Verbal irony:
Use and effects in written discourse

een wetenschappelijke proeve op het gebied van de Letteren

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Preface

When you turn towards a typical preface in a dissertation, you usually find words of praise of the PhD candidate for many people who helped him or her in preparing the dissertation. After having written a dissertation myself, I can only agree that the process of this research has not been a solitary one. However, the topic of this dissertation makes it difficult to plunge right in in acknowledging those people who helped me during this process. After all, a scholar of irony may run the risk that his kind of words of praise are interpreted as ironic. Fortunately, Peter Jan recently pointed out that – in this dissertation at least – I have added an irony marker to the repertoire discussed in chapter 4. For reader convenience, ironic utterances in this dissertation are printed in bold face.

This brings me to my team of supervisors, Peter Jan Schellens and Margot van Mulken. Peter Jan, your broad knowledge, sharp analyses, constructive criticism and insightful comments have helped me enormously during this research project. Margot, your flexibility, knowledge about figurative language and enthusiasm for my project have been much appreciated. I am grateful for all you both did for me. Hans Hoeken, thank you for acting as a third supervisor during the first year of my project.

I was fortunate enough to belong to both the Department of Business Communication and Dutch Language and Culture during my time as a PhD student. Both departments have a pleasant atmosphere and great colleagues. I would like to particularly acknowledge Jos Hornikx, Rob le Pair, Frank van Meurs, Lettica Hustinx, Renske van Enschot and my roommates Daniël Rovers and Joost van Driel. A special thanks is kindly extended to Rogier Crijns.

It is said that taking a PhD is a lonely business. I found out that this is often not true, especially with a group of fellow PhD candidates to give support and to have lunch with. Rian Timmers, Ester Sorm, Yvette Linders, Didier Hodiamont, Annemieke Kouwenberg, Floor van Renssen, Judith Kessler, and Esther op de Beek: thank you all.

During the project, several students have helped me by acting as second coders or by helping me in collecting participants for my experiments. I am particularly grateful to Marije Boer, Karin Fikkers and Bram van der Plas for their assistance.

I would also like to thank the British Conservative Party for allowing me to reproduce the campaign advertisement on the cover of this dissertation.
During the last semester of my time as a PhD candidate, I also started working at the Department of Communication Studies at VU University Amsterdam. I would like to thank the MT in general and Elly Konijn in particular for the warm welcome and the flexibility to allow me to combine teaching at VU University with the completion of my PhD project. In addition, I would like to thank Camiel Beukeboom with whom I have extended my research on irony, Anita van Hoof for the pleasant train rides and my roommates Bo van Grinsven and Jolanda Veldhuis.

Of course, the completion of a PhD project also depends on a good home base. I am grateful to my parents Henry and Wilma and to my brother Antoine for all their support throughout the years. Finally, I want to thank Anneke; who has been my most critical reader, has always reminded me of the other things in life than a PhD project, and, above all, who is my great love.

Malden, July 2010.
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**Summary in Dutch**

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**Curriculum Vitae**

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Chapter 1:
Introduction

“Lotto: the greatest risk of becoming a millionaire.” “Autodrop: so tasty, it should be banned.” Various Dutch brands position themselves with the use of an ironic slogan. The Dutch lottery Lotto advertises the chances of winning the jackpot in an ironic way. In this advertisement, winning the Lotto jackpot is literally portrayed as something negative, because contestants literally run a risk. For Dutch people who participate in the Lotto, winning the jackpot is of course something positive. Another Dutch company, Autodrop (car-shaped licorice), literally claims that its product is too tasty and that it should be banned. Of course, Autodrop wants to convey the opposite; consumers should go to the supermarket and purchase the product. Both the Lotto and the Autodrop commercials use the rhetorical strategy of verbal irony to persuade their customers to buy their products.

The use of irony is not explicitly announced in the Lotto and Autodrop commercials; it is possible that addressees do not pick up on the irony and interpret the slogans literally. Irony thus divides its addressees into two groups; a group of people who understand the irony (the so-called group of “wolves”) and a group of people who do not understand the irony (the so-called group of “sheep”; Gibbs & Izett, 2005, p. 133). The riskiness of using irony has even led American authorities to declare American airports as “no-irony zones”, effectively prohibiting the use of irony when talking to airport officials (Phelan, 2009).

Even though irony can be a risky strategy to use, not all ironic utterances are difficult to understand. In contrast, some stock ironic expressions are usually understood effortlessly. A Dutch example is the expression Boeien! (Literally: Interesting!) that is typically used to convey that something is not interesting at all. English examples of expressions that are almost immediately recognized as irony are “That’s a likely story”, “You’re a real winner”, and “Joe is a fine friend” (Barbe, 1995, pp. 22-24). These stock expressions of irony (referred to as “common irony”, Barbe, 1995) demonstrate that some ironic utterances are less difficult than others.

Surprisingly, the claim that ironic utterances may differ in complexity can hardly be deduced from theories that aim to explain how irony is understood. The classic model of irony comprehension is the Standard Pragmatic Model (SPM, see e.g., Attardo, 2000a; Booth, 1974). The SPM predicts that an ironic utterance is always first
misunderstood. Readers of an ironic utterance first process the literal evaluation of an utterance. When this literal evaluation is incongruent with the context, it is rejected. Then, the intended (ironic) evaluation is activated. Various empirical studies confirm the hypotheses of the SPM and show that an ironic utterance takes more processing time than a literal utterance (e.g., Dews & Winner, 1999; Schwoebel, Dews, Winner & Srinavas, 2000). From these data, the scholars conclude that an ironic utterance is always more difficult to comprehend than a literal utterance.

A competing model of irony comprehension is the direct access model (Gibbs 1994, 2003). The main claim of this theory is that speakers do not have to "automatically analyze the complete literal meaning of linguistic expressions before accessing pragmatic knowledge to figure out what speakers mean to communicate" (Gibbs, 2003, p. 363; italics in original text). Gibbs (1994, pp. 117-119) claims that figurative language is understood in the same way as literal language. He adds that addressees who comprehend a metaphor or an ironic utterance often do not realize that that specific utterance was metaphoric or ironic (Gibbs, 1994, p. 118). The claims of the direct access view are also supported by various empirical studies (e.g., Gibbs 1986a, 1986b; Ivanko & Pexman, 2003). These studies show that it depends on the context whether literal utterances are processed faster than ironic utterances or not.

In light of the direct access view, scholars have identified various contextual factors that may influence the ease with which irony is processed. Most of these contextual factors are speaker characteristics such as gender, speaker occupation or regional and cultural background. A number of studies found that irony is expected more when the speaker is male than when the speaker is female (e.g., Colston & Lee, 2004; Katz, Blasko & Kazmerski, 2004). Katz and Pexman (1997) investigated the relationship between irony comprehension and speaker occupation and found that occupation could also guide irony comprehension. Irony was more expected when speakers had an occupation that was associated with non-seriousness (e.g., a comedian or a cab driver) than when speakers had an occupation associated with seriousness (e.g., a doctor or a judge). Finally, Goddard (2006) demonstrates that a speaker's cultural background may also be related to irony comprehension. If speaker and addressee do not come from the same cultural background, irony may well go undetected.

The relationship between speaker and addressee may play a role in irony comprehension in face-to-face-interactions. Jorgensen (1996) and Katz et al. (2004) claim that a possible difference in social status between speaker and addressee may
influence irony comprehension; irony is least expected when a speaker with a low social status talks to somebody with a higher social status. A second relational issue that is connected to irony comprehension is whether speaker and addressee are friends or not (see Rockwell, 2003). When they are indeed friends, the addressee is usually more inclined to take literal criticism as ironic praise than when speaker and addressee do not like each other (Pexman, 2005, p. 212). Pexman and Zvaigzne (2004) also showed that speakers were more certain that an ironic compliment (e.g., you are a terrible writer) would be understood correctly if they had a solidary relationship with the addressee than when they had not.

The studies mentioned above support one of the claims of the direct access view: contextual factors may influence irony comprehension. These studies or the theories of the direct access view and SPM themselves do not pay attention to the textual characteristics of ironic utterances. Instead, these studies implicitly assume that, given a number of contextual features, “ironic utterances” are a fairly homogeneous group to which results can be generalized (cf. Gibbs, 1986a, 1986b, Schwoebel et al., 2000, and many others). In other words, experimental results that are found for a limited number of ironic utterances can be generalized to ironic utterances in general. This would imply that a stock ironic expression such as *Boeien!* is just as easy (or difficult) to comprehend than an ironic utterance in, say, a literary novel. Intuitively, this may not seem like a very convincing claim. Indeed, a third model of irony comprehension takes a different view and differentiates between various ironic utterances based on characteristics of the utterance.

The Graded Salience Hypothesis (GSH; Giora, 2003; Giora, Fein & Schwartz, 1998) claims to account for a difference in processing times between ironic utterances with the concept of graded salience. In the GSH, the concept of graded salience refers to the place of a lexical item or expression in the mental lexicon. This mental lexicon is hierarchically structured (Giora, 2003, p. 18). Let’s take the word ‘bank’ as an example, which can both refer to a monetary institution and the rising ground that borders a river. If the word ‘bank’ firstly reminds you of a monetary institution, this first word meaning has a higher place in your mental lexicon and is more salient than the second word meaning. If for an expression such as *Boeien!*, an ironic interpretation is more salient than a literal one, the GSH predicts that this ironic interpretation is activated before a literal interpretation.

Salience is determined by four factors: (1) frequency of usage and the degree of (2) familiarity, (3) conventionality and (4) prototypicality (Giora, 2003, pp. 15-18)\(^1\). The
GSH predicts that the salient meaning of a word is always processed first. In other words, it is not the literal or intended meaning of an utterance that determines how this utterance is processed, but rather the degree of salience. In some cases, the figurative rather than the literal meaning of a word or expression is most salient, which may explain why in some cases a figurative interpretation is just as fast as a literal interpretation (Giora, 1999, pp. 924-925). Empirical evidence for the concept of graded salience can be found in many studies published by Giora and her colleagues, including Giora et al. (1998), Giora and Fein (1999), and Giora et al. (2007).

In contrast to the direct access view or the SPM, the GSH thus argues that the ways in which an ironic utterance is processed largely depend on both the addressee and characteristics of that ironic utterance; how salient is the utterance as an ironic utterance for a specific addressee? In other words, the GSH argues that, besides the addressee, message characteristics of an ironic utterance are other important predictors of the difficulty with which an ironic utterance is processed. These differences in message characteristics may help in predicting whether an ironic utterance is relatively easy or difficult to understand. In light of the empirical evidence presented by Giora and her colleagues in favor of the GSH (e.g., Giora et al., 1998; Giora et al., 2005; Giora et al., 2007, among many others), it may be surprising that the actual message form of an ironic utterance has received little scholarly attention. What are the textual characteristics of a conventional or prototypical ironic utterance?

Giora and colleagues confirm the claims of the GSH with experiments. In these experiments, Giora and her colleagues did not vary the salience of ironic utterances. Instead, they compared literal to ironic stimuli and stated that the ironic stimuli were always less salient than the literal stimuli, thus leaving out examples of “common irony” (e.g., Giora et al., 1998). The question how differences in the salience of ironic utterances can be determined remains unanswered. A second point to note is that the stimulus material used by Giora and her colleagues – like that of most experiments that look into verbal irony – can be referred to as textoids; experimenter-generated texts. The use of these types of stimuli has garnered much criticism (e.g., Graesser, Millis & Zwaan, 1997; Katz, 2009; Kreuz & Roberts, 1993). In response to one of Giora’s articles (Giora, Fein, Kaufman, Eisenberg & Erez, 2009), Katz (2009) argued that the unilateral use of textoids as stimuli is especially a problem in irony studies. He asserts that
“there is a [...] generalized problem found in most experimental studies of irony (including, alas, some that I have published): most materials are neither situationally real nor employ instances of verbal irony that reflect how a person would actually speak in the situations reflected in experimental textoids” (Katz, 2009, pp. 402-403).

In other words, the empirical evidence in favor of the GSH is critiqued, because it is based on ironic utterances that do not reflect the ways in which ironic utterances are used in natural discourse. This means that empirical evidence in favor of the GSH should be supplemented with data that show how irony is actually used in natural discourse.

Information on how irony is used in natural discourse is also needed with respect to theories about irony. Irony scholars often use invented examples – either as an illustrative utterance or as a textoid – to illustrate or investigate a point about irony. A case in point is Wilson (2006), who opens her article with a number of “typical examples of verbal irony”, but does not explain which aspects or characteristics actually make her examples “typical”. Besides, the claim that some utterances are “typical” examples also raises the question which examples of verbal irony (if any) could be named as a-typical. Wilson (2006) does not go into these issues, which may be problematic. After all, people are usually not good at all at describing their own “language production” (Deignan, 2005, pp. 85-88). Therefore, Deignan (2005, pp. 85-88) argues that descriptions of aspects of language should be accompanied with an analysis of natural language data.

Most scholars who concerned themselves with analyses of irony in usage have done so in the context of spoken text, either in non-mediated face-to-face interactions (see e.g., Bryant & Fox Tree, 2002; Clift, 1999; Gibbs, 2000; Giora & Gur, 2003; Partington, 2007; Poggi, Cavicchio & Caldognetto, 2007; Rockwell, 2003) or in face-to-face interactions mediated by television programs (e.g., Attardo, Eisterhold, Hay & Poggi, 2003; Kotthoff, 2003; Pelsmaekers & Van Besien, 2002; Weizman, 2001). These studies demonstrate that irony is used relatively often in dialogic interaction; around 8% of conversational turns between American college friends contains irony (Gibbs, 2000). Irony in spoken interaction is also often marked; either with a special intonation (e.g., Attardo et al., 2003; Bryant & Fox Tree, 2005; Rockwell, 2007) or an incongruent facial expression (e.g., Attardo et al., 2003; Muecke, 1978; Rockwell, 2001; see also chapter 6).
In written communication, irony may work differently. First of all, writers do not have clues like "a special intonation" or an "incongruent facial expression" to their disposal. Besides, various structural differences between the modalities of spoken and written communication exist (Jahandrie, 1999). Writing is for instance more "detached" (Jahandrie, 1999, pp. 139-141), more "succinct" (Jahandrie, 1999, p. 141) and uses "longer words and more extensive vocabulary" (Jahandrie, 1999, p. 144) than oral communication2. As a result, "typical" ironic utterances may vary across the two domains3.

Irony in written communication has received less attention than irony in speech. Most scholars who consider verbal irony in written communication only look at the frequency of usage of irony in one particular genre. In genres like French and American advertising (Biswas, Olsen & Carlet, 1992; Leigh, 1994) and American literature (Kreuz, Roberts, Johnson & Bertus, 1996), irony seems hardly to be used. In contrast, irony was the most frequently used indirect speech act in Thai novels (Srinarawat, 2005).

Two corpus studies look at the use of irony in written communication beyond the frequency of usage. Kohvakka (1996) analyzed the use of irony in literary and newspaper texts from the perspective of argumentation theory. She found that irony is often used to come to a fake conclusion. In this analysis, she thus considers words or utterances as ironic when they do not literally support the conclusion of a text. Instead, when these words or utterances only support the conclusion when they are ironically interpreted, she considers the utterances to be ironic.

Secondly, Whalen, Pexman and Gil (2009) discussed the use of figurative language in e-mail communication. Whalen et al. (2009) demonstrate that irony is used in 7.4% of e-mails written by Americans. If irony is used, it is very often (i.e., 92.1%) accompanied by a discourse marker such as an emoticon or a quotation mark. Whalen et al. (2009) thus conclude that writers often help their addressees in detecting irony.

This overview shows that the features of irony in written texts have received scant attention. The first part of this dissertation is thus concerned with the ways in which irony is used in written discourse. Its first research question is:

RQ1. How are features of irony used in written discourse?

These features of irony can be divided into two types of features: textual and co-textual features. Attardo (2000b, p. 7) argues that the two most important textual features of
ironic utterances are irony factors and irony markers. Irony factors are characteristics that every ironic utterance should have in order to qualify as ironic. If an irony factor were to be removed from an ironic utterance, it would no longer qualify as ironic. At the same time, every irony factor can have two or more levels that may differ across ironic utterances. Each ironic utterance for instance involves a shift in evaluative valence, which makes this valence shift one of the irony factors. At the same time, the shift in valence can be a shift from a literally positive to an intended negative meaning (i.e., ironic praise as in “Great weather” when it rains) or a shift from a literally negative to an intended positive evaluation (as in “Horrible weather” when the sun shines). Whilst a shift in valence is the irony factor, ironic praise and ironic blame are its levels. This means that the first sub-question of RQ1 is:

RQ1a. How are the levels of irony factors used in written discourse?

A second characteristic of ironic utterances is the use of irony markers (Attardo 2000b, p. 7). Irony markers are clues a writer can give that “alert a reader to the fact that a sentence is ironical” (Attardo, 2000b, p. 7). This means that, if all markers were to be removed from an ironic utterance, this utterance would still qualify as ironic (Attardo et al., 2003, p. 244). An example of such an irony marker is the use of hyperbole (e.g., Kreuz & Roberts, 1995). It may be that an ironic utterance with a hyperbole (e.g., “Fantastic weather,” when it rains) is easier identified as ironic than an ironic utterance without a hyperbole (e.g., “The weather is OK” when it rains). Whilst both utterances convey a literally positive attitude towards the weather, the utterance with the hyperbolic “fantastic” may be easier to interpret as ironic than the utterance with the non-hyperbolic “OK”. The second sub-question is thus:

RQ1b. How are irony markers in the ironic utterance used in written discourse?

Besides looking at the ironic utterance itself, RQ1 can also be answered by looking at elements from the co-text of the ironic utterance, i.e., the other utterances of the text with the exception of the utterance under discussion (Attardo, 2000b). This definition sets the co-text apart from the context. Context, in contrast, refers to aspects outside of the text that can help in interpreting an utterance as ironic (e.g., speaker characteristics). Whilst contextual factors have been demonstrated to play a role in the interpretation of irony (e.g., Colston, 2005), co-textual elements can also help the
interpretation of an ironic utterance. The verbal co-text of the ironic utterance (i.e., the other utterances except for the ironic utterance under discussion) may provide a set-up for an ironic utterance, so that the use of irony does not come as a surprise. In some genres such as cartoons and advertisements, the visual co-text (i.e., the visual image) may do the same and help the reader in detecting the irony. This implies that, besides lexical elements of the ironic utterance itself, RQ1 should also take these co-textual elements into account. The third and fourth sub-questions of RQ1 are then:

RQ1c. How are irony markers in the verbal co-text used in written discourse?
RQ1d. How are visuals used in relation to irony in written discourse?

A second point to consider is that an ironic utterance is never found in isolation. Usually, irony theorists present examples of ironic utterances outside of context and generalize these examples to ironic utterances in general (e.g., Utsumi, 2000; Wilson & Sperber, 1992). In written communication, an ironic utterance is always published in a text which in turn belongs to a specific genre. Various genres come with their own characteristics and expectations (e.g., Biber, 1993; Steen, 1999). It may well be that irony in one particular genre is used differently from irony in another genre. Therefore, the second research question of this dissertation is:

RQ2. How do features of irony differ across various written genres?

Like RQ1, RQ2 is also divided into four sub-questions that deal with irony factors and irony markers in the ironic utterance, verbal co-text and visual co-text. The four sub-questions of RQ2 are thus:

RQ2a. How does the use of irony factors differ across various written genres?
RQ2b. How does the use of irony markers in the ironic utterance differ across various written genres?
RQ2c. How does the use of irony markers in the verbal co-text differ across various written genres?
RQ2d. How does the use of visuals in relation to ironic utterances differ across various written genres?
Whilst RQs1 and RQ2 focus on describing the usage of irony’s features, the third RQ deals with the pragmatic effects that irony’s features may have. Various studies have shown that irony is more difficult to comprehend than a literal utterance (e.g., Gibbs, 1986a; Giora, 2003). In this respect, it is important to investigate whether textual features of an ironic utterance may help to differentiate between ironic utterances. In other words, is it possible to predict whether an ironic utterance is relatively simple or relatively difficult to understand based on textual features of that ironic utterance?

The influence of message features on irony’s perceived complexity and irony comprehension is not only important to investigate the ways in which ironic utterances are processed, but can also serve as a predictor of attitudes. Various studies have shown that the use of rhetorical figures can indeed increase attitudes (e.g., McQuarrie & Mick, 2003a; Mothersbaugh, Huhmann & Franke, 2002; Van Enschot, 2006). A prerequisite for doing so is that the rhetorical figure is understood (e.g., Lagerwerf, 2007; Van Enschot, 2006). Most of these studies focused on rhetorical figures in general (e.g., Mothersbaugh et al. 2002; Van Enschot 2006) or on specific rhetorical figures other than irony. Van Enschot (2006) for instance looked at tropes in general, but none of her experimental stimuli contained examples of irony. In an advertising context, Ang and Lim (2006), McQuarrie and Mick (2003a) and B. Phillips and McQuarrie (2009) found effects of metaphors (another trope) on attitudes towards advertisements and brands. The only exception is Lagerwerf (2007), who found that the use of irony in advertisements can indeed positively influence attitudes, but only when the irony is understood.

The third research question focuses on the effect of message features on irony complexity, irony comprehension and attitudes towards the irony and text. Since previous research has shown that the influence of irony on attitudes may depend on irony comprehension, it is possible that the effect of irony on attitudes also depends on perceived complexity of the irony. Research question 3 is

RQ3. What is the relationship between the presence and features of irony, comprehension and appreciation?

RQ3 can be divided into two sub-questions. The first sub-question focuses on the direct relations between the presence and features of verbal irony on the one hand and comprehension and appreciation on the other hand. The second sub-question
investigates the extent to which the effect of irony on appreciation depends on comprehension:

RQ3a. What is the relationship between the presence and features of verbal irony and (i) perceived irony complexity, (ii) irony comprehension, (iii) the attitude towards the utterance and (iv) the attitude towards the text?
RQ3b. To what extent does the effect of irony on attitudes towards the utterance and text depend on perceived complexity and comprehension of the irony?

Before RQs 1-3 can be answered, however, the concept of verbal irony needs to be defined. The next chapter defines the concept of verbal irony. It also contains the Verbal Irony Procedure (VIP), the operationalization used to identify irony in discourse.

RQs 1 and 2 are answered with corpus studies in chapters 3 – 6. Chapters 3 and 4 analyze lexical items of the ironic utterances themselves. Chapter 3 looks at irony factors (i.e., characteristics of the ironic utterance). Chapter 4 deals with irony markers (i.e., clues that an utterance may be ironic) in the ironic utterance. Chapters 5 and 6 both consider the role of co-text in the use of irony. Chapter 5 discusses co-textual irony markers, whilst chapter 6 is concerned with the relationship between verbal irony and images. RQ3 is dealt with in chapters 7 and 8. Chapter 7 connects the findings of the corpus research to irony complexity; this chapter investigates the relationship between the various irony factors and markers and perceived irony complexity. Chapter 8 contains two experiments that look at the influence of the irony factor of evaluativeness (experiment 1) and irony markers (experiment 2) on irony complexity, irony comprehension and attitudes towards the utterance and the text.
Chapter 2: 
Irony – Definition and operationalization

2.1 Introduction
The previous chapter gave a brief introduction of irony and the research questions of this dissertation. Before these research questions can be answered, it is important to first define the concept of verbal irony. Although many scholars have written about the definition of verbal irony, a consensus has not been reached. Instead, the definition of verbal irony is still a “problem that surfaces in the irony literature” (Gibbs & Colston, 2007, p. 584). In the first part of this chapter, five different theoretical approaches to verbal irony are discussed to come to the definition of verbal irony that is used in this dissertation. The second part of this chapter presents the Verbal Irony Procedure (VIP), the operationalization of the definition of verbal irony.

2.2 Definitions of verbal irony

This section describes the definition of verbal irony that is used in this research study. In this dissertation, irony is defined as “an evaluative utterance, the valence of which is implicitly reversed between the literal and intended evaluation”. This definition is a synthesis of the essential elements that constitute irony in various definitions.

Traditionally, verbal irony is described as a rhetorical figure which can be categorized as a trope (Leigh, 1994; McQuarrie & Mick, 1996; Van Enschot, 2006). This means that irony is a form of figurative language that includes “a deviation from the ordinary and principal signification” of an utterance (Corbett & Connors, 1999, p. 379). The literal meaning of a trope should be “reinterpreted” to come to the intended meaning (see also Van Enschot, 2006, p. 17), which implies that the intended meaning of an ironic utterance is always implicit.

The oldest surviving definition of irony as a rhetorical strategy can be found in the anonymous Rhetoric to Alexander, ascribed to Anaximenes of Lampsacus (4th century BC), in which irony means “praising by blaming” and “blaming by praising” (N. Knox, 1973, p. 22). From the definition from the Rhetoric to Alexander, a definition is derived that can be regarded as the classical definition of verbal irony: “saying the opposite of what you mean”. This “standard definition”, which can be traced back to the Roman author Quintilian (1959, p. 333) from the first century AD, is also often used in

The term “opposite” in the standard definition has proven to be problematic. Often, scholars interpret the term “opposite” from the standard definition as a term that is related to a lexical item in an ironic utterance. This implies that a certain word or word group from the literal utterance is replaced by its opposite term (D. Knox, 1989, p. 19). An example can serve to clarify this claim. In this and all following examples in this dissertation, ironic utterances are printed in boldface. Imagine that Brenda and Laurie had planned to go on a picnic. On the day of the picnic, however, it rains. Brenda comments to Laurie:

(2.1)  **Great weather for a picnic!**

If utterance (2.1) is interpreted as ironic according to the standard interpretation of the standard definition, rain is considered the opposite of great weather for a picnic. To go to the intended interpretation of utterance (2.1), the word “great” is replaced by its opposite “bad.”

This entails that the Standard Definition sees a number of elements as essential to qualify an utterance as ironic: irony is implicit (i.e., not explicitly signaled as irony) and it is possible to distinguish between a non-ironic and an ironic reading of the same utterance that are opposites of each other.

Based on this interpretation, the standard definition has garnered much criticism. Wilson and Sperber (1992, pp. 55-56) give a counterexample. Suppose that Pete invites me to come to his cottage in Tuscany in May, claiming the weather is always great in that part of Italy in May. I decide to give it a try. Upon arrival, however, there is a terrible storm. Ironically, I exclaim to Pete:

(2.2)  **Ah, Tuscany in May!** (Wilson & Sperber 1992, p. 55)

Wilson and Sperber (1992) claim that it is difficult – if not impossible – to explain this ironic exclamation with the use of the standard definition. After all, which lexical item in utterance (2.2) can be replaced by its semantic opposite? It is nevertheless relatively easy to interpret this utterance as ironic (see section 2.2.3). Wilson and
Sperber (1992) use these kinds of examples to explain that and how the classic interpretation of the standard definition of irony fails. In addition to its implicitness and the opposition between the literal and intended meaning, more elements are needed to distinguish between ironic and non-ironic utterances.

2.2.1 (Neo-)Gricean definitions of irony

Grice (1975, 1978) developed a well-known and influential model of conversational implicatures. He uses the standard definition of irony (Grice, 1975, p. 53) and sees this rhetorical figure as a flouting of the maxim of quality (i.e., “try to make your contribution one that is true”). Grice’s explanation for his definition of irony is that an ironic utterance is untrue in its literal meaning. When Brenda for instance says utterance (2.1) during a thunderstorm, utterance (2.1) is clearly untrue. In a later article, Grice (1978, pp. 123-125) comes back upon this first definition, because he felt “there was certainly something missing” in his first account. Not every utterance that is blatantly untrue can be labeled as ironic. As an example, Grice accounts a fictional dialogue between speakers A and B. When these persons walk along a car with a shattered window, B says:

(2.3) Look, that car has all its windows intact! (Grice, 1978, p. 124).

When A does not understand the speaker, B replies: “You didn’t catch on. I was in an ironical way drawing your attention to the broken window” (Grice, 1978, p. 124). According to Grice (1978), irony is always accompanied by a form of evaluation. The lack of an evaluation in utterance (2.3) explains the absurdity of the utterance and the impossibility of an ironic interpretation of utterance (2.3). This means that Grice (1978) amends the standard definition and claims that, besides an implicit opposition between a literal and intended meaning, irony also always includes an evaluation.

A Gricean definition of irony has two important general characteristics on which it differs from a number of other definitions of irony. The first is that irony is seen as a deviation from a general norm, the maxim of quality. According to Van Enschot (2006, p. 11), Gricean maxims such as the maxim of quality can be seen as norms that are equal to everyone. When a reader reads a text “correctly”, he discovers whether irony is included in that text or not (Booth, 1974, p. 16). Some authors who define irony as a
deviation from a general norm even claim that it depends upon a reader’s “intelligence” whether he finds irony or not (e.g., Corbett & Connors, 1999, p. 406).

A second important characteristic is that irony in a Gricean perspective is seen as binary. This means that an utterance is either ironic or not ironic. In other words, if certain conditions are met, an utterance is ironic. If these conditions are not met, an utterance is not ironic. This is different from the views of a number of other authors who see irony as gradual, which implies that some ironic utterances are more ironic than others.

Grice’s definition of irony is critiqued by many scholars. Besides criticism aimed at his use of the standard definition, other points of critique are geared towards the definition of irony as a flouting of the maxim of quality. Myers Roy (1978, pp. 17-18) gives a good counterexample (which is later quoted by many authors including e.g., Barbe, 1995, pp. 24-25, Coulson, 2005, p. 129 and Gibbs, 1986a, p. 4). Myers Roy (1978) describes a situation in which two people are in a car. Driver A takes a left turn without signaling. Passenger B says:

(2.4) I love people who signal.

In this example, the speaker takes a literally positive attitude towards the use of a direction indicator; the literal meaning of this utterance is not untrue. The irony stems from the fact that driver A did not signal. By mentioning a norm that is in opposition to the actual behavior displayed by A, B indicates her disapproval of this behavior. Utterance (2.4) shows that Grice’s definition in which an ironic utterance had to be literally untrue does not apply to all instances of verbal irony.

Various scholars thus disagree with the claim that irony is a flouting of the maxim of quality and claim that irony can also be a flouting of another maxim than the maxim of quality (e.g., Kaufer, 1981, p. 500), all maxims (e.g., Barbe, 1995, pp. 38-39) or no maxim at all (e.g., Holdcroft, 1983, p. 507). Grice’s critics have two solutions to the problems with his definition.

Some scholars choose to amend Grice’s theory (so-called ‘Neo-Griceans’ such as Attardo, 2000a). These Neo-Griceans believe that irony can be explained from the theoretical background of principles and maxims, but only when Grice’s view of language is amended to account for the use of verbal irony. Attardo (2000a) presents a Neo-Gricean approach and expands Grice’s model with one maxim: the maxim of
inappropriateness, which is introduced to better explain irony in a (Neo-)Gricean framework. Attardo (2000a, p. 823) summarizes his definition of irony as “an inappropriate utterance which is nonetheless relevant to the context”. This definition can explain utterance (2.4), because it is literally inappropriate in the given situation.

Kihara (2005, p. 517) claims that the strength of Attardo’s definition is also its weakness. He does not see why irony should necessarily be connected to inappropriateness, which is what Attardo (2000a) does. Nevertheless, Attardo’s (2000a) maxim of inappropriateness also connects irony to relevance; an ironic interpretation should be relevant to its context. This adds another precondition for irony in comparison to Grice’s (1978) definition; an ironic interpretation should be relevant, given the context in which it is uttered.

Whilst Attardo (2000a) chooses to amend Grice’s (1975, 1978) framework, other scholars, who are discussed from section 2.2.2 onwards, choose to define irony from another theoretical background (e.g., Clark & Gerrig, 1984; Sperber & Wilson, 1995; Utsumi, 2000).

2.2.2 Irony as indirect negation

An approach that, at face value, seems to resemble a (Neo-)Gricean perspective, but which is still different, is Giora’s definition of irony as indirect negation (Giora, 1995; Giora et al., 1998). In this view on irony, any form of indirect negation (i.e., a negation without an explicit negation marker) qualifies as irony. Giora (1995, pp. 240-241) thus emphasizes that most ironic utterances are affirmative statements and thus do not include a negation marker. In a note, Giora (1995, pp. 240-241) concedes that negative statements (i.e., utterances with a negation) can also be used ironically. In that case, the negation is indirectly cancelled.

Indirect negation further presupposes that (1) the literal and intended meaning differ to a certain degree and (2) that both the literal and intended meaning are retained in irony processing (Giora et al., 1998, p. 85). This contrast between a literal (i.e., non-ironic) and intended (i.e., ironic) meaning can also be found in a (Neo-)Gricean perspective. Like the Standard Definition and the Gricean perspective, Giora (1995) also believes that irony is implicit, and that an opposition can be seen between the literal and ironic interpretation. Besides, Giora (1995, p. 244) and Attardo (2000a) agree that an ironic utterance should also be relevant to its context.
Despite these similarities, a number of differences can be observed between Giora's (1995) view on irony and irony from a (Neo-)Gricean perspective. Giora et al. (1998, p. 85) argue that the retention of both the literal and intended meaning distinguishes indirect negation from a (Neo-)Gricean perspective. In a (Neo-)Gricean perspective, the literal meaning is rejected in favor of the intended meaning. In the theory of indirect negation, the literal and intended meaning of the ironic utterance remain available (Giora et al., 1998, p. 85).

The theory of indirect negation also differs from a (Neo-)Gricean perspective on two other, important points. In a (Neo-)Gricean perspective, irony is seen as a deviation from a general norm. Since irony is considered a deviation from a general norm, a scholar or a “good reader” can determine whether an utterance is ironic or not. Indirect negation, in contrast, is a deviation from a personal norm. This implies that the receiver's background and his ideas about the sender, co-text and context determine whether an utterance is ironic or not. Instead of a scholar who determines what is and what is not ironic, stimuli are presented to respondents who are left the choice (e.g. Giora, Fein, Ganzi, Levi & Sabah, 2005). This view of irony as a deviation from a personal norm can well be applied to instances in which it may be difficult to determine whether irony has indeed been used, cf. the use of irony in literary texts. In regular texts and easy examples of irony, however, this view may be more difficult to hold. It is for instance very difficult to deny that an easy utterance like (2.1) is used ironically.

A second important difference is that irony in this definition is not seen as a binary, but rather as a gradual phenomenon. This implies that the bigger the contrast between the literal and intended meaning, the more ironic the utterance is. As an example, let's say that I want to make a statement about Max, who – despite many hours of study – failed all his exams. I could say:

(2.5a) Max is exceptionally bright.
(2.5b) Max is not exceptionally bright.
(2.5c) Max is not bright.
(2.5d) Max is stupid (Giora et al., 2005, p. 86).

Giora et al. (2005, p. 85) state that it is possible to distinguish degrees of irony based on these utterances. The final utterance (2.5d), is the non-ironic, literal meaning of the utterance. The hierarchy of ironiness can be established based on the contrast with (2.5d). This means that utterance (2.5a) is the most ironic, followed by (2.5b) and
(2.5c) (Giora et al., 2005, p. 85). A problem with this definition is that the distinction between irony and non-irony becomes murky. Whilst Giora et al. (2005) for instance label utterance (2.5c) as ironic, other authors may disagree, because utterance (2.5c) already literally implies that Max is stupid. In addition, it is difficult to say, based on the hierarchy in (2.5), when an individual addressee perceives the contrast with utterance (2.5d) as big enough to label an utterance as ironic.

2.2.3 Irony and Relevance Theory

Neo-Gricean perspectives and indirect negation are not the only definitions of irony. Another influential approach can be found in Sperber and Wilson’s Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1995, 1998). Wilson and Sperber (2002) define irony as a special form of echoic use. In this model, echoic use is a subtype of what the authors refer to as interpretative use.

An utterance is a form of interpretative use when, on a meta-level, it displays another utterance, the content of which is similar. A good example is a summary (Wilson & Sperber, 2002, p. 271), because it paraphrases another source. As mentioned earlier, echoic use is a subset of interpretative use. In order to pass as echoic, an utterance should both repeat another utterance on a meta-level and be relevant by showing the sender's opinion about this earlier utterance (Wilson & Sperber, 2002, p. 271). Wilson and Sperber (2002, p. 271) clarify this with the following example:

(2.6) Peter: That was a fantastic party.

(2.7) Mary:
   a. [happily] Fantastic.
   b. [puzzled] Fantastic?
   c. [scornfully] Fantastic!

