

“Hi, Mr. President!”

Fictive interaction blends as a unifying rhetorical strategy in satire

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What makes *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* so successful as social and political satire? Rhetorical theorists and critics have identified several mechanisms for satisfying the show’s satiric and parodic aim, which include *parodic polyglossia*, *contextual clash*, and *satirical specificity* (Waisanen, 2009). We present a unified account of meaning construction that encompasses these three mechanisms within the framework of blended fictive interaction (Pascual, 2002, 2008a, 2008b). Satire results from emergent effects of different conceptual configurations that have to be in place to integrate a pastiche of speech whose provenance originates in different and diverse contexts and genres. The integration of contradictory, conceptually disjointed pieces of discourse under the governing structure of the conversation frame accounts for the show’s most conspicuous satirical moments. These imagined interactions highlight facets of the real world for critical commentary. The thick description of an influential *Daily Show* segment deepens our understanding of contemporary political satire.

Keywords: fictive interaction networks, late-night satirical political entertainment television shows, parodic polyglossia, satirical specificity, contextual clash

1. Introduction

Comedy, satire included, undoubtedly aims to make the audience laugh. But underneath the humor in satire lies layers of social and political stances that compel viewers to regard reality in a way they might otherwise have ignored. It is thus not surprising that there should be hundreds of television programs worldwide considered satirical news or parodies of news broadcasts, with either real or entirely made-up stories about politics (e.g. *Shaun Micallef's Mad as Hell* in Australia, *Gospodari Na Efira* in Bulgaria, *Le Petit Journal* in France, *De Ideale Wereld* in Belgium, or *El Intermedio* in Spain).

An epitome of a modern political satire news program is *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* from the American cable television network 'Comedy Central', which was enormously popular between 1999 and 2015, having received 23 Emmy awards. The show is considered a cultural phenomenon in itself (Jones, 2010; Feldman, 2017) and its former host, Jon Stewart, is reputed to be a pioneer of this genre and one of the first comic rhetorical critics of his time (Baym, 2005; Warner, 2007; Jones, 2010; Goodnow, 2011; Amarasingam, 2011; Armstrong, 2015). With his show, Stewart created a generation shift (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Young, 2008), in such a way that the currently most viewed late-night satirical political entertainment programs in the USA have been directly influenced by his show, like *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*, *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee*, *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*, and *The Daily Show with Trevor Noah*, to name just a few. In fact, the hosts of these shows are protégées of Jon Stewart (D'Addario, 2015; Finkelstein, 2015, 2016; Zinoman, 2014) and have all been correspondents of *The Daily Show* when Jon Stewart was at its helm, with the exception of Trevor Noah, who replaced Stewart as host in 2015. The show's influence also goes

well beyond American borders, as it inspired the performance of Egypt's Al Bernameg, hosted by Bassem Youssef (Armstrong, 2015). Although *The Daily Show* does not consider itself serious news broadcasting, it produces non-trivial rhetorical effects on its viewers and is therefore much more than mere entertainment (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Cao, 2010; Feldman, 2013; Lichter, 2008; Popa, 2011; Xenos & Becker, 2009). The former host, Jon Stewart, had great influence on people's opinion and has even been called "one of the most credible and trustable men in America" (Knappenberger, 2014, 1:05). In fact, *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* has been considered responsible for "elevating the genre of new political television into a viable and credible source for interpretations, critiques, and 'truth' about politics" (Jones, 2010, p. 79). Hence, Jon Stewart's rhetorical strategies on the show have received quite some attention from media and scholars alike (Becker, Xenos, & Waisanen, 2010; Brewer & Marquardt, 2007; Džanić & Berberoviü, 2010; Waisanen, 2009; Young, 2013).

What made *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* so successful and influential? On his show Jon Stewart was able to hold politicians and the news media figures accountable for their actions by strategically using three rhetorical comic tactics: *parodic polyglossia*, *contextual clash*, and *satirical specificity* (Waisanen, 2009). The first, originating from Bakhtin's (1981) term 'polyglossia', refers to the multi-voiced, multi-viewpoint nature of the world. In his show, Stewart presented his own perspectives on the news, using various voice registers to convey different politically and culturally relevant information, a practice unthinkable in traditional news broadcasts. For example, he used his own progressive voice as a concerned citizen when passionately giving his opinions on political topics, using prosodic features (e.g. high pitch, changing rate of speech, etc.), only to then quickly switch viewpoints to give voice to other characters, often the

politicians he wanted to criticize. Thereby, Stewart not only succeeded in making his discourse funny by showing incongruities, but also implicitly satirized the individuals discussed (Waisanen, 2009, pp. 122–126). The second rhetorical tactic, *contextual clash*, involves “the multiplying and mixing of seemingly unconnected contexts with one another” (Waisanen, 2009, p. 130). Stewart utilized this tactic to create disparate comparisons, not only to make his discourse humorous but also to provide political insights to viewers. For example, when he showed a video clip of a politician saying something in a given context but played that clip in an entirely different and sometimes absurd context, this re-contextualization provided viewers with an elucidatory framework for better understanding the original political message criticized by the host. The third tactic, *satirical specificity* (Waisanen, 2009, pp. 126–130), is, in our view, a strategy that is used to shed light on ‘vague’ ideologies in the political world through critically analyzing the words and actions of political figures. Its purpose is to “direct critical accountability toward the suasive, mystifying merger in terms of politics and media” (Waisanen, 2009, p. 130). When ordinary citizens watch political speeches on television, for example, they are confronted with vague pronouncements, such as “Freedom isn’t free” or “My opponent is a Euroskeptic!”, that allow politicians or candidates to self-promote themselves while criticizing their opponents without stating their own position in detail. By not getting into specifics on how their values translate into concrete policies or action, politicians appear polite and sensitive to the public’s concerns. On his show, Stewart used humor to deflate these discursive mystifications by placing such bromide in specific contexts that are easily understandable.

In this paper we examine Jon Stewart’s discourse in *The Daily Show* from a Cognitive Linguistic perspective, focusing on how it is multimodally reinforced. We

analyze the aforementioned three tactics within the unified account of Fauconnier and Turner's (1994, 1998, 2002) theory of *conceptual integration* or *blending* and Pascual's (2002, 2006, 2014) notion of *fictive interaction*. Our principal claim is that *parodic polyglossia* and *contextual clash* are two rhetorical tactics that exploit our capacities for conceptual blending and fictive interaction, revealing something significant about the target of parodic and satirical treatment, thereby satisfying the rhetorical strategy of *satiric specificity*. We will satisfy this claim by analyzing the creative *fictive interaction blends* by Stewart on *The Daily Show* when criticizing President Obama's performance during the first presidential debate of the 2012 election. This description of political satire entails close analysis of the *factive*, *fictitious*, and *fictive interaction blends* used to represent and critique both Obama and his challenger, Mitt Romney.

2. Conceptual blending theory and fictive interaction

Developed by Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner (1994, 1998, 2002), Conceptual Blending Theory is a general model of meaning construction, whereby we navigate through our world by constructing scenes and scenarios that guide how we think, speak, and act by combining aspects of distinct and sometimes disparate scenes and scenarios into new 'blended' spaces. These 'blends' initiate conceptualizations and inferences that are not the sum of but are in fact distinct from their 'feeder' scenes and scenarios. Such creative configurations are most conspicuously but not exclusively evidenced in the technique of *contextual clash* discussed above.

