

The Function of Humour in British English and Japanese

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THE FUNCTION OF HUMOUR IN BRITISH ENGLISH AND JAPANESE

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

In some ways, humour is the intersection of some of my previous interests, namely that of politeness and identity. Humour is something that is deeply connected to language, in that language is one of the mediums through which it is often expressed, though it is not the only one. In addition to the linguistic element, there is also a strong sociolinguistic aspect to humour, as concepts of what is considered funny or not funny are to an extent based upon cultural backgrounds and shared mutual references. This also includes social contexts that deem certain subjects as appropriate or inappropriate to make fun of or refer to in a jocular manner. As such, it is worth considering and comparing cultural perceptions of humour as misinterpretations of humour can lead to misunderstandings and potentially offence being taken. Similarly, a dearth of humour in a circumstance where it might be culturally expected might also lead to a sense of awkwardness and miscommunication.

1.2 Rationale

Britain and Japan are two countries with vastly different languages, though there are also some similarities that exist beneath the surface. They are both island countries, and the Japanese political system is in many ways modelled on the British one (東, 2007). Both British English and Japanese are considered to be

negative politeness cultures by Brown and Levinson (1987), with humour being a means through which face can be saved by mitigating the extent of the utterance whilst at the same time also risking the loss of face through failure of full comprehension of the intended humorous utterance. As such, there is a certain amount of potential to comparing them as while there are likely to be differences there will also be structural similarities. This would provide a good framework for investigating differences in practice and being able to consider what elements lie behind these differences, whereas in situations where the structural differences are greater comparisons can be difficult due to the reasons being hard to identify clearly. In this way, the variables at work can be controlled to an extent through the pre-existing cultural structures allowing for a directness of comparison that is not always possible when investigating different sociocultural phenomena in a linguistic context.

1.3 Research Question

Much in the way that a large part of my interest in both politeness and identity creation, both as general concepts and with regards to the impact on multicultural communications that therefore exist, were focused on the function they serve rather than the mechanisms by which they came into being, it is thus the same when it comes to humour. The purpose that humour serves humans in communication interests me, so I therefore intend to investigate the function it has in the two languages and cultures that I have the greatest connection to, which also have many aspects that are similar from a certain perspective, allowing

comparisons to be within a reasonable degree of directness that does not always exist when comparing languages or cultures.

The research questions of this thesis are thus concerned with the manner in which humour functions in British English and Japanese, with a particular interest to the function if any it plays in political situations. As such the aim is to consider: (1) is there a difference in the function that humour has in British English and Japanese conversations, and (2) does humour have a functional role in the arena of politics in Britain and Japan, and is it used similarly?

1.4 Overview of Thesis

First, the introduction hopes to set up the forthcoming chapters of the thesis and introduce the general ideas that will be covered. The second chapter focuses on the literature review. Firstly, a brief etymology of humour is given before looking at the background of the historical theories and thoughts regarding humour that have existed in Britain and Japan. Then the chapter turns to look at humour in the academic field of linguistics. This includes the semantic conceptualisations of humour theory, the various studies that have touched upon the functions of humour, and the way in which it operates within culture such as the issues arising with regards to cross-cultural communication, it's role in politics and protests, and the manner in which it intersects with politeness. Finally, the chapter concludes with a brief mention of relevant political discourse as a means of considering the norms and standards of politics in Britain and Japan. This then leads into the third chapter, which sets out the methodology of the research in the following

chapters, as well as the theoretical standpoints to be used as aided by the preceding literature review.

The fourth chapter focuses on instances of humour in natural conversation in both British English and Japanese. Each instance was categorised as to the function it served within the context of the conversation, to allow for comparisons. This allows the manner in which humour functions in daily conversation to be investigated and for the differences and similarities that exist between usage in British English and Japanese to be made apparent. After the categorised examples, there is a brief analysis and discussion to tie the chapter together and provide a basic overview of the manner in which humour appears to function in natural conversations in British English and Japanese.

The fifth chapter then moves on to look at the function of humour in the political sphere by using the recordings of the Prime Minister's Questions sessions that occur in both the British Parliament and the Japanese National Diet. It is both interesting to see the manner in which humour functions differently in different situations as well as the situations where humour is considered to be appropriate or inappropriate in different cultures. As such, instances of humour were noted and categorised to allow for comparison between the two languages as well as against the instances in natural conversation. The differences are then considered and discussed to ascertain the differences that are apparent in the data. Connected to this, the manner in which humour was used in electoral candidacy during the 2017 elections that took place in both elections is included at the end to provide an additional aspect to the humour or lack of humour that exists in political situations. The manner in which electoral candidacy can be used as a

medium for humour was considered with relation to the phenomenon of joke candidates whose entire candidacy is of a humorous nature not intended to be taken seriously. As well as the candidates themselves, the manifestos that joke candidates published on their websites were also considered for their use of humour in contrast to those produced for distribution by the serious major political parties.

The sixth chapter is a discussion chapter wherein the results obtained in the previous chapters are compared and discussed. The difference between humour usage in British English in general compared to Japanese is contrasted, as well as the differences between the functions of humour used in casual conversation in comparison to political discourse. As well as the findings, the potential reasons for the divergences in the data are considered, and the nuances that exist in cultures are explored. As such, the difference in the function of humour in British English and Japanese is discussed, with the manner in which humour appears to be categorised touched upon as a part of the divergence in the manner in which it is used. Finally, in the seventh chapter the findings are concluded so as to tie together all the elements of the thesis, and some potentials for future directions are considered.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Humour has been considered from multiple perspectives throughout history. This ranges from philosophical musings from antiquity to modern linguistic studies. Cultural issues often interact with humour, and one issue that is frequently identified is that of the ethical issues connected with laughing at other people. Therefore, the cultural backgrounds of Britain and Japan can be considered to be relevant to the humour that is present.

Likewise, language is often involved in humour, whether it be in the case of direct wordplay or simply the medium through which the humour is imparted, so linguistics is a framework through which humour can be explored. That is not to say that humour cannot exist in other mediums, as it is in many ways multi-modal, but that it is the one that will be focused on here.

Finally, a consideration of norms of specialised discourse is required to adequately consider the function of humour in such a situation. As such, studies touching upon issues relating to political discourse in Britain and Japan are also included as background information relevant to the topic.

2.2 Etymology and Terms

The word humour comes from the Latin word *humor* meaning fluid. During the Middle Ages it entered the field of English medical language from French in

relation to the four types of bodily fluid within the human body and their relationship to four types of temperament. Imbalance of these fluids was believed to affect the characteristic of a person (河盛, 1969; Hempelmann, 2017).

This then developed into being used to express the concept whereby personal peculiarities caused by imbalanced humours would be emphasised for ridicule and therefore becoming the basis for a degree of comic characterisation (Larkin-Galiñanes, 2017; Hempelmann, 2017).

Within Britain, humour often involves and engages with concepts such wit, sarcasm and irony. Wit is perceived as connected to intelligence, with it having the meaning of clever as well as funny, and is often regarded as a highly desirable trait (Ilie, 2004). Sarcasm is a type of satirical or ironic wit often used to wound. Irony tends to involve a degree of incongruity between two concepts which can be used for humorous effect.

In modern Japanese there exists the loan-word *yumoa* from the English to mean humour. It joins a collection of words that predate it considerably, and is used alongside *warai* as the commonly used terms within the field of humour studies in Japanese.

2.3 Historical and Cultural Background

2.3.1 British Background

Western scholars from the time of Aristotle have theorised about humour. One theory was that it was used to show superiority, as those that laughed did so at those they considered to be beneath them. Within Britain, this connected to the manner in which the theologians of the Christian church viewed laughter as a

negative thing, which Jesus had never himself done. Following the Protestant Reformation in England, comedy continued to be regarded as immoral and to be avoided (Larkin-Galiñanes, 2017). In this way, humour is seen as being connected to malice and the abuse of others.

Despite these negative attitudes towards humour, some did consider there to be benefits. Mostly, this was with regards to the relief obtained from the physical act of laughing, with Joubert, Kant and Descartes considering the health benefits that it provided. While the line of thought mostly focused on the physical act of laughing, it did also make the point that a certain state of mind was necessary for the laughter to be induced (Larkin-Galiñanes, 2017).

In more modern times, cognitive considerations regarding humour have dominated. This involves the concept of incongruity being a part of creating humour and focuses on the intentional aspects of with rather than accidental (Larkin-Galiñanes, 2017). Incongruity is not innately amusing, much like how irony is not always humorous. It does however have the capability to be used in a humorous manner, though it also has to not be incongruous in a manner that is frightening, as safety is a requirement for humour to be appreciated (Carroll, 2014).

2.3.2 Japanese Background

Japanese religious fervour did not historically have negative connotations with humour, and the myth of Amatarasu Omikami arguably doubles as a comedy sketch. However, the issue of vulgarity concerned scholars and those connected to the theatre, where comedy was often performed. Here the issue of outright

laughter being considered vulgar was weighed against the greater skill of a comedian able to draw out subtle smiles from the audience (Wells, 1997; Higuchi, 2015).

In addition to vulgarity, the potential aggression and malice connected to laughter was also an issue that scholars considered with regards to humour. Yanigata believed that humour originated on the battlefield and was used to laugh at fallen enemies while increasing the solidarity amongst allies, and that consequently it had no real place in civilised society (Wells, 1997). Similarly, there has been a historic connection between laughter and shame, with laughter being considered to be in need of being repressed (Oda, 2006).

Moving on from issues of vulgarity and obscenity, scholars in Japan turned their focus to comparing Western and Japanese literary humour in the Meiji era, often lamenting a perceived inferiority of Japanese humour in comparison with the Western examples. Japanese comedic literature tended to either fall into the camp of being considered too crude or too subtle to be rated highly in this way (Wells, 1997).

2.4 Semantic Theories

2.4.1 The General Theory of Verbal Humour

The General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH) as put forward by Attardo and Raskin (1991) provides a theory for analysing and considering the structure of humorous utterances via the use of six knowledge resources. Attardo (2001) expands upon the GTVH to include longer literary narratives that are both entirely humorous as well as ones that are not purely comedic but contain some

elements of humour. These six knowledge resources (in hierarchical order) are: (1) Script Opposition, (2) Logical Mechanism, (3) Situation, (4) Target, (5) Narrative Strategy, and (6) Language (Figure 1).

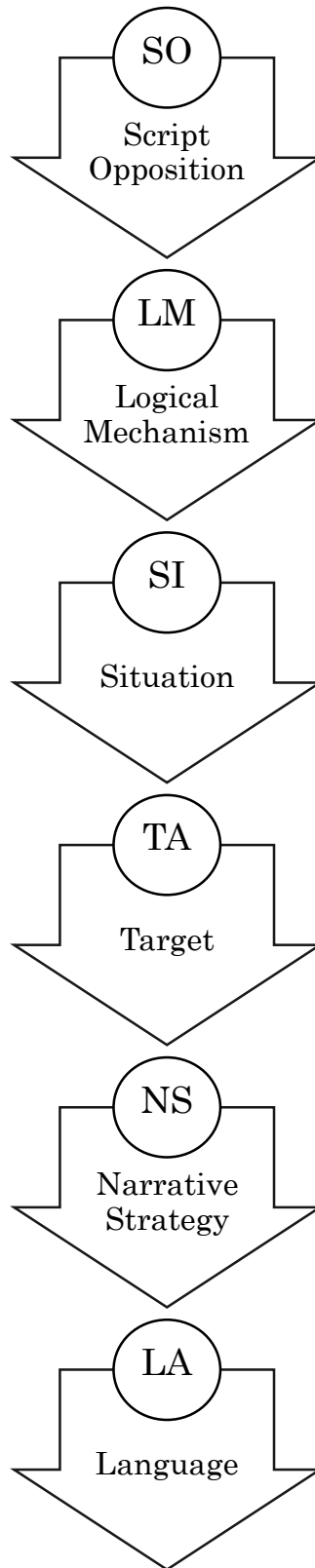


Figure 1: The 6 Knowledge Resources (Attardo, 2001)

2.4.1.1 Script Opposition

This parameter is based around the theory that a joke will be either in its entirety or at least partially compatible with multiple scripts that may be opposing, such as contrasting *real* with *unreal* (Attardo, 2001). This can be considered to tie in with the incongruity theory, as it operates to an extent by providing humour through the conflict between the expected script and the one which is expressed. It is the most abstract of the knowledge resources (Attardo, 2001).

2.4.1.2 Logical Mechanisms

In the context of a joke there will often be some kind of distorted logic, which does not necessarily apply to the world in general but for the purpose of humour a willing suspension of disbelief is entertained (Attardo, 2001). Examples of logical mechanisms include straightforward statements where there is are juxtapositions of elements such as in Example (i) as well as Example (ii) where there exists a false analogy.

- i. Gobi Desert Canoe Club

(Attardo, 2001:25)

In Example (i) there is a contrast between the idea of a desert, which tends to be dry and sandy, with that of a canoe club, which would require bodies of water on which to canoe.

- ii. A student is failing an oral exam in entomology. Finally, the professor shows him the leg of an insect and asks to identify the owner. The student is unable to do that, and the professor flunks him. As the student is leaving the room the professor realizes that

he did not put down the student's name. "What's your name, young man?" he shouts after the student. The student sticks his leg back into the room and says, "You guess it, professor."

(Attardo & Ruskin, 1991:305).

Here the analogy between identifying an insect from its leg as a part of an exam is compared to a professor identifying a student by their leg, an analogy which does not hold up as an actual analogy but within the context of a joke provides the possibility of amusement.

2.4.1.3 Situation

Any kind of joke has to be about something. Likewise, any kind of humorous utterance logically has to be about something. This could be some kind of activity, participants, objects, etc (Attardo, 2001). Some jokes such as Example (iii) leave the situation in the background, whereas some such as Example (iv) rely more heavily on it.

- iii. "Can you write shorthand?"
"Yes, but it takes me longer."

(Attardo, 2001:24)

- iv. "Is the doctor home?" the patient asked in his bronchial whisper.
"No," the doctor's young and pretty wife whispered in reply. "Come right in."

(Attardo, 2001:21)

The set-up of the situation of the joke in Example (iv), namely that the wife is at home but the doctor is not, is required, but in Example (iii) the situation where

writing in shorthand or speedily might be necessary is left in the background rather than being explicitly stated (Attardo, 2001:24).

2.4.1.4 Target

A joke or humorous utterance may have a target which works as the “butt” of the joke. For this to work, there tends to be a requirement of some kind that would connect the target to the actions described in the joke. This may involve a group that is stereotyped to be idiotic who can be described in a joke as performing a behaviour that is generally considered to be stupid, such as blondes (Attardo, 2001). An example of this is Example (v) where the target is that of Poles, where they are shown to perform a simple task in a manner that is absurdly stupid (Attardo & Ruskin, 1991:301)

- v. How many Poles does it take to screw in a light bulb? Five. One to hold the light bulb and four to turn the table he’s standing on.

(Freedman & Hofman, 1980, in Attardo & Ruskin, 1991:295)

2.4.1.5 Narrative Strategy

The genre of a joke, which are often constructed as narratives, is considered to be the narrative strategy that is used to create the humour (Attardo, 2001). It would appear little has been done regarding this parameter. It is effectively the genre or subgenre that the joke can be considered to fall into, such as the structures like question and answer jokes or riddle-style jokes (Attardo & Ruskin, 1991:300). As such, Example (vi) is a straightforward expository narrative telling of a joke, whereas Example (vii) is the same basic joke told through the means of a personal-ad format (Attardo & Ruskin, 1991:300).

- vi. It takes five Poles to screw in a light bulb: one to hold the light bulb and four to turn the table he's standing on.

(Attardo & Ruskin, 1991:295)

- vii. "Need help changing light bulb. Have bulb. Wanted: four strong man to turn table. Call Miaskowsky at 555-POLE"

(Attardo & Ruskin, 1991:300).

2.4.1.6 Language

While an ordinary utterance can be considered to be an aspect of casual language, a joke can be considered to be non-casual as it contains additional layers of meaning as a consequence of it having a specific function, namely to cause laughter or amusement. This can mean that the placement of something such as a punchline in a joke and the exact phrasing can make something be funny or not. Functions like the use of idioms or understatement could be considered to be examples (Attardo, 2001). Paraphrases are also commonly used in jokes, where the same basic joke can be used in a variety of ways with minor adjustments (Attardo & Ruskin, 1991:298). As such, Example (vi) above can be paraphrased as Example (viii) below, wherein the same basic concept is being communicated as the punchline, though the phrasing differs and rather than Poles the group singled out is Polacks (Attardo & Ruskin, 1991:295).

- viii. The number of Polacks needed to screw in a light bulb? Five – one holds the bulb and four turn the table.

(Clements, 1969:22 in Attardo & Ruskin, 1991:295).

2.5 The Functions of Humour

Humour and laughter both play important roles in lubricating human interaction to maintain good relationships, and serve as an important element of nonverbal communication. It has been suggested that those that favour a more aggressive style of humour may also require a greater amount of laughter in daily interactions, with a study into aggressive humour positing that the emphasis on laughter as a means of communicating in daily life allows people to laugh at humour that others might find to be too aggressive to qualify as funny (伊藤, 本多, & 渡邊, 2011).

It can be presumed that humour serves a function within human communication beyond the most straightforward desire to entertain the audience, as well as being as multifaceted and complex as communication strategies often are. There have been numerous studies that at some point categorise the varying functions of humour, with varying degrees of the broadness of the categories.

2.5.1 Social Functions of Humour

From a primarily psychological perspective that touched on the social perspective, Martineau (1972) modelled the social functions of humour with regards to the situation of the group and the various reactions that could result depending on the specifics of the groups involved and the humour used. As such, the context and situation, as well as the manner in which those present react, are all judged to be important to the consideration of humour. In this way, humour is dependent on the judgement of the audience or group that is exposed to it (Martineau, 1972). He thus divides the functions of humour with regard to whether it is judged by the in-

or out-group as esteeming or disparaging them before considering the various functions it may have (Martineau, 1972).

2.5.1.1 Intragroup Situation

Martineau (1972:117) designated intragroup situations as being those whereby humour is both initiated and judged within the ingroup alone, requiring no further direct interaction with any other group.

In this case, if the humour is judged to esteem the group, then it serves to solidify the sense of solidarity contained within. When it is judged to have disparaged the group, it can function as a means by which to control the group, it can increase solidarity in the face of a perceived threat, it can exacerbate pre-existing conflict, and it can lead to demoralisation and potential disintegration of the group (Martineau, 1972:117-118).

If the humour is judged to have esteemed an out-group, a situation that is unlikely, then it ultimately works to foster solidarity within the group through the mechanism of elevating the other group as a reference group with whom similarities are shared. In the event that the humour is judged to disparage an out-group, then it can function to either increase the solidarity and sense of morale within the in-group, or it can foster a sense of hostility with regards to the out-group (Martineau, 1972:118-119).

2.5.1.2 Intergroup Situation (Internal)

In an intergroup situation where the humour originated from an out-group and the in-group acts as the audience for that humour, two groups are involved in the

humour creations, but the judgement and functional effects are kept within the in-group (Martineau, 1972:119).

In the case that the humour is judged to be serving to esteem the in-group, it serves as a means to increase in-group solidarity. Similarly, when the humour is judged to disparage the in-group, it can also serve to increase the sense of morale within the in-group by means of bonding together in the face of adversity, it can function as a means by which the behaviour of the in-group is controlled, and it can also serve to demoralise the in-group especially when bombarded with a constant stream of jocular abuse (Martineau, 1972:119-120).

If, however, the humour is judged to be esteeming the out-group, then it can either serve to create or increase a sense of hostility from the in-group towards the out-group, or it can serve to increase the solidarity within the in-group. Likewise, when the humour is judged to be disparaging the out-group, it can function to either increase the morale within the in-group or increase the sense of hostility the in-group holds towards the out-group (Martineau, 1972:121).

2.5.1.3 Intergroup Situation (Interaction)

In the case of humour that is initiated in an intergroup situation, the manner in which it functions is related to the interaction between the in- and out-group as well as the judgement by both of the groups (Martineau, 1972:122).

If the humour is judged to esteem one of the two groups, it can either function to encourage increased consensus and a degree of social integration between the groups, or it can function to be complicit in the disintegration and

dissolvment of the pre-existing relationship between the groups (Martineau, 1972:122).

In the case that the humour is judged as disparaging one of the two groups, it can serve to function as having a role in disintegrating the relationship between the groups, or it can function as a means by which the relationship between the groups is redefined (Martineau, 1972:122-123).

2.5.2 Humour at Work

Collinson (1988) encountered the use of humour between the men working on the shop floor of a lorry producing factory in North West England in the 1980s, and the function it served. He broadly separated the functions into three categories, with humour being used as a means of resistance, a means of conformity and a means of control. The use and style of humour is presupposed to be highly connected to the socioeconomic affiliations of the working-class men that made up the majority of the participants in the study as well as being closely intertwined with their sense of identity (Collinson, 1988).

2.5.2.1 Humour as Resistance

Through the co-creation of a jocular culture on the shop floor rife with self-deprecating and teasing in-jokes that separated them from the management and served as a form of resistance in this perceived “us vs them” culture war that existed. This also allowed them to resist boredom by creating a form of entertainment during working hours. Through these tactics, humour was a means

of resistance that thereby created a sense of solidarity amongst the men (Collinson, 1988).

2.5.2.2 Humour as Conformity

Likewise, the maintenance of the joking culture that existed was also important for the conformity required for smooth in-group interaction and maintenance of good internal relationships, mainly through the constant pressures of being able to keep giving and taking the jokes. This helped to maintain a degree of in- and out-group boundaries, with those unable to adapt to the joking culture that existed effectively being ostracised. This meant that humour in this manner was seen to be a part of performing working-class masculinity as well as policing the manner in which the group was doing so, by maintaining a particular ideal to be aspired to (Collinson, 1988).

2.5.2.3 Humour as Control

Additionally, humour was used to exert and maintain control, being used as a method to control those that were perceived as not working as hard as they ought to be and thereby either incentivising them to do so or pushing them out of the core group. This could lead to arguments within the group and potentially damaging friendships, as well as creating an atmosphere that was somewhat adversarial (Collinson, 1988).

2.5.3 Humour with Friends

Hay (2000) developed a framework for the purpose of analysing the function and strategies of spontaneous humour amongst friendship groups in New Zealand, for her analysis of gender in relation to humour.

As well as the over-arching category of a general function of humour, she also identifies three major categories of the functions of humour, which are solidarity, power and psychological (Figure 2). Being that the data set was of casual conversation amongst friends, the vast majority of the ways in which humour was used was focused on creating a sense of solidarity amongst the group. Likewise, the use of humour as a means to exert power over the other participants in the conversation is minimal as the participants were members of a friendship group and therefore can be assumed to have a primarily amicable relationship. Within these categories of the functions served by humour, the strategies used were also considered with the acknowledgement that there could be overlap due to the circumstances as well as categorisation occasionally requiring a pre-existing knowledge of the group, the people and their relationships (Hay, 2000).

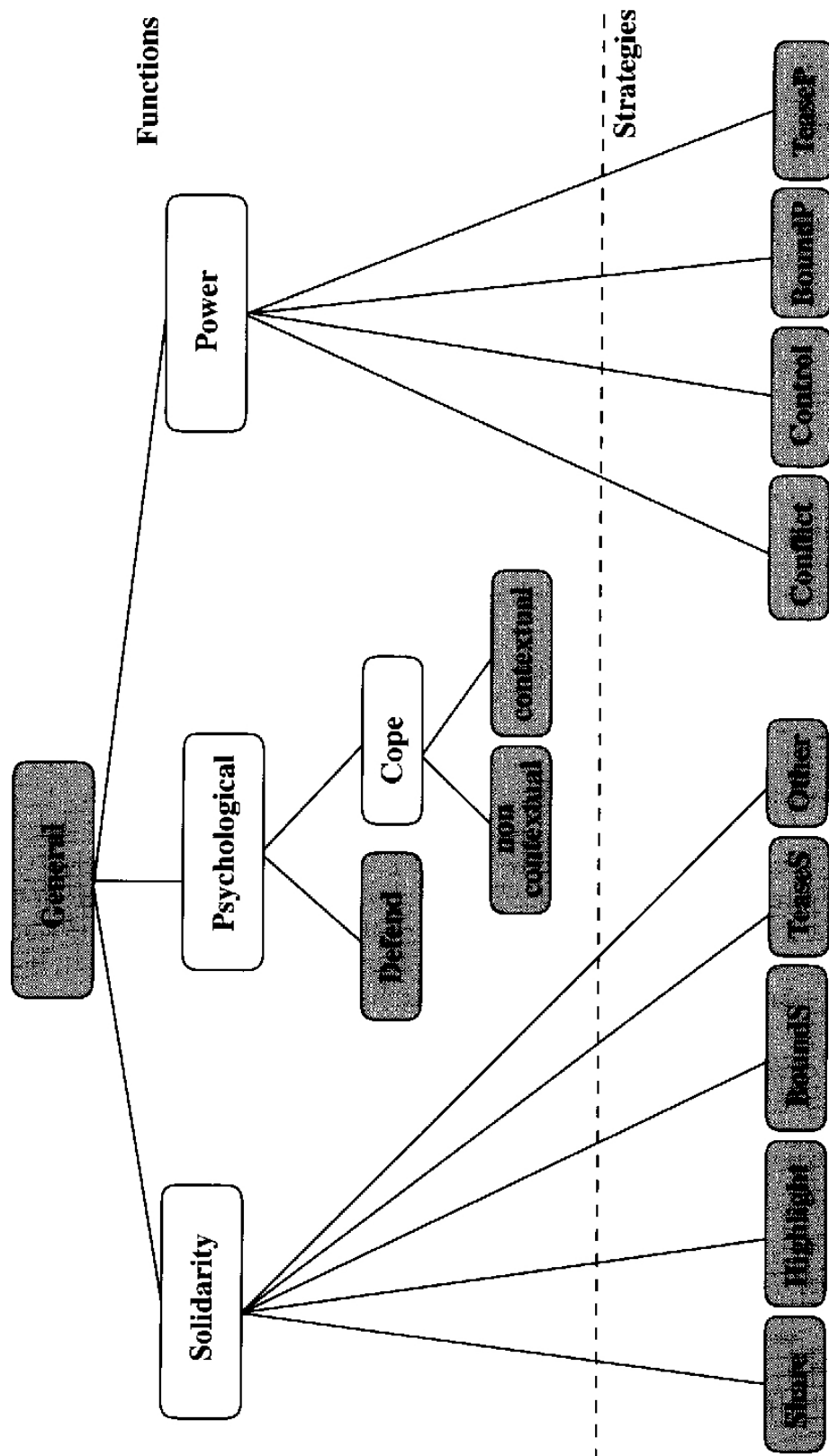


Figure 2: Functions of Humour (Hay, 2000:717)

2.5.3.1 Solidarity

Numerous instances of humour serve to create a sense of solidarity in the group, as studied by Hay. The major strategies identified were those of sharing, highlighting similarities, maintaining boundaries and teasing.

Sharing demonstrates a degree of trust between the group and thus helps to increase a sense of solidarity. Similarities or shared experiences can be referenced, demonstrating what they have in common and thereby enhancing the solidarity within the group. Maintaining and defining boundaries operates by reinforcing the boundaries that serve to separate the in-group from the out-group, which consequently increases the sense of solidarity within the group. Teasing, which is not always purely verbal, can reinforce a relationship when there is already a jocular aspect to the friendship, wherein teasing is understood to be a manner of expressing their closeness and mutual trust (Hay, 2000).

2.5.3.2 Power

Fewer examples of humour functioning as a means to maintain or create power occurred in Hay's data set due to the participants being friends and therefore seeking to maintain a sense of solidarity rather than power. Strategies for using humour as a means of creating power included fostering conflict, controlling or influencing others, setting boundaries and teasing (Hay, 2000).

Fostering conflict can be done in a humorous manner that is still adversarial and involves a sense of power being gained over other members of the group. Control can be exerted over others by means of a regulatory use of humour, though it is often also used in the much more benign manner of mildly influencing

others rather than outright control. This can be a friendly act, which may not be interpreted as an explicit exertion of control but rather just seen as a humorous moment influencing decisions. Boundaries can be challenged and set to maintain the status quo as well as altering it to reflect a new way of doing things within the group, thereby imposing the power of an individual over the group or the group over an individual that has inadvertently strayed. Teasing can be used to attack in a manner that causes genuine harm rather than the more playful variety that serves to foster solidarity, though from an outside perspective the difference between the two varieties of teasing can be hard to detect (Hay, 2000).

2.5.3.3 Psychological

Sometimes the humour serves a psychological function focused on the utterer rather than the group as a whole. This can involve using humour as a method of self-defence by identifying a perceived weakness or flaw and making a joke out of it before anyone else has the opportunity to do so, thereby ensuring that any harm to the psyche is minimised. Likewise, humour can be used to cope with both issues that have been raised as part of the context of the conversation as well as more existential and general ones such as death (Hay, 2000).

Hay differentiates between coping with contextual problems and coping with non-contextual problems by describing contextual coping humour as being used to cope with problems ‘we need to get through to survive the conversation’ and non-contextual coping humour as that which is needed to cope with problems ‘we need to get through to survive in life, or a period of our life’ (Hay, 2000:726).

2.6 Humour and Culture

Humour is deeply intertwined with culture. It can be used to create a sense of collective solidarity as well as being a manner to resist or protest against an aspect that is rejected.

The context can be deeply specific, requiring at times a mutual understanding to the cultural context of a joke and at others the even more specific situation of the actual moment within which the humour is performed. It is also something that on occasion requires modification, as seen in Scarpetta and Spagnolli's research regarding the manner in which stand-up comedians altered the jokes they used depending on the racial makeup of the room they were performing to, due to the manner in which the tastes and sense of what passed from being a joke about a sensitive topic to overstepping the line of what was appropriate differed according to the socio-cultural background of the audience in a manner that can be seen to include their racial profile (Scarpetta & Spagnolli, 2009).

Failure of humour can lead to issues of miscommunication. In addition to the necessity of a mutual understanding of the framing within which the humorous utterance is presented, the sense of it must also be appreciated as if it is something considered to be distasteful or simply unfunny it may fail even when there is sufficient comprehension of the contextual elements required (Bell, 2017).

Within Britain, the issue of what style and varieties of comedy a person enjoys can be closely linked to their class and subsequent socioeconomic situation, with tastes being in part dependent on the cultural capital available to them (Friedman, 2011). In this way, it forms an aspect of personal identity and interacts

with the other elements of the social background of a person to create a complete sense of identity, with certain tastes varying in their degree of how aspirational they might be in socioeconomic terms.

2.6.1 Cross-Cultural Issues

As contextual knowledge is a large part of humour, allowing for both its detection and its comprehension, it can become an issue in cross-cultural situations.

In this manner, an utterance that has the potential to be humorous is not guaranteed to be interpreted as such merely due to having the linguistic competence allowing for an understanding of the language it is presented in. The social and cultural elements that surround it are in this way vital elements of the interpretation and full comprehension of the humour. One example of the difference in language ability and social comprehension is a study of Japanese university students learning English as a second language, who were presented with humorous brain twisters. In these cases, even when the students were capable of translating the phrases to a reasonable degree of accuracy, the cultural context and therefore the fact that it was intended to have a humorous element to it mostly eluded them, suggesting the necessity of including more aspects of a cultural nature in language teaching (Tamaoka & Takahashi, 1994).