Utterances (2.7a), (2.7b) and (2.7c) are all examples of echoic use. In order to understand Mary’s utterances, Peter should not only recognize that she paraphrases a part of his earlier utterance (2.6), but also gives her opinion about utterance (2.6). In utterance (2.7a), Mary agrees with Peter that the party was fantastic. In utterance (2.7b), she is surprised by his judgment and questions the positive judgment about the party. In utterance (2.7c), Mary shows Peter that she does not agree with him and that she did not consider the party as fantastic at all.
Even though utterances (2.7a), (2.7b) and (2.7c) are all examples of echoic use, Wilson and Sperber (2002) do not claim that all three utterances are ironic. They have another precondition for irony: the utterance should implicitly display a negative attitude towards the utterance about which the speaker gives her meaning. This implies that only utterance (2.7c) is an example of irony.

Like Giora’s (1995) theory of irony as indirect negation, the theory of echoic use sees irony as a deviation from a personal norm. In this approach, not one “correct” reading of a text exists. Sperber and Wilson (1998, p. 287) refer to the “relevance to an individual”. Again, this perspective may well work to explain more difficult forms of irony, but is problematic to apply to easier forms of irony; if a person does not see the irony in utterance (2.7c), this would mean that this person has not understood the utterance.

The definition of irony as echoic use has a number of advantages in comparison to (Neo-) Gricean approaches. This definition can for instance explain both ironic utterances (2.2) and (2.3), which was difficult from a Gricean perspective. Earlier in this chapter, an invitation was described to come to Tuscany in May, because the weather would be beautiful. On arrival, it rained constantly. Disappointed, the guest exclaimed:

(2.2) Ah, Tuscany in May!

The theory of irony as echoic use can explain utterance (2.2). Upon uttering (2.2), the speaker refers to the earlier utterance that the weather in Tuscany in May is always beautiful. Since the weather in Tuscany obviously is not beautiful on this day in May, it would be absurd to mean utterance (2.2) literally. Utterance (2.2) thus shows a negative attitude towards the rationale behind the invitation (Wilson & Sperber, 1992, p. 61). The view of irony-as-echoic-use can thus explain the irony in utterance (2.2), because it assigns an evaluation to utterance (2.2), both in the literal source (Tuscany in May is beautiful) and in the ironic echo (Tuscany in May is not beautiful at all).

Utterance (2.3) can also be explained with the perspective of irony-as-echoic-use. A and B come along a car with a shattered window. B says

(2.3) Look, that car has all its windows intact!
From a Gricean perspective, utterance (2.3) was difficult to explain. Wilson and Sperber (1992, p. 61) claim that the reason for this difficulty is that utterance (2.3) adheres to all definitions of irony except for one; it is not an echo. They argue that by adding a short context, utterance (2.3) can easily be seen as ironic. In the context that Wilson and Sperber (1992, p. 61) suggest, B tells A that in the street he lives in, broken cars are often dumped. A says that he does not believe that B’s claim is true. When A and B then walk along a car with a broken window, B utters (2.3). In doing so, B critically echoes A’s assertion in a situation in which it is clearly wrong. With this context, utterance (2.3) becomes an example of echoic use as well as irony (Wilson, 2006, p. 1728; Wilson & Sperber, 1992, p. 61).

These examples show that Wilson and Sperber (1992) agree with Grice (1978) that irony needs an evaluation, both in the literal source and the ironic echo. Besides, it also demonstrates that irony is never found in a context-free vacuum; it is not possible to say that an individual utterance is ironic or not. Instead, individual utterances are always uttered in a context; it is only possible to say if an individual utterance is ironic or not when that context is taken into account. This implies that Wilson and Sperber (1992) agree with Attardo (2000a) and Giora (1995) that an ironic utterance always needs to be relevant to its context.

It is remarkable in the analyses of utterances (2.2) and (2.3) according to the definition of irony-as-echoic-use that – like in the analysis according to the standard definition – there are again two utterances that are opposites (see also Attardo, 2000a, p. 811). In this analysis, the opposition is not semantic such as good vs. bad, but rather an opposition between a literal source and an ironic echo. Despite the fact that the oppositions in (2.2) and (2.3) are more implicit than in for instance (2.1), a contrast is still needed in order to label an utterance as ironic, even in the Relevance Theoretical framework. This means that basic concepts of the standard definition – a literal and an ironic interpretation that are opposites of each other – are still needed.

A final element that takes center stage in this approach to irony is by critically echoing a literal source, the speaker shows a negative attitude towards the speaker who uttered the literal source in earnest. This makes the speaker of the literal source the butt of the ironic remark. In other words, an ironic utterance always has a target with whom the ironist disagrees.

A problem with Sperber and Wilson’s approach towards irony is the concept of echo. This concept is defined too vaguely (see e.g., Attardo, 2000a, p. 805;
In response to this criticism, Sperber and Wilson (1998, p. 284) argue that the concept of echo is bound to certain limits. An interpretation of an utterance as echoic is only acceptable when this interpretation contributes to the relevance of an utterance (Sperber & Wilson, 1998). However, the concept of relevance can be interpreted in different ways. The source of the echo in utterance (2.7c) was relatively easy to establish. In the interpretations of utterances (2.2) and (2.3), a context was also construed in which the source of the echo was introduced. In other cases, this is much more difficult. Consider the following example:

(2.8) Bonnie and Tom are driving on a deserted highway late at night. “Tom”, says Bonnie, “the tank is empty”. “I know this car”, Tom replies. “I can drive fifty miles when it says empty.” Bonnie responds, “That’s fine. I’ve always wanted to spend the night in the car” (Gerrig, 1993, p. 153).

Bonnie’s final remark is ironic, because she implicitly wants to make clear that she does not want to spend the night in the car at all. In this way, her remark thus contributes to the relevance of the story. However, the ironic utterance is difficult to explain from the perspective of irony-as-echoic-use. What is the source of this final utterance? Attardo (2000a, p. 805) claims that the concept of echo almost leads to an “infinite regression” of possible interpretations. Since an echo can also be implicit, any utterance could theoretically be an echo of another utterance, a thought or a norm. These unclear boundaries between what does and what does not constitute an echo make the concept of echo difficult to apply to real-world data. The definition of irony-as-echoic-use thus does not cover all instances of verbal irony. Instead, echoic irony can be labeled as a sub-set of ironic utterances.

2.2.4 Irony as pretense
Various scholars think of irony as a form of pretense (e.g., Clark & Gerrig, 1984; Cros, 2001; Currie, 2006; Ducrot, 1984; Kumon-Nakamura, Glucksberg & M. Brown, 1995), going back to the original meaning of the Greek word eironeia. This approach states that irony literally has many voices; an ironic speaker S pretends she is an (ignorant) speaker S’ who talks to an (ignorant) receiver A’. Receiver A sees through this pretense and is able to interpret the ironic remark (Clark & Gerrig, 1984, p. 122). This theory posits that irony is thus always aimed at somebody or something; its target.
As an example to defend this approach, Jonathan Swift’s 1729 essay *A Modest Proposal* is used (Clark & Gerrig, 1984, p. 123). In this essay, Swift seems to seriously propose to solve the economic problems in Ireland by serving poor Irish children as food to the rich. The pretense theory argues that, in this essay, Swift pretends “to speak as a member of the English ruling class to an English audience” (Clark & Gerrig, 1984, p. 123). The reader is expected to see through this pretense and to understand that Swift implicitly criticized the way the English dealt with the Irish. Example (2.8) can be interpreted as pretense as well. Bonnie pretends to like having to spend a night in the car, whilst she in fact has a totally different opinion.

Again, a number of elements are basic to irony in this definition: irony is implicit and an opposition between a literal and ironic reading can be observed. At the same time, irony also has a target (speaker S’ and addressee A’) who is mocked. This also makes irony evaluative.

Like the other perspectives on irony, the pretense theory suffers from a number of problems. Even though the pretense theory can handle texts that are completely ironic such as Swift’s essay very well, it is more difficult to apply to short and relatively easy forms of irony. Let’s suppose that speaker A would look out of her window on a rainy day and ironically exclaim

\[(2.9) \quad \text{Great weather!}\]

The pretense theory would then explain utterance (2.9) by saying that the person who utters (2.9) pretends to be an incompetent weather forecaster (Clark & Gerrig 1984, p. 122; Ducrot, 1984, pp. 212-213). The speaker of utterance (2.9) not only gives her opinion about the weather, but also mocks this incompetent weather forecaster. This explanation seems to needlessly complicate utterance (2.9). Besides, Utsumi (2000, p. 1782) posits that every form of indirect speech, and not only irony, can be seen as a form of pretense. Kreuz and Glucksberg (1989, p. 384) give a good example of indirect language that can be seen as pretense, but not as irony:

\[(2.10) \quad \text{Can you pass the salt?}\]

The speaker of (2.10) pretends that she does not know if the addressee is physically capable of passing the salt. Since it would be absurd to assume that the addressee is
physically incapable to comply with the request, the speaker expects the addressee to see through this pretense. Utterance (2.10) thus meets Clark and Gerrig's (1984) definition of irony, but is not ironic. Nevertheless, this definition also uses a number of basic concepts that were also used in other definitions of irony; irony is evaluative, implicit (the pretense is not explicitly announced as pretense), mocks a specific person (addressee A') and has both a literal (S' talks to A') and an intended meaning (S talks to A) that are in opposition to each other.

2.2.5 Irony, mental spaces and domains of discourse

Fauconnier (1990, p. 392) introduced a model to explain implicit meanings of utterances: the mental space theory. Scholars who approach irony from this theory (e.g., Kihara, 2005) claim that irony can be found when different domains of discourse are connected in a specific way, often via a kind of opposition. In Kihara's (2005) model, unfulfilled expectations take center stage.

Kihara (2005, pp. 517-518) says that two mental spaces can be distinguished in verbal irony: a mental space of expectation and an initial reality space. It is possible that a situation in reality (initial reality space) does not satisfy certain expectations (mental space of expectation). If this is the case and the speaker implicitly alludes to these unfulfilled expectations, irony can be used. Irony is recognized when an addressee notices this implicit reference to an unfulfilled expectation.

Let's illustrate this with an example. Barbe (1995, p. 21) refers to a situation in which a mother asked her son to clean his room. When she enters the room and sees that he did not do it, she says:

(2.11) I see that you have cleaned your room.

In utterance (2.11), the mother appeals to her expectation that her son would listen and clean his room (mental space of expectation). Of course, she sees that this did not happen in reality (initial reality space). Since she implicitly refers to this unfulfilled expectation, utterance (2.11) is an example of irony.

Kihara's (2005) definition also shares a number of elements with other definitions of irony. In Kihara's (2005) perspective, irony is implicit and displays an opposition between two different mental spaces. Besides, irony implicitly shows that a certain
expectation was not fulfilled in reality. This makes irony evaluative, because the speaker shows disappointment.

Coulson (2005), Ritchie (2005) and Utsumi (2000) discuss irony in a similar way to Kihara (2005). They all argue that irony connects different domains of discourse related to (failed) expectations and reality. Even though they use other terms than Kihara (2005), the approach is comparable.

Coulson (2005) places irony in the theory of conceptual blending. She also discusses an opposition between two spaces: an expected reaction (expected reaction space) and a reaction that does not meet this expectation (counterfactual trigger space). In utterance (2.11), the expected reaction is a cleaned room and the counterfactual trigger is the fact that the room is not cleaned. Coulson (2005) argues that both spaces should have something in common; the blending space. In utterance (2.11), the blending space consists of the room that either is or is not cleaned.

Ritchie (2005, pp. 282-284) connects irony to the concept of “frames”. In his definition, irony can be observed when an opposition can be found between a culturally accepted frame – in utterance (2.11), it would be a son who cleans his room – and a frame that undermines the culturally accepted frame – in utterance (2.11), it is the son who did not clean his room.

Utsumi (2000), finally, discusses an ironic environment. Utsumi (2000, p. 1783) claims that an ironic environment is evoked when two conditions have been met. Firstly, a speaker should have a certain expectation (at time t₀) that is not met (at time t₁). Then, the speaker should have a negative attitude about the fact that the expectation has not been met³. Despite the difference in terminology, Utsumi’s expectation and failed expectation are comparable to the mental space of expectation and the initial reality space. It is also striking that Utsumi (2000, p. 1783) connects irony to negative emotions such as disappointment, anger and rage. Irony may also serve to elicit positive emotions; it can be funny or evoke a feeling of social solidarity.

It should be noted that all definitions in this section (i.e., Coulson, 2005; Kihara, 2005; Ritchie, 2005; Utsumi, 2000) connect irony to unfulfilled expectations. This makes these definitions both too narrow and too broad; not every ironic utterance has to allude to unfulfilled expectations. Suppose that Mary was invited by her best friend Susan to come to her party. Even though Mary likes Susan, she dislikes her parties and does not relate to Susan’s other friends. For social reasons, she decides to attend the party anyway and her expectations are fulfilled; she does not like the party. When
Peter then gives a favorable review of the party, Mary utters (2.7c). This utterance is ironic, even though it refers to a situation in which Mary’s expectations were fulfilled. This means that an allusion to unfulfilled expectations is not a necessary pre-condition for irony.

At the same time, not every implicit reference to an unfulfilled expectation may be an example of irony. Let’s suppose that student A failed his exams, even though he expected to pass. In this case, the mental space of expectation is “passing an exam”. Father B comments:

\[(2.12)\quad \text{It is a pity that you did not study harder.}\]

Utterance (2.12) contains an implicit reference to student A’s low grade and implicitly alludes to the mental space of expectation; utterance (2.12) does not explicitly mention the exam’s grade. Nevertheless, utterance (2.12) should not be interpreted ironically. Father B really wanted that student A had studied harder in order to pass his exams. This means that the notion of an implicit reference to unfulfilled expectations is too broad, because it also encompasses a number of non-ironic utterances.

Whilst these definitions are both too broad and too narrow, they also use a number of basic elements discussed earlier. Irony is again implicit and an opposition between a literal and an ironic reading can again be observed. Irony also has a target (an unfulfilled expectation) about which the author takes a negative stance. This also makes irony evaluative. Finally, irony is relevant in this perspective, because it connects the utterance to an expectation that was held in the past.

### 2.2.6 The definition of irony used in this research

The previous sections described a number of different theoretical approaches to the subject of verbal irony. It demonstrated that, across the various definitions, ironic utterances have a number of features that need to be included in an operational definition of irony: (1) irony is always implicit, (2) irony is evaluative, it is possible to (3) distinguish between a non-ironic and an ironic reading of the same utterance, (4) between which a certain type of opposition may be observed. Of course, irony is also always directed at someone or something; its target.\(^{14}\)

First of all, irony is always implicitly relevant; the intended meaning is not explicitly stated (cf., Giora, 1995; Grice, 1978, among many others). This implies that
an ironic interpretation of an utterance can always be denied. Nevertheless, if an utterance is interpreted as ironic, this ironic reading should be congruent with the co- and context. In other words, an ironic reading should be relevant.

Secondly, irony should always include an evaluation of some sort (cf. Attardo, 2000a; Kotthoff, 2003; Sperber & Wilson, 1995). With the exception of the standard definition, all authors agree that irony contains some form of evaluation. In other words, irony always has an evaluative proposition in which a person or object is evaluated. The most basic form of these evaluative propositions is “X is good” or “X is bad”.

It is also possible to distinguish between a non-ironic and an ironic reading of the same utterance. Traditionally, this distinction has been defined as a difference between a literal and intended meaning of the utterance (e.g., Grice, 1975, 1978). Other scholars tend to use different terms such as source (i.e., utterance used literally) and echo (i.e., utterance used ironically) (Sperber & Wilson, 1995), a “pretended” and “real” meaning (Clark & Gerrig, 1984) or a difference between various mental spaces (e.g., Coulson, 2005; Kihara, 2005).

These different non-ironic and ironic readings of the same utterance all have an important thing in common; these two readings are in opposition to each other. Even though the names of the non-ironic and ironic reading may be in dispute, the nature of the opposition is not. The authors seem to agree that the opposition in irony involves a shift in evaluative valence between the literal and intended evaluation. In other words, if the non-ironic reading is positive, the ironic reading is negative (and vice versa).

Based on these characteristics of irony, irony is defined in this research as “an evaluative utterance, the valence of which is implicitly reversed between the literal and intended evaluation”. In other words, irony is treated as an implicature with a reversal of evaluative valence (see also Kawakami, 1984, 1988, summarized in

Figure 2.1: advertisement for Computer Idee
If an utterance is read ironically, the valence of the evaluation implied in the literal utterance is reversed in the ironic reading. This means that irony works on a pragmatic level. Therefore, when identifying irony, both a literal and an ironic interpretation can be identified. These interpretations can be placed on a scale of evaluation, which contains both positive and negative evaluations with a zero point in between. An utterance is ironic when one interpretation is in one domain of the scale (positive or negative) and the other on the other side of the zero point (negative or positive). Let’s clarify this with an example. Figure 2.1 shows a Dutch advertisement for the computer magazine *Computer Idee*. The text of the advertisement is:

(2.13.1) Shameful!
(2.13.2) Now only 1 Euro.
(2.13.3) *Computer Idee*, is not difficult about computers.

The advertisement’s caption (Shameful) can be qualified as an ironic utterance. In Dutch, the word “shameful” has a negative meaning, which conflicts with general knowledge that an advertisement usually conveys something positive about the advertised product, service and/or the company. Indeed, the reader should infer that the (apparent) discount on the computer magazine’s price is something to celebrate. If these meanings are placed on a scale of evaluation, we get Scale 2.1; whilst the literal meaning (shameful) conveys a negative attitude towards the discounted price, the intended meaning shows a positive attitude towards the lower price.

![Scale 2.1: Desirability of the discounted price of Computer Idee](image)

The concept of the evaluation scale also reconciles perspectives on irony that see irony as a binary (e.g., Grice, 1975, 1978) and gradual phenomenon (e.g., Giora et al., 34).
On the one hand, the scalar nature of the evaluation scale allows for gradual distinctions between ironic utterances. On the other hand, the zero point provides a clear guideline when an utterance can and cannot be called ironic.

In addition, this definition makes it possible to distinguish irony from (non-ironic) hyperbole and (non-ironic) understatement. Let’s suppose that Mary went to Susan’s party which she found OK. When Susan asks Mary about the party, she uses an hyperbole:

\[(2.14) \quad \text{It was a fantastic party.}\]

This utterance can also be placed on a scale of evaluation; scale 2.2:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Fantastic} \quad \text{quite OK} \\
X \quad X
\end{array}
\]

\textit{Scale 2.2: Evaluation of the party; Non-ironic hyperbole}

Scale 2.2 demonstrates that the hyperbole in utterance (2.14) is non-ironic. Even though the literal (fantastic) and intended evaluation (quite OK) differ, no reversal of evaluative valence can be observed between the literal and intended meaning. The same can be said about non-ironic understatements. Suppose that John has difficulties in mathematics and worries whether he will pass his exams. John studies hard and, to his own amazement, manages to score an A+. Pete coolly comments:

\[(2.15) \quad \text{You did quite well.}\]

Utterance (2.15) is an understatement. Since John did fantastic, especially given his difficulties in math, the evaluation in (2.15) is less pronounced than what Pete really wants to communicate. Utterance (2.15) can also be placed on a scale of evaluation. Scale 2.3 demonstrates that Pete’s remark is non-ironic. Even though a difference in evaluation can be observed between the literal (quite OK) and intended
evaluation (fantastic) of Pete’s remark, this difference does not involve a shift in evaluative valence.

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2.3 Previous operationalizations of verbal irony

The previous section defined verbal irony as “an evaluative utterance, the valence of which is implicitly reversed between the literal and intended evaluation”. Since the first part of this dissertation aims to describe the ways in which irony is used in natural discourse, a corpus analysis has been done and is reported on in Chapters 3 – 6. For such an analysis, the definition of verbal irony needs to be expanded into an operationalization that makes every step explicit in determining whether an utterance is ironic or not. The next section contains the operationalization used in this research; the Verbal Irony Procedure (VIP). Before the VIP is discussed, this section first deals with previous operationalizations of irony and argues why a new operationalization like the VIP is needed in the first place.

Of course, in dealing with natural examples of a particular stylistic phenomenon such as irony – and by engaging in corpus research – a crucial question considers the ways in which important concepts are operationalized and measured. Some studies provide no information at all on how irony is operationalized (cf. Cros, 2001; Weizman, 2001). If these studies do provide information, they simply state that irony has been identified without explaining how this has happened. Gibbs (2000, p. 13) for instance claims that his student coders “analyzed the utterances in their transcription to find ironic utterances”. Whalen et al. (2009, p. 269) state that

"[t]he first author coded every e-mail text for instances of nonliteral language and categorized each instance as one of the five types [of nonliteral language included in..."
the research, CB]. A second coder then applied the same coding scheme to all the e-mail texts, and interrater agreement was calculated” (Whalen et al., 2009, p. 269).

It is unclear how these raters identified irony or other types of nonliteral language, which criteria were used to separate literal from nonliteral language or how nonliteral utterances were counted. Besides, it is unclear how interrater agreement (which was 95%) was calculated. Did coders have to agree that an e-mail contained non-literal language or not? Or did coders have to agree on the issue which (parts of) an utterance would qualify as non-literal language? Or did coders also have to agree on the different types of non-literal language? And when did something qualify as non-literal language in the first place? Since Whalen et al. (2009) provide quantitative results, these aspects should be made explicit.

In the corpus-analytic literature on irony in which an operationalization is published, four different types of operationalizations can be observed, all of which have a number of drawbacks. A first group of studies has operationalized irony by using the “standard definition of irony” (i.e., saying the opposite of what you mean; see paragraph 2.2) and let a coder apply it to the data (e.g., Kreuz et al., 1996; Leigh, 1994; Srinarawat, 2005). Eisterhold, Attardo and Boxer (2006, p. 1246) exemplify this strategy. After the authors collected a corpus of texts that they believed to possibly include irony, “[a]n outside rater first read through the entire corpus and determined which sequences were ironical/sarcastic, based on a folk definition of irony/sarcasm; no training was provided”. Eisterhold et al. (2006) give no information on how this rater’s observations could be checked. Again, it is unclear how the rater used and applied the definition of irony to the data, which criteria were used to separate irony from non-irony or how ironic utterances were counted.

A second group of studies (e.g., Barbe, 1995, pp. 131-144; Claridge 2001; Lucariello, 1994; Partington, 2007; Shelley, 2001) looks for irony in large text corpora by looking for collocations with the word “irony” or one of its derivates (e.g., ironic, ironical, ironically). This approach has two downsides. Firstly, the word “irony” can mean different things to different people (Gibbs & Colston, 2007). This means that an utterance that one speaker calls “ironic” may not necessarily adhere to the definition of irony that a researcher has. And secondly, this method yields few natural examples of verbal irony, because verbal irony is seldom explicitly acknowledged. Instead, this method helps to find examples that can be labeled as situational irony. Consider the
following example from the Dutch newspaper *Algemeen Dagblad*, in which Gerlach Cerfontaine, chairman of Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam, talks about the level of security at his airport. Cerfontaine was forced to take on this issue, because Alberto Stegeman, a reporter for the Dutch TV channel SBS6, had made an undercover documentary in which he showed how he had evaded security measures at the airport.

"In the TV show *Pauw & Witteman* on November 27, he [i.e., Cerfontaine] invited SBS6 reporter Alberto Stegeman to take a look and see for himself that everything was all right now. Ironically enough, Stegeman was already at Schiphol Airport that very night, only without an invitation. There, he determined again that security was still very poor" (Van Joolen, 2008, p. 3).

In situational irony, as can be seen in the Schiphol example, the irony is in a situation that fails to meet certain expectations (cf. Lucariello, 1994; Shelley, 2001). In the case of the Schiphol example, a difference can be observed between Cerfontaine's claim that security at Schiphol Airport is robust, and Stegeman's actions that show that, at the exact same time, security measures are not good at all.

A third group of corpus studies identifies irony by the reaction it evokes. Since irony often involves humor, a number of studies using oral data only considered to include utterances as ironic when they were followed by (canned) laughter (e.g., Partington, 2007; Pelsmaekers & Van Besien, 2002). A downside to this approach is that it can only be used in analyses of audio or audio-visual recordings. In analyzing irony from different modalities (e.g., written speech or a transcript of only the words), this method cannot be used. A second, more pressing, problem with this analysis is that it may overlook many instances of verbal irony. Many authors agree that humor is only one of the communicative goals of irony (cf. Gibbs, 2000; Roberts & Kreuz, 1994). Besides humor, irony can be used for other communicative purposes such as the enhancement (e.g., Averbeck & Hample, 2008; Matthews, Hancock & Dunham, 2006) or diminishing of critique (e.g., Dews & Winner, 1997), and it can be used as a politeness strategy (e.g., P. Brown & Levinson, 1987; Leech, 1983). At the same time, not all humorous utterances are ironic; irony can also be considered a subset of humor (e.g., Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2004; Catanescu & Tom, 2001).

A fourth group of studies has operationalized irony by looking at pattern deviations (Kohvakka, 1996; Louw, 1993). Louw's (1993) analysis focuses on what he calls "semantic prosodies". He suggests looking up words in large text corpora to see
what connotations these words have. Louw's (1993) example is the word “utterly”. When considering connotations in the Cobuild corpus, Louw (1993) finds that most phrases use “utterly” with a negative connotation. Only a few collocates use “utterly” with a positive connotation. After examining these collocates, Louw (1993, p. 164) concludes that each carries a “fairly obvious ironic intention”. With this analysis, Louw (1993) shows that irony may be discovered with collocates; irony may carry other connotations than non-ironic utterances. In addition to Louw (1993), Kohvakka (1996) also looks at pattern deviations, but does so from a the perspective of argumentation theory. When certain words or utterances only support the conclusion when they are ironically interpreted, she considers these utterances to be ironic.

The studies of Louw (1993) and Kohvakka (1996) demonstrate that irony can be seen as a deviation from a certain pattern, be it semantic or argumentative. However, this method does not make clear which elements distinguish an ironic utterance from other utterances that deviate from patterns such as a hyperbole or an understatement. The Pragglejaz Group (2007) argues that, in order to distinguish between figurative and non-figurative language, a clear method of analysis is needed. For irony, this method should be clear on what exactly constitutes an ironic utterance and helps in distinguishing between irony and non-irony. The next paragraph introduces the Verbal Irony Procedure (VIP) that helps to distinguish between irony and non-irony. It also includes a sample analysis of one particular text using the VIP. In the VIP, the definition of irony that was discussed in the previous chapter (i.e., “an evaluative utterance, the valence of which is implicitly reversed between the literal and intended evaluation”, see paragraph 2.2.6) is used.

2.4 Operationalization of verbal irony
2.4.1 Unit of analysis
Before the Verbal Irony Procedure can be presented, it is important to select a proper unit of analysis (Steen, 2007, pp. 82-85). If a unit of analysis is well chosen, different observations can be well compared. In other words, a division of a text into units of analysis facilitates a comparison and closer analysis of different ironic utterances. This type of unit of analysis is usually referred to as a “recording/coding unit” (Krippendorff, 2004, pp. 99-101).

Typically, Krippendorff (2004, p. 100) recommends using units of analysis that are “the smallest units that bear all the information needed in the analysis.” When
analyzing irony, single words – the smallest unit of information in discourse (Krippendorff, 2004) – generally do not bear all the information needed. First of all, the selection of a unit of analysis that goes beyond the single word is warranted by the nature of verbal irony itself. In irony, a reversal of evaluation does not take place at the single-word level (e.g., good vs. bad), but rather at the level of evaluation (see e.g., Kotthoff, 2003). Therefore, paragraph 2.2.6 defined irony at the level of evaluative propositions. Besides, Low and Cameron (2002, p. 85) stress the importance of incorporating so-called “multi-word units” into units of analysis. They claim that language users do not look at words in isolation, but that they make “considerable use of multi-word units”. This implies that the unit of analysis should also be extended beyond the single word to the level of an evaluative proposition.

When taking the objections against single words into account, a clause is a logical choice to select as the unit of analysis, because clauses can be considered the “basic level of linguistic encoding” (Horne, Frid & Roll, 2005, p. 4; see also Hunston, 2000). In the paragraph 2.2, an ironic utterance was shown to include an evaluative proposition. In order to make sure that only one proposition is included per unit of analysis, we propose to divide texts for irony analysis into “finite clauses” (e.g., Levelt, 1998). Every unit of analysis can thus contain “one and only one tensed or finite verb” (Levelt, 1998, p. 257). As a result, every main and sub clause should be counted as a separate unit of analysis. When a unit is marked as ironic, this would mean that the entire clause is considered ironic. Utterances that do not have a tensed or finite verb (e.g., exclamations like “Cheers!” or headers) should be counted as separate elliptic propositions (see e.g., Giora, 1995, p. 244-245) and thus as separate units of analysis. In order to show how a text for irony analysis can be divided into units of analysis, I present an analysis of the opening two sentences of a Dutch DVD review that will be discussed in more detail later.

Sarah Nolan ([Diane] Lane) is a kindergarten teacher – in Hollywood code a gigantic clue that this woman is selflessness incarnate – but she is on her own nevertheless. Her boyfriend traded Sarah, already over forty years of age, in for a younger specimen.

When these two sentences are divided into units of analysis, six clauses are formed:

[1] Sarah Nolan ([Diane] Lane) is a kindergarten teacher
[2] [Utterance 1 is] in Hollywood code a gigantic clue that [Utterance 3]
[3] this woman is selflessness incarnate
but she is on her own nevertheless.

Her boyfriend traded Sarah [sub Utterance 6] in for a younger specimen.

Sarah is already over forty years of age.

The example shows that every subordinate clause was taken and selected as a different unit of analysis. We see for instance that the sub-clause referring to the Hollywood code has been further subdivided into two different clauses and that clause [3] is subordinate to clause [2]. In the same way, we see that [6] is subordinate to [5] and that the two ‘parts’ of [5] that in the original text were separated from each other by [6] have been put together to count as one unit. Finally, some utterances need to be supplemented to form a correct clause, such as utterances [2] and [6].

2.4.2 The Verbal Irony Procedure (VIP)

After the texts are divided into units of analysis, the Verbal Irony Procedure (VIP) can be applied to the data. This procedure, which can also be found in Figure 2.2, runs as follows:

1. Read the entire text
   - First, coders read the entire text to generally understand what stance the author of the text takes.
   - Then, they decide whether the entire text is ironic. When this is not the case, the coder may continue to step 2.

   It is important to read the entire text first to get a sense of what message this text wants to bring across. This information may help a coder to determine which utterances are (literally) incongruent with their co-text (i.e., all other utterances from the same text excluding the utterance under consideration; Attardo, 2000b, p. 9) or context (i.e., background information; Attardo, 2000b, p. 10).

2. Decode whether the utterance is descriptive or evaluative
   - Coders re-read individual paragraphs of the text and then look at the different utterances (units of analysis) in that particular paragraph.
For every utterance, coders argue whether it is purely descriptive, evaluative or is descriptive with an evaluative connotation. In case the clause is purely descriptive (and does not have an evaluative connotation), it is not considered ironic.

In case the utterance is evaluative or has an evaluative connotation, this utterance may be ironic (Step A in Figure 2.2).

Paragraph 2.2.6 argues that an ironic utterance always conveys some form of evaluation. Consequently, utterances without an evaluation (i.e., purely descriptive utterances) should be marked as non-ironic and discarded for further analysis. In some cases, coders may believe that – even though an utterance seems descriptive at face value – it also has an evaluative connotation. In that case, coders should leave this utterance in as a possibly ironic utterance. An example of a descriptive utterance with an evaluative connotation is an exclamation like utterance (2.2) (“Ah, Tuscany in May!”). Even though none of the individual words contain an evaluation that can be reversed in an ironic reading, the utterance itself can be seen as evaluative. Other examples of evaluative connotations can be found in the sample analysis in the following section.

3. Decide if the literal evaluation is incongruent with the (co-)text

In case the utterance is evaluative or has an evaluative connotation, coders determine what the (literal) evaluation is.

After paraphrasing the literal evaluation of the evaluative clause, coders determine if this literal evaluation is incongruent with the co-text (Step B in Figure 2.2). If this is not the case, the clause is not ironic.

The attribution of verbal irony to a text is something that is implicit. In order to see if an utterance is ironic, it is important to make the literal evaluation explicit to see if it is incongruent with the co-text. If this is not the case, it is likely that the author of the text really means this literal evaluation. This implies that the utterance in question is not ironic. In contrast, literal evaluations that are incongruent with the co-text and context are an indication that an utterance may be ironic.
Figure 2.2: Coding scheme of Verbal Irony Procedure (VIP)
4. **Decide if a relevant reading be found when the valence of the literal evaluation is reversed in the intended evaluation**

- If the literal evaluation is incongruent with the co-text or the context, the clause is possibly ironic. Coders have to construct a scale of evaluation as presented earlier.

- If the utterance is evaluative, this scale can be constructed with the use of certain terms from the utterance itself. If the utterance has an evaluative connotation, it is up to the coder to design the scale with the evaluation identified earlier.

- The scale of evaluation should have two important characteristics: (1) the scale should include a subdivision between positive and negative valence and (2) the literal evaluation should be negative or positive.

- Both the literal and the intended evaluation have to refer to the same object (Step C in Figure 2.2). This object can be a person, a physical object (e.g., a chair), but also a state of affairs (e.g., the weather), an event or a previous utterance.

- If a relevant reading can be found with a reversal of valence between the literal and intended evaluation (i.e., the intended (ironic) evaluation (negative or positive) has a different valence than the literal evaluation (positive or negative)) and in which the intended evaluation is congruent with the co-text, the utterance is considered ironic (Steps D and E in Figure 2.2).

Finally, coders have to construct a scale of evaluation as presented in the previous section. Since irony always involves two evaluations (literal and intended) with a difference in valence, coders have to see whether they could construct an evaluation scale with a positive and a negative domain. This means that the evaluation scale needs to have a so-called zero-point (neither positive nor negative) that has to be crossed to get from the literal to the intended evaluation in order for an utterance to count as ironic. Besides, this ironic interpretation needs to be relevant to the co- and context; an ironic reading should be congruent with the co- and context.

An advantage of the VIP is that it makes all steps in the identification of irony explicit. If coders disagree, backtracking their steps in the VIP will make it clear why their interpretations differ. This then makes it possible for coders to argue why they see a specific utterance as ironic or not.

The VIP also reconciles the perspectives of irony as a deviation of a general or personal norm. It has to be noted that the VIP does not claim to give the one, “correct”
interpretation of an utterance in claiming which utterances are ironic and which not. As Tannen (1984 in Gibbs, 2000, p. 12) observes, “there is some subjectivity involved in classifying utterances as ironic or not ironic”. However, the argumentation and analysis of some easy cases of irony may be so clear that an alternative explanation (and an interpretation of an utterance as non-ironic) does not hold. These cases can then be identified as indisputably ironic. At the same time, it is also possible that coders would disagree on some of the more difficult cases that were labeled as irony. In these cases, the VIP helps in explicating the steps in deciding why certain utterances were labeled as ironic and others were not. As such, coders can compare their analyses to come to a general conclusion whether an utterance is ironic or not.

2.4.3 Sample analysis

In order to show how texts can be analyzed with the VIP, this paragraph presents a sample analysis of a text; an anonymous DVD review of the romantic comedy film MUST LOVE DOGS (2005, dir. Gary David Goldberg) published in the Dutch newspaper Sp!ts (Anonymous, 2006). The first step of the VIP requires a coder to read the entire text before he or she starts coding. Therefore, the complete text, with numbers separating utterances, is reproduced below:

[1] Must Love Dogs

[24] Ratings:
[26] Extras: 6 [out of 10]

The text of the MUST LOVE DOGS review is analyzed below with the use of the VIP. Descriptive utterances (i.e., [1], [2], [5], [9], [10], [14], [18] and [24]) are not discussed. In order to convenience readers, ironic utterances are printed in boldface in the discussion below.

3. *in Hollywood code a gigantic clue*

This utterance contains an evaluation about the large size of a clue in the so-called “Hollywood code”, a supposed set of conventions to which Hollywood films adhere. The author seems to believe that this clue (i.e., kindergarten teachers are selfless people) is firmly rooted in Hollywood’s conventions. The rest of the text also informs the coder that the reviewer believes that MUST LOVE DOGS is a standard romantic comedy from Hollywood. As such, the literal evaluation is congruent with the co-text. Therefore, utterance [3] is non-ironic.