Conceptual Blending Theory is the direct descendent of Fauconnier's theory of mental spaces ([1985] 1994, 1997), which is based on the same founding principle that

human beings think in scenes and scenarios, which are what guides natural language use. A mental space consists of elements, roles, and relations making up scenes and scenarios often constituting an ontological umwelt, such as REALITY, FICTION, or DREAM. Mental spaces are local domains set up as we think and talk, often structured by semantic frames (Fillmore, 1982), such as FAMILY or RESTAURANT, and conceptual domains (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987), such as UP or DOWN. The initial goal of mental space theory was to provide elegant solutions to a number of referential phenomena that up until then puzzled formal logicians and philosophers of language, such as referential opacity, presupposition, and the structure of analogical counterfactuals. Blending theory adds the observation that human beings not only construe information within mental spaces but that many if not all conceptualizations involve fusing elements and organizing structure from two or more mental spaces. In a canonical form of the model, a blending network involves at least two ‘input’ spaces that, in addition to creating cross-space mappings between elements, selectively project information from each input into a ‘blended’ space. This space develops its own emergent structure according to its own unique logic. Examples abound (see Fauconnier & Turner, 1994, 1998, 2002; Oakley & Pascual, 2017, for extensive summaries), but, for purposes that will be clear momentarily, we recount a now famous instance of blending in discourse (our italics and underlining):¹

- (1) I claim that reason is a self-developing capacity. Kant disagrees with me on this point. He says it’s innate, but I answer that that’s begging the question, to which he counters, in Critique of Pure Reason, that only innate ideas have power. But I say to that, *What about neuronal group selection?* And he gives no answer. (Fauconnier & Turner, 1998, p. 145)

Here, an American professor presents himself arguing with Immanuel Kant, the long-deceased German philosopher, to highlight their opposing views on reason for an audience of American students. The conceit recounted by Fauconnier and Turner is to be modeled as a network of three distinct mental spaces, two of which are ‘inputs’ to a third, ‘blended’ space. Input space 1 consists of a historically actual scene where Kant provides a written argument in German, first published in Germany in 1781. Input space 2 corresponds to another actual scene in a different time and space, where the present-day professor offers a contrasting spoken argument in English at an American university. In both spaces, Kant and the professor are engaged in philosophical argumentation on the nature of reason, but not with each other. The elements ‘Kant’ and ‘Professor’ from the input spaces are selectively projected into the blended space. What emerges in the blend is the performance of a face-to-face debate with Kant as the professor’s opponent and the students as an audience of ratified bystanders. The reason for the blend is to dramatize the flow of ideas from Kant to the Professor and back using the format of an oral debate, for the ostensive benefit of the students, who ‘witness’ Kant being argued into silence. This instance exemplifies a ‘fictive triologue’, where the modern professor’s philosophical ideas are presented in opposition to those of Kant as a didactic strategy for the sake of the students. These three-way communication channels, where a non-actual conversation is set up in order to present a line of argument to a silent audience, are extremely common in philosophical discourse (Brandt, 2008, p. 116; Xiang, 2016), and are in fact prototypical of both courtroom argumentation (Pascual, 2002, 2006, 2008a, 2008b, 2014) and televised political debates (Cienki & Giansante, 2014).

The Debate with Kant is an instance of so-called ‘fictive interaction blends’ (Pascual, 2002, 2008a, 2008b, 2014), which are the outcome of conceptually integrating a given mental space (Fauconnier, [1985] 1994) with the frame of FACE-TO-FACE CONVERSATION (Goffman, 1963). In this frame there are specific roles (i.e. addresser, addressee, bystander, message), which speakers use to actively and successfully participate in actual communication. In fictive interaction blends, the interaction takes place in a CURRENT DISCOURSE SPACE, defined as “the mental space comprising those elements and relations construed as being shared by the speaker and hearer as a basis for communication at a given moment in the flow of discourse” (Langacker, 2001, p. 144). It involves one or more fictive addressers ‘interacting’ with one or more fictive addressees, so as to attain some actual communicative goal in the here-and-now. These types of fictive interaction blends help readers and listeners better comprehend the mappings of the blends where fictive interaction takes place (Turner, 2010).

Before proceeding, some clarification on the word ‘fictive’ is in order. We use the term in the sense of Talmy (2000), as that which is ontologically neither real nor imaginary or fictional. Thus, a state of affairs is fictive in so far as mental access is given to some real or plausible situation by means of a non-genuine method of construal. Consider this ‘fictive motion’ construction:

(2) The highway runs along the coast line.

This sentence is factual with respect to the ostensive existence of a highway, but fictive with respect to its depiction as moving. In (1) above, the construal is real in that Kant is a historically real person with verifiable philosophical arguments, even as the verbal

exchange is non-genuine, or 'fictive'. Kant's thoughts on reason, however, are not to be taken as 'fictional', 'counterfactual', or 'fake'. Of course, there are instances of fictive interaction that are also 'fictional' or even impossible, but the principal point is that fictivity is a representational strategy for construing all manner of events.

The scenario of having a conversation, of being at once a verbal initiator and respondent, or of bearing witness to such verbal interactions as a bystander or eavesdropper is used to structure many of the mental spaces used to generate meaning. In no venue does the conversational frame and its manifestations in factive, fictive, and fictional dialogues seem more apparent than in satirical news.²

3. *The Daily Show*: A satirical news program

The Daily Show is considered a hybrid of a serious broadcast news program and a parodic talk show (Baym, 2005; Gray, Jones, & Thompson, 2009; Jones, 2007, 2010). It belongs to the 'infotainment' genre, which merges information and entertainment (Baum, 2002, 2003, 2005; Prior, 2003; Baum & Jamison, 2006; Thussu, 2007). This implies that the show itself constitutes a blended network of mental spaces, the spaces within which its content is to be construed.

The beginning of the show perfectly captures this genre mix. It contains the elements of a typical opening of a serious 'hard' news broadcast program especially used in the era of the 'Big Three' American Television Networks: CBS, NBC, and ABC. The show begins with an opening date on a spinning globe with music that cues importance and a voice-over announcing: "From Comedy Central's world news headquarters in New York, this is *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart!*". The camera zooms in on the host sitting

behind a broadcaster desk in formal attire. This serious news format is blended with a quickening tempo of the theme song while the camera zooms further in on Stewart making exaggerated and comical movements, followed by another camera angle shot of the audience cheering. All these elements are common features of situation comedies and variety shows, signaling to the viewer that this, after all, is not a serious nightly news program.

The hybrid nature of the show is not only seen at the beginning of the show, it also unfolds throughout, as in the first segment, the monologue. Then, the host, sitting behind his desk like an anchorman, looks directly into the camera and delivers the daily news headlines, showing video clips and soundbites as factual quotations, an evidential strategy frequently used by mainstream serious news programs. Unlike traditional news programs, however, this show also provides its viewers with seemingly nonsensical soundbites from politicians as well as altered video clips or images that include non-serious references (e.g. from pop culture), not only to make the viewers laugh, but also to call their attention to certain issues. The host does not present the information with the detached impartiality of a traditional news broadcaster, he makes comments and overtly criticizes the information using facial expressions, gestures, and prosodic emphasis, even interrupting clips and soundbites to do so. This is often achieved through fictitious interactions with the individuals in those clips or images, for the sake of the audience.

4. Data

We will analyze a monologue from season 18 of *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, ‘Democalypse 2012 – Obama, Where Art Thou?’, which includes a fictive enunciation in

the subtitle. Airing on October 4th, 2012 and lasting nine minutes and twenty-two seconds, this monologue was entirely related to the first 2012 US Presidential debate between then presidential candidates Mitt Romney and Barack Obama that had occurred the day before.³ According to several polls the winner of that debate was Mitt Romney (Blake, 2012; CBS Interactive, 2012; CNN Politics, 2012). This particular episode was chosen because it very clearly illustrates how Jon Stewart resorts to complex conceptual networks of fictitious and fictive conversations in the service of political satire. It is through numerous fictive interaction blends of different types and appearing at different levels of discourse that Stewart expresses his discontent of the democratic candidate's performance in the debate. By fictively talking to Obama, for Obama, and pretending to have others talk about or address Obama in different communicative settings, Stewart communicates to his viewers what he thinks the President did wrong, while also being critical of Romney's victory.

