions. He takes everything literally, has a strict daily routine, and dislikes physical contact. Mary Cooper is Sheldon’s mother, who plays a central character on the show. She is a devout Baptist Christian. She is a strict, caring, and over-protective mother who mostly fixates on Sheldon, ignoring her other children most of the time. She struggles to raise her over-smart yet socially awkward son. This scene is Sheldon’s first day attending high school. He is only nine years old. His family, especially his mother, is worried about him. Sheldon and his mother, Mary, are in the car heading to the school.

In analysing this extract through Attardo’s general theory of verbal humour, the six knowledge resources help understand the generation and interpretation of humour. Script opposition in the above scene is Sheldon’s intellectual attitude and Mary’s parental concerns. Sheldon’s thoughts about car games and leadership highly contradict Mary’s emotional state. This scene generates comedic tension through Sheldon and Mary’s opposing views of the situation. For logical mechanism, Sheldon’s hypothesis about leadership demonstrates his mental superiority, which is incongruent with the social realities of high school.

It generates humour since Sheldon's logic appears accurate to him, while it is absurd in the context of social interaction. The humorous situation is generated from Sheldon's first day of high school due to his exaggerated confidence in himself and Mary's maternal concerns about social life in high school and how her nine-year-old son would deal with it. The humour target in the above text is Sheldon's quirkiness because he is overconfident and only focuses on the intellectual aspect of his life. Also, the humour in this text targets Mary's exaggerated maternal worries about her son's naivety. The narrative strategy used in this text to deliver humour contains exaggeration and absurdity of Sheldon's fantasy to become a leader, while the audience understands social hierarchies, and this creates incongruity. Furthermore, Sheldon takes Mary's request literally when she asks him that they should just talk and ignores her desire for a meaningful connection, and this creates a pragmatic mismatch between Sheldon's robotic answer, "very well", and Mary's emotional need. The language that is used by Sheldon in this example is very formal for a casual mother-son conversation and contrasts with Mary's colloquial tone, and it generates humour.

In the above extract, an accidental or unintentional form of humour arises from Sheldon's overconfidence based only on his intellect, ignoring social norms. Mary's exaggerated maternal concerns generate humour unintentionally as well. Concerning spontaneous conversational humour, Sheldon teases Mary when he states that the game is fun for him because his mother always loses. He acknowledges that she always loses at the game and that is the reason it is enjoyable for him; he teases her in a lighthearted, playful way. In Mary's statement, where she explains to Sheldon that some people may be frightened because of his brilliance, she uses irony since she desires to inform her son indirectly that some people may bully or harass him, and instead of using these words directly, she uses "intimidation". Mary uses overstatement in her exaggerated and hyperbolic prayer when she asks God to watch over her son because she gives many details of how teenage and high school kids may bully and irritate her nine-year-old son.

In a pragmatic analysis of humour, the researcher applies the non-observance of Grice's maxims. In Sheldon's first question, when he asks his mother if she would play a driving game with him, he flouts the maxim of relevance because many people play car games to pass the time in the car; nevertheless, in this case, it seems irrelevant due to Mary's concern about Sheldon's social life. Sheldon shifted from that emotional context by flouting the maxim of relevance, and that shift caused a humorous effect. In Sheldon's second question, when he asks his mother to play a complicated game with him, he does not observe the maxim of quantity because he provides needless, complex, and excessive details that do not fit the social context. This mismatch imbalances the simplicity of the conversation and leads to humour. Furthermore, Sheldon's suggestion to play an extra-intellectual game in the middle of a casual conversation flouts the maxim of relevance and adds absurdity to the situation. In Sheldon's statement, when he says people may know how brilliant he is and make him their leader, he flouts the maxim of quality because of his exaggeration, which is far from reality. It is humorous as he thinks that due to his smartness, he will socially succeed, and this is highly doubtful in the high school environment and context. After this statement, when Mary praises God to watch over her...

Extract 2:

"Adult Sheldon: When you are three foot ten and in high school, getting from point "A" to point "B" can be a harrowing experience, but it's worth it when point "B" is [EXHALES] the library. Home to the original information superhighway, the Dewey Decimal System.

Ms. Hutchins: Hey there, Sheldon. What can I get for you today? Chemistry? Quantum mechanics? Astronomy?

Sheldon: No, nothing fun today. I need to learn how to make a friend.

Ms. Hutchins: Aw, honey, you having a hard time adjusting to high school?

Sheldon: I'm having a hard time adjusting to Earth.