4. *that this woman is selflessness incarnate*

Like utterance [3], utterance [4] contains an evaluation. In this evaluation, Sarah’s character is literally seen as “selflessness incarnate”. At first, it is difficult to see whether the reviewer would really mean this evaluation. It is a hyperbole that may be used to mock Sarah or the film, and as such may be ironic. In order to solve this problem, a scale of evaluation about Sarah’s character was drawn (Scale 2.4). The utterance literally says that Sarah is selflessness incarnate; it literally evaluates Sarah’s character positively. A reversal of evaluation (i.e., a negative evaluation of Sarah’s character) would be odd in this particular review; the reviewer wants to convey that the film’s characters are so positive that they become unbelievable (see also utterance [8]). Therefore, no plausible reading can be found in which the intended evaluation of Nolan’s character is negative. Instead, the reviewer claims that Sarah is relatively selfless; this change in evaluation does not involve crossing the zero-point of the scale. In other words, utterance [4] contains a non-ironic hyperbole.
Sarah is selflessness incarnate  Sarah is quite selfless  Sarah is very self-centered

Scale 2.4: Evaluation of Sarah Nolan’s character: Non-ironic hyperbole

6. Her boyfriend traded Sarah in for a younger specimen.
Utterance [6] could be described as evaluative, because the words “traded in” as well as “specimen” show a negative evaluation of the behavior of Sarah’s former boyfriend, even though it is unclear who makes the specific negative assessment. In this case, the literal evaluation is congruent with the co-text. Utterance [6] is non-ironic.

7. already over forty years of age
It is possible to argue that the word “already” makes utterance [7] evaluative. However, in this case, the literal evaluation is congruent with the co-text as well. It is true that Sarah is older than forty years of age. Consequently, this utterance is non-ironic.

8. Her impossibly amiable sisters want that [utterance 9].
This utterance is evaluative as well, because of the phrase “impossibly amiable”. The word impossible explicitly negates amiable, which implies that, literally, the author considers it improbable that somebody in real life is as amiable as Sarah’s sisters. This seems to be one of the points of critique of this reviewer on the film MUST LOVE DOGS (see also utterance 4). Therefore, the literal evaluation is congruent with the co-text; the utterance is non-ironic.

11. Will she succeed in finding the man of her dreams?
On the surface, this utterance seems descriptive. The author poses the question that is central to the plot (or might even sum up the plot) of the romantic comedy Must Love Dogs. On face value, this question would thus simply include a description of the movie’s main premise. The answer to the question, however, is implicitly evaluative; the film makers hoped that a potential viewer would find the outcome of this plot
interesting enough to consider watching the film. This adds an evaluative connotation to utterance [11].

After reading the entire text, it also seems as if a literal use of this question is incongruent with the co-text. Previous utterances already gave a number of clues that Must Love Dogs completely adheres to genre conventions of the romantic comedy (e.g., the Hollywood code). Any reader who has seen a fair share of romantic comedies already knows the movie’s ending without having seen it; of course Sarah will find her true love. Therefore, utterance [11] should be interpreted as a rhetorical question; the reader as well as the critic knows the answer. Since the reviewer does not intend [11] as a literal, but as a rhetorical question, utterance [11] can be interpreted as an evaluative statement about the movie’s plot. This implies that the construction of an evaluation scale is warranted (Scale 2.5). In a literal evaluation (i.e., the question were to be asked in earnest), the plot’s outcome is uncertain. A potential viewer might want to know the answer, the plot would have been unpredictable and the movie captivating; a positive evaluation of the film. However, after reading the entire text, it becomes clear that the movie is reviewed negatively; an evaluation in which the valence of the literal claim is reversed, is congruent with the text. Indeed, the reviewer implies that the audience immediately knows how the film ends. This implies the plot is very predictable, which makes for a boring film. In this analysis, the zero point is crossed between the literal and intended evaluation (see Scale 2.5). This utterance is ironic.

![Evaluation Scale of Must Love Dogs](image)

12. Sarah meets a lot of losers of course.

This utterance is evaluative. The "of course" demonstrates that the critic finds it expectable that Sarah should meet many losers before finding her true love. In this case, the literal evaluation is congruent with the co-text; [12] also belongs to the
standard ingredients of a romantic comedy from Hollywood. This utterance is therefore non-ironic.

13. One of her digital don juans already starts crying within two minutes of date
Like utterance [12], utterance [13] contains an evaluative connotation. Although [13] may only seem a description of the actions of one of the suitors, it contains an evaluation as well. The word “don juan” refers to a male person who can either be described as a “womanizer” or as a romantic ideal. This literal evaluation is incongruent with the co-text, because the suitors were described in the previous utterance as “losers”. An evaluation scale can be constructed about this specific suitor (Scale 2.6). Since a man who cries after two minutes cannot be seen as a romantic ideal, an evaluation in which the valence of the literal evaluation is reversed is congruent with the text. This makes [13] ironic.

Suitor is a romantic ideal/ don juan

0

Suitor is a loser/ not a don juan

Scale 2.6: Evaluation of the suitor

15. Hilarious of course, such blind dates from hell.
This utterance contains an evaluation, because the author literally claims that the blind dates from the movie are hilarious, which would be a positive attribute for a romantic comedy. However, when looking at the description of the two blind dates – her own father and a guy who cries after two minutes – this literal evaluation seems to be incongruent with the co-text. After constructing Scale 2.7, a reversal of the valence of the literal evaluation seems more probable in this context; these dates are not hilarious at all. This means that [15] is ironic.
16. **With the crybaby, Sarah even goes on a second date.**

This utterance is one of the most difficult cases in this text to judge. On the surface, this utterance seems like a description of an event in the movie. In the narrative world of the film, this event may have been intended as a probable event. One word, however, puts an evaluative spin to this utterance; the word “even”. With this word, the author expresses his or her disbelief that Sarah would go out with the crybaby on a second date. This disbelief is meant literally; the utterance is non-ironic\(^\text{21}\).

17. **A normal person in the most prevailing mood of swooning would not even believe that.**

The utterance contains an evaluation (i.e., the event described in [16] is unbelievable). This evaluation is literally congruent with the rest of the text; the author seems to endorse that the film is unbelievable, which means that [17] is non-ironic. Other utterances which evaluate the film negatively in a similar way (and whose literal evaluation is thus congruent with the text) include utterances [20], [21], [23], [25] and [26]. These are not discussed further.

19. **but that does not really make Must Love Dogs a must-see either.**

Utterance [19] contains an evaluation (Must Love Dogs is not really a must-see). The literal evaluation of [19] is difficult to determine, because it includes a negation. In other words, is the literal evaluation of “not really a must-see” positive or negative? In dealing with this issue, it was decided that the literal evaluation would be determined based on the presence or absence of a modifier. If a modifier was absent (e.g., not a must-see), the negation was interpreted as a negation of the “main word” (in this case: the noun “must-see”). Therefore, if the text were “not a must-see”, the literal evaluation would have been interpreted as negative. If a modifier is present, however (as in the case of this utterance; “not really a must-see), a negation is interpreted as a negation of this
particular modifier; the movie is *not really* a must-see, which means it is still a little bit of a must-see.

The literal evaluation is incongruent with the rest of the text, because the author describes the film rather negative. After constructing a scale of evaluation (see Scale 2.8), it seems that an intended negative interpretation of this utterance is more probable than a literal positive interpretation. This makes [19] ironic.

This example shows that two coders who use the VIP may not necessarily come to the same interpretation of utterances. In this example, we interpreted the negation as a negation of the modifier and the literal evaluation as positive. Since an ironic interpretation of the Dutch expression “not really a ...” is conventionalized and almost always means “really not a ...”, another coder may interpret the literal evaluation of this utterance as negative and the utterance as non-ironic. An advantage of the VIP is that it becomes clear why these interpretations differ, enabling coders to specifically argue why they interpret a specific utterance as ironic (or not).

22. *one of the most gifted actors for this particular genre*

This utterance evaluates Cusack's performance in other romantic comedies. Although he may "drown in sugariness" in this particular film (see utterance 21), his acting in other romantic comedies is favorably reviewed. This means that this utterance is literally incongruent with the text as well; even though his performance in MUST LOVE DOGS is poor, Cusack remains one of the best actors to cast in a romantic comedy.

2.5 Conclusion and discussion

This chapter introduced the definition and operationalization of irony that is used in the corpus research reported in Chapters 3 – 6. Based on an analysis of the various
definitions of irony, a definition of verbal irony as an “evaluative utterance, the valence of which is implicitly reversed between the literal and intended evaluation” was introduced. This definition was then the basis of the Verbal Irony Procedure (VIP). This procedure can be used to discriminate between ironic and non-ironic utterances. A sample analysis of one text showed how the method could help in determining which utterances could be considered ironic and which not.

Like the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) did for metaphor studies (Pragglejaz Group, 2007), this detailed procedure opens up the coding process of verbal irony to rigorous empirical scrutiny. The VIP can make the intersubjectivity – inherent to the attribution of irony – explicit. If coders disagree on the labeling of a specific utterance as ironic, it not only becomes clear that they disagree, but also why they disagree; the VIP requires coders to break down the labeling of ironic utterances into a number of steps, making it easier to see when and why interpretations start to diverge.
Chapter 3:
Irony factors

3.1 Introduction
In the previous chapter, the Verbal Irony Procedure (VIP) – a method to identify verbal irony in discourse – was introduced. This procedure can help to locate and identify ironic utterances in natural discourse. This is the first in a series of four chapters in which the analysis of textual features of a corpus of ironic utterances is discussed. This particular chapter is concerned with so-called “irony factors”. The term “irony factor” has been introduced by Attardo (2000b, p. 7) who describes it as a characteristic of the ironic utterance. This means that an irony factor cannot be removed from the ironic utterance without destroying the irony. In Attardo’s (2000b) words, if an irony factor were to be removed, “the irony would disappear as well”. Although Attardo (2000b) first coined the term “irony factor”, he does not give examples of what he actually means with it. What exactly constitutes an “irony factor”? How can it be concluded which factors are crucial in constituting irony? And, even more important, which irony factors can actually be distinguished?

The previous chapter analyzed various theories of irony and concluded that an ironic utterance had a number of features which an utterance needs to have to qualify as ironic. These were that an ironic utterance is always (1) evaluative, and (2) has two meanings (literal and intended) that (3) are in opposition to each other, (4) is always directed at somebody or something; its target and (5) is relevant to its co- and context.

These five characteristics of ironic utterances served as the important elements of the operational definition of irony introduced in paragraph 2.2.6. Besides, they can also be found in the VIP scheme on p. 43 labeled as A – E. Every ironic utterance needs to have all of these five factors whereas non-ironic utterances do not necessarily have to include one or more of these factors. Therefore, they can be labeled as irony factors; every ironic utterance contains these irony factors in some way, and the factors serve to differentiate between irony and non-irony; they are thus useful factors to discriminate ironic from non-ironic utterances.

At the same time, these five irony factors manifest themselves concretely in ironic utterances. In doing so, irony factors have levels that differ across ironic utterances. As mentioned earlier, the irony factor of a shift in valence for instance
includes the sub-levels of ironic praise and ironic blame. In other words, whilst any ironic utterance has to contain a reversal of evaluation, the exact nature of this reversal may vary across different ironic utterances. Whilst irony factors themselves can thus be used to separate irony from non-irony, the levels of irony factors may be used to differentiate between ironic utterances. In this chapter, the latter issue is discussed as the object of analysis of a corpus of ironic utterances.

Table 3.1 gives an overview of the various irony factors and their sublevels. Let's briefly illustrate these five irony factors with an example; utterance (3.1), uttered in a downpour:

(3.1) Great weather, eh?

A first property of an ironic utterance is evaluativeness. Utterance (3.1) meets this condition, because it contains an explicit evaluation in the word "great". A second property of an ironic utterance is that a literal and an intended meaning can be observed. A pre-condition for observing a difference between a literal and an intended meaning is that the literal meaning is somehow incongruent with the co- or context. In the case of utterance (3.1), a contrast can be observed between the literally positive evaluation about the weather in utterance (3.1) and the actual situation in which it rains. Therefore, the literal evaluation is incongruent with the context. A third property of an ironic utterance is that it involves a shift in evaluative valence between the literal and intended evaluation. This shift in evaluative valence can be found in utterance (3.1); whilst the literal evaluation about the weather is positive (Great weather), the intended evaluation is negative (Horrible weather). This makes utterance (3.1) an example of ironic praise.

Another textual property of an ironic utterance is that it is always directed at somebody or something; its target. More contextual information is needed about utterance (3.1) to determine who or what the target is. The target could be the failed expectation that the weather would be great at the moment of speaking. The target could also be a specific person who wrongly predicted the weather; he or she claimed that the weather would be nice. Ironic utterance (3.1) could then serve to mock this person. Finally, an ironic utterance should be implicitly relevant to a given co- and context. In other words, it should be clear how the intended meaning of the irony is related to the discourse topic. In the case of utterance (3.1), the irony can be linked
directly to the actual weather situation; utterance (3.1) is directly relevant. Table 3.1 gives an overview of the five irony factors and their sublevels.

The research questions that are answered in this chapter are:

RQ1a. How are the levels of irony factors used in written discourse?
RQ2a. How does the use of irony factors differ across various written genres?

The next section discusses each irony factor separately. In the method section, then, the method of analysis of the irony factors is dealt with and the corpus of ironic utterances that forms the basis of the analyses of this and the following chapters is introduced.

Table 3.1: Irony factors and their sublevels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Irony factors</th>
<th>Sublevels of irony factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics</td>
<td>Distinguish irony from non-irony</td>
<td>Distinguish between ironic utterances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of factors</td>
<td>Evaluativeness (labeled A in Figure 2.2)</td>
<td>Explicitly evaluative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Implicitly evaluative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incongruence (labeled B in Figure 2.2)</td>
<td>Incongruence with co-text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Incongruence with context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Target (labeled C in Figure 2.2)</td>
<td>Sender (self-directed irony)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Addressee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Third party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Combination of the above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reversal of valence (labeled D in Figure 2.2)</td>
<td>Ironic praise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ironic blame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relevance (labeled E in Figure 2.2)</td>
<td>Directly relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Indirectly relevant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 Irony factors and their sublevels

3.2.1 Evaluativeness: explicitly and implicitly evaluative irony
One of irony’s characteristics is that it always conveys an evaluative proposition, which makes evaluativeness an irony factor. In some ironic utterances, this evaluation is
easier to locate than in other ironic utterances. The evaluation is already present in some ironic utterances, whereas in other ironic utterances, it has to be inferred (e.g., Kohvakka, 1996, p. 77).

In our stock example of verbal irony, discussed in the previous paragraph (utterance 3.1), the utterance was explicitly evaluative. The reason was that the utterance contained an explicitly evaluative word (*great*) which immediately framed it as an evaluative utterance.

An example of an implicitly evaluative ironic utterance can illustrated by means of a constructed example related to utterance (3.1). Imagine that Brenda and Laurie had wanted to go on a picnic. A day before the event, Brenda claimed that the picnic could continue as planned; the weather would be perfect. The next, however, it rained continuously and the picnic was cancelled. Disappointed, Laurie said to Brenda:

(3.2) Yes, you are a professional weather forecaster.

Utterance (3.2) does not seem evaluative at first value. Instead, it can be empirically verified whether Brenda is indeed employed or educated as a professional weather forecaster. If (3.2) is not interpreted as ironic, then, it seems as if Laurie is providing descriptive information about Brenda’s occupation or education. If, however, it is assumed that Laurie makes a comment about Brenda’s failed prediction, then utterance (3.2) can be interpreted as ironic. This means that Laurie gives a negative statement about Brenda’s ability to predict the weather. On face value (i.e., literal evaluation), it seems as if Laurie values Brenda’s forecast highly whilst she in fact comments negatively on it (i.e., intended evaluation). In order to interpret (3.2) as ironic, it is thus important to interpret a seemingly non-evaluative statement such as (3.2) as an evaluative statement (cf. Kohvakka, 1996, p. 77). In the case of (3.2), the utterance is thus what can be called “implicitly evaluative”; the ironic utterance is “covertly evaluative” and it is “up to the audience to recognize a good – or bad – thing when they see it” (Partington, 2007, pp. 1553-1554). This is different from utterances that are explicitly evaluative. In these utterances, the intended evaluation can be constructed by looking for the semantic opposite of one of the words in the original utterance. The study described in this chapter looks both at the issue how the irony factor of evaluativeness is used in written discourse and whether genre differences may be observed in the way in which this factor is used.
3.2.2 Incongruence: incongruence in the co- or context

In order to detect irony, the literal evaluation of an utterance should be incongruous with the co- or context. This incongruence can help a reader to comprehend the ironic utterance. The levels of this irony factor are concerned with the question whether the ironic utterance is based on incongruence with the co-text or incongruence with the context. In other words, does the text give any clues what the solution of the irony is or is it up to the reader to solve the irony based on contextual knowledge?

Toolan (1994, p. 90) claims that the perception of incongruence between an ironic utterance and its context is crucial to the recognition and understanding of an ironic utterance. Incongruence of the literal evaluation of an ironic utterance has two different levels; incongruence with the co-text (i.e., the other utterances in a text) and incongruence with the context (i.e., aspects besides the other utterances in a text).

First of all, it is possible that an exchange does not include incongruent information with the literal evaluation of an ironic utterance. A case in point is a new dialogue between Brenda and Laurie, who had wanted to go on a picnic, but had to abandon that picnic because of bad weather conditions:

(3.3.1a) Laurie: Great weather, eh?
(3.3.2a) Brenda: Let's go to the movies.

In this dialogue, no information is found that is incongruent with the literal evaluation of the ironic utterance. The information that the weather is bad is already manifest in the context. Therefore, Brenda changes the topic and talks about another activity that she and Laurie may undertake. In this situation, thus, Laurie chooses to rely on context and “mutual knowledge” (e.g., Jorgensen, 1996) as a way to communicate irony.

An issue to consider is in what circumstances an author decides to use irony, but believes that she may not exclusively rely on shared contextual knowledge. The question thus arises in what circumstances a writer decides to help his reader by explicitly “creating mutual knowledge” in the co-text (Kubczak, 1985, p. 428). Clues to what the intended evaluation of the irony is can be given by including an element that is incongruent with the ironic evaluation into the text. This is illustrated with an adapted version of the dialogue between Brenda and Laurie whose picnic plans have still been refuted:
(3.3.1b) Laurie: Great weather, eh?
(3.3.2b) Brenda: What do you mean?
(3.3.3b) I don’t get it.
(3.3.4b) Laurie: Well, we can’t go on our picnic.
(3.3.5b) The weather sucks.

Utterances (3.3.2b) and (3.3.3b) demonstrate that Brenda does not understand Laurie’s ironic utterance in (3.3.1b). In the utterances (3.3.4b) and (3.3.5b), Laurie therefore includes incongruent information with the irony in (3.3.1b). In (3.3.5b), Laurie solves the irony in (3.3.1a); the information that the weather sucks has a reversed valence in comparison to the (literal) claim that the weather is great. However, (3.3.4b) also includes incongruent information with a literal interpretation of the utterance. Of course, if a picnic can’t go on because of the weather, the weather is not great at all1.

A closely related phenomenon of interest is the place of the incongruent information in the co-text. In the example presented in (3.3b), Laurie provides Brenda with incongruent information after the ironic evaluation in (3.3.4c) to help her see the irony. However, it is also possible that the incongruent information is placed before the ironic evaluation, as in the following example:

(3.3.1c) Laurie: It rains.
(3.3.2c) We can’t go on our picnic.
(3.3.3c) Brenda: Yeah, that sucks.
(3.3.4c) Laurie: Great weather, eh?

In this version of the dialogue between Brenda and Laurie, the information that is incongruent with the ironic evaluation in (3.3.4c) precedes the ironic evaluation. This implies that in this dialogue, the co-text sets up an explicit frame in which to interpret the ironic utterance. In this chapter, the question whether genres differ in the ways in which they present information incongruent with the literal evaluation of an ironic utterance (either before the ironic utterance, thus setting up a frame against which the irony is to be evaluated or after the ironic utterance, thus effectively ‘solving’ the irony) is pursued as well.
3.2.3 Targets: sender, receiver or third party

Another characteristic of irony is that it is always aimed at someone or something; its target. A target can thus be defined as the person or object against whom or which the ironic utterance is directed (Livnat, 2004, p. 58). The various levels of this irony factor thus include the concrete person or object towards whom or which the ironic utterance is directed.

When dealing with the targets of irony, two important concepts need to be disentangled: the object of the ironic evaluation and the target of the ironic utterance. The object of the ironic evaluation is the person or thing the ironic utterance is about. The target is the person or object at whom the ironic utterance is directed. In some cases, the object of the ironic evaluation and the target of the irony may be equated, but this is not always the case. In the examples discussed below, attention is paid to this distinction and the two concepts are both discussed.

In the literature, three types of ironic targets have been identified. First, a speaker can make an ironic remark about herself (e.g., Cros, 2001, pp. 203-204; Kotthoff, 2003, p. 1396). In doing so, the speaker makes herself the victim of her own ironic remark. Self-directed irony may be interpreted as making fun of oneself or as a sign of self-reflection and modesty.

Again extending Brenda and Laurie’s example of the picnic that failed because of poor weather conditions, an example of self-directed irony may be observed in the following exchange:

(3.4.1) Laurie: I think that
(3.4.2) the weather will be great for a picnic.
[At the time the picnic was planned, it turned out that it rained heavily].
(3.4.3) Laurie: Rain, rain, rain!
(3.4.4) Great job, Laurie!

In utterance (3.4.4), Laurie directs the irony at herself, thus making herself the target of the ironic utterance. The object that is evaluated, however, is not – strictly speaking – Laurie herself, but rather her past prediction about the weather (the “job”). Nevertheless, the person that is targeted in the ironic utterance is Laurie herself.

Besides the author, the addressee can be a target of an ironic utterance as well (e.g., Clark & Gerrig, 1984, p. 122; Cros, 2001, pp. 202-203; Jorgensen, 1996, p. 618; Weizman, 2001, pp. 134-135). Various authors have observed that taking the
addressee as target of the ironic utterance helps to build a solidary relationship between sender and addressee (e.g., Cros, 2001, pp. 202-203; Jorgensen, 1996, p. 618). An example can be seen in yet another version of the dialogue between Brenda and Laurie:

(3.5.1) Brenda: I think that
(3.5.2) the weather will be great for a picnic.
[At the time the picnic was planned, it turned out that it rained heavily].
(3.5.3) Laurie: Rain, rain, rain!
(3.5.4) Great job, Brenda!

The dialogue in (3.5) is almost identical to the dialogue in (3.4). The main difference is that Laurie is not evaluating herself this time, but rather Brenda. Since Brenda is present at this exchange and the receiver of the ironic utterance, the target of the ironic utterance is the addressee. Please note that Brenda – like Laurie in the previous example – is not strictly speaking the person evaluated in the ironic utterance. Rather, Brenda’s past prediction about the weather is the object that is evaluated. Although closely linked, the irony’s object of evaluation and target are not identical in this case.

Finally, the target of an ironic utterance can be a third party (i.e., not the sender or addressee; e.g., Cros, 2001, p. 202; Weizman, 2001, pp. 129-133). In the case of the weather example, the target can be the object evaluated. Imagine that Laurie had not planned to go on a picnic at all. She is simply at home, staring out of her window, looking at the rain and saying (3.1) to herself. In this situation, Laurie does not comment on a previous utterance or failed prediction. Instead, she simply comments on the weather. In this specific situation, therefore, the object evaluated and the target of the ironic utterance converge.

Of course, it is also possible that the target is a third party that diverges from the object evaluated. Imagine that the day before the picnic, Brenda and Laurie watch the weather report on TV. Helga is the name of the weather forecaster:

(3.6.1) Helga (on TV): Tomorrow, it will be unclouded.
(3.6.2) It will be a sunny day, with highs around 25° C.
[At the time the picnic was planned, it turned out that it rained heavily].
(3.6.3) Laurie: Rain, rain, rain!
(3.6.4) Great job, Helga!
In the case of utterance (3.6.4), Helga is the target of the ironic utterance, whilst her prediction is the object that is evaluated.

In some cases it is difficult to spell out who or what the exact target of the ironic utterance is; it can be argued that a combination of sender, addressee and third party may be the target of the ironic utterance. A case in point is when Laurie is a professional weather forecaster who predicts to her friend Brenda that the weather of the following day would be perfect for their picnic. Laurie is not alone in her prediction. When Brenda and Laurie zap across TV channels, they see that Laurie’s professional opinion is shared by the other weather forecasters they see (i.e., Helga, Piet and Erwin). The following day, again, the weather is bad. Laurie comments ironically:

(3.7)  We, weather forecasters, are really reliable sources.

In (3.7), Laurie ironically targets a number of professional weather forecasters. This group includes both herself – which would make the sender the target of (3.7) – and the weather forecasters from TV (i.e., Helga, Piet and Erwin), which would mean that a third party is the target of the utterance. This overlap between targets means that the target of (3.7) is a combination of sender and third party.

A number of scholars has pointed out that the identification of the target of an ironic utterance is crucial in understanding irony (e.g., Gibbs, 2000, p. 10; Livnat, 2004, p. 58)\(^3\). A close link can particularly be observed between the conceptualization of irony from a relevance-theoretical perspective and the importance of targets (e.g., Livnat, 2004, p. 58; Weizman, 2001, pp. 125-126). In relevance theory, Wilson and Sperber (2002) connect irony to the concept of echoing (see section 2.2.3). In their view on irony, an ironic utterance contains a negative evaluation of an earlier utterance. They believe that this negative evaluation thus reflects on the person who uttered the earlier utterance (the ‘source’) in earnest. If the source of an ironic echo can be attributed to a specific person, this person can be described as the target or victim of the irony.

**3.2.4 Reversal of valence: ironic praise and ironic blame**
A third irony factor is related to the opposition between the literal and the intended meaning of the ironic utterance. In order for any utterance to qualify as an ironic utterance, a reversal of valence has be found between the literal and intended

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evaluation. The nature of this reversal of valence is the focus of the irony factor of valence.

Many researchers have noticed the distinction between ironic praise and ironic blame (e.g., Gibbs, 1986a; Kreuz, 1996; Matthews, Hancock & Dunham, 2006). The choice between ironic praise or ironic blame reflects the way in which the zero-point on irony's evaluation scale is crossed. If an ironic utterance is literally positive, it is considered ironic praise. Ironic utterances that are literally negative are referred to as ironic blame. This means that the example of Brenda and Laurie discussed in the previous paragraphs (i.e., “Great weather”) can be described as an example of ironic praise.

An example of ironic blame may be observed in another imaginary discussion between Brenda and Laurie. In this scenario, Brenda and Laurie had planned to go on a picnic. On the given day, the weather was beautiful with lots of sunshine. Laurie ironically comments:

\[(3.8) \quad \text{Horrible day for a picnic, eh?}\]

In (3.8), a literally negative utterance should be decoded into an intended positive utterance. This makes (3.8) an example of ironic blame.

Various authors have claimed that ironic praise is used much more often in natural language than ironic blame (e.g., Holman, 1972, p. 279; Jorgensen, Miller & Sperber, 1984, p. 115; Kreuz & Glucksberg, 1989, p. 376; Sperber & Wilson, 1981, p. 312). This phenomenon has been labeled the 'asymmetry constraint' (Kreuz, 1996, pp. 32-33). Indeed, when comparing utterances (3.1) and (3.8), the first utterance intuitively seems a more natural example of verbal irony than the latter. However, it has not yet been empirically investigated whether ironic praise is indeed used more often in discourse than ironic blame nor whether genre differences may be found in the use of ironic praise and blame.

### 3.2.5 Relevance: directly and indirectly relevant irony
A final irony factor is related to the judgment that is inherent to verbal irony; how does the ironic utterance relate to the discourse topic? Relevance of utterances has been widely regarded as an important aspect in discourse comprehension (e.g., Sperber & Wilson, 1995). The more an utterance is relevant to its co- and context, the easier this
utterance should be to process. Wilson and Sperber (2002, p. 252) argue that the relevance of an utterance is low – all other things being equal – when the processing effort needed to decode the utterance is high. Even though the level of relevance may differ between ironic utterances, the intended evaluation of every ironic utterance should at least have some relevance to the co- or context.

In order to specify these circumstances, relevance in ironic utterances can be described as the degree to which an ironic utterance “introduces information about an accessible discourse topic” (Giora, 1995, p. 244). This means that if an utterance is directly relevant, one inference is needed to connect the ironic utterance to the discourse topic. If an ironic utterance is indirectly relevant, more than one inference is needed to connect the ironic utterance to the discourse topic. Let’s illustrate these two levels of the irony factor of relevance with an example.

An utterance is directly relevant if only one inference is needed to connect it to the discourse topic. In these cases, the object of the ironic evaluation is properly introduced and referred to in the co-text. A case in point can be seen in utterance (3.8). This utterance is directly about the weather in relation to the picnic. This means that the irony in (3.8) about the failed expectations can be solved with one inference and that utterance (3.8) is directly relevant to the co-text.

An example of an indirectly relevant ironic utterance can be seen in dialogue (3.9). In this dialogue, Brenda and Laurie again have to deal with a failed picnic.

(3.9.1) Brenda: Shall we go on our picnic anyway?
(3.9.2) Laurie: I just love soggy sandwiches!

In (3.9), the topic that is discussed is a plan of deciding what to do next. Laurie responds with an ironic comment in (3.9.2) after which Brenda proposes to go to the cinema. In order to make sense of (3.9.2), a series of inferences is needed. First of all, it should be manifest to both speakers that Laurie does not like soggy sandwiches at all. Then, Brenda has to deduce that the sandwiches will get soggy if they were to eat them out in the rain. From this information, she should thus conclude that Laurie does not want to on their picnic, because of the rain. In order to make sense of (3.9.2), the addressee thus has to make a number of inferences to see the relevance between an ironic comment about soggy sandwiches in a dialogue about going on a picnic. Utterance (3.9.2) is thus an example of an indirectly relevant ironic utterance.
3.3 Method

3.3.1 Material

For the analyses in chapters 3 – 7, a corpus of ironic utterances from Dutch, written persuasive texts was compiled. First, texts from various written genres were collected. In order to differentiate between types of persuasive texts, the persuasive texts could be divided into two sub-categories: (1) texts that mainly aim to change people’s behavior (advertisements) and (2) texts that mainly aim to change people’s opinion (opinionative texts).

Two types of advertisements were chosen: commercial and non-commercial advertisements. The advertisements came from the advertisement databases of the Reclamearsenaal (www.reclamearsenaal.nl) and Cebuco (http://www.cebuco.nl/website/databank.asp?menuid=60). Besides, the portfolios of print advertisements that Dutch advertising agencies had put on their web site were considered. Only sites of agencies that were a member of VEA, the Dutch trade association of communication agencies, were included. A selection of the non-commercial advertisements, finally, came from the Duivenvoorden (2005) corpus.

For the opinionative texts, four genres were chosen, including columns, book and film reviews, and letters to the editor. Since advertisements often contain visuals, cartoons were included in the corpus as an opinionative genre with an emphasis on visual information. This means that the advertisements and cartoons can be labeled as “multimodal genres”, because they contain both verbal and visual information (see Forceville, 2008). In contrast, columns, book and film reviews and letters to the editor can be referred to as purely verbal genres, because these texts only contain verbal information. The opinionative texts came from a large number of Dutch daily newspapers (i.e., Algemeen Dagblad, Dagblad De Limburger, De Gelderlander, Metro, NRC Handelsblad, Spits, De Telegraaf, Trouw and De Volkskrant) taken from a random week (14-17 March 2006). By using this variety of sources, it can be argued that the texts and authors are diverse enough that one author’s dominant style does not skew the results.

Texts were selected from these databases based on a specific selection criterion. A text was read completely and briefly. When it could not be clearly argued that every utterance in the text did not contain irony, it was included in the corpus. When there were concrete doubts (i.e., one or more utterances were possibly ironic), the text was included in the corpus until it could be better argued whether it did or did not contain irony.
not contain irony. In other words, the Pragglejaz policy of “when in doubt, leave it in” (Steen, 2007, p. 126) was adapted to the selection of the texts in the irony corpus. Steen (2007, p. 126) argues that this policy, which he used for metaphor research, provides a good option for increasing the validity of the observations. Instead of producing a limited set of clear-cut examples on which everybody can agree, this procedure helps to increase the number of a-typical ironic utterances in the corpus. As a result, this policy increases the validity of the corpus of ironic utterance as a representative sample of irony in these genres.

Initially, 372 texts were selected. These texts were then coded with the Verbal Identification Procedure (VIP, see paragraph 2.4). After coding with the VIP, 213 texts (i.e., > 32,900 words, 4,415 utterances) remained in which a total number of 456 ironic utterances was found. This implies that 10.3% of all utterances in the corpus were ironic. Table 3.2 shows how the texts and ironic utterances are distributed across the different genres. The complete list of advertisements in the corpus can be found in Appendix I. The list of opinionative text can be found in Appendix II.

The corpus was coded by the author of this dissertation. Since the attribution of irony is inherently a subjective matter (Tannen, 1984 in: Gibbs, 2000), a selection of utterances that were identified as ironic were presented to two student coders. To make this selection, a stratified sample of 60 texts (15 advertisements, 15 columns, 15 book or film reviews and 15 letters to the editor) was randomly selected4. It turned out that these selected texts contained 180 ironic utterances, an average of exactly 3 ironic utterances per text and 39% of all ironic utterances. Two student coders (MA students in Dutch Language and Culture) first read an individual text and were then presented with the ironic utterances marked in boldface. Coders could indicate that they immediately recognized the irony, could understand why a specific utterance was marked as ironic after a second look or did not see the irony at all. Each student coder could provide a meaningful ironic interpretation of at least 87% of utterances that the author had labeled as ironic. In this process, the coders worked independently of each other and the author; they were only told which utterances were marked as ironic by the author, but not why these utterances were marked as ironic. Given the slippery nature of verbal irony, these results are interpreted as promising; coders can agree on the utterances that were identified as irony which strengthens the claim that the utterances in the corpus that were labeled as ironic may also be recognized by others as such. The irony coding of the author is thus used in this and the following chapters.
Table 3.2: Overview of the total number of texts, the total number of ironic utterances, the total number of utterances, the average number of ironic utterances per text (and standard deviations) and irony density – split out by genre (commercial and non-commercial advertisements, columns, cartoons, book and film reviews, and letters to the editor)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of text</th>
<th>Nr. of texts</th>
<th>Nr. of ironic utterances</th>
<th>Total nr. of utterances</th>
<th>Avg. nr. of ironic utterances per text</th>
<th>Avg. irony density per text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commercial ads</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>1.42 (1.50)</td>
<td>.34 (.24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-commercial ads</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>1.75 (1.47)</td>
<td>.28 (.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (advertisements)</strong></td>
<td><strong>122</strong></td>
<td><strong>189</strong></td>
<td><strong>873</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.55 (1.49)</strong></td>
<td><strong>.32 (.24)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>1589</td>
<td>4.65 (4.63)</td>
<td>.07 (.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cartoon</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>1.06 (0.24)</td>
<td>.28 (.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book and film reviews</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>1448</td>
<td>3.77 (2.96)</td>
<td>.09 (.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters to the editor</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>1.79 (0.93)</td>
<td>.13 (.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (opinionative texts)</strong></td>
<td><strong>91</strong></td>
<td><strong>267</strong></td>
<td><strong>3509</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.95 (3.15)</strong></td>
<td><strong>.13 (.13)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>213</strong></td>
<td><strong>456</strong></td>
<td><strong>4415</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.14 (2.44)</strong></td>
<td><strong>.24 (.22)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The irony density of a text is computed by dividing the number of ironic utterances of a text by the total number of utterances of the text.*

In this and the following chapters, the ironic utterances in the corpus (N = 456) are analyzed. Even though the ironic utterances are always nested within texts, the corpus is analyzed at the level of individual ironic utterances. Table 3.2 shows that that the number of ironic utterances is higher in the opinionative texts than in the advertisements ($t (119.96) = 3.91, p < .001, r = .34$), even though the number of advertisements is higher than the number of opinionative texts. This means that, on average, the opinionative texts contain more ironic utterances than the advertisements. However, the opinionative texts in general consist of more utterances than the advertisements. When the average irony density (i.e., the number of ironic utterances divided by the total number of utterances in a text) is taken into account, results show that advertisements with ironic utterances have a higher irony density than opinionative texts with ironic utterances ($t (192.97) = 7.16, p < .001, r = .46$).
3.3.2 Procedure and reliability

For the coding of the different irony factors, a coding instruction was made that was applied to the ironic utterances in the corpus. In this coding instruction, the different irony factors were introduced and illustrated with a number of examples how an ironic utterance could vary across the different levels of the irony factors. A copy of the coding instructions can be found in Appendices III and V.