This episode was also chosen because it occurred in a particularly close presidential race and because, according to the Commission on Presidential Debates (2012), this first debate was the most viewed of the three in the campaign. Critically, it is commonly believed that debates can sometimes help tip the outcome of elections (Davis, Bowers, & Memon, 2011). Media coverage after a debate is just as important as the debate itself, because it discusses and analyzes in detail the performance of the candidates, which may influence voters (Kraus, 2000, pp. 147–149). It was after Obama's poor performance in that first debate that his campaign strategy changed in the following debates (Baker, 2012).

5. Analysis

This section analyzes four different fragments in which Stewart sets up non-actual interactions with and between individuals, both alive and dead, and construed in real as well as counterfactual or entirely fictional realms, to fictively bring the audience in as conversational bystanders. Stewart interweaves these fictive interaction networks into his opening monologue. They are introduced together with factual information about the first debate from the night before, using video clips from the debate to present and editorialize on the debate.

These imagined ‘conversations’ are aimed at entertaining the audience while showing the host’s opinion of the President’s performance in the first debate. Stewart creates non-actual dialogues using multiple modes of communication, setting up conceptual configurations that are somewhere between fact and fiction. We identify five types of fictive interaction networks in this televised episode:

1. ‘Addressing’ a real contemporary language user in a PRESENT-PAST REALITY blend (section 5.1)
2. ‘Addressing’ a real contemporary language user in a PRESENT REALITY-FICTION blend (section 5.2)
3. ‘Speaking’ for a real contemporary language user in a PRESENT REALITY-PAST COUNTERFACTUAL blend (section 5.3)
4. ‘Speaking’ for a real now-deceased language user in a COUNTERFACTUAL PAST-PRESENT REALITY-FICTION blend (section 5.4)

5. Quoting a real contemporary speaker, fictively addressing another real contemporary language user in a PAST-PRESENT REALITY-NURSERY RHYME-ADVERTISEMENT blend (section 5.5)

We will now analyze each type in detail.

5.1 ‘Addressing’ a real contemporary language user in a PRESENT-PAST REALITY blend

Our first example is the first time in the monologue that Jon Stewart fictively addresses President Obama. This non-actual conversational turn is carefully set up so that viewers can unpack the blend, the contexts clashing in time and space. The host first appears in full screen behind his desk presenting the news about the debate, speaking directly to the camera, giving viewers the impression that they’re being addressed personally. There is a camera switch from Stewart in the HERE-AND-NOW space of the *Daily Show* studio to a full screen video clip from the Presidential debate the night before. This camera switch signals that a new space is set up, a PAST REALITY space.

The clip shows both candidates during the debate, with Romney taking up half of the left-hand side of the screen talking with the sound off, and Obama on the right-hand side of the screen looking down at his podium. The extract below is in reaction to this clip that is playing while Stewart is talking (Figure 1) at minute 1:43:

- (3) ↑DUDE HE’S YELLING AT YOU (.) ↑LOOK UP ((AUD laughs)) (2.0)
↑<LOOK UP> ((Obama looks up)) ↑WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT? ↑WHAT

ARE YOU WRITING THAT'S SO IMPORTANT? (.) ↑WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO - ((image of dark-skinned hands sketching Romney's head on a drawing of a naked woman's body from the movie Titanic)) (.) (...) <↑MR PRESIDENT (.) ARE YOU JUST GONNA LET HIM RO::LL YOU? >⁴



Figure 1: Stewart 'coaching' Obama during the debate

This piece of discourse, along with the image switch on the screen, indicates a change in footing from the HERE-AND-NOW space of the ongoing show, where the host is talking to his viewers, to the PAST REALITY SPACE of the Presidential debate that occurred the day before (cf. Figure 2).

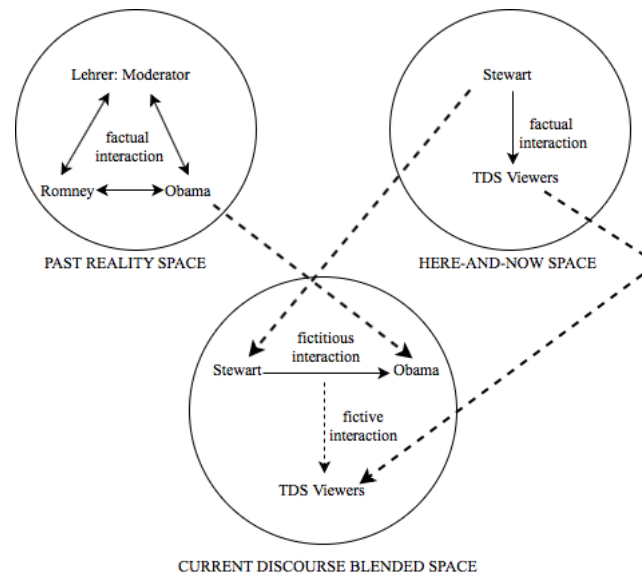


Figure 2: Fictive interaction network of E.g. 1: “Dude, he’s yelling at you!”

In the blend, Stewart is ‘talking’ to Obama during the debate, while his viewers listen. The conversation is of course not actual. However, it is fluid, humorous, and argumentatively effective. Stewart shifts from factually addressing his viewers to pretending to address Obama from a different time and space. Television viewers are therefore turned into factual bystanders of that fictitious conversation, but they are also fictive addressees, since the non-actual exchange is set up to fictively inform them of the host’s opinion on Obama’s performance. This is similar to the Debate with Kant example mentioned previously in that the unreal conversation is occurring in the contextual space of the show for the sake of viewers, like the debate between philosophers in the classroom for the sake of the students.

Satirical specificity as a rhetorical strategy is accomplished in (3) by Stewart talking directly to Obama during the debate in the same space and time and by making the supposed reason for Obama’s lack of eye contact very concrete (pretending he’s drawing). All of this not only creates humor, but also conveys to Stewart’s viewers his

discontent with one of Obama's shortcomings in this first debate, which was criticized by all the media. The tactic's success lies in the conversational structure Stewart carefully sets up for this purpose.

Up until this moment, Stewart is sitting behind his desk with a direct gaze to the camera reporting to his viewers what happened in the debate, referring to the candidates in the third person (i.e. "Obama", "Romney"), like an ordinary news broadcaster would. A video clip from the debate is shown in full screen, with a line dividing the screen, taking viewers back to that moment. Romney is shown on the left-hand side of the screen, the President appearing on the right-hand side. It is during this clip that Stewart directly addresses the President with the colloquial vocative 'dude'. This signals a viewpoint and frame shift. This would be an inappropriate way to address the sitting President of the United States of America in a factual conversation, but because this occurs in an imagined conversation in a political satire program, it is acceptable and humorous (precisely due to the clash with shared expectations about reality). Stewart is at this point not fulfilling the role of broadcaster but that of the President's equal, ready to talk to him and 'coach' him. By shifting from a neutral to a more informal register Stewart uses the rhetorical tactic of *parodic polyglossia*. His extreme frustration is communicated and heightened through prosodic features like the loudness and tone of despair in his voice when saying "look up". There's a momentary illusion that the President heard and responded non-verbally to (or acted upon) the host's plea, when the clip shows Obama actually looking up at Romney in the debate right after a slight pause from Stewart's second plea to look up. Obama's gesture serves as a response token in this non-genuine interaction with Stewart. There is a camera switch back to the host at the studio. In this part of the fictitious conversation, the host is looking directly into the camera, continuing his staged dialogue

with Obama by asking him why he did not look Romney in the eye. Stewart's facial expression and gaze (eyebrows frowned and staring into the camera, as if it were Obama), as well as the use of hand gestures or adaptors (Andersen, 1999), i.e. vigorously and repeatedly tapping his pen on the paper in front of him, indicate exasperation. By looking into the camera, the host is not only maintaining the CURRENT DISCOURSE SPACE, but also including the viewers as ratified listeners of this fictive interaction, making them participants. Therefore, other points of view are brought into the scene, such that the event now possesses a polyglossic dimension that dramatizes the apparent fact that everyone sees and agrees that Obama's performance was poor. This suggests that one function of *parodic polyglossia* is precisely to open the conversation up to additional stances (e.g. that of bystanders) that can enhance ridicule. This illusion works because the two fictive events are integrated both in time and in space, which allows a conversational blend to be created.