Ms. Hutchins: Yeah. You and me both. [handing him a book] Try this. It's been around a while, but it's still quite popular. Unlike me, who's just been around a while."

(Young Sheldon, S1, E2)

This extract is from the second episode of season one, "Rockets, Communists, and the Dewey Decimal System". In this scene, Sheldon Cooper, a super-intelligent, socially naïve prodigy, finds out that his mother is worried about him because he has no friends. His twin sister, Missy, suggests that he should make a friend for the sake of their mother. As soon as Sheldon faces a problem, he immediately runs to the library, which is the most preferred place of comfort for him. This scene takes place in the library. It is a conversation between Sheldon and a middle-aged, lonely, and unnoticed librarian, Ms. Hutchins, who seems unsatisfied with her work and personal life. Adult Sheldon from The Big Bang Theory, who is the narrator for the Young Sheldon sitcom, opens up this scene. In analysing the second extract according to Attardo's general theory of verbal humour, the script opposition in the above scene is expected versus unexpected. Normally, when someone faces difficulties making friends, the expected reaction is emotional or social support. Sheldon wants to solve his struggles in making friends in the library and treats them like an academic subject, creating an unexpected contrast. The logical mechanism can be found through the absurdity and incongruity of the above scene. Sheldon's struggle in making friends is framed absurdly as he attempts to learn to make friends from books. Moreover, Ms. Hutchins's statement about her unpopularity adds incongruity to the scene because it is unexpected that an adult responds in this way to a child's concern. The situation of this scene is illustrated through the context of interaction. The setting is the library, which is a place associated with knowledge and learning; nevertheless, Sheldon uses it to solve his various problems rather than through experiences. The humour target in this extract is Sheldon's intellectual nature. Ms. Hutchins makes herself a target as well through her statement, where she clarifies her unpopularity. The narrative strategy of how humour is structured through the dialogue of this scene is the setup where Sheldon asks for a book,

and how that leads to an unexpected punchline, which is his reason for reading it; also, Ms. Hutchins's response, where she humourously relates Sheldon's problems to her own. The language used in the extract is humourous since Sheldon uses exaggerated phrases where he talks about adjusting to Earth and how making friends is the opposite of fun for him.

There are many forms of spontaneous conversational humour in the above extract. For instance, Sheldon uses overstatement when he talks about his difficulties adjusting to Earth. Ms. Hutchins's assertion about her unpopularity is a clear example of self-deprecation. She puts herself humourously when she implies that she is outdated and unnoticed. Furthermore, Sheldon uses irony when describing academic subjects as fun tasks and making friends as burdensome.

Pragmatically analysing the extract, to generate humour in this scene, the narrator, adult Sheldon, flouts all of the maxims. Adult Sheldon flouts the maxim of quantity by providing too much detail about his height, "three feet ten." He also pictures moving from one place to another with extra difficulty and needless information. The humour stems from this extra explanation of a simple situation, and the audience can notice how Sheldon differs from other schoolers. In addition, adult Sheldon flouts the maxim of quality due to his exaggeration in describing this experience as a "harrowing" one, because walking through school cannot be that dangerous and dramatic. The audience may find this description humorous because of the hyperbolic explanation of adult Sheldon. Moreover, adult Sheldon flouts the maxim of relation due to his unexpected and somehow irrelevant connection between the library and what he describes as a "superhighway, the Dewey Decimal Point". This humorous analogy makes the library seem more exciting than what the majority of people would view. Furthermore, adult Sheldon flouts the maxim of manner using ambiguous and complex language. Instead of expressing his love for the library in simple words, he uses technical and academic phrases such as "original information superhighway." It raises humour since the audience can see his huge passion for an ordinary place like the library. In the above example, Ms. Hutchins asks

Sheldon about high school adjustment, and Sheldon replies with obvious exaggeration when he claims that he is having a hard time adjusting to Earth. Due to this hyperbolic expression, he flouts the maxim of quality. The humour lies in the absurd scale of his discomfort and framing his struggle as existential. In addition, Ms. Hutchins flouts the maxim of manner because she states an ambiguous and indirect statement when she suggests a book for Sheldon and tells him that the book is old but popular, then she compares herself to it. In the beginning, she seems to describe the book, but unexpectedly shifts focus to herself. The flouting of this maxim by overlapping different topics makes the listeners re-illustrate the context in which the interaction is occurring.

Extract 3:

“Sheldon: There’s going to be a lecture on carbon dating at the Natural Science Museum on Saturday. Who would like to take me?

George Sr.: You know what? I’d be happy to.

Connie: What happened to helping me at my yard sale?