Table 3.3: Cohen’s kappa, the percentage of agreement between coders, $p_{pos}$ and $p_{neg}$ in the first and second round of reliability coding of the irony factors of evaluativeness, incongruence, valence and relevance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>$\kappa$</th>
<th>% Agreement</th>
<th>$p_{pos}$</th>
<th>$p_{neg}$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluativeness</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>77.5 %</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incongruence</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>71.0%</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reversal of valence</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>90.6 %</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>88.3 %</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluativeness</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>89.7 %</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incongruence</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>89.9 %</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reversal of valence</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>96.6 %</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>94.8 %</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All figures are average scores of agreement between the three possible coder pairs and are unstandardized. $\kappa$ reports Cohen’s Kappa, %Agreement reports the total percentage of agreement. $p_{pos}$ indicates the probability that when one coder believed a specific utterance to be explicitly evaluative, ironic praise, directly relevant or to have an incongruent evaluation in the co-text, the other coder agreed; $p_{neg}$ indicates the probability that when one coder believed a specific utterance to be implicitly evaluative, ironic blame, indirectly relevant or to have an incongruent evaluation in the context, the other coder agreed.

It is important that the data that are reported in a corpus analysis are both reliable and valid. In order to test for intercoder reliability of the observations, the same MA-students of Dutch Language and Culture mentioned in section 3.3.1 were trained in the coding procedure. These coders were then asked to analyze a number of ironic utterances using the coding instruction. The data of these coders were compared against the coding of the author; three coders were thus included in the reliability analysis. The stratified sub-corpus described in paragraph 3.3.1 was used for the reliability analysis. This corpus contained 60 texts and 180 ironic utterances (i.e., 39%
of all ironic utterances in the corpus). Wimmer and Dominick (1987, p. 183) recommend that between 10% and 25% of the data should be re-analyzed in order to calculate intercoder reliability. Since the stratified sub-corpus contained 60 texts and 180 ironic utterances (i.e., 39% of all ironic utterances in the corpus), it meets these demands.

In order to test for intercoder reliability of textual features, Cohen’s Kappa should be used (e.g., Carletta, 1996). Normally, Cohen’s Kappa is only used to calculate agreement between a pair of coders. When using multiple coders, Siegel and Castellan (1988) recommend calculating a mean Kappa based on pair-wise comparisons of all possible coder pairs. This means that the Kappa’s reported below are an average of the three coder pairs. After a first round of coding, Cohen’s Kappa of the various irony factors varied between .07 and .56 (see Tables 3.3 and 3.4). Landis and Koch (1977, p. 165) provide much cited guidelines for interpreting a score of Cohen’s Kappa. If we were to follow their recommendations, intercoder reliability varied between poor and moderate, depending on which specific irony factor is considered. Only when a kappa value exceeds .60, Landis and Koch (1977) consider this value to indicate a “substantial” agreement.

Table 3.4: Cohen’s kappa, the percentage of agreement between coders, p_{sender}, p_{receiver}, p_{3rd party} and p_{combination} for the in the first and second round of reliability coding of the irony factor of target.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Round of coding</th>
<th>κ</th>
<th>% Agreement</th>
<th>p_{sender}</th>
<th>p_{receiver}</th>
<th>p_{3rd party}</th>
<th>p_{combination}</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st round</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>75.3 %</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd round</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>90.8 %</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All figures are average scores of agreement between the three possible coder pairs and are unstandardized. κ reports Cohen’s Kappa, %Agreement reports the total percentage of agreement, p_{sender}, p_{receiver}, p_{3rd party} and p_{combination} are unstandardized, ; p_{sender} indicates the probability that when one coder believed that the target was the sender, the other coder agreed, p_{receiver} indicates the probability that when one coder believed that the target was the receiver, the other coder agreed, p_{3rd party} indicates the probability that when one coder believed that the target was a third party, the other coder agreed, p_{combination} indicates the probability that when one coder believed that the target was a combination of sender, receiver and/ or third party, the other coder agreed.

To see if coders would be able to resolve their differences, a second round of coding was held. In this second round, coders were confronted with the coding and motivation of another rater on cases on which they disagreed (see e.g., Van Enschot,
2006). They could indicate whether they stayed with their own interpretation, agreed with the other rater’s observation or considered both their interpretations as good. This second round increased reliability substantially. After the second round, all irony factors except for relevance scored above Landis and Koch's .60 threshold. Even though coders were not allowed to confer during coding in both the second round of coding and all coders coded their data independently from each other, a point of caution should be noted about the kappa after the second round of coding. In the second round, coders did not just look critically at the cases on which there was disagreement. Since the coders saw the ratings of another coder and that other coder’s motivation, it may be possible that they were sometimes also influenced by the codings and/or motivation of the other coder. This implies that the kappa of the second rounds of coding reported in this dissertation should be interpreted with some caution; it is partially independent.

In some cases, a low kappa score may be caused by the data distribution. If a specific level of an irony factor is only used three times and coders would disagree about one of these three options, Cohen’s kappa may be estimated very low (i.e., paradox of kappa; Cicchetti & Feinstein, 1990; Feinstein & Cicchetti, 1990). In order to deal with this discrepancy, various statisticians have argued that researchers should also report agreement and agreement per category (positive and negative agreement) to see “if overall figures of agreement hide disagreement on less common categories” (Artstein & Poesio, 2008, p. 591; see also Feinstein & Cicchetti, 1990; Reidsma, 2008). Cicchetti and Feinstein (1990) suggest reporting positive agreement ($p_{pos}$) and negative agreement ($p_{neg}$). These two proportions, reported in Tables 3.3 and 3.4, indicate the chance that if one coder assigns a certain code to an utterance, the other will do the same. For reversal of valence, for instance, these percentages report the number of times coders agreed an utterance was ironic praise and the number of times coders agreed that an utterance was ironic blame.

The $p_{pos}$ and $p_{neg}$ always refer to different levels of the irony factor. The $p_{pos}$ refers to explicitly evaluative irony, ironic praise, directly relevant irony and an incongruent evaluation that is present in the co-text. In contrast, the $p_{neg}$ refers to the levels of implicitly evaluative irony, relevance and target. For relevance, the issue whether an utterance was directly relevant had a high agreement score after the first round of coding ($p_{pos} = .94$). At the same time, however, coders could hardly agree on the issue whether an utterance was indirectly relevant ($p_{neg} = .12$). For target, a similar
pattern was found. Agreement was high on the question whether an ironic utterance targeted a third party. However, for the other targets, the probability that two coders would agree was lower than 60% after the first round. This may be due to confusion between the object of ironic evaluation and the target of an ironic utterance, as discussed in paragraph 3.2.3. The low Kappa scores for these two irony factors thus seem justified. In these cases, the low kappa score reflects a disagreement on less common categories (see Artstein & Poesio, 2008). Nevertheless, the second round of reliability coding was needed to bolster agreement. The scores of the author were used in the analysis in the following paragraph. However, because of its low agreement score, the information of the factors of target and relevance should be treated with care.

3.4 Results and implications: Quantitative and qualitative

This section is concerned with the results from the analysis in which the irony factors are compared across genres. Besides quantitative information about differences between genres, this section also discusses a number of qualitative observations related to the different irony factors. It was chosen to include the latter discussions, because the real data often were not as clear-cut as the (invented) examples included earlier. For this reason, results are discussed for each irony factor individually.

3.4.1 Evaluativeness

Results

The first research question deals with the use of irony factors. Table 3.5 shows that 260 out of a total of 456 ironic utterances in the corpus were explicitly evaluative. These results demonstrate that, on average, an ironic utterance is explicitly evaluative in 56.9% of all ironic utterances in the corpus.

The second research question is concerned with the relationship between genre and the explicitness of an ironic evaluation. A relationship can be observed between genre and the question whether an ironic utterance is explicitly or implicitly evaluative ($\chi^2 (5) = 21.09, p = .001$, Cramer's $V = .22$, asymptotic method$^5$). An inspection of the residuals$^6$ showed that the commercial advertisements differed significantly from their expected values. In commercial advertisements, an ironic utterance was more often implicitly evaluative than expected.
Table 3.5: The frequency of explicitly and implicitly evaluative ironic utterances in commercial and non-commercial advertisements, columns, cartoons, book and film reviews and letters to the editor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Explicitly evaluative</th>
<th>Implicitly evaluative</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commercial advertisements</td>
<td>40^a</td>
<td>65^b</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-commercial advertisements</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columns</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cartoons</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book and film reviews</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters to the editor</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>260</strong></td>
<td><strong>196</strong></td>
<td><strong>456</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. ^a^, ^b^ = The frequency was ^a^ lower or ^b^ higher than might be expected on the basis of row and column totals (i.e., adjusted standardized residuals < -1.96 or > 1.96).

Examples

Examples of both explicitly and implicitly evaluative ironic utterances can be found in the corpus. An example of an explicitly evaluative utterance can be found in the opening of a letter to the editor, presented in (3.10.1). In this letter to the editor, the author ironically gloats at an astrologer’s wrong prediction about the winner of *Idols*, the Dutch version of *Pop Idol*. On the eve of the final – when only two contestants were still in the game – the astrologer wrongly predicted the winner. The author of the letter to the editor opens with:

(3.10.1) **How sad for your astrologer Elodie Hunting**

(3.10.2) that she was so utterly wrong in her prediction about the winner of *Idols.*

From the rest of the text, it becomes clear that the author has a low opinion of astrology and ridicules the astrologer’s wrong prediction. In other words, he does not believe that the astrologer’s mistake is sad at all. A reader of this ironic utterance can comprehend the irony, because utterance (3.10.1) contains the word “sad” which can be directly used as the literal evaluation (i.e., [Utterance 3.10.2] is sad for astrologer Elodie Hunting). The irony can then be solved by looking for the opposite of the evaluative word “sad”. In other words, (3.10.1) is an explicitly evaluative example of verbal irony.
Examples of implicitly evaluative ironic utterances can be found in the corpus as well. In a review of the TV program “In the trail of Peking Express” (a Dutch traveling show, broadcasted on the channel NET 5), utterance (3.11.2) is a seemingly descriptive utterance:

(3.11.1) Seldom have I seen a poorer piece of TV than “In the trail of Peking Express” on NET 5.

(3.11.2) Image stylist Dyanne Beekman has set off to “discover” South Vietnam for this traveling program.

(3.11.3) Beautiful nature, a rich culture and of course a grim history.

(3.11.4) But we do not see that.

It seems as if the speaker of (3.11.2) makes a descriptive utterance about the reason why Beekman went to South Vietnam in the first place. One could even argue that utterance (3.11.2) is Beekman’s official assignment brief, issued by the management of NET 5. Theoretically therefore, it could be empirically possible to verify whether (3.11.2) is true or not. Nevertheless, utterance (3.11.2) can be seen an ironic utterance. The reader then has to make an extra inference to frame (3.11.2) as an evaluative utterance. Like in utterance (3.2) the reader has to reconstruct the evaluation; it is good or interesting to explore South Vietnam for a traveling program. The intended evaluation is negative; it is bad that Beekman does not explore South Vietnam’s nature, culture or history.

In some cases, however, it was more difficult to determine whether an utterance was literally evaluative. A case in point on which coders disagreed was the following extract from a book review. The book that is reviewed is about the way the American government dealt with the media during the second Iraq War. At this point, the reviewer talks about the American policy:

(3.12.1) With support from marketing and communication experts, journalists, film directors and researchers, scenarios were developed to effectively influence public opinion around the globe.

(3.12.2) These did not only provide for technological fireworks and visual spectacle,

(3.12.3) that kind of footage quickly bored its viewers

(3.12.4) which was known from previous research,

(3.12.5) but also for “realistic war footage” with “real people”
Utterance (3.12.5) is ironic, because the reviewer claims that the war footage shown during the second Iraq War is not realistic at all, but turns out to be scripted by the American government. An issue to debate, however, is whether the ironic utterance also includes an explicit evaluation or not. On the one hand, it is possible to argue that the question whether something is realistic or not is in the eye of the beholder. The people who saw the war footage on TV only had films such as Saving Private Ryan as a vantage point against which to decide whether the footage they saw of the Iraq War was realistic. This approach would mean that the decision of realism of footage is to be decided by the individual viewer, which would mean that (3.12.5) is explicitly evaluative. At the same time, it is also possible to argue that (3.12.5) is implicitly evaluative. The American soldiers who are portrayed actually experienced the things that could be seen on the footage. For these soldiers, therefore, the footage presented an (edited) version of their wartime experience. Besides, the people who are portrayed in the footage are actual soldiers who did a ToD in Iraq, in contrast to Capt. Miller or Private Ryan (characters from the Spielberg film, played by Tom Hanks and Matt Damon, respectively). These difficult cases were decided on by the author.

Implications
In this chapter, the distinction between explicitly evaluative and implicitly evaluative irony was introduced in order to deal with the examples of irony that do not seem to include an explicit evaluation. It turns out that almost 60% of all ironic utterances in the corpus can be labeled explicitly evaluative. This pattern can be found in all genres included in the corpus with the exception of commercial advertisements. In this genre, the percentage of explicitly evaluative ironic utterances is significantly lower than what was expected based on the general distribution. This seems to indicate that commercial advertisements use irony that may come across as (seemingly) more objective than irony in other genres. This result lends empirical support to the claim that verbal irony may differ across written genres. Commercial advertisements seem to work differently from other the genres in the corpus.
3.4.2 Incongruence

Results

Table 3.6 shows that, for a total of 184 utterances from the 456 ironic utterances in the corpus, incongruent information with the literal evaluation of the ironic utterance was present in the co-text. For a total of 239 utterances, incongruent information with the literal evaluation of the ironic utterance was absent. In 33 cases, it was unclear whether incongruent information with the literal evaluation of the ironic utterance was present or absent\(^\text{10}\). These 33 cases were excluded from further analysis on the factor of incongruence. These results demonstrate that, when these 33 cases were discarded, incongruent information with the literal evaluation of the ironic utterance is present in 40.0% of all ironic utterances in the corpus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Incongruent info absent</th>
<th>Incongruent info present</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commercial advertisements</td>
<td>(28^a)</td>
<td>(45^b)</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-commercial advertisements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columns</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cartoons</td>
<td>(17^b)</td>
<td>(1^a)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book and film reviews</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters to the editor</td>
<td>(18^a)</td>
<td>(25^b)</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>423</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. 33 utterances were not coded, because it was unclear whether incongruent information was present or not in the verbal co-text; \(a^b\) = The frequency of the absence or presence of incongruent information was a lower or b higher than might be expected on the basis of row and column totals (i.e., adjusted standardized residuals < -1.96 or > 1.96).

A relationship can be observed between genre and the presence or absence of incongruent information in the co-text (\(\chi^2 (5) = 26.91, p < .001, \text{Cramer's } V = .25\)). An inspection of the residuals showed that the commercial advertisements, cartoons and letters to the editor differed significantly from their expected values. In the case of cartoons, incongruent information was absent from the verbal co-text more often than
expected. For the commercial advertisements and letters to the editor, in contrast, incongruent information was present more often than expected.

Another aspect that may be worth looking at is whether the incongruent information is placed before or after the ironic utterance. In 19.1% of all cases in the corpus in which incongruent information is present, this incongruent information is placed before the ironic utterance. Table 3.7 shows the distribution across the different genres. Again, a relationship between a text’s genre and the place of incongruent information (i.e., before or after the ironic utterance) can be observed ($\chi^2 (5) = 22.18, p < .001$, Cramer’s $V = .35$, exact method). An inspection of the residuals showed that the commercial advertisements, columns, and book and film reviews differed significantly from their expected values. In the case of commercial advertisements, incongruent information was placed after the ironic utterance more often than was expected. For the columns, and book and film reviews, in contrast, incongruent information was placed before the ironic utterance more often than was expected.

Table 3.7: Location of co-textual information that is incongruent with the literal evaluation of the ironic utterance in commercial and non-commercial advertisements, columns, cartoons, book and film reviews, and letters to the editor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Before ironic utterance</th>
<th>After ironic utterance</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commercial ads</td>
<td>0$^a$</td>
<td>45$^b$</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-commercial ads</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columns</td>
<td>13$^b$</td>
<td>30$^a$</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cartoons</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book and film reviews</td>
<td>12$^b$</td>
<td>28$^a$</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters to editor</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>35</strong></td>
<td><strong>149</strong></td>
<td><strong>184</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $^a,b = \text{The frequency of the absence or presence of incongruent information was } ^a \text{ lower or } ^b \text{ higher than might be expected on the basis of row and column totals (i.e., adjusted standardized residuals } < -1.96 \text{ or } > 1.96).$

An explanation for this difference is that irony in commercial advertisements is used as a riddle. First, an advertiser makes an ironic utterance. Then, the advertiser helps the addressees who cannot solve the irony by presenting incongruent
information. The columns and book and film reviews, in contrast, want the reader to get their point. Therefore, they first present a general context after which an ironic evaluation is used as a fake conclusion as described by Kohvakka (1996; see Ch. 1).

Examples
Examples of both ironic utterances with incongruence in co- and context can be found in the corpus. An example in which the co-text presents incongruent information can be found in the advertisement for the Dutch weekly magazine Elsevier in Figure 3.2. The text of this advertisement goes as follows:

(3.13.1) "Soft drugs are not dangerous."
(3.13.2) Don’t be fooled.
(3.13.3) Elsevier.

This advertisement includes an echoic use of a previous utterance, although it is unclear who used (3.13.1) literally. The second utterance shows that Elsevier dissociates itself from the utterance. This advertisement does not include the intended evaluation of ironic utterance (3.13.1), which would be something like “soft drugs are dangerous”. Nevertheless, utterance (3.13.2) is a strong co-textual clue that the advertisement’s sender (in this case: Elsevier) cannot be held accountable for a literal interpretation of (3.13.1).

In a number of other cases, the intended evaluation is not stated or hinted upon in the co-text. An example from the corpus can be found in utterances (3.14.1) – (3.14.5), the opening lines of a review of a book on the second Gulf War that was also referenced in (3.12).

(3.14.1) An apparently insignificant detail,
(3.14.2) but ironic and symbolic in the light of history:
(3.14.3) At the end of February 2003, [sub 3.13.4 [sub. 3.13.5]] UN employees remove a life-size replica of Guernica, [sub 3.13.6], from one of the rooms of the Security Council.
(3.14.4) some days before American Secretary of State Colin Powell in an
effervescent PowerPoint presentation “proves” that [3.13.5]

(3.14.5) Iraq has weapons of mass destruction,

(3.14.6) Picasso’s most famous painting

After this long opening sentence, the text continues to argue why the removal of
*Guernica* was symbolic and ironic. This leaves the reader with utterance (3.14.4) In
order to correctly decode this ironic utterance (i.e., American Secretary of State Colin
Powell did not prove at all that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction), the reader
needs to have a certain amount of background knowledge. In this case, the
background knowledge consists of the fact that, in contrast to the claims made by the
American government before the second Gulf War, no weapons of mass destruction
were found in Iraq, at least at the time this book review was published. Since this issue
was widely covered in the media at the time the book review was published, the critic
could assume that his audience would know these facts. In this case, the co-text does
not explicitly set up a contrast with the literal evaluation of ironic utterance (3.14.4).
This subsumes that the reviewer believed his readers to have a certain amount of
contextual knowledge – in this case, knowledge of current world affairs – necessary to
decode the ironic utterance.

In other cases, it was more difficult to determine whether the co-text contained
an evaluation that was incongruent with an earlier utterance. A case in point can be
seen in utterance (3.15.5), an excerpt from a column in which columnist Ebru Umar
talks about the new bed she recently bought:

(3.15.1) I actually just bought a new bed [with a width] of 1.80 meters
(3.15.2) whilst a single bed was more than enough.
(3.15.3) But my mother was in league with the salesperson,
(3.15.4) so I also bought a comforter of 720 euros apiece.
(3.15.5) No, the euro did not make life more expensive.

Utterance (3.15.5) is ironic, because Umar literally says that life is not more expensive
after the Dutch guilders had been replaced with the euro, whilst she means that life
indeed has become more expensive. In the literal evaluation, Umar is thus satisfied
with the prices in euros (in comparison to guilders), whilst the intended evaluation
shows her dissatisfaction with the prices in euros. However, utterance (3.15.5) is
difficult to code on the irony factor of incongruence. On the one hand, it is possible to argue that the co-text does not include incongruent information with the literal evaluation of (3.15.5). A reason is that the co-text does not include any information about a comparison of prices before and after the introduction of the euro, possibly corrected for inflation. It is thus possible to claim that the co-text does not contain incongruent information with (3.15.5). At the same time, it is also possible to claim that the co-text actually does contain some incongruent information. In (3.15.4), it is claimed that Umar bought a comforter for 720 euros. Even though (3.15.4) does not contain any information about the prices of comforters in the guilders era, Umar may imply it to be considered general knowledge that comforters were not as expensive then. In this line of thought, the mere mentioning of the price of the comforter can – together with general knowledge about the prices in the guilders era – work as incongruent information.

**Implications**
The results show that the inclusion of incongruent information is fairly common in Dutch, written irony. In almost half of the cases, the writer chose to make it easier for the reader by adding incongruent information with the literal evaluation of an ironic utterance in the co-text. This is not surprising. Micham (1984, p. 92) purports that, if writer and reader do not really know each other, “care must be taken within the particular message itself to establish a ground against which intended ironies can stand out.” For these texts, it is the case that the sender does not know which individuals will read them. Nevertheless, in little over half of the cases, the authors chose not to include incongruent co-textual information in the co-text and in almost half of the cases, the authors chose to do so.

It is not surprising that cartoons were an exception to this pattern. The definition of co-text applied in this chapter does only include written information. In cartoons, visual co-text of course also plays an important role in decoding the irony. However, it is hard to apply the same coding scheme to visual information as the coding scheme that was applied to the written co-text. Therefore, the visual co-text is dealt with separately in chapter 6 on irony and visuals.

The differences in the commercial advertisements and letters to the editor are most striking. Even though “default assumptions” of a commercial advertisement may lead a reader to expect a positive message about the advertised product or service or
the advertiser, advertisers feel the need to include incongruent information with the irony in their text. In that way, they try to minimalize the number of readers who fail to understand the irony.

The fact that people who write to a newspaper use explicitly incongruent information more than other writers does not come as a surprise either. First of all, these people are often not professional writers. Besides, they write to an audience that does not know them and who may choose to accept or withhold publication of their letter. In order to increase common ground, these writers can therefore choose to mention incongruent information explicitly more often than other writers.

Another aspect is the place of the incongruent information. In commercial advertisements, the incongruent information usually follows the ironic utterance; irony in commercial advertisements is used as a riddle that needs to be solved. In some cases, the advertiser seems unsure whether the riddle will actually be solved; explicitly incongruent information is included. In columns as well as book and film reviews, however, incongruent information usually precedes the ironic utterance. In those cases, it seems as if the writer tried to create a common ground first after which an ironic utterance was used.

3.4.3 Targets

Results

Table 3.8 shows that, from a total of 456 ironic utterances in the corpus, the sender was the target 40 times. For a total of 36 utterances, the target could be classified as the addressee. In 340 cases, the target was a third party. For a total of 41 cases, the target was a combination of sender, addressee and/ or a third party. These results demonstrate that, on average, a third party is the ironic target in 74.4% of all ironic utterances in the corpus.

A relationship can be observed between genre and the various targets ($\chi^2 (15) = 57.45, \ p < .001$, Cramer’s $V = .21$, exact method). An inspection of the residuals showed that the commercial and non-commercial advertisements, columns and book and film reviews differed significantly from their expected values. In the case of columns, the sender was more often the target than expected, whilst the addressee was the target less times than expected. For the book and film reviews, both the sender and the addressee were the target less often than was expected, whilst a third party was more often the target. In the commercial advertisements, a third party was
the target less often than was expected, whilst the addressee and a combination of sender, addressee and/or third party were more often the target than was expected. In non-commercial advertisements, finally, the addressee was more often the target than was expected.

Table 3.8: Frequency of targets of sender, addressee, third party or a combination in commercial and non-commercial advertisements, columns, cartoons, book and film reviews, and letters to the editor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sender</th>
<th>Addressee</th>
<th>Third party</th>
<th>Combination</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commercial ads</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-commercial ads</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columns</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cartoons</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book and film reviews</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters to the editor</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>456</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. a,b = The frequency of targets was a lower or b higher than might be expected on the basis of row and column totals (i.e., adjusted standardized residuals < -1.96 or > 1.96).

Examples

Examples of the various targets can be found in the corpus. In an example of self-directed irony from the corpus, columnist Ebru Umar talks about her own behavior in the dating game:

(3.16.1) Still, I suddenly see attractive men everywhere.

(3.16.2) The lunches and dates suit me well.

(3.16.3) I ignore an sms from the fair-haired god.

(3.16.4) Very mature.¹⁴

Utterance (3.16.4) is an ironic utterance; the reader should infer that Umar’s decision to simply ignore an sms from an attractive male (the “fair-haired god” from the previous utterance) is not a mature response at all. Although the object of the ironic evaluation is Umar’s behavior (more specifically, her behavior to ignore an sms from the fair-haired
god), the irony is directed at Umar herself. Utterance (3.16.4) therefore directly targets the text’s author.

An example in which the addressee is the target of the irony can be seen in the advertisement for the non-profit organization Bond Zonder Naam in Figure 3.5.

(3.17) Sure, blame it on someone else”.

The Bond Zonder Naam is a non-profit organization that aims to increase solidarity throughout Dutch society. Utterance (3.17) is an example of an advertisement in which the organization uses irony to address a social problem. The Bond Zonder Naam seems to believe that too many people blame their misfortunes on other people instead of critically looking at themselves. Utterance (3.17) thus ironically targets the addressees that do just that. Literally, the utterance purports that it is good to blame misfortune on another person; the object of evaluation is the blaming of things gone bad on others. If the irony is resolved, the addressee will see that it aims to convey that it is bad to blame bad things on other people.

Corpus examples in which a third party was the target of the ironic utterance have also been listed throughout this chapter. Examples include utterances (3.13.1), which targeted people who believe that soft drugs are not dangerous and utterance (3.14.4), which targeted the American Secretary of State.

A natural example in which a combination of sender, addressee and/ or third party was the target of the ironic utterance can be seen in an example from the corpus, in which the film DATE MOVIE (2006, dir. Aaron Seltzer), a parody of films from the romantic comedy film genre, is very negatively reviewed:

(3.18.1) The procedure is this:
(3.18.2) You take the best scenes from a number of successful films,
(3.18.3) you confuse the blender for a text processor,
(3.18.4) you put your entire collection in it,
(3.18.5) press a button
(3.18.6) and you think that (3.18.7)
(3.18.7) you have a new script.
Since a number of illiterates work in Hollywood, who cannot read but who can count, you get a bag of money to actually make that piece of crap. And strangely enough, we – enthusiasts of the noble film art – watch this rubbish.

In the literal evaluation of (3.18.12), the reviewer ponders that “we” (enthusiasts of the noble film art) actually go to the cinema to watch a movie like DATE MOVIE. At the same time, the reviewer means that people who are real enthusiasts of the art of filmmaking would never see this film. A question that remains is who the exact target of the utterance is. In other words, who is the group that is ironically addressed as we, enthusiasts of the noble film art. Firstly, the target is the actual audience of the film. This audience could include the addressee (who may or may not go out to see the film), other people who see the film (a third party) and perhaps even the reviewer himself (who saw the film for professional reasons). This means that the target of the ironic utterance can be described as a combination between sender, addressee and third party.

In some cases, the target was also clear and identifiable, but difficult to classify. A case in point is utterance (3.19.6). The text comes from a series of advertisements that aimed to promote social behavior by ironically exposing anti-social behavior. In doing so, the advertisement also adopted the style of Dick Bruna’s Miffy books, a popular series of children’s books. The advertisement opened in the following way:

Kees is in his car. It is crowded on the road. Henk wants to get on the road as well. Kees gives him the finger. 'No' is what that means (Literal translation: ‘No’ means that). Well done, Kees.

Utterance (3.19.6) is an example of an ironic utterance, because it is not polite at all to show somebody the finger. Kees’ behavior should thus not be lauded at all, but critiqued. It is clear that Kees (who gives Henk the finger) is the target of the ironic utterance. However, it is not really clear how Kees can be classified. On the one hand,
Kees is directly addressed in the utterance (Well done, Kees). It is possible to argue that Kees is the addressee of (3.19.6). On the other hand, Kees is a fictional character and is thus not the intended audience for this non-commercial campaign. Instead, people who behave like Kees are the targets of the ironic utterance. This means that Kees himself can also be labeled as a third party whilst the group of people that Kees represents can be considered a combination of targets; this group includes both the addressee (i.e., people who behave like Kees and see the advertisement) and a third party (i.e., people who behave like Kees and do not see the advertisement). It is clear that – although the target of ironic utterance (3.19.6) seems straightforward, it is still difficult to actually label this target.

**Implications**

For all genres in the corpus, the results show that a third party was most often the target of the ironic utterance. Authors seem to prefer to ironically target neither themselves nor their audience directly, thus creating irony at the expense of a third party.

The results have also indicated a relationship between the genre of a text and the target of the ironic utterance. In four of the six genres, the distribution of the targets was different from what was expected based on the general distribution. Different genres thus seem to use irony against different targets. These differences can be well explained when considering the genres more closely.

In book and film reviews, the target is more often a third party and less often the sender or addressee than could be expected on statistical grounds. This can be directly related to the function of a book or film review. In a review, a certain work such as a book or film is evaluated by the reviewer. Irony in this genre is thus often directed at either the evaluated work or the person who is responsible for creating the work (i.e., the book’s author or the film’s director). Both the work itself and the person responsible for it can be labeled a third party. It is not surprising then that a third party is more often the target of the ironic utterance in a book or film review.

In contrast to the other genres, a column may be about the author of the text him- or herself. The author of a column can talk about personal experiences. It may thus not come as a surprise, then, that the sender is more often the target than in the other genres. This genre difference can also be explained based upon a close examination of the genre in which the ironic utterances were used.
The final difference was found in the commercial and non-commercial advertisements. In these genres, the addressee is more often the target than expected based on the general distribution. These genres may directly address the reader to talk to him or her about their behavior. In the case of commercial advertisements, the text may address the reader to directly to persuade the reader to buy a specific product or service. In non-commercial advertisements, then, the text addresses the reader in order to persuade the reader to show some (socially-acceptable) behavior.

3.4.4 Reversal of valence

Results

Table 3.9: Frequency of usage of ironic blame and ironic praise in commercial and non-commercial advertisements, columns, cartoons, book and film reviews, and letters to the editor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ironic blame</th>
<th>Ironic praise</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commercial advertisements</td>
<td>54(^b)</td>
<td>47(^a)</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-commercial advertisements</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columns</td>
<td>11(^a)</td>
<td>94(^b)</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cartoons</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book and film reviews</td>
<td>10(^a)</td>
<td>82(^b)</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters to the editor</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. 16 utterances could not be coded, because it was unclear whether the literal evaluation was negative or positive. \(^a\)\(^b\) = The frequency of ironic blame or ironic praise was \(^a\) lower or \(^b\) higher than might be expected on the basis of row and column totals (i.e., adjusted standardized residuals < -1.96 or > 1.96).

Table 3.9 shows that, from the 456 ironic utterances in the corpus, 338 were counted as examples of ironic praise. A total of 102 utterances were examples of ironic blame. On average, an ironic utterance is therefore an example of ironic praise in 76.8% of all ironic utterances in the corpus. In 16 cases, it was unclear whether the author gave a positive or a negative evaluation\(^\text{18}\). These 16 cases were excluded from further analysis on the irony factor of reversal of valence. The results reflect and confirm the existence of the asymmetry constraint. In general, ironic praise occurs more often in natural written language than ironic blame.

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A relationship could be found between genre and the use of ironic praise and blame ($\chi^2(5) = 70.95, p < .001, \text{Cramer's } V = .40, \text{exact method}$). An inspection of the residuals showed that the commercial advertisements, columns, and book and film reviews differed from their expected values. In the case of commercial advertisements, an ironic utterance was more often an example of ironic blame than what was expected based on the general distribution of the corpus. In contrast, columns, and book and film reviews had relatively more examples of ironic praise than what was expected based on the general distribution of the corpus.

**Examples**

Examples of ironic praise and blame could be found in the corpus. Ironic praise could for instance be seen in utterance (3.19.6). This utterance is literally positive, and has to be decoded into a negative intended utterance.

Ironic blame can be seen in Figure 3.3, an advertisement for the computer magazine *Computer Idee*. Utterance (3.20.1) includes an ironic utterance:

(3.20.1)  Shameful!
(3.20.2)  Now only 1 Euro.
(3.20.3)  Computer Idee, does not make computers difficult\(^{19}\)

The literal meaning of the word “shameful” is a negative comment on the (supposedly) low price of the magazine. However, the ad aims to convey that the low price of the magazine is something good. In order to solve the irony in (3.20.1), a reader has to decode the literal meaning of outrageous (i.e., negative) into the intended meaning of good (i.e., positive). Therefore, (3.20.1) can be described as an example of ironic blame.
In some cases it was difficult to determine whether an utterance was an example of ironic praise or ironic blame. In the advertisement for Kanis & Gunnink coffee in Figure 3.4, an ironic utterance is present in the slogan:

(3.21) Just lie low^{20}.

In other advertisements, this brand of coffee uses this particular slogan to distinguish themselves from their competitors by refraining from explicitly bragging about their product, thereby evoking a Dutch cultural value. In this specific advertisement, however, the slogan is used to advertise a special promotion designed for a special occasion (i.e., since Kanis & Gunnink had sold over 25 million coffee pads, they offer consumers a ‘2 for 1’ deal). In this ad, therefore, Kanis & Gunnink claim that they do not lie low; the promotion should be regarded as something special. It is unclear how this change of evaluation of the normal slogan should be interpreted in terms of ironic praise and blame. Laying low is something favorable. However, doing something special just for once is favorable as well. In this case, a difference in evaluation about laying low can be observed, but is difficult to assign a specific valence to the literal and ironic interpretation.

**Implications**

The results seem to confirm the existence of the asymmetry constraint in a number of genres of contemporary Dutch written discourse. Throughout the corpus, ironic praise was used more frequently than ironic blame. This means that – overall – the existence of the asymmetry constraint is confirmed. In columns and book and film reviews, the asymmetry constraint is even bigger than in the other genres. In these genres, ironic blame is even rarer than in the other genres in the corpus.
There also seems to be a difference in the ways in which ironic blame is used in advertisements and the other genres included in the corpus; ironic blame is significantly more frequent in commercial advertisements than in any other genre in the corpus. These results may be explained with regard to genre expectations. Whilst authors of opinionative texts can express both positive and negative evaluations, a norm for advertisements is to usually present a positive evaluation of a product, service and/or corporation (Forceville, 1996, p. 68). The “default assumption” of an advertisement is that it conveys something positive. The advertiser also knows about this expectation of the receiver’s and may choose to play with it; a reader can use the genre’s conventions to correctly decode the irony.

### 3.4.5: Relevance

#### Results

Table 3.10: Frequency of directly and indirectly relevant ironic utterances in commercial and non-commercial advertisements, columns, cartoons, book and film reviews, and letters to the editor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Directly relevant</th>
<th>Indirectly relevant</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commercial advertisements</td>
<td>64&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>41&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-commercial advertisements</td>
<td>51&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>33&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columns</td>
<td>102&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>5&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cartoons</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book and film reviews</td>
<td>95&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters to the editor</td>
<td>41&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>456</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. <sup>a,b</sup> = The frequency of targets was lower or higher than might be expected on the basis of row and column totals (i.e., standardized residuals < -1.96 or > 1.96).

Table 3.10 shows that, for a total of 368 ironic the 456 ironic utterances in the corpus, the utterance was directly relevant. These results demonstrate that, on average, an ironic utterance is directly relevant in 80.5% of all ironic utterances in the corpus.

A relationship can be observed between genre and the question whether an ironic utterance is directly or indirectly relevant ($\chi^2 (5) = 84.91, p < .001$, Cramer’s $V = .43$, exact method). An inspection of the residuals showed that all genres in the corpus
with the exception of cartoons differed significantly from their expected values. In both commercial and non-commercial advertisements, ironic utterances were more often indirectly relevant than expected on the distribution of the entire corpus. In columns, letters to the editor and book, film and TV reviews, in contrast, ironic utterances were more often directly relevant than expected based on the distribution of the entire corpus.