Likewise, cultural influences can lead to differing tastes in humour. This can be seen in the context of a small study wherein even accounting for linguistic differences by ensuring all the sketches either had Japanese subtitles or Japanese dubbing, the Japanese participants rated the entertainment values of the Monty Python sketches shown as consistently lower than the British participants

(Reader, 2018). This can be due to cultural differences leading to vital parts of the background knowledge required to understand the full joke being missing as well as sensitivities regarding the idea of what is considered to be funny varying.

This raises the issue of translation in addition to that of cross-cultural communication of humour. Where an element of humour is rooted in the original language, it can be hard to manage to translate it. Some jokes may refer to cultural knowledge that might not be easily available to the understandings of someone from a different culture. Likewise, some aspects of humour are firmly intertwined with the language from which they originate, hinging on linguistic ambiguities that arise from aspects of words such as their pronunciation, the existence of homophones, and them having multiple meanings. This is of particular relevance to the entertainment industry when preparing something for an audience beyond the culture and language within which it was created. This can include novels and films, both requiring different aspects of translation. Consequently, an understanding of the sociocultural context is required for a translation that manages to replicate a similar joke (Chiaro, 2017).

It can, therefore, be difficult to manage to both maintain the original source material whilst also keeping the humour inherent in the original as it can be lost in the translation process. This does not mean that it is not possible, with it being a necessary part of exporting films and television series from one area of the world to another. This requires not only specific language skills of the translators tasked with accurate representation of the dialogue that may exist but also the issue of how to deal with humour and the varying issues that may exist therein, both with

regards to replicating humour but also different cultural attitudes towards both what is funny as well as what is offensive (Bucaria, 2017).

Some things such as stand-up comedy style shows or live performances may be harder to translate effectively, with there being issues of missed elements of humour even when it is. In such cases, earphones providing simultaneous interpretations of the jokes are a possibility as in the case of some Issey Ogata comedy shows in London, though this did mean that the laughter of the audience would sometimes be out of sync with the performer due to a slight delay. However, then the tone of voice of the comedian may be a part of the expression that an interpreter may not manage to convey accurately. However, even accounting for these issues, one of the major issues with regards to translating the comedy being performed by the Japanese comedian to the primarily British audience was still that of cultural differences, meaning that the British audience lacked the necessary cultural nuances to find some of the material funny (三木, 2009).

2.6.2 Politics and Protest

Humour can also be used as a means to raise awareness of an issue in a palatable manner that reduces discomfort, engaging an audience in a manner that keeps their attention and prevents the serious underlying issues from dominating the conversation but at the same time brings it fully to their attention. In this way, comedians can be public thinkers, involved in the public and political discourse of a country, sometimes with great audiences (Chrzczonowicz, 2018).

In America, this includes a variety of such comedians that discuss current affairs through a lens of comedic satire in shows such as *Late Night with Seth*

Meyers and *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver* (Chrzczonowicz, 2018). In Britain there likewise is a variety of television and radio shows that combine being comedy panel quiz shows for light-hearted entertainment with the topics covered being current affairs. These include the television shows *Mock the Week* and *Have I Got News for You* as well as the latter's radio counterpart *The News Quiz*. In this way, humour can serve as a tool for discussing current and political affairs, both through making it more approachable to lay people whilst also serving as a weapon with which to attack targets.

It can be through the use of humour that the public who may have been alienated or put off politics can be drawn back into having an interest in something that was previously viewed as dull or unrelated to them. It can also serve as a means for going down in history, with those ridiculed forever having that lingering as a footnote in their personal biography (Hynes, Sharpe, & Greg, 2008). It can also serve to be a method for peaceful protest that can have a similar shock value to violence but with nothing more than the occasional ego being harmed.

It was in this way that one of the manners in which a part of the West German student movement in the post-war era expressed their somewhat bohemian, anti-authoritarian and neo-Marxist leanings was through the medium of humour as a part of their protests, under the name of *Spassguerilla*¹. As such the tactics of guerrilla warfare as used by Che Guevara were developed into the tactical deployment of guerrilla-style humorous "attacks" (Teune, 2007). These included the 'pudding assault' of 1967, which did not happen but was planned, with the intent to bombard the motorcade of the US Vice-President with projectiles

¹ Fun guerrilla (German)

such as pudding that would cause little harm but a degree of humiliation (Teune, 2007:122), as well as using leaflets to satirically exaggerate the media reports regarding an incident of potential arson to be a victory for the peace movement (Teune, 2007:123). In this way, while it was dependent on the circumstances that arose in the political situations to take the opportunities to use humour as a means of political protest, it was a method that could be used to potentially memorable effect.

Similarly, humour was utilised along with digital integration as could be expected in the modern age as a part of the Women's March protest of 21 January 2017, an international event centred on the USA protesting about various issues not limited to women's rights and in part due to a degree of opposition to the policies and attitudes of the newly inaugurated President Trump. Both within the context of the march and in the manner corresponding images and dialogue were shared online both during and after the event, there was a use of humour through the means of such methods as humorous slogans on signs to be carried by protesters, which could then be photographed and shared widely online. In this way, while it has its limitations, humour has been used as a part of political protest (Bore, Graefer, & Kilby, 2017).

One issue that does exist is the manner in which humour when used for political means as satire can easily be misunderstood, either taken as the truth when it was intended as satirical or misinterpreted as a different standpoint than the actual intended one hidden behind the veil of humour, as well as ironic satire being mistaken for humorous parody, altering the perceived stance of the utterer, as well as the reaction of the audience (Stewart, 2016). In this way, Stewart (2016)

analyses the strategies used by Stephen Colbert both in his show *The Colbert Report*, which ran 2005-2014 on American television, and also his 2006 White House Correspondent's Dinner performance, as well as acknowledging the risks he faces as a satirist to be misinterpreted as to his core beliefs and thus intentions.

It should also be noted that this manner of using humour to raise political issues exists beyond the arena of verbal or purely language-based media, with political cartoons having their own breed of humour that is often of the verbo-visual variety, which can be analysed much in the way that verbal humour can to consider the ways in which it is constructed (Guerra, 2016).

2.6.3 Politeness

Humour occupies an ambivalent position in that it can serve as a face threat whilst also simultaneously being a method through which face can be saved. Similarly, utterances that are intended as humour but are misinterpreted as sincere can inadvertently cause offence. Similarly, both mock politeness and mock impoliteness are phenomena that occur on occasion, as a form of interaction between humour and politeness.

Joking can operate as a positive politeness strategy on the grounds that it relies on the shared contextual knowledge to function and can thus operate to show solidarity and thus draw the conversation participants together. It can also act as a mechanism through which face threatening acts such as making requests can be minimised (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Teasing, in particular, can have face-threatening properties, being that it can be interpreted as overly aggressive outside of pre-existing jocular

relationships. In the case of language learners, while it can be a friendly introduction to an aspect of the linguistic culture they are studying when they are teased by those with whom they are socially intimate, but with the risk of inhibiting enthusiasm for learning and damaging the existing rapport when used by educators towards their students in the classroom (Shardakova, 2017). While teasing has been shown to have the potential to operate as a face-threat, in the analysis of cases of teasing amongst Japanese teachers by Geyer (2010) the fact that they can also interact in a way to cause a person's face ascription to be contested and even altered.

Taylor's research into mock politeness, which investigated the difference in frequency of labelling posts in the corpora of an Italian internet forum compared to an English one, found that there was a greater frequency in the Italian forum of labelling their posts as either *ironico*² or *sarcastico*³ when compared to the tendency of the English posts to be labelled as ironic or sarcastic. Similarly, the manner in which the two terms appeared to overlap with regards to meaning in the Italian usage, suggesting a lack of firm separation in semantic sense of the words in Italian, whereas in English there was a more clear differentiation in the manner in which the lay terms were used that reflected the academic definitions (Taylor, 2016).

Likewise, mock impoliteness, wherein implicit or explicit impoliteness is used in a jocular manner, is a variety of banter that appears to exist in the discourse of Australian and Northern British English speakers. Within this, a

² Ironic (Italian)

³ Sarcastic (Italian)

more detailed differentiation of the varieties of mock impoliteness that exist can be described as being that of jocular mockery, being a specific type of teasing whereby within a frame of humour the teaser diminishes something that holds relevance for someone else either present or conceptually a member of the group, and jocular abuse, being a manner of insulting a target within a jocular framing so that they are cast into the category of person. It can, therefore, play a role as a form of group interaction that serves to strengthen in-group solidarity, but at the same also carries the risk of inadvertently causing actual hurt or disharmony within the friendship group (Haugh & Bousfield, 2012).

Similarly, joking in Japanese is highly contextual and the issue of formality plays a great role. Takekuro's (2006) research into the differences in jokes in Japanese and English, both using natural conversation as well as Japanese and American films, found joking to occur in both formal and informal settings in English, but not in formal situations in Japanese. This suggests that there is a likelihood of humour constrained by the formality of a situation in Japanese, with humour not permitted culturally in some circumstances.

2.7 Political Discourse

2.7.1 British Politics

There have been a number of studies investigating the linguistic features occurring in the political arena using the British Prime Minister's Questions parliamentary sessions as a source. Both Murphy (2014) and Harris (2001) consider the House of Commons of the UK Parliament to be a "community of

practice” for research purposes in the same way that other social groups may be regarded as such.

The nature of the political questioning of the British Prime Minister during Prime Ministers Questions is different from that of a journalist asking questions regarding policy due to the different rules governing them. While journalists are expected to be impartial, MPs are not and are protected by their parliamentary privilege so that they may accuse and criticise freely without risking accusations of slander, as long as they avoid what is regarded as unparliamentary language that is not in keeping with the traditional means of operation (Bull & Wells, 2012).

It is often regarded as an important demonstration of leadership by the Leader of the Opposition to be able to undermine the authority of the Prime Minister through use of a strategy that is often considered to include a wide range of Face Threatening Acts (Bull & Wells, 2012). For those challenging the government or Prime Minister, the strategy of threatening the Prime Minister’s positive face by subjecting them to ridicule through the use of humour and wit is generally more effective than a more overt aggressive attack (Harris, 2001).

British debates have a tendency towards being confrontational, with heated disputes often turning into ‘interpersonal verbal duelling’ (Ilie, 2004:54). Ilie (2004) also notes how the British rhetorical tradition differs from the Swedish one in that ridiculing is permitted even in the case of serious subjects, while serious discourse is clearly separated from joking in the Swedish traditional rhetoric. Similarly, British parliamentary debates show a large amount of political polarisation, with the differences between adversaries highlighted and party

divisions reinforced, whereas Swedish debates have a greater degree of rhetorical polarisation in that serious talk is kept clearly separated from playful talk.

As such, insults, including those that use an ironical tone, frequently occur in the British parliament. The unwritten debating rules of the British parliament ‘encourage and praise quick, witty and humorous interventions’ in high regard, which connects to the insults used in the British parliament frequently focusing on the wit and intelligence of the opposing side in both an individual and collective capacity (Ilie, 2004:76).

Within parliament, despite the requirement for polite discourse, ‘offensive irony and humour in connection with insults’ are used to partially hide the hostility and scorn of the utterer behind the veneer of something more palatable (Ilie, 2004:78). The ‘ritualistic duelling’ of the debates both allows for an encourages ironical criticisms as part of the culture of allowing politicians to use playful linguistic elements to outsmart their political opponents (Ilie, 2004:84).

2.7.2 Japanese Politics

Feldman (1998) states that an important aspect of the behaviour and speech of Japanese politicians revolves around the traditional Japanese concepts of *honne* and *tatemae*, which describe the division between the personal self that a politician may be, and their public persona that they must embody outside of their home situation. As such, there may be a large amount of hedging rather than direct expressions of opinion in their normal style of political speech.

Diet proceedings in Japan are in many ways a very public aspect of the face of Japanese politics, though a large amount of the discussion as to what actually

ends up as policy also goes on behind closed doors. Incidences, often considered to be slips of the tongue rather than deliberate, where a politician speaks too candidly or openly have resulted in criticism from colleagues and ultimately resignation (Feldman, 1998). Feldman (1998) lists a number of occasions where Japanese politicians have directly insulted or accused other Diet members of things, as well as criticising aspects of policy, that led to the person speaking being chastised or even forced to resign.

This suggests that Japanese politicians have to be careful about what they say, always ensuring that it is in keeping with the norms of the cultural and political system they are in.

2.8 Conclusions

Firstly, it can be seen that while there are differences in the historical backgrounds regarding how British culture and Japanese culture has treated humour, there are also similarities especially with regards to the manner in which the ethical issues have been considered.

The manner in which humour operates can differ with regards to culture due to the manner of the language upon which it draws as well as the cultural sensitivities and knowledge resources that are available. Consequently, different languages and cultures can have different ways of using humour due to what is considered appropriate or entertaining. It would therefore be interesting to compare and contrast the ways in which they might differ.

It can also be seen that the wider area of politics and political protest is somewhere that can be intertwined with humour. As such, it would be interesting

to investigate the manner in which humour is used in political spheres of varying countries.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Moving on from the background concepts described briefly in the preceding two chapters, a theoretical standpoint and methodology can be developed for the sake of the desired research.

3.2 Provisional Categorisations of the Functions of Humour

Firstly, this consideration of humour and the functions it serves is primarily focused on its place within face-to-face conversational interactions. As such, the interactional function of humour in digital communications may be slightly different.

It is also likely that comedy performances will differ in the function of humour, given that the relationship a comedy performer has with their audience is likely to be less personal and intimate from the relationships that may exist in conversation. As such, the function of humour to simply entertain can likely be presupposed to exist, wherein the reaction of laughter soothes the ego of the comedian in the way that applause can be assumed to do so for the ego of a performer of a different genre. Likewise, there would be situations where the success of the comedy dictated future career and financial prospects. As such, this sort of humour usage has different parameters to the variety that occurs in conversation or speech between participants in some form of dialogue.

The first division that appears to exist when it comes to the functions of humour in conversational circumstances is what could be considered to be a

difference in the focal point of the reason for the humour. That is to say, whether the driving point of the humour is concerned with the speaker's relationship with other people, whether that be positive or negative, or with the speaker's relationship with themselves in the manner of their internal psychological state of being.

Within this context of the internal psyche, it appears to be rooted in self-protection. In this way, humour can function as a means of self-defence to protect the speaker from the risk of becoming the butt of someone else's joke or from direct criticism that is not humorous, thereby taking the power out of the hands of others and retaining control of their own perceived weaknesses and issues. Likewise, humour can serve a psychological function for a person's internal psyche by acting as a coping mechanism for a variety of issues whether raised in the preceding conversation or pre-existing and potentially existential issues that they are all aware of. In both cases, the damage that might be inflicted upon their sense of self and psyche is mitigated through the use of humour. As such, while this humour may be enjoyed by the audience, the primary focal point of its function is with the speaker. Likewise, the desire to be liked by others or receive a modicum of their approval is also a core aspect of the functioning of the human psyche, and humour is a means by which this can be achieved. As such, this function of humour has been included under the idea of the psychological functions of humour. It is entirely possible that humour, when performed for a wider audience, may often fall within this category.

In the context of humour functioning as an aspect of interpersonal relationships and having a connection with regards to the relationship the speaker

has to other people, humour can function as a means of fostering a sense of solidarity through means such as highlighting what people have in common and referring to their shared knowledge base the sense of belonging can increase leading to positive interpersonal feelings. Similarly, humour can also serve as a means of expressing more negative aspects of a relationship by means of creating or exacerbating pre-existing conflicts. This can include using a jocular style or the trappings of a tease to disguise personal insults intended to wound as well as amuse.

In addition to this, it seems to also be the case that humour can serve a dualistic function where it both acts to bring together one group at the expense of another, combining aspects of both the function of solidarity and the function of conflict to have a different interpretation depending on the partisan sentiments of the people present. This, therefore, would involve a certain degree of boundary creation and management, with the personal affiliations of the people as well as those of the speaker altering the interpretations, with humour used in this manner effectively functioning to polarise those present along pre-existing boundaries.

Humour can also function as a method of controlling others, both through explicitly consolidating power over others to dominate them as well as through friendly or well-intentioned subtle manipulations to guide others to or from certain options. As has been mentioned before, the sensation of being laughed at tends to be an unpleasant one and therefore can be used as a means of maintaining social control. This can also operate within social groups to ensure that all members obey what are the accepted social norms of the group as well as society in general. It can also be a subtle manner in which others are guided to make better decisions

through the use of humour to gently nudge them towards them rather than the use of explicit instructions.

In this way, as can be seen in Figure 3 below, the functions of humour can be provisionally categorised for use in the data analysis that follows. This draws heavily on Hay's (2000) categorisations for the functions of humour.

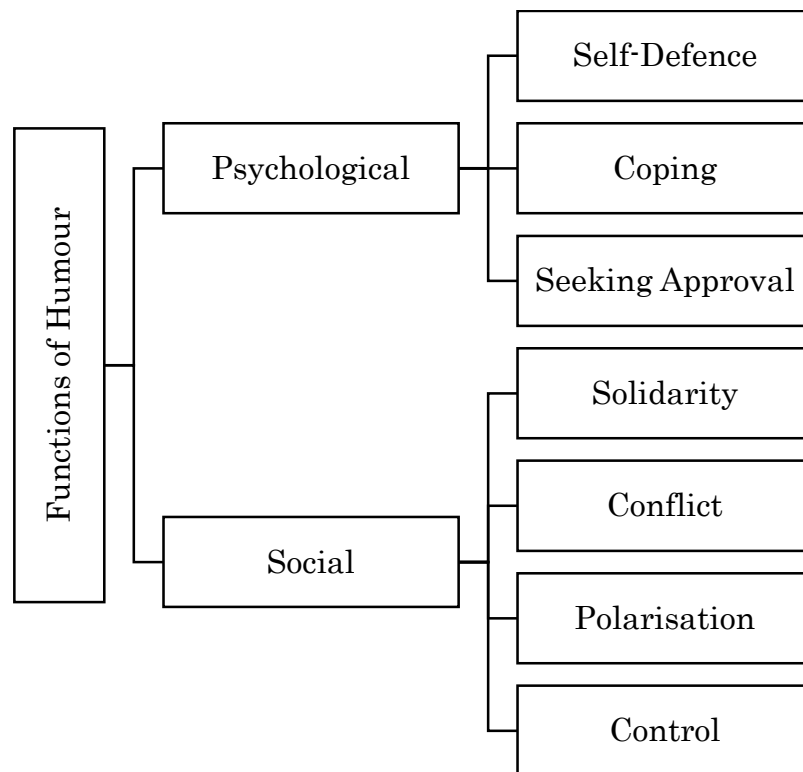


Figure 3: Functions of Humour

3.3 Research Methodology

The research methodology will be structured into three basic sections. First, there will be an analysis of data obtained from corpora of natural conversations in British English and Japanese. The moments that elicit laughter will be considered, given that laughter is a common response to humour and that the other participants in the recordings are the primary audience for any humour produced,

though consideration of that manner in which intentional verbal humour is not the sole trigger for laughter. Upon detecting these moments of potential humour, they will be analysed and categorised as to the function that they appear to have within the context of the conversation.

Secondly, there will be a section where through a similar method of analysing the statements surrounding incidences of laughter, the discourse that exists in Prime Minister's Questions will be analysed in both British English and Japanese. This is in part because it represents a situation which is formal in nature but at the same time also tends to involve the production of natural speech. The circumstances are also interesting as they are both bound by social expectations of civility and share a common profession in that most are career politicians representing a section of the country as well as often the political party to which they are affiliated, whilst at the same time there is an adversarial aspect to the communications that exist therein as there are often stark differences in views on the political issues being discussed. Therefore, it is not necessarily an obvious place for humour, and it can be assumed that humour would be limited. However, at the same time it is an arena in which humour can serve a purpose and can subsequently prove to be a useful situation to compare and contrast the differences that exist both between informal conversation and politicians engaging in what could constitute debate as well as the differences between the manner in which humour is used in British English and Japanese.

The third and final data array for analysis is also political in theme but diverges from the other two data sets by no longer focusing on the speech acts of recorded conversations. Instead, the snap elections of 2017 that occurred in both

Britain and Japan are taken as a focal point, with the manner in which candidates for certain seats presented themselves and the wording of the manifestos produced considered for the extent to which humour is used.

3.4 Detecting and Defining Humour

In comparison with more specific forms such as *esprit*, which comes from French, the definitions of humour are often vague (河盛, 1969). Given the focus on humorous utterances, humour in this study will be considered to be utterances made with the apparent intent of eliciting laughter from some of those present. This encompasses a number of methods that could potentially be considered more finely to be something such as wit, sarcasm or irony, but excludes elements of humour that are non-verbal such as gestures or paralinguistic sounds.

As has been noted, humour can be subjective which can complicate matters when it comes to detecting and classifying it. Similarly, there are adjacent concepts that have the potential to vary depending on culture. In the interest of getting a wide variety of examples through which the similarities and differences in the function of humour can be deduced, humour will be approached in a broad sense connected to the simple desire to make others laugh. As such, the illocutions surrounding instances of laughter will be considered, and then the context of the conversation as well as paralinguistic clues such as tone and, when applicable, body language will assist in deciding if the illocutions in question appear to be intentionally eliciting laughter. If so, then it will be judged as being intentionally humorous.

3.5 Conclusions

Having this provisional theoretical standpoint as the backbone of the methodological practises to be implemented, the data can be analysed and a greater understanding of the manner in which humour functions in British English and Japanese with particular focus on the political sphere can be ascertained.

Chapter 4

Conversational Humour

4.1 Introduction

One of the circumstances under which humour arises is within the context of casual, friendly conversation. As such studying naturally occurring conversation with regards to the manner in which humour functions within it can help to serve as a baseline against which more specialised situations for conversation can be compared. It also allows for the comparison of the functions of humour in natural conversations in British English and Japanese.

It can be presupposed that the dominant function of humour in casual conversations is likely to be that of creating solidarity and thus improving group cohesion.

4.2 Methodology

Both corpora are freely available online for research purposes. Recordings were chosen so as to obtain a similar amount of data for both languages. Due to the nature of the corpora being different, this means that there is some variation. The recordings for the BNC are completely natural, which means that that the audio is at times unclear and often features background noises such as the television and the radio. They also vary with regard to topic and length. These factors are both inconvenient from a perspective of making research easy to qualify and yet also incredibly important due to the manner in which it allows for truly accurate representations of natural conversation. In comparison the Sakura corpus

recordings were all effectively staged, with the conversation topics preselected. This allowed for a balancing of the participants' genders as well as ensuring that the recordings are of comparable lengths, with the audio not only clear but also featuring a video of the conversation. In this way it is not as purely natural as the conversations presented in the BNC but it manages to find a balance in providing a resource for researching aspects of natural conversation.

As such, recordings were selected from those available and the transcriptions used are those provided by the BNC and the Sakura corpus. These were then analysed for incidents of laughter, on the basis that laughter is a common response to show appreciation for incidences of humour. In this way, the judgement with regards to the presence of humour in any given utterance is left at the discretion of the participants in the conversation, given that they are the intended audience of any humorous utterances, rather than the researcher. However, in keeping with Keith-Spiegel's (1972) assertions with regards to the elicitation of laughter, not all of these laughs will be as a consequence of humorous utterances just as not all humorous utterances elicit laughter. Some utterances may be intended as humorous but be missed by the others, and some humorous moments may be due to non-verbal aspects. Likewise, sometimes humour is acknowledged with a smile rather than a full laugh. All these cases, as well as laughter due to other means such as shock or nerves, were excluded from the data, leaving only the incidences where an utterance of clear humorous intent elicited laughter from at least one other participant in the conversation.

Within both data sets, there were incidences of laughter without a verbal utterance that was the intentional cause of it, as well as laughter that appeared

to be in response to some form of utterance that was intentionally humorous and sought to incite laughter in those listening. It is the incidents of laughter caused by apparently intentional verbal cues that have been focused on, with the relevant section that elicits laughter underlined for as long as long as the laughter remains a present aspect of the conversation. They have therefore been considered and categorised as to their function and purpose within the discourse, using the overarching categories as discussed in Chapter 4 and shown in Figure 3.

4.3 British English Data

A total of 18 recordings were used to provide the data set for the British English analysis. These were all recorded by the participants in the early 1990s as part of the project that created the British National Corpus (Coleman, Baghai-Ravary, Pybus, & Grau, 2012). As such the recordings are not individual files but are a section on a tape, and are of variable lengths. The transcripts are available along with the audio, though they do occasionally have gaps and errors, as well as occasionally having utterances incorrectly attributed. There is a wide age range in participants as well as variation in occupation. The two recordings by Annette (Annette 6 and Annette 7) and the one by Hazel featured only female participants, and the recording by Dean was all-male, but all the others were primarily mixed-gender. However, with the longer recordings some participants would come and go, meaning that there were on occasion moments where there were only participants of one gender speaking. The shortest recording was approximately 7 minutes and 30 seconds, the longest were about 47 minutes long.⁴

⁴ More detailed information can be found in the Appendix.

4.3.1 Psychological Functions

4.3.1.1 Self-Defence

Example 1

None (PS18L)	[1196] I've found ... I have to have a lot of ... conditions. [1197] Everything has to be just so for me to be able to learn. [1198] It has to be right.
Denise (PS18E)	[1199] I mean half the time I think I don't remember anything because er er, people are so busy blooming ... playing around and
None (PS18L)	[1200] Mhm.
Denise (PS18E)	[1201] shouting and
None (PS18L)	[1202] And I'm too nosey to block things out.
Denise (PS18E)	[1203] and
None (PS18L)	<u>[1204] When I was sitting in that corridor there was one of the tutors on the phone, only for a short while</u>
Denise (PS18E)	<u>[laugh]</u>
None (PS18L)	<u>[1205] and I couldn't even blot him out cos I was too nosey to listen to what he was talking about.</u>
Denise (PS18E)	<u>[laugh]</u>

The group of friends talking are students, with their conversation turning to issues regarding studying, in particular the requirements they might have with regards to the environment around them that inhibits or encourages good concentration. One of the participants brings up the fact that when there are people and noises around them, they find it difficult to concentrate. To illustrate this they give the example of the an incident not long before the conversation took place when they were attempting to study, but were distracted by a tutor talking on the phone. They then go on to call themselves nosey, making Denise laugh, in a manner that suggests that it functioned in some ways as a teasing comment only uttered by the one who was on the receiving end before one of the others could have made the accusation, either in jest or honesty. In this way self-deprecating humour can serve as a manner of self-defence, defending the psyche from attacks that might be more malicious if perpetrated by another person.

4.3.1.2 Coping

Example 2

Elizabeth
(PS08X)

[483] Well, I was already in and he came in
and ... just erm ... I was here and he just
suddenly came round that way and he sat down
next to Louise and ... and he said how are you?

[484] I said I'm okay.

[485] You look good or something.

[486] And then ... that was it really.

Anne (PS10L)	[487] He chatted to Louise did he?
Elizabeth (PS08X)	[488] Yeah. [489] <u>Why break the habit of the lifetime eh?</u>
Matthew (PS10K)	<u>[laugh]</u>

(Elizabeth 2, Tape 057502)

Here Elizabeth is retelling meeting her ex-boyfriend who she recently parted from, and that he chatted to a mutual acquaintance called Louise (who Elizabeth refers to as smelling of garlic in the full conversation). She then sums up the conversation with the sarcasm-tinged comment “Why break the habit of the lifetime eh?”, which makes her brother Matthew laugh. This may be referring to background regarding the relationship that is not covered in the data, but also could be considered to be a sort of coping mechanism to minimise the hurt that may have been experienced in the break up and any feelings that might linger. It also serves to show to her family that she is coping and allows them to do the same in a mutual show of reassurance of being alright.

Example 3

Elizabeth (PS08X)	[636] Yeah , it was, and th ... erm ... but it's just saying it's not like that. [637] And whe they ... you see, some people are trying to get the opinions of Ethiopia changed, cos like everyone seems to pity them and ... really, they should
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accept them and try and help them, but try and help them on, like equal terms.

Anne (PS10L) [638] Mm.

Mike (PS10M) [639] I mean, there's er Sudan who ... and other parts of Africa, and Bangladesh they've got er ... horrendous problems which are equally as bad!

Matthew (PS10K) [640] Yeah, because we're planning on shifting out [...] . [laugh]

Elizabeth (PS08X) [laugh]

Mike (PS10M) [641] Well, you got your evening mapped our [laughing] fairly well have you [] ?

Matthew (PS10K) [642] I'm not ... pessimistic about [...] .

Mike (PS10M) [643] Well they haven't.

[644] I mean, all the, all the respect [...]

Matthew (PS10K) [645] Well

Mike (PS10M) [646] As I say, it's it's from the [...] to have respectability.

Elizabeth (PS08X) [647] But you know erm ... the, media at the time, you know there's a pic , there was a picture of the time of a baby who was starving and screaming.

Mike (PS10M) [648] Yeah.

Anne (PS10L) [649] Mm.

Elizabeth (PS08X) [650] Well, they would have showed a wider picture of the actual picture, and apparently they take.co , the

photographers had taken a baby away
from it's mother [laughing] he's standing
in the middle of a desert [] , and there's a
picture of them with a baby and all these
photographers [laughing] photographing
it [] !

Matthew

(PS10K)

[651] [laugh] ... [laughing] Sounds a bit
like that baby [...] [] !

Mike (PS10M)

[652] Yeah. [laughing] [...] [] !

Group of

unknown

speakers

(KBYPSTUGP)

[laugh]

(Elizabeth 3, Tape 057503)

The conversation touches on current news in the form of the famine in Ethiopia and political situations there. Elizabeth then brings up that the topic has been covered in some of her classes, so she proceeds to tell her family the summary of what she has learnt regarding the way the media distorts reality to an extent, leaving most people with a slightly inaccurate mental image of Ethiopia. In the earliest section of this part of the conversation, Elizabeth and Mike are discussing seriously the problems that existed at the time of the recording, mentioning Ethiopia, Sudan and Bangladesh by name as well as Africa in general.

This serious conversation is then shifted away from developing into a fully serious discussion by Matthew's utterance of "Yeah, because we're thinking of shifting out", which garners laughter and serves to derail the conversation. What follows is therefore more laughter-filled and cheerful than discussions of

humanitarian disasters. There is an element of sarcasm or teasing to this utterance, which can be taken as an indirect manner to cope with the emotional toll that can be extracted when discussing somewhat dark topics such as famines and suffering. In this way the topic can be indirectly altered as well as lightened to a more cheerful one. It can therefore be regarded as a response that acts as a coping mechanism by inviting laughter rather than a continuation of a serious discussion.

Following this initial touching upon of the wider issue of the famine in Ethiopia, such issues are returned to by Elizabeth, who had initially raised it. However, at this point in the conversation, the more serious issues of those suffering and starving are side-stepped with Elizabeth bringing up a photo of a baby who was photographed as if it was alone but beyond the frame of the photograph was its mother. While this is to an extent not humorous through linguistic means but more the somewhat ridiculous mental image of the photoshoot that she conjures up, and it manages to ensure that both the topic is referred to whilst at the same time keeping the family laughing. This cherry picking of the most ridiculous aspects to talk about can be a means of coping with the feelings that might well up if the full extent of a humanitarian disaster was dwelled upon by favouring imagery and concepts that will cause laughter and levity.