George Sr.: Ooh, is that this Saturday? I’m sorry. I’m taking him to a lecture on, oh what is it? Carbonation?

Sheldon: Carbon dating. A method of determining the age of artifacts and fossils.

George Sr.: Hey, we could use that to figure out how old your grandma is.

Sheldon: That won’t work. You can’t carbon-date something that’s still alive.

George Sr.: Well, then, we’ll just chop her down and count down the rings.”

(Young Sheldon, S2, E7)

This extract is from the second season's seventh episode, “Carbon Dating and a Stuffed Raccoon”. This scene is taken in the kitchen, Mary is cooking, her mother Connie is helping her, and George Sr. is sitting there drinking a beer. Sheldon is excited about a lecture on carbon dating and seeks someone to take him. George Sr. immediately agrees to take him, but it seems that he has an earlier engagement with Connie to help her in her yard sale, and he wants to avoid it. The conversation shifts into humorous wordplay and exaggerated interaction. Throughout the sitcom, George Sr. and Connie tease one another because

Connie thinks her daughter, Mary, deserves a better man. On the other hand, George Sr. thinks that Connie can never accept him as a good son-in-law. Their relationship is a love-hate one. Connie enjoys mocking and criticising him, and George Sr. sarcastically responds to her.

In analysing this excerpt according to Attardo's general theory of verbal humour, the script opposition is the contradiction between scientific accuracy and a playful misinterpretation. Sheldon brings up an academic scientific concept, carbon dating, which is a method to determine the age of fossils. On the other hand, George Sr. misrepresents the scientific concept and shifts it to an absurd method for determining Connie's age. Thus, the humour is generated from the incongruity between Sheldon's scientific concept and George Sr.'s playful misinterpretation. The logical mechanism in the above extract is the twist where Sheldon corrects his father by saying that carbon dating does not work on living things. His father shifts the whole scientific topic to absurdity and finds another analogy to determine Connie's age, which is a tree. The situation where the humor is generated is a family setting. Sheldon, a smart, advanced child, interacts with his father, who is seeking a chance to tease his mother-in-law. The interaction between two persons who have different intentions and personalities generates humor. The essential target or punchline of the humor in this scene is Connie, but in a lighthearted way. The narrative strategy starts with the serious setup by Sheldon's scientific request, then by George Sr.'s intentional misinterpretation, after that by Sheldon's correction, and finally, George Sr. escalates it to an exaggerated joke that leads to the punchline of the joke, Connie. The language used in this scene is Sheldon's formal language and George Sr.'s use of wordplay and misinterpretation that contribute to humour, for instance, "carbon dating" is mistakenly changed to "carbonation".

Teasing is a form of humor that George Sr. uses when he comments about the determination of Connie's age. In addition, George Sr. uses overstatement when he pictures Connie as a tree that can be chopped and how her age can be figured by counting the rings of the tree; this is an extreme exaggeration that generates humour. Furthermore, George Sr. ignores Sheldon's correction about carbon

dating and responds with another humorous remark without engaging seriously with the topic; this can be counted as a clever reply to a serious statement, which is another form of humour. Moreover, an ironic contrast can be seen between Sheldon's scientific accuracy and George Sr.'s intentionally playful inaccuracy. Pragmatically analysing the above extract, George Sr. flouts the maxim of relevance when he ignores Sheldon correcting his mistake about "carbonation" and deliberately shifts the topic to make fun of Connie's age. Additionally, George Sr. flouts the maxim of quality twice; the first one is when he states that Connie's age can be determined using carbon dating, nevertheless, he is certain that this procedure is false and hyperbolic. The second flout of the quality maxim by George Sr. is when he states that Connie can be chopped like a tree to determine her age, which is a clear violation due to its absurd exaggeration of comedic effect. Moreover, George Sr. flouts the maxim of manner because he intentionally ambiguates and misinterprets the scientific concept to generate a joke about Connie's age.

Extract 4:

“Missy: Mom and Dad are still really upset.

Sheldon: With good reason. She's awfully old to be having a baby.

Missy: Is it really dangerous?

Sheldon: Not with modern science, but back in pioneer times, we'd been burying her down by the crick.

Missy: I'm just saying they're cranky enough, so don't be a pain in the ass.

Sheldon: I'm always on my best behavior. You're the hormonal firecracker around here.

Missy: [RAISING HER VOICE] Sheldon.

Sheldon: And thar she blows. Moby Dick. It's a book.”