Examples
Examples of the directly and indirectly relevant irony can be found in the corpus. A good example of a directly relevant ironic utterance could for instance be seen in (3.15.1), an ironic comment on the low price of the magazine Computer Idee. This (supposedly) low price is also the subject of the entire advertisement, which implies that the ironic utterance can be directly related to the subject of the text. It thus takes a small inference to establish why utterance (3.16.1) is relevant to the entire text discourse; utterance (3.16.1) can be described as directly relevant.

An example of a not directly relevant ironic utterance can be seen in the advertisement for the Dutch magazine Sprout in Figure 3.6:

(3.22.1) “Television will never be a medium of entertainment.”
(3.22.2) David Sarnoff, President RCA, 1955
(3.22.3) See the opportunities
(3.22.4) that others fail to seize

Utterance (3.22.1) is an example of an ironic echo of the words of David Sarnoff, who in 1955 predicted that television would not become a medium of entertainment. The
advertisement, however, is not about television and its possibilities as a medium of entertainment at all. Instead, the advertisement is about the magazine Sprout that claims to signal the opportunities that others fail to seize. In order to see how ironic utterance (3.22.1) is relevant to this text, the reader has to make an extra inference; he has to see that Sarnoff is one of the “others” mentioned in (3.22.4) and that the use of television as an entertainment medium is the opportunity he failed to seize. Therefore, the subject of the ironic utterance (television as a medium of entertainment) and the target of the ironic utterance (David Sarnoff) are not embedded in the co-text and the ironic utterance is not directly about the subject of the text. Since at least one extra inference is needed to explain (3.22.1) in this text, the irony can be characterized as indirectly relevant.

In a number of cases, it was difficult to establish whether an ironic utterance was directly relevant or not. A case in point was an ironic utterance from a column by Dutch author Arnon Grunberg, in which he tells about his experience during a hazing by a Dutch student union in a log cabin in the French Alps:

(3.23.1) The last evening of my stay, I was turned over with mattress and all.
(3.23.2) Thereupon, five academics sat down upon that mattress.
(3.23.3) For the record, I was under it.
(3.23.4) In a puddle of melt water.
(3.23.5) And a cheerful song was sung.
(3.23.6) This is called ‘turning’.
(3.23.7) I discovered (3.22.8)
(3.23.8) what solidarity is
(3.23.9) and now I know (3.22.10)
(3.23.10) what it is,
(3.23.11) **I will persist with it for the time being.**
(3.23.12) This can be considered as a warning\textsuperscript{22}.

Utterance (3.23.11) makes an ironic comment about Grunberg’s planned behavior for the coming time. He literally claims that he will continue the type of behavior he has learnt from the academics for some time to come. However, Grunberg means to say that he is appalled by the students’ view on acceptable group behavior. From the point of relevance, utterance (3.23.11) is tricky. On the one hand, it can be argued that utterance (3.23.11) is about solidarity, which is not the main theme of the column.
Instead, a reader needs an extra inference to connect solidarity with the students’ behavior. This would mean that (3.23.11) is indirectly relevant. On the other hand, it can also be claimed that utterance (3.23.11) is directly relevant. After all, solidarity is the word with which Grunberg summarizes the behavior of the students; all members of the student union have to be solidary in that they have a pass through a demeaning rite of passage. In this way, utterance (3.23.11) is directly related to the students’ behavior, which would make this utterance directly relevant.

**Implications**

Results showed that, on average, around 80% of all ironic utterances could be characterized as directly relevant ironies. This distribution was hardly found in any of the individual genres of the corpus. In commercial and non-commercial advertisements, the number of directly relevant ironic utterances was significantly lower than 80.5%, whilst the number of directly relevant ironic utterances was significantly higher in columns, book, film and TV reviews, and letters to the editor. These data seem to lend empirical support to the claim that verbal irony may differ across genres. However, these figures should be interpreted with caution. Cohen’s Kappa was lower than the threshold of .60 and the percentage of agreement for the category of indirectly relevant irony only just exceeded 50% after a second round of coding. This means that the reliability of the analysis is at stake. The figures reported on relevance should thus be treated with care and considered as a qualitative indication that irony may differ across various genres.

**3.5 Conclusion and discussion**

In this chapter, the abstract notion of irony factors mentioned in the literature (e.g., Attardo 2000b) was given substance. A distinction was made between an irony factor and its different levels. An irony factor was defined as an abstract characteristic that sets ironic utterances apart from non-ironic utterances. In contrast, the levels are the concrete manifestations of these irony factors. Ironic utterances can differ depending on the level of irony factor that is used in the utterance. This means that the levels of irony factors help to distinguish between ironic utterances. In this chapter, five irony factors were introduced and dealt with. These are evaluativeness, the presence or absence of incongruent information, a reversal of valence, irony’s targets and relevance. This chapter’s first research question was
RQ1a. How are the levels of irony factors used in written discourse?

The study showed the overall distribution of the various levels of these irony factors. Firstly, ironic utterances were explicitly evaluative in almost 60% of all ironic utterances included in the corpus. Secondly, it was demonstrated that incongruent information was explicitly present in the co-text in less than 45% of all cases in the corpus. When it was present, it was placed in around 80% of all cases after the ironic utterance. The study also demonstrated that a third party was most often the target of the irony in the genres included in the corpus. Sender, addressee as well as a combination of sender, addressee and third party were irony’s targets in less than 10% of cases each. Furthermore, the research provided empirical support for the existence of the asymmetry constraint; ironic praise was found more often than ironic blame (i.e., in 79.4% of all cases). Finally, irony was directly relevant to the discourse theme in 80% of cases included in the corpus.

The second research question connected the use of the various irony factors to the genres in the corpus:

RQ2a. How does the use of irony factors differ across various written genres?

Empirical evidence presented in this chapter supports a genre-based view on irony; the ways in which verbal irony is used differs across genres. Irony in commercial advertising is rather different from irony in, for instance, letters to the editor. In Table 3.11, it can be observed how these genres exactly differ from each other.

The first aspect that seems striking from Table 3.11 is that every genre in the corpus differs significantly from the general distribution for at least one irony factor. Similarly, a significant relationship between genre and irony factor could be observed for any of the five factors under discussion. This implies that the way in which irony is used in different written genres shows great variety.
Table 3.11: Overview of differences between genres (commercial and non-commercial advertisements, columns, cartoons, book and film reviews, and letters to the editor) and the general distribution on irony factors (evaluativeness, incongruence, reversal of valence, targets and relevance).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Evaluativeness (§ 3.4.1)</th>
<th>Incongruence (§ 3.4.2)</th>
<th>Position of incongruent info (§ 3.4.2)</th>
<th>Targets (§ 3.4.3)</th>
<th>Reversal Relevance valence (§ 3.4.5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Distribution</td>
<td>57.1% explicitly eval.</td>
<td>43.6% present in co-text</td>
<td>19.1% before irony</td>
<td>S: 8.8% A: 7.9% T: 74.3% C: 9.0%</td>
<td>79.4% praise direct rel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Com. ads</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>⇑</td>
<td>⇑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-com. ads</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columns</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cartoons</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book/film reviews</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>⇑</td>
<td>⇑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters editor</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>⇑</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. ↑ = Count for genre X is significantly higher than the expected score based on the general distribution (p < .05). ↓ = Count for genre X is significantly lower than the expected score based on the general distribution (p < .05). 0 = No significant difference between the count for genre X and the general distribution. S = Sender, A = Addressee, T = Third party, C = Combination of sender, addressee and/ or third party.

The genre that differs most from the general distribution is that of commercial advertisements. It seems as if irony in commercial advertisements is very different from irony in other genres; irony is more often ironic blame, the incongruent information is more often present and placed after the ironic utterance and its targets are more often the addressee and a combination of sender, addressee and/ or third party. Finally, irony in commercial advertisements is less often explicitly evaluative and directly relevant. Some of these results can be explained from the nature of the genre of commercial advertisements. A commercial advertisement for instance aims to convey a positive message about the advertised product or service, or the sender of the advertisement (Forceville, 1996, p. 68). This means that people who view these advertisements already have a default expectation of a positive message in mind. This already implies that advertisers may not want to use ironic praise, because ironic praise always conveys a negative evaluation about the sender, the addressee and/ or a
third party. Instead, advertisers who use irony choose for ironic blame, because ironic blame implies a positive evaluation of sender, the addressee and/or a third party, thus confirming genre expectations.

Like irony in commercial advertisements, irony in non-commercial advertisements is less often directly relevant than expected and has more often the addressee as its target. In contrast to irony in commercial advertisements, a combination of sender, addressee and third party is less often the target than expected.

Ironic utterances in columns and irony in book, film and TV reviews seem to be most similar. They are both more often directly relevant, have more examples of ironic praise, have incongruent information more often placed before the ironic utterance and have less often the addressee as their targets. The biggest difference between these two genres in terms of irony factors can be seen when considering the sender as target of the irony. In book and film reviews, the sender is less often the target than could be expected, whilst it is more often the target in columns. After all, columns are more personal than any of the other genres in the corpus. Besides, irony in book, and film reviews has relatively more often a third party as its target. This can be explained because this genre is primarily concerned with the evaluation of either an object (a book or film) or the creator of this object (the author or director).

The two genres that seem to resemble the general distribution the closest are cartoons and letters to the editor. Cartoons only differ from the general distribution when incongruent information is taken into account. In cartoons, incongruent information is less often present in the co-text than what could be expected based on the general distribution. An explanation can be that a cartoons tend to contain little written text. In addition, the image in cartoons may also reflect incongruent information with the literal evaluation of the ironic utterance (see Chapter 6). In contrast, letters to the editor have more often incongruent information than expected based on the general distribution. They are also more often directly relevant.

At first sight, irony in opinionative texts is not different from irony in advertisements. Instead, main differences may be found between so-called purely verbal and multimodal genres. The purely verbal genres (i.e., columns, book and film reviews, and letters to the editor) convey their message only through verbal text. In contrast, the multimodal genres (commercial and non-commercial advertisements and cartoons) convey their message through both verbal text and visual images. This means that the differences across genres that were found in this chapter can more
easily be explained by looking at the genre’s mode (i.e., purely verbal vs. multimodal genres) than by looking at the genre’s goal (i.e., a change in attitude or a change in behavior).

For the first time, a study provides empirical support for the claim that verbal irony is used differently in various genres, selected across the same modality (i.e., written communication). These results favor a genre-based approach to verbal irony. It seems odd to say that something is a “typical” example of verbal irony (e.g., Wilson, 2006) or to speak of the ways in which verbal irony is generally used. Instead, these results suggest that we may look for a “typical” example of verbal irony for a particular genre, because, in every genre, irony deviates in some way from the general distribution. In comparison to the general distribution, it can be concluded that irony in multimodal genres is more often explicitly evaluative, is more often ironic blame, is more often indirectly relevant and often has the addressee as its target. In contrast, irony in purely verbal genres is more often ironic praise, directly relevant and often has a third party as its target than the general distribution. The two irony factors that are an exception to this pattern are incongruence and cases in which the target is the sender. In the first case, commercial advertisement (multimodal genre) and letters to the editor (purely verbal genre) differ from cartoons (multimodal genre). In the second case, columns (purely verbal genre) differ from book and film reviews (purely verbal genre). With the exception of these last two factors, it can be concluded that genre differences in irony factors are mainly related to the distinction between multimodal and purely verbal genres. The next chapter seeks to corroborate these genre differences by looking at irony markers in the ironic utterance. This chapter analyzes whether genres differ in the way in which a reader is alerted to a possible usage of irony. In addition, the next chapter also connects irony markers to irony factor and analyzes if specific levels of irony factors may need more or less “help” of irony markers.
Chapter 4:  
Irony markers in the ironic utterance

4.1 Introduction

In contrast to the concept of irony factors discussed in the previous chapter, irony markers have been more extensively documented. Whilst irony factors are crucial for an ironic utterance, irony markers are not. Instead, an irony marker is a metacommunicative clue that can “alert the reader to the fact that a sentence is ironical” (Attardo, 2000b, p. 7). As such, an irony marker helps a reader in detecting irony and can – in theory – be deleted from an ironic utterance without removing the irony. An example of an ironic utterance without and an ironic utterance with an irony marker can be seen in utterances (4.1a) and (4.1b). The scenario is identical to that described in the previous chapter; Brenda and Laurie still cannot go on their picnic, because the weather is bad.

(4.1.a) Laurie (in a downpour): “The weather is nice.”
(4.1.b) Laurie (in a downpour): “This is the best weather for a picnic I can possibly imagine.

Utterance (4.1.a) contains a literally positive evaluation of the weather. Since it rains – which makes poor weather for a picnic – utterance (4.1.a) may be interpreted as ironic; the weather was not nice at all. Utterance (4.1.b) also contains a positive evaluation of the weather at the time of speaking. In this version, an irony marker (in this case, a hyperbole) is included in the utterance. This hyperbole gives a clue that utterance (4.1.b) is not meant literally. This may mean that utterance (4.1.b) is easier to interpret as ironic than utterance (4.1.a). Although the hyperbole is not essential to consider (4.1) as ironic – utterance (4.1) without an irony marker is ironic as well – the hyperbole is assumed to help in the identification of irony.

An irony marker should be interpreted as a clue that an author may be ironic. In other words, utterance (4.1.b) could be easier to recognize as ironic than utterance (4.1.a) because of the addition of the hyperbolic irony marker. This does not mean, however, that a hyperbole always leads a reader to an ironic interpretation. A hyperbole, like all irony markers, sometimes serves as a clue to indicate that an author
is ironic. The only irony marker that – at least in theory – should always lead to an ironic interpretation is the so-called irony sign, a punctuation mark which looked like the mirror image of a question mark (¶). The irony sign was introduced by 19th-century French author Alcanter de Brahm and was intended to always signal an ironic utterance. Critics described this proposal as “preposterous” (Muecke, 1969, p. 56), because it “would almost always reduce the value of the irony” (Booth, 1974, p. 55). Unsurprisingly, the ‘irony sign’ did not catch on. This means that no irony markers included in the discussion in the next paragraphs should be interpreted as exclusive clues that guarantee that an utterance is ironic.

This chapter focuses on irony markers in the ironic utterance. The first research question that is addressed in this chapter is:

RQ1b. How are irony markers in the ironic utterance used in written discourse?

This research question aims to describe how irony markers are used in written discourse and can be divided into two sub questions. A first sub question is concerned with the issue how often irony markers are used in written discourse. When doing so, it is possible to look at irony markers at three different levels, which are explained into more detail in section 4.2. Firstly, it is possible to look at the average number of markers per ironic utterance. Secondly, irony markers can be subdivided into two different levels. The lowest of these two levels is the level of types. At this level, every irony marker (e.g., hyperbole, quotation marks, rhetorical question) is classified into its own type. Several of these types can then be taken together at the level of categories. Both hyperboles and rhetorical questions can for instance be classified as tropes. Of course, it is possible that differences between types and categories of irony markers may also be observed. The first sub question is then:

RQ1b-i. How are various types and categories of irony markers in the ironic utterance used in written discourse?

RQ1b-i provides empirical data about the frequency with which irony markers are used in discourse. A related question is how irony markers are used in relation to irony factors. Are some levels of irony factors accompanied by more markers or by different types of markers than other levels? A second sub question of RQ1b is thus:
RQ1b-ii How does the use of irony markers in the ironic utterance differ across various levels of irony factors?

The previous chapter demonstrated that irony factors are used differently in the various genres of the corpus. A final question to ask is whether a relationship can also be established between genre and irony markers. The third research question of this chapter is thus:

RQ2b. How does the use of irony markers in the ironic utterance differ across various written genres?

Before these research questions can be answered, however, the different categories (tropes, schematic, morpho-syntactic and typographic markers) and types of irony markers (e.g., hyperbole, quotation marks) have to be distinguished.

4.2. Irony markers in Dutch written discourse

In written discourse, many scholars have distinguished various lists of irony markers (e.g., Attardo, 2000b; Kreuz, 1996; Muecke, 1978; Seto, 1998). In order to present these in a comprehensive and clear way, these markers are divided into a number of categories. These different categories include tropes, schematic irony markers, morpho-syntactic irony markers and typographic irony markers. All of these categories include various types of irony markers and are discussed below. An overview of the various categories of irony markers as well as basic examples can be seen in Table 4.1.

It has to be noted that the list of irony markers presented in Table 4.1 is mostly based on the lists of markers mentioned in the irony literature. However, three markers were not mentioned in the literature, but identified after an iterative inspection of part of the corpus. These markers are diminutives (morpho-syntactic irony marker), crossed-out text and special signs (both typographic irony markers). In the following section, all types of irony markers are both explained with the same stock weather example and with an example from the corpus.
Table 4.1: List of irony markers, (made-up) examples related to Brenda and Laurie’s failed picnic and sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marker</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tropes as irony markers:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Metaphor</td>
<td>Predicting the weather is a breeze</td>
<td>Ritchie, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Hyperbole</td>
<td>This is the best weather for a picnic I can possibly imagine.</td>
<td>e.g., Berntsen &amp; Kennedy, 1996, Kreuz &amp; Roberts, 1995; Muecke 1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Understatement</td>
<td>The weather is quite OK.</td>
<td>Muecke 1978; Seto, 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Rhetorical Question</td>
<td>Could the weather be any better for a picnic?</td>
<td>Barbe, 1995; Gibbs, 2003; Muecke, 1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Schematic irony markers:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ironic repetition</td>
<td>“The weather will be great” → Indeed, the weather is great.</td>
<td>Berntsen &amp; Kennedy, 1996; Muecke, 1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ironic echo</td>
<td>Indeed, the weather is great.</td>
<td>Berntsen &amp; Kennedy, 1996; Muecke, 1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Change of register</td>
<td>You may grant me the honor of listening to another one of your fine predictions.</td>
<td>Haiman, 1998; Hutcheon, 1994, Leech, 1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Morpho-syntactic irony markers:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Exclamation</td>
<td>Great weather!</td>
<td>Seto, 1998; Wilson &amp; Sperber, 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Tag question</td>
<td>It is great weather, isn’t it?</td>
<td>Kreuz, 1996; Kreuz et al., 1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Focus Topicalization</td>
<td>Great weather it is, I believe.</td>
<td>Seto, 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Interjections</td>
<td>Well, it is great weather.</td>
<td>Kreuz &amp; Caucci, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Diminutives</td>
<td>“Dat was een mooi weersvoorspellinkje”. That was a great little prediction.</td>
<td>New in the corpus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Typographic irony markers:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Different typography</td>
<td>It is great weather.</td>
<td>Cutler, 1974; Kreuz, 1996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Capitalization</td>
<td>It is GREAT weather</td>
<td>G. Capelli, 2008; Haiman, 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Quotation marks</td>
<td>It is “great” weather.</td>
<td>Attardo, 2001; Gibbs, 1994; Myers, 1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Other punctuation marks</td>
<td>It is great [!] weather.</td>
<td>Attardo, 2000b; Gibbs, 1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Emoticons</td>
<td>It is great weather :)</td>
<td>Kreuz, 1996; Renkema, 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Crossed-out text</td>
<td>It is horribly great weather.</td>
<td>New in the corpus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Other special signs</td>
<td>Your Weather Report™ is great.</td>
<td>New in the corpus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One group of irony markers distinguished in the literature is not dealt with in this or the following chapter. This group entails markers that are exclusively connected to spoken communication. In research on spoken irony, for instance, much emphasis is
placed on the role of a so-called “ironic tone of voice” (e.g., Bryant & Fox Tree, 2005; Cheang & Pell, 2008; Haiman, 1998; Rockwell, 2007). This tone of voice indicates that an ironic speaker uses a distinct intonation that differs from “normal” (i.e., non-ironic) speech. Since this marker is inherent to spoken communication, it is not dealt with in this study on irony in written communication.

Of course, not only the ironic utterance itself may alert a reader to the possible use of irony; both the verbal and visual co-text (i.e., the verbal utterances or images included in a text) can also point a reader towards a possible ironic interpretation. These co-textual irony markers are discussed in the next chapters.

4.2.1 Tropes as irony markers
A first category of irony markers includes tropes, a sub-category of rhetorical figures. A trope may be defined as “a deviation from the ordinary and principal signification” of an utterance (Corbett & Connors, 1999, p. 379) and contrasted with a scheme (McQuarrie & Mick, 1996; Van Enschot, 2006). In contrast to a scheme, a trope has to be reinterpreted in order to be correctly understood; a trope involves “transference of a meaning” (Corbett & Connors, 1999, p. 379). Although Corbett and Connors (1999) limit the definition of trope to a transference of the meaning of individual words, a trope can also involve a transference of meaning in a group of words (see e.g., the metaphor “well armed with arguments” in utterance 4.3.1) or a transference of meaning of an utterance (e.g., irony). As discussed in chapter 2, an ironic utterance can be considered a trope in itself. Four tropes are mentioned in the literature as irony markers: metaphor, hyperbole, understatement and rhetorical questions.

Ritchie (2005) claims that metaphors can help to facilitate an ironic interpretation and argues that many metaphors have an “ironic edge” (Ritchie, 2005, p. 292) to them. Metaphors can be defined as “implicit comparisons” between two entities (Kreuz & Roberts, 1993). A crucial factor in establishing whether this “implicit comparison” is metaphoric is whether a “cross-domain mapping” (Lakoff & Nuñez, 2000) is involved. This means that the two entities that are metaphorically compared (i.e., the tenor and vehicle) should come from different domains. A made-up example is again based on Brenda and Laurie’s failed weather prediction that was also discussed in the previous chapter. Commenting on Brenda’s prediction, Laurie could have said:
Predicting the weather is a breeze.

Utterance (4.2) is ironic, because Laurie wants to indicate that it is very difficult to predict the weather (seeing that Brenda incorrectly predicted the weather). Utterance (4.2) also contains a metaphor, because a weather prediction is not literally a breeze. This metaphor may be especially remarkable, because its vehicle is related to the weather domain; the word “breeze” literally evokes the idea of wind. This means that the metaphor may work to attract attention to the ironic utterance.

In the corpus, metaphoric irony markers are found as well. One example from the corpus can be seen in a political column. In an excerpt from this column, the reader finds the following lines:

(4.3.1) Gun lovers in America are usually well armed with arguments.
(4.3.2) A favorite bromide is the slogan (4.3.3), (4.3.4)
(4.3.3) "Guns don’t kill people,
(4.3.4) people do."  

Utterance (4.3.1) is ironic. Literally, the utterance conveys that American gun lovers usually have good arguments to defend their position. The author intends to convey that he believes that these gun lovers only have pseudo-arguments at their disposal; their arguments are very weak. In this ironic utterance, a metaphor can be observed in which an argument is compared to a weapon. This argument-is-weapon metaphor is closely related to Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) classic conceptual metaphor of ARGUMENT IS WAR. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that metaphors connecting argumentation to the target domain of war are often used in natural discourse (e.g., I demolished his argument, He shot down all my arguments). In this utterance, this conventional metaphorical comparison is made salient by the connection with American gun lovers; gun lovers use arguments as weapons. This metaphor draws attention to (4.3.1), thus serving as an irony marker.

A second trope that can be considered as an irony marker is hyperbole (see, among many others, Berntsen & Kennedy, 1996; Kreuz & Roberts, 1995; Muecke, 1978). A hyperbole can be defined as a “speaker overstating the magnitude of something” (Colston, 2007, p. 194). A made-up example of hyperbole as an irony marker was already presented in utterance (4.1.b). A good example from the corpus can be found in a book review of the correspondence between the late Dutch literary
critic Michaël Zeeman and Dutch literary author Abdelkader Benali. About Zeeman, the reviewer observes:

(4.4.1) Passionate is also Zeeman’s profound hatred towards the Netherlands,

(4.4.2) home base of sluggards, fools and morons.

(4.4.3) Benali gets easily carried away into this revulsion.

(4.4.4) It illustrates the power relationship between both correspondents,

(4.4.5) which is very reminiscent of Herenleded⁶.

(4.4.6) Zeeman’s perky voice brings associations to mind with Cherry Duyns’ bombastic drivel⁵.

Utterance (4.4.2) is an ironic repetition of Zeeman’s opinion of the Netherlands, of which the reviewer distances himself. In (4.4.6), he even claims that Zeeman’s opinion remind him of the “bombastic drivel” of a character from a 1970s comedy. This means that the reviewer does not endorse a literal reading of (4.4.2). Instead, he wants his readers to see that he does not share Zeeman’s opinions. In order to help his readers, (4.4.2) contains a hyperbole. This exaggeration can both be seen in the term “home base of” and the list of three negative terms describing the country’s inhabitants.

A third trope that can serve as an irony marker is understatement (e.g., P. Brown & Levinson, 1987; Muecke, 1978; Seto, 1998). In an understatement, something is presented as “less significant than it really is” (Beckson & Ganz, 1960 in Panpothong, 1996, pp. 19-20). In the case of Brenda and Laurie, the latter could for instance say, when she is completely soaked:

(4.5) The weather is quite OK.

Utterance (4.5) is ironic, because the weather is far from OK for a picnic; Laurie is soaked. At the same time, utterance (4.5) contains an understatement, because – in reality – Laurie’s opinion about the weather is more pronounced than what it might seem from the relatively aloof phrase “quite OK”. In the corpus, understatements can also be found as irony markers. An example can be seen in a review of the play Banden (a Dutch pun referring both to the word “tires” that are used as important props and the word “connections”, as in connections between family members) by the group Carver.
‘Banden’ is about the relationship between a mother, her son and her brother.

And it is not really good.

That becomes clear after only a few minutes.

Contact is rough,
communication is nil,
and there is noise all the time.

Utterance (4.6.2) is ironic, because it literally claims that the relationship between mother, brother and son is slightly good. Utterances (4.6.4) – (4.6.6) show otherwise; the relationships of the family members are really bad. The ironic utterance also contains an understatement. The words “not really a good one” literally denote only a slightly positive evaluation.

The last trope that is mentioned in the literature as an irony marker is the rhetorical question (e.g., Barbe, 1995; Gibbs, 2003; Muecke, 1978). A rhetorical question is a “statement framed as a question” (Blankenship & Craig, 2006, p. 111) to which a reader is not supposed to provide an answer. An example of an ironic utterance about the picnic gone wrong marked by a rhetorical question can be found in utterance (4.7):

Could the weather be any better for a picnic?

Utterance (4.7) is an ironic rhetorical question, because it is obvious that the weather is not good for a picnic at all. These ironic rhetorical questions can also be found in the corpus. One example from the corpus was already presented in paragraph 2.2.3, in which the review of the romantic comedy film MUST LOVE DOGS (2005, dir. Gary David Goldberg) was analyzed with the use of the VIP. In one utterance, a question about the film’s plot was framed as a rhetorical question:

Will she succeed in finding the man of her dreams?

In paragraph 2.2.3, it was explained why utterance (4.8) was ironic. Literally, the author asks the question that is central to the film’s main plot point, indicating that possible viewers might find this an interesting premise to ask. Ironically, the author wants to convey that the movie’s plot is a worn-out cliché; any viewer knows how this romantic
Hollywood comedy will end. The fact that this evaluation is framed as a rhetorical question might attract the attention of readers of the review.

### 4.2.2 Schematic irony markers

This section deals with schematic irony markers. Like tropes, schematic irony markers are stylistic. The label "schematic" refers back to the word scheme in the distinction between tropes and schemes (cf. McQuarrie & Mick, 1996; Van Enschot, 2006). Unlike tropes, schematic irony markers draw attention to the form of an ironic utterance. A schematic irony marker does not have to be reinterpreted.

The first two of these schematic irony markers are closely related to Sperber and Wilson’s (1995) account of verbal irony – discuss in more detail in section 2.2.3 – in which the concept of echoic use took center stage. Wilson and Sperber (2002) demonstrated that an echo can be a strong indication that an utterance is meant ironically. For this reason, echo (or repetition) is included in this section as an irony marker. Independent from Sperber and Wilson (1995), other authors also describe an echo as an irony marker (e.g., Berntsen & Kennedy, 1996; Muecke, 1978). These authors refer to an ironic repetition as a “parody”, in which the “voice of an inferior is taken” (Muecke, 1978, p. 371). In doing so, they consider the repetition of words as a clue that a writer may be ironic and thus as an irony marker.

Echoes (or repetitions) may serve as an irony marker in two different ways. Firstly, a writer may ironically repeat something that she (or a spokesperson) said earlier in the text or – in case of spoken interaction – in the dialogue; a repetition based on co-text. In the case of a repetition based on co-text, an ironic utterance ironically repeats (part of) an earlier utterance from the same text that was not used ironically in its first usage. Secondly, a writer may ironically repeat something that was not mentioned earlier in the text under discussion or in the same dialogue, but was mentioned somewhere else; a repetition based on context. In order to prevent confusion between the two, an ironic repetition in the co-text is labeled as a “co-textual repetition” and an ironic repetition in the context is referred to as an “echo”.

An example of a co-textual marker in the case of Brenda and Laurie’s dialogue about the weather could have occurred if Brenda would have seriously predicted the weather to be great. Only seconds after this prediction, it starts to rain. Laurie comments:
In doing so, Laurie literally repeats the utterance Brenda made only seconds before. This means that Laurie repeats an earlier utterance from the same conversation that was used non-ironically. If Brenda had not uttered (4.9) seconds, but rather a week before, then her prediction would have become part of contextual knowledge and utterance (4.9) had to be interpreted as an ironic echo.

An example of a co-textual repetition from the corpus can be seen in the following section of a column in which in the recent Dutch education policy is evaluated negatively, based on a research report written by Leo Prick. The columnist writes:

(4.10.1) That Prick, based on his research, has a low opinion of many so-called ‘education specialists’ in the Dutch Lower House

(4.10.2) is completely understandable. [...] Many lines with examples of recently failed education reforms were omitted because of space.

(4.10.3) A new government should make improvement – not reform – of education a central objective.

(4.10.4) This is a project comparable to the Delta works,

(4.10.5) but [which is] much more difficult.

(4.10.6) However, education is too important to leave to the ‘education specialists’ any longer.12

The last utterance is ironic, because it may be clear that the author believes that the Dutch politicians who, in political language, are referred to as ‘education specialists’ have in fact a limited knowledge of education policy. The author may believe that education can be left to the education specialists, but he does not agree that the Members of the Dutch Lower House who call themselves education specialists actually deserve to be called education specialists. This ironic utterance was already ‘announced’ in the co-text. In utterance (4.10.1), the columnist literally said to have a low opinion of the ‘education specialists’ by referring to them as the ‘so-called education specialists’13. The repetition of the words ‘education specialists’ in (4.10.6) refers back to the original utterance in (4.10.1) which helps in seeing (4.10.6) as ironic.
An example of an ironic echo from the corpus could already be seen in (4.4.2). In this utterance, the reviewer ironically paraphrases the attitude towards the Netherlands that Zeeman displayed in his correspondence with Benali. He does not do so by quoting literally from Zeeman’s correspondence – the quote on which the reviewer based (4.4.2) is absent in the co-text – and bases the recognition of the quote or paraphrase on contextual knowledge. The reader knows that the text under discussion is a book review and can infer that the reviewer (ironically) paraphrases Zeeman in (4.4.2) rather than giving his own opinion.

Besides co-textual repetition and ironic echoes, a change of register may be a third schematic irony marker (e.g., Sperber & Wilson, 1981). Many authors claim that irony often involves a switch in registers, which draws attention to the ironic utterance (e.g., Haiman, 1998; Hutcheon, 1994; Leech, 1983). In these examples, a difference can be observed between the register used in (part of) the ironic utterance and the rest of the exchange. In the case of Brenda and Laurie’s discussion about the weather, Laurie uses a change in register if she were to ask for Brenda’s next prediction in the following way:

(4.11) You may grant me the honor of listening to another one of your fine predictions.

In utterance (4.11), a change of register is used, because Laurie is too polite for a normal conversation between friends. In this case, a specific example of a change in register is used that is called hyperformality; the use of extreme politeness in a situation where this is inappropriate (Haiman, 1990).

In the corpus, examples of a change of register can also be observed. In a non-commercial advertisement that wants to attract attention to anti-social behavior, the organization SIRE mimics the style of Dick Bruna’s Miffy books (see Figure 4.1). In a short story in the SIRE advertisement, some changes of register with the original Miffy books may be observed. The text runs as follows:

(4.12.1) Kees is in his car.
(4.12.2) It is crowded on the road.
(4.12.3) Henk wants to get on to the road as well.
(4.12.4) Kees gives him the finger.
(4.12.5) ’No’ is what that means (Literal translation: ‘No’ means that).
This short story considers a number of changes of register with its original, which help to perceive it as ironic. First of all, the original *Miffy* books want the readers to adopt Miffy’s social behavior. In contrast, this story literally condones Kees’ anti-social behavior in ironic utterances (4.12.6) and (4.12.7). Besides, the story contains a number of words that do not belong to the *Miffy* register such as the words “silly cock” in utterance (4.12.7). In these ironic utterances, these changes in register may serve as irony markers.

### 4.2.3 Morpho-syntactic irony markers

The third group of irony markers is the group of morpho-syntactic irony markers, which work on the morphologic and syntactic levels of the utterance. The first morpho-syntactic irony marker is an exclamation (see Seto, 1998; Wilson & Sperber, 1992). In the case of our weather example, an ironic utterance with an exclamation would be:

(4.13) **Great weather!**
Since utterance (4.13) is an exclamation, emphasis is placed on the literal evaluation that has to be reversed in the ironic reading. In the corpus, exclamations can also serve as irony markers. One example can be observed in a pamphlet of a group called the “Association Argentina”. In the pamphlet under discussion, the association protests the planned demolition of the “Warehouse Argentina”, a workspace of young artists in Amsterdam. The pamphlet ends with the words:

(4.14.1) Of course, it [i.e., the planned demolition of the Warehouse Argentina, CB] is a matter of money again.
(4.14.2) Apparently Amsterdam loves to see itself as a bulky dormitory town with cultural poverty.
(4.14.3) Very nice!15

Utterance (4.12.3) is ironic, because the Association Argentina does not consider it nice that their Warehouse is scheduled to be demolished. They also do not endorse Amsterdam’s policy that – as they put it – is set out to transform the city into a “bulky dormitory town with cultural poverty”. The ironic utterance is also an exclamation, which puts an emphasis on the ironic opinion.

A second morpho-syntactic irony marker is the use of tag questions such as “didn’t you” (Kreuz, 1996; Kreuz, Kassler, Coppenrath & McLain Allen, 1999). In the case of Brenda and Laurie’s failed picnic trip, an example of an ironic utterance with a tag question would be

(4.15) It is great weather, isn’t it?

Utterance (4.15) features a tag question which emphasizes the evaluation in utterance (4.15). Whilst tag questions are commonly used in English interrogative sentences, they are not used very often in Dutch. Nevertheless, an example of an ironic tag question can be found in an advertisement from Cebuco, aimed at persuading companies to invest in advertising space in newspapers. In order to achieve this goal, Cebuco ironically addressed its target group:

(4.16.1) Oh no, eh?
(4.16.2) Not that campaign again that
(4.16.3) you see more often than your own campaign16.
Utterances (4.16.1) and (4.16.2) are ironic, because Cebuco wants its readers to see that newspaper advertising is a means to reach a big target audience. The fact that this target group sees the Cebuco campaign everywhere should thus not be seen as negative (i.e., the literal evaluation of utterance 4.16.1), but rather as a positive sign that newspaper advertising works. Utterance (4.16.1) also contains a tag question as an irony marker; the word ‘eh’.

Another morpho-syntactic irony marker is focus topicalization (Seto, 1998). Although Seto (1998) lists focus topicalization as an irony marker, he does not give a definition of the phenomenon. A definition of focus topicalization is provided by Gundel and Fretheim (2004) who define it as a special “syntactic structure […] where a constituent has been ‘displaced’ from its canonical position in a clause to occupy a syntactically more prominent position”. Gundel and Fretheim (2004) discuss various reasons and ways in which constituents can be ‘displaced’ in a clause. In the case of focus topicalization that Seto (1998) lists as an irony marker, the “sentence-initial constituent” refers to the “information focus”. In other words, the word or word group that is emphasized is placed at the beginning of the clause under discussion. Let’s illustrate this with an example and assume that the ‘canonical’ sentence is sentence (4.17.1).

\[
\begin{align*}
(4.17.1) & \quad \text{I believe the weather is great.} \\
(4.17.2) & \quad \text{Great the weather is, I believe.}
\end{align*}
\]

Utterance (4.17.2) is the version of sentence (4.17.1) in which the word “great” – the information focus of the ironic utterance – is placed and emphasized at the beginning. This may also help in the detection of irony. An example from the corpus is from a review of an anthology edited by Dutch author Gerrit Komrij in which “doing number two” takes center stage. The review opens with the following lines:

\[
\begin{align*}
(4.18.1) & \quad \text{Feces: always fun.} \\
(4.18.2) & \quad \text{Until you are about two years old,}
\end{align*}
\]
(4.18.3) you can happily rub yourself with your own baking,
(4.18.4) show it with pride,
(4.18.5) or sadly send it off.