Example 4

Arthur (PS50T)	<u>[204] how many times has he, has</u> <u>he done this to us now?</u> <u>[205] Over the years [laugh]</u>
A. (PS50U)	<u>[206] Don't tell me Arthur I go</u> <u>through all these panic stations and</u> <u>[laugh]</u>
Arthur (PS50T)	
A. (PS50U)	<u>[207] and</u>
Unknown speaker (KP1PSUNK)	<u>[...]</u>
A. (PS50U)	<u>[208] life's one big trauma with him</u>
Arthur (PS50T)	<u>[209] Keeps you on his toes</u>

(Arthur 1 Tape 032501)

Up until this point in the conversation, the main topic has been the issue of Arthur's brother-in-law and A.'s son being currently in hospital for an unknown reason, updates on his condition and wondering when he will be able to come home. At this point, they have already received the good news that he no longer requires morphine and his condition has improved considerably, which lightens the atmosphere. In this state of relief, Arthur and his mother-in-law (A.) turn the discussion to the previous times he has been hospitalised, as there have been many similar incidents in the past. Arthur chooses to approach this topic with a degree of humour, presumably due to having just received good news with regards to his recovery, and is therefore in good spirits as he reminisces over the fact that this is a recurring situation for them. Their partial complaints about this recurring situation is affectionate, dealing with the stress of it with a mock complaint to relieve some of the tension and express the relief of a positive outcome. In this way

of dealing with it through a lens of humour, it can help with coping with the actual distress involved.

Example 5

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| Dorothy
(PS0R7) | [1278] And he said you'll be able to go round
the roundabout then I [...] the flaming things! |
| Raymond
(PS0PN) | [laugh] |
| Dorothy
(PS0R7) | [1279] So he said you couldn't have done!
[1280] So I sa have, so I told him what he
said, and he said ... well that's exactly what it
says in the book!
[1281] I said yes, well why don't you do it?
<u>[1282] I said because in the bloody book</u>
<u>there's no cars on the roundabout and I says it</u>
<u>[...]!</u> |
| Raymond
(PS0PN) | <u>[laugh]</u> |
| Dorothy
(PS0R7) | [1283] I said you bring me three o'clock |
| Margaret
(PS0PP) | [1284] You really [...] |
| Raymond
(PS0PN) | [...] |
| Dorothy
(PS0R7) | [1285] in the morning I'll go round the
roundabout for you when it's empty! |
| Raymond
(PS0PN) | [1286] Mm, that's it ... innit? |

Dorothy	<u>[1287] I said but when I come here there are</u>
(PS0R7)	<u>cars everywhere, I says on ... on the picture</u>
Raymond	<u>[laugh]</u>
(PS0PN)	
Dorothy	<u>[1288] there isn't a car in sight!</u>
(PS0R7)	<u>[1289] He sat there and burst out laughing</u>
	<u>but he said ... yeah you're right, [laughing]</u>
	<u>there isn't [] !</u>
Margaret	<u>[laugh]</u>
(PS0PP)	

(Raymond 12, Tape 029903)

Dorothy is talking about general day to day issues with Raymond and Margaret, when Margaret remembers that Dorothy had been intending to learn to drive. As such, Dorothy starts recounting some of her experiences to her friends, which leads to this discussion of roundabout that is tinged with humour, eliciting laughter in a few places. Mostly the focus is on the problems that Dorothy finds when navigating them when there are other cars on roundabouts, as that causes her problems so she is complaining albeit in a tongue-in-cheek manner. As such, she recounts the conversations she had with her driving instructor, in which she says that she pointed out that in the pictures there were no other cars, which she would be fine with but there being other cars on the roundabout makes it harder. She also tells them how the driving instructor laughed and admitted she had a point when she raised the issue that the books describing how to drive on roundabouts had diagrams showing no other cars, making it look deceptively simple. There is something self-deprecatory about the whole segment of the

conversation, with it mostly seeming to serve the function of coping with the issue in question. It can be seen as being easier to feel more positive about struggling with something when that issue can be repackaged as a humorous anecdote to amuse friends and family.

4.3.1.2 Seeking Approval

Example 6

None (PS18J)	[1614] It's about a two different ... tools.
Denise (PS18E)	[1615] A tool being?
None (PS18L)	[1616] <u>My body is my tool!</u>
Denise (PS18E)	<u>[laugh]</u>
Unknown speaker (KBUPSUNK)	<u>[laugh]</u>

(Denise 2, Tape 071501)

There is a idle conversation about something they seem to be studying together, with a degree of uncertainty to the tools mentioned in the conversation, which Denise asks for clarification about as there is no prior indication of what tools it might be. From this, the speaker with the code PS18L takes the opportunity to interject and gives a somewhat silly response to the more serious discussion occurring around them, garnering laughter. It partly would have the function of increasing a sense of levity within the group, as well as allowing the speaker to indicate their membership. It also serves towards their desire for approval, eliciting laughter as a means of affirming this.

4.3.2 Social Functions

4.3.2.1 Solidarity

Example 7

Lyn (PS0DP)	[246] he is just a right prick, right? [247] I said to Russell I'll go upstairs and have a look at the bedrooms and I've got this thing that if it's a nice house I'd go and have a look at the bedrooms, he said well why? [248] I said [...] ... So I said to this Richard, I said excuse me I said but your phone's not working downstairs I said have you got one upstairs?
Debbie (PS0DM)	<u>[249] You nosy cow!</u>
Lyn (PS0DP)	<u>[250] Yeah!</u>
Debbie (PS0DM)	<u>[laugh]</u>
Lyn (PS0DP)	<u>[251] He said yeah, he said it's in my bedroom.</u>
Group of unknown speakers (KCAPSUGP)	<u>[laugh]</u>
Lyn (PS0DP)	[252] So I'm walking up the stairs and he's walking up behind me, and all I can hear is Russell saying watch yourself cos he had his hands on me [...] watch yourself. [253] [...] went to have a look in his

bedrooms like and I ... they're all done out in pine, every bedroom is done out in pine.

[254] The old thatch you know, the ... well it's not, it's like tongue and groove now innit?

[255] There was one pink, one cream ... one blue and white, and that's four bedrooms, they were absolutely gorgeous bedrooms.

[256] They were lovely.

[257] So I said can I use your phone in that one? [laugh]

Debbie (PS0DM)

[laugh] ...

Lyn (PS0DP)

[258] But he is a pillock, he's ... I mean she, Catherine right his cous Russell's cousin ... she's really pretty, she's rea she's got a lovely skinny figure, everything ... and he's just a pillock, there's no other word for him.

Hayley (PS0DN)

[259] But he got money.

Lyn (PS0DP)

[260] Well that's it innit?

[261] You can't blame them can you?

(Gordon 1, Tape 054101)

In this example, after the women have been what they like in men, Lyn asks if anyone knows Richard who lives in a nice farmhouse. After introducing that topic to the conversation, she dismisses Richard as a pillock before going on to talk about his house and shares a story of a somewhat cheeky thing she did, namely asking

to use the landline phone in the bedroom of the house solely because she wants to see what the bedrooms upstairs look like and that provides a convenient excuse. The set-up of the story, both with the reason clearly being that she wants to see the bedrooms using the excuse of using the phone creates a sense of humour by contrasting the purpose with the descriptions of the bedrooms and the final return to the excuse, when those listening know that she had no actual desire to make a phone call. It therefore serves to be a mildly humorous anecdote, with Lyn's sharing of it suggesting the strength of the friendship given that she is revealing what might be considered to be a secret (the method she uses to surreptitiously gain access to the bedrooms of houses of people she might be visiting) and also shows her in a slightly silly light (the fact that she likes to see the bedrooms of nice houses). That she discloses this for their amusement suggests a certain solidarity and the strengthening of the in-group she considers them all to be a part of.

Example 8

Denise (PS18E)	[1667] rubbish off!
	[1668] I mean you had John Major on one side, Paddy Ashdown on the other, Neil Kinnock on the other.
None (PS18L)	[1669] Paddy Ashdown's the only one worth listening to.
Denise (PS18E)	[1670] I mean
None (PS18H)	[1671] Neil, Neil Kinnock
Denise (PS18E)	[1672] for God's sake!

Unknown speaker (KBUPSUNK)	[laugh]
None (PS18H)	[1673] he's a wanker!
Unknown speaker (KBUPSUNK)	[laugh]
Denise (PS18E)	[sigh]
Unknown speaker (KBUPSUNK)	[1674] I know.
None (PS18H)	[1675] Let's not talk about [...] .
Denise (PS18E)	[1676] It's election constantly on the telly. [1677] Six o'clock News is extended.
Unknown speaker (KBUPSUNK)	[1678] Mm.
Denise (PS18E)	[1679] They have ... they have extended from six o'clock till quarter to seven ... and then
None (PS18J)	[1680] Have you noticed that when there's a general election
Denise (PS18E)	<u>[1681] you have about five minutes of news</u>
None (PS18J)	[1682] there's never any di
Denise (PS18E)	[1683] and
None (PS18J)	[1684] disasters like [...]
Denise (PS18E)	<u>[1685] thirty five minutes of bloody election</u>
Group of unknown speakers (KBUPSUGP)	<u>[laugh]</u>

Denise (PS18E)	<u>[1686] coverage!</u>
Denise (PS18E)	[1687] Probably is, but it's not
None (PS18H)	[1688] Vote Bean!
None (PS18J)	<u>[1689] Why don't they have a big old disaster and see if they feature it on the news [...]</u>
Denise (PS18E)	<u>[1690] Well they wouldn't.</u>
	<u>[1691] It would have two minutes at the end!</u>
Group of unknown speakers (KBUPSUGP)	<u>[laugh]</u>
Denise (PS18E)	[1692] It makes you wonder what news
None (PS18H)	[1693] Well
Denise (PS18E)	[1694] there is to tell you!
None (PS18H)	[1695] a runaway train has run straight through
Denise (PS18E)	[laugh]
Denise (PS18E)	[1696] And we're gonna need your head.
Denise (PS18E)	[1697] Yeah.
None (PS18L)	[1698] Well last night ... er
Denise (PS18E)	[1699] And there's been an earthquake and everything
None (PS18L)	[1700] there's the
Denise (PS18E)	[1701] everybody's dead.
Unknown speaker (KBUPSUNK)	[1702] Vote Paddy Ashdown.

None (PS18L)

[1703] there's been eight miners
trapped down in Yorkshire but ... the
election

(Denise 2, Tape 071501)

Example 8 is a part of a lengthy discussion about the upcoming election, which is peppered with laughter and fleeting moments of humour. It is raised due to it being an important part of their present existence, and also the issue with regards to when they will be able to vote considering their other commitments.

It becomes clear during the discussion that they are all in some manner fed up with it, and the complaints turn to the manner in which the news has become entirely dominated by the election. Denise comments over a number of turns “you have about five minutes of news and thirty five minutes of bloody election coverage” and thus elicits a laugh with the stark description of the imbalance between current affairs and the election that takes over everything. This then leads into the slightly darker but still joking discussion of there being a hypothetical disaster with Denise asserting that it would go unreported or receive “two minutes at the end!”. This is presumably something of an over-exaggeration for the purposes of increasing the entertainment value of her comments and emphasising her point, but it inspires both a continuation of that topic and also a degree of laughter. It serves to foster the solidarity of the group, marking themselves as an in-group in opposition to the people in positions of power organising the election and by association its effects on their lives.

Example 9

None (PS18K)	<u>[1760] I reckon we should all vote for Mr Bean!</u>
Denise (PS18E)	<u>[laugh]</u>
None (PS18J)	<u>[laugh]</u>

(Denise 2, Tape 071501)

In this example, which is a continuation of the discussion started in Example 8, after a reasonably lengthy and serious discussion of the politicians such as John Major, Paddy Ashdown and Neil Kinnock who were at the time the leaders of their parties and therefore all potential Prime Ministers, one of the participants says “I reckon we should all vote for Mr Bean!” referring to the well-known comedy character played by Rowan Atkinson. It is a ridiculous suggestion in its own way, given that he is fictional and therefore unlikely to become Prime Minister. It also draws on two elements that the group has in common. Firstly, they all speak in a manner that suggests a certain dissatisfaction with the options available in the upcoming election. In that way, the idea of rejecting all of them in favour of a fictional character who is known for being incompetent both draws upon and relies on that dissatisfaction and disinterest in the politicians provided as actual options. Secondly, the humour necessitates the knowledge resources that they all seem to possess with regards to who Mr Bean is. That common knowledge of his character and the fact that he tends to cause chaos and disaster (making him not a good choice for Prime Minister) is one thing that they have in common, so this serves to highlight it by referring to something that they all share an awareness of.

Example 10

Denise (PS18E)	<u>[846] She gets really high scores in her exams doesn't she? [laugh]</u>
None (PS18L)	<u>[847] The kind of thing Denise likes to know about people.</u>
Denise (PS18E)	<u>[laugh]</u>
None (PS18K)	[848] I dunno.
Denise (PS18E)	[849] Well I have to know these things.
None (PS18L)	[850] I know you do dear.
Denise (PS18E)	[851] I say I'm sure, did she not get the eighty percent in the open book exam? [852] ... She's got lovely hair!
None (PS18L)	[...]
Denise (PS18E)	[853] Mm!
None (PS18L)	[854] Got something about her personal appearance as well!
Denise (PS18E)	[855] She's got nice hair Jan.
None (PS18K)	[856] I think she's got nice hair.
None (PS18L)	<u>[857] Yeah but she does well in her exams so</u>

None
(PS18K)

[laugh]

Denise
(PS18E)

[858] Don't you think these things are
important?

(Denise 2, Tape 071501)

Whilst doing their research the group of friends chatter about other women they know. As a consequence, the topic turns to one woman they are all familiar with, called Jan. Denise comments, “She gets really high scores in her exams doesn’t she?” which leads to some laughter. Her friend then says that this sort of thing is “The kind of thing Denise likes to know about people” with a teasing element to the tone, in a way that makes Denise laugh suggesting that it is a friendly tease that shows the strength of their friendship. This is then echoed later on, when Denise also mentions that Jan has nice hair as an additional point, with another friend bringing up again Denise’s initial assertion that “she does well in her exams” and thus eliciting more laughter. This would suggest that it is friendly teasing, functioning to show their closeness and maintain a cheerful conversation. It therefore relies on their pre-existing relationship for this. As such, it shows their closeness. The teaser is demonstrating adequate knowledge of what Denise is like as a person so as to be able to joke about her oddities in such an intimate way. Given that they appear to be friends there is little sense of powerplay and the suggestion is that therefore it is a show of a friendly jocular relationship.

Example 11

Lyn
(PS0DP) [149] they've got a girl that works there right
and her name her name is Linda and they run
this big machine and it's really long ... and he
said if she's at the top machine he can't see down
the other end of the machine cos her boobs are in
the way and he's got [laughing] I said you don't
ask her can sh [] he said yeah well he said
[laughing] I've gotta ask her [] can she move out
the way, he said if she sits on the table her boobs
are resting on the table, I said oh [...] I'd crack
up.
[150] He said me and the boys we're standing all
day watching her when she's bending down
putting box [laughing] in a sack []

Debbie
(PS0DM) [laugh]

Hayley
(PS0DN) [151] Dirty c cows.

Debbie
(PS0DM) [laugh]

Lyn
(PS0DP) [152] [...] though haven't you?

Hayley
(PS0DN) [153] Dirty bastards men are.
[154] ... Aye I suppose you have gotta look.

Lyn
(PS0DP) [155] As long as you don't touch I suppose.

Hayley
(PS0DN) [156] It's horrible window shopping innit?

Lyn
(PS0DP) [laugh]

Debbie [157] Gordon says it's not natural if you don't
(PS0DM) erm ... if you don't look.

Lyn [158] Oh I get, I get [...]
(PS0DP)

Debbie [159] As long as he don't touch.
(PS0DM)

(Gordon 1, Tape 054101)

In this example, the participants initially start talking about losing weight, which turns into a discussion about big breasts and focuses on a girl called Linda in the neighbourhood who has particularly large breasts. Firstly, Lyn describes the manner in which the men often look at her when she is working, with Debbie laughing presumably at the idea of the men unable to focus on anything else as implied by Lyn's retelling.

This could be seen as a degree of boundary management with regards to gender. Despite Gordon's presence during much of the conversation, in this section the women present are disparaging men in general, with Hayley calling them all "dirty bastards" with regards to the topic of looking at women. She then lightens the tone a little with the slightly irreverent analogy of "It's horrible window shopping innit⁵?" likening women to items available for purchase, where it can be frustrating to only be able to see them rather than touch or buy them. This adds levity to an otherwise serious topic, which creates a degree of solidarity within the group identification of them all being women as opposed to men, with the comment

⁵ "Innit" is a dialect term for "isn't it" used commonly in many parts of Britain

garnering laughter coming across as being spoken as if from the perspective of a sleazy man such as the “dirty bastards” that they are talking about.

Example 12

None (PS18H)	[1711] Who's voting for Tory here?
Denise (PS18E)	[1712] I might.
None (PS18J)	[1713] Me, no.
None (PS18H)	[1714] Anyone else?
Unknown speaker (KBUPSUNK)	[1715] I'm sorry.
Denise (PS18E)	[1716] I think I will.
None (PS18H)	<u>[1717] I think I will and all.</u>
Group of unknown speakers (KBUPSUGP)	<u>[laugh]</u>
Denise (PS18E)	<u>[1718] Lesley goes by the majority.</u>
Group of unknown speakers (KBUPSUGP)	<u>[laugh]</u>
None (PS18H)	[1719] No!
	[1720] I wo no!
Unknown speaker (KBUPSUNK)	[1721] No!
None (PS18H)	[1722] I'm not going by
Denise (PS18E)	[1723] [laughing] No [] !
None (PS18H)	[1724] the
Unknown speaker (KBUPSUNK)	[1725] No!

None (PS18H)

[1726] majority.

[1727] I mean, could you live
with Neil Kinnock Prime
Minister?

(Denise 2, Tape 071501)

In Example 12, a latter part of the conversation also shown in Example 8, Lesley who is designated “None (PS18H)” is teased about the manner in which she reveals her intention to vote Tory, with Denise joking that she had opted for the party the majority of them had gone for, effectively having her vote chosen by their votes. Denise’s teasing reflects the manner in which the majority party takes power in the British electoral power. Lesley protests at this assessment, showing the slight complication that can exist with teasing, with there being both a good-humoured aspect to it as friendly banter between friends but also Lesley feeling the need to defend herself even if it is still friendly. This helps to show how easy it can be for teasing to cross over the line from friendly to overly-aggressive, and that it can often have a dualistic function, with the entertainment factor of those not on the receiving end often seeing greater mirth in it than those being teased. Similarly, the entire conversation is about politics and by extension political loyalties so in many respects it is full of face-risks and this manner of teasing is both a risk but also a diversion from the more serious topic.

Example 13

Denise
(PS18E)

[1155] And erm ... he's, he's got these papers like
with short stories

None (PS18K)	[1156] Mm.
Denise (PS18E)	[1157] and the wind blows them away out of his hand, so erm
None (PS18K)	[1158] Shit! [1159] Oh shit!
Denise (PS18E)	[1160] you're meant to get them in the bin not out of the bin.
None (PS18K)	[laugh]
Denise (PS18E)	[1161] And th he's picking them all up and this one ... there's a ... like a rockwe erm, doberman pinscher standing and these papers [laughing] between his legs [] . [1162] [...] urgh! [1163] Urgh!
None (PS18K)	[laugh]
Denise (PS18E)	[1164] Like this, and he's saying, Bonkers, now give me that paper! [1165] Give me that paper! [1166] The dog just leaps on him right, [laughing] so he's wrestling this dog, and he's screaming and the dog going, growling at him and everything
None (PS18K)	[1167] Aha.
Denise (PS18E)	[1168] and then suddenly you hear [mimicking dog barking] the dog goes running off and he's bit its ear!

	[1169] So he goes to see his mother who's a nurse [] at the
None (PS18K)	[1170] Aha.
Denise (PS18E)	<u>[1171] school where he lives, cos she's the nurse, like a matron, and er ... she said ... Garth!</u> <u>[1172] What's this? [laugh]</u>
None (PS18K)	<u>[1173] [laughing] Was it its ear [] ?</u>
Denise (PS18E)	<u>[1174] [laughing] The dog's ear [] .</u>
None (PS18K)	<u>[laugh]</u>
Denise (PS18E)	<u>[1175] [laughing] It's a little triangle of the dog [] !</u>
None (PS18K)	[1176] Oh no!
Denise (PS18E)	<u>[1177] [laugh] ... [laughing] I mean it was cruel</u>
None (PS18K)	[1178] Oh my God!
Denise (PS18E)	<u>[1179] but it was funny cos he just ... aargh!</u> <u>[1180] Like this [] .</u>
None (PS18K)	[1181] Ah ah ah!
Denise (PS18E)	<u>[1182] The dog went off yelping. [laugh]</u>
None (PS18K)	[1183] Bless its little cotton socks.

Denise
(PS18E) [laugh]

(Denise 2, Tape 071501)

After asking her friends if they saw *The World According to Garth* the other day and them answering that they hadn't, Denise retells a scene from it that she found to be darkly comedic, involving Garth and a dog. It manages to straddle the divide between the slightly darkly humorous and the horrific. She judges the group she is in to be one that will be entertained by her retelling, demonstrating an awareness of their tastes. She then shares the story, which then functions as a means of consolidating the pre-existing group solidarity around another shared piece of experience and knowledge.

Example 14

Denise [1219] And I, I keep going down and I'll turn it
(PS18E) down, and then I'll go out room and he turns it
back up again. [laugh]

Denise [1220] It's like living with a ... [laughing]
(PS18E) cantankerous old man [] !

None
(PS18L) [laugh]

Denise
(PS18E) [1221] It's enough to make you deaf.

None
(PS18L) [1222] What? [laugh]

Denise	<u>[1223] [laugh] ... Well the sound quality's not</u>
(PS18E)	<u>very good.</u>
	<u>[1224] I says, well I can hear it upstairs! [laugh]</u>
None	
(PS18L)	<u>[laugh]</u>

(Denise 2, Tape 071501)

In connection to their discussion about what environments they need to study effectively, Denise brings up the issue of the volume of the television as she can study fine when it is on softly, but not when it is loud as is often the case. She shares her issues through the means of humorous complaints, primarily regarding her husband. In this, she is sharing aspects of herself with her friendship group, which can act as a means to draw them closer out of a sense of solidarity. This is a means of using humour to complain about things that both shows the complaints do not warrant action but also allows her to vent and reinterpret the issues in a more humorous and therefore positive light.

Example 15

Arthur (PS50T)	[263] and they haven't had the compensation yet?
A. (PS50U)	[264] No
Arthur (PS50T)	[265] None of them?
A. (PS50U)	[266] No
Arthur (PS50T)	[267] Did father get any compensation?
A. (PS50U)	[268] Oh he didn't apply, he never, must admit

Unknown speaker (KP1PSUNK)	[...]
Arthur (PS50T)	<u>[laugh]</u>
A. (PS50U)	<u>[269] nothing wrong with me</u>
Arthur (PS50T)	<u>[270] [laughing] not much []</u>
A. (PS50U)	<u>[271] I'm alright</u>
Arthur (PS50T)	<u>[272] not much</u>
A. (PS50U)	<u>[273] I'm alright [laugh] I'm alright</u> <u>that's what I said to him you silly</u> <u>bugger you should of applied, even if you</u> <u>didn't</u>
Arthur (PS50T)	<u>[274] Oh no, no, if he's fit, you shouldn't</u> <u>of</u>
(Arthur 1, Tape 032501)	

Arthur and A. are reminiscing about previous major incidents that the man in question has been involved in, as he has frequently been in dramatic accidents leading to time spent in hospital. This turns to one incident they are both very familiar with, and the insurance payment forms that resulted from it. Despite the person in question being the butt of the joke, as well as not present due to being in hospital, the teasing towards him is affectionate. Even with him not there, the relationship they both have with him and also their affection and in-depth knowledge of what he is like means that it does operate as a means of showing closeness and therefore this instance of humour can be considered to function as a means of showing solidarity within the group which is familial in nature.

Example 16

Jackie (PS0V5)	[30] I think I'll throw these cuttings away.
Tony (PS0V4)	[31] Yes ... they're not doing anything are they?
Jackie (PS0V5)	[32] Not these.
Tony (PS0V4)	[33] <u>Apart from sitting there and dying.</u>
Jackie (PS0V5)	[34] <u>Sitting there and dying.</u>
Tony (PS0V4)	[<u>laugh</u>]
Jackie (PS0V5)	[35] lonely.

(Tony 1, Tape 010201)

General chitchat about the kitchen leads to a Jackie commenting that she might as well throw out the cuttings⁶ that were hanging around the kitchen doing nothing. Tony and Jackie talk over each other to an extent echoing the phrase “sitting there and dying” to co-create the small moment of humour. In doing so it functions as a means of increasing solidarity with the reference to shared knowledge and experience. There is an existential element to it, with the resigned comment they both speak, but also a sense of making light of it at the same time.

Example 17

Margaret (PS598)	[97] [...] Kinnock's photograph in front of the Sun this morning [...]
---------------------	--

⁶ Small piece of a plant cut off to be used for propagation

Pat (PS599)	[98] Aha.
Margaret (PS598)	<u>[99] Big headlines saying [laugh] if Labour get in today will the last person out of Britain please put the [laughing] lights out. [100] Something like that [].</u>
Pat (PS599)	<u>[101] [laugh].</u>
Gary (PS595)	[102] If Labour get in what?
Margaret (PS598)	<u>[103] [laughing] Kinnock on the front of the paper this morning, the Sun, [] his head was inside the light bulb. [104] It said, if Labour get in to the government today, will the last person who leaves Britain please [laughing] put the light out [].</u>
Pat (PS599)	<u>[105] [laugh] [...]</u>

(Sharon 3, Tape 075002)

The family are discussing the election, all expressing a degree of dissatisfaction with the options and some uncertainty regarding who to vote for. This topic makes Margaret want to repeat and describe the headline on the front page of *the Sun*⁷ as well as the picture that accompanied it to the group, laughing as she does so and thus inspiring Pat to laugh as well. This headline suggests that Britain is finished if Labour wins the election, and the context of it inspires some laughter in the group. In this way, Margaret shares a piece of political humour that she found entertaining with those she knows or believes to be like-minded with

⁷ *The Sun* is a British tabloid newspaper that leans towards the right.

regards to those issues for their amusement. This method of sharing functions as a means for increased solidarity.

Example 18

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| Tony (PS0V4) | [74] I was just going to grab the book. |
| Jackie (PS0V5) | [75] Which book? |
| Tony (PS0V4) | [76] and start it off. |
| Jackie (PS0V5) | [77] is it a blue book ... that's the white
one. |
| Tony (PS0V4) | [78] Yeah. |
| Jackie (PS0V5) | [79] The blue one is for yourself. |
| Tony (PS0V4) | [80] Yeah |
| Christine
(PS0V6) | [81] Dad |
| Tony (PS0V4) | [82] that's that for when I've done the first
ten tapes. |
| Christine
(PS0V6) | [83] Dad |
| Jackie (PS0V5) | <u>[84] Yeah eleven to go.</u> |
| Tony (PS0V4) | <u>[laugh]</u> |

(Tony 1, Tape 010201)

While chitchatting, Tony comments about how he was going to go get the book that is in some way connected to his task of assisting the researchers by recording the conversations he has. Jackie, Tony's wife, teases him lightly in reference to the tapes and draws out a laugh in doing so. After Tony comments that the blue book is for when he's done the first ten tapes, Jackie quips "Yeah eleven to go" to make

him laugh, as a friendly joke regarding the progress or lack of it in this task that could be seen as insurmountable. This functions to show their closeness and the mutual trust that exists between them, increasing solidarity through the awareness of the ability to blend in a jocular element to their relationship.

Example 19

Shirley (PS0S8)	[746] Doctor has been given a big job in Trinity
George (PS0S4)	<u>[747] He says</u>
Shirley (PS0S8)	[748] he's given up his practice, well he's not, he's still
George (PS0S4)	<u>[749] I'll just have to leave the country</u> <u>quickly</u>
Sam (PS0S3)	<u>[laugh]</u>

(Sam 17, Tape 046417)

The group has been discussing calling the doctor, when Shirley tells them that she has no doctor at present, as he's leaving his practice. While Shirley is seriously imparting the information about the doctor leaving, George comments in a manner that implies he may have had an involvement that was nefarious in nature, and therefore may have to flee the country, making Sam laugh. This manner of jokingly sharing illicit information even if it is only false and through implication shows the connection between George and Sam, inviting the potential for the sharing of a secret only it is a joke. In this way the humour functions as a means of increasing the solidarity found in their relationship.

Example 20

Tony (PS0V4)	[95] Hello, it's the thing about spoken English.
Jackie (PS0V5)	[96] <u>[laughing] Microphone man []</u> .
Rene (PS0V7)	<u>[laugh]</u>
Tony (PS0V4)	[97] I'll turn it off if you like.

(Tony 1, Tape 010201)

Jackie has been teasing Tony slightly about the fact that he's a volunteer for the project. Due to recording the conversations, Tony is presumably wearing some kind of microphone. Consequently, Jackie jokingly called him "microphone man" making herself laugh as well as Rene. It is a teasing comment, but one that functions to show affection and the tight-knit relationship that they all share, being family. It is also the final line in the recording, so he did turn the microphone off.

Example 21

Margaret (PS0PP)	[1661] Well, good luck with the driving!
Dorothy (PS0R7)	[1662] Oh I [...]
Margaret (PS0PP)	[1663] Keep at it!

Raymond	<u>[1664] Let us know when you're coming</u>
(PS0PN)	<u>out ... a we , and we'll stay in</u>
Dorothy	<u>[1665] So you can all stay in!</u>
(PS0R7)	
Raymond	<u>[1666] especially on the roundabouts!</u>
(PS0PN)	
Margaret	<u>[1667] [laugh] ... Three o'clock in the</u>
(PS0PP)	<u>morning you'll be alright!</u>
	<u>[1668] Three am.</u>
Raymond	<u>[1669] [laugh] ... [laughing] That's right [] !</u>
(PS0PN)	

(Raymond 12, Tape 029903)

As a parting greeting, the roundabout issue covered earlier in their conversation is brought up again, with Raymond and Dorothy overlapping to an extent with the idea of them all staying in. This is a call-back to Dorothy telling them how much she struggled with learning to drive on roundabouts due to there being other cars, and that it would be easier at night when there were less drivers using the roads. It is a friendly tease that in many ways functions as a means of strengthening the bond between them, through shared knowledge and the self-disclosure involved with them knowing the trials of Dorothy's driving.