The CURRENT DISCOURSE space of the first fictive interaction network involves the fusion of two input spaces: a PAST REALITY space, referring to the debate from the night before, and a HERE-AND-NOW space, corresponding to the actual ongoing show. This is a so-called *basic communication space* (Sanders, Sanders, & Sweetser, 2009), comports with the viewpoint of the host and the studio audience, as well as providing the deictic center for words and gestures. This blend produces a conspicuous *contextual clash*, where the formal and 'cold' register of the debate merges with the informal and 'hot' register of a comedy show. The overall effect of this dramatized conceit is to elicit a general discontent with Obama's performance, thus qualifying as an instance of *satirical specificity*.

5.2 ‘Addressing’ a real contemporary language user in a PRESENT REALITY-FICTION blend

In example (3) Stewart conceptually shows viewers his discontent with Obama’s performance by pretending to remonstrate him. The next segment, by contrast, shows a fictitious tête-à-tête between Stewart and Obama, with the studio audience and television viewers as fictive ‘eavesdroppers’ at 00:35:

- (4) *You know I hate to do this to you sir* (1.0) *Camera three please* ((turning to camera)) (2.0) ((in child-like voice)) *Hah Hah hi Mister President* ↑ ((AUD laughs)) (2.0) ((stacking papers evenly in front of him)) *you know look* (1.0) *I know you probably dread having to spend ninety minutes* (.) *debating some knucklehead from* ((lifting hands)) *Harvard, who’s just gonna* ((lifting and moving right hand mimicking talking)) *ra ra ra all night* (.) *believe me, I know, I’ve been there* (...) *But you know Mister President* (.) *everyone has parts of their jobs that they don’t like as much* (.) *but they still have to do:: those things if they want to* ↑ *kee:::p those jobs.* (...)

This entirely imagined talk Stewart pretends to be ‘privately’ having with the President fuses fiction with the reality of Stewart’s ongoing monologue in the HERE-AND-NOW, where Stewart manages camera orientation, etc.

Stewart first suggests a more respectable, humble, and distant relationship with the President, uttering the phrase: “I hate to do this to you, sir”, while looking directly into the camera with a concern look (head slightly tilted, eyebrows slightly raised and drawn up, lips sucked into his mouth), indicating that he is about to give the President ‘tough

love' advice. The change of stance occurs when the host cues the audience to this change in viewpoint. First he utters the words "camera three please", while looking directly into the camera and pointing to his right, and then he physically turns to that side to face another camera and pretend to address Obama directly. This verbal and gestural space-builder sets up a new intimate blended discourse space in the HERE-AND-NOW, where he can fictitiously talk to Obama. This allows the viewers to better conceptualize this non-actual 'heart-to-heart' as occurring live and right before their eyes, while being framed in a television studio.

Stewart starts the fictitious one-on-one conversation with a direct gaze to the camera lens, smiling meekly and speaking in a boyishly and nervously tone ("Hi, Mr. President!") with exaggerated humility (cf. Figure 3).



Figure 3: Stewart 'addressing' Obama in the here-and-now

There's a slight shift from this informal mode to a more serious business-like tone and facial expression in "You know, look", emphasized with the stacking of papers on the table. Here, there is a radical change in footing (Goffman, 1981). Stewart now begins 'reprimanding' the President about his debate performance, as a campaign advisor would. Incongruent frames are also activated when Stewart metonymically refers to Romney

through the negative vocative “knucklehead” (i.e. idiot), which cognitively clashes with “from Harvard”, an ivy league American university. The whole fictive interaction network makes Obama’s defeat even more surprising, while simultaneously diminishing Romney’s victory, thereby not only making the piece of discourse humorous but also revealing Stewart’s poor opinion of the Republican candidate to viewers (cf Figure 4).

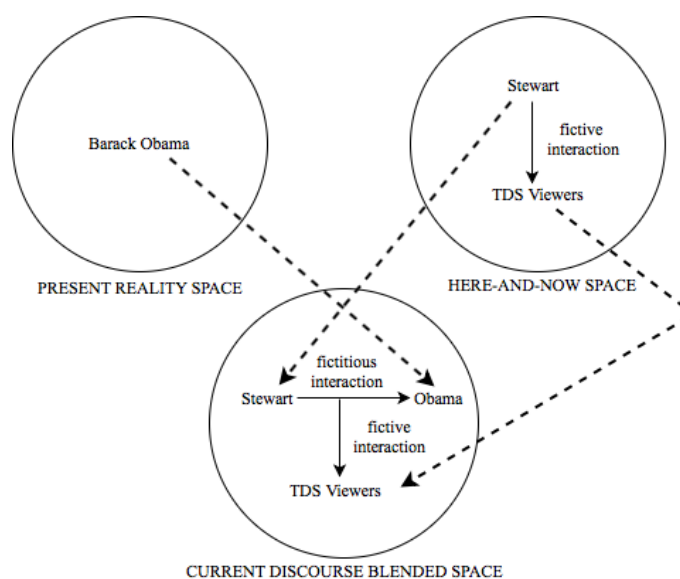


Figure 4: Fictive interaction network of E.g. 2: “Hi, Mr. President!”

By abruptly and explicitly turning away from his news broadcaster persona to ‘address’ Obama directly with the voice of an intimidated child when greeting him first and that of a concerned citizen later, Stewart is using two rhetorical tactics: *parodic polyglossia* and *contextual clash*. The drastic shift in rhetorical footing is made evident when Stewart directs the cameraperson to a different camera. This move and shift in body orientation is very common among comedians and stage actors when wanting to signal a shift from the interactional structure in the HERE-AND-NOW (i.e. television host addressing the audience) to a different one, an imagined scenario in this case (i.e. television host

pretending to address a discourse character). *Contextual clash* also becomes manifest in the incongruent situation of the President of the United States being told he didn't do well in the debate, as though he found campaigning an annoying part of his job, which in turn could cost him his office.

The blend of formal and informal register in (4) makes this non-genuine dialogue funny and allows Stewart to hold the President responsible for his loss by explicitly saying what he and *The Daily Show* viewers, who are Obama supporters, would have liked to have said to Obama after his defeat in the debate. Once again, *parodic polyglossia* and *contextual clash* serve the end of *satirical specificity*.

5.3 'Speaking' for a real contemporary language user in a PRESENT REALITY-PAST COUNTERFACTUAL blend

In the next example Jon Stewart provides the President with what he thinks should count as an effective response to Romney. Stewart first shows a montage of video clips of the President at the debate giving a long-winded response to Romney, but not stating what the other candidate said was inaccurate or downright incorrect. Obama's reply is in fact so long that the moderator, Jim Lehrer, has to ask him to stop, for which the President apologizes. After the clip, the camera switches back to the *Daily Show* studio with a still image of Obama at the debate to the top right side of Stewart, who is at his desk not as a news broadcaster but as a viewer of the debate, pretending to be in a state of trance, motionless with his hands on the table in front of him, his head slightly tilted back, and a fixed disoriented gaze upward for a few seconds. There is a change in viewpoint when the camera shows the host slowly moving out of this pretend transient state by first

shifting only his eyes and then making jolted head movements, showing he is back with his viewers on the show. After a seven-second-silence, Stewart faces the camera in amazement, as having just been woken up from a stupor (eyes wide open, eyebrows raised, lips curved upwards) and fictively ‘says’ to the Obama from the debate the night before on the screen at 04:01:

- (5) ↑You went over your time? (1.0) ((AUD laughs)) And yet somehow managed in all that overtime to not turn and look your opponent in the eye and just mention <what he said was (.) untrue::↑?> ((AUD laughs)) (.)