(4.18.6) Strangely enough, adults no longer consider this funny after some time

(4.18.6) \( \text{(Gek genoeg vinden volwassenen dat na enige tijd niet meer grappig)}^{18} \)

Utterance (4.18.6) is ironic, because it presents the opinion of the adults through the eyes of the child. The child may be amazed that, after some time, adults no longer condone playing with excrement, but adults have good reasons for it. In fact, it is only natural that adults correct a child who plays with its own stool. The ironic utterance puts the element that has the evaluation that has to be reversed in front of the utterance. In this way, the words “strangely enough” are emphasized instead of the word “adults” which would have been emphasized in a normal word order (i.e., \( \text{volwassenen vinden dat gek genoeg na enige tijd niet meer grappig} \)).

A final morpho-syntactic irony marker is the use of interjections (Kreuz & Caucci, 2007). From a semantic point of view, these interjections may be defined as “conventionalized linguistic signs that express a speaker’s current mental state, attitude, or reaction toward a situation” (Ameka 2006, p. 743). An interjection may thus help to draw attention to an utterance and work as an irony marker. In our weather example, an ironic utterance with an interjection would be

(4.19) Well, the weather is great.

Utterance (4.19) already seems to undermine a literal evaluation by means of the interjection ‘well’. Interjections can thus serve as irony markers. An example from the corpus can further illustrate the use of interjections as irony markers. This example was also discussed in the previous chapter and came from a column in which columnist Ebru Umar talked about the purchase of a bed.

(4.20.1) I actually just bought a new bed [with a width] of 1.80 meters
(4.20.2) whilst a single bed was more than enough.
(4.20.3) But my mother was in league with the salesperson,
(4.20.4) so I also bought a comforter of 720 euros apiece.

(4.20.5) No, the euro did not make life more expensive^{19}. 

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In this example, ironic utterance (4.20.5) contains an interjection ('No'). This interjection emphasizes the literal negation (that the ironic utterance again negates in its intended evaluation). In doing so, a reader may be alerted to the presence of irony in (4.20.5).

Diminutives are the final irony marker that was included in this category. This marker is that was not found in the literature, but was present in the corpus. In the corpus, it was found that a diminutive can serve as an irony marker in Dutch. In the case of Brenda and Laurie's failed picnic trip, an example may be

(4.21) "Dat was een mooi weersvoorspellinkje". That was a great little prediction.

The Dutch word “weersvoorspellinkje” (little prediction) may already evoke a negative association related to the prediction in question and can thus work as an irony marker. An example from the corpus comes from an ironic review of the TV program Shownieuws (Showbiz news) on the Dutch TV-channel SBS6:

(4.22.1) Comfortably reviewing the latest gossip with Geer Joling, Victor Brand or one of the other little SBS entertainment queens (literally: SBS entertainment little queens).
(4.22.2) Did you miss the broadcast
(4.22.3) or can't you get enough of the latest gossip about Rebecca Loos' broken nail?
(4.22.4) Then you just watch the rerun later in the evening.

Even though the entire review can be considered ironic (the reviewer does not like this particular TV program), the diminutive as irony marker can be found in utterance (4.22.1). Little SBS entertainment queens, the final word of the utterance (in Dutch: SBS-entertainmentkoninginnetjes) is a diminutive. Besides a metaphor about Joling and Brand (who are male hosts of a TV program instead of female royalty), the Dutch word is also a diminutive. In this case, the addition of a diminutive form – the Dutch suffix tjes – adds to the implicit addition of a negative evaluation to utterance (4.22.1). This implies that, in Dutch, diminutives can also serve as irony markers. The new irony marker of diminutives lends support to the claim that irony in different languages may be marked with language-specific irony markers. Other studies already found language-specific irony markers from other languages besides Dutch. In Japanese, for
instance, honorific prefaces such as go- and o- can serve as irony markers (Seto, 1998). The parenthetical focus discourse marker tobože can be an irony marker in Croatian (Dedaic, 2005), whilst the marker ře may signal irony in Sissala (Blass, 1990).

4.2.4 Typographic irony markers

The last group of irony markers is the group of typographic irony markers. A typographic irony marker can be seen in (part of) the typography of a text such as its font type, use of capital letters or the use of punctuation marks.

A first typographic irony marker is the use of a different typography (e.g., Cutler, 1974; Kreuz, 1996). In this irony marker, the ironic utterance is written in a different font, style, font size, etc. in order to draw attention to it. This means that the ironic utterance about Brenda and Laurie’s picnic could for instance be listed as

(4.23) It is great weather.

In utterance (4.23), emphasis is placed on the word “great”, because it is written in italics. This different typography makes the evaluation stand out and may alert a reader to its ironic use. An example from the corpus can be seen in an advertisement for M&M’s in Figure 4.3.

(4.24) Forget Crispy

Part of the reason why ironic utterance (4.24) stands out from the advertisement is because the syllable ‘for’ is written in another font and had another color than the rest of the utterance (see Figure 4.3). In doing so, both the literal (Forget Crispy) and
intended evaluation (Get Crispy) of the advertisement become clear. As such, the different typography serves as an irony marker.

A second typographic irony marker is the use of capitalization (G. Capelli, 2008; Haiman, 1998). With this irony marker, words that are usually not capitalized are capitalized in order to emphasize their ironic use. In other words, capitalization would be an irony marker if the word "great" in utterance (4.23) would be written in capital letters instead of in italics. An example from the corpus comes from a letter to the editor in which the author is angry with a previous letter writer, a Mr. Verboon who in turn opposed a plan of Dutch actress Carice van Houten. Verboon reacted to Van Houten’s plan to look for a sperm donor in case she would still be single in a couple of years and would want to have a child. Verboon objected, arguing that Van Houten was hatching an evil plot to kill all males and start an era of global female domination. Verboon concluded that he at least would not be willing to donate his sperm to Van Houten. In response to Verboon’s letter, this author claims:

(4.25.1) Without wanting to get too personal, I kind of have the idea that
(4.25.2) Mr. Verboon shows through his letter to the editor of March 10,
(4.25.3) that he is blessed with a rich fantasy
(4.25.4) and loves to feel indispensable
(4.25.5) despite that he loves to waste his time watching or contemplating soccer, or consuming drinks in a smoky space with lots of noise and female dancers in bikinis
(4.25.6) (who probably ARE worthy of his sperm, if only for a night).
(4.25.7) Being confronted with someone (4.25.8) is easily intimidating.
(4.25.8) who does not show a preference for these things21.

Utterance (4.25.6) is ironic, because the author implicitly distances himself from the opinion he attributes to Verboon in utterance (4.25.5). The author intends to say that it is ridiculous that the female dancers in bikinis are worthy of Verboon’s sperm, whilst an actress like Carice van Houten is not. The reader’s attention is drawn to ironic utterance (4.25.6), because the word ‘are’ is capitalized. This word also emphasizes the valence of the literal evaluation, and thus serves as an irony marker.

Another typographic irony mark is the use of quotation marks (e.g., Attardo, 2001, p. 55; Burger & De Jong, 1997, p. 395; Gibbs, 1994, p. 379; Haiman, 1990, pp. 188-192; Myers, 1990, pp. 431-432; Renkema, 2002, p. 388). An example could have
been found in utterance (4.23) if the word “great” had been placed between quotation marks rather than spelled in italics. Utterance (4.10.5) contains an example from the corpus. In this utterance, the word ‘education specialists’ is placed in between quotation marks to signal that this word is ironically repeated.

A fourth typographic irony mark is the use of punctuation marks other than quotation marks to signal irony. Examples of these other punctuation marks include [?!!], [sic], [...] and [!] (Attardo, 2000b, p. 9; Gibbs, 1994, p. 379). It is for instance possible to place [!] after the word great in utterance (4.23). An example from the corpus is from a cartoon in which a certain John goes skiing (see Figure 4.4). He sees a company called “Gips AG” (i.e., Plaster AG) and ironically comments:

\[(4.26)\] Very encouraging ... \(^{22}\]

The three stops (...) may work as an indication that John hesitates or stops after uttering (4.26). This means that John looks for a deliberate pause to indicate that he does not mean utterance (4.26) literally. As such, the three stops can thus work as an irony marker.

Another typographic irony marker is the use of emoticons (also called smileys; see Kreuz, 1996, pp. 30-32; Renkema, 2002, p. 344). An example can be seen in utterance (4.27):

\[(4.27)\] It is great weather ;-

The smiley following utterance (4.27) alerts the reader to a possible ironic interpretation by directly giving the reader an ironic wink. However, this irony marker was not used in any of the texts in the corpus. This can be explained by the fact that smileys are rarely used in traditional print media. Instead, smileys are often used in
forms of computer-mediated communication (CMC) such as e-mails and chat talk. An analysis of nonliteral language in e-mails found that emoticons were used often to mark irony in e-mails (Whalen et al., 2009).

In contrast to smileys which were mentioned in the literature, but not found in the corpus, two new typographic irony markers were found in the corpus that were not mentioned in the literature. The first of these irony markers stretches the concept of irony to its limit; it is crossed-out text. The made-up example related to Brenda and Laurie’s picnic plans can be found in Table 4.1, but a clearer example can be found in the advertisement for advertising agency linssen id in Figure 4.5. This advertisement has the following text:

(4.28.1) You brief the agency in a 360° Brainstorm Session.

(4.28.2) The agency starts a Positioning Optimization™.

(4.28.3) Then, the DemandVision® is determined with the aid of the DemandStewardship® model.

(4.28.4) This leads to a BrandStrategy™.

(4.28.5) Now, your own organization is firstly subjected to a rigorous Resource Check™.

(4.28.6) after which the input for the Creative Content® is determined based on the Fact Analysis Research Technique (FART®).

(4.28.7) Then, the agency comes up with a good idea™.

Figure 4.5: Advertisement for linssen id: Crossed-out text and special signs as irony markers

When looking at utterances (4.28.1) – (4.28.7), the crossed-out text opens up two different readings. The first reading is the entire text (including crossed-out text), which is an advertisement filled with marketing jargon. The second reading only involves parts of utterances (4.28.1) and (4.28.7). This text has the same meaning as the first text, but is devoid of marketing jargon. The crossed-out text helps the reader to
navigate between the two different readings of the advertisement. As such, the crossed-out text helps the reader to determine that *linssen id* does not literally mean the entire literal content of utterances (4.28.1) – (4.28.7).

Besides crossed-out texts, the advertisement in Figure 4.5 features another new irony marker that can be labeled as “other special signs”. After a number of terms from marketing jargon, the symbols ™ and ® are used. These symbols (indicating that something is a registered trademark) can also help the reader to see that a literal reading of these utterances should be interpreted as bombastic drivel. Another special sign that helps to expose utterance (4.28.6) as an exaggerated claim is the abbreviation of the Fact Analysis Research Technique. The word “FART” already illustrates that this research technique cannot be taken seriously.

4.3 Method

4.3.1 Material
The corpus described in paragraph 3.3.1 was used for the analysis of irony markers in the ironic utterance.

4.3.2 Procedure and reliability
A coding instruction was made for the coding of various irony markers. In this instruction, coders were explained what an irony marker was and which different irony markers could be distinguished. For every ironic utterance, coders had to decide for all types of irony markers discussed in the previous sections whether it was present or absent. Types of irony markers were thus coded as binary variables. A copy of the coding instructions can be found in Appendices IV and V.

Reliability of the coding of the various irony markers was determined. For this reliability analysis, the same stratified subsample from the corpus was used as in the reliability analysis of irony factors (see paragraph 3.3). This means that 180 ironic utterances (39.4 % of ironic utterances from the corpus) were included in the reliability analysis. The procedure for reliability coding was identical to that of irony factors. Two MA-students of Dutch Language and Culture coded the subsample for reliability analysis in two rounds. In the first round, coders analyzed the sample with the use of the coding instruction. In the second round, coders were confronted with the coding and motivation of another rater on cases on which they disagreed in a similar way as the second round for irony factors (see paragraph 3.3.2). Reported kappas are based
on average scores between the three coders (the author and the two student coders). Since the coding in the second round was partially independent (coders saw the other ratings of another coder, but they did not actually confer), the scores of the kappas after the second round of coding should be treated with care (see paragraph 3.3.2). Table 4.2 shows the reliability scores for irony markers after the first and second round of coding.

A number of irony markers already obtained an acceptable reliability score after the first round of coding (e.g., rhetorical questions, tag questions, capitalization and quotation marks), whilst other irony markers scored below the .70 threshold. A similar pattern could be observed in the analysis of irony markers as in the analysis of irony factors. Again, the overall percentage of agreement is very high, whilst the corresponding Cohen’s Kappa score is sometimes very low. In the first round of coding, the lowest percentage of agreement was for instance 78.1%, whilst the lowest kappa was .11 (both for “ironic echo”). In order to see how this difference could be explained, percentages of agreement on the question whether a specific irony marker was present \( (p_{\text{present}}) \) or absent \( (p_{\text{absent}}) \) are also reported. The results section demonstrates that all types of irony markers occur in less than 50% of ironic utterances in the corpus. Disagreement between coders thus stems from the question whether a specific irony marker is present rather than when a specific irony marker is absent. In other words, coders more often both agree that a certain irony marker is not used in a specific ironic utterance than that a certain irony marker is present in a specific ironic utterance.

After the second round of coding, five irony markers did not reach a satisfactory Cohen’s Kappa of at least .70. These are ironic echo, focus topicalization, change of register, interjections, and a different typography. Not surprisingly, the question whether something is an ironic echo or not asks a considerate interpretation from coders. In coding something as an ironic echo or not, a coder has to look at his or her contextual knowledge beyond the text under discussion. Coders of course differ in this contextual knowledge. This means that (part of) an utterance may be an echo to one coder, but not so to another coder who has different contextual knowledge. The other four types of irony markers are not used very often. Table 4.2 shows that coders agree on at least 96% of cases for these irony markers. This implies that these irony markers were not used very often. If coders thus disagreed on a relatively low number of cases, kappa was low. This means that these markers are difficult to code reliably.
Table 4.2: Cohen’s kappa, the percentage of agreement between coders, \( p_{\text{present}} \) and \( p_{\text{absent}} \) in the first and second round of reliability coding of irony markers in the ironic utterance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Round</th>
<th>Marker</th>
<th>( \kappa )</th>
<th>%Agreement</th>
<th>( p_{\text{present}} )</th>
<th>( p_{\text{absent}} )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Tropes as irony markers:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Metaphor</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>91.8</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hyperbole</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>79.0</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understatement</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>96.1</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rhetorical Question</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>95.0</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Schematic irony markers:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ironic repetition</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.88.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ironic echo</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>78.9</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.88.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change of register</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>90.9</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.95.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Morpho-syntactic irony markers:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exclamation</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>87.2</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tag question</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>99.6</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus Topicalization</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>90.0</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interjections</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>93.3</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diminutives</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>98.5</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Typographic irony markers:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Different typography</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>96.3</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Capitalization</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>99.6</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quotation marks</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>97.4</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other punctuation marks</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>98.5</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emoticons</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crossed-out text</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other special signs</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Tropes as irony markers:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td>Metaphor</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>98.3</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.990</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Hyperbole</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>90.0</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.936</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understatement</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>98.9</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>.994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rhetorical Question</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>98.9</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>.994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Schematic irony markers:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ironic repetition</td>
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<td>98.9</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.994</td>
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<td>Ironic echo</td>
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<tr>
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<td>96.3</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.981</td>
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<td><strong>Morpho-syntactic irony markers:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Exclamation</td>
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<td>97.4</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>.986</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Tag question</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>99.6</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus Topicalization</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>96.7</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interjections</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>98.9</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.995</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Diminutives</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>99.6</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Typographic irony markers:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Different typography</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>98.9</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Capitalization</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>99.6</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quotation marks</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>99.3</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>.996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other punctuation marks</td>
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<td>98.9</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emoticons</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crossed-out text</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other special signs</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All figures are average scores of agreement between the three possible coder pairs and are unstandardized. \( \kappa \) reports Cohen’s Kappa, \%Agreement reports the total percentage of agreement, \( p_{\text{present}} \) indicates the probability that when one coder believed a specific utterance to have a specific type of irony marker, the other coder agreed; \( p_{\text{absent}} \) indicates the probability that when one coder believed a specific utterance not to have a specific type of irony marker, the other coder agreed.
4.4 Results

The first research question of this chapter was

RQ1b-i How are various types and categories of irony markers in the ironic utterance used in written discourse?

RQ1b-i addresses the frequency with which the various categories and types of irony markers are used in the ironic utterances in the corpus. Results demonstrate that, on average, an ironic utterance in the corpus has 1.66 different irony markers ($SD = 1.20$). The minimum number of irony markers is 0 and the maximum number is 6. This implies that a number of ironic utterances in the corpus is not marked at all. An example of an unmarked ironic utterance is utterance (4.29.2), which comes from a review of the TV program “In the trail of Peking Express”, a traveling program on the Dutch TV channel NET5. The reviewed episode is hosted by Dutch stylist Dyanne Beekman, who visits Vietnam. In the first part of the review, the reviewer argued that Beekman did not have any attention for the country’s historical or cultural heritage. Instead, her main concern in the documentary is “fun shopping”. After buying a pair of shoes made from the skin of an endangered species of animal, Beekman continues on her journey:

(4.29.1) "This is the real Vietnam",
(4.29.2) she knows (literal translation),
(4.29.3) when her boat anchors at a small workshop.
(4.29.4) Immediately, the family flees into their small house²⁴.

Utterance (4.29.2) is ironic. On reading about Beekman’s account in Vietnam, it becomes clear that the reviewer asserts that Beekman does not know anything about the country. This means that the reviewer believes that Beekman does not know what the real Vietnam would be. Utterance (4.29.2) is thus ironic. On a literal reading, Beekman is portrayed as an expert who knows the real Vietnam. On an ironic reading, Beekman is portrayed as an amateur who does not know anything about Vietnam. In order to interpret (4.29.2) as ironic, however, the reader has to completely rely on co-text. Utterance (4.29.2) itself does not include an irony marker that helps the reader to identify it as an ironic utterance.

An ironic utterance with six irony markers could already be seen in utterance (4.28.6). As mentioned in section 4.2.4, this utterance contains the irony markers of
crossed-out text and other special signs. This ironic utterance contains four more irony markers. Firstly, the utterance switches between two registers; an utterance with marketing jargon (crossed-out text) and an utterance without marketing jargon (text that is not crossed-out). This also means that terms such as Creative Content ironically echo stereotypical utterances that are used by marketing executives. Besides, the crossed-out text is repeated a number of times, which also makes for a co-textual repetition. Finally, words such as Creative Content are capitalized, whilst these utterances are not capitalized in regular English.

Table 4.3 indicates how many irony markers were included in the ironic utterances in the corpus. It shows that most ironic utterances had one marker (162 utterances) or two markers (132 utterances). Ironic utterances without markers (67 times) and ironic utterances with three markers (67 times) were also found frequently. Ironic utterances with four or more irony markers were hardly found in the corpus.

Table 4.3: Occurrence of total number of irony markers per utterance, specified per genre (commercial and non-commercial advertisements, columns, cartoons, book and film reviews and letters to the editor).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marker</th>
<th>Comm. ads</th>
<th>Non-comm. ads</th>
<th>Column</th>
<th>Cartoon</th>
<th>Book/film review</th>
<th>Letter to editor</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 markers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 marker</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 markers</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 markers</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 markers</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 markers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 markers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 also indicates a genre difference between the multimodal and purely verbal genres. Irony in multimodal genres (commercial and non-commercial advertisements and cartoons) typically contains between 1 and 3 irony markers. In contrast, most irony in purely verbal genres (i.e., columns, book and film reviews, and letters to the editor) contains between 0 and 2 irony markers. It thus seems that, despite the possibility of multimodal marking of irony (see Ch. 6), irony in multimodal genres is more marked than irony in purely verbal genres.
Table 4.4: Occurrence of tropes as irony markers per genre (commercial and non-commercial advertisements, columns, cartoons, book and film reviews, and letters to the editor). Percentages indicate the relative use of a particular irony marker in a particular genre (i.e., frequency of use/N)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marker</th>
<th>Com. ads (N=105)</th>
<th>Non-com. ads (N=84)</th>
<th>Column (N=107)</th>
<th>Cartoon (N=19)</th>
<th>Book/ film review (N=98)</th>
<th>Letter to editor (N=43)</th>
<th>Total (N=456)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metaphor</td>
<td>3 (2.9 %)</td>
<td>1 (1.2 %)</td>
<td>11 (10.4 %)</td>
<td>2 (10.5 %)</td>
<td>3 (7.0 %)</td>
<td>30 (6.6 %)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyperbole</td>
<td>13 (12.4 %)</td>
<td>10 (11.9 %)</td>
<td>37 (34.6 %)</td>
<td>4 (21.1 %)</td>
<td>23 (23.2 %)</td>
<td>8 (18.6 %)</td>
<td>95 (20.8 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understatement</td>
<td>3 (2.9 %)</td>
<td>3 (3.6 %)</td>
<td>7 (6.5 %)</td>
<td>0 (0 %)</td>
<td>6 (6.1 %)</td>
<td>1 (2.3 %)</td>
<td>20 (4.4 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhetorical Question</td>
<td>10 (9.5 %)</td>
<td>19 (22.6 %)</td>
<td>7 (6.6 %)</td>
<td>2 (10.5 %)</td>
<td>11 (11.1 %)</td>
<td>13 (3.4 %)</td>
<td>62 (13.6 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4 shows how often tropes are used as irony markers across the corpus. It demonstrates that hyperboles are used most often as irony markers (95 times), followed by rhetorical questions (62 times), metaphors (30 times) and understatements (20 times). In total, tropes are used 207 times as irony markers in the corpus.

Table 4.5: Occurrence of schematic irony markers per genre (commercial and non-commercial advertisements, columns, cartoons, book and film reviews, and letters to the editor). Percentages indicate the relative use of a particular irony marker in a particular genre (i.e., frequency of use/N)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marker</th>
<th>Com. ads (N=105)</th>
<th>Non-com. ads (N=84)</th>
<th>Column (N=107)</th>
<th>Cartoon (N=19)</th>
<th>Book/ film review (N=98)</th>
<th>Letter to editor (N=43)</th>
<th>Total (N=456)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Co-textual repetition</td>
<td>20 (19.0 %)</td>
<td>8 (9.5 %)</td>
<td>9 (8.5 %)</td>
<td>1 (4.3 %)</td>
<td>7 (7.1 %)</td>
<td>2 (4.7 %)</td>
<td>47 (10.3 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ironic echo</td>
<td>66 (62.9 %)</td>
<td>43 (51.2 %)</td>
<td>21 (19.6 %)</td>
<td>8 (42.1 %)</td>
<td>25 (25.3 %)</td>
<td>7 (16.3 %)</td>
<td>170 (37.3 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change of register</td>
<td>28 (26.7 %)</td>
<td>12 (14.3 %)</td>
<td>6 (5.6 %)</td>
<td>3 (15.8 %)</td>
<td>12 (12.1 %)</td>
<td>5 (11.6 %)</td>
<td>66 (14.5 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The distribution of schematic irony markers across the corpus can be seen in Table 4.5, which shows that schematic irony markers are used 283 times in the corpus. The schematic irony marker that is used most often is echo (170 times), followed by a change of register (66 times) and a co-textual repetition (47 times).

Table 4.6 shows how the morpho-syntactic irony markers are distributed across the corpus. Whilst the category of morpho-syntactic irony markers has more subtypes of markers than either tropes or schematic markers, the number of morpho-syntactic irony markers in the corpus is lower than that of the other two subcategories.
Exclamations are the type of morpho-syntactic irony marker that is used most often in the corpus (75 times), followed by interjections (37 times), focus topicalization (26 times) and diminutives (12 times). Tag questions (1 time) are hardly used as irony markers in the corpus.

Table 4.6: Occurrence of morpho-syntactic irony markers per genre (commercial and non-commercial advertisements, columns, cartoons, book and film reviews, and letters to the editor). Percentages indicate the relative use of a particular irony marker in a particular genre (i.e., frequency of use/N)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marker</th>
<th>Com. ads (N=105)</th>
<th>Non-com. ads (N=84)</th>
<th>Column (N=107)</th>
<th>Cartoon (N=19)</th>
<th>Book/ film review (N=98)</th>
<th>Letter to editor (N=43)</th>
<th>Total (N=456)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exclamation</td>
<td>22 (21.0 %)</td>
<td>29 (34.5 %)</td>
<td>4 (3.7 %)</td>
<td>10 (52.6 %)</td>
<td>6 (6.1 %)</td>
<td>4 (9.3 %)</td>
<td>75 (16.4 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tag Question</td>
<td>1 (1.0 %)</td>
<td>0 (0 %)</td>
<td>0 (0 %)</td>
<td>0 (0 %)</td>
<td>0 (0 %)</td>
<td>0 (0 %)</td>
<td>1 (0.2 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Topicalization</td>
<td>9 (8.6 %)</td>
<td>4 (4.8 %)</td>
<td>5 (4.7 %)</td>
<td>1 (4.3 %)</td>
<td>6 (6.1 %)</td>
<td>1 (2.3 %)</td>
<td>26 (5.7 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interjections</td>
<td>14 (13.3 %)</td>
<td>9 (10.7 %)</td>
<td>7 (6.5 %)</td>
<td>1 (4.3 %)</td>
<td>4 (4.1 %)</td>
<td>2 (4.7 %)</td>
<td>37 (8.3 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diminutives</td>
<td>3 (2.9 %)</td>
<td>0 (0 %)</td>
<td>1 (0.9 %)</td>
<td>0 (0 %)</td>
<td>7 (7.1 %)</td>
<td>1 (2.3 %)</td>
<td>12 (2.6 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>49</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7, then, shows how the typographic irony markers are distributed across the corpus. Even though the category of typographic markers consists out of seven types of markers (more than any other category), typographic markers are only used 119 times in the corpus. Quotation marks are used most often as typographic markers (44 times), followed by crossed-out text (24 times) and other special punctuation marks (15 times) and signs (15 times). Capitalization (12 times) and a difference in typography (9 times) are hardly used in the corpus. Emoticons, finally, are not used in the corpus.

All types of irony markers are thus not used in the same amount. Instead, some irony markers such as ironic echoes and hyperboles are used in more than 20% of ironic utterances of the corpus. In contrast, irony markers such as tag questions, capitalization and a difference in typography are used in less than 3% of ironic utterances in the corpus. These results show that some irony markers are used more than others; whilst some irony markers can thus almost be seen as “prototypical” irony markers (e.g., ironic echo, hyperbole), others are hardly used in the corpus (e.g., emoticons, tag questions). The result for emoticons may be explained, because the
corpus did not feature any chat text, whilst tag questions may be more frequently used in English than in Dutch.

Table 4.7: Occurrence of typographic irony markers per genre (commercial and non-commercial advertisements, columns, cartoons, book and film reviews, and letters to the editor). Percentages indicate the relative use of a particular irony marker in a particular genre (i.e., frequency of use/N)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marker</th>
<th>Com. ads (N=105)</th>
<th>Non-com. ads (N=84)</th>
<th>Column (N=107)</th>
<th>Cartoon (N=19)</th>
<th>Book/ film review (N=98)</th>
<th>Letter to editor (N=43)</th>
<th>Total (N=456)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Different typography</td>
<td>7 (6.7 %)</td>
<td>2 (2.4 %)</td>
<td>0 (0 %)</td>
<td>0 (0 %)</td>
<td>0 (0 %)</td>
<td>0 (0 %)</td>
<td>9 (2.0 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitalization</td>
<td>11 (10.5 %)</td>
<td>0 (0 %)</td>
<td>0 (0 %)</td>
<td>0 (0 %)</td>
<td>0 (0 %)</td>
<td>1 (2.3 %)</td>
<td>12 (2.6 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quotation marks</td>
<td>16 (15.2 %)</td>
<td>3 (3.6 %)</td>
<td>5 (4.7 %)</td>
<td>0 (0 %)</td>
<td>10 (10.1 %)</td>
<td>10 (23.3 %)</td>
<td>44 (9.6 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other punctuation marks</td>
<td>4 (3.8 %)</td>
<td>2 (2.4 %)</td>
<td>1 (0.9 %)</td>
<td>4 (21.1 %)</td>
<td>3 (2.0 %)</td>
<td>1 (2.3 %)</td>
<td>15 (3.3 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emoticons</td>
<td>0 (0 %)</td>
<td>0 (0 %)</td>
<td>0 (0 %)</td>
<td>0 (0 %)</td>
<td>0 (0 %)</td>
<td>0 (0 %)</td>
<td>0 (0 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossed-out text</td>
<td>23 (21.9%)</td>
<td>0 (0 %)</td>
<td>0 (0 %)</td>
<td>1 (5.3 %)</td>
<td>0 (0 %)</td>
<td>0 (0 %)</td>
<td>24 (5.3 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other special signs</td>
<td>7 (6.7 %)</td>
<td>8 (9.5%)</td>
<td>0 (0 %)</td>
<td>0 (0 %)</td>
<td>0 (0 %)</td>
<td>0 (0 %)</td>
<td>15 (3.3 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>68</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>119</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second research question of this chapter was:

RQ1b-ii How does the use of irony markers in the ironic utterance differ across various levels of irony factors?

It is investigated whether a relationship could be established between the levels of different irony factors and the total number of irony markers and between the levels of different irony factors and the various categories of irony markers (tropes, schematic markers, morpho-syntactic markers and typographic markers). Results are reported per irony factor. Average scores can be found in Table 4.8.

The first irony factor to be considered is the explicitness of the ironic evaluation, which can be explicitly or implicitly evaluative (see paragraph 3.2.1). A t-test for independent samples shows that the total number of irony markers is higher in implicitly evaluative irony than in explicitly evaluative irony ($t$ (346.2) = 2.73, $p < .01$, $r = .15$). This difference was also found for schematic and typographic irony markers; these categories of markers were used more often in implicitly than in explicitly evaluative irony ($t_{schematic}$ (375.1) = 3.36, $p < .01$, $r = .17$; $t_{typographic}$ (271.9) = 5.14, $p < .01$, $r = .22$).
In contrast to this general pattern, morpho-syntactic irony markers turned out to be used significantly more often in explicitly evaluative irony than in implicitly evaluative irony ($t(453.8) = 3.48$, $p < .01$, $r = .16$).

The second irony factor to be considered is incongruence, which has the sublevels of incongruence in co-text and incongruence in context (see paragraph 3.2.2). The total number of irony markers is higher when incongruent information with a literal reading of the ironic utterance is present in the co-text than when incongruent information from the context ($t(421) = 4.07$, $p < .001$, $r = .19$). The same effect was found for the category of schematic irony markers ($t(356.0) = 5.16$, $p < .001$, $r = .26$).

Table 4.8: Means (and standard deviations) for the occurrence of irony markers and the different categories of irony markers (tropes, schematic, morpho-syntactic and typographic markers) related to the levels of irony factors (evaluativness, incongruence, reversal of valence, target and relevance).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Irony factor</th>
<th>Tropes markers</th>
<th>Schematic markers</th>
<th>Morpho-syntactic markers</th>
<th>Typographic markers</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluativeness</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicitly evaluative irony</td>
<td>.47 (.58)</td>
<td>.51 (.70)</td>
<td>.41 (.66)</td>
<td>.13 (.37)</td>
<td>1.52 (1.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicitly evaluative irony</td>
<td>.43 (.62)</td>
<td>.76 (.84)</td>
<td>.22 (.49)</td>
<td>.43 (.73)</td>
<td>1.85 (1.38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Incongruence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incongruence in co-text</td>
<td>.45 (.60)</td>
<td>.71 (.73)</td>
<td>.37 (.66)</td>
<td>.19 (.45)</td>
<td>1.72 (.99)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incongruence in context</td>
<td>.51 (.61)</td>
<td>.37 (.61)</td>
<td>.31 (.54)</td>
<td>.13 (.34)</td>
<td>1.33 (1.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sender</td>
<td>.40 (.59)</td>
<td>.28 (.45)</td>
<td>.48 (.60)</td>
<td>.28 (.60)</td>
<td>1.43 (1.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressee</td>
<td>.64 (.49)</td>
<td>.58 (.69)</td>
<td>.53 (.61)</td>
<td>.14 (.35)</td>
<td>1.89 (.98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third party</td>
<td>.44 (.60)</td>
<td>.69 (.81)</td>
<td>.26 (.58)</td>
<td>.28 (.60)</td>
<td>1.66 (1.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>.49 (.64)</td>
<td>.39 (.59)</td>
<td>.61 (.77)</td>
<td>.20 (.46)</td>
<td>1.68 (1.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reversal of valence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ironic praise</td>
<td>.48 (.62)</td>
<td>.54 (.76)</td>
<td>.31 (.60)</td>
<td>.26 (.57)</td>
<td>1.60 (1.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ironic blame</td>
<td>.33 (.49)</td>
<td>.88 (.80)</td>
<td>.39 (.58)</td>
<td>.27 (.60)</td>
<td>1.88 (1.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relevance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directly relevant irony</td>
<td>.50 (.60)</td>
<td>.56 (.76)</td>
<td>.33 (.61)</td>
<td>.21 (.52)</td>
<td>1.59 (1.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirectly relevant irony</td>
<td>.27 (.54)</td>
<td>.85 (.76)</td>
<td>.35 (.57)</td>
<td>.48 (.72)</td>
<td>1.96 (1.23)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $^{a,b}$ = The frequency of the use of markers for this level of the irony factor was $^a$ lower or $^b$ higher than the frequency of the use of markers for another level of the irony factor.

The third irony factor is target, which has the sublevels of sender, receiver, third party and a combination of sender, addressee and/ or target (see paragraph 3.2.4). No
relationship was found between the various levels of the irony factor of targets and the total number of irony markers ($F < 1$). A relationship was found between target and the use of morpho-syntactic irony markers ($F (3, 452) = 6.90, \ p < .001, \ \eta^2_p = .0425$). A Bonferroni post-hoc test indicated that morpho-syntactic irony markers are used less often when the target is a third party than a combination between sender, addressee and/or third party ($p < .01$). The higher use of morpho-syntactic irony markers when the target is either the addressee compared to a third party was a trend ($p = .06$). A relationship was also found between target and the use of schematic irony markers ($F (3, 452) = 4.95, \ p < .01, \ \eta^2_p = .03$). A Bonferroni post-hoc test indicated that schematic irony markers are used more often when the target is a third party than when the target is the sender ($p < .01$).

The fourth irony factor to be considered is reversal of valence, which has the sublevels of ironic praise and ironic blame (see paragraph 3.2.3). The total number of irony markers is higher in ironic blame than in ironic praise ($t (438) = 2.06, \ p < .05, \ r = .10$). This general pattern is confirmed for schematic irony markers, which are used more often in ironic blame than in ironic praise ($t (438) = 3.90, \ p < .001, \ r = .18$). In contrast to the general pattern, tropes are used significantly more often as an irony marker in ironic praise than in ironic blame ($t (206.5) = 2.55, \ p < .05, \ r = .17$).

The last irony factor to be considered is relevance, which has the sublevels of directly and indirectly relevant irony (see paragraph 3.2.5). The total number of irony markers is significantly higher in indirectly relevant irony than in directly relevant irony ($t (454) = 2.56, \ p < .05, \ r = .12$). This general pattern is confirmed for schematic and typographic irony markers, which are both used more often in indirectly relevant irony than in directly relevant irony ($t_{schematic} (454) = 3.24, \ p = .001, \ r = .15; \ t_{typographic} (110.8) = 3.39, \ p < .01, \ r = .31$). In contrast to this general pattern, tropes are used more often as an irony marker in directly relevant irony than in indirectly relevant irony ($t (146.7) = 3.51, \ p < .01, \ r = .28$).

These results show that irony markers are generally associated with one of the levels of the various irony factors. Chapter 7 connects the irony factors and markers to irony’s perceived complexity and investigates whether the levels of irony factors that have the most markers (i.e., implicitly evaluative irony, ironic blame, indirectly relevant irony) are also the more difficult levels of the various irony factors.
The third research question of this chapter was RQ2b. How does the use of irony markers in the ironic utterance differ across various written genres?