Example 22

Tony	[1700] and, and, so erm, we ... er, then I came
(PS0V4)	round and I did it in second, he said there you
	went too wide there

Jackie (PS0V5)	[1701] Yeah.
Tony (PS0V4)	[1702] you came close to the white line.
Jackie (PS0V5)	[1703] Yeah.
Tony (PS0V4)	<u>[1704] Yes, course there's always a car parked on the corner isn't it?.</u>
Jackie (PS0V5)	<u>[1705] There's always a car parked on the corner</u>
Tony (PS0V4)	<u>[laughing]</u>
Jackie (PS0V5)	[1706] [...] . [1707] I must admit I'd always cheat at that corner, when I'm coming up to it, I don't do it suddenly
Tony (PS0V4)	[1708] Mm.
Jackie (PS0V5)	[1709] I'm then coming up to it, I move fractionally out into the road
Tony (PS0V4)	<u>[1710] [laughing] yeah.</u>
Jackie (PS0V5)	<u>[1711] [laughing] then you've got more room to get round [] If you sit glued to the pavement it's a hell of a job to get round</u>

(Tony 27, Tape 010314)

Tony is talking about issues he's having with learning to drive, which culminates in the issues involved with driving around a corner both he and Jackie are familiar

with. First they both laugh at the comment uttered by Tony and echoed by Jackie about it being complicated by there always being a car parked there, but also when Jackie gives her advice as to how to handle it they both laugh as she does so. This advice is not strictly speaking the kind that a professional might give. In this way they are sharing something they both have in common and drawing on knowledge that is shared by them both. This then functions as a means of reinforcing the pre-existing solidarity.

Example 23

Jackie (PS0V5)	[1761] when the erm, so it, a car parked across a drive ... and a car, the car behind him which was in a space was going
-------------------	--

Tony (PS0V4)	[1762] Mm.
-----------------	------------

Jackie (PS0V5)	[1763] and it was in quite a big space, I could off got in behind him and then changed if I'd reversed in [music] but when I saw this other chap sat in his car and then he indicated he wanted to pull out, so I let him go
-------------------	--

Tony (PS0V4)	[1764] Mm.
-----------------	------------

Jackie (PS0V5)	[1765] Then I drove into his space ... well then somebody else came and drove in behind me ... and the car in front then was sort of, oh yeah, then somebody else came and reversed in in front of him, so the car in front it was across the drive was boxed in by this time, I didn't box him in I just
-------------------	---

Tony
(PS0V4)

[1766] No .

Jackie
(PS0V5)

[1767] parked behind, but then somebody else came and parked in front of him, and he was there and sort, you could see him looking you know, he looked at the driveway and he looked, he was looking in his rear view mirror and then he turned round and looked like this, then he looked at the front, and he was thinking my god I can't get out of here, and all of a sudden a little car comes up the road stops, goes beep, beep on the horn, wanna get in the drive, this bloke went ha, ha, ha, ha [laughing] and he couldn't do anything []

Tony
(PS0V4)

[1768] [laugh] .

Jackie
(PS0V5)

[1769] So, so, he looked, he looked round at me, he looked at the ... the other group waiting in front and he was, he flashed his lights at them so that, they realised what was going on by then, they moved forward a bit , I moved back a bit and he just had enough room he reversed right up close to me and then got out but he just had enough room to get out, and since then I won't park over the driveway up there, cos you can bet your life the one driveway along that road and you parked in front is the one that somebody wants to get into.

Tony
(PS0V4)

[1770] Ah .

(Tony 27, Tape 010314)

As a continuation of their conversation about driving, Jackie proceeds to tell Tony a tale of her both witnessing as well as being involved in, an incident where someone got boxed in when parking in front of a driveway. This elicits laughter from her husband as she puts a positive spin on the incident that also serves as a cautionary tale, and they can both see the humour in it. This is then shared and functions as a means of solidarity, with her sharing both a story and also providing a warning for parking in front of driveways. Even though neither of them know the unfortunate driver and may not wish him ill, they can both find humour in his misfortune and laugh at him for his bad luck.

Example 24

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| George
(PS0S4) | <u>[643] Rochers town, we were only a short way and we went to this house, we were only young coppers, and we had this friend call on us and we looked out, he was going back into the car and he looked down the street and he said, my God there's an awful lot of children around here, they must do nothing but screw all the time</u> |
| Sam
(PS0S3) | <u>[laugh]</u> |
| George
(PS0S4) | <u>[644] oh, at the top of his voice, and all these neighbours turned</u> |
| Sam
(PS0S3) | <u>[645] [laughing] I think so []</u> |
| George
(PS0S4) | <u>[646] and there was another one across the way and she was deteriorating, she was getting</u> |

nervous right there, see if I had to be brought
away you know

Sam
(PS0S3) [647] Yeah

George
(PS0S4) [648] she was a kind of an early person in the
mist with all these horrible little snotty kids

Sam
(PS0S3) [649] [laughing] Oh God []

(Sam 17, Tape 046417)

The conversation for a while is about undesirable places and people. In connection with this, George retells a tale for the amusement of the group. His humorous description of an incident when he was in the early stages of his career as a police officer, where a friend made a remark that should have been kept private in a manner that meant everyone heard, causes Sam to laugh. This meant that everyone in the vicinity turned to look at the friend and by association George. This manner of sharing an embarrassing moment not only aids with coping with it, but it turns it into a more positive experience by the association with being a funny story to be shared with friends. In this way it can function as a means of increasing solidarity through the sharing of embarrassing personal experiences and incidents. The victim being laughed at is partly George as he is presumed to have been present during the incident, but most the person he was with whose misfortune has become something for the group of friends to laugh at.

Example 25

Raymond (PS0PN)	[1589] She wants a rich ... good looking chap then, she
Dorothy (PS0R7)	[1590] They all
Margaret (PS0PP)	[1591] Yeah
Dorothy (PS0R7)	[1592] <u>[laugh] want that, I mean ... as my mum said, I'm looking for a</u>
Raymond (PS0PN)	<u>[laugh]</u>
Dorothy (PS0R7)	[1593] <u>millionaire</u>
Margaret (PS0PP)	[1594] <u>They're thin on the ground!</u>
Dorothy (PS0R7)	[1595] <u>but there don't seem to be any around</u> <u>[...]</u>
Margaret (PS0PP)	[1596] <u>I've had to go out looking for one all these years!</u>
Raymond (PS0PN)	<u>[laugh]</u>

(Raymond 12, Tape 029903)

The participants are talking about Raymond and Margaret's daughter, with Dorothy asking how she is doing. They give Dorothy updates on her life, and Raymond comments that she wants a man who is both rich and good looking. The ideal sort of man, namely a millionaire, is then described to laughter with the additional joking comments by Dorothy and Margaret that they are hard to find.

This is not a serious expectation of either of them, and their comments make Raymond laugh. It therefore serves as a small moment of humour that serves the function of primarily increasing the solidarity within their relationship through joking about shared understandings and sharing of such impossible comments.

Example 26

Raymond (PS0PN)	<u>[1739] When I learned it was horse and carts on the roads! ... [laugh]</u>
Dorothy (PS0R7)	<u>[laugh]</u>
Unknown speaker (KDMPSUNK)	[1740] Do you
Margaret (PS0PP)	[1741] What
Raymond (PS0PN)	[1742] That
Margaret (PS0PP)	[1743] is he like?
Unknown speaker (KDMPSUNK)	[1744] buy a [...] [...]
Raymond (PS0PN)	[1745] That's a joke!
Margaret (PS0PP)	[1746] Yeah.
Raymond (PS0PN)	[laugh]

(Raymond 12, Tape 029903)

As the conversation winds down, they once again return to a major conversation topic, which is that of Dorothy's trials and tribulations when it comes to learning to drive. Raymond jokes that when he learnt to drive it was in an era when horses and carts were still common, causing Dorothy to laugh, which he later clarifies is definitely a joke. This joke has an element of self-deprecation with regards to his

age. It functions as an attempt at solidarity and to encourage Dorothy with her driving, by stressing how hard it can be to learn and how full of cars the roads can be.

Example 27

Unknown speaker (KB2PSUNK)	<u>[2047] A senior citizen is one who was here before the pill, before television, frozen food, credit card and ballpoint pens, for us timesharing meant togetherness, not computers and a chip meant a piece of wood, hardware meant hardware and software wasn't even a word, teenagers never wore slacks, we were before pantyhose, drip-dry clothes, dishwashers, clothes driers and electric blankets, we got married first and then lived together</u>
Group of unknown speakers (KB2PSUGP)	<u>[laugh]</u>
Unknown speaker (KB2PSUNK)	<u>[2048] How quaint can one be?</u>
Group of unknown speakers (KB2PSUGP)	<u>[laugh]</u>
Unknown speaker (KB2PSUNK)	<u>[2049] They all wore Peter Pan collars and thought cleavage was something butchers did, we were before vitamin, vitamin pills, disposal</u>

diapers, Q E one, jeeps, pizzas, instant coffee
and Kentucky Fried wasn't even thought of, in
our day cigarette smoking was fashionable,
grass was for mowing, pot was something you
cooked in.
[2050] A gay par person was the life of the
party and nothing more

Group of
unknown
speakers
(KB2PSUGP)

[laugh]

(Alec 7, Tape 061301)

While at the over sixties club, the announcer speaks with the clear intent of making the audience laugh. This is achieved through a barrage of small details which reference the things that people of their age would be familiar with or aware of, focusing in particular on the ways in which the world has changed since their birth. In this way it clearly appeals to their shared sense of experience and fosters a feeling of solidarity within the group.

Example 28

John (PS07F)

[399] Cos it's hard to get him all
together.

Dean (PS07E)

[400] He's retired. [laugh]

Eddie (PS07J)

[401] Although, there isn't any at
Marseilles.

Unknown speaker
(KBTPSUNK)

[...]

Dean (PS07E)

[402] That's why he's gone, that's why
he's gone to Leeds cos he's retired.
[laugh]

David (PS07G)

[laugh]

(Dean 4, 060304)

Dean is talking about football in a pub with his mates. This football talk covers a variety of different elements before it turns to the discussion of a specific footballer, who is referred to as being retired. Dean jokes that that is why he has gone to play for Leeds, making David laugh, with the suggestion being that quality is not required to play for Leeds. This functions as a show of solidarity as they are all of a similar opinion, and football can be a sphere of life in which people can be very tribal in their affiliations and loyalties. As such, a dismissive and attacking joke at the expense of a club or the player of a club the conversation participants do not support or have an intense rivalry with will draw them together both through the humour and also the sense of having something to be opposed to. In different situations such a joke could lead to conflict, especially given how seriously football loyalties can be seen in some circumstances. In a situation where everyone is known to be likeminded, laughing at the failings of the footballer and the club helps strengthen their solidarity as supporters of another club.

Example 29

Hazel
(PS0F5)

[126] and then his friends come knocking at the
door, you coming out to play football Rhys?
[127] No I'm going to the football match with

	dad.
	[128] ... [mimicking] You're gonna watch Cardiff City [] ?
	[129] And so of course they started pulling his leg then see?
	[130] And he said ... he said
Cerys (PS0F6)	<u>[131] No, are you gonna watch Cardiff City lose again.</u>
Hazel (PS0F5)	<u>[132] That's right, twenty five nil.</u>
Marie (PS0F7)	<u>[laugh]</u>
Hazel (PS0F5)	[133] So Rhys says oh how did you guess ... but erm he come in then, he said I'm not going to the football mum.

(Hazel 2, Tape 053603)

Hazel and Marie are talking about family matters, when Hazel recounts an incident when her son Rhys's friends came to the door to ask him to come out to play football with them. As she says, "they started pulling his leg then" which is a colloquial way of saying they began to tease him and joke around with him, focusing on the idea that going to see Cardiff City meant that he would be seeing them lose and probably badly. The recounting of this teasing joke makes Marie laugh, showing that this is a mutually understood reference, which suggests a sense of solidarity. The teasing jokes as used by Rhys's friends also appear to have served their purpose of convincing him to come out and play football with them rather than going to see Cardiff City with his father, showing the power that

humorous teases can have to control the behaviours of others. As an anecdote recounted by his mother it loses this element and instead is primarily used to show solidarity and mutual understanding. In both formats it still primarily derives the humour from the failings and misfortunes of Cardiff City Football Club.

Example 30

Dean (PS07E)	[440] Yeah, you can swear on it.
David (PS07G)	[441] <u>Hooker, hooker, hooker!</u>
Eddie (PS07J)	[442] <u>Well, fuck me [...]</u> !
John (PS07F)	<u>[laugh]</u>

(Dean 4, 060304)

In the midst of a conversation at the pub that mostly focuses on sport, his friends ask if they can swear on the recording as that is presumably a usual part of their discourse. When Dean says yes proceed to do so quite deliberately, which leads to some laughter, not so much because of what is said but the context within which it is said. This functions as a form of solidarity primarily through the means of them acting in a slightly silly way for mutual entertainment. There could also be considered to be a degree of rebelling against authority, as represented by the tape recorder, with it being common social norms to not use bad language in polite or official situations and yet with the tape recorder they are permitted to do so, leading to an overuse of them for a brief period.

Example 31

- A.
(PS50U) [1075] everything's a sixpence and a, they have
this great big display of buckets in one of the
windows, sixpence
- Arthur
(PS50T) [1076] Sixpence a bucket
- A.
(PS50U) [1077] there was a little hardware shop just
round the corner
- Arthur
(PS50T) [1078] Mm
- A.
(PS50U) [1079] and his were fivepence ha'penny
- Arthur
(PS50T) [laugh]
- A.
(PS50U) [1080] and there was this long queue outside
- Arthur
(PS50T) [1081] Woolworths for sixpence [laugh]
- A.
(PS50U) [1082] Woolworths to buy buckets for sixpence
- Arthur
(PS50T) [1083] and could've gone round the corner for
- A.
(PS50U) [1084] Bought them for fivepence ha'penny
- Arthur
(PS50T) [1085] See there's, there's the con again you see,
it's the same thing, you can convince people
they're do they're doing brilliantly and charge
them more [laugh]

A. [1086] But we said we, we couldn't give over
 (PS50U) laughing about that and they thought it was
 hilarious because it, it's like C & A's they used to
 always say, nineteen and eleven or nine and
 eleven or, it was always the
 (Arthur 2, Tape 032502)

Arthur and A. have been having an extended and slightly joking conversation about prices and money covering house prices and shop prices. This leads to A. telling the tale (set in the pre-decimalisation era) of Woolworths advertising buckets for sixpence leading to queues, when there was another shop around the corner selling them for cheaper. They therefore laugh at the stupidity of the many people who were so eager for buckets that they thought was a good deal that they ended up buying the more expensive version due to the advertising hype. The conversation overlaps and it is clear that they both understand each other and agree with the same sentiments, with the humour of the story functioning to further highlight this as a demonstration of solidarity.

4.3.2.2 Conflict

Possibly as a consequence of the data being of conversations between families and friends means that there were no examples of humour noted that functioned as a means to create or exacerbate conflict. The closest that might exist were moments of teasing that came from a place of closeness and thus functioned as a demonstration of closeness.

4.3.2.3 Polarisation

There were no clear examples of humour being used to polarise groups along their boundary lines, possibly as the conversations were primarily friendly and thus lacked the confrontational element or divisive sense that might be required for this. Even the political discussion in Denise 2 was primarily focused around group solidarity.

4.3.2.4 Control

None of the humour detected in the data seemed to serve the function of control, whether it was through asserting personal power or through subtle manipulations of others through the use of humour.

4.4 Japanese Data

The Japanese data came from Sakura Corpus, which is a part of the TalkBank Project and has transcripts, audio and video recordings (MacWhinney & Wagner, 2010). As such the conversations were focused around a topic provided by the researchers. These topics are discussions of whether they are cat or dog people, discussions regarding part-time work and discussions about preferences regarding the opposite sex. The participants were all students, being either 19 or 21 years old. They are referred to by codes assigned by the corpus, the final letter of which is either M or F to indicate male (M) or female (F). Some of them appear in multiple conversations out of the 14 recordings. Sakura01 to Sakura06 were mixed-gender, with two male participants and two female participants in each conversation. Sakura07 to Sakura12 were all-female conversations, and Sakura13 to Sakura18

were all-male. The shortest transcribed section was 11 minutes 45 seconds, the longest 35 minutes and 30 seconds.⁸

4.4.1 Psychological Functions

4.4.1.1 Self-Defence

Example 32

*B1F: da [ɫ] “daasaa” yaro ?

だ, だーさーやろ ?

*A1F: “daasaa” .

*A1F: soo .

*A1F: <“daasaa”> [x 3] .

だーさー, そう, だーさーだーさーだーさー.

*C1M: “daasaa” .

だーさー.

*A1F: watashi shabettara tabun “daasaa” ga ooi n da yo ne .

私喋ったたらたぶんだーさーが多いんだよね.

*C1M: a soo .

あ, そう.

*B1M: hee .

へーーーーー.

*A1F: soo [x 4] .

そうそうそうそう.

*C1M: Hokkaidooben ka: .

北海道弁か～.

*B1F: hetta ne .

減ったね.

*A1F: hetta ?

減った ?

⁸ More detailed information can be found in the Appendix.

*B1F: hetta .
減った.

*A1F: oq seechoo .
お～成長.

*C1M: &=laugh a: ne utsuru yo ne .

*C1M: nantoka shiyaa toka utsutta mon ,, ore .
(笑)あ～ね, 移るよね.なんとかしや～とか, 移ったもん, おれ.

*B1F: dare kara ?
誰から ?

*C1M: eq anoo K toka .
え, あの～K(友人の名前)とか.

*A1F: a: .
あ～.

*B1F: areq ?
あれ ?

*B1F: kare Gifu janai no ?
彼, 岐阜じゃないの ?

*C1M: un demo iu yo .
うん, でも言うよ.

*C1M: un nantoka shiyaa .
うん, なんとかしや～,

*C1M: aq baito [/] baitosaki no hito toka kara mo utsutta wa .
あ, バイト, バイト先の人とかからも移ったわ.

*B1F: watashi mo chotto watashi genin ni zero ten gowari gurai
fukunde (i)ru ki ga suru .
私もちよっと, 私原因に 0.5 割ぐらい含んでる気がする.

*A1F: &=laugh .
(笑)

(Sakura02)

This example features a lengthy conversation about dialect, culminating in B1F's admission that she may have led to an increase in the use of a specific dialectal usage as noticed by C1M. She does not, however, accept full responsibility, saying she only caused 0.5% increase, making the others laugh. There is an element of self-deprecation to her comment, which also acts as a degree of self-defence. She claims the potential responsibility in a humorous manner before any such accusations can be levelled at her, thereby acting as a degree of self-defence.

4.4.1.2 Coping

No obvious examples of humour being used as a coping mechanism were detected in the data set.

4.4.1.3 Seeking Approval

No clear instances emerged of humour being used purely for the function of seeking the approval of the audience and thereby being liked. This could be due to the situation within which the participants were related.

4.4.2 Social Functions

4.4.2.1 Solidarity

Example 33

*G3M: uchi mo sono kame de saa beranda de saa medaka katte (i)te
saa .

うちもそのかめでさ、ベランダでさメダカ飼っててさー。

*I3M: un .

うん。

*G3M: soko ni saa kingyo doonyuu shitara saa kingyo ga medaka
kutte saa .

そこにさー、金魚導入したらさー、金魚がメダカ食ってさー、

*G3M: de sono mama kekkyoku medaka inaku natte (i)ta n da kedo .
でそのまま結局メダカいなくなって金魚飼ってたんだけど.

*I3M: &=laugh .
あはは.

*M3M: hee .
へー.

*G3M: kingyo ga hanete soto tobidete sono mama hikarabite shinde
(i)ta .
金魚が跳ねて外飛び出て、そのままひからびて死んでた.

*ALL: &=laugh .
(笑)

*M3M: kawai soo ni .
かわいそうに.

(Sakura15)

In a conversation that began with the prompt of whether they were dog or cat people, the topic moved on to pets. Here G3M begins by talking about his unfortunate experience keeping fish, starting with the suspicion that his killifish were disappearing. He then talks about getting goldfish, which ate all the killifish. However, karma had its revenge on them, as they leapt out of their tanks to their deaths. This slightly macabre tale is recalled for the amusement of the others, with the description of the death of the fish he owned garnering laughter. This could be considered to be used as a means of creating greater solidarity within the group, judging those with him to be likeminded in taste and therefore likely to find it amusing despite the slightly malicious and gory element.

Example 34

- *G3M: dakara Jteki ni isee ni motomeru jooken .
だから、J(話者の名前)的に異性に求める条件.
- *J3M: mazu yasashisa desu ne: .
まず、優しさですねー.
- *G3M: yasashisa .
優しさ.
- *H3M: yasashisa .
優しさ.
- *G3M: yasashisaraizensu ga hitsuyoo ?
優しさライセンスが必要？
- *J3M: uq [//] un hitsuyoo da ne .
うっうん...必要だね.
- *J3M: da yo ne .
- *J3M: &=laugh .
だよね.(笑)

(Sakura13)

This example is from a conversation prompted by the idea of appealing traits in the opposite sex. After the participants all seem to have come to an agreement that kindness is an important quality in the opposite sex, the jokey comment regarding a kindness licence being necessary is met with agreement that helps co-create the sense of amusement. This seems to be partly self-aware, with the knowledge that the main characteristic that they have highlighted is kindness, easily pushed to laughter by the added awareness that they're being recorded. In some ways the butt of the joke with regards to the comment is all of them but with

the added element that they are all fully aware of the contexts behind it. As such it has an element of drawing them together as a group and showing their similarities in contrast to other people who for that moment are more starkly cast as the out-group. Their similarities are highlighted by the similarities in their go-to answer of kindness, so by highlighting this even if it is in a slightly silly manner that is also a light tease that pokes fun at them all it still shows what they have in common and emphasises group solidarity.

Example 35

*B1F: ie de kurashite (i)ru toki toka kekkoo tsukutt(e) otte sa an(o)
toki to kawaran ki ga suru .

家で暮らしてるときとか結構作ってさ, あんときと変わらん
気がする.

*A1F: soo ?

そお ?

*A1F: nanka sugoi repaatorii fuete (i)ru yo .

なんかすごいレパートリー増えてるよ.

*B1F: hontoo ni ?

ほんとに ?

*B1F: kitchen semaku natta mon de sa amma +...

キッチン狭くなったもんでさ, あんま...

*C1M: kitchen semaku natte yarizurai yo ne: .

キッチン狭なってやりづらいよね~.

*A1F: sore hara tatsu ,, ichiban .

それ腹立つ一番.

*B1F: hontoo ni dekin nen tte .

本当にできんねんて.

*A1F: un .

うん！

*C1M: nanka moo iraira suru mon ,, nanka koo kotchi de iroiro saido yatte (i)te amma koko okitai no ni okenee [: okenai] shi mitai na .

なんかもうイライラするもん, なんかこうこっちでいろいろサイ
ドやってて, あんまここ置きたいのに置けねえし, みたいな.

*A1F: &=laugh nanka moo ikko hoshii tte omou mon ne .

(笑)なんかもう 1 個ほしいうって思うもんね.

(Sakura02)

In Example 35, the conversation about attractive traits in the opposite sex moves on to being good at cooking. They all touch on the issue of the kitchens in small one-person flats being too small to comfortably cook, before C1M narrates the problems whilst overacting, causing the others to laugh. It touches on a common frustration that they all share and empathise with, showing a common sense of awareness and that they are all drawing from sets of knowledge resources that are in this respect at least very similar. In this way it is a small moment of turning frustration to laughter that allows for the building of group solidarity.

Example 36

*H1F: nanka kiiroi no ,, komugiiro mitai na .

何か、黄色いの.小麦色みたいな.

*B1F: doo shiyoo ?

どうしよう、

*B1F: chiwawa shika dete konai .

チワワしか出てこない.

*E1M: mimi wa ?

耳は？

*H1F: mimi ne: &chit nanka ke de kakurete (i)ru .
 耳ね一、ちっ、なんか毛で隠れてるの.

*E1M: konna n(o) ?
 こんなん ?

*E1M: ja marui no ?
 じゃ、丸いの ?

*H1F: uun togatte (i)ru .
 ううん.とがってる.

*E1M: togatte (i)ru .
 とがってる.

*C1M: togatte (i)ru yo &=laugh .
 とがってるよ.ふふ.

*H1F: nanka ne +...
 なんかね...

*B1F: doo shiyoo .
 どうしょう、

*B1F: tondemonai e ga watashi no atama no naka de .
とんでもない絵が私の頭の中で.

*ALL: &=laugh .
はははっ(笑)

(Sakura04)

In this example, after discussing whether they are cat or dog people, they talk about different dog breeds. This leads to H1F's attempt to describe a what a Pomeranian (a breed of dog) looks like for the benefit of those who do not know. However, B1F ends up commenting that the descriptions she is providing are producing a picture in her head that is unique and interesting (but implied in the comment is the suggestion that what she is picturing is nothing like a Pomeranian). This comment gets laughter from the other conversation

participants, functioning as to draw them all together in a united sense that H1F's description may have been lacking in some ways. In this way it is possibly a very light tease, where H1F's ability to describe dog breeds is the victim but mostly it functions to bring them all together in a shared sense of mild confusion.

Example 37

*G3M: *ashiha to muneha de .*

脚派と胸派で.

*I3M: *ja: ore muneha da na .*

じゃあ、おれ胸派だな.

*G3M: *ja: ore shiriha de .*

じゃあ、おれ尻派で.

*I3M: *J wa ?*

J(相手の名前)は？

*J3M: *nani nokotton [: nokotte iru] no ,, ato ?*

何残っとんの、あと.ははは.

*ALL: *&=laugh .*

(笑)

*I3M: *yasashisa de .*

優しさで.

*J3M: *ja: yasashisa de .*

*J3M: *modotchatta kedo .*

じゃあ、優しさで.戻っちゃったけど.

*ALL: *&=laugh .*

(笑)

*ALL: *&=laugh .*

(笑)...(笑)

(Sakura13)

Having previously discussed the importance of kindness in prospective partners of the opposite sex, the participants move onto the topic of physical preference (of the legs, arse, tits, etc variety). 13M comments that he prefers breasts, and G3M adds that he prefers bums. After this, J3M asks what else there is and 13M refers back to their previous topic of discussion, which focused on kindness, so J3M claims that his preference is for kindness, adding in the acknowledgement that they've been sucked back into that previous conversation. This is all done in good humour, with the participants laughing. In part it may be due to the slightly awkward and potentially taboo subject that they are aware they are talking about whilst it is being recorded. Another element is that manner of recalling the subject they had previously, drawing on the sense of shared experience as a part of creating a sense of solidarity.

Example 38

*G3M: iyaa demo isee ni motomeru jooken da kara saa betsu ni koibito tte wake janai no kanaa .

いや、でも異性に求める条件だからさ、別に恋人ってわけじゃないのかな。

*G3M: on@i isee no tomodachi ni motomeru jooken toka de mo betsu ni ii wake jan .

おん、異性の友達に求める条件とかでも別にいいわけじゃん。

*H3M: a: .

ああー。

*J3M: a sooiu koto na n ?

あ、そういうことなん？

*J3M: hanashi shiyasuku: +...

...話しやすくー。

- *ALL: aː .
あーあー.
- *J3M: nori ga yoku +...
ノリがよくー.
- *ALL: un ooːq .
うん、おおー.
- *H3M: mune ga ookikuː .
胸が大きくー.
- *G3M: kore betsu ni jooken +...
これ別に条件...
- *ALL: oo [ɪ] oo [ɪ] oo .
おーおーおー.
- *J3M: maa ne .
まあね.
- *I3M: ashi ga nagakuː +...
脚が長くー.
- *H3M: ashi ga nagakuː .
脚が長くー.
- *H3M: ketsu mo kyuq to agatte (i)te .
ケツもキュッと上がってるー.
- *H3M: kawaiiː +...
かわいいー.
- *ALL: &=laugh .
(笑)

(Sakura13)

The participants move on from discussing their preferences and opinions about members of the opposite sex in a romantic sense to considering them as friends. Initially they begin with listing good qualities for women that they could be friends

with, such as easy to talk to, before H3M gives having big breasts as being a good quality for women to have in general. Despite a brief attempt at protesting against this new change in direction by G3M, this aspect is taken up by the other two, with long legs and a nice bum being added as good qualities in women, leading them all to laugh. In this way this derailment of the initial serious topic of conversation is a show of the mutual knowledge the participants have of each other (having already discussed the topic of physical attributes of women) and thus can be seen to function as a demonstration of solidarity whilst at the same time having a teasing quality with the whole group serving as the victim.

Example 39

*H3M: ore wa Qchan ga suki da yo .

おれは Q(女子学生の呼び名)ちゃんが好きだよ.

*G3M: ore mo Qchan [/] Q ga suki desu .

おれも Q(女子学生の呼び名)ちゃん、Q(女子学生の呼び名)が好き
です.

*ALL: &=laugh .

(笑)

*J3M: <ikanee [: ikanai] yo> [/] ikanee [: ikanai] yo .

*J3M: &=laugh .

いかねーよ、いかねーよ.ははははは.

*ALL: &=laugh .

(笑)

*G3M: uso [/] uso .

*G3M: &=laugh .

うそうそ.ははははは.

*H3M: xxx . [+ threex]

xxx

*H3M: kokutchatta .

告っちゃった.

*ALL: &=laugh .

(笑)

*G3M: tabun [/] tabun kore mite (i)ru mukoo de kotowararet(e) oru
yo .

*G3M: gomennasai tte iwaret(e) oru ni .

たぶん、たぶんこれ見てる向こうで、断られとるよ、ごめんなさ
いって言われとるに.

*ALL: &=laugh .

(笑)

(Sakura13)

The discussion of what they like in the opposite sex involves them commenting on a few girls that they find cute. This leads to H3M declaring that he has something of a crush on Qchan, which is then picked up primarily by G3M for teasing, culminating in the imaginative description that Qchan was off to the side of the room in which they were being recorded in, turning him down. This appears to be teasing that can often exist within the context of a jocular relationship symbolising closeness and a degree of trust.

Example 40

*J3M: Jsan , isee ni motomeru jooken to wa dono yoo na mono
deshoo ?

J(話者の苗字)さん異性に求める条件とはどのようなものでしょ
う ?

*J3M: &=laugh .

(笑)

*J3M: nani „ kono sutansu ?

何、このスタンス.

*J3M: deban da zo .

出番だぞ.

*G3M: soo desu ne: .

そうですねー.

*G3M: desu yo ne: .

*G3M: moo: .

ですよー.もー.

*ALL: &=laugh .

(笑)

(Sakura13)

After a few lines discussing how the recording will work, they look to beginning the actual conversation about what they find attractive in the opposite sex, and start by instigating a small amount of friendly teasing that comes from an awareness of the situation, functioning as a means of creating a sense of solidarity between the participants of the study. The ease with which laughter is elicited is likely to be connected to the circumstances within which they find themselves, namely being in a room where they are being recorded and videoed discussing a predetermined subject.

Example 41

*K3M: ato inu ga kirai na riyuu ga atte yaken ni osowareta n da yo
ne .

あとイヌが嫌いな理由があって、野犬に襲われたんだよね.

*ALL: &=laugh .

ははは.

*I3F: yaken tte donna ?

野犬ってどんな？

*K3M: chau [/] ch(ig)au .

ちゃうちゃう

*K3M: ore Rgawa no chikaku ni kawa ga nagaret(e) otte saa ore tsuri
daisuki de teeboozoi jitensha hashitte (i)ku toki ni .

おれ R 川の近くに川が流れとってさ、おれ釣り大好きで、堤防
沿い自転車走ってくときに.

*J3M: abuna(i) .

危な！

*H3F: &=laugh .

あははははは.

*J3M: nani ?

何？

*J3M: sono saki ni waratt(e) okoo mitai na .

その先に笑ったこうって.

*J3M: teeboozoi ni shi gonin de tsuri +...

堤防沿いに 4、5 人で釣り...

*J3M: chuugakkoo n(o) toki da kedo .

中学校んときだけど.