This sets the scene for the next conceptual configuration, where the host ‘shows’ Obama what he could have said instead at 04:05:

- (6) *let me see if I can (.) come up with a two-minute answer that might have been more effective (1.0) ((clears his throat, throws out his arms, slightly facing his right so that viewers see him in $\frac{3}{4}$ profile, pointing to his right, lifting his arm and bending it looking at his wrist while protruding his tongue)) <*LIAR* ((AUD laughs)) *LIE LIE LIAR LIE LIE LIAR LIE LIE LIE* (.) *LIE* ((looking into camera with arm lifted and bended, eyebrows raised)) *LIAR ROMNEY LIE ROMNEY LIE* (.) *LIAR*> ((straightening up, looking at the camera with a normal tone of voice)) >your time is up< ((tone of voice changes back to exaggeration)) (.) shut your *fat pie hole* Lehrer (2.0) ((AUD cheers)) ((looking into the camera with assertive tone of voice))*

I'm the Commander in Chief (.) I don't take orders from tote bag Johnny ((looking at wrist again)) LIE LIE LIE... (2.0)

This piece of speech is construed as counterfactual by the space-builder that introduces it (“let me see if I can (.) come up with...”), where Stewart places himself in the President’s place in the debate the night before. It is a COUNTERFACTUAL FICTITIOUS blend with the host from the HERE-AND-NOW input space pretending to be Obama from the PAST REALITY space (cf. Figure 5).

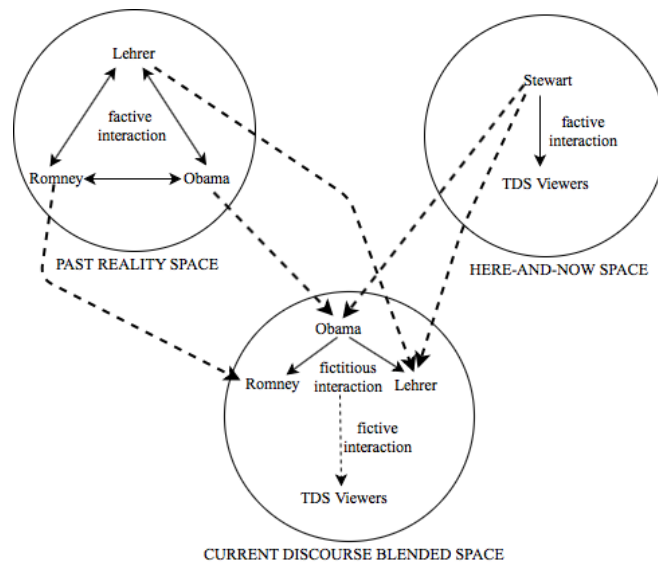


Figure 5: Fictive interaction network of E.g. 3: “Liar”

Stewart maps out his response to Romney by first theatrically preparing his ‘transformation’ from host to democratic candidate, using paralinguistic features (e.g. clearing his throat) and body gestures (thrusting his arms out). Simultaneously, Stewart conceptually refers to the debate by turning his body to his right assuming Obama’s position in the debate to face Romney, hence using his body as a ‘surrogate’ for Obama,

a material anchor for this conceptual blend, as is common and often even grammaticalized in signed languages (Liddell, 2003). The host points to his right and looks at his wrist to conceptually represent a wristwatch, a material anchor standing for the pass of time, since each candidate had been assigned the two minutes per response (cf. Figure 6)



Figure 6: Stewart as Obama in the debate

This gestural viewpoint suggests that Stewart is taking a perspective inside the debate scene. This is another fictitious-fictive interaction network, where the host of the ongoing show speaks for a discourse character from his monologue, i.e. Obama, thereby becoming the fictive addresser, in the debate talking to Romney and Lehrer, now turned fictive addressees. Meanwhile the viewers ‘overhear’ this non-actual conversation set up for their sake.

Humor arises when Stewart starts accusing Romney of lying, repeating the words “liar” and “lie” loudly several times in an exaggerated and theatrical manner, while staring at his imaginary wristwatch and briefly facing the camera three times. Repeating such an accusation recasts it in a humorous way, while simultaneously mocking Romney. This repetition is reminiscent of what children would say to other children who ridiculed them unjustly. Although Stewart is playing the role of the President, as fictive addresser,

there is a shift in character viewpoint when the host briefly takes on the role of debate moderator, presented as ‘intruder’, temporarily making him the fictive addresser. This shift becomes evident when the host faces the camera again and says “your time is up”, alluding to the DEBATE frame. Stewart’s tone of voice also returns to normal when producing this utterance, Obama now temporarily becoming his fictitious addressee.

These character changes and paralinguistic features involve *parodic polyglossia*, with Jon Stewart embodying Obama but responding as a comedian. The Stewart/Obama blend allows the host to develop the role a little further. He mimics Obama by glancing at his right side, looking at his wrist, and replying to Lehrer by turning to the camera and interrupting the moderator (“shut your fat pie hole Lehrer”), thereby effectively pulling rank as President, though in a far-from-Presidential tone. This is not only understood verbally (“I’m the Commander in Chief (.) I don’t take orders from tote bag Johnny”), but reinforced with gesticulation, pointing to himself while nodding his head and talking aggressively in a way uncharacteristic of Obama and indeed of a canonical President. Once again Stewart invites the audience into this blended space by looking into the camera while ‘performing’ this humorous fictitious dialogue that clashes with Obama’s reserved and cool persona and with the formal register of a presidential debate.

Despite its complexity, the audience is able to follow this extract, thanks to multimodal cues: change of tone of voice, gaze direction, and body position. By impersonating the President during the debate and giving him voice, the host shows what he believes to be the case, namely that Romney won the debate by lying repeatedly. Accusing an opponent of being untruthful is a typical debate strategy used by politicians, which is probably why Stewart suggests that to Obama. He also insinuates that Obama should have done better, as the most powerful person in the country. The fictitious

conversation is humorous because it is incongruous. It is an example of *contextual clash*, because world leaders during a Presidential debate are not generally expected to glorify themselves by stating their position and/or title nor criticize an opponent or belittle a moderator in such a blunt and rude manner.

This staged dialogue provides evidence of *parodic polyglossia* and *contextual clash* as tactics for achieving *satirical specificity*. In demonstrating how Obama should have responded to Romney, Stewart suggests that it would have been easy for Obama to have won the debate.