In Table 4.9, the average number of irony markers per ironic utterance can be observed for the different genres. The average number of irony markers per ironic utterance was related to a text's genre \( (F(5, 450) = 20.00, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .18) \). A Bonferroni post-hoc test indicates that ironic utterances in commercial advertisements have more irony markers than ironic utterances in non-commercial advertisements \((p < .01)\), columns \((p < .001)\), book and film reviews \((p < .001)\) and letters to the editor \((p < .001)\). The Bonferroni post-hoc test also showed that ironic utterances in non-commercial advertisements have more irony markers than ironic utterances in columns \((p < .01)\) and book and film reviews \((p < .05)\). Finally, the Bonferroni post-hoc test shows that irony in cartoons has more irony markers than irony in columns \((p < .05)\).

This first analysis indicates that irony in multimodal genres (i.e., commercial and non-commercial advertisements and cartoons) may be marked in a different way from irony in purely verbal genres (i.e., columns, book and film reviews, and letters to the editor).

A second issue considered the relationship between the usage of irony markers from the various categories of irony markers and the genres in the corpus. These analyses confirmed the results for the categories of schematic, morpho-syntactic and typographic irony markers \((F_{\text{schematic}}(5, 450) = 15.53, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .15; F_{\text{syntactic}}(5, 450) = 6.53, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .07; F_{\text{typographic}}(5, 450) = 15.80, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .15)\). Bonferroni post-hoc tests mainly reveal that schematic, morpho-syntactic and typographic markers are used less often in the purely verbal genres (columns, book and film reviews, and letters to the editor) than in the multimodal genres (commercial advertisements, non-commercial advertisements and cartoons). To be specific, columns have less schematic \((p < .001)\), morpho-syntactic \((p < .01)\) and typographic irony markers than commercial advertisements. Columns also have less schematic \((p < .01)\) and morpho-syntactic irony markers \((p < .01)\) than non-commercial advertisements and less morpho-syntactic irony markers than cartoons \((p < .05)\). Book and film reviews have less schematic \((p < .001)\) and typographic irony markers \((p < .001)\) than commercial advertisements and less morpho-syntactic irony markers than non-commercial advertisements \((p < .05)\). Finally, letters to the editor have less...
schematic irony markers than commercial ($p < .001$) and non-commercial advertisements ($p < .05$) and less typographic irony markers than commercial advertisements ($p < .01$). One exception to this difference between purely verbal and multimodal genres can be found; commercial advertisements contain more schematic ($p < .05$) and typographic irony markers ($p < .001$) than non-commercial advertisements.

Table 4.9: Means (and standard deviations) for the occurrence of irony markers and the different categories of irony markers (tropes, schematic, morpho-syntactic and typographic markers) in the different genres (commercial and non-commercial advertisements, columns, cartoons, book and film reviews, and letters to the editor).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Tropes</th>
<th>Schematic markers</th>
<th>Morpho-syntactic markers</th>
<th>Typographic markers</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commercial ads</td>
<td>.28 (.53)</td>
<td>1.09 (.97)</td>
<td>.47 (.66)</td>
<td>.65 (.91)</td>
<td>2.48 (1.39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-commercial ads</td>
<td>.39 (.56)</td>
<td>.75 (.73)$^a$</td>
<td>.50 (.65)</td>
<td>.18 (.38)$^a$</td>
<td>1.82 (1.04)$^a$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columns</td>
<td>.58 (.63)$^b$</td>
<td>.33 (.53)$^{bc}$</td>
<td>.16 (.52)$^{abcd}$</td>
<td>.06 (.23)$^a$</td>
<td>1.12 (.90)$^{abcd}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cartoons</td>
<td>.42 (.69)</td>
<td>.63 (.83)</td>
<td>.63 (.76)</td>
<td>.26 (.45)</td>
<td>1.95 (.91)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book and film reviews</td>
<td>.51 (.58)</td>
<td>.44 (.59)$^a$</td>
<td>.24 (.48)$^a$</td>
<td>.13 (.34)$^a$</td>
<td>1.32 (1.07)$^a$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters to the editor</td>
<td>.58 (.66)</td>
<td>.33 (.57)$^{bc}$</td>
<td>.19 (.50)</td>
<td>.28 (.45)$^a$</td>
<td>1.37 (.90)$^a$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $^a,b$ = The frequency of the use of markers in this genre was $^a$ lower or $^b$ higher than the frequency of the use of markers in commercial advertisements. $^c$ = The frequency of the use of markers in this genre was lower than the frequency of the use of markers in non-commercial advertisements, $^d$ = The frequency of the use of markers in this genre was lower than the frequency of the use of markers in cartoons.

Tropes are also used differently across purely verbal and multimodal genres. But unlike schematic, morpho-syntactic and typographic irony markers, tropes are used more often in purely verbal than in multimodal genres ($F (5, 450) = 3.65, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .04$) A Bonferonni post-hoc test indicates that tropes are used less often as irony markers in commercial advertisements than in columns ($p < .01$). The higher use of tropes as irony markers in book and film reviews ($p = .07$) and letters to the editor ($p = .07$) compared to commercial advertisements was marginally significant. These results demonstrate that tropes are used more often as irony markers in the purely verbal than in the multimodal genres$^{26}$. 

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4.5 Conclusion and discussion

This chapter looked at the characteristics of irony markers in the ironic utterance in Dutch written discourse. Its first research question was

RQ1b-i How often are various types and categories of irony markers in the ironic utterance used in written discourse?

A frequency analysis demonstrates that ironic utterances contain an average of 1.66 different \((SD = 1.20)\) irony markers. This does not mean, however, that every type of irony marker is used in the same amount. Tropes and schematic irony markers are used more often than morpho-syntactic or typographic irony markers. Types of irony markers are also used in different amounts; ironic echoes, hyperboles and exclamations are used relatively often, whilst emoticons, tag questions and a difference in typography are hardly used in the corpus.

This difference in usage may imply that different irony markers may have a different status; some markers are used more often to signal irony and could perhaps be considered as more typical irony markers, whilst other that are hardly used can be considered as a-typical irony markers. Of course, the typicality of irony markers may also be related to the genres that were considered. The low score of emoticons can for instance be caused by the absence of texts from the domain of computer-mediated communication (CMC; Hancock, 2004). Further research may investigate whether a smiley is a typical way to signal irony in chat talk (see also Whalen et al., 2009). Although this claim may seem so obvious as not to warrant empirical research, a note of caution is needed. Various scholars list the use of quotation marks as typical ways to signal verbal irony in written speech (e.g., Renkema, 2002; Wilson & Sperber, 1992). The results of this study warrant critical scrutiny of this claim, because quotation marks were used as irony markers in less than ten per cent of ironic utterances in the corpus. Further research may also investigate the influence of this (a)-typicalness of irony markers on attention and recall of ironic utterances. It may be possible that a-typical irony markers are not as well recognized as irony markers than typical irony markers, but, because of their a-typicality, better remembered.

Another issue is the way in which irony markers were used in relation to the various levels of irony factors. This chapter’s second research question was
RQ1b-ii. How does the use of irony markers in the ironic utterance differ across various levels of irony factors?

Results show that irony markers are used more often at specific levels of irony factors. Ironic utterances that are implicitly evaluative, incongruent with the co-text, ironic blame and indirectly relevant have more irony markers than ironic utterances that are explicitly evaluative, incongruent with the context, ironic praise and directly relevant. In Chapter 7, it is argued that the levels of irony factors that turned out to have the most markers are also the more difficult levels of the irony factor. Writers thus intuitively seem to compensate for the choice of the more difficult level of an irony factor with the use of more irony markers.

The categories of schematic, morpho-syntactic and typographic irony markers confirmed this result. They tended to be higher at the level of irony factors that were considered as more difficult (implicitly evaluative irony for schematic, morpho-syntactic and typographic markers; ironic blame for schematic markers; indirectly relevant irony for schematic and typographic markers). It may be the case that authors of these texts add more irony markers in order to compensate for this (supposedly) more difficult level of the irony factor. In contrast, tropes were different from the other subcategories of irony markers. When a relationship between the use of tropes as irony markers and levels of irony factors was found, tropes would generally be used more often at the level of the specific irony factor that was considered easiest (ironic praise for reversal of valence and directly relevant irony for relevance, respectively).

Besides supporting the claim that the way in which irony is used depends on the level of the irony factors, these results also suggest that tropes may work differently as irony markers than the other three categories. The latter categories of irony markers mainly seem to be associated with the multimodal genres (advertisements and cartoons), whilst tropes are used more often than expected in the purely verbal genres included in the corpus (columns, book and film reviews and letters to the editor). An explanation for this difference may be found in the fact that tropes – by definition – require a reader to re-interpret or to decode an utterance. In other words, these irony markers are related to the content of an ironic utterance; this group of irony markers requires some sort of reinterpretation to be noticed and understood; it thus requires more cognitive effort. The other three categories of irony markers, instead, are related to the form of an ironic utterance. These three categories alert a reader to irony by
drawing attention to its form, either by invoking an association with an earlier utterance (schematic irony markers), drawing attention to syntactical structure or use of words (syntactic irony markers) or by attracting attention through the use of a typographic device (typographic irony markers). Therefore, tropes may work differently from the other categories of irony markers.

The third research question of this chapter was

RQ2b How does the use of irony markers in the ironic utterance differ across various written genres?

Genre analyses show a difference between the multimodal (commercial and non-commercial advertisements and cartoons) and the purely verbal genres (columns, book and film reviews, and letters to the editor). In general, irony in commercial and non-commercial advertisements has more irony markers than irony in columns and book and film reviews. Irony in cartoons has more irony markers than irony in columns, whilst irony in commercial advertisements also has more irony markers than irony in non-commercial advertisements and letters to the editor. An explanation for this effect may be found in the notion of co-text. The genres of columns, letters to the editor and book and film review are purely verbal genres; they have much verbal co-text to depend on. In contrast, advertisements and cartoons are mainly multimodal genres; they depend on both words and images. They thus have less co-text (in the form of non-ironic written utterances), but instead may also rely on the images that are included to help readers with a successful interpretation. Again, non-commercial advertisements tend to have more co-text than commercial advertisements, which can explain for the difference between the two genres.

Besides dealing with irony markers as a whole, relationships between genre and the various categories of irony markers were investigated. Schematic, morpho-syntactic and typographic markers were generally used more often in multimodal than in purely verbal genres. In contrast, tropes were used more often in purely verbal than in multimodal genres. These results confirm the general trend that tropes are used differently as irony markers than the other three categories.

When dealing with various categories of irony markers, an influence of co-text may be established. Purely verbal genres (i.e., columns, book and film reviews, and
letters to the editor) are associated with less irony markers and tropes whereas multimodal genres (advertisements and cartoons) have more irony markers and are associated with schematic, morpho-syntactic and typographic irony markers. A question is thus justified whether this difference in co-text may also help a reader. Perhaps the co-text in purely verbal genres helps in setting up a frame of unseriousness to get a reader into an ironic mood (Coulson, 2005; Utsumi, 2000). This would mean that verbal co-textual irony markers may alert a reader to the fact that the author is ironic.

In contrast to these verbal genres, irony in multimodal genres (advertisements and cartoons) tends to have more irony markers. Does this mean that the elements from the other modality (i.e., images) do not help the reader to discover the irony? But if they do help a reader, how do they do it? Results from this chapter does suggest that different forms of co-text (either as written co-text or multimodal co-text) may work differently in alerting the reader to the possible use of irony. Therefore, the next two chapters contain analyses of the possible existence and role of irony markers in the verbal and visual co-text.
Chapter 5:  
Irony markers in the verbal co-text

5.1 Introduction
This chapter is concerned with verbal markers in the co-text. In the previous chapter, a distinction was made between purely verbal and multimodal genres. Results showed that irony in the latter type of genres (i.e., advertisements and cartoons) had more irony markers than irony in purely verbal genres (i.e., columns, book and film reviews and letters to the editor). One explanation for this difference was that the purely verbal genres could more rely on verbal co-text (i.e., the other utterances of a text except for the ironic utterance under discussion, Attardo, 2000b) than the multimodal genres. This first co-textual chapter thus focuses on the way the verbal co-text may help a reader in detecting irony, whilst the next chapter deals with the way the visual co-text may help a reader to find irony.

Like irony markers in the ironic utterance, co-textual irony markers serve to signal the use of irony. Whilst an irony marker in the ironic utterance draws a reader’s attention to the fact that a sentence is ironic (Attardo, 2000b), co-textual irony markers alert a reader that an author may be ready to use an ironic utterance. As such, a co-textual irony marker can be seen as a support strategy (Hay, 2001) that helps a reader to detect irony. In other words, a co-textual irony marker can help to create a so-called "ironic environment" (Utsumi, 2000) in which the use of irony is almost expected by default.

This ironic environment may be created in a number of ways. Firstly, a writer may use more than one ironic utterance. If an author adds more ironic utterances to a text, irony comprehension may be facilitated. In other words, an ironic utterance that was preceded by, say, four other ironic utterances may be easier to recognize as ironic than the first ironic utterance in a text (e.g., Hay, 2001). A first co-textual marker that may help a reader to get into an “ironic mood” is thus the use of multiple ironic utterances in one text. Let’s illustrate this with an example from the corpus. Columnist Ebru Umar reports a dialogue between herself and a reporter from another newspaper. The other reporter asks Umar whether she can actually write whatever she wants in her column in the newspaper Metro. Umar responds:
(5.1.1) No, I am being censored at Metro, all right!
(5.1.2) To put it even stronger, I do not write my columns myself,
(5.1.3) they jokingly put my name above it and my photo beneath it.
(5.1.4) Dah.
(5.1.5) Of course I can write whatever I want.

In utterances (5.1.1) – (5.1.3), Umar is ironic. The repeated use of irony may help a reader to start expecting irony. In other words, it may be easier for a reader to perceive utterance (5.1.3) as ironic, because it has been preceded by ironic utterances (5.1.1) and (5.1.2) than to perceive utterance (5.1.1) as ironic, which has not been preceded by an ironic utterance. A first type of co-textual irony marker is thus the use of multiple ironic utterances per text.

Of course, the co-text may also mark irony in different ways besides the use of multiple ironic utterances per text. Co-textual markers may be closely related to the types of irony markers in the ironic utterance. It is possible that an author for instance uses a hyperbole in a non-ironic utterance to attract a reader’s attention. In this way, an author can already “announce” an ironic utterance by means of a non-ironic utterance. A good example of this latter strategy can be seen in the opening lines DVD review of the MUST LOVE DOGS film that was extensively discussed in paragraph 2.4.3. Co-textual irony markers are printed in italics:

(5.2.1) Sarah Nolan ([Diane] Lane) is a kindergarten teacher
(5.2.2) in Hollywood code a gigantic clue that
(5.2.3) this woman is selflessness incarnate
(5.2.4) but she is on her own nevertheless.
(5.2.5) Her boyfriend traded Sarah, [5.2.6], in for a younger specimen.
(5.2.6) already over forty years of age,
(5.2.7) Her impossibly amiable sisters want that
(5.2.8) Sarah starts meeting new men.
(5.2.9) So they put an advertisement on a dating web site.
(5.2.10) Will she succeed in finding the man of her dreams?

Although (5.2.10) is an ironic utterance that is marked by a rhetorical question, utterances (5.2.1) – (5.2.9) may already have led a reader to expect an ironic utterance. Words such as “Hollywood code”, “a gigantic clue” and the “impossibly amiable sisters” may have led a reader to believe that something was going on. This
alertness may help a reader to get into a mood that anticipates an ironic utterance that eventually comes in (5.2.10). In this way, the co-text may help to facilitate an ironic reading.

The hyperboles in utterances (5.2.2) and (5.2.7) show that some types of irony markers in the ironic utterance can be extended to co-textual irony markers. However, this may not be the case for all types of irony markers in the ironic utterance. It is for instance difficult to imagine how typographic markers such as quotation marks or capitalization could mark anything beyond the utterance in which these markers are used. This implies that not all irony markers in the ironic utterance may serve as co-textual irony markers.

Whilst various scholars have observed that irony may be used when an “ironic environment” is created (Utsumi, 2000) or when an ironic frame is opened up (Ritchie, 2005), the linguistic means that signal the use of this ironic environment or ironic frame have received scant attention. In other words, scholars have not yet identified which linguistic elements may serve as co-textual irony markers. It is possible that a list of co-textual irony markers has much in common with a list of irony markers in the ironic utterance. However, irony markers in the ironic utterance like quotation marks may be difficult to use as co-textual markers. At the same time, co-textual irony markers may exist which are not used as irony markers in the ironic utterance. This chapter's first research question is thus:

RQ1c. How are irony markers in the verbal co-text used in written discourse?

In order for RQ1c to be answered, however, another issue should first be addressed. Since co-textual irony markers have received scant attention, it is important to first identify different types of co-textual markers. When these co-textual irony markers have been identified, it is possible to analyze how these irony markers in the verbal co-text are used in written discourse. This chapter

The previous two chapters have demonstrated that the use of irony factors (Chapter 3) and irony markers in the ironic utterance (Chapter 4) differs considerably across various written genres. The question is whether such a genre difference can also be observed for co-textual irony markers. The final research question of this chapter is thus:
RQ2c. How does the use of irony markers in the verbal co-text differ across various written genres?

5.2 Method
5.2.1 Material
The selected sub sample that was used for the reliability analyses of irony factors and markers was coded for the presence of co-textual irony markers. This sub sample thus consisted out of 60 texts with a total of 180 ironic utterances. Excluding these ironic utterances, the sample consisted out of 2,162 utterances that were coded for the presence or absence of co-textual irony markers.

5.2.2 Procedure and reliability
Two different methods were used to analyze the use of multiple ironic utterances in one text and the use of other co-textual irony markers. The analysis of the use of multiple ironic utterances per text was relatively straightforward. Using the VIP (see Chapter 2), ironic utterances in the corpus were already identified in Chapter 3 for the analysis of irony factors. With these coding results, it is easy to know how many (if any) ironic utterances precede a specific ironic utterance in a specific text.

For the other co-textual analysis, a coding instruction was made based on a bottom-up approach. To answer the first research question and to identify as many co-textual irony markers as possible, it was decided to use a bottom-up approach to identify the co-textual markers. After all, irony markers in the verbal co-text have not yet been dealt with in the irony literature. In contrast to irony markers in the ironic utterance, no list of possible markers was readily available. In order to leave the possibility that irony markers in the ironic utterance may be different from irony markers in the verbal co-text, a bottom-up approach was selected.

Like the analysis of irony factors and irony markers in the ironic utterance, coding was done in two different rounds. For the first round, coders – two MA students in Business Communication at Radboud University Nijmegen – were given an instruction that informed them what a co-textual irony marker was. They were subsequently asked to identify and label co-textual irony markers. This identification and labeling of co-textual irony markers was an open process, because coders were not given a set of restricted options. Instead, they could indicate everything they considered to be a co-textual irony marker. Coders were asked to be as specific as
possible about what they considered as a co-textual irony marker. They were also asked to indicate why they considered something as a co-textual irony marker. In the second round, coders were confronted with the coding and motivation of another rater on cases on which they disagreed, in a similar way to the second round of irony factors (see paragraph 3.3.2) and irony markers in the ironic utterance (see paragraph 4.3.2). Since the coding in the second round was partially independent (coders saw the other ratings of another coder), the scores of the kappas after the second round of coding should be treated with care (see paragraph 3.3.2).

It should be noted that these coders could only code the non-ironic, co-textual utterances. In this way, irony markers in the ironic utterances were excluded from this analysis. The exact coding instruction can be found in Appendices VI and VII.

Table 5.1 shows that Cohen’s Kappa was low after the first round of coding ($\kappa = .06$; slight agreement). After the second round, the score for Cohen’s Kappa increased to $.84$, which can be qualified as “almost perfect” (Landis & Koch, 1977). These data show the same pattern as the data in the previous two chapters. In the first round, Cohen’s Kappa is low whilst the average percentage of agreement is relatively high (88.5%). When looking at agreement over the question whether a co-textual marker is present or absent, it turns out that most disagreement stems from the question whether a marker is present. After a second round of coding, coders relatively agree on the matter whether something is a co-textual marker or not. The author made the final decision about the group of cases coders disagreed about after the second round of coding (i.e., 63 out of 2,162 utterances or 2.9 % of utterances).

Table 5.1: Cohen’s kappa, the percentage of agreement between coders, $p_{\text{present}}$ and $p_{\text{absent}}$ in the first and second round of reliability coding of co-textual irony markers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Co-textual markers</th>
<th>$\kappa$</th>
<th>%Agreement</th>
<th>$p_{\text{present}}$</th>
<th>$p_{\text{absent}}$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Round 1</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>88.5</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Round 2</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>97.3</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $\kappa$ lists the Cohen’s Kappa, %Agreement indicates the total percentage of cases that coders agree on; $p_{\text{present}}$ indicates the probability that when one coder believed a specific utterance to have a co-textual irony marker, the other coder agreed; $p_{\text{absent}}$ indicates the probability that when one coder believed a specific utterance not to have a co-textual irony marker, the other coder agreed.

Based on the argumentation given by the two coders, the author then classified the identified co-textual markers into categories. While doing so, the author looked at
the list of irony markers in the ironic utterance and analyzed whether co-textual markers could be placed into these categories, based on the descriptions given by the two coders.

5.3 Results
The first research question was:

RQ1c. How are irony markers in the verbal co-text used in written discourse?

To answer this research question, the types of irony markers in the verbal co-text had to first be identified. Based on the argumentation provided by the coders, the author classified the co-textual markers of irony in non-ironic utterances into two main categories; tropes and tone-of-voice co-textual irony markers. The category of tropes contains the same tropes that were found as markers in the ironic utterances in the previous chapter: metaphor, hyperbole, understatement and rhetorical questions. The category of tone-of-voice markers contains one marker that was also found as a marker in the ironic utterance (a change of register) and two new co-textual markers (cynicism and the use of humor).

The classification of co-textual irony markers was done on the basis of the descriptions provided by the coders. The label of metaphors was reserved for co-textual markers that were identified by coders with words that emphasized a comparison like “analogie” (analogy). For co-textual markers that were classified as hyperboles, coders used words related to exaggeration such as “overdrijving” (exaggeration), “heel overdreven manier om dit te zeggen” (a very exaggerated way to say this) or “hyperbool” (hyperbole). Co-textual markers were labeled as understatements and rhetorical questions when coders directly used the words “understatement” or “rhetorical question” in expressions such as “klinkt als een understatement” (sounds like an understatement) or “retorische vraag” (rhetorical question). A co-textual marker was classified as a change of register when coders used explanations that made clear that certain utterances did not fit the rest of the text, such as “spreektaal, geen schrijftaal” (vernacular speech, no written speech) or “tegenstelling: de woordkeuze ‘academici’ past niet bij de huidige activiteit van deze mensen” (contrast: the choice of the word ‘academics’ does not fit the actual activity of these people). The classification of cynicism was given to co-textual utterances that
coders described with words such as “cynisch” (cynic) or “wrange woordkeuze” (a wry choice of words). Finally, a co-textual marker was classified as humor when coders noted that a remark was considered as funny in expressions such as “grappige woordkeuze” (a funny choice of words) or “grapje” (a joke).

The following paragraphs introduce and explain the various co-textual markers of irony by means of a number of examples. Examples of ironic utterances that serve as co-textual markers could be seen in utterances (5.1.1) and (5.1.2). The first category of co-textual markers is the category of tropes that consists of metaphors, understatements, hyperboles and rhetorical questions.

Tropes

Examples of both metaphors and understatements – both already mentioned as irony markers in the ironic utterance in Chapter 4 – as co-textual irony markers can be found in a column in which the author narrates about his visit to the doctor. The author starts out by explaining why he went to see his physician after which he talks about the doctor’s sense of humor:

(5.3.1) Yesterday, since I did not feel like a R. Ritsma or L. Armstrong after waking up –
(5.3.2) a techno rave party seemed to have started in my chest
(5.3.3) with more ‘heart beats per minute’ than I cared for –
(5.3.4) I got a medical inspection.
(5.3.5) My doctor is a stoic with a special sense of humor. […]
(5.3.6) If a samurai warrior were to chop off my leg with a sword tomorrow,
(5.3.7) my doctor, after looking at the stump, would say something like:
(5.3.8) “That will be no Kennedy march this year,
(5.3.9) I am afraid’.
(5.3.10) I like that. […]
(5.3.11) Together, we look at the little ball in the meter,
(5.3.12) that crawls to a level that does not really fit a R. Ritsma

Utterance (5.3.12) is ironic. Literally, it says that the level of the ball in the meter fits the level of an athlete like Rintje Ritsma for a little bit. The author intends to say that the level of the ball in the meter does not fit an athlete like Ritsma at all. This ironic utterance refers back to utterances (5.5.1) – (5.5.4) in which the author discussed his
reasons for going to the doctor. In this opening fragment, the reader’s attention is
drawn by a comparison between the author and two famous athletes (Ritsma and
Armstrong) and by the metaphoric way in which the author writes about his heart
condition. Instead of literally talking about his heart, the author metaphorically
discusses a “techno rave party in his chest” (utterance 5.3.2) with too many “heart
beats per minute” (utterance 5.3.3), thus comparing his heart beat with the beat of
techno rave music. This metaphor may already attract the reader’s attention and set up
an expectation for other tropes to follow.

Ironic utterance (5.3.12) uses an understatement as an irony marker (“does not
really fit a R. Ritsma”) that was already introduced in (5.3.1). Like utterance (5.3.1),
utterance (5.3.8) also contains an understatement. In this utterance, the doctor reacts
extremely cool to the hypothetical situation in which the author’s leg is cut off by saying
that this would mean that the author would have to skip participation in a long walking
march for at least a year. These non-ironic understatements prepare the reader for the
ironic utterance marked by an understatement in (5.3.12).

Another trope that can serve as a co-textual marker is hyperbole, an example of
which can be seen in a column about the Dutch soccer team’s chances in the World
Cup in Germany in 2006. In contrast to other Dutch pundits, this specific author does
not see the Dutch team as a favorite to win the title. His main argument is that most
players of the Dutch national team were either injured or substitutes at their clubs.
About attacking midfielder Arjen Robben, the columnist observes:

(5.4.1) Arjen Robben is injured half of the time
(5.4.2) and suspended for a large part of the remaining time.
(5.4.3) About him, we should not worry at all. 5

Utterance (5.4.3) is ironic, because Robben's condition is a reason to worry for the
Dutch team. Utterances (5.4.1) and (5.4.2) already “announce” this ironic utterance,
because they both contain hyperboles. Although it is true that Robben is an injury-
prone player and is relatively often suspended in comparison to other players, the
claims in (5.4.1) and (5.4.2) are an exaggeration of this situation. In this way, the
reader is already “prepared” for the ironic utterance that follows in (5.4.3).

A final trope that was found as a co-textual marker in a non-ironic utterance was
the rhetorical question. An example of a rhetorical question that functions as a co-
textual irony marker can be seen in utterance (5.5.11). This is an extract from a TV review in which two TV programs are compared. In the first part, the reviewer talks about a documentary in which an Italian colonel unfolds his theory that Julius Caesar and Jesus Christ were actually the same person. The reviewer discusses one of the colonel’s arguments in support of his thesis, which is that both men consciously accepted and embraced their immanent deaths. In the second part of the extract, the reviewer discusses the recent news event about the suicide of former Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic in his prison cell in The Hague.

(5.5.1) The colonel thinks that
(5.5.2) while there may have been 23 or 60 conspirators,
(5.5.3) the real killers were with ten men at the most.
(5.5.4) He also wants to show that
(5.5.5) Caesar knew
(5.5.6) what was coming to him
(5.5.7) and that he did not fight against the treason.
(5.5.8) The recently deified friend of the people, [sub (5.6.9)] would thus stand a better chance on immortality,
(5.5.9) betrayed by those pharisees of aristocrats,
(5.5.10) which was Caesar’s argument according to the colonel.
(5.5.11) Do I hear echoes of the sneaky suicide and conscious pursuit of canonization by Slobodan Milosevic?
(5.5.12) Great job by the way from Gerri Eickhof in the Eight O’Clock News,
(5.5.13) Who talked to the mayor of Milosevic’s birthplace Pozarevac
(5.5.14) so that we now know
(5.5.15) how that name should be pronounced:
(5.5.16) sounds like Pózzurrewutsj6.

In the extract from the review, the rhetorical question in utterance (5.5.11) connects the parts about the murder of Caesar and the coverage of Milosevic’s suicide in the Eight O’Clock News. The rhetorical question also introduces a change in style between utterances (5.5.1) – (5.5.10) on the one hand and utterances (5.5.12) – (5.5.16) on the other. Whilst the first ten utterances are descriptive and present the colonel’s case, the second five utterances contain the reviewer’s ironic attitude towards Eickhof’s coverage of the Milosevic case. The rhetorical question thus not only connects the two parts of
the review, but also helps to alert the reader to the change in style (and thus to the irony) that is to follow.

_Tone-of-voice markers_

Besides these tropes that may work as co-textual irony markers, coders also distinguished several tone-of-voice markers that may alert a reader to the possibility of an ironic utterance. The first of these tone-of-voice markers is a change of register, also listed as an irony marker in the ironic utterance. An example can be observed in a column – also discussed in Chapter 4 – in which Dutch author Arnon Grunberg talks about his experience during a hazing by a Dutch student union in a log cabin in the French Alps:

(5.6.1) The last evening of my stay, I was turned over with mattress and all.
(5.6.2) _Thereupon, five academics seated themselves_ upon that mattress.
(5.6.3) For the record, I was under it.
(5.6.4) In a puddle of melt water.
(5.6.5) And a cheerful song was sung.
(5.6.6) This is called ‘turning’.
(5.6.7) I discovered (5.7.8)
(5.6.8) what solidarity is
(5.6.9) and now I know (5.7.10)
(5.6.10) what it is,
(5.6.11) **I will persist with it for the time being.**
(5.6.12) This can be considered as a warning^7.

Utterance (5.6.11) makes an ironic comment about Grunberg’s planned behavior for the coming time. He literally claims that he will continue the type of behavior he has learnt from the academics for some time to come. However, Grunberg means to say that he is appalled by the students’ view on acceptable group behavior and will not act in the same way. This contradiction between learning acceptable behavior and the reality of Grunberg’s hazing is also found in utterance (5.6.2). In this utterance, a difference can be observed between the normal use of the word “academic” (i.e., a respectable person of higher education) and the words “to seat yourself” (a high style register) and the reality of the academics’ childish behavior in the ‘turning’ of Grunberg.
This clash between the two registers may already alert a reader to the eventual use of an ironic utterance in (5.6.11).

A second co-textual tone-of-voice marker is the use of cynicism. An example can be found in a letter to the editor, in which the author dissociates herself from a previous letter written by a Mr. Verboon. In this letter, this author dissociates herself from Verboon’s negative assessment of Carice van Houten’s plan to look for a sperm donor:

(5.7.1) Verboon writes:
(5.7.2) 'Her [i.e., Carice van Houten, CB] ideal is probably:
(5.7.3) worldwide domination for women,
(5.7.4) a massive freezing of sperm, enough for a thousand years,
(5.7.5) then exterminating all men
(5.7.6) and aborting all fetuses of boys.
(5.7.7) And there you go!
(5.7.8) The perfect world!'
(5.7.9) Well done, Mr. Verboon,
(5.7.10) very clever that you rebel against this.
(5.7.11) It appears to be terrible to be seen and used as an object by an authority
(5.7.12) that uses force to this end.
(5.7.13) But do you think that a thousand years is enough?

After literally quoting from Verboon’s letter in utterances (5.7.2) – (5.7.8), the author responds with two ironic utterances that disqualify Verboon’s arguments. The author then goes on by giving the reader another clue that she is ironic by means of the cynic utterance (5.7.11). In this utterance, the author implicitly refers to the fact that men have seen and used women as objects for many years. This cynicism about gender relations then sets the stage for another ironic utterance in (5.7.13). The cynic co-textual utterance may thus help in alerting a reader to the author’s ironic intent.

The final tone-of-voice marker is the use of humor. This means that the author makes a joke or a funny remark to set the stage for an ironic remark to follow. An example can be seen in a column about the World Cup in which the author talks about the situation regarding the German national team

(5.8.1) where national coach Klinsmann was called to account by a concerned Angela Merkel.
“Well, do you kick the ball hard enough?”

she might have asked.

The great thing was that

Klinsmann, hat in hand, went to Merkel.

In such a country at least, such important problems are immediately treated at the highest level.

Utterance (5.8.6) is ironic, because the author does not believe that the achievements of a soccer team are something that the Chancellor of Germany should be concerned about; she ought to worry about really important matters of national importance. This ironic utterance is almost introduced by the ludicrous question the columnist attributes to Merkel in (5.8.2). This question sets up a humorous frame, because the question is stupid. At the same time, it also shows that it is absurd that Klinsmann should apparently listen to and work with Merkel’s ideas about soccer tactics. Even though Merkel has many good and distinguishing qualities, the columnist believes that she knows nothing about coaching a soccer team. As such, the humorous question already ‘announces’ that the author may use irony.

When the types of irony markers in the verbal co-text have been identified, is it possible to analyze how they are used in natural discourse. Table 5.2 demonstrates that many texts had more than one ironic utterance; two-thirds of the ironic utterances in the sample served to mark at least one other ironic utterance. This analysis shows that irony is often used to announce another ironic utterance. The second part of the analysis focused on the characteristics of co-textual irony markers in non-ironic, co-textual utterances. In this corpus analysis, a total of 169 utterances with co-textual ironic markers (or 7.8% of all co-textual utterances) was identified.

Table 5.2 shows that a hyperbole is the trope that is used most often as a co-textual marker in a non-ironic utterance (59 times). The other three tropes are used as a co-textual irony marker in less than 1 percent of all non-ironic utterances; understatements are used 9 times, metaphors 4 times and a rhetorical question is used only once. Humor is the tone-of-voice marker that is used most often (41 times), followed by a change of register (38 times). Cynicism is the tone-of-voice irony marker that is used the least often (17 times).
Table 5.2: Occurrence of categories of co-textual irony markers (ironic utterance that precede the irony, tropes and tone-of-voice markers) per genre (advertisements, columns, book and film reviews, and letters to the editor).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Co-textual marker</th>
<th>Ads</th>
<th>Column</th>
<th>Book/ film review</th>
<th>Letters to editor</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Irony preceding the irony</td>
<td>8 (34.8%)</td>
<td>54 (80.6%)</td>
<td>46 (73.0%)</td>
<td>12 (44.4%)</td>
<td>120 (66.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tropes as co-textual markers:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphor</td>
<td>2 (2.8%)</td>
<td>40 (4.1%)</td>
<td>25 (2.7%)</td>
<td>6 (2.6%)</td>
<td>73 (3.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyperbole</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td>33 (3.4%)</td>
<td>20 (2.2%)</td>
<td>5 (2.2%)</td>
<td>59 (2.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understatement</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td>4 (0.4%)</td>
<td>3 (0.3%)</td>
<td>1 (0.4%)</td>
<td>9 (0.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhetorical Question</td>
<td>0 (0 %)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (0.1 %)</td>
<td>0 (0 %)</td>
<td>1 (&lt; .01%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tone-of-voice markers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change of register</td>
<td>8 (11.3 %)</td>
<td>33 (3.4 %)</td>
<td>41 (4.4 %)</td>
<td>14 (6.1 %)</td>
<td>96 (4.4 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cynicism</td>
<td>4 (5.6 %)</td>
<td>15 (1.5 %)</td>
<td>12 (1.3 %)</td>
<td>7 (3.1 %)</td>
<td>38 (1.7 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humor</td>
<td>2 (2.8%)</td>
<td>11 (1.1 %)</td>
<td>24 (2.6 %)</td>
<td>4 (1.8 %)</td>
<td>41 (1.9 %)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Percentages in the row of “irony preceding the irony” indicate the percentage of ironic utterances that are preceded by at least one ironic utterance. Percentage in the rows for tropes and tone-of-voice markers indicate relative use of a particular co-textual irony marker divided by the total number of co-textual utterances in a particular genre. a = The frequency of the use of ironic utterances that precede the irony in this genre was lower than the frequency of the use ironic utterances that precede the irony in the genre of columns. b = The frequency of the use of this category of co-textual irony markers was higher than might be expected on the basis of row and column totals.

The final research question of this chapter was:

RQ2c. How does the use of irony markers in the verbal co-text differ across various written genres?

Firstly, a relationship between genre and ironic utterances that serve as a co-textual marker for other ironic utterance was found ($\chi^2 (3) = 23.29, p < .001, \text{Cramer’s V} = .36$). An inspection of the residuals showed that irony in columns was marked more often by other ironic utterances than expected. In contrast, irony in advertisements and irony in letters to the editor were marked less often by other ironic utterances than expected.