*H3F: chuugakkoo .

中学校.

*I3F: kekkoo kiken da ne .

結構危険だね.

*K3M: de aru tonneru ga atte nanka shiran kedo koosokudooro no
shita no tokoro ni otte soko kara wanwan [/] wanwan@o tte ryoosaido
kara .

で、あるトンネルがあって、なんか知らんけど、高速道路の下の
所において、そこから ワンワンワンワン って両サイドから

*H3F: &=laugh .

あははは.

*ALL: &=laugh .

(笑)

*J3M: hasamikomareta ?

はさみこまれた？

*K3M: hasamikomareta n da tte „ yaken ni .

はさみこまれたんだって野犬に.

*H3F: kamareta ?

噛まれた？

*I3F: chotto matte !

ちょっと待って.

*I3F: omoshirosugiru .

おもしろすぎる.

*K3M: kamarete (i)nai .

噛まれてない.

*K3M: hisshi ni nigeta n da tte .

必死に逃げたんだって.

*K3M: de moo ikidomari da mon de „ sotch i „ boohatee no anoo
burokku no „ kaerana ikan wake yo .

で、もう行き止まりだもんでそっち防波堤のあのうブロックの、
帰らないかんわけよ.

*ALL: &=laugh .

(笑)

*K3M: moo asoko ni oru tte wakatt(e) oru mon de moo asoko dasshu
de iku ka doo suru ka de nayand(e) otta „ minna de .

もうあそこにおるって分かっとなるもんで、もうあそこダッシュで
行くか、 どうするかで悩んどったみんなで.

*I3F: &=laugh .

あははは.

*H3F: &=laugh .

あははは.

*J3M: minna de &=laugh .

みんなではは.

*K3M: demo tsugi wa moo dareka hitori ga gisee ni naru shika nai
tte .

でも、次はもう誰か一人が犠牲になるしかないって.

*I3F: &=laugh .

あははは.

(Sakura03)

When discussing whether they are dog or cat people, K3M gives a variety of reasons why he dislikes dogs, finishing his list with the fact that he was bitten by a wild dog when he was younger. He then goes on to tell this story to humorous effect, entertaining the others and drawing laughter from them by recounting this tale. In this manner, it operates as a manner of creating solidarity within the group as he is sharing a story that is implied to have been unpleasant at the time but with a more humorous slant to it.

Example 42

*J3M: inu mo ja: kogatainu toka dattara ii n janai ,, shitsunai de
kaeru yoo na ?

犬もじゃあ小型犬とかだったらいいんじゃない?室内で飼えるよ
うな.

*K3M: u:n demo kusai n da yo ne .

うーんでも臭いんだよね.

*K3M: shiriai no ie ni nihiki gurai otte ,, itta toki ni .

知り合いの家に2匹ぐらいおって、行ったときに.

*K3M: kawaikatta kedo berobero namerarete saa ,, okashi no fukuro .

かわいかったけど、ペロペロ舐められてさ、お菓子の袋.

*K3M: moo ikko atta n da kedo okashi no fukuro aketara aketa
shunkan ni naka no okashi no nioi yori inu no nioi no hoo ga kitsukute
saa moo okashi kuenkatta mon .

もう 1 個あったんだけど、お菓子の袋あけたら あけた瞬間に、
中のお菓子の匂いより犬の匂いのほうが キツくてさ、もうお菓子食えん
かったもん.

*ALL: &=laugh .
(笑)

(Sakura03)

The conversation returns after an interlude to K3M's dislike of dogs. He recounts an incident where he visited an acquaintance who had dogs, and that while they were cute they also smelt bad, with the cake he was given to take home smelling of dog upon opening. This complaint is done in a good-natured manner, eliciting laughter from the other participants of the conversation. In sharing such things in a way to induce laughter, he helps to create a sense of solidarity through the vulnerability that can be seen to occur with sharing with others.

Example 43

*K3M: shikamo saa inu saa zutto neko katte (i)ru mon de saa neko
pon@o tte nagete mo chakuchi suru jan ,, chanto .

しかもさ、犬さ、ずっとネコ飼ってるもんでさ、ネコ ポンって
投げても着地するじゃんちゃんと.

*K3M: sooiu kuse ga tsuite (i)ru mon de saa tomodachi n(o) uchi itta
toki ni inu o pon@o tte nagetara don@o tte natchatta abunee [: abunai]
to omotte .

そういう癖がついてるもんでさ、友達ん家行ったときに 犬をポ
ンって投げたらドンってなっちゃって、危ねえと思って.

*ALL: &=laugh .

(笑)

(Sakura03)

During their discussion about whether they like cats or dogs more, K3M induces laughter by the manner in which he describes one of the differences between cats and dogs, and the issues that can exist if you are used to cats, one of which being that a cat that is gently thrown will land quite happily on the ground and a dog will just drop to the ground. This mental image helps lead to laughter, which increases the sense of levity within the group, likely encouraging a more relaxed sense of the conversation. There's also a sense of shared knowledge inherent in the comments, adding to a sense of solidarity.

Example 44

*B3F: uchi kame mo kaitai .

うち亀も飼いたい.

*A3F: kame ?

亀 ?

*B3F: kame .

亀.

*G3F: kame kusai yo .

亀臭いよ ?

*B3F: a: so(o) k:a .

あーそっか.

*A3F: akirameta .

諦めた.

*G3F: &=laugh .

(笑)

*C3F: mutcha [: metcha] hayai .

むっちゃ早い.

*B3F: kusai no wa chotto komaru naa .

臭いのはちょっとこまるな.

(Sakura10)

During their discussion about whether they like cats or dogs more, the participants consider what animals they might like to keep as pets, with B3F expressing the desire to have a tortoise. When she is promptly informed that tortoises smell bad she seems a little less enthusiastic, with A3F joking that she's already given up the idea, making G3F laugh. This exchange has an element of a tease, which seems to be friendly with the function of maintain group solidarity and a continued levity to the conversation.

Example 45

*B3F: dakara: sug:oi konde nanka juuninin no yoyaku toka ato
sannin sannin yoyaku yoyaku de .

だから一すっごい混んでなんか 12 人の予約とか. あと 3 人 3 人
予約予約で.

*B3F: son(o) toki futari shika inakute ,, metcha komu noni .

そんなとき 2 人しかいなくて.めっちゃ混むのに.

*G3F: hitori ?

ひとり ?

*C3F: eq ?

え、

*C3F: hooru ga ?

ホールが ?

*B3F: dakara naka no hito ga dete kite kuretari shita kedo: (.)
mawaranai .

だから中の人が出てきてくれたりしたけどー.回らない.

*B3F: hito ga tarinasugite „ moo .
人が足りなすぎてもう.なんか.

*B3F: nanka gurasu mo tarinakut:e .
グラスも足りなくなつて.

*B3F: biiru dasu gurasu mo nakute sono biiru mo kirete .
ビール出すグラスもなくて.そのビールも切れて.

*B3F: hiete (i)nai no „ gurasu ga .
冷えてないのグラスが.

*G3F: eq ?
え、

*G3F: hiete (i)nai no ?
冷えてないの？

*G3F: uwao@i .
うわーお.

*B3F: hiete (i)nakut:e osake mo dondon [x 2] nakunatte: moo
kuchakucha .

冷えてなくつてー.お酒もどんどんどんどん無くなつてー.もうく
ちゃくちゃ.

*A3F: &=laugh .
(笑)

*B3F: zembu kuchakucha da mon .
全部くちゃくちゃだもん.

*A3F: demo atarashii hito wa iru n janai ?
でも新しい人はいるんじゃない？

*B3F: hainnai n da tte .
入んないんだって.

*B3F: kyuujin shite (i)nai n da tte .
求人募集してないんだって.

*A3F: eq ?
 え ?
 *G3F: nande ?
 なんで ?
 *G3F: toosan suru ?
 倒産する ?
 *B3F: mata ka ?
またか.
 *A3F: mata ka ?
またか.
 *ALL: &=laugh.
(笑)

(Sakura10)

B3F raises the fact that after the recording she has to go to her part-time job, and thus segues into telling tales of times when it was particularly busy for the amusement of the others, getting some laughter out of A3F in particular. This discussion then goes on towards them wondering at the chances of another bankruptcy, making them all laugh. In this way, it refers to things they are all familiar with and helps draw together the group through B3F sharing her experiences and them recognising the context referred to. It thus creates a sense of solidarity through the humour involved.

Example 46

*A1F: un Sapporo no chotto hanare↑ da kara moshikashitara yasui
 kamoshirenai .

うん.札幌のちょっと外れ?だから、もしかしたら安いかもしれない.
い.逆に何もないけどね.

*A1F: gyaku ni nanimo nai kedo ne .
逆に何もないけどね.

*B1F: &=laugh .
ふふ(笑)

*A1F: Sapporo made iku no ni nanka densha de buun .
札幌まで行くのに何か電車でブーン.

*A1F: moo chotto aru deshoo .
もうちょっとあるでしょ?

*B1F: oishii mizu to .
おいしい水と.

*ALL: &=laugh .
はははは.(笑)

(Sakura11)

From talking about part-time work, the topic drifts to prices in Hokkaido. When discussing the reasons why a place in Hokkaido might be cheap, A1F assumes that there is likely nothing much in that area. She then wonders if there might not be something of interest there, and B1F responds that the water is nice making them all laugh. This manner of effectively co-creating the humour shows the way in which it functions to increase a sense of group solidarity, being a means to draw them together by drawing on their shared knowledge as demonstrated in the proceeding conversation. It also singles out one thing (Sapporo) as a victim to mock as a means of creating humour.

Example 47

- *D1F: Naganojiman ?
長野自慢 ?
- *D1F: koogen ga ippai aru .
高原がいっぱいある.
- *A1F: gambatte ,, Naganojiman .
頑張って長野自慢.
- *B1F: shitsugen ga aru .
湿原がある.
- *ALL: &=laugh .
はははは(笑)
- *A1F: taichoo iu kedo doo shiyoo .
隊長言うけどどうしよう.
- *D1F: n: kimoteki ni moo makete (i)ru .
んー.規模的にもう負けてる.

(Sakura11)

They're discussing places in Hokkaido that are cheap, with Naganojima being mentioned in a derogative fashion to suggest that there is nothing much there. B1F's suggestion that Naganojima's claim to fame is that it has a bog after their failed attempts at coming up with anything else is greeted with laughter. It functions as a means of increasing group solidarity by adding an entertaining spin on something they are familiar with due to the proceeding conversation.

Example 48

- *B1F: toshiue no josee wa ?
年上の女性は ?
- *B1M: &a ammari suki janai .

あ, あんまり好きじゃない.

*B1F: a: .

あー.

*A1F: shita dattara ikutsu gurai toka wa ?

下だったらいくつぐらいとかは?

*C1M: a: .

あー.

*B1M: shita dattara .

下だったら...

*B1F: ima shita kangaetara hanzai ni natchau mon ne .

今, 下考えたら犯罪になっちゃうもんねー.

*B1M: un [x 3] soo .

うーん, うん, うんそう.

*B1M: soo na n da yo ne .

そうなんだよね.

*A1F: sootaiteki ni iko(o) .

総体的にいこ.

*C1M: iyaa mada seefu desho .

いや, まだセーフでしょ.

*B1M: un juuko kurai kanaa .

うーん.10 個くらい, かな.

*B1F: juu ka .

10 かー.

*A1F: a: juuko ka: .

あー, 10 個かー.

*B1F: kekkoo osanakunai ,, demo ?

結構幼くない?でも.

*B1F: daijoobu ?

大丈夫?

*B1F: ima shoogakusee da kedo .

今小学生だけど.

*C1M: juuko shita ka: .

10 個下かー.

*B1M: juuko shita kurai .

10 個, くらい.

*C1M: ne chotto hanzai da yo ne .

ね, ちょっと犯罪だよね.

*A1F: ato juunen mateba daijoo bu .

あと 10 年待てば大丈夫.

*B1F: kekkon suru nenree da yo ,, sore .

結婚する年齢だよそれ.

(Sakura02)

One of the aspects that the participants discuss in response to the prompt of what they find appealing in the opposite sex is that of age. The discussion whether older or younger women are preferred involves B1M expressing a preference for younger women. As they are all 19 this means that there's a limit to this, with first B1F pointing out that much younger and it will probably be illegal, causing some laughter. Once he posits that 10 years younger is a good gap C1M then also agrees that it is definitely a bit illegal. It is friendly teasing but also can be used to serve as a means for helping to preserve boundaries and approach issues that may require the clarification of positions and boundaries without causing direct threats. Mostly it therefore functions as a means of showing solidarity through the show of care and the joking relationship that also allows for guidance through the reminder of social norms without any actual threat.

Example 49

*B1F: demo renraku wa suru yo .

でも連絡はするよ,

*B1F: renraku wa chanto suru yo „ < ima n(o) toko wa benri da kara
> [x 2] .

連絡はちゃんとするよ.今んところ便利だから.今んところ便利だから.

*D1F: gyaku na n jan .

逆なんじゃん.

*C1F: renraku kitara aket(e) oku yo .

連絡来たら空けとくよ.

*C1F: kono futari chotto yabai yo ne .

この 2 人ちょっとやばいよね.

*B1F: &=laugh .

ふふ.

(Sakura08)

While discussing the elements they find attractive in the opposite sex, the participants consider the important of communication to relationships. This results in two of the participants expressing the fact that they are unlikely to communicate, which results in a tease from B1F directed their way. This elicits laughter and operates as a friendly manner in which to suggest that it might be wise if the two who are unlikely to communicate changed their ways. This is a friendly show of group solidarity with a hint of guidance as to conduct of the two participants in question.

Example 50

*G3M: omae ga Furansuttee de ochita tokoro gurai kara hanashiya .

お前がフランス亭で落ちたところぐらいから話や.

*H3M: daibu mae jan .

だいぶ前じゃん.

*I3M: mada kekkamachi na n deshoo .

まだ結果待ちなんですよ.

*L3M: tte iu ka &machi &=laugh .

ていうか待ちっははは.

*G3M: &=laugh .

はははは.

*H3M: mada kekkamachi na n da yo ne .

まだ結果待ちなんだよね.

*L3M: kekka kit(e) oran no ?

結果きとらんの？

*H3M: kekka mada tsuite (i)nai .

結果まだ着てない.

*L3M: a: honto ni: .

あーほんとに一.

*H3M: soo da yo .

そだよ.おれずっと待ってるからね.

*H3M: ore zutto matte (i)ru kara ne .

おれずっと待ってるからね.

*L3M: &=laugh .

あはははは.

(Sakura17)

The conversation with the prompt of part time jobs begins with H3M talking about his problems getting a part time job, leading to some teasing and joking about H3M having failed to get a job at a French place he had applied for, and having

waited a long time for the results. This kind of jocular interaction helps to show interpersonal solidarity and the positive aspects of the relationship.

Example 51

*G3M: inu wa kashikoi shi naa .

イヌは賢いしな.

*H3M: kashikoi un .

賢い...うん.

*G3M: omae yori kashikoi shi naa &=laugh .

お前より賢いしな.(笑)

*ALL: &=laugh .

(笑)

*H3M: iyaa [x 5] .

いやいやいやいやいや...

*ALL: &=laugh .

(笑)

*M3M: onaji gurai da tte &=laugh .

同じぐらいだって.(笑)

*ALL: &=laugh .

(笑)

(Sakura15)

They're discussing whether they like dogs or cats most, which leads to G3M mentioning firstly that dogs are intelligent, and then jokingly comments that they are more intelligent than H3M when he agrees with the statement, causing the group to laugh. It serves as a friendly tease that shows the jocular element of their friendship and the ability to joke around with each other. This is then reinforced by M3M echoing the statement to reinforce it, causing more laughter.

4.4.2.2 Conflict

None of the instances of humour detected in the data set appear to function as a means of creating conflict. This is possibly due to the fact that the conversations recorded were of a friendly nature and so it can be presumed that the relationship between the participants was friendly even in the event that they were effectively strangers.

4.4.2.3 Polarisation

There are no clear examples of humour functioning as a means of polarising the participants into groups along set boundaries. This may be due to them taking part in the conversations so as to take part in studies to do with natural conversation rather than debates or arguments.

4.4.2.4 Control

None of the examples present appeared to function purely as a means of maintaining control, either through friendly humour to gently guide others into better ways of being or through using the threat of becoming the butt of a joke the means to control others.

4.5 Comparative Analysis

As can be seen, the function that humour appears to serve in the data set differs slightly between the two languages. Neither of the two data sets appear to present any examples of humour functioning as a means of causing conflict or acting to

polarise the audience, though given the nature of the data as coming from friendly data this can be considered to be not entirely surprising.

Regarding the manner in which humour serves a psychological function, there are more examples of this in the English data set than in the Japanese one, where there was one sole instance of humour functioning as a method of self-defence and one that could potentially be classified as coping. The British English conversations feature 6 instances of humour that serve a psychological function, 4 of which are moments where humour is used as a coping mechanism and 1 instance each of humour being used as a form of self-defence and as a means to seek the approval of or be liked by others. If it therefore is the case that the discrepancy between the numbers is either due to it being simply rarer as a function of humour in British English to an extent but more importantly Japanese then it is entirely possible that expanding the number of recordings used or revisiting instances of laughter that had previously been dismissed as not caused by humour could lead to this number changing. Likewise, altering the situation of the recordings used may open up different functions for humour to perform.

In both the British English and Japanese data, humour seems to primarily have a social function which is mostly focused on solidarity. All of the social function examples of the British and Japanese examples of humour were of humour that functioned with regards to solidarity. In this way the instances and functions of humour appear to be similar across the two languages.

One point that must be raised with regards to laughter is the manner in which it is present in all the recordings beyond being triggered by humour. It can be presupposed that due to the setting of the Japanese recordings, where the

participants are in an unfamiliar situation for the sole purpose of providing conversational material for research purposes, there is more laughter due to nervousness and uncertainty, as well as a wish to fill the silence. Conversely, the British English recordings are more relaxed in tone as well as more meandering in topic as it is closer to completely natural.

Table 1: Comparison of the Functions of Humour in Natural Conversation

	British English	Japanese
Psychological Functions	6	2
⇒ Self-Defence	1	1
⇒ Coping	4	1
⇒ Seeking Approval	1	0
Social Functions	25	18
⇒ Solidarity	25	18
⇒ Conflict	0	0
⇒ Polarisation	0	0
⇒ Control	0	0
<i>Total</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>20</i>

4.6 Discussion

While it is clearly the case that in the situation of natural conversations, the major function that humour has in both British English and Japanese is to increase the sense of solidarity within those present, the manner in which this is achieved varies across the two languages.

In the Japanese data set, the majority of the methods used to create a sense of solidarity through humour is achieved by the use of teasing. This can be seen in examples such as Example 39, Example 48, and Example 51, as well as others. Here a victim is identified for the purpose of the tease, and through such methods humour is created. From this set of data, it appears to be the most commonly used method for creating humour within a group setting.

In comparison, the British data set seems to have more examples where the means of creating the sense of solidarity with humour involves the act of laughing at the misfortune of others. This can be seen in Example 13 where the rather macabre tale of a dog's ear being partially bitten off is recounted for humorous effect, Example 23 where the misfortune of a driver becomes a humorous anecdote for a witness to their bad luck, and Example 31 where the perceived stupidity of the customers becomes a point of amusement over which the conversation participants bond. Similarly, the use of humorous complaints is also used frequently. This can be seen in Example 14 where Denise is complaining about living with a "cantankerous old man" though doing so with affection and for humorous effect and in Example 15 where there are some affectionate complaints about a family member that are laughed over. While this is not entirely absent in the Japanese data set, as seen in Examples 42 and 45, it appears to be much scarcer.

Self-deprecating humour, which could be considered to be categorised under teasing as it is in many ways a self-tease, appears to be roughly equal across both languages, having a few examples in each data set, such as Examples 26 and 36.

However, in both cases this was not the major method for the creation of a sense of solidarity.

This suggests that there is a far greater tendency in British English to create humour that laughs at another's misfortune, even when they are not present and not consenting to being laughed at. Japanese humour seems to avoid this variety of more negative humour, whether it is at the misfortune of others or to complain about things, tending more towards teasing where there is humorous victimisation but it can also be co-created and cross over into self-deprecating humour. While there are questions that can be raised about teasing, the overarching suggestion is that there is potential for British English humour to be crueller than Japanese humour. There is also a more indirect manner to it, with the idea of recounting tales of misfortune that happened to others for unrelated people to laugh at, as opposed to teasing one individual who is present in the conversation.

4.7 Conclusions

From this limited manner of investigation, it can be presupposed that humour functions in a similar manner in friendly casual conversations in British English and Japanese, with the primary function being that of increasing solidarity.

While the instances of humour functioning in connection with the psychological needs of the individual are limited in the British data set, they are even rarer in the Japanese one. This does not necessarily mean that they are significantly rarer in Japanese than in British English, but it is also a possibility. It could however also simply mean that this is a function of humour that would

not commonly be used in the circumstances of the data set, namely when being recorded having a designated conversation with people who may be strangers.

Similarly, the frequency of humour appears to be comparable suggesting that it is likely that it occurs at a similar frequency in friendly conversations of both British English and Japanese, though it is more abundant in the British English data. This would suggest that while the languages and aspects of the cultures may be different, there are also points where the cultural tendencies converge. Alternately, this is a phenomenon common across all cultures and languages.

Chapter 5

Political Humour

5.1 Introduction

Whilst humour and the elicitation of laughter have a positive element with the initial assumption that it functions primarily in relaxed and happy environments, philosophers throughout history influencing both British and Japanese cultural development have concerned themselves over the issue of the perceived victims of humour in addition to the vulgarity of it, suggesting that it can be used as a weapon in conflicts that are more verbal than physical.

As such, humour also has potential for use in deeply partisan conditions, where there is both a sense of solidarity within one political party holding a specific set of values and ideals as well as an adversarial relationship with those of other political parties, affiliations and beliefs. Consequently, despite the formal elements of the settings, at least in the British tradition of debating the value of witticisms can be regarded as holding a great value within a verbal confrontation as may regularly occur during Parliamentary sessions. Subsequently, humour in Prime Minister's Questions Parliamentary Sessions is analysed, as well as the use of humour during elections.

5.2 Methodology

One issue with humour is that it can be subjective. A statement can be uttered that some people find to be funny and others do not. This can be due to a variety of reasons, from sociological demographics and relationships with the archetype

that may be the butt of the joke, to vital elements necessary to understanding it being lacking. Similarly, different tastes can mean different ideas of what constitutes a funny statement, and context can alter the way a person reacts. As such, it can be hard to judge the intent of a speaker. I therefore focused on the statements that elicited laughter as that suggested that the primary audience of the speaker interpreted the statement as having a humorous element to it. This removed any issues of the author's political views interfering with an assessment as to whether a statement contains an element of humour, as well as minimising the need for specialist background knowledge to detect and understand the jokes that may exist. As such, the intended audience of fellow politicians are taken as the main judge as to whether a statement is serious or humorous.

However, laughter is not merely due to finding something funny (Keith-Spiegel, 1972:17). It is a reaction that can be due to a variety of other emotions or stimuli. Likewise, a statement can illicit laughter even if the person speaking did not intend to be funny. As such, moments when it was concluded that the laughter was elicited for reasons other than the audience finding some form of humour in the statement were dismissed. This could include situations where a speaker makes a mistake, which given the circumstance has comedic value such as accidentally agreeing with the opposition when it is clear that it an unintended slip of the tongue and therefore the speaker laughs it off along with the listeners before returning to the intended topic, as well as situations where there is laughter due to reasons beyond pure word choice such as pre-existing context and physical aspects of presentation.

Consequently, statements that elicited laughter that appeared to be intentional in their use of humour were noted and considered for analysis firstly as to their function and secondly as to the way in which this compared across the two languages and cultures. These are marked by underlining the relevant parts of the statements that caused the laughter and can therefore be considered to having a degree of humorous intent.

5.3 British Parliament

The British Parliament is comprised of three elements, the House of Commons, the House of Lords and the Monarchy. It is between the two Houses that legislative decisions for running the country are made (Parliament UK).

The House of Lords consists of three types of peers, life peers who make up the majority (approximately 700) and are appointed by the Queen at the recommendation of the Prime Minister to serve for the duration of their lifespan, 26 archbishops and bishops of the Church of England whose membership to the House of Lords passes on with their title when they retire, and the elected hereditary peers of whom 92 still remain (Parliament UK).

The Government operates within the House of Commons, comprising of selected members of the party with the majority (Parliament UK). The composition of the House of Commons is decided by public vote using the first-past-the-post system. These general elections occur at least every 5 years with those standing competing for 650 seats, each representing a single constituency across the UK (Parliament UK). Due to the fact that the Speaker and their 3 deputies do not vote, as well as the fact that Sinn Féinn MPs refuse to take their

seats for political reasons, the number required for a majority is slightly lower than the theoretical 326 needed (Syal & Travis, 2017).

The British Parliament has a YouTube channel (UK Parliament), where the sessions of Prime Minister’s Questions are uploaded. As such, there are videos of the sessions going back until 2012, with a few additional sessions dating back to 1990. Likewise, the sessions are transcribed and incorporated into the Parliamentary records, which are available online as part of the Hansard system. It is these transcriptions that are used below, which are not completely accurate as to the words spoken, but rather on occasion amended to remove issues such as unnecessary repetition and add in clarifications if required. The first question, for example, is written out in the transcripts but in reality, as it is predetermined, it can be asked as a variant on the phrase “question number one” by the MP called upon to ask it.

The Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the second largest non-ruling party are each able to ask multiple questions, but the backbenchers are limited to one each. This includes the MPs for the Prime Minister’s own party.

Table 2: British Prime Minister's Questions Sessions Used

Date	Prime Minister	Duration
1997-05-21	Tony Blair (Labour)	30 minutes
2007-06-27	Tony Blair (Labour)	37 minutes
2007-07-04	Gordon Brown (Labour)	31 minutes
2012-01-11	David Cameron (Conservative)	35 minutes
2012-01-18	David Cameron (Conservative)	33 minutes

2012-01-25	David Cameron (Conservative)	33 minutes
2015-11-18	David Cameron (Conservative)	34 minutes
2015-11-25	David Cameron (Conservative)	33 minutes
2016-03-23	David Cameron (Conservative)	39 minutes
2016-04-13	David Cameron (Conservative)	36 minutes
2016-04-20	David Cameron (Conservative)	35 minutes
2016-04-27	David Cameron (Conservative)	36 minutes
2017-06-28	Theresa May (Conservative)	49 minutes
2017-07-05	Theresa May (Conservative)	46 minutes
2017-07-12	Theresa May (Conservative)	40 minutes
2017-07-19	Theresa May (Conservative)	45 minutes
2018-09-12	Theresa May (Conservative)	41 minutes
2019-02-20	Theresa May (Conservative)	43 minutes
2019-05-15	Theresa May (Conservative)	44 minutes
2019-06-26	Theresa May (Conservative)	49 minutes

5.3.1 Psychological Functions

5.3.1.1 Self-Defence

Example 52

Mr. Major

The House will note that the right hon. Gentleman replied in the generality but did not reply specifically. He did not provide the House with the categorical assurance I asked him for; perhaps he will do so in just a moment. If the tax proceeds, it will lead to an extra tax on gas, water, electricity and telephones. I return to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Esher and Walton (Mr. Taylor). If the tax gives

rise to an increase in bills for many people on low incomes, will the right hon. Gentleman follow the precedent set by the previous Government and increase social security benefits to compensate for that? Will the right hon. Gentleman accept that if he does not, the populist tax on fat cats he proposes will be a tax that hits most those who have least?

The Prime Minister

I shall resist the temptation to say that that was the soundbite, because I have a feeling that I used to use a few of those myself at one time. No, that is not the case. There is a cap on prices. Some of the regulators have already said that they would not consider it right for the windfall tax to lead to any increase in prices.

(21 May 1997)

This is Major's third question to the Prime Minister (Blair) regarding the changes to the tax boundaries that are planned, and he is dissatisfied with the Blair's responses thus far. Blair, knowing that he has a reputation for using soundbites that work as pleasant slogans but therefore failing to go into true depth regarding policies, begins his answer with the glib comment "I shall resist the temptation to say that that was the soundbite" showing that he was not truly resisting the aforementioned temptation as such but rather acknowledging the existence of the neat soundbites used in the election campaign and the tendency to resort to them, even referring to their usage in the election he has only just won. After this means of prefacing his answer does he do so fully. In this way it both serves to function as a means of creating a sense of levity within the House and demonstrating his self-awareness, but also it ensures that it will not be a jibe used against him in the near future, whether in the present House sitting or any later write-ups.

Example 53

Colin Burgon (Elmet) (Lab)

Q2. The Prime Minister can relax, because I will not ask him about Venezuela today. Like thousands of other parents, I have watched anxiously as my daughter has prepared for her exams, but we can safely predict that when the GCSE results come out in August any rise in pass rates will provoke the Conservatives and their media allies to devalue the work of teachers and young people. So if in response I state our socialist belief that education is a path that should be open to the many, not the few, will the Prime Minister—

Mr. Speaker

Order. I have to hear a question. I have not heard one yet.

Colin Burgon

Sorry, Mr. Speaker. Will the Prime Minister, as one comrade to another, at last agree with me on something, and thus ensure his place in history?

The Prime Minister

First, let me shock my hon. Friend by saying that the definition of socialism that he has just given—that it is for the many and not the few—is one that I wholeheartedly share. Secondly, <...>

(27 June 2007)

Here a somewhat self-deprecating comment is used to start the question by Colin Burgon, suggesting his awareness of his tendencies and reputation of often asking awkward questions about Venezuela. Making it into a humorous manner of beginning his comment can be a manner of helping to protect himself from any forthcoming jokes at his expense, and demonstrates an ability to laugh at himself.

5.3.1.2 Coping

Example 54

The Prime Minister (Mr. Tony Blair)

Before listing my engagements, because this is the last time that I will be able to do so, may I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your gentle courtesy and kind forbearance toward me over the years? I have had need of both.

Now to my engagements. This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I will have no such further meetings today, or any other day.

(27 June 2007)

The first question of the session always asks the Prime Minister to list their engagements, which they then reply to in a highly formulaic manner in keeping with tradition. As it is his final Prime Minister's Questions session after 10 years of being Prime Minister, he uses the customary phrase only to deviate from it to reflect the new status quo. This is a highly contextual aspect that gets some laughter, serving to set the mood for the session but also having an element of coping to its function. It helps to ensure that the final session of his term is one that is in good spirits and that he leaves on a high.

Example 55

The Prime Minister

I thank my hon. Friend for his kind words in relation to the closure of Longbridge in his constituency. He is absolutely right. I think that 85 per cent. of the work force have now found a job, and I congratulate him on that. I feel a certain solidarity with them since I received the following communication by urgent letter yesterday:

“Details of employee leaving work: Surname Blair. First name T”—

it actually says “Mr., Mrs., Miss or other”—

“This form is important to you. Take good care of it. P45.”

(27 June 2007)

The question the Prime Minister is asked is mostly concerned with praising his accomplishments over the years, which includes the help the government gave to those who lost their jobs in the MP’s constituency. As such, Blair is takes the opportunity to bring up the fact that he has resigned as the Prime Minister has and therefore will shortly no longer be employed is used as a joke, suggesting that he now feels a greater sense of solidarity with the unemployed and talks about having received his P45 form (received upon leaving employment). Using this means of joking about the fact that he will no longer be Prime Minister and therefore will effectively be unemployed (even if that does not mean that he will be struggling financially or frantically searching for a new job in the local job centre) casts it in a positive light and ensures that the mood regarding that is kept positive. In this way, despite the fact that he resigned of his own volition, it helps to be a means of coping with that change in status and the future that awaits him.