5.4 ‘Speaking’ for a real now-deceased language user in a COUNTERFACTUAL PAST-PRESENT REALITY-FICTION blend

To accentuate even more how terribly Obama did in the debate, the host introduces another discourse participant, Osama bin Laden, the President’s worst enemy. Stewart’s outrage is made manifest in a different type of fictive interaction network, construed within an intricate fictitious conversation between Osama bin Laden and Obama. This extract follows from the one in (6) above and also involves Stewart talking for someone else, i.e. the now deceased Osama bin Laden himself (cf. Figure 7) at 01:58:

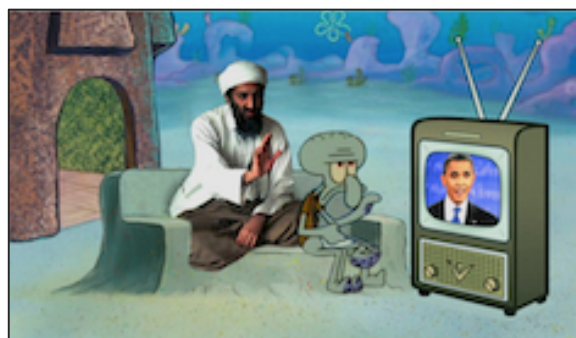


Figure 7: Osama bin Laden’s underwater world

(7) *and even people who* ((body pulled back, holding pen in left hand pointing to his right, then to the camera)) *don't like you were somewhat stunned at the poor performance* (.) ((sitting up straight, pointing with his right hand to his right side with eyes wide open and eyebrows raised) *Even Osama bin Laden* ((opening hands and arms out on each side of him)) *from the bottom of his watery grave watched and was like* ((full screen image of underwater Sponge Bob cartoon with real image of Osama bin Laden sitting on a cartoon couch, watching a cartoon TV with a real image of Obama during the debate) *↑that's the guy that killed me?* ((AUD laughs)) *↑Really?* ((full screen, pretending to write on paper with his pen in the air, his right eye slightly closed, eyebrow lowered, left eye wide open)) *Mister Look-down-at-the-paper-all-night* (.) *↑shot me in the face?*

Contextual clash is attained through a complex blending network involving a number of completely different input spaces that are mapped and fused with each other (cf. Figure 8).

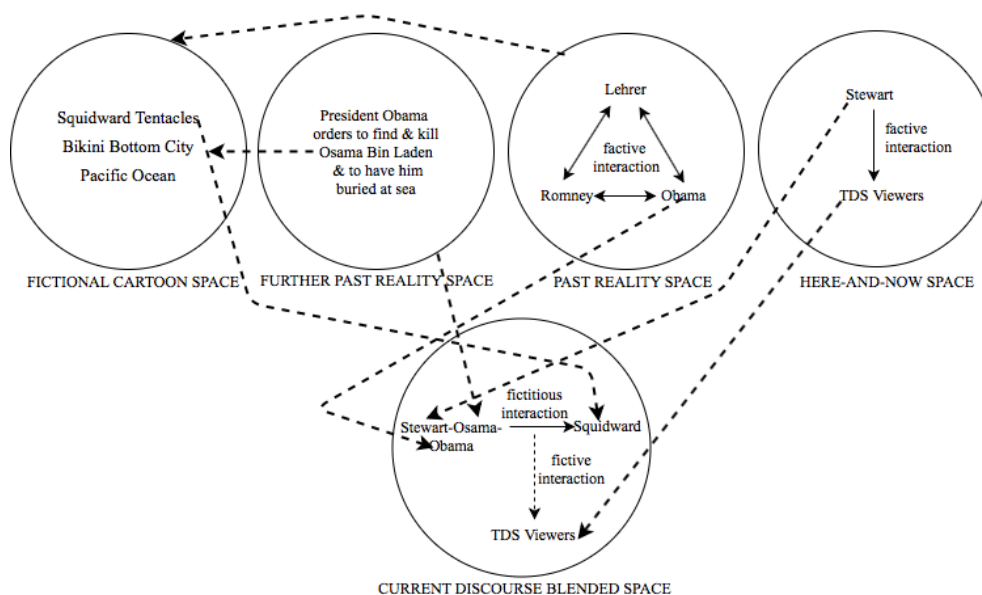


Figure 8: Fictive interaction network of E.g. 4: “That’s the guy that killed me?!”

There are four input spaces blended together, namely the HERE-AND-NOW space, the PAST REALITY space, the FURTHER PAST REALITY space, and the FICTIONAL CARTOON space. The FURTHER PAST REALITY space refers to the time when the Obama administration found and killed the then most wanted terrorist, Osama bin Laden, and buried him in an unknown place at sea. The FICTIONAL CARTOON space that serves as the background of this scene is the Sponge Bob cartoon, a fictional underwater world featuring the fictitious character Squidward Tentacles, an ill-tempered, hostile, and arrogant octopus. In the blend Osama bin Laden is alive but in his burial site, which naturally involves a temporal integration of the PAST REALITY space, in which he was alive and above water, and a PRESENT REALITY space, in which he is dead and underwater. Bin Laden and the octopus appear together watching the debate underwater on television, showing Obama in the same suit and tie he wore the night before. Blending life and death or individuals' alive and dead states is a very commonly used strategy in persuasive discourse (Coulson & Pascual, 2006; Pascual, 2008b).

This example, like the previous three, starts with Stewart in the HERE-AND-NOW space looking into the camera while fictitiously talking to Obama to fictively tell viewers how discontent he is with Obama's debate performance. Just before this extract, the host refers to the left-leaning news commentator Chris Matthews, and shows a clip on full screen of Matthews expressing obvious frustration about the President's performance in the first debate. This serves to make the point that other Obama supporters were disappointed with the democratic candidate. The camera shifts back to Stewart at the *Daily Show* studio, sitting behind his desk and with no images of the debate in the background, indicating that another discourse space is being created. This prepares the

ground for a contrast, indeed a *contextual clash*, with how Obama's worst enemy reacted at his debate performance. The host, looking straight at the camera, introduces a new discourse character, Osama bin Laden. In this fragment, Stewart emphasizes that everyone was surprised and disappointed about how badly he did in the debate, including the very terrorist Obama ordered killed, someone who shouldn't want the President to succeed.

The host uses an embedded intra-sentential fictive interaction, the *like* + direct speech construction, to change viewpoint once again. The pragmatic marker 'like' functions as space-builder, prompting viewers to open a FICTIVE VERBAL space, where words ascribed to Osama bin Laden reveal his inner thoughts and emotions. A non-actual utterance is introduced involving three non-information-seeking questions, attributed to a dead-alive individual in this reality-cartoon blend (*"that's the guy that killed me? Really? Mister Look-down-at-the-paper-all-night shot me in the face?"*). Thus, a viewpoint shift occurs, as the image of bin Laden in an underwater cartoon watching the debate appears in full screen. Although the image is set in a Sponge Bob cartoon, the fictive addresser, Osama bin Laden, is seen not as a cartoon figure but rather as a 'real' human being (through a photograph rather than a drawing), centered in the scene looking at a 'real' image of Obama at the debate on a cartoon television set.

When Stewart takes on the voice of bin Laden there is a blend of mixed viewpoints occurring in a COUNTERFACTUAL BLENDED space. There is bin Laden's viewpoint presented by Stewart, who simultaneously agrees with it even though there's no implicit criticism coming from his own voice. Stewart imagines what bin Laden would have thought of Obama's debate performance. The camera switches from the image back to the *Daily Show* studio, where the host is looking into the camera while using prosodic

features, facial expressions, and gestures to accentuate his surprise. Through this verbal and nonverbal behavior, Stewart manages multiple perspectives, ascribing mental states to a real dead/alive individual and verbalizing them, while also offering his own stance on the matter. By pretending to write on a piece of paper, Stewart uses his own body as a so-called 'surrogate' (Liddell, 1995, 2003) or 'material anchor', enacting the counterfactual dead/alive bin Laden imitating Obama in an exaggerated and comical manner, also known as gestural viewpoint (Parrill, 2012). In this case, the gestural point of view is a blend of mixed viewpoints: Obama's, bin Laden's, and Stewart's. It is the host who is theatrically mocking Obama's posture, gaze, and gesture, mixing it with his own perspective to criticize the President for not maintaining eye contact throughout the debate. He does this using his own voice to portray bin Laden's, a dead-alive discourse character in this CURRENT DISCOURSE BLENDED SPACE. The contrast presented of a fictional cartoon world with a dead-alive character in front of a TV set with a real person illustrates *contextual clash*. It not only produces humor, but it also makes viewers reflect on why the President, an active and successful leader that managed to track down and kill the most wanted man in the world, was not able to defeat and react to his opponent in a mere debate. In this fictitious dialogue, Stewart blends Osama bin Laden's counterfactual voice with his own, an example of *parodic polyglossia*, to once again advance *satiric specificity*: a highly competent President acting so incompetently that even his mortal foe loses respect for him.