(Young Sheldon, S5, E20)

This excerpt is from the twentieth episode of the fifth season, “Uncle Sheldon and a Hormonal Firecracker”. George Jr. (Georgie) is Sheldon's older brother, whose character contrasts with his brother's. Georgie is portrayed in the show

as a typical teenager who struggles academically but is brilliant in social intelligence, business, and making money. In the current season, he is only seventeen years old, has dropped out of secondary school, and works with his grandmother Connie in her laundrette, which secretly has a gambling room in the back. Georgie lies about his age to impress a girl coming to the laundrette who is in her twenties. When she finds out about his age, she breaks up with him, and later she discovers that she is pregnant with Georgie's child. In this episode, Georgie informs his parents that he has impregnated a girl who is almost ten years older than him. His parents argue about this situation as his mother thinks the best solution is marriage because of her devotion to Christianity and the church, while his father disagrees. Sheldon and Missy do not realise the real situation, but they know that something is going on and distressing their parents. In this scene, they think that their mother is the one who is pregnant since they heard them talking about a baby.

In analysing this extract according to Attardo's general theory of verbal humour, the script opposition lies in the clash between two interpretations. The first interpretation is the actual situation of Georgie, getting a girl pregnant. The second interpretation is Sheldon and Missy's false assumption, thinking that their mother is the one who is pregnant. The logical mechanism that connects the opposed scripts is Sheldon's exaggerated explanation when he states the contrast between the danger of childbirth with modern medicine and back in the pioneer times. This sharp comparison of these two different time periods adds a comedic twist that is unexpected to the audience. The situation or the macro script of this scene is a casual sibling conversation between Sheldon and his twin sister, Missy, in their room, talking about a family situation. It generates humour because they lack actual information about their family issue and do not know what is really happening. The misunderstanding increases because of Sheldon's logical reasoning; he always applies irrelevant logic rather than questioning his own assumptions. In this scene, instead of thinking about their actual family problem, he fixates on the danger of pregnancy to their mother and his sister's hormones. The essential target of humour in this scene is Sheldon because of his

tendency for detailed, logical explanations and historical references. The secondary target is Missy because of her teenage, unstable hormones when Sheldon compares her emotional reactions to Moby Dick and calls her a “hormonal firecracker”. The narrative strategy in the above extract starts with the serious setup by Missy informing Sheldon about their parents' situation. Then, Sheldon misinterprets what Missy says by assuming that their mother is pregnant. After that, he explains childbirth in the pioneer times, which is an absurd, needless historical comparison. Finally, he escalates the absurdity by provoking Missy when he compares her to a famous novel written a long time ago and mocks her for not knowing about it. The language used in this scene is humorous since it contains two different types of speech styles; Sheldon uses formal and historical language that contrasts with Missy’s emotional and informal kind. Additionally, Sheldon’s use of Southern Colloquialism adds another layer of humour when he states “Down by the cricks” because it adds a regional touch and makes his historical exaggeration funnier. Moreover, when Sheldon uses a literary reference and compares Missy’s emotional reactions to Moby Dick, it is humourously clever because he pictures her frustration as an epic sea battle.

Multiple forms of spontaneous conversational humour are used in the above extract. Sheldon uses irony when he claims he is always on his best behaviour because he usually annoys and irritates people around him, especially his parents, when he wants something, gets sick, or something changes in his life. Thus, Missy and the audience know that this is not true and is a complete contradiction. In addition, Sheldon uses overstatement when he talks about pregnancy in the Pioneer Times; he pictures it as if it is a certain death sentence. This is a definite exaggeration because pregnancy was not that dangerous during that period of time. He also uses overstatement when he exaggerates his mother’s age and pictures her as a very old woman. He claims that she is right to be upset because she is dreadfully too old to have a child, and the audience can notice that Mary is only in her late thirties, which is a normal age for pregnancy. Furthermore, Sheldon teases Missy when he calls her names because of her

sensitive teenage age and hormonal changes, which causes her unstable moods. Moreover, when Missy comes to inform Sheldon that their parents are upset and requests him to behave well, he uses a clever reply to her serious statement and shifts the whole topic to historical information about pregnancy in the Pioneer Times and talks about her hormonal changes using literary references. This generates humour because Sheldon does not make jokes that much, he is always unintentionally funny, but this time he tries hard to be funny and smiles while stating his joke about *Moby Dick*.