Example 56

Suella Braverman (Fareham) (Con)

I am due to give birth any day now. I am hoping that there will not be an emergency in the Commons! [Laughter.] May I put on record my thanks to you, Mr Speaker, to the former Leader of the House, my right hon. Friend the Member for South Northamptonshire (Andrea Leadsom), to the Government and to cross-party MPs who have

delivered the proxy voting scheme, which will enable my constituents to be represented during my maternity leave?

(26 June 2019)

The MP begins her question with a joking expression of her desire to not have her waters break midway through a Parliamentary session, which functions as a means of coping with the fact that there is a slight possibility of that happening, as well as the more definite fact that she will shortly be giving birth and that this may be an intimidating thought. It also helps serve as a framing device for her comment about maternity leave for MPs, after which she is able to segue into her actual question (redacted here).

5.3.1.3 Seeking Approval

Example 57

Matt Warman (Boston and Skegness) (Con)

Q7. It is a truth universally acknowledged that fish and chips taste best on the beaches of Skegness, and that is why 4 million people visit those beaches every year. Does the Prime Minister agree that we should work with the Environment Agency, the local enterprise partnership and local councils, build on the work of this Government that has brought jobs and growth, and extend the tourist season and build a billion-pound coastal economy by the end of this decade?

(20 April 2016)

Warman starts his question with a well-known quote, namely the first line of *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen which goes ‘It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.’

(Austen, 1813:1). This appeals to the common knowledge that he assumes to be shared by the whole Chamber as people who are presumed to be well-educated and therefore aware of classic novels. Specifically, it appeals to the Prime Minister in a manner to present him in a good light, showing a blend of education and good humour. In this manner it can be argued that the major function it serves is to make him more likeable to others and the Prime Minister in general.

5.3.2 Social Functions

5.3.2.1 Solidarity

Example 58

Mr. Stuart Bell

Having fought the general election on a platform of no hundred days of dynamic action--the definition of dynamic action changing from one Prime Minister to another--having introduced a Queen's Speech with 26 Bills, much to the delight of the public, having made the Bank of England independent, having severed supervision of the banking system from the Bank of England and having introduced a new system of regulation for the City of London, can the Prime Minister tell the House what he proposes as an encore?

The Prime Minister

I thank my hon. Friend for that question. <...>

(21 May 1997)

In Example 58, the fellow Labour MP Stuart Bell ends an impressive list of all the things the new Prime Minister (Tony Blair) has done with “can the Prime Minister tell the House what he proposes as an encore”. The phrasing of referring everything to come as being an encore, when of course it will be the main part of

his premiership, highlights the efficiency of the Prime Minister, his team and indeed the entire Labour Party. It causes some laughter at the phrasing, with the sense of both success and potential it causes allowing it to function as a means of increasing solidarity through highlighting reasons to be proud within the Party.

Example 59

Mr. Cameron

On behalf of everyone on these Benches, may I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on his remarkable achievement of being Prime Minister for 10 years? [Hon. Members: “Hear, hear.”] For all the heated battles across the Dispatch Box, for 13 years he has led his party, for 10 years he has led our country, and no one can be in any doubt about the huge efforts he has made in public service. He has considerable achievements to his credit, whether it is peace in Northern Ireland or his work in the developing world, which will endure. I am sure that life in the public eye has sometimes been tough on his family, so on behalf of my party may I wish him and his family well, and wish him every success in whatever he does in future?

The Prime Minister

Let me thank the right hon. Gentleman for those very generous sentiments. For all the political disagreements between us, it is always important to be able to work with people on issues of national importance across the political divide, and I have always found him most proper, correct and courteous in his dealings with me, and I thank him for that. Although I cannot wish him well politically, none the less, personally, I wish him and his family very well indeed.

(27 June 2007)

The Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition have a pleasant exchange wishing each other well, but the Prime Minister is careful to add in the disclaimer “Although I cannot wish him well politically” causing laughter. Despite the manner in which it positions Cameron as the enemy, it also speaks to the sense of solidarity that can exist within the entire House of Commons, with them all being MPs who may be friendly and wish each other well, just not politically. As such it functions as a manner of appealing to what they all have in common, both as people and also as MPs with party loyalties, with the acknowledgement that friendships and positive feelings can exist across those lines.

Example 60

Helen Goodman (Bishop Auckland) (Lab)

Q12. Some people think that the worst case that has been made so far to vote to leave the EU is the claim that England is an island. Will the Prime Minister tell the House the worst argument that he has heard from the Brexiters?

The Prime Minister

I think it is probably that we would get out of the Eurovision song contest. Not only would that be incredibly sad, but given that Israel and Azerbaijan, and anyone anywhere near Europe seems to be able to enter—*[Interruption.]* Australia, too, so we are pretty safe from that one.

(20 April 2016)

Here the question asked and the answer given, both of which reduce the complex issue of Brexit to a single stupid argument, receive laughs and act as mutual act of mocking the Brexiteers and their arguments. As such it operates in a manner to show solidarity but in a manner that is undoubtedly also somewhat polarising

for those in favour of Brexit. It however casts those that wish to leave the EU as idiots incapable of crafting good arguments, with the suggestion that there are many arguments in favour of leaving the EU but they are all illogical nonsense that misunderstand both the relationship Britain has with the EU and also reality as a concept.

Example 61

Mr Ben Bradshaw (Exeter) (Lab)

Q11. With the United Kingdom facing its most momentous decision for a generation in eight weeks' time, does the Prime Minister think it makes more sense to listen to all our closest friends and allies around the world, or to a combination of French fascists, Nigel Farage and Vladimir Putin?

The Prime Minister

I am glad the right hon. Gentleman takes the English pronunciation of Farage, rather than the poncey, foreign-sounding one that he seems to prefer—a thoroughly good thing. I think we should listen to our friends and our allies. Looking around the world, it is hard to find the leader of a country who wishes us well who wants us to do other than stay inside a reformed European Union.

(27 April 2016)

Here the rather disparaging comment regarding the pronunciation of Farage gets a laugh and functions as a means to showing the solidarity that exists between the asker and the Prime Minister, despite them being of different political parties. There is still something that they have in common and can agree on with ease. As Nigel Farage has been a leading campaigner for Brexit and similar issues, he is

familiar in the realm of politics even if he is not an MP himself, meaning that his name is recognisable within the context of the debate.

Example 62

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab)

I would like to pay tribute to the former Labour MP for Birmingham, All Saints, Brian Walden, who passed away this week. He was a very formidable figure in this House and a very strong political interviewer who every politician really loved being interviewed by at the time—but they only said that afterwards.

I think it would also be only right that the House of Commons pays tribute to a leading Hollywood icon and campaigner for animal welfare, Doris Day, who passed away this week. I am tempted to quote some Doris Day songs, but I won't. [Interruption.] All right—"Whip-Crack-Away!" [Interruption.] No, no, no. [Interruption.] I do apologise, Mr Speaker—I have obviously started a parliamentary singalong here.

[...]

(15 May 2019)

Before beginning his questions to the Prime Minister, Corbyn takes the time given to him as Leader of the Opposition to pay tribute to a number of people who died, with some elements of humour being used within his comments. First there is some slight laughter caused by a statement that could likely be regarded as a teasing show of solidarity, highlighting something that a number of them have in common. It is rather tongue-in-cheek, with the implication that most of those who were interviewed by Brian Walden were also glad for the interview to be over.

Corbyn then moves on to the tribute to Doris Day, where the slight discrepancy between some of her songs and the more traditionally serious draws some laughter. This slight moment of silliness is in some ways a show of solidarity within the entire House, with the recognition of the songs and the human aspects of them beyond their positions with regards to political loyalties.

Example 63

Suella Braverman (Fareham) (Con)

I am due to give birth any day now. I am hoping that there will not be an emergency in the Commons! [Laughter.] May I put on record my thanks to you, Mr Speaker, to the former Leader of the House, my right hon. Friend the Member for South Northamptonshire (Andrea Leadsom), to the Government and to cross-party MPs who have delivered the proxy voting scheme, which will enable my constituents to be represented during my maternity leave?

Eleven-year-old Ruby Lloyd, who is at Hook-with-Warsash primary school, is campaigning for a pedestrian crossing in Warsash Road to encourage more pupils to walk to school, thereby improving road safety and air quality. Hundreds of local residents support her campaign, as do her headmistress and her councillors. Will my right hon. Friend get behind Ruby's campaign for safer roads in Fareham?

The Prime Minister

We wish my hon. Friend the very best for the upcoming birth. I feel a certain satisfaction, having played a little role in ensuring that she and her husband got married, as she has acknowledged.

(26 June 2019)

Braverman prefaces her question about primary school children walking to school with a humorous reference to the fact that she will shortly have a child of her own.

The Prime Minister then adds in a small social mention in her answer, which gets a small amount of laughter, functioning as a means to demonstrate the solidarity that presumably exists between the two of them, highlighting the things that they have in common. It also to an extent excludes those that are not within that social circle.

5.3.2.2 Conflict

Example 64

Sir Menzies Campbell (North-East Fife) (LD)

The Prime Minister entered No. 10 Downing street with a promise of change. Will he now set a target for the withdrawal of British troops from Iraq; will he order the reopening of the investigation into allegations of corruption in relation to arms sales; and will he renegotiate the one-sided extradition treaty with the United States?

The Prime Minister

As I said yesterday, my door is always open to the right hon. and learned Gentleman. On these issues, let me tell him this: it would be wrong to set a timetable at this stage. <...>

Sir Menzies Campbell

When I look at the Prime Minister's door it appears to be more of a trap door than anything else—so there is not much evidence of change there. Will the Government now abandon their headlong rush towards a new generation of nuclear power stations? Will they undertake to tax pollution more than earnings? Finally, will they abolish the unfair and regressive council tax?

(4 July 2007)

Here the rejoinder to the Prime Minister's answer gets laughs by comparing his door to a trap door. In this way it appears to function mostly as a personal attack wrapped in humour, fostering conflict between them. This builds upon what would already be an adversarial relationship given that they are of differing parties and therefore differing views, but also it sets the tone for their future relationship going forward as this is the first time Gordon Brown is Prime Minister for Prime Minister's Questions, suggesting that future encounters too will be adversarial in tone despite any attempts to make it friendlier.

Example 65

Edward Miliband (Doncaster North) (Lab)

In the autumn statement the Chancellor said that train fares would rise by only 1% above inflation. Can the Prime Minister therefore explain why rail companies this month on some of the busiest commuter routes have increased their fares by up to 11%?

The Prime Minister

The power to do that was given to them by the last Labour Government.

Edward Miliband

No, Mr Speaker, the Prime Minister is wrong. The last Labour Government stopped them doing that, and this Prime Minister, when he came to office, reversed that policy, which we introduced. That is why the companies are able to rig the fares. That is why someone travelling from Northampton to London will see a rise on the season ticket of more than £300. Will he now stand up to the train companies, get a better deal for commuters and change his policy?

The Prime Minister

I know that the right hon. Gentleman has had a difficult start to the year, but I am afraid he has made it worse by getting the facts wrong.

<...>

(11 January 2012)

The Prime Minister first answers Miliband's question with a confrontational statement passing the blame, and then with his second answer he uses a display of faux-sympathy to get laughs. This form of personal attack functions to increase a sense of conflict that exists between them on a personal and professional level. In doing so, the Prime Minister demeans Miliband and casts him as incompetent and unfortunate.

Example 66

Edward Miliband

I will tell him what he should do: he should change course. It is his policy. Why is unemployment rising? It is rising because he is cutting too far and too fast. It is his record. <...>

The Prime Minister

To be fair to the right hon. Gentleman, he changes course every day; he is an expert at changing course. Labour's shadow Chancellor said two days ago:

"My starting point is...we are going to have to keep all these cuts."

Then Labour's deputy leader said yesterday that

"we're not accepting the Government's...cuts, we are totally opposing them and we're fighting them."

The right hon. Gentleman is flip-flopping on a daily basis. It is no wonder that the founder of Labour's business forum had this to say:

"At a time when the nation needs strong political leadership, Labour offers nothing...the pro-business, pragmatic approach to wealth and enterprise"

have all gone.

"Instead there is a vision and leadership vacuum."

What total adequate testimony to what stands opposite!

(18 January 2012)

Here the Prime Minister uses a personal attack under the guise of a humorous opening statement to discredit Miliband and at the same time avoid actually answering the question. As such it seems to function as a means of increasing a sense of conflict and aims to demoralise both the leadership and the general membership of the opposing party.

Example 67

Jeremy Corbyn

Next week the Chancellor will present his autumn statement to the House. Can the Prime Minister clarify something about the source of the necessary extra funding for the security services, which we support? Will it come at the expense of other areas, either within the Home Office budget or other areas of public spending, from the reserves, or from new funding? Does he want me to go on longer so that the Chancellor can explain the answer to him?

The Prime Minister

We will set out in full our decisions next week, but we have already said that we will fund an increase in the security services of 1,900 personnel. We will safeguard the counter-terrorism budget and we will see an increase in aviation security. All that is part of an overall spending settlement. At the same time as funding our security and increasing our defence spending, we have to make decisions that eradicate our budget deficit and keep our economy strong. We do not do that just for the current generation: we do it for our children and grandchildren, because none of these things—not even strong defence—is possible without a strong economy.

Jeremy Corbyn

I am not absolutely sure where the money is coming from following the Prime Minister's answer, but no doubt it will come.

(18 November 2015)

Corbyn's question ends with a slightly subtle attack that generates some laughter, implying that the Prime Minister does not understand the issue himself and therefore needs the extra time to prepare as he is stupid. It therefore has a function of causing a degree of conflict, having an element of a personal attack by questioning the intelligence of the Prime Minister and consequently his competence for office. It is mocking in style, though with the personalised manner in which it occurs it is likely to function mostly to cause conflict without the added elements of polarisation that could otherwise exist.

Example 68

The Prime Minister

Suddenly the king of fiscal rectitude speaks. The right hon. Gentleman may have noticed that the Budget passed last night. It is a Budget that cuts the deficit in every year of this Parliament. It is a Budget that delivers a surplus by the end of this Parliament. None of that is going to change. He talks about this Budget—*/Interruption./* The “hostile” shout, but the “neutral but not hostile” have to be quiet, I think. I want to know: hands up, who is “core plus”?

I will tell you what this Budget did. It took a million people out of income tax. It saw more money for our schools. It helped the poorest people in our country to save. It cut taxes for small businesses. It cut taxes for the self-employed. It made our economy stronger. It made our country fairer. It is a Budget that will help this country do better.

(23 March 2016)

The Prime Minister has seen a report on his political rivals, the Labour Party, in which they are divided into a number of categories. He uses this a number of times during the session to mockingly deflect from other issues. In this example, the Prime Minister elicits laughter on a number of occasions by singling out MPs and giving their designation according to the report, before asking for those in “core plus” to put their hands up as though it is a manner in which a teacher has grouped a bunch of primary school children. These primarily serve the function of causing conflict, both by means of being a general attack on the Labour Party in opposition but also through the manner in which a number of individuals are singled out for personal focus. He thus derails any arguments the opposition may have by use of the manner in which they have been categorised as to their varying levels of hostility. The manner in which it is presented means that it likely also sews the seeds of discontent and intraparty conflict as well as through the means of his attack.

Example 69

Rushanara Ali (Bethnal Green and Bow) (Lab)

Q12. The former Work and Pensions Secretary described the cuts to personal independence payments for the disabled as divisive, unfair and against the national interest. The Chancellor’s U-turn suggests that he now agrees. Can the Prime Minister explain how on earth he allowed this to happen in the first place?

The Prime Minister

It is good to have an intervention from someone who, I think, is “neutral but not hostile”. If the hon. Lady keeps going, she could join “core group plus”, with the rest of us. She would be very welcome in “core group plus.” <...>

(23 March 2016)

The Prime Minister continues his reference to the categorisation of earlier in the session (as seen in Example 68 above) which serves to derail her question to an extent and exacerbate the partisan conflicts that exist between them. It also continues to push at divisions within the Labour Party creating a sense of conflict within the party as well as between the two parties.

Example 70

Jeremy Corbyn

A pattern seems to be developing. [Interruption.] It is quite simply this: the Prime Minister has a Health Secretary who is imposing a contract on junior doctors, against the wishes of patients, the public and the rest of the medical profession; and he has an Education Secretary who is imposing yet another Tory top-down reorganisation that nobody wants. When will his Government show some respect and listen to the public, parents and patients, and indeed to professionals who have given their lives to public service in education and health? When will he change his ways, listen to them and trust other people to run services, rather than imposing things from above?

The Prime Minister

I tell right hon. Gentleman the pattern that is developing: we can see 1.9 million more people being treated in our health service; and we can see 1.3 million more children in “good” or “outstanding” schools. That is the pattern that is developing: a strong economy, investing into our

public services. The other pattern that I have noticed, standing at this Dispatch Box, is that I am on my fifth Labour leader—and if he carries on like this, I will soon be on my sixth.

(27 April 2016)

Here the concept of a continued pattern raised by Corbyn is twisted and reutilised by the Prime Minister to imply that Corbyn will not last much longer as the leader of the Labour Party. This is done by Cameron stressing that he has in his time as leader of the Conservative Party faced five different Labour Party leaders, suggesting that he's defeating them all by outlasting them and that Corbyn will be next to fall. In this way it is a humorous manner of increasing conflict. Firstly, the conflict that exists between the two parties on opposite sides of the House, as well as the personal conflict between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, but in addition to this there is also potential for conflict within the Labour Party and an increase in the conflicted and uncertain mood that exists within it. As such it can also help to stir feelings of unrest and encourage the Labour Party to seek a new leader.

Example 71

Jo Stevens (Cardiff Central) (Lab)

Q5. I know the Prime Minister is well aware of the misery and suffering caused by reckless gambling. Following her own recent experience and the turmoil it has caused to her friends and colleagues, will she now commit to legislating on fixed odds betting terminals, the cause of so much hardship across our communities?

The Prime Minister

As the hon. Lady knows, a consultation was undertaken on that particular issue, which the Department for Culture, Media and Sport is considering. It will announce a response in due course.

(28 June 2017)

This is a session that took part directly after the 2017 election when the Conservative Party lost their majority. Here the fact that the Prime Minister called an election which did not go the way she had hoped is brought up to frame a serious question regarding gambling laws. In many ways it serves as a personal attack, but at the same time as it seeks to highlight the conflict that exists between the two parties it also encourages conflict and disintegration within the Conservative Party.

Example 72

Mr Paul J. Sweeney (Glasgow North East) (Lab/Co-op)

Q3. The Prime Minister will now know what it is like to have a job but to lack job security. Sometimes it can even bring a tear to the eye. Given her new-found empathy for millions of workers in insecure work, why is she now cutting six Department for Work and Pensions jobcentres in Glasgow and also back-office staff at Springburn in my constituency, where unemployment is twice the national average?

(19 July 2017)

Similarly, this example is in the aftermath of the 2027 election when results were still in everyone's mind. As such the precarious nature of the Prime Minister's job security is used to frame a question about unemployment issues in a manner that elicits laughter at the Prime Minister's expense (not the unemployed constituents).

This draws upon the fact that there is a risk that she will be ousted from office having not performed as well as the Conservatives would have liked, and might therefore be feeling insecure in her position. As such it functions to increase the conflict between the parties by taking pleasure in the Prime Minister's misfortune. It also implies the encouragement of a degree of conflict within the Conservative Party due to the discontent that existed due to the consequences of the election results. Even if the Conservative Party is not seriously considering replacing her, it raises the issue of May being forced out of a job to ensure that it is in her mind and also in the mind of other party members who might be considering a coup.

Example 73

Ian Murray (Edinburgh South) (Lab)

Q7. The interim Prime Minister has repeatedly refused to answer the question asked by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, so may I try again? It was reported over the weekend, by the temporary Chancellor's own Cabinet colleagues, that he had said that some public sector workers are "overpaid". Will the Prime Minister tell the House, the country and those public sector workers which ones she thinks are overpaid, which ones she thinks are underpaid and what she is going to do about it?

(19 July 2017)

Another example from a session in the immediate aftermath of the 2027 election, where once again the Labour MPs use the bad outcome for the Prime Minister as a means of framing their questions in a manner that is humorous to them but not her. This MP chooses to address the Prime Minister as being the "interim Prime

Minister” in a manner that suggests the belief that she will not last long in the job (and by association it is Labour who will shortly be taking over from the imminent collapse of her government). It therefore serves to establish both the conflict in positions that his and her parties have, as well as encouraging internal conflict within the Conservative Party by reminding them of what could be considered to be the misjudgement of calling a snap election and the manner in which the campaign was handled, thereby raising questions about her competence for the job. In this way, this phrasing that hints at humour can function as a means to cause conflict within the Conservative Party as well as demonstrating the inter-party conflicts that exist. It could also be considered to have the additional aim of diminishing the confidence of the Prime Minister and encouraging her party to devolve into disarray through making them the butt of the joke.

Example 74

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey) (Lab)

In 2017, during the election, we learned what the Prime Minister’s definition of “strong and stable” was. As our automotive industry disintegrates before our eyes, as investment is put on hold and as growth slows, are we now learning what the Prime Minister’s definition of “smooth and orderly Brexit” is?

(20 February 2019)

Here Eagle uses the Prime Minister’s own words, as well as her track record to attack her on a personal level as well as criticising her government. This somewhat ironic quoting of the phrases May had used to describe both her leadership and her vision for Brexit, particularly during the election campaign of

2017, elicits laughter and serves to heighten the conflict both between the parties as well as within May's own party that was deeply divided on the issue of Brexit.

5.3.2.3 Polarising

Example 75

Mr. Major

In view of the apparent confusion in briefings from Ministers over recent days, will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House which companies and which classes of companies are likely to be liable to the windfall tax? Will he also please explain to the House why the chairman of British Telecom apparently felt that his company would not be liable?

The Prime Minister

I heard what the chairman of British Telecom said the other day and I was delighted that he indicated that he had the good judgment to vote Labour in the general election. <...>

(21 May 1997)

Major asks Blair about his tax plan, raising the issue that there are those in the public such as the chairman of British Telecom who might be confused by it or even deliberately misled by the unclear Labour government. Blair answers the question by first focusing on the idea that voting Labour in the general election shows good judgement, which is a statement that gets a small amount of laughter as it is also a polarising statement. For a Prime Minister of the Labour Party or any other Labour Party member it is good judgement and helped put them in power. However, to many other members of the House in particular those like John Major who was the Leader of the Opposition and are Conservative Party members, having just lost the aforementioned election, it further shows the stark

boundary that exists between the two viewpoints. As such it can be considered to function as increasing solidarity within both groups by polarising the differences and strengthening the boundary that exists between them.

Example 76

Mr. Wallace

If, as the Prime Minister indicated some moments ago, a lifting of the beef export ban is not exactly imminent, is he able to indicate what kind of approximate time scale our beef producers might reasonably expect? In the meantime, what steps are his Government taking to restrict imports into the United Kingdom of beef products that do not meet the same very high standards required of our domestic producers? [347]

The Prime Minister

We obviously want to do everything that we possibly can to encourage and bring about the lifting of the beef ban. I say to the hon. Gentleman with the greatest respect that I do not think that plucking out arbitrary timetables has a very good history in the matter. We remember what happened before. *[Laughter.]* I am sorry to bring back bad memories. I believe that we can make progress and I am hopeful that progress is being made. The very fact that we have a Government who are arguing the case sensibly and constructively gives us a far better chance than we had under the previous Administration.

(21 May 1997)

The question about the timescale of the limitations on beef sales in the UK is asked sincerely and there is a serious answer given. However, in addition to this, the Prime Minister refers to something that previously happened with regards to timetables for policies, which is then mentioned may hold bad memories for some

of them, which leads to some laughter. This reference to something that they all, as politically aware members of Parliament know indicates an element of solidarity but also holds a polarising element to it in that the memory may be entertaining for some like him as they are connected to a failure of the previous government. However, for those who are effectively the victims of his witticism those bad memories are likely to be ones that they do not want to think of and therefore do not find to be funny. As such it likely serves to polarise Parliament along Party lines more, increasing the solidarity within individual groups and animosity between them.

Example 77

Ian C. Lucas (Wrexham) (Lab)

Q3. May I thank the Prime Minister for coming to my constituency during the general election campaign and for making her widely welcomed U-turn on the dementia tax? May I invite her back to Wrexham to make another announcement, reversing her appalling cuts to police budgets, which my constituents want to see the back of?

(28 June 2017)

Here a policy that was initially announced and generally proved to be somewhat unpopular resulting in it being withdrawn is referred to (the dementia tax), as well as the manner in which it was rescinded. It is thus used as a framing device to ask for the Prime Minister to repeat the act of changing her policy on another point that the MP asking the question does not agree with. As such it functions to polarise those present, with a sense of solidarity developing on either side as well

as an increasing awareness of the boundary that exists between them. This would be particularly enhanced by the election that had just occurred.

5.3.2.4 Control

Example 78

The Prime Minister

I want to thank my hon. Friend for welcoming me to the Gower yesterday. Before coming to his constituency I visited Port Talbot, where I met the management and trade unions, and had a very constructive discussion. [Interruption.] I did actually meet the Conservative leader, Andrew R. T. Davies, who does an excellent job in the Welsh Assembly. [Interruption.] If the hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant) wants to be Speaker, he had better stop interrupting everybody, as it is not going to get him any votes—a little tip for him there. But the serious point is about the areas where we could help. [...]

(27 April 2016)

Here the Prime Minister is attempting to answer a question, but it interrupted by other members of parliament being rowdy. He regains control after being interrupted and specifically addresses a part of the cause of the interruption. In doing so he makes the person who was responsible for the interruption (Bryant) the butt of the joke to be laughed at and thus it functions to show that the power rests with Cameron.

Example 79

Jeremy Corbyn

I think I can help the Prime Minister with that issue. When you cut local authority expenditure by 40%, you end up with fewer building control inspectors—[Interruption.]

Mr Speaker

Order. It is pretty bad when people shout. For someone sitting right by the Speaker's Chair to shout displays, let us say, a lack of wisdom, which should not be repeated. [Interruption.] Order. Every Member in the Chamber must and will be heard, however long the session has to run.

(28 June 2017)

The Speaker here has to intervene when an interruption disrupts the discussion between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, where Corbyn is unable to continue asking his question due to the noise. The Speaker regains control in part by highlighting that manner in which one of those who was shouting was sitting right by him, meaning that it was impossible for him to not notice. This teasing manner of phrasing can be considered to be a way to slightly soften the scolding whilst also maintaining control. It can also help to ensure that those singled out do not repeat the misdemeanour.

Example 80

Jeremy Corbyn

The Prime Minister simply does not get it. [Interruption.]

Mr Speaker

Order. We have plenty of time. I am quite happy to run on for some considerable period of time. People who are making excessive noise

should try to calm themselves and perhaps just give a moment's thought to whether they would like to be viewed by their constituents shrieking their heads off. It is very downmarket.

Jeremy Corbyn

There is a low-pay epidemic in this country, <...>

(5 July 2017)

Interruptions cause Corbyn to be drowned out in his attempt to ask a contentious question to the Prime Minister as part of a back and forth between the two of them about the plight of the low paid, meaning that the Speaker has to regain control of the House and quieten them down. His sardonic scolding of the MPs gains some laughter, with that method of generalised and disapproving teasing acting as a method of establishing his control and exerting his personal power.

Example 81

Jeremy Corbyn

What we want is a country where there are not 4 million children living in poverty and where homelessness does not rise every year. I look along the Front Bench opposite and I see a Cabinet bickering and backbiting while the economy gets weaker and people are pushed further into debt. [Interruption.] Well, they can try talking to each other. The economy is—[Interruption.]

Mr Speaker

Order. The hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi) is gesticulating in a distinctly eccentric manner and he must stop doing so. Shakespeare's county deserves better.

Jeremy Corbyn

The reality is that wages are falling, <...>

(19 July 2017)

In this example, the Speaker singles out a particular member in a manner that elicits laughter as a means of regaining control of the House and restoring the floor to Corbyn who had been speaking. In this way humour functions as a means of exerting and maintaining control through wielding the threat that those that misbehave will become the butt of the joke and therefore be laughed at by the other MPs.

Example 82

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab)

The Prime Minister just responded to a question on antisemitism. I simply say this: antisemitism has no place whatsoever in any of our political parties, in our life, in our society—[Interruption.]

Mr Speaker

Mr Ellis, be quiet now and for the rest of the session. You used to practise as a barrister. You did not make those sorts of harrumphing noises in the courts; or if you did, no wonder you no longer practise there.

Jeremy Corbyn

As I was saying, <...>

(20 February 2019)

Here the Speaker handles an interruption by singling out an individual who contributed to the noise, teasing them by referring to their previous career to laughter. In this way the humorous teasing functions as a means of exerting control firstly over the person on the receiving end of the tease (Mr Ellis) but also all the other MPs that might consider interrupting the proceedings of the session.

5.4 Japanese National Diet

The National Diet (国会, Kokkai) consists of two sections, the House of Representatives and the House of Councillors. Legislation is thus passed through a combination of the two Houses, with the members of both being elected by the public. This system has existed since the promulgation of the Constitution of Japan went into effect on 3rd May 1947 (衆議院, 2014). Structurally it is based on the British Parliamentary system, which can be considered to allow for a greater ease of comparison (東, 2007).

The House of Councillors is the Upper House, with the members holding their offices for 6 years. There are 245 members, of whom 147 are elected to represent a plural seat prefectural constituency and 98 are elected through the means of proportional representation (衆議院, 2014).

The House of Representatives is the Lower House, with the 465 members holding office for 4-year terms. There are two manners through which these members can be elected to the house, with 289 of them being elected to represent a single seat constituency and 176 being elected through the means of proportional representation (衆議院, 2014).

The House of Representatives for the Japanese Parliament maintains a record of the sessions on their website, with official transcripts in standard Japanese, as used below. Sessions are also available on their internet television website (衆議院), though there are less sessions of question time available in comparison to the British Parliament's YouTube channel, presumably due to the

questioning of the Prime Minister in this manner being a less common session in Japan.

During these sessions, the leaders of the opposing parties are given time to question the Prime Minister, though this time is limited. As such most sessions are around 50 minutes.

Table 3: Japanese Prime Minister's Questions Sessions Used

Date	Prime Minister	Duration
2010-02-17	Hatoyama Yukio (DP)	53 minutes
2010-03-31	Hatoyama Yukio (DP)	52 minutes
2010-04-21	Hatoyama Yukio (DP)	53 minutes
2011-02-09	Kan Naoto (DP)	52 minutes
2011-02-23	Kan Naoto (DP)	52 minutes
2011-06-01	Kan Naoto (DP)	54 minutes
2011-11-30	Noda Yoshihiko (DP)	51 minutes
2012-02-29	Noda Yoshihiko (DP)	49 minutes
2012-04-11	Noda Yoshihiko (DP)	51 minutes
2012-11-14	Noda Yoshihiko (DP)	52 minutes
2013-04-17	Abe Shinzo (LDP)	54 minutes
2013-12-04	Abe Shinzo (LDP)	47 minutes
2014-06-11	Abe Shinzo (LDP)	50 minutes
2015-05-20	Abe Shinzo (LDP)	52 minutes
2015-06-17	Abe Shinzo (LDP)	51 minutes
2016-05-18	Abe Shinzo (LDP)	55 minutes

2016-12-07	Abe Shinzo (LDP)	53 minutes
2018-05-30	Abe Shinzo (LDP)	50 minutes
2018-06-27	Abe Shinzo (LDP)	57 minutes
2019-06-19	Abe Shinzo (LDP)	52 minutes

5.4.1 Psychological Functions

5.4.1.1 Self-Defence

There do not appear to be any examples in the data set that function purely as a means of psychological self-defence.