5.5 Quoting a real contemporary speaker, fictively addressing another real contemporary language user in a PAST-PRESENT REALITY-NURSERY RHYME-ADVERTISEMENT blend

The last example comes at the very end of this segment. Stewart fictitiously talks to Obama about how he “relentlessly” asked his supporters to help him win the election through a large number of passionate emails. Stewart quotes verbatim a few of the subject lines of these emails from Obama’s campaign. He contrasts the intensity of the emails asking for active support from voters with Obama’s meek performance in the debate. This sets the scene for the final plea at 03:17:

- (8) *I’m tempted to leave you with the wise words of a noted actor (.) whose campaign viral video has been forwarded to my inbox (.) nineteen hundred times by some of you who are passionate followers (0.5) I believe it goes a little something like this:
((soundbite of an angry Samuel Jackson in Pro-Obama Ad)) SJ: *WAKE THE F*CK UP* ((AUD laughs, claps, and cheers))*

This extract is a continuation of Stewart’s imagined address to Obama on the first debate (cf. examples (3), (4), and (5)). The host in his news broadcaster mode looks directly into the camera to create the illusion of the interpersonal space of a face-to-face conversation. He informs Obama fictitiously, and the audience fictively (as fictive bystanders of this non-actual dialogue), that the conversation is coming to an end (“*I’m tempted to leave you*”). He then sets up the VERBAL space of a novel competent discourse character (“the wise words of a noted actor”), and shifts to a video, where Samuel Jackson utters those

words (cf. Figure 9).



Figure 9: Jackson in pro Obama advertisement

Stewart frames this VERBAL space as an embedded intra-sentential fictive interaction, by introducing it with “I believe it goes a little something like this”, a space-builder that prompts viewers to open a mental space of an approximate quote, which in fact contains an actual quote, copy-pasted from a video-taped commercial of the real Jackson. This bit is humorous due to a *contextual clash*, the short clip from a campaign advertisement video being contextualized within Stewart’s monologue. *Parodic polyglossia* is also involved, since Stewart is letting Jackson do the talking for him. Visually, this new mental space is created with a camera angle switch from Stewart talking into the camera at the *Daily Show* studio to a head shot of Samuel Jackson, shown in full screen with a slight zoom effect for additional emphasis. Jackson’s intensity, stress, and tone of voice when uttering the phrase “wake the f*ck up” also makes this humorous because the profanity clashes with conventional expectations of what counts as “wise words” and how one would generally address a sitting President. This verbatim quotation is used fictively to display the host’s frustration with President Obama’s debate performance. It is also presented

literally as a wake-up call for Obama to do better in future debates.

The quote further involves *contextual clash* in that it is construed within another complex blending network, a PAST REALITY-NURSERY RHYME-ADVERTISEMENT blended space in a video clip of Obama’s campaign (cf. Figure 10).

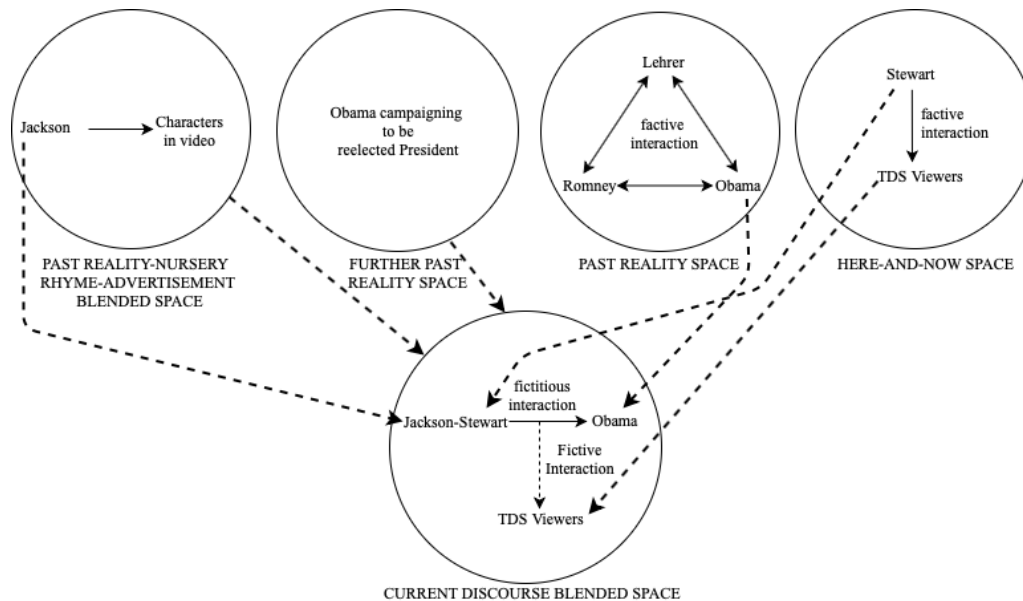


Figure 10: Fictive interaction network of E.g. 5: “Wake the F*ck Up”

The source of that quotation is in itself a complex blending network involving multiple input spaces. The original online campaign advertisement was narrated by Samuel Jackson and addressed to potential voters of the 2012 election, as an attempt to reenergize Obama’s campaign and popularity.⁵ The video is set up as a nursery rhyme, entitled ‘Wake the F*ck Up’. It is in itself a communication context blend of a parody of a children’s book for adults by Adam Mansbach, entitled ‘Go the F*ck to Sleep’, in which the narrator tries to get a child to go to sleep by showing that different animals have done the same. Jackson recorded an audio version of this book in 2011. In the 2012 campaign video parody, Jackson magically appears in the homes of the elderly, young people, and

other disgruntled voters to encourage them to start paying attention to the election, showing these citizens the dangers of voting Republican, and ending his visit to each house by telling its inhabitants to “wake the f*ck up”. Thus, in the original video, Jackson fictitiously addresses this utterance to individual characters in the video, all actors, as a way to fictively ‘tell’ viewers to get actively involved in the election and vote Democrat. In Stewart’s show, this message serves as a means to present Stewart’s message to Obama. This fictitious address of Jackson to Obama is embedded in Stewart’s fictitious address to Obama, as a means of fictively telling the President that he should do better, and in turn fictively tell his viewers of his disappointment about Obama’s performance. This communicative scenario is humorous because we know that Samuel Jackson’s words were not originally intended for Obama, who should be the last person needing encouragement to vote for himself.

Significantly, the message Stewart sends Obama through this complex fictive interaction blend is also the one that closes the monologue. Reframing the quotation from the campaign video heightens and amplifies Stewart’s critique in the most pointed way possible.

6. Conclusions

Humor has been studied from a Cognitive Linguistics perspective in general (e.g. Brône, Feyaerts, & Veale, 2006) and more specifically within the theory of conceptual blending in political cartoons (Coulson, 2001; Marín-Arrese, 2003, 2008). These works have mainly focused on the content of the humorous discourse (e.g. the image a joke sets up, the blend between the literal and figurative meaning of a word) or the form of a given

punch line. In this paper, we dealt with the interactional structure of humor found in a political satire television program. Our focus was on fictive interaction blends that in themselves produce humorous effects, operating at a cognitive level within these networks.

As the host of *The Daily Show*, Jon Stewart constantly switched viewpoints, framing his speech in different interactive settings, to engage in imagined conversations with individuals not present in the television studio, through both the verbal mode and an array of multimodal communicative means enhanced by media techniques. Through these non-actual interactions, Stewart produced a compelling political satire that deployed the tactics of *parodic polyglossia* and *contextual clash* to highlight or *satirically specify* the targets of his critique, namely Obama's perceived fecklessness and Romney's mendacity.