Pragmatically analysing the above extract, multiple maxims of Grice are flouted. Sheldon flouts the maxim of quantity when he talks about the risks of childbirth in the Pioneer Times. Instead of responding to Missy directly, he gives an excessive amount of unnecessary historical context about it, making it overly dramatic, exaggerated, and humorous. This statement is also not related to their original conversation about their parents' distress, which is a clear shift indicating a flout of the relevance maxim as well. Additionally, Sheldon flouts the maxim of relevance another time when he compares his sister's emotional reactions to *Moby Dick*. This unexpected metaphor adds humour to this scene since it is an odd literary reference and not related to their original conversation. Moreover, Sheldon flouts the maxim of quality three times in this scene; the first one, when he exaggerates the danger of childbirth and pregnancy in the Pioneer Times, the second one, when he exaggerates about his mother's age, and the third time when he calls his sister a "hormonal firecracker" and compare her emotional reactions to *Moby Dick*. These exaggerations are humorous because childbirth was not as risky as he portrays it in that period, their mother is not that old to have a baby, nor is Missy as cranky as he describes her.

Extract 5:

"Dr Linkletter: Sheldon?

Sheldon: Yes?

Dr Linkletter: What is the angular momentum of the neutron and the portion inside deuterium?

Sheldon: Oh, um, “L” equals zero.

Dr. Linkletter: Close. [...]

Sheldon: Sorry. I’m a little distracted.

Dr. Linkletter: It happens. Anyway

Sheldon: Normally, I would have gotten that right.

Dr. Linkletter: I have no doubt. Anyway

Sheldon: There are just some things going on at home, and I’m not allowed to talk about it.

Dr. Linkletter: And we don’t want to hear about it.

Sheldon: I can tell you no one is sick in case you’re concerned.

Dr. Linkletter: Anyone concerned? Show of hands. No? moving on.

Sheldon: That’s why I got the answer wrong.

Dr. Linkletter: Son, it’s just a mistake. Everyone makes them.

Sheldon: [ON HIS MIND] like my brother Georgie did when he got that girl pregnant. Don’t say it. Don’t say it. Don’t say it.

Dr. Linkletter: What?

Sheldon: I need to use the restroom.

Dr. Linkletter: This is college. Just go. You red shirt. Lock the door.”

(Young Sheldon, S5, E20)

This excerpt is from the twentieth episode of the fifth season, “Uncle Sheldon and a Hormonal Firecracker”. In this scene, Sheldon is in a physics class with other students, and Dr. Linkletter is lecturing them about quantum physics. Dr. Linkletter is a recurring character in *Young Sheldon*. He is a physics Professor at East Texas Tech. When Sheldon was still in high school, he was taking advanced physics courses under the supervision of Dr. Linkletter. However, in this season, he is officially a full-time college student. Throughout the sitcom, Sheldon usually irritates Dr. Linkletter with his smug attitude and lack of social intelligence. Regardless of this, Dr. Linkletter knows how brilliant Sheldon is and always helps, guides, and engages with him on intellectual topics. Thus, their relationship is portrayed in the sitcom as a mixture of respect, frustration, and occasional amusement. Sheldon is well known as a person who cannot keep secrets. Earlier

in this episode, he finds out that his brother, Georgie, has gotten a girl pregnant, and his parents require him not to tell anybody yet. Thus, he struggles to keep this private family issue, especially from Dr. Linkletter, to whom he tells everything about his life.

In analysing the above extract according to Attardo's general theory of verbal humour, the script opposition in this scene is made from a clash between the significant academic lecture and Sheldon's inability to keep a secret. Sheldon is distracted by a personal family issue in a serious physics lecture since he cannot keep his brother's secret of getting a girl pregnant. Instead of concentrating on Dr. Linkletter's question, Sheldon internally battles with himself not to reveal a family secret that is not related to the lecture in any manner, and interrupts the lecture multiple times. The logical mechanism that connects the opposed scripts is incongruity, since Sheldon is well-known for his concentration in lectures, and he even corrects teachers and professors when they are mistaken. However, this time, Sheldon was not able to answer the professor's question accurately because of his internal crisis. What generates humour in this scene is Sheldon's exaggerated self-restraints in revealing a secret, as if he is about to explode with it, and his choice of an awkward escape when he leaves the class adds another layer of humour to the scene. The situation or macro script of this scene is set in the college lecture hall where the Professor is discussing serious academic matters with students. Sheldon disrupts it multiple times by bringing up his personal problems, which makes the scene funnier. The essential target of humor in this scene is Sheldon because of his exaggerated inner struggles to keep a secret and his lack of social awareness for not recognising that his personal concerns are out of place in the lecture. The secondary target of humor is Dr. Linkletter, he is frustrated because of Sheldon's multiple interruptions. The narrative strategy starts with the serious setup where Dr. Linkletter asks a question about quantum physics. Then, Sheldon's internal struggles begin when he almost reveals his brother's secret. After that, the absurdity escalates when he repeats the phrase "Don't say it" in his mind. Later, instead of silence or revealing the secret, he goes out humorously, and the punchline is Dr. Linkletter's

response when he asks a student to lock the door. The language used in this scene is humorous because of the Professor's use of a sarcastic tone all over the scene, which contrasts with Sheldon's sincerity. Moreover, when Sheldon repeats the phrase "Don't say it", it makes the audience expect an embarrassing outburst.