5.4.1.2 Coping

Example 83

片山虎之助君 おおさか維新の会の片山虎之助でございます。

初めてここに出てまいりますので大変上がっておりますから、どうかひとつよろしくをお願いします。

(2016 年 5 月 18 日)

In the opening section of his opportunity to question the Prime Minister, Katayama uses his introduction to humorously marvel at how far he has risen in the political world to be questioning the Prime Minister in this manner, eliciting laughter as a form of self-deprecating humour that presumably primarily serves the function of allowing him to cope with any nerves or uncertainty that might exist at the circumstance he is in.

Example 84

片山虎之助君 日本維新の会の片山虎之助でございます。

久しぶりです。久しぶりなんですが、時間はやはり五分なんです。よろしくぜひ
お願いいたします。

(2018 年 5 月 30 日)

Here the manner in which Katayama bemoans the fact that he as usual only had five minutes with which to question the Prime Minister garners some laughter. This use of humour can be seen to play a psychological function to aid coping with the circumstances, such as coming to terms with the limited time available to him by using it as a source of laughter.

5.4.1.3 Seeking Approval

Example 85

片山虎之助君 これはやめた方がいいですよ。分限か何かで保護されているのが問題だということがあるんですけども、ぜひ、そういうことをひとつ総合的に検討して、もっと公務員が生き生きと働けるような、そういうあれをつくってくださいよ。霞が関や永田町が活性化しますよ。

それからもう一つ、私は.....

(2018 年 5 月 30 日)

The gap between what Katayama is saying and reality, as highlighted by his conclusion garnering laughter of having one more thing to say, presents as a use of humour. It mostly seems to be used as a part of his appeal to be liked by others,

featuring as a part of his personality as good-humoured and able to laugh at himself.

5.4.2 Social Functions

5.4.2.1 Solidarity

Example 86

内閣総理大臣(安倍晋三君) たくさん御質問をいただいたわけですが、まず、この党首討論のあり方につきましては、まさに国会で御議論をいただきたいと思うわけでございます。

<...>

また、御党の、今幾つか、憲法裁判所あるいは教育の無償化等について御提案等もいただきました。そういうことについてもしっかりと建設的に、審査会で、党と党が案を持ち合って、議論が収れんしていくことを期待したい、このように思う次第でございます。

また、片山委員にも、ぜひ元気でこれからも頑張ってくださいと思います。

(2016 年 5 月 18 日)

After answering Katayama's question, Abe ends it with a wish that Katayama will continue to do his best in good health from then onwards. This can be seen as being a call-back to the manner in which Katayama began his questioning a few minutes earlier in the session. It presumably elicits laughter due to the recognition of those listening catching the underlying antagonistic elements that exist in the political arena between opposing parties, as well as there potentially being a teasing aspect to it to welcome him into his new position. It could also have an element of mockery that inspires derision and dismissal, being a sarcastic suggestion that he is not fit

to be asking the Prime Minister questions, but it does not seem to have been said or taken in that manner, though it is another element that could exist under the surface. In this manner it can be taken as being quite close to irony in its functioning, given the likelihood of political opponents sincerely wishing each other well to be low.

5.4.2.2 Conflict

There do not seem to be any examples in the data set where humour functions as a means of causing conflict.

5.4.2.3 Polarising

Example 87

内閣総理大臣(安倍晋三君) まず、お答えをする前に、先般、薨去されました桂宮宜仁親王殿下の御冥福を心からお祈りをいたしまして、そして哀悼の誠をささげたいと思います。

その上で、お答えをいたします。

最初に民主党の立場を御説明をいただきましたが、果たして立場がどこにあるのか、これは皆さん、よく分かりませんでしたね。私たちは、国民の命と、そして国民の平和を守っていく大きな責任を担っています。その上で、例示として挙げました、近隣諸国でもし紛争が起こって、そこから逃れようとする邦人を輸送する米国の船が襲われたときに……(発言する者あり)

(2014 年 6 月 11 日)

Here the slightly mocking manner in which Abe comments that after the explanation given he and, he assumes, everyone else does not understand the stance of the Democratic Party, not because of a lack of comprehension ability on

his behalf but rather on the ability of the party representatives to actually explain it (along with the potential implication that even they themselves do not know what their party's stance is). This draws laughter from those listening. In this way it is a mild use of humour that functions to polarise those present along the boundaries of party lines by being a form of an attack on the Democratic Party as well as its representatives, separating out Abe and his party as belonging to a separate category.

5.4.2.4 Control

Example 88

片山虎之助君 その前に、やはり責任問題が出てきますよね。きょうも各党の方が言われましたように、責任問題が出てくる。それから、二度延期しますと、三度目が引き上げるのが難しいんです、こういうのは。ぜひそれについて総理の御所見を賜りたい。

言うだけ言って、あとは総理に答えてもらいますから。がたがたしませんから、最後。

憲法改正につきましては、きのう参議院の予算委員会で申しあげましたように、今の憲法のいいところは残さないけません。全面改正なんというのは、我々は無理だと思う。

(2016年5月18日)

Here there is a perceivable gap between the reality of what will happen and Katayama's description of how he'll simply ask the question and the Prime Minister will simply answer directly, getting laughter. This use of mild humour does also have a degree of functioning as a means of control. The implied chastisement with regards to the fact that this is unlikely to occur in reality acts

as a very subtle manner of attempting to exert control through a slight manipulation of ideals. His statement is rather out of place in amongst the formality of the session, so the contrast between the rather rough casual statement and the situation within which it is made leads to a sense of amusement, causing laughter.

5.5 Comparative Analysis

Firstly, as can be seen in Table 4, there appear to be over 5 times more incidences of humour in the British data set compared to the Japanese one. These incidences of humour are used for a psychological function double the amount of times in the British data set compared to the Japanese one. The British English data also records humour used for social function at over 8 times the rate that it does in the Japanese one. In particular, the social function of conflict was the function that humour mostly served in the British data set, but by comparison it does not appear to be used at all in the Japanese data set.

Another point of interest is that the total number of the psychological functions and social functions counted when taken as broad categories score equally in the Japanese data set while in the British English data set there is a strong discrepancy with the social function being recorded over 4 times more frequently than the psychological functions.

There is a suggestion that firstly, humour is not considered entirely appropriate for situations such as during political discourse. In part it may be from a cultural manner in which the appropriate arenas for humour are considered, and political issues are judged as requiring seriousness rather than moments of

humour. The structure of the Prime Minister's Questions sessions in Japan mean that the time of the questioner is limited, so could be a desire to not waste valuable time as well as not wanting to be criticised politically for wasting time that should have been spent questioning the Prime Minister by making wisecracks.

Similarly, the manner in which the questioning takes place may also alter the mood. In Britain Prime Minister's Questions tend to be a weekly event while Parliament is in session. While the leaders of the larger opposing parties do get special preference, all the other MPs are also able to ask questions. As such, it can be considered that there is a far wider opportunity for varying attitudes towards the appropriateness of using humour in that circumstance. In comparison, the Japanese session appears to happen less regularly, meaning there is presumably a less casual attitude towards it, and those asking questions are limited to the leaders of opposition parties, whose time for questioning the Prime Minister is also limited. As such, it may be a situation where it is harder or less appropriate to use humour. Similarly, the personalities taking part in the discourse are restricted to a select few. Of the 6 incidences identified in the Japanese data, 4 of them came from Katayama Toranosuke, which suggests that there may be an element of personal choice. It therefore also suggests that if there were more people asking questions it might either open up greater chance for those that tend towards using humour in such circumstances and also potentially altering the mood to a slightly more casual one.

Table 4: Incidences of Humour in Prime Minister's Questions

	British English	Japanese
Psychological Functions	6	3
⇒ Self-Defence	2	0
⇒ Coping	3	2
⇒ Seeking Approval	1	1
Social Functions	25	3
⇒ Solidarity	6	1
⇒ Conflict	11	0
⇒ Polarisation	3	1
⇒ Control	5	1
Total	31	6

5.6 Discussion

From the data present, it can be considered that both the function that humour serves and also the arenas within which it is permitted differ when comparing British English and Japanese. That it is clearly a part of British Parliamentary customs whilst at the same time appearing to be not a commonly used tactic in the Japanese National Diet upholds the assertions of Wells (1997) regarding the manner in which humour is used in the two societies.

The humour primarily used during Prime Minister's Questions in the British Parliament is the variety that is highly tinged with aggressive elements, acting as a means of either exacerbating pre-existing conflicts or starting them. This can be used in the manner it is in Examples 71, 72, and 73, where a personal

attack on the Prime Minister phrased in a manner that also has a humorous aspect is used as a framing device for the question being asked. This combines adversarial attitudes with a hint of humour, often creating a caustic or sarcastic element to the question, which the Prime Minister has no choice but to answer even if it is a cruel joke at their expense.

While there are instances in the Japanese Prime Minister's Questions data set of statements including elements with a hint of ironic intent that draws laughter, such as in Example 86, these are rare especially when compared to the quantity apparent in the British English examples. Feldmen (1998) connects the tendency of Japanese politicians towards being more reserved in public forums to the Japanese traditional concepts of *honne* (which would be classified as honest and personal) and *tatemae* (which would be the formally presented version of a person). This need to constantly maintain a certain demeanour wherein the more personal version of the self is kept hidden away from the public eye is likely to make it harder to include something such as a humorous style in a politician's personal debating style. As such, humour would likely be considered to be something more appropriate for informal discourse styles in Japan, with political scenarios being viewed more clearly as formal situations where the *tatemae* presentation is more socially acceptable and therefore common.

5.7 Election Humour

Utterances made during Parliamentary sessions are not the only manner in which humour can be used within politics. Another arena where it appears upon occasion is that of election campaigns. In 2017 both Britain and Japan held snap elections,

ending Parliamentary sessions early in the hope of increasing the majorities of the ruling parties. Abe Shinzo remained the Prime Minister of Japan, with his party the LDP increasing their vote share (NHK, 2017). In comparison, Theresa May's Conservative Party lost their previous majority but still had enough seats to remain the governing party with her continuing on as Prime Minister (BBC, 2017). While the majority of political campaigns, especially those connected with the major political parties, produced serious manifestos and presented themselves as serious candidates, there were those in the British election who did not.

5.7.1 The British Election

For the 2017 election the major political parties produced coherent manifestos to lay out their visions for Britain should they become the ruling party. The Conservative Party campaigned under the slogan “strong and stable” as the phrase used to describe both the style of government they would form as well as the manner of Theresa May's leadership, which was therefore used in both the manifesto and played a prominent role in promotional speeches (The Conservative and Unionist Party, 2017). The Labour Party, being the Opposition, fielded an in-depth manifesto of over 100 pages laying out their vision for what Britain under a Labour government would look like. This was simply titled *For the Many Not the Few*, expressing the core fundamental beliefs that are central to the Labour Party (The Labour Party, 2017). The Liberal Democrats likewise used their manifesto and campaign as a clear demonstration of their political ideals and desires for forming a government (The Liberal Democrats, 2017).

In addition to the major parties and the various national parties that only focus on one country of the union, there are many smaller parties and independents that run for election. While many of these candidates harbour serious political ambitions or hopes, there are also those who are using their candidacy for some other reason. As such, there are those that stand as joke candidates with no true prospect of winning but using humour as a means of drawing the attention of the public.

As seen in Table 6 below, following the 2017 general election, the Conservative Party won the most seats but falling just short of a majority with only 318, meaning that a deal with the DUP was required to be able to govern (Syal & Travis, 2017). As such, Theresa May remained Prime Minister, forming a Conservative government, with the Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn serving as the Opposition and forming a Shadow Council.

Table 5: Seats Won in the British Election of 2017 (BBC, 2017)

Party	Seats
Conservative	318
Labour	262
Scottish National Party	35
Liberal Democrat	12
Democratic Unionist Party	10
Sinn Fein	7
Plaid Cymru	4
Green Party	1

UKIP	0
Others	1

The candidates contesting the seats of the leaders of the major parties (Conservative, Labour, and Liberal Democrat) were therefore those chosen to be considered as they can be considered to draw the highest level of media attention.

5.7.1.1 Theresa May, Leader of the Conservative Party (Maidenhead)

The incumbent Prime Minister Theresa May faced 12 candidates for her seat in the constituency of Maidenhead (BBC, 2017). While this included representatives from other major political parties, it also included some lesser known single-issue party candidates and independent candidates. Within this number there were also those whose candidacy serves to function as a form of joke, having a part of their purpose as being political protest through the medium of humour.

As detailed in Table 6 May won 64.8% of the vote and therefore her seat, compared to the runner-up Pat McDonald of Labour who received 19.3% share of the vote (BBC, 2017).

Table 6: Maidenhead Results 2017 (BBC, 2017)

Party	Candidate	Votes	Vote Share (%)
Conservative	Theresa May	37,718	64.8
Labour	Pat McDonald	11,261	19.3
Liberal Democrat	Tony Hill	6,540	11.2
Green Party	Derek Wall	907	1.6

UKIP	Gerard Batten	871	1.5
Animal Welfare Party	Andrew Knight	282	0.5
Independent	Lord Buckethead	249	0.4
Independent	Grant Smith	152	0.3
Monster Raving Loony Party	Howling 'Laud' Hope	119	0.2
Christian Peoples Alliance	Edmonds Victor	69	0.1
The Just Political Party	Julian Reid	52	0.1
Independent	Yemi Hailemariam	16	0.0
Independent	Bobby Smith	3	0.0

6.7.1.1.1 Lord Buckethead

Lord Buckethead managed to get 249 votes despite the fact that he was a man in costume, having assumed the role of a space lord. His website makes reference to this now when giving a general summary of the character of Lord Buckethead.

At the time of the election there was an introduction to Lord Buckethead to give readers a feel for who he was as a political candidate.

My name is Lord Buckethead. I am a space lord, and I am running to be the independent Member of Parliament for Maidenhead in the 2017 UK General Election. I enjoy planet-conquering, dominating inferior species, and Lovejoy.

I am the only candidate standing at this election who has personally stood against two Conservative Prime Ministers, Margaret Thatcher in Finchley (1987) and John Major in Huntingdon (1992). News has reached me that your country is crying out for effective opposition. And so, 25 years after my last visit I have returned to take on Theresa May in Maidenhead and thus complete a historic hat-trick. If Mrs May cannot even defend her own social care policies just days after they are launched, how can she possibly cope against a Space Lord?

My manifesto is an ambitious and progressive programme not only for the good Earthlings of a certain Berkshire conurbation but for the entirety of your nation. It is a suite of policies that have been fully costed and which marries fiscal responsibility with an interest in lasers.

I call upon my Maidenhead rival Theresa May, and that funny Islington chap with the beard, to debate me in public. Failure to do so will be treated as cowardice and a tacit endorsement of my superiority.

You may contact me on Twitter [@LordBuckethead](#) or write to me at Lord@Buckethead4Maidenhead.com

More news will appear here on this site in due course so stay tuned, folks.

LB

(Lord Buckethead, 2017)

To an extent this is of a similar style to the manner in which serious politicians introduce themselves. It blends this element of believability with the ridiculous such as ‘a suite of policies that have been fully costed and which marries fiscal responsibility with an interest in lasers’ combining the sort of phrase that would be expected in a political statement with an ending that would be more suited in a science-fiction show, returning to the characterisation of Lord Buckethead as an alien space lord.

The major part of the website consisted of the manifesto, which is considerably shorter than the multi-page manifestos printed by the major political parties. Instead it was a simple list of 15 points. It does, however, use phrasing and references to issues that would be recognisable to the public, though often with aspects that deviate from the norm considerable to comedic effect.

MY 2017 MANIFESTO: Strong, not entirely stable, leadership

1. *The abolition of the Lords* (except me).
2. *Full facial coverings to be kept legal*, especially bucket-related headgear.
3. *No third runway to be built at Heathrow*: where we're going we don't need runways.
4. *Ceefax to be brought back immediately*, with The Oracle and other Teletext services to be rolled out by the next Parliament.
5. *Regeneration of Nicholson's Shopping Centre, Maidenhead*.
6. *Buckethead on Brexit*: a referendum should be held about whether there should be a second referendum.
7. *Nuclear weapons*: A firm public commitment to build the £100bn renewal of the Trident weapons system, followed by an equally firm private commitment not to build it. They're secret submarines, no one will ever know. It's a win win.
8. *Nationalisation of Adele*: in order to maximise the efficient use of UK resources, the time is right for great British assets to be brought into public ownership for the common good. This is to be achieved through capital spending.
9. *A moratorium until 2022* on whether Birmingham should be converted into a star base.
10. *Legalisation* of the hunting of fox-hunters.
11. *New voting age limit* of 16 to be introduced. New voting age limit of 80 to be introduced too.

12. *Katie Hopkins* to be banished to the Phantom Zone.
13. *Stop selling arms* to Saudi Arabia. Start buying lasers from Lord Buckethead.
14. *Prospective MPs* to live in the seat they wish to represent for at least five years before election, to improve local representation in Parliament.
15. *Free bikes for everyone*, to help combat obesity, traffic congestion and bike theft.

(Lord Buckethead, 2017)

This list is far briefer than policy commitments that require over 80 pages to clarify, but it also has a degree of the ridiculous to them. It is also headed with ‘strong, not entirely stable, leadership’ (Lord Buckethead, 2017), which can be seen to be a mocking reference to May’s Conservative’s slogan of ‘strong and stable leadership’ (The Conservative and Unionist Party, 2017).

He also answers a question regarding his education policy on his website. The first two of his points are within what might be expected to be normal political stances. The third and final one, however, serves as a punchline with the sudden departure from that frame of reference into a more comedic one that once again draws upon the character of space lord.

Investment in new grammar schools is a bad idea. Even a modest amount of research reading makes it clear that Earth education specialists believe that this would be a retrograde step. Instead, a Buckethead government would seek a third way with a wave of brand new Gamma Schools, founded on 3 key principles:

1. better pay for teachers to attract bright graduates.
2. increased facilities for children including more playing fields.

3. any child caught misbehaving three times will be blasted into deep space, with the parents offered a lovely fruit basket by way of consolation or celebration, depending on the child

Discipline is a huge issue in schools, but that should do the trick.

(Lord Buckethead, 2017)

In addition to his campaign material, Lord Buckethead attended both the hustings and the reading of the vote in full costume, which as the name suggests includes having a bucket on his head. This provided a certain element of visual humour to the otherwise serious event.

As noted by Lord Buckethead himself, this is not the first time that a person has used the costume and name of Lord Buckethead to stand against a Conservative Prime Minister, with Margaret Thatcher and John Major both encountering him in their political careers (Lord Buckethead, 2017).

6.7.1.1.2 Howling ‘Laud’ Hope of the Monster Raving Loony Party

The seat of Maidenhead was also contested by Howling ‘Laud’ Hope, leader of the Official Monster Raving Loony Party. This is an officially registered political party that regularly fields a small number of candidates, though it is not regarded as a particularly serious party. A party manifesto was produced for the election, though lacking the depth of the more serious major parties. It was available on their website and covered a variety of issues as well as containing a number of spelling mistakes for comedic effect (The Official Monster Raving Loony Party, 2017).

We will stand on a platform of free woollen hats for all, so we can pull the wool over peoples eyes.

Taxation

Tax payers to receive Nectar Points from HMRC

Nationalisation.

The Loony Party will Nationalise all Political parties.. and if they don't keep their manifesto promises.. we will sell em off.

We will nationalise crime to make sure it doesn't pay

Austerity

Due to the fact that the Government have made cuts in almost everything around. the loony party proposes to cut the letters of the alphabet..

Starting with the letters N. H. and S

Educational funding

The Loony Party proposes that all Schools would have a Jumble sale or fete or other fundraising event at least twice per month to help raise funds for those little extras.. such as Desks, Books, paper, pens etc.

Electoral Change

The Loony party propose that voters will get a 30 day cooling off period during which, if you change your mind, didn't like the result, or didn't know what you were voting for, you can get your vote back.

Reduce the voting age to 16 (carried forward from our 1983 manifesto) ..(nicked by labour))

Immigration policy

One in one out (carried forward from our 2015 manifesto (nicked by UKIP))

Pensions or How to get the grey vote...

In keeping with the Labour Party's latest bid to get one or two pensioners to vote for them they have brought out a new policy guaranteeing the Triple lock on pensions until 2025 if they get voted in..The Loony party of course will go one better and buy a very large padlock,

Defense

We shall replace the Trident missile.. with a three pronged fork

Economy & Pensions

We will further complicate the UK tax system so that large companies can no longer find loopholes.

Environment

We will change the English symbol of three lions to 3 badgers. How often do you see lions running round the countryside?

All Food sold in fast food establishments should be clearly marked
“May contain traces of real food”

Social Media

All Social Media sites to be taken down for one day a year for a
“Remember when we used to talk” day.

Transport

We will only paint yellow lines where you CAN park,
We will rename the current Oyster travel cards, ‘Sardine Cards’ to
better reflect the experience when travelling on public transport

(The Official Monster Raving Loony Party, 2017)

This manifesto is also referred to as a ‘manicfesto’, which combines the concept of mania and therefore madness into the more serious idea of a political manifesto. It is written in somewhat casual languages, with use of slang like ‘nicked’, as well as phrasing that would not be out of place in a serious political manifesto that combines with silly suggestions to create an element of humour.

Howling ‘Laud’ Hope presents himself in a manner that suggests a degree of dressing in costume, tending towards a caricature of a somewhat mad lord. He has contested multiple elections from 1983 onwards (The Official Monster Raving Loony Party, 2017).

5.7.1.2 Jeremy Corbyn, leader of the Labour Party (Islington North)

In the election, ten people contested the seat of Islington North which is held by Jeremy Corbyn, leader of the Labour Party, as seen in Table 7. The candidates included both those representing the major political parties as well as some standing for smaller parties, such as the Communist League and the Socialist Party GB, and also independent candidates (BBC, 2017). Of these independent candidates, Michael Foster was a donor for the Labour Party who was standing out of protest as to the direction Jeremy Corbyn was leading it in (Foster, 2017) and Susanne Cameron-Blackie was a cancer patient standing to draw attention to the issues with the financial drain experienced by the NHS (Hunt, 2017). One of the parties represented by candidates was that of the Official Monster Raving Loony Party, as with the seat of Maidenhead (BBC, 2017).

As could be expected, Jeremy Corbyn won the seat with 73% of the vote share. The runner-up, James Clark who represented the Conservative Party, only received 12.5%.

Table 7: Islington North Results 2017 (BBC, 2017)

Party	Candidate	Votes	Vote Share (%)
Labour	Jeremy Corbyn	40,086	73.0
Conservative	James Clark	6,871	12.5
Liberal Democrat	Keith Angus	4,946	9.0
Green Party	Caroline Russell	2,229	4.1

UKIP	Keith Fraser	413	0.8
Independent	Michael Foster	208	0.4
Monster Raving Loony Party	Knigel Knapp	106	0.2
Independent	Susanne Cameron- Blackie	41	0.1
Socialist Party GB	Bill Martin	21	0.0
Communist League	Andres Mendoza	7	0.0

6.7.1.2.1 Knigel Knapp of the Monster Raving Loony Party

The Official Monster Raving Loony Party fielded a candidate against Corbyn, who followed the party line and stood on the official manifesto of the party. He also dressed in a manner that evoked the party (The Official Monster Raving Loony Party, 2017).

5.7.1.3 Tim Farron, leader of the Liberal Democrats (Westmorland & Lonsdale)

The seat of Westmorland and Lonsdale, held by Tim Farron leader of the Liberal Democrats, was contested between four candidates as shown in Table 9. Three of the four were representing major political parties, and one was an independent candidate (BBC, 2017). This independent candidate was named Mr Fish Finger (BBC, 2017).

Tim Farron won the seat with only 45.8% of the vote, closely followed by the runner-up, James Airey for the Conservative Party, who had 44.3% of the vote (BBC, 2017).

Table 8: Westmorland & Lonsdale Results 2017 (BBC, 2017)

Party	Candidate	Votes	Vote Share (%)
Liberal Democrat	Tim Farron	23,686	45.8
Conservative	James Airey	22,909	44.3
Labour	Eli Aldridge	4,783	9.3
Independent	Mr Fish Finger	309	0.6

6.7.1.3.1 Mr Fish Finger (Independent)

Mr Fish Finger ran on a “manifishto” (Matthews, 2017), which included a number of fish-based puns as shown below. This includes pollocktics (pollock + politics), as well as a great number of words combined with cod, such as codmitted (cod + committed).

MANIFISHTO

POLLOCKY DOCKUMENT

Mr FISH FINGER

Even though I have only been in Pollocktics for a short while, I am fully codmitted to making Brexit work for the Codstituents of Westmorland and Lonsdale.

I will work to provide a better education system for Students. Free fishing rods for everyone.

Too many students are moving outside the codstituency in pursuit of

better Chubb prospects. However, if they are getting the catch of the day, they won't run away.

I will work closely with local businesses and the tourism industry.

No tax on chip shops and restaurants.

Farmers need our help, and we need to support our farmers through Brexit negotiations to ensure that they receive a fair eel.

If we had enough codidates to stand in every codstituency, we would not make manishto promises that we can't keep. We would, however, make a firm codmitment to hake Britain great again by making all MPs pre-qualify before standing for election. All codidates should pass a swimming test, and – once elected – must wear kipper ties and cod pieces for offishal duties.

Immigration is a part of what makes Great Britain great. In our Brexit negotiations, we need to develop an immigration policy that will guarantee open waters for fish of any race, creed, colour or gender who want to come to our country to work. There will be no flounders allowed unless they work.

NHS

More fish fingers on hospital menus, and free fish for NHS staff. Free training for nurses.

This is the first election the Fish Finger party will swim in. We will build on our success in this campaign, and we will field more codidates as our part grows. We have oceans of followers who want to sea us win.

(Mr Fish Finger, 2017)

The reason why Mr Fish Finger chose to dress as a fishfinger and run against Tim Farron is given in the introduction to his website, where he introduces himself with 'Hello. I am a fish finger. In a recent poll of over 1000 users on Twitter I was voted more trustworthy than Tim Farron. Not difficult to do.' (Mr Fish Finger, 2017).

This can be considered to be a not entirely serious candidate, given that he changed his name to Mr Fish Finger for the election and wore a fishfinger costume for campaigning (Burke, 2017).

5.7.2 The Japanese Election

In preparation for the 2017 election the political parties of Japan produced manifestos and campaigned on their policy issues. The Liberal Democrat Party (LDP) produced a detailed manifesto of their intentions with regards to how they would continue to govern should they win, with Abe Shinzo laying out what he regarded as the main issues facing the country as being the unstable situation with North Korea and that of the low birth-rate combined with the ageing population (自民党, 2017).

Both the Party of Hope under Koike Yukiko and the Constitutional Democratic Party under Edano Yukio were established not long before the election, but both still had time to form election pledges for their manifestos (希望の党, 2017; 立憲民主党, 2017).

In addition to the major parties, there were also smaller ones as well as independents contesting the seats available. As can be seen in Table 10, the LDP held on to their majority.

Table 9: Seats Won in the Japanese Election of 2017 (NHK, 2017)

Party	Seats
Liberal Democratic Party	284
Party of Hope	50
Komeito	29
Japanese Communist Party	12
Constitutional Democratic Party	55
Nippon Ishin no Kai	11
Social Democratic Party	2
Independent	22

The only leaders of what could be considered to be major parties that were directly contesting seats were Abe and Edano, as some leaders held other political positions or were in a proportional representation bloc. However, unlike the British party leaders, the candidates that stood against them did not contain any that presented themselves in a manner that was overwhelmingly humorous.

5.7.3 Discussion

The first point worth mentioning is the contrast by which there are candidates who use their entire candidacy as a means of performing a public joke in the British electoral data whereas there are no such candidates apparent in the Japanese electoral data. The nature of the humour invoked by these joke candidates does tend to have a degree of satirical and political intent, being invoked as a means of protest.

In addition to this there is the fact that there appears to be more candidates contesting each seat in the British elections, which might also play a part. In the seats shown above, the 3 seats from the British election shown were contested by 27 candidates, with 13 contesting Theresa May's seat of Maidenhead and 10 contesting Jeremy Corbyn's seat of Islington North. However, the majority of the candidates were serious ones, despite those in costume being more visible.

One potential reason why this is a more common phenomenon in Britain than Japan could lie in the manner in which the results are read out. In Britain this is done in the local village hall, with the more important seats televised, meaning that all the candidates must assemble and line up on stage. Therefore, the candidates dressed in costume stand out and are likely to be noticed nationally. In Japan there is no assembly of the candidates, with them instead receiving news of the results in their campaign offices.

The existence of an actual officially registered political party (The Official Monster Raving Loony Party) that exists to compete for seats they will not win and mock politics in general suggests that this is a use of humour that is not only acceptable within the social context of British English but is appreciated by a reasonable audience.

In comparison, it is possible that political candidacy is not considered to be an appropriate place for displays of humour within the context of Japanese sensitivities. It could also be the case that there being a number of proportional representation blocs throughout Japan rather than just individual seats might also contribute to this, as that would change the dynamic. As in the case of Lord Buckethead, Mr Fish Finger and the two candidates from the Official Monster

Raving Loony Party, they stood in those seats specifically because of the identities of the incumbent Members of Parliament.

This is not to say that there are no such candidates that may be considered to belong in this category in Japan, as it could be a case of there being a different motivation, meaning that the idea of standing against the leader of a major political party holds less of an appeal to Japanese candidates. Mac Akasaka has run for a number of political seats, and has received attention for his tendency to do so in costume such as Superman (吉野, 2017). However, despite his manner of dress he does not appear to regard his candidacy as a joke in the same way that a candidate like Lord Buckethead might (Hongo, 2013). A part of the potential reason for this could be that it is considerably more expensive to stand as a candidate in Japan than in Britain, but the threshold at which the deposit is returned is lower in Britain (Álvarez-Rivera, 2019; 選挙総合会社, n.d.).

However, while there were joke candidates like this in the British election, the major political parties presented their policies and candidacy for government through serious means, suggesting that it would not be appropriate for such political parties to field candidates that behaved in such a manner.

5.8 Conclusions

It can be seen from the data above that humour is used considerably less in the Japanese Prime Minister's Questions when compared with the British Prime Minister's Questions. This could in part be due to structural differences between the sessions, but cultural differences regarding the appropriateness and function of humour are likely major contributors to the discrepancy that exists between the

two data sets. This is further enhanced by the difference seen between the existence of joke candidates that use humour as the primary basis of their candidacy even without any actual intent to win in Britain but not Japan. In this manner it is used as a means of protest that positions the serious candidates as the victim of a form of joke whilst also drawing laughter and amusement. Joke candidates may not be serious politicians like the ones elected to Parliament, but those MPs do also on occasion use humour. In both ways, there can be considered to be an attacking aspect to it, which may be an aspect of humour that while common in Britain is not used in Japan.