All the examples are fictitious dialogues between the host and actual, living individuals (e.g. Obama, Romney, Lehrer), who were not in the HERE-AND-NOW of the *Daily Show* studio. These non-genuine conversations were set up to serve an overall fictive purpose, that is, to show viewers Stewart's low opinion of the President's performance in the first presidential debate. They are fictive interaction blends presented as part of one longer fictitious conversation with Barack Obama set up early in the host's monologue. Although each contained conceptual integration of different contexts, they were all related to the show's topic. There were enough shared features amongst the input spaces to link them, but also enough distance from each other so that there was incongruity, and consequently humor.

The overall conceptual network unfolding in Stewart's monologue of multiple blends was carefully orchestrated. Stewart first used his news broadcaster mode to present his audience with the facts related to the debate, referring to the candidates in the third

person. This along with the use of multimodal modes (e.g. video clips from other sources, body language) set the scene for the blended fictive interaction network, a fusion of the HERE-AND-NOW of the *Daily Show* with a fictitious PRESENT space and a blended space of the HERE-AND-NOW with a PAST REALITY DEBATE space. These configurations were created so that the host could ‘directly’ talk to Obama about what he felt went wrong the night before. Obama was the discourse participant in all of these fictive interaction blends, but other communicative participants were also carefully chosen to present specific ideas, like Osama Bin Laden in example (7). All the fictive interaction networks analyzed involved imagined conversations in Jon Stewart’s monologue, where factually he was the only one speaking. Osama Bin Laden in example (7), as a discourse participant embedded in Stewart’s fictitious conversation with Obama, for example, serves as a point of contrast. The configuration of the short video clip with Samuel Jackson in (8) was chosen to reinforce the idea that Obama had to do better. All of the fictive interaction networks analyzed involved imagined conversations in Jon Stewart’s monologue, where factually he was the only one speaking. The humor and persuasive power of these fictitious conversations were enhanced by the use of video clips of the candidates during the debate and other modes of communication. These communicative aids helped Stewart to contextualize the conversations and direct viewers towards the issues he wanted to discuss.

In addition, fictive dialogues (Pascual, 2002, 2008a, 2008b, 2014) were created in which the television viewers became fictive bystanders (Goffman, 1963; Pascual, 2002, 2014), overhearing fictitious dialogues that were not addressed to them but rather created for their sake. By creating these dialogues, Stewart dramatically and humorously presented his reaction to the first debate as a needless loss for the better candidate.

These fictitious conversations were not only set up to entertain the audience but also to inform them of the host's political stance. Despite their complexity, the viewers were able to unpack the blends, thanks to the combination of masterful verbal and gestural information and rich visual context. Moreover, they understood the humor not only because they shared the same cultural background and knowledge of the current events discussed (Coulson, 1996, 2001; Coulson, Urbach, & Kutas, 2006), but also because they knew it belongs to the infotainment genre and not a real news broadcast television program. Reality, fiction, and fictivity are not independent of each other, but are dynamically embedded in one another in these conversations for argumentative purposes through multiple blending chains (cf. Pascual, 2002, 2008a, 2008b; Xiang, 2016). The setting up of counterfactual, often entirely impossible fictions in order to make a serious point further shows that human reasoning does not operate through logical steps involving truth-conditional presuppositions, but rather emerges from the inferences and conceptualizations within these blends (cf. Coulson & Pascual, 2006).

Theatricality played an important part in Jon Stewart's fictitious conversations because it allowed the host to take on the role of different discourse participants with conflicting viewpoints. His exaggerated gestures, facial expressions, and tone of voice not only made these unreal interactions humorous, but also 'stirred' the viewers. This is a common feature in satire and humor as well as in commercial advertising (Brandt & Pascual, 2016). To a certain extent, the host was also giving voice to the American people, by presenting what numerous citizens thought about the debate. All examples in this paper also involved an added identity blend, that is, a more complex mixed viewpoint, which helps account for Stewart's success. Naturally, 'hard news' broadcasters would not be able to do this, because they have to present the facts as they are, appearing as objective

and non-partial. By contrast, as a satirist broadcaster of a ‘soft news’ program, Jon Stewart was able to say whatever he wanted and however he wanted, many times shockingly so. It is in his highly dialogical monologues that he reinforced his political views through humor in his fictitious interactions for fictive purposes, for the sake of his viewers.

Our analysis is consistent with Bakhtin’s (1981, 1986) idea of a monologue as a dialogue, in that language is fundamentally regarded as dialogic, emerging from the interaction of those who use it, even when the addresser and addressee are the same individual engaged in inner dialogue. We know about the world through talk-in-interaction. Reported and imagined speech are used in discourse as evidential strategies to present state of affairs as well as the speaker’s mental and emotional states (Pascual, 2014). Humor arises from setting up non-actual interactions, using language that would be utterly inappropriate in real and genuine communicative exchanges with a President, to communicate something that is very real and comes across as accurate.

The success of the *Daily Show with Jon Stewart* is thus largely due to the use of these complex fictive interaction blends based on *parodic polyglossia* and *contextual clash* for purposes of properly calling attention to the diffident, vague, and mendacious activities of discourse characters, thereby also attaining *satirical specificity*. By theatricalizing these fictitious conversations in his monologue Stewart conveyed views with a force not available to mainstream news broadcasters or comics.

The Daily Show is just one example of a political satire television program. Future research into the role fictive interaction blends in humor could focus on other sources of political news media outlets, like social media or Internet memes, analyzing verbal and nonverbal elements of humorous fictive interaction blends and the purposes they serve.

Since nowadays people look for information that is concise and easily accessed, it would be interesting to explore the importance of fictive interaction blends in these other political satire news media outlets and assess their impact on different kinds of audiences. Another avenue for further study would be investigating political satire books and carrying out a statistical analysis on the kinds of fictive interaction blends that are more frequent and the level at which they mostly occur. This would certainly help us understand the cognitive processes underlying humor as well as its power to persuade. After all, ‘many a true word is spoken in jest’.

Notes

¹ The Debate with Kant blend has been extensively analyzed from slightly different perspectives (e.g. Brandt, 2008; Oakley, 2009; Pascual, 2002, 2014).

² For a discussion on the distinction between factive, fictitious, and fictive dialogues, and how in rhetoric factive as well as entirely fictitious dialogues may be set up for fictive purposes, namely for the narrator to fictively communicate something to the ultimate audience, see Xiang (2016).

³ The entire monologue can be viewed at: <http://www.cc.com/video-clips/o9bylm/the-daily-show-with-jon-stewart-democalypse-2012---o-bama--where-art-thou--pt--1> (examples (3), (5), (6)) and <http://www.cc.com/video-clips/l4fcg0/the-daily-show-with-jon-stewart-democalypse-2012---o-bama--where-art-thou--pt--2> (examples (4), (7), (8)). Analyses of fictive interaction blends on the two *Daily Show* episodes about the second and third US Presidential debates in 2012 can be found in Fonseca (2016).

⁴ Manifestations of fictive interaction blends are italicized. We further follow the conversation analysis transcription conventions (Jefferson, 1984), with only a few adaptations: timed pause (numbers in parentheses indicate the seconds of a pause in speech); downward arrow (falling pitch or intonation); upward arrow (rising pitch or intonation); less than/greater than symbols (enclosed speech delivered more rapidly than usual); greater than/less than symbols (enclosed speech delivered more slowly than

usual); capitalized text (shouted or increased volume speech); underlined text (emphasized or stressed speech); and double parenthesis (extra-linguistic information).

⁵ The Samuel L. Jackson ‘Wake the F*ck Up’ advertisement can be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BeTQq22EM0k>.

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