This extract contains multiple forms of spontaneous conversational humour. For instance, most of Dr. Linkletter's talk in this scene is sarcastic; when he says nobody wants to hear about your problem, he only wants to shut down Sheldon's personal talk. Moreover, when he states that if someone is concerned to raise his hand, he knows that no one cares and only wants to return to the lecture. Additionally, Sheldon uses two forms of humour in one statement when he states that he would get the question right in a normal situation because Sheldon rarely doubts himself and never acknowledges his mistakes, which is ironic and self-deprecating. Furthermore, Sheldon uses a clever reply to a serious statement on his mind when Dr. Linkletter states that everyone makes mistakes, he immediately relates it to his brother's mistake of making a girl pregnant. It is humorous since it makes Sheldon's urge to reveal Georgie's secret even bigger than before.

Pragmatically analysing the above extract, Sheldon and Dr. Linkletter flout several conversational maxims. Sheldon flouts the maxim of quantity by providing unnecessary information about a family situation in the class. Then, instead of stopping, he adds more unneeded detail when he states that nobody is sick if anyone is concerned. It generates humor since it is uncommon to interrupt a serious class to give personal and detailed information about family business to professors and colleagues. Additionally, Sheldon flouts the maxim of relevance because they are in the middle of a serious physics lecture when he shifts to his personal life. Dr. Linkletter immediately shuts it down, indicating its irrelevance, but Sheldon continues to change the original topic, which enhances the humour in this scene. Furthermore, Sheldon flouts the maxim of manner because all of what he states in this scene is ambiguous and vague; nobody understands what is really happening because of his unclear speech. Nevertheless, he does not

stop. At the end of the scene, he asks to use the bathroom, and he adds another layer of vagueness and misleading to his speech. It is humorous because he interrupts the lecture multiple times for an incomprehensible reason.

Extract 6:

“Georgie: Can you un-baptize somebody?

Sheldon: Well, since it’s a magical ceremony that doesn’t mean anything, then, sure, why not? In the name of science and reason, I un-baptize you.

Georgie: No, not me. Put it back.

Sheldon: Oh. Okay. Control-Z. You’re baptized.

Georgie: Thanks. And it’s not for me. It’s for my daughter. Mom baptized her in the kitchen sink, and Mandy’s mom did it in a Catholic church.

Sheldon: Sure. Baptists versus Catholics. Much blood was shed over that in the 1500s.

Georgie: They did it without telling us.

Sheldon: Rude.

Georgie: [...]

Sheldon: Well, you’re lucky it was just a baby and not a computer.”

(Young Sheldon, S7, E6)

This excerpt is from the sixth episode of the final season, “Baptists, Catholics and an Attempted Drowning”. In this episode, there is a confrontation between Mary (Georgie’s mother) and Audrey (Mandy’s mother). Mary wants to baptize her grandchild in the Baptist church, while Audrey wants to baptize her in the Catholic church. They end up baptizing her twice on the same day without informing her own parents. When Mandy finds out, she gets upset and argues with Georgie about it because he seems fine with the situation. In this scene, Georgie tries to find a solution by negotiating the situation with Sheldon, who is also frustrated since his colleague has updated his computer behind his back. Sheldon, as usual, treats the status with logic and reason without engaging in social and emotional aspects.