It can also be concluded that in Japan political candidacy may not be considered to be an appropriate means through which to perform humour, and that humour in this political arena may not be wholly appropriate. In contrast, in Britain it can be seen that political candidacy is not only a means of performing humour that is appropriate but also to an extent encouraged as a means of expressing political discontent. This does seem to be limited to independent candidates or small parties that do not win seats. Major political parties in Britain operate similarly to their Japanese counterparts by producing manifestos and materials to lay out their policies seriously.

These serious politicians who are often affiliated with established serious political parties will still use humour in some manner in Parliament, even if it is not their entire candidacy. As such these two aspects in which humour intersects with political life can be seen to be elements that exist in Britain but are scarce in Japan.

Chapter 6

Discussion

6.1 Introduction

From observing the results obtained from the data it is possible to compare firstly the general differences in how humour is used and the functions it serves in British English and Japanese. The difference in functions and usage between casual conversation and parliamentary discourse can also be analysed. Finally, the intersection between the divergences in both language and situation can be drawn together for consideration.

It should also be noted that only 18 recordings per language were used as data for the natural conversation analysis, which therefore cannot be directly compared to the 20 sessions per language that were used for the parliamentary data set. The Parliamentary and National Diet sessions were also longer on average than the recordings of natural conversation, meaning that more political utterances than casual utterances were used as a data source.

6.2 British and Japanese Humour

As can be seen in Table 10, there are significantly more instances of humour in the British English recorded data than the Japanese equivalent. The major reason for this discrepancy is due to humour being considerably more frequently used in Prime Minister's Questions in British English when compared to Japanese. In both cases, the psychological functions account for considerably less instances than the social function, being three times more common in British English compared with Japanese. With regards to the psychological functions that humour

can have, in both British English and Japanese the most common one appears to be that of using humour as some kind of coping mechanism, though due to the quantity this preference is far clearer in the British English data set.

While solidarity is the function of humour most used across both languages, in addition to being the most used social function and being the major reason why the social functions so outweigh the psychological functions in the results, it is interesting to note the fact that the social function of conflict was noted 11 times in the British English data but 0 times in the Japanese. This is due to some of the data coming from Prime Minister's Questions where this function of humour appeared in British English but not in Japanese. Using humour as a form of creating solidarity is similar across the two languages, with 31 instances found in the British English data set and 19 in the Japanese. This suggests that solidarity as a function of humour is common across both languages, but conflict is only a function of humour as part of the British cultural norms.

Table 10: Comparison of the Functions of Humour in British English and Japanese

	British English	Japanese
Psychological Functions	12	5
⇒ Self-Defence	3	1
⇒ Coping	7	3
⇒ Seeking Approval	2	1
Social Functions	50	21
⇒ Solidarity	31	19

⇒ Conflict	11	0
⇒ Polarisation	3	1
⇒ Control	5	1
<i>Total</i>	<i>62</i>	<i>26</i>

6.3 Casual and Parliamentary Humour

Considering the fact that the natural conversation data set numbered 18 recorded pieces per language, compared to the 20 sessions of Prime Minister's Questions that were used for each language, humour occurs more frequently in casual conversation than it does in sessions of Parliament. It is however of interest to note the discrepancy with regard to the social functions of humour aside from that of solidarity. Conflict is the function on humour that occurs most frequently in Prime Minister's Questions, but it does not appear at all in the natural conversation data sets. Similarly, there were 4 instances of humour functioning to polarise those present during a session of Prime Minister's Questions, but no such incidences during the natural conversations observed. Likewise, while there were 6 incidences of humour being used to control others during the sessions of Prime Minister's Questions that were analysed, there was only no incidents that seemed to use humour to function in this manner in the natural conversation.

In many respects, this makes sense given the fact that causing conflict is not generally what is aspired to when talking casually with friends, but in the situation of holding political debates there is likely to be a higher degree of adversarial feeling. As such conflict is a much more desired outcome. Polarisation would be in many ways the same, given the potential for bad feelings to occur due

to such feelings, which would be more acceptable in a political confrontation than a friendly conversation.

In contrast to this, the function of solidarity clearly occurs more often in natural conversation compared to discourse in Prime Minister's Questions. Prime Minister's Questions produced 7 examples of this, but the 36 recordings of natural conversation produced 43 incidents, which can therefore be extrapolated to conclude that there is a likelihood that 40 recordings would produce something in the vicinity of 50 incidences of humour functioning in relation to solidarity. Considering the numbers, there was at least one incident of humour functioning as a means of creating solidarity in every recording of natural conversation.

Table 11: Comparison of the Functions of Humour in Natural Conversation and Prime Minister's Questions

	Natural Conversation	PMQs
Psychological Functions	8	9
⇒ Self-Defence	2	2
⇒ Coping	5	5
⇒ Seeking Approval	1	2
Social Functions	43	28
⇒ Solidarity	43	7
⇒ Conflict	0	11
⇒ Polarisation	0	4
⇒ Control	0	6
Total	51	37

6.4 Humour Function in British English and Japanese

Table 12: Functions of Humour in British English and Japanese in Casual Conversation and Prime Minister's Questions

	British English		Japanese	
	Casual	PMQs	Casual	PMQs
Psychological Functions	6	6	2	3
⇒ Self-Defence	1	2	1	0
⇒ Coping	4	3	1	2
⇒ Seeking Approval	1	1	0	1
Social Functions	25	25	18	3
⇒ Solidarity	25	6	18	1
⇒ Conflict	0	11	0	0
⇒ Polarisation	0	3	0	1
⇒ Control	0	5	0	1
Total	31	31	20	6

As has been mentioned above, both British and Japanese people use humour as a means of creating a greater sense of solidarity within the group, particularly within the context of natural conversations. This serves to increase the sense of co-operation and friendliness within the group. The methods that are used to achieve this, however, appear to differ.

Humorous utterances in British English appear to often have a victim who is being made fun of in some way. This victim does not have to be present, with

there often being retellings of misfortunes in humorous ways that amuse others, as well as laughing at the bad luck or stupidity of others. This connects with the theorising of the negative and more nasty aspects of humour (Carroll, 2014; Larkin-Galiñanes, 2017) as well as the fact that it is used as a combative weapon in debating forums such as Prime Minister's Questions where it is used as an additional weapon with which to attack political opponents. Direct attacks to cause conflict could be regarded as in breach of common rules of politeness, but humour is a means through which attacks can be made without being seen to be explicitly rude. As such there appears to be a strong tradition of using humour in Parliament as well as in daily life, with there being negative as well as positive elements to its use.

Humour was regarded by Aristotle as a good means by which opponents in debates could be disarmed, by using wit as a demonstration of intelligence to render opponents ridiculous and inspiring the audience to laugh at them (Larkin-Galiñanes, 2017). This is similar to the attitude that Wells (1997) describes Yanigata as having with regards to the origin of humour, namely laughing at fallen foes and at the same time inspiring one's allies onwards in battle with such laughter. However, these two historical perspectives differ, as Yanigata's reasoning was that while the function of humour may have started on the battlefield, to move onwards to a peaceful society such elements must be suppressed, whereas Aristotle's views that have presumably made their way into British society suggested rather that it was a good intellectual weapon for debating as a higher degree of wit as demonstrated by having a witty repertoire that allows for the ability to use humour in such complex ways means that the

speaker in a debate using this method will potentially be regarded as the more intelligent and verbose debater.

As such, it seems to be the case that within British society humour has a purpose both to mock or subjugate others, as well as being a weapon in debates, where the use of humour that draws upon negative points in a mocking manner elicits laughter at the expense of the victim and serves as a means of publicly ridiculing them so as to make them look like the less competent debater or politician.

Likewise, in British English there seems to be a tendency towards using complaints as a means to create a sense of humour, which both allows for bonding over misfortune whilst at the same time reinterprets it in a positive light. This can act as both a means of drawing people together as a shared sense of solidarity whilst also helping those experiencing bad luck to cope with it through venting about it in a way that partially overrides the unfortunate aspects with the more positive feeling of eliciting laughter.

Comparatively, Japanese humorous utterances are rare in Prime Minister's Questions, being the exception rather than the rule. This is despite them occurring in casual conversation with a similar regularity to the rate with which they appear in British English. These utterances mostly appear to be friendly and positive ones, seeking to continue and build upon friendships, often relying on the act of friendly teasing to create amusement.

It is possible that a part of the reason why there appears to be a slightly greater use of psychological humour in British English than in Japanese could be due to the existence of the more attacking use of humour within the wider British

culture, so there is a greater desire to pre-emptively defend against the risk of falling victim to such an attack.

This intertwining of politics with humour in Britain but not Japan is supported by the electoral data recorded in Chapter 5, wherein 2 independent candidates stood for seats of the leaders of political parties under the guise of humorous individuals with humorously satirical manifestos as well as the 2 individuals who stood representing the satirical but officially registered party the Official Monster Raving Loony Party. This added to the evidence that suggests that in Britain humour is clearly used regularly in situations such as Prime Minister's Questions as a means of showing adversarial aggression and can therefore be considered not only to be regarded as a weapon in the arsenal of a debating politician in Britain but also the means through which a layperson might hope to compete with them on more even ground. As mentioned by Ilie (2004), humour is often used as a means of disguising an insult, in part because wit is a highly prized quality, especially in a politician due to the cultural association with high intelligence.

Contrasting to this, many of the electoral candidates surveyed appeared to be entirely sincere and serious in their intent as well as in their presentation. This suggests that while humour is entirely appropriate for use as a social or psychological function within discourse, it is not appropriate for either the basis of an entire political career or for manifestos outlining a party's serious intent for the nation. This appears to be particularly the case in Japan, where there is plenty of humour used in casual conversation, but it is limited in the case of Prime Minister's Questions sessions and apparently non-existent in the basis of political

campaigns. This connects to the findings of Takekuro (2006) with regards to jokes occurring in informal conversations but not formal ones. Prime Minister's Questions is a formal situation, and is therefore generally considered to be inappropriate for humour use. Similarly, the cultural issue of not expressing laughter openly except in select situations, in combination with the public nature of politics where politicians as a rule keep their private selves hidden to a degree, explains why it is that humorous utterances in the Japanese Prime Minister's Questions were rare (Feldman, 1998; Oda, 2006).

6.5 Frequency of Humour

Despite the discrepancy between the volume of recorded casual conversation and parliamentary data used to obtain the results, it can be clearly seen in Table 13 that out of the data used the only occurrences of humour being used as a means of causing conflict were from the British English Prime Minister's Questions.

There is a suggestion that humour serves a psychological function with its usage less frequently in Japanese than it does in British English, having occurred with less frequency across the Japanese sets of data than it does in the British English data. This could be due to the circumstances of the recordings of the natural conversation data, or simply the case that humour is not used in this respect in Japanese casual conversations. Humour operating as a social function to increase solidarity appears to occur to a similar degree in British English and Japanese conversation, and is the majority of the social functions that humour serves in those circumstances.

It can be seen that in general, humour occurs slightly more regularly in British English casual conversation than in Japanese casual conversation. The British Prime Minister's Questions is of a comparable frequency, having an average of 1.55 incidences of humour per session compared to the 1.72 frequency of humour per recording of the British English conversations and the 1.11 frequency of humour per recording from the Japanese conversational data. It is however clear that humour is rare in Prime Minister's Questions in Japan, to the point that it can presumably be regarded as virtually non-existent.

Table 13: Frequency of the Functions of Humour in British English and Japanese in Casual Conversation and Prime Minister's Questions

	British English		Japanese	
	Casual	PMQs	Casual	PMQs
Psychological Functions	0.33	0.3	0.11	0.15
⇒ Self-Defence	0.06	0.1	0.06	0
⇒ Coping	0.22	0.15	0.06	0.1
⇒ Seeking Approval	0.06	0.05	0	0.05
Social Functions	1.39	1.25	1	0.15
⇒ Solidarity	1.39	0.3	1	0.05
⇒ Conflict	0	0.55	0	0
⇒ Polarisation	0	0.15	0	0.05
⇒ Control	0	0.25	0	0.05
Total	1.72	1.55	1.11	0.3

6.6 Conclusions

In these ways the functions of humour can be considered with regards to the ways they operate in the two circumstances of natural conversation and Prime Minister's Questions in both British English and Japanese, as well as the manner in which politics in general and interact with humour. It is therefore clear that there is a difference in the manner in which humour is conceptualised in British English and Japanese.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

Having considered the results obtained from the various data and analysed them to a reasonable degree, I have drawn a number of conclusions. This involves the nature of humour in British English, the nature of humour in Japanese and the differences that exist between the two. Similarly, the specifics of humour in casual conversation and politics can also be considered, though not without also involving the differences between British English and Japanese.

7.2 Humour in British English

It can be concluded from the results obtained from the recordings both of natural conversation and also from Prime Minister's Questions, as well as the data considering the manifestos and candidates in the 2017 general election that humour plays an important role in British English. It occurs in both friendly conversation and the controlled adversarial confrontation that is Prime Minister's Questions, though with different functions. In friendly conversations, the major function it serves is to increase the solidarity within the group, whereas in Prime Minister's Questions it mostly is used as a method with which to cause conflict. It has to be noted that the means through which friendly solidarity is created is still often at the expense of others, with the misfortune of other people becoming jokes to be laughed at, as well as complaints issued in a humorous manner.

The fact that there appears to be this strong tradition of using humour, often sarcastic, to attack others as well as laughing at the misfortune of other people, could help to explain why there might be more examples of psychological functions of humour, especially that of self-defence, as there is already a culture of potential attack. As such, there is a greater sense of wanting to be the one in control of creating the humour around your misfortune or weaknesses, rather than waiting and allowing another to issue a sarcastic or mocking remark at your expense.

Similarly, it is also the case that candidates on occasion chose to stand on a platform that is primarily satirical. The candidates that represent the major political parties do not tend to use this method, aspiring instead to comport themselves with dignity as well as the parties composing serious and detailed manifestos laying out their vision for Britain under their rule. However, their attempts to be dignified are ruined should they face a joke candidate, besides whom they may have to stand whilst pictures are taken that immortalise the moment forever.

It is, therefore, possible to come to the potential conclusion that humour is important for the British in that it exists in a variety of aspects of their lives. It also clearly has a function that can be combative and aggressive through the use of elements such as sarcasm to attack verbally, the tendency towards deriving humour from mocking and complaints, and the manner in which it is used politically to demean opponents.

7.3 Humour in Japanese

Humour in Japanese casual conversation seems to serve more of a social function than a psychological one. The major function identified is that of increasing solidarity within the group during casual conversations. This seems to be mostly achieved through friendly teasing, with some additional elements of self-deprecation. Therefore, it seems that a lot of Japanese humour has an element of consent to it, and does not tend towards singling out victims to laugh at or mock in the way that British English does.

It seems to have a role in casual conversation and daily life, acting primarily as a positive means of improving relationships and creating an atmosphere of fun where everyone can relax and enjoy themselves. As such, the negative and caustic aspects of humour that appear regularly in British English seem to be rare by comparison in Japanese, making Japanese humour appear to be a mostly positive phenomenon.

It does not appear to be considered entirely appropriate to use humour in a political setting, with it being highly uncommon. This could be either the cause or the reason why there is no use of humour as a means of causing conflict. It could be that this is considered to be inappropriate and therefore this method of humour is avoided and thus the chances of it appearing in politics has reduced, or it may be that due to the socially acceptable areas for humour to be used are focused on friendly situations it may be that this function of humour has little purpose.

The more positive manner in which it appears to operate does suggest that the idea of using it as a means of aggressively mocking, demeaning and

deliberately making others look stupid as it can be used in British English is not a common usage in Japanese, and that therefore it has no place in political debates.

7.4 Humour in Daily Life

This research suggests that humour has a multitude of functions within the context of daily life and naturally occurring conversations. Mostly it serves a positive function, despite the fears that philosophers once held, acting both to soothe psychological issues as well as to increase group solidarity. While British English clearly uses humour as a means of causing conflict that manages to still stay within the boundaries of politeness, both British and Japanese people primarily use humour for increasing a sense of group solidarity, improving the sense of friendship that may exist and creating a more relaxed environment.

British use of humour does tend to involve laughing at the suffering of others to a degree that is not nearly as common in Japanese humour. This is something that could be an issue with cross-cultural communication when it comes to using humour between the two cultures as there is potential for misunderstanding of meaning. Intended humorous utterances by a British English speaker could be misunderstood with regards to the intent or misinterpreted. In comparison, while there is teasing present in the British conversations, there is more in the Japanese ones. This could also potentially cause issues, with there being the potential for British natives feeling that they are being attacked if subjected to this teasing, due to the combination of it potentially being at a higher frequency than they are accustomed to as well as

them being primed for more attacking elements of humour and potentially misinterpreting it in such a manner.

7.5 Humour in Politics

Humour clearly has a role to play in British politics, both from the perspective of being an additional element of political debates and discourse as well as from being a manner in which the public register their displeasure by serving as a means for protest. The manner in which it is used as a method of taunting opponents through leaning heavily on elements such as irony and politeness can presumably be considered to connect to the manner in which it is used slightly more indirectly in daily humour to indirectly laugh at others both through retelling tales of misfortune as well as complaining.

In contrast, it seems to be the case that humour is not considered particularly appropriate for use within Japanese politics. It may not be entirely taboo, but it is used sparsely and potentially relies on a select few who tend toward humorous utterances to be used at all within that arena. A part of this is presumably due to the manner in which Japanese humour does not appear to serve a function of attacking others. Whilst teasing, which does have similarities, is prevalent in Japanese conversational humour, it is also clearly structured to be an aspect of friendly relationships.

7.6 Final Conclusions

To conclude, it can be seen that the manner in which humour is used in British English and Japanese is quite different. While there is the overlap of humour

being used as a means of creating group solidarity in natural conversation, the methods through which this humour is created appears to differ, with Japanese preferring to tease a member of the group whereas Brits tend to laugh at the misfortunes of others that are not present.

Furthermore, in British English humour continues to be used with a similar rate of usage but different function in political situations. Here the major function it serves is to help create and maintain the sense of conflict that exists in politics. In Japanese however, humour is rarely used in politics, occurring extremely infrequently.

7.7 Future Directions

An immediate project would ideally be to look into Japanese politics in greater detail to consider the reasons why it is so much more serious in presentation and manner in comparison to British politics. It would also be interesting to consider the way this connects to the attitudes the general population has towards politics and politicians, as well as the positives and negatives to the different styles in terms of the political operations of the governments. This could involve issues such as cultural and social norms, definitions of politeness and appropriateness, and issues connecting to the media.

Tangentially, there is potential in investigating the manner in which the Japanese concepts of *honne* and *tatemae*, that presumably interact with the use of humour in varying situation, apply to British culture and how such ideas might differ there. This could connect to a deeper investigation of the political cultures

that exist in Britain and Japan, such as the use of jeering and interruptions in political discourse.

It would be interesting to compare other scenarios for humour that might differ between the two countries, such as literature and television shows, as well as possibly comedy shows. Likewise, investigating the use of humour in politics in other cultures would be interesting. Ascertaining whether using humour politically is limited to Britain or if other English-speaking cultures also have similar practises would also potentially produce interesting results. From there, comparing the tendencies with regards to humour and politics of the British to other European cultures as well as those of the Japanese to the surrounding Asian cultures could elicit some interesting results.

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Appendix

I BNC Participant Data

Recording	Participants			Duration
Katriane 7, (Tape 067707)	PS560	Ag 1	f (Katriane, age 24, catering manager, Scottish,)	14'
	PS562	Ag 2	m (Sandy, age 32, catering manager, Scottish,) colleague	
	KPJPSUNK (respondent W0000)	X	u (Unknown speaker, age unknown) other	
Arthur 1, (Tape 032501)	PS50T	Ag 3	m (Arthur, age 44, teacher, Merseyside,)	47'
	PS50U	Ag 5	f (A., age 70, housewife, North-west Midlands,) mother-in-law	
	PS50V	Ag 3	f (Paula, age 43, teacher, North-west Midlands,) wife	
	PS50W	Ag 1	m (Anthony, age 16, student, Northern England,) son	
	PS50X	Ag 0	m (Paul, age 14, student, Northern England,) son	
	KP1PSUNK (respondent W0000)	X	u (Unknown speaker, age unknown) other	
Annette 6, (Tape 062102)	PS1CX	Ag 3	f (Annette, age 44, administrative assistant, Lancashire,)	17'
	PS1CY	Ag 1	f (Teresa, age 19, stable hand, Lancashire,) daughter	
	PS1D1	Ag 1	f (Tracy, age 24, housewife, Lancashire,) daughter	
	KB9PSUNK (respondent W0000)	X	u (Unknown speaker, age unknown) other	
Annette 7, (Tape 062103)	PS1CX	Ag 3	f (Annette, age 44, administrative assistant, Lancashire,)	8'
	PS1CY	Ag 1	f (Teresa, age 19, stable hand, Lancashire,) daughter	
	PS1D1	Ag 1	f (Tracy, age 24, housewife, Lancashire,) daughter	

	KB9PSUNK (respondent W0000)	X	u	(Unknown speaker, age unknown) other	
Tony 1, (Tape 010201)	PS0V4	Ag 3	m	(Tony, age 37, civil service, Central South-west England,)	7'30"
	PS0V5	Ag 3	f	(Jackie, age 35, civil servant (pt), Central South-west England,) wife	
	PS0V6	Ag 0	f	(Christine, age 11, student (state secondary), Central South-west England,) daughter	
	PS0V7	Ag 5	f	(Rene, age 60+, retired, Central South-west England,) mother-in-law	
Tony 27, (Tape 010314)	PS0V4	Ag 3	m	(Tony, age 37, civil service, Central South-west England,)	17'
	PS0V5	Ag 3	f	(Jackie, age 35, civil servant (pt), Central South-west England,) wife	
	KE3PSUNK (respondent W0000)	X	u	(Unknown speaker, age unknown) other	
Sam 17, (Tape 046417)	PS0S3	Ag 4	m	(Sam, age 58, company director, Irish,)	20'
	PS0S4	Ag 4	m	(George, age 56, clerk, Irish,) brother-in-law	
	PS0S5	Ag 5	f	(Betty, age 60, Irish,) sister- in-law	
	PS0S6	Ag 4	f	(Diana, age 51, housewife, Irish,) wife	
	PS0S8	Ag 2	f	(Shirley, age 26, bank official, Irish,) daughter	
	KDUPSUNK (respondent W0000)	X	u	(Unknown speaker, age unknown) other	
Sharon 3, (Tape 075002)	PS1CH	Ag 1	f	(Sharon, age 18, sales assistant, North-east England,)	9'
	PS594	Ag 1	m	(John, age 19, warehouseman, North-east England,) colleague	

	PS598	X	f	(Margaret, age unknown, sales assistant, North-east England,) colleague	
	PS599	X	f	(Pat, age unknown, sales assistant, North-east England,) colleague	
	PS59A	X	m	(Gary, age unknown, sales rep, North-east England,) colleague	
	PS6TN	X	u	(No name, age unknown) role unspecified	
Raymond 12, (Tape 029903)	PS0PN	Ag 4	m	(Raymond, age 57, retired, North-west Midlands,)	15'
	PS0PP	Ag 4	f	(Margaret, age 55, retired, London,) wife	
	PS0R7	Ag 5	f	(Dorothy, age 60, machinist, Welsh,) colleague	
	KDMPSUNK (respondent W0000)	X	u	(Unknown speaker, age unknown) other	
Richard 2, (Tape 071101)	PS1K9	Ag 4	m	(Richard, age 49, lecturer)	47'
	PS1KA	Ag 3	f	(Jan, age 38, teacher, North-west Midlands,) wife	
Denise 2, (Tape 071501)	PS18E	Ag 2	f	(Denise, age 25, student nurse, Central Northern England,)	41'
	PS18H	X	u	(No name, age unknown) role unspecified	
	PS18J	X	u	(No name, age unknown) role unspecified	
	PS18K	X	u	(No name, age unknown) role unspecified	
	PS18L	X	u	(No name, age unknown) role unspecified	
	PS18M	X	u	(No name, age unknown) role unspecified	
	PS18N	X	u	(No name, age unknown) role unspecified	
	KBUPSUNK (respondent W0000)	X	u	(Unknown speaker, age unknown) other	

	KBUPSUGP (respondent W000M)	X	u	(Group of unknown speakers, age unknown) other	
Elizabeth 2, (Tape 057502)	PS08X	Ag 1	f	(Elizabeth, age 19, student, North-west Midlands,)	13'
	PS10K	Ag 1	m	(Matthew, age 23, manager, North-west Midlands,) brother	
	PS10L	Ag 4	f	(Anne, age 48, clerk (pt), North-west Midlands,) mother	
	PS10M	Ag 4	m	(Mike, age 53, computer operator, North-west Midlands,) father	
	KBYPUNK (respondent W0000)	X	u	(Unknown speaker, age unknown) other	
Elizabeth 3, (Tape 057503)	PS08X	Ag 1	f	(Elizabeth, age 19, student, North-west Midlands,)	15'
	PS10K	Ag 1	m	(Matthew, age 23, manager, North-west Midlands,) brother	
	PS10L	Ag 4	f	(Anne, age 48, clerk (pt), North-west Midlands,) mother	
	PS10M	Ag 4	m	(Mike, age 53, computer operator, North-west Midlands,) father	
	KBYPUNK (respondent W0000)	X	u	(Unknown speaker, age unknown) other	
	KBYPUGP (respondent W000M)	X	u	(Group of unknown speakers, age unknown) other	
Gordon 1, (Tape 054101)	PS0DL	Ag 2	m	(Gordon, age 32, unemployed, Welsh,)	22'
	PS0DM	Ag 2	f	(Debbie, age 29, housewife, Welsh,) wife	
	PS0DN	Ag 2	f	(Hayley, age 29, housewife, Welsh,) cousin	
	PS0DP	Ag 2	f	(Lyn, age 32, housewife, Welsh,) friend	
	KCAPSUGP (respondent W000M)	X	u	(Group of unknown speakers, age unknown) other	

Dean 4, (Tape 060304)	PS07E	Ag 2	m	(Dean, age 32, miner chargehand, Central Northern England,)	10'
	PS07F	Ag 3	m	(John, age 40, unemployed, Central Northern England,) friend	
	PS07G	Ag 2	m	(David, age 28, unemployed, Central Northern England,) friend	
	PS07H	Ag 3	m	(Michael, age 38, sales representative, Central Northern England,) friend	
	PS07J	Ag 3	m	(Eddie, age 37, lorry driver, Central Northern England,) friend	
	KBTPSUNK (respondent W0000)	X	u	(Unknown speaker, age unknown) other	
Arthur 2 (Tape 032502)	PS50T	Ag 3	m	(Arthur, age 44, teacher, Merseyside,)	45'
	PS50U	Ag 5	f	(A., age 70, housewife, North- west Midlands,) mother-in- law	
	PS50V	Ag 3	f	(Paula, age 43, teacher, North- west Midlands,) wife	
	PS50X	Ag 0	m	(Paul, age 14, student, Northern England,) son	
	KP1PSUNK (respondent W0000)	X	u	(Unknown speaker, age unknown) other	
Alec 7 (Tape 061301)	PS01T	Ag 5	m	(Alec, age 68, retired, Central Northern England,)	34'
	PS01U	Ag 4	f	(Ann, age 45, saleswoman, Central Northern England,) friend	
	PS01V	Ag 5	f	(Joyce, age 63, retired, Central Northern England,) wife	
	KB2PSUNK (respondent W0000)	X	u	(Unknown speaker, age unknown) other	
	KB2PSUGP (respondent W000M)	X	u	(Group of unknown speakers, age unknown) other	

Hazel 2 (Tape 053603)	PS0F5	Ag 3	f	(Hazel, age 39, vdu clerk (pt), Welsh,)	44'
	PS0F6	Ag 0	f	(Cerys, age 7, schoolgirl (state primary), Welsh,) daughter	
	PS0F7	Ag 5	f	(Marie, age 66, housewife, Welsh,) mother-in-law	
	KCCPSUNK (respondent W0000)	X	u	(Unknown speaker, age unknown) other	
	KCCPSUGP (respondent W000M)	X	u	(Group of unknown speakers, age unknown) other	

II Sakura Corpus Participant Data

Recording	Participants	Duration
Sakura01	G3M 21;01. male Student	26'00"
	H3M 21;00. male Student	
	K3F 21;00. female Student	
	L3F 21;00. female Student	
Sakura02	A1F 19;00. female Student	35'30"
	B1F 19;00. female Student	
	C1M 19;00. male Student	
	B1M 19;00. male Student	
Sakura03	H3F 21;00. female Student	11'45"
	J3M 21;00. male Student	
	K3M 22;00. male Student	
	I3F 21;00. female Student	
	INV 21;00. female Investigator	
	UNI Unidentified	
Sakura04	H1F 19;00. female Student	26'25"
	B1F 19;00. female Student	
	C1M 19;00. male Student	
	E1M 21;00. male Student	
Sakura05	I3M 21;00. male Student	27'20"
	G3M 21;00. male Student	
	L3F 21;00. female Student	
	E3F 21;00. female Student	
Sakura06	G1F 19;00. female Student	26'00"
	F1F 19;00. female Student	
	E1M 19;00. male Student	
	D1M 19;00. male Student	
	INV 21;00. female Investigator	
Sakura07	D3F 21;00. female Student	25'00"
	F3F 21;00. female Student	

	L3F 21;00. female Student	
	E3F 21;00. female Student	
Sakura08	E1F 19;00. female Student B1F 19;00. female Student C1F 19;00. female Student D1F 19;00. female Student	28'25"
Sakura09	E1F 19;00. female Student B1F 19;00. female Student A1F 19;00. female Student D1F 19;00. female Student	27'00"
Sakura10	A3F 21;00. female Student B3F 21;00. female Student C3F 21;00. female Student G3F 21;00. female Student INV 21;00. female Investigator	25'15"
Sakura11	A1F 19;00. female Student B1F 19;00. female Student C1F 19;00. female Student D1F 19;00. female Student INV 21;00. female Investigator	25'25"
Sakura12	A3F 21;00. female Student B3F 21;00. female Student C3F 21;00. female Student G3F 21;00. female Student INV 21;00. female Investigator	23'55"
Sakura13	I3M 21;00. male Student G3M 21;00. male Student H3M 21;00. male Student J3M 21;00. male Student	21'20"
Sakura14	B1M 19;00. male Student A1M 19;00. male Student E1M 19;00. male Student C1M 19;00. male Student INV 21;00. female Investigator	30'00"
Sakura15	I3M 19;00. male Student H3M 19;00. male Student G3M 19;00. male Student M3M 19;00. male Student INV 21;00. female Investigator	25'50"
Sakura16	E1M 19;00. male Student A1M 19;00. male Student C1M 19;00. male Student D1M 19;00. male Student INV 21;00. female Investigator	23'30"
Sakura17	L3M 21;00. male Student G3M 21;00. male Student I3M 21;00. male Student	26'45"

	H3M 21;00. male Student	
	INV 21;00. female Investigator	
Sakura18	A1M 19;00. male Student	16'50"
	B1M 19;00. male Student	
	C1M 19;00. male Student	
	D1M 19;00. male Student	

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