In analysing the above extract according to Attardo's general theory of verbal humour, the script opposition is science versus religion. Georgie is genuinely worried about the whole situation because his fiancée is upset and also, and he has faith in God and religion. On the other hand, Sheldon does not believe in God and treats baptism as an absurd subject. The mismatch between their two different perspectives creates humor. The logical mechanism that connects the opposed scripts is Sheldon's absurdity and exaggeration. Baptism is a spiritual and religious ritual that indicates purification and rebirth in Christianity. Sheldon deals with it like a reversible computer function and compares it to pressing the keys of a computer keyboard. In addition, Sheldon's unexpected exaggeration of historical religious wars makes the scene more absurd and humorous. The situation or the macro script of the above scene contains a family conflict over religion as context. Mary, Audrey, Mandy, Baby, and Georgie are included. Sheldon and Georgie are discussing the issue in the Coopers' garage. Contrary to Georgie, Sheldon is logically and emotionally detached from the whole subject. The primary target of humour in the above extract is Georgie, since he is genuinely worried and does not know how to solve this issue. In addition, he acts humorously when he asks Sheldon to put his baptism back again as if Sheldon had un-baptized him for real. The secondary target is religious rituals since Sheldon mocks their illogical nature when he describes baptism as a magical ritual that does not mean anything. The narrative strategy begins with a serious setup by Georgie asking if someone can be unbaptized since he is worried about his daughter and wants to fix the situation for Mandy. Then, Sheldon intentionally misinterprets the question and describes this spiritual ritual as nonsense. After that, when Georgie panics and asks Sheldon to put his baptism back, he escalates absurdity, and Sheldon pushes the joke further when he references historical religious wars. The final punchline is Sheldon's statement when he tells his brother how lucky he is since it is a baby, not a computer. He puts his computer before his brother's baby, as he has a similar problem with his colleague updating his computer without telling him. The language used in this scene is humorous because it contains clever wordplay by Sheldon when he uses

Control-Z to connect religious rituals and modern technology. In addition, Georgie uses a humorous tone, especially when he asks Sheldon, “Put it back”. Moreover, Sheldon talks about 1500 years of bloodshed in a detached, casual tone, which makes his statement humorous.

Irony and satire are forms of spontaneous conversational humour used in this extract; Sheldon’s talk about religious ceremony as a nonsensical process contrasts with Georgie’s serious concern is ironic. His statement is also satirical since he uses aggressive humour to mock a spiritual religious ritual. In addition, he gives a dry remark in an ordinary tone about religious war, which is ironic since normally when people talk about such events, they use a sympathetic tone.

Pragmatically analysing the nineteenth extract, multiple maxims are flouted, for instance, Sheldon flouts the maxim of quality because he states his opinion about baptism as a fact when he describes it as a magical, nonsensical tradition. He also pretends to unbaptize Georgie absurdly. In addition, Sheldon flouts the maxim of manners since he pretends that Control-Z, which is the undo shortcut in computers, works in real life, and this makes the conversation unclear, especially for Georgie. Moreover, Georgie complains about a family conflict, and he is emotionally disturbed and expects his brother to assist him, but Sheldon shifts the subject and randomly brings up an ancient religious war, which is humorous since it has no relation to Georgie’s issue.

5. Results

One of the key findings of this analysis is the role of script opposition in humour, which is a repetitive pattern in the analysed extracts and the foundation of humour in Young Sheldon. In many cases, the script opposition in Young Sheldon typically involves a contrast between logic and emotions, expected and unexpected, seriousness and absurdity, and literal and figurative meanings. In addition, the logical mechanism is a recurring pattern in the analysed excerpts. The researcher finds that the logical mechanism in most extracts relies on the resolution of incongruity, exaggeration, and absurdity. The situation or macro script in this sitcom deliberately generates humour within personal, intellectual,

and domestic settings. Instead of exaggerated physical comedy, Young Sheldon makes humour a natural part of the character interactions. The analysed extracts illustrate different targets, for instance, Sheldon, Mary, religious rituals, and social conventions. The narrative strategy in Young Sheldon typically follows a four-stage comedic framework. It initiates with a serious setup by a character, then an intentional misinterpretation by another character, followed by absurdity escalation, and finalises with an absurd resolution as a punchline. Language has an important role in generating humour in Young Sheldon since the characters use irony, sarcasm, etc., in addition to Sheldon's use of formal language in every extract. Another consistent finding is the close connection between humour and the intentional non-observance of Grice's conversational maxims. The researcher finds that the most humorous effects in Young Sheldon are obtained by the flouting of maxims rather than suspending, infringing, opting out, or violating maxims. In many analysed extracts, characters of the sitcom deliberately flout maxims by providing irrelevant, exaggerated responses for humorous effects. Furthermore, multiple spontaneous conversational forms of humour are used in the analysed extracts, which enhance Young Sheldon's comedic style.

6. Conclusions

This study underscores the importance of pragmatic analysis in understanding humour within scripted television. By applying Grice's Cooperative Principle, Attardo's General Theory of Verbal Humour, and Martin's categories of spontaneous conversational humour, the study demonstrates that pragmatic theories offer effective analytical tools for dissecting humour in sitcoms.

The analysis reveals that all six knowledge resources in Attardo's GTVH—particularly script opposition—play crucial roles in constructing humour. Script oppositions such as logic versus emotion or literal versus figurative interpretations consistently emerged as humour-generating devices. Additionally, characters frequently flout conversational maxims, leading to humorous implicatures, exaggerations, and absurd punchlines.

The study also highlights the extensive use of spontaneous conversational humour, such as irony, teasing, and overstatement, which enhances the sitcom's comedic style. Ultimately, this research confirms that humour in *Young Sheldon* is pragmatically constructed and contextually rich, reinforcing the value of a linguistic-pragmatic approach in media analysis.

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پوخته

ئەم توێژینه‌وه‌یه شیکاری پراگماتیکی تەنز لە سیتکۆمی ئەمریکی یۆنگ شیلدون دا دەکات. ئامانجی ئەم شیکارە چۆنیەتی دروستبوونی تەنزە لە ڕێگەی ستراتیژی زمانەوانییەوه، بە گرنگیدان بە میکانیزمە پراگماتیکەکان. توێژەر چەندین بێردۆزیک بەکاردهێنیت، لەوانە بێردۆزی گشتی تەنزی زارەکی ئاتاردۆ بە کارهێنانی هەرشەش سەرچاوەی زانیاری ئەم بێردۆزە، ناسینەوه‌ی فۆرمەکانی تەنز بە گرنگیدان بە جورەکانی تەنزی گفتوگۆیی خۆبەخۆ، و بنەماکانی هاوکاری گرایس، لەگەڵ جەختکردنەوه لەسەر ڕەچاوەکردنی ماکسیمەکانی گرایس. توێژینه‌وه‌که شیوازیکی

توێژینهوهی چۆنایهتی بهکاردههینیت بۆ شیکردنهوهی برێگه تایبهتهکانی سیتکۆمهکه. ئه نجامی توێژینهوهکه ئاشکرای دهکات که ههر شهش سهراچاوهی زانیاری بێردۆزی گشتی ته نزی زارهکی ئاتاردۆ پۆلێکی بهراچاویان ههیه له دروستکردنی ته نزی، به تایبهتی دژایهتی دوو بێرۆکه له ناو سیناریۆ. جگه له وهش، په یوه ندییهکی نزیک له نیوان ته نزی و په چاونه کردنی به ئه نقهست به ماکسیمه گفتوگۆییهکانی گرایس ئاشکرا دهکات. ههروهها، ئه وهش نیشان دهدات که بهکارهینانی فۆرمی گفتوگۆی خۆبهخۆی ته نزی ده بێته هۆی بهرزکردنهوهی شپۆازی کۆمیدی سیتکۆمهکه. توێژینهوهکه به و ئه نجامه دهگا که پێبازی پراگماتیک له ته نزی ته له فزیۆنیدا شتیکی بنه پرتیه، به و پێیهی تیرپوانینیکی به نرخ له بنیاتنانی زمانهوانی کۆمیدیا دا دهدات.

المخلص

تستكشف هذه الدراسة التحليل التداولي (البراغماتي) للفكاهة في المسلسل الكوميدي الأمريكي "يونغ شيلدون". وتهدف إلى تحليل كيفية توليد الفكاهة من خلال الاستراتيجيات اللغوية، مع التركيز على الآليات التداولية (البراغماتية). ويطبق الباحث نظريات متعددة، منها نظرية أترادو العامة للفكاهة اللفظية باستخدام جميع مصادر المعرفة الستة، والتعرف على أشكال الفكاهة من خلال التركيز على فئات الفكاهة الحوارية العفوية، ومبدأ غرايس التعاوني، مع التركيز على عدم مراعاة مبادئ غرايس. وتعتمد الدراسة على منهج بحث نوعي لتحليل مقتطفات محددة من المسلسل. وتكشف نتائج الدراسة أن جميع مصادر المعرفة الستة لنظرية أترادو العامة للفكاهة اللفظية لها دور هام في توليد الفكاهة، وخاصة تناقض النص. كما تكشف الدراسة عن العلاقة الوثيقة بين الفكاهة وعدم مراعاة مبادئ غرايس الحوارية عمداً. كما توضح كيف أن استخدام أشكال الفكاهة الحوارية العفوية المتعددة يعزز الأسلوب الكوميدي للمسلسل. وتستنتج الدراسة إلى أن النهج التداولي (البراغماتي) ضروري في الفكاهة التلفزيونية، لأنه يوفر رؤى قيمة في البناء اللغوي للكوميديا.