Another relationship was found between genre and the choice of tropes or tone-of-voice co-textual markers ($\chi^2 (3) = 8.38, p < .05, \text{Cramer’s V} = .22$ (exact method)). An inspection of the residuals showed that tropes are used more often in columns than
expected. No statistical tests were performed on the relationship between genres and the types of co-textual irony markers, because their occurrences were – generally – very low; none of the types of co-textual markers was found in more than 5 per cent of co-textual utterances.

5.4 Conclusion and discussion
This chapter introduced the concept of verbal co-textual irony markers. These co-textual irony markers alert a reader to the fact that a next utterance may be ironic; they already bring the reader in an ironic mood. As such, a co-textual irony marker sets up a frame of expectation of an ironic utterance.

The first research question dealt with the use of co-textual irony markers in written discourse. In order to answer this question, types of co-textual irony markers had to first be identified. Three different types of co-textual irony markers were distinguished. Firstly, ironic utterances themselves may serve as a co-textual irony marker, because they may prepare a reader that more ironic utterances might follow. Besides these other ironic utterances, non-ironic utterances may serve as a co-textual marker of verbal irony as well. Since co-textual markers of verbal irony had not yet received empirical attention, these types of markers were identified with a bottom-up approach which revealed two different categories of co-textual markers. A first category of co-textual markers in non-ironic utterances is the category of tropes, which includes metaphors, hyperboles, understatements and rhetorical questions. The second category consists of tone-of-voice markers; a change of register, cynicism and humor.

The co-textual irony markers that were found in the non-ironic utterances thus included both irony markers that could be found in the ironic utterance itself (metaphor, hyperbole, understatement, rhetorical questions and a change of register) as well as markers that are exclusive to the domain of co-textual irony markers (cynicism and humor). It thus seems that co-textual irony markers – in contrast to irony markers in the ironic utterance – are not morpho-syntactic or typographic.

When the types of co-textual irony markers were identified, the frequency with which the various co-textual markers were used could be analyzed. Ironic utterances that precede the irony, hyperboles, cynicism and humor are used relatively often, whilst metaphors, understatements and rhetorical questions are hardly used. The high usage of hyperboles is similar to the relatively high use of hyperboles as markers in the ironic
utterance. These findings confirm earlier research that found a close connection between hyperbole and the use of irony (e.g., Kreuz & Roberts, 1995).

The final research question dealt with the relationship between co-textual irony markers and genre. Results show that ironic utterances are found more often as a co-textual irony marker in columns than in advertisements or letters to the editor. Besides, columns are also more associated with tropes than with the tone-of-voice markers. These results confirm the results of the previous chapter that found that irony in columns is often marked with the use of tropes. This result may be explained by the literary character of columns. Since many columns in the corpus are written by Dutch literary authors (e.g., Remco Campert, Arnon Grunberg and Tommy Wieringa), these authors may use more “literary” techniques such as tropes.

This chapter offers the first empirically-driven classification of co-textual irony markers. These results again support the notion that the study of irony should be usage-based. Besides the various ways in which an ironic utterance may manifest itself with regards to irony factors (see Chapter 3) and irony markers in the ironic utterance (see Chapter 4), irony’s co-text may also influence the ways in which irony is marked. Since markers – by definition – are supposed to signal irony, these co-textual markers may also aid irony comprehension. The link between co-textual irony markers and irony processing has been confirmed in a recent study by Hodiamont, Burgers and Van Mulken (2010), who found that ironic utterances that were preceded by other ironic utterances were processed faster than ironic utterances that were not preceded by other ironic utterances.

This chapter’s results should be interpreted as the first exploratory results on the issue of co-textual markers of verbal irony. Future research may help to refine the classification and more categories of co-textual irony markers may be found. One way to do this is to look at other aspects of “co-text”. In this chapter, co-text was defined as the other utterances of a text excluding the ironic utterance under discussion. In that way, co-text was seen as a purely verbal matter. The previous chapter showed a difference in the use of irony markers in purely verbal (columns, book and film reviews and letters to the editor) and multimodal (advertisements and cartoons) genres. In advertisements as well as cartoons, the visual co-text may also help a reader in detecting irony. This would indicate that irony in these genres can also be marked by so-called visual irony markers, which are discuss in more detail in the next chapter.
Chapter 6: Verbal irony and visuals

6.1 Introduction
Chapter 4 demonstrated that irony may be marked differently in purely verbal and multimodal genres. Whilst the previous chapter dealt with the role of verbal co-text, this chapter is concerned with the relationship between verbal irony and visuals. It discusses the issue how visuals may help a reader in detecting verbal irony.

One option to deal with this issue is to simply use the list of irony factors and markers and transplant these to the visual modality. Some scholars would agree with this notion. They argue that nothing special separates visual from verbal communication. McQuarrie and Mick (2003b) for instance claim that "there is nothing special about the visual modality. Pictures can be signs, and semiotic theory explains the communicative function of pictures using the same constructs that explain the function of words. [...] In short, at the level of scientific theory, whether something is visual or verbal, pictorial or auditory, may be of little consequence" (McQuarrie & Mick, 2003b, pp. 215-216).

At a first glance, this observation seems to hold for the irony markers introduced in Chapter 4. After all, metaphors or hyperboles may be transplanted to the visual mode and could thus also work as visual irony markers (cf., El Refaie, 2005). The same may be true for the use of quotation marks. In the visual domain, it is possible to use “air quotes” to visually represent the use of quotation marks (cf. Muecke, 1978). Other irony markers, however, do not fare as well. How is it possible to visually represent an exclamation, focus topicalization, rhetorical question or interjection? Since these issues are hard to solve, this chapter takes a different perspective.

In a later article, B. Phillips and McQuarrie (2004) argued against McQuarrie and Mick (2003b) and claimed that "[b]ecause pictures are not speech, we shall argue that existing taxonomies designed for verbal rhetorical figures [...] do not adequately capture important differentiations within the visual domain" (B. Phillips & McQuarrie, 2004, p. 114). This means that images may help a reader in detecting irony in different ways from verbal texts. This claim can be well illustrated by the fact that verbal irony
itself cannot even be completely transplanted to the visual modality (e.g., Hornikx & Van Mulken, 2004; Kennedy, 2008). Kennedy (2008, p. 458) argues that

“irony in pictures is surely rare. [...] In language, the irony is often accompanied by a special tone of voice, but alas, no manner of portrayal has yet been invented that is the tip-off for pictorial irony. New Yorker cartoons are often ironic, but their irony lives in a caption’s fit to the picture”.

The definition of irony used in this research (i.e., “an evaluative utterance, the valence of which is implicitly reversed between the literal and intended evaluation”) also shows that it is difficult to portray irony solely in the visual domain. After all, purely visual irony would entail that an image implicitly negates its own literal evaluation. Following Kennedy (2008), it may be hypothesized that the image itself is not ironic, but it may sometimes be important in deciding whether a verbal utterance is ironic or not. In other words, an image can help a reader in detecting verbal irony.

The issue how an image serves to detect irony has received scant scholarly attention. Most scholars who looked at the relationship between verbal irony and images limited themselves to studying visual markers (e.g., Attardo et al., 2003; El Refaie, 2005; Rockwell, 2001). A visual marker may work in the same way as a marker in the verbal co-text, which implies that a visual marker sets up a co-textual support strategy that may alert a reader to the possible use of irony. In doing so, the literal evaluation is displayed and mocked at the same time, an example of which can be seen in the Lotto advertisement in Figure 6.1:

![Figure 6.1: advertisement for Lotto: Visual marker](image-url)
(6.1) The greatest risk of becoming a millionaire as well.

Utterance (6.1) is ironic, because participation in the Lotto lottery is literally portrayed as something negative. Lotto’s contestants literally run the risk of becoming millionaires. Of course, anyone who is willing to participate in such a lottery is glad to run such a risk; they only dream of winning the jackpot. The advertisement’s image, however, illustrates the supposed risk of participation: an astronaut – representing somebody who won Lotto’s jackpot – goes to the moon to plant the Dutch flag, only to discover that many Dutchmen had been there before. The reader should then infer that these other Dutch visitors were previous Lotto winners who also went to the moon. The astronaut’s mission thus ends in disappointment. The image of Figure 6.1 serves to show one of the imagined risks of becoming a millionaire. At the same time, people who view this advertisement are supposed to recognize the image as a hyperbole. As of 2009, only two Dutchmen (Wubbo Ockels and André Kuipers) have ever gone into space, none of whom had landed on the moon. It is thus up to the reader to recognize the supposed risk of becoming a millionaire as ludicrous, opening up an ironic reading of utterance (6.1). In this utterance, the image serves as an irony marker by illustrating the literal evaluation of an ironic utterance whilst showing the absurdity of that literal evaluation at the same time.

Besides serving as an irony marker, a visual may also illustrate one of the levels of the irony factor of incongruence; the inclusion of information in the visual co-text that is incongruent with the literal evaluation of the ironic utterance. In other words, an image may display information that

Figure 6.2: advertisement for Libertel: Visual representation of the factor of incongruence
does not endorse a literal evaluation of the ironic utterance. An example of this strategy can be seen in the advertisement of mobile phone provider *Libertel* in Figure 6.2:

(6.2.1)  Sure, hedge-clippers are nice.
(6.2.2)  But it so difficult to call someone with them.
(6.2.3)  The nicest gifts are iZi: calling on your mobile without a pay-monthly plan.

Utterance (6.2.1) is ironic; the man in this *Libertel* advertisement is not happy at all with the gift of hedge-clippers he just received. Instead, he would have preferred a mobile phone with a pay-as-you-go plan from mobile phone provider *Libertel*. In this advertisement, the man explicitly shows his displeasure with receiving hedge-clippers instead of a mobile phone. This implies that the image in Figure 6.2 highlights the incongruence between the literal and intended evaluation of the ironic utterance.

Of course, it should be noted that not every image in an advertisement or a cartoon with an ironic utterance automatically aids the addressee in finding the irony. An example of an advertisement in which the image does not help can be found in Figure 6.3:

(6.3.1)  Shameful!
(6.3.2)  Now only 1 Euro.
(6.3.3)  Computer Idee, does not make computers difficult.

Figure 6.3 contains an advertisement for the Dutch magazine *Computer Idee* that was also discussed in Chapter 2. The advertisement has the ironic tagline of “Shameful” to advertise the magazine's low price of 1 Euro. The image in the advertisement shows a cover of one of the issues of the magazine. This magazine cover does not help in decoding irony.
not help the reader to arrive at an ironic interpretation of the advertisement's tagline: The image does not help in detecting the irony.

Summarizing, if an ironic utterance is accompanied by an image, this particular image can have three relations to that ironic utterance. Firstly, the image may not help a reader in detecting the irony at all, like the image in Figure 6.3. If, however, an image does help a reader in detecting irony, this may happen in two distinct ways. A first way in which an image can help in detecting the irony is by serving as a visual irony marker (see Figure 6.1). This means that an image highlights and shows the absurdity of the literal evaluation of an ironic utterance at the same time. A second way in which an image can help a reader in detecting the irony is related to the irony factor of incongruence: an image contradicts the literal evaluation of the ironic utterance (see Figure 6.2). For reader convenience, the first way in which an image can help to detect irony is labeled as “visual marker”, whilst the second way is labeled as a “visually incongruent image” from this point on. This also brings us to the first research question:

RQ1d. How are visuals used in relation to irony in written discourse?

In answering RQ1d, it becomes clear which type of visual (i.e., a visual that does not help, a visual marker or an incongruent image) is most common in multimodal genres.

Previous authors who have dealt with the relationship between visuals and verbal irony did not differentiate between visual markers and incongruent images. Instead, these scholars typically analyze pictorial elements that help a reader in detecting irony by focusing on one of these elements. Attardo et al. (2003), for instance, investigate the way in which facial expressions can help a reader to detect irony. Based on an analysis of humorous material from American sitcoms, Attardo et al. (2003) demonstrate how inappropriate facial expressions can serve to accomplish this goal. If a sitcom character for instance winks or smiles whilst making an ironic remark, a viewer may see the wink or smile as a clue that the speaker is ironic. At the same time, a blank expression (referred to as “blank face” by Attardo et al., 2003) whilst uttering an (explicitly) evaluative ironic remark may also help in detecting the irony, because the absence of a facial emotion implicitly negates much of the literal evaluation.

Rockwell (2001) analyzed the facial expressions of respondents who used irony in a conversation. She divided the face into three areas (i.e., (1) the eyebrows and
forehead, (2) the eyes, lids and upper part of the nose and (3) the mouths, cheeks, lower part of the nose, chin and jaw) and asked two coders to analyze “intentional movements” in these three facial areas when a speaker made an ironic remark. She found that only the mouth area (area 3) differed significantly between irony and non-irony; irony speakers made “mouth movements” to distinguish between irony and non-irony. Unfortunately, Rockwell (2001) does not elaborate on what these specific mouth movements entail. She also does not explain how it is possible to distinguish an intentional from an unintentional facial movement.

In contrast to Attardo et al. (2003) and Rockwell (2001), El Refaie (2005) focuses on newspaper cartoons rather than face-to-face interactions. The case study of irony discussed by El Refaie (2005) shows that visual hyperbole can be considered as a marker of verbal irony. This also demonstrates that irony markers in the verbal and visual domain can sometimes overlap; hyperbole can be a marker in the ironic utterance and an irony marker in the verbal and visual co-text.

The studies done by Attardo et al. (2003), Rockwell (2001) and El Refaie (2005) analyzed the ways in which visuals may help a reader in detecting irony by focusing on specific pictorial elements. Although their approach has garnered interesting insights on how these particular pictorial elements help a reader in detecting verbal irony, their approach is still a bit ad hoc; a specific pictorial element was brought to the attention of researchers who decide to investigate it. The question remains which other pictorial elements that help a reader to detect irony may be distinguished. To try to capture this phenomenon as broadly as possible, a bottom-up approach is used in which all elements from the visual domain are analyzed separately to see if they help a reader to detect irony or not. The “elements from the visual domain” in the bottom-up approach are derived from Verstraten’s (2006) visual narratology, an extension of Bal’s (1997) theory of narratology to the visual realm. Verstraten’s (2006) visual narratology shows a great overlap with other visual “grammars” (e.g., Bordwell & Thompson, 2004; W. Phillips, 2002). According to Verstraten (2006), two types of elements play a role in the process of meaning-giving in the visual domain of static images. These include the mise en scènes and cinematographic techniques. Both the mise en scènes and cinematography consist out of five pictorial elements each.

The mise en scène is concerned with the question “who and/ or what is shown” (Verstraten, 2006, p. 59). The first element of the mise en scène is the choice of characters. The choice for a specific character or person may influence the way in
which an image is processed. A second element is the position, body language and/or facial expression of these characters. The way in which characters are represented can also affect the interpretation of an image. The facial expressions mentioned by Attardo et al. (2003) can be assigned to this category. A third element is the clothing of the characters, which may also influence the ways in which such a character is perceived. Another aspect of the mise en scène includes objects visible in the picture. Like the choice of character, the choice of objects may also demonstrate important information about the image. The last element of the mise en scène is the location or setting of the image; the question of where a picture is situated may also influence the interpretation of the image (Verstraten, 2006, pp. 59-66).

Cinematography deals with the question “how” something is shown (Verstraten, 2006, p. 59). Following Verstraten (2006), cinematographic techniques include the use of color, framing, depth and sharpness, camera angle and focalization. The cinematographic technique of color focuses on the ways color is used (or not) to emphasize elements in the image. Framing is related to the frame of the image; which elements are included in the image and where in the image are they located? Depth and sharpness concerns the clarity with which certain things are represented in an image. The camera angle deals with angle from which a photo is taken. Focalization, finally, asks the question if the camera also takes somebody’s perspective or not.

In addition to analyzing which type of visual is used most often in multimodal genres, RQ1d can be used to analyze which pictorial elements are used to signal irony.

The examples of visuals that helped a reader to detect irony that were used in this section were comprised of several pictorial elements. Figure 6.1 showed the supposed danger of winning the jackpot of the Dutch lottery Lotto. The first pictorial element that comprises the visual marker is the astronaut’s body language. The low shoulders and the head held low indicate the astronaut’s disappointment. The multitude of Dutch flags planted on the moon give the reason for his disappointment; numerous Dutch astronauts were on the moon before him. Finally, the shot is made from a bird’s-eye perspective, which makes it seem as if the entire surface of the moon is filled with flags. This visual marker is thus comprised out of four pictorial elements: (1) body language (the astronaut’s shoulders and head), (2) objects (the multitude of Dutch flags) in combination with (3) location (the moon), and (4) camera angle (bird’s-eye perspective).
Figure 6.2 showed the man who was unhappy with his gift of hedge-clippers. The man showed his displeasure with his gift by means of his facial expression and body language; he looked puzzled and held the hedge-clippers as if they were a mobile phone. The red-purple tone of the advertisement suggests that the picture is old, possibly indicating that the gift of hedge-clippers is old-fashioned. Finally, the man in the image directly addresses the camera as if the camera was the person he is speaking to. This implies that the camera takes the perspective of the person who gave the hedge-clippers as a gift. This incongruent image is thus comprised out of four pictorial elements as well: (1) body language and facial expression (indicating disappointment), (2) object (hedge-clippers as substitute for a mobile phone), (3) color (tone of an old-fashioned photo) and (4) focalization (camera takes the perspective of the person who gave the present).

This bottom-up approach allows each image to be analyzed on each of the elements of the mise en scène and each of the cinematographic techniques. It is then possible to argue which pictorial elements help a reader to detect irony. Nevertheless, it should be taken into account that this is the first analysis to use visual grammar to identify pictorial elements that help a reader in detecting irony. This analysis should thus be seen as a first, exploratory analysis in the ways in which visuals can help a reader to detect irony.

Finally, the previous chapters demonstrated that the use of irony factors, irony markers in the ironic utterance and co-textual irony markers differed across written genres. A related question is whether the use of visuals in relation to verbal irony also differs across genres. The final research question of this chapter is then:

RQ2d. How does the use of visuals in relation to ironic utterances differ across various written genres?

6.2 Method

6.2.1 Material

Like the analysis in the previous chapter, this analysis was mainly exploratory. Fifty multimodal texts were randomly selected from the corpus, in which a total of sixty-five ironic utterances (or: 14.2% of all ironic utterances in the corpus) were found. Out of these fifty texts, twelve were cartoons, twenty-one were commercial advertisements and seventeen were non-commercial advertisements.
6.2.2 Procedure and reliability

The coding process consisted out of two rounds of coding. For the first round, coders – the author as well as two advanced BA students in Business Communication at Radboud University Nijmegen – were given an instruction that informed them when a visual could help in detecting irony. They were subsequently asked to analyze each ironic utterance separately in relation to the image present in the advertisement or cartoon. In doing so, coders had to analyze several variables.

Firstly, they were asked if the visual actually helped in decoding the ironic utterance or not (compare Figures 6.1 and 6.2 to Figure 6.3). Texts in which a visual did not help were not analyzed further. Then, coders had to decide whether the visual could be classified as a visual marker (see Figure 6.1) or as an incongruent image (see Figure 6.2).

The second part of the analysis aimed to identify as many pictorial elements as possible that indicated the use of irony. In order to do this, an exploratory analysis was executed where coders had to analyze the image on aspects of mise en scène (choice of characters, body language and facial expression, clothing, objects and location and setting) and cinematography (the use of color, framing, depth and sharpness, camera angle and focalization).

In the coding process, coders had to argue whether each of these pictorial elements would help in detecting the irony. This means that, say, the use of characters was only marked if the coder felt that this use of characters helped in detecting or solving the irony. The instruction provided coders with either a real or a made-up example in which one of the elements from the mise en scène or one of the cinematographic techniques helped to decode the irony (see Appendices VIII and IX).

In the second round, coders were confronted with the coding and motivation of another rater on cases on which they disagreed, in a similar way to the second round of irony factors (see paragraph 3.3.2), irony markers in the ironic utterance (see paragraph 4.3.2) and co-textual irony markers (see paragraph 5.2.2). Since the coding in the second was partially independent (coders saw the other ratings of another coder), the scores of the kappas after the second round of coding should be treated with care (see paragraph 3.3.2).

Table 6.1 presents the reliability scores for the questions whether a visual helps in decoding the irony and whether the image is a visual marker or visually incongruent. It shows that even though none of these variables scores an acceptable Cohen’s...
kappa of .60 after the first round of coding, coders still agree in at least 60% of all cases. After the second round of coding, the reliability scores look different. Cohen’s kappa for the variables related to the presence or absence of a visual that helps in decoding the irony as well as the issue whether the visual serves as a marker or an illustration of the irony factor of incongruence reached an acceptable level of at least .60, which can be labeled as “substantial” (Landis & Koch, 1977).

Table 6.1: Cohen’s kappa, the percentage of agreement between coders, \( p_1 \) and \( p_2 \) in the first and second round of reliability coding of visuals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Round</th>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>( \kappa )</th>
<th>%Agreement</th>
<th>( p_1 )</th>
<th>( p_2 )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Image helps in decoding irony or not(^1)</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>75.3</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Image is a visual marker or visually incongruent(^2)</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>72.1</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Image helps in decoding irony or not(^1)</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>88.9</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Image is a visual marker or visually incongruent(^2)</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>86.5</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All scores are average scores based on the three possible coder pairs. \( \kappa \) lists the Cohen’s Kappa; %Agreement indicates the total percentage of cases that coders agree on.

1 For the question whether an image helps in decoding the irony or not, \( p_1 \) indicates the probability that if a coder believes that the image helps in decoding a specific ironic utterance, at least one other coder would agree; \( p_2 \) indicates the probability that if a coder believes that the image does not help in decoding a specific ironic utterance, at least one other coder would agree.

2 For the question whether an image can be classified as a visual marker or as an incongruent image, \( p_1 \) indicates the probability that if a coder states that an image is a visual marker, at least one other coder would agree; \( p_2 \) indicates the probability that if a coder states that an image is visually incongruent, at least one other coder would agree.

Table 6.2 shows reliability scores for the elements that give meaning in the visual domain. These scores show a pattern that is similar to the other reliability scores. After the first round of coding, only two elements (depth and sharpness, and focalization) reach an acceptable Cohen’s kappa of at least .60, even though overall agreement is at least 64% for any of the variables. The second round of coding paints a different picture. After this round, only three elements (i.e., choice of objects, framing and camera angle) score a Cohen’s kappa below the .60 threshold, even though overall agreement for any of these variables is at least 75%. More positively, seven elements (i.e., choice of characters; position, body language and facial expression; clothing; location and setting; color; depth and sharpness; focalization) are now coded with a Cohen’s kappa of at least .60.
Table 6.2: Cohen’s kappa, the percentage of agreement between coders, $p_{\text{present}}$ and $p_{\text{absent}}$ in the first and second round of reliability coding of pictorial elements that guide an ironic interpretation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Round</th>
<th>Pictorial element</th>
<th>$\kappa$</th>
<th>$%$Agreement</th>
<th>$p_{\text{present}}$</th>
<th>$p_{\text{absent}}$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Mise en scène:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Choice of characters</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>67.3</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Position, body language,</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>72.3</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>facial expression</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>87.1</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Choice of objects</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>67.5</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Location or setting</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Round 1</td>
<td><strong>Cinematography:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Color</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>87.9</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Framing</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>90.5</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Depth and sharpness</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>96.5</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Camera angle</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>85.1</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focalization</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>98.4</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Round 2</td>
<td><strong>Cinematography:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Color</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>96.0</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.98</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Framing</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>93.8</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Depth and sharpness</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>97.4</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Camera angle</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>91.3</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focalization</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>98.0</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All scores are average scores based on the three possible coder pairs. $\kappa$ indicates Cohen’s Kappa; $\%$Agreement indicates the total percentage of cases coder pairs on average agree on; $p_{\text{present}}$ reports the probability that if a coder believes that a certain pictorial element is (partly) responsible for guiding an ironic interpretation, another coder agrees; $p_{\text{absent}}$ reports the probability that if a coder believes that a certain element is not responsible for guiding an ironic interpretation, another coder agrees.

The figures reported in Tables 6.1 and 6.2 show that the visual elements are difficult to code reliably with only one round of coding. After a second round of coding in which coders are confronted with the analysis of another coder, however, agreement can reach a substantial level. This makes it acceptable to report the coding of the author after the second round of coding. Results related to variables that scored reliability lower than .60 should be treated with care.
6.3 Results
The first research questions of this chapter dealt with the ways in which visuals are used in relation to irony in multimodal discourse. The first research question was:

RQ1d. How are visuals used in relation to irony in written discourse?

Table 6.3 shows that, for 52 ironic utterances in the multimodal texts (or 80% of ironic utterances from the selected sub-corpus), the image helped a reader to detect irony (see e.g., Figures 6.1 and 6.2). This means that for 13 ironic utterances from the multimodal texts (or 20% of ironic utterances from the selected sub-corpus), the image did not help a reader to detect irony (see Figure 6.3). These latter ironic utterances were not included further in the analyses in this chapter. Table 6.3 also shows that, in a number of cartoons, the image does not help in detecting the irony. These cartoons are comics in which the irony can be solved based on the text between the characters in the comic. Table 6.3 also demonstrates that, when the image helps a reader to detect irony, it is more often visually incongruent (36 times or 69.2% of ironic utterances from the corpus in which a visual helped in detecting the irony) than a visual marker (16 times or 30.8% of ironic utterances from the corpus in which a visual helped in detecting the irony).

Table 6.3: The number of ironic utterances for which the image helps to detect the irony and the number of ironic utterances for which the image is a visual marker or visually incongruent, by genre.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Commercial ads</th>
<th>Non-commercial ads</th>
<th>Cartoons</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Help to detect irony</td>
<td>Helps</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does not help</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image is</td>
<td>a visual marker</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>visually incongruent</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to analyzing which type of visual is most often in written discourse, RQ1d can also be applied to describing which pictorial elements are used in relation to irony in multimodal discourse. Table 6.4 shows how often individual elements from the mise en scène and cinematography were said to help a reader to detect irony. The most striking aspect of Table 6.4 is the difference in use between elements from the mise en
scène and cinematography. Positioning of characters, body language and facial expression are used most often to help a reader to detect irony (34 times), followed by the choice of objects (32 times) and characters (25 times). Location and setting are used 16 times and clothing is used 13 times to help a reader in detecting irony. All cinematographic elements are used less than ten times to alert a reader to irony usage. Whilst elements from mise en scène are thus used relatively often, elements from cinematography are hardly used to guide a reader towards an ironic interpretation.

Table 6.4: Frequency with which pictorial elements are used to guide a reader towards an ironic interpretation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Commercial ads</th>
<th>Non-commercial ads</th>
<th>Cartoons</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mise en scène (total)</strong></td>
<td>51</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice of characters</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position, body language, facial expression</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice of objects</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location or setting</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cinematographic techniques (total)</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Framing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depth and sharpness</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camera angle</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focalization</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This chapter’s final research question was:

RQ2d. How does the use of visuals in relation to ironic utterances differ across various written genres?

It was found that none of the analyses showed a significant difference between genres. Genre was not related to the issues whether visuals helped in detecting the irony or not ($\chi^2 (2) = 3.42, p = .20$, exact method) and whether the image was a visual marker or visually incongruent ($\chi^2 (2) = .09, p = 1.00$, exact method). For the pictorial elements, none of the elements from the mise en scène was related to genre ($\chi^2_{\text{choice of characters}} (2) = .46, p = .84$; $\chi^2_{\text{body language}} (2) = 1.52, p = .53$; $\chi^2_{\text{clothing}} (2) = 1.11, p = .59$; $\chi^2_{\text{choice of objects}}$).
(2) = 1.46, \( p = .53 \); \( \chi^2_{\text{location}} (2) = 1.21, \ p = .57 \), all exact method). Because of their low occurrence, no tests were performed on the cinematographic techniques.

6.4 Conclusion and discussion
This chapter was concerned with the ways in which visuals could help in detecting verbal irony. The first research question of this chapter was about the ways in which visuals are used in relation to irony in multimodal discourse. Results demonstrate that, for over 80% of ironic utterances in the multimodal texts, the image helped a reader to detect irony. These results suggest that images are an important aspect of verbal irony in multimodal genres. In addition, results demonstrate that images that help a reader to detect irony can more often be labeled as visually incongruent than as visual markers. This implies that images that help in decoding irony often work with a contrast to the literal evaluation of the ironic utterance.

In addition to the types of visuals, the pictorial elements that help to signal irony were analyzed. Results show that elements from the mise en scène are more important in this matter than cinematographic techniques, because the number of elements from the mise en scène that alert a reader to the use of irony is much higher than the number of cinematographic techniques that do so. The pictorial elements of body language and facial expression, and the choice of characters and objects were used most often to direct a reader towards an ironic reading. The importance of body language and facial expression support the observations of Attardo et al. (2003) and Rockwell (2001) who also believed that facial expressions could be important in helping a reader to detect irony.

In contrast to elements from the mise en scène, elements from cinematography are hardly used to help a reader to detect irony. Previous research showed that cinematographic elements of images in advertisements can produce attitudinal effects (see e.g., Meyers-Levy & Peracchio, 1992 for camera angle; Meyers-Levy & Peracchio, 1995 for color and Peracchio & Meyers-Levy, 1994 for framing). Nevertheless, in the corpus, these cinematographic elements were not found to help a reader in detecting the irony in a verbal utterance. Since the number of images included in this analysis was relatively low, future research may want to confirm these findings.

The results from this chapter suggest that images may help a reader to detect irony in two different ways. Firstly, the use of body language and facial expression strongly resembles kinetic cues that are used in face-to-face interaction (e.g., Attardo
et al., 2003; Rockwell, 2001). This implies that an image that marks irony may resemble a freeze-frame shot from a conversation. The image conveys a critical moment in an (imagined) conversation; the moment at which the speaker "produced" a visual clue to help a reader identify the use of irony. The second way in which an image may help a reader to detect irony depends upon what is shown; the choice of characters or objects. These visuals may then be considered as a replacement of the situational context (cf. the ironic environment introduced by Utsumi, 2000). In the case of the weather example introduced in the previous chapters, Brenda and Laurie had expected that the weather would be great for their picnic. An image might then show that it was raining at the moment the ironic utterance of "Great weather, eh?" was uttered. In case of a multimodal text, a sender has of course the possibility to manipulate the situational context represented in the image.

This chapter distinguished the pictorial elements that help a reader to identify verbal irony. However, in many images, several pictorial elements are used to help a reader identify verbal irony. This study has not investigated the effect of these pictorial elements put together. It may be that some pictorial elements typically work together to help a reader in detecting irony (cf. Figures 6.1 and 6.2). Visual metaphors and visual hyperboles are examples of a combination of various pictorial elements that together serve as a visual marker or to create visual incongruence. An example of a visual hyperbole that serves as a visual marker is the image of the disappointed Dutch astronaut on the moon who discovers that many Dutchmen had planted a flag on the moon before him (Figure 6.1). Future research may set up a coding instruction to identify visual markers and incongruent images that are comprised out of multiple pictorial elements more systematically.

The final research question dealt with the issue whether the relationship between irony and visuals may be different across genres. Results demonstrate that genre is not related to the way in which visuals help a reader to detect irony. In contrast to irony factors, irony markers in the ironic utterance and verbal co-textual markers, the use of visuals to help to detect irony does not differ across the genres in the corpus. Of course, one explanation why genre and the use of visuals in relation to irony may be unrelated comes from the fact that this chapter reports an exploratory analysis; the number of images that was included in the analysis was relatively low (50 images divided over three genres). A second explanation may be a difference in modalities; it is possible that verbal text and visuals work differently in alerting a reader to an ironic
utterance. Whilst the author of a verbal text may use a wide variety of written clues to help a reader detect irony, the number of visual clues that are at the “writer’s” exposure may be relatively small (only ten pictorial elements are identified in the Verstraten (2006) framework, for instance). In order to increase statistical power, future research may thus seek to replicate these results with a bigger sample of multimodal texts.

This chapter concludes a series of four chapters which focused primarily on describing irony in usage. This last chapter provided an analysis on the use of visuals in relation to irony. Chapters 3 and 4 showed how ironic utterances could differ on irony factors and markers and Chapter 5 dealt with irony markers in the verbal co-text. Chapters 3 – 5 showed that these differences were genre dependent. A next issue to consider is the rhetorical effects that differences on irony factors or differences in the use of irony markers may have. The next chapter, then, deals with one of these possible rhetorical effects; the perceived complexity of ironic utterances.
Chapter 7:
The relation between irony factors and markers and the perceived complexity of irony

7.1 Introduction
The previous four chapters dealt with a description of the corpus on irony factors and irony markers in the ironic utterance and co-text. These chapters demonstrated that both irony factors and markers were used in different ways in different genres. A follow-up question that is addressed in this chapter is the influence of these different irony factors and markers on irony's effects. In other words, is it possible to predict some of irony's effects through the use of irony factors or irony markers? In doing so, this chapter focuses on the perceived complexity of an ironic utterance.

Chapter 1 argued that the appreciation and persuasiveness of an utterance or text may be related to the complexity of an utterance or text. Lagerwerf (2007) demonstrated that an ironic utterance is better appreciated than a non-ironic utterance, but only when it is understood. In this respect, the complexity of an ironic utterance may be an important predictor of comprehension; the more complex an ironic utterance is, the more difficult it is to comprehend that utterance. Another theory that connects the complexity of an utterance to appreciation is that of the inverted U-curve (e.g., McQuarrie & Mick, 2003b; B. Phillips, 2000; Van Enschot, Hoeken & Van Mulken, 2008; Van Mulken, Van Enschot & Hoeken, 2005). This inverted U-curve models a text's effectiveness and indicates that a text of moderate complexity is usually the most effective. If a text is too easy, readers do not remember it. If a text is too difficult, readers get frustrated and refuse to process it further (e.g., Chebat, Gelinas-Chebat, Hombourger & Woodside, 2003; Ketelaar & Van Gisbergen, 2006; McQuarrie & Mick, 1999). Instead, a text should be moderately complex; it should be new or inviting enough to allow for processing whilst it ought to be easy enough to be solved relatively smoothly. This U-curve thus predicts that an utterance's complexity is an important predictor of a text's effectiveness.

Lowrey (2008) claims that the complexity of an utterance or text is not a purely textual characteristic. Instead, she refers to complexity as perceived complexity: what one reader finds difficult may be easy for another reader. In doing so, Lowrey (2008)
sees complexity as a combination of message and receiver characteristics. Authors can make choices that may make a text more or less complex for readers. At the same time, a particular text may be easy for one reader, yet difficult for another reader. Lowrey (2008) thus advises not to measure complexity as a purely textual characteristic with a fixed formula based solely on textual characteristics, but rather as a receiver characteristic and measure complexity as it is perceived by users of language. In doing so, Lowrey (2008) also advises to measure complexity as a continuous variable. An utterance is not simply “easy” or “difficult”. Instead, utterances or texts can be placed on a complexity continuum ranging from very easy to very difficult.

Since irony appreciation may be influenced by complexity, it is necessary to establish how these irony factors and markers are related to the (perceived) complexity of an ironic utterance. This chapter thus deals with the relation between irony factors and markers and the perceived complexity of an ironic utterance. Its research question is:

RQ3a-i What is the relationship between textual features of irony (irony factors, irony markers in the ironic utterance and co-text) and perceived irony complexity?

The relation between irony markers and irony complexity is hypothesized relatively easily. By definition, irony markers ought to alert “a reader to the fact that a sentence is ironical” (Attardo, 2000b, p. 7). By implication, therefore, an ironic utterance with an irony marker should be easier to comprehend than an ironic utterance without an irony marker. A second implication is that stacking irony markers may effectively reduce the complexity of an ironic utterance; the more irony markers an ironic utterance contains, the easier this ironic utterance should be to comprehend. It has, however, never been investigated whether irony markers indeed reduce the complexity of an ironic utterance.

It is thus expected that irony markers work to reduce perceived irony complexity. But do all irony markers work in a similar way? The relationships between types of irony markers and perceived irony complexity is an issue that has not yet been addressed. In this way, this chapter may be considered exploratory in determining the relative importance of types of irony markers on irony complexity.
For irony factors, the situation is more complex than for irony markers. The relationship between an irony factor and irony complexity depends on the level of the irony factor under discussion.

For evaluativeness (see paragraph 3.2.1), an implicitly evaluative ironic utterance requires an extra inference compared to an explicitly evaluative ironic utterance. For the first, a reader has to infer an evaluation that is already present in the latter. This means that an explicitly evaluative ironic utterance is expected to be easier to comprehend than an implicitly evaluative ironic utterance.

In case of the irony factor of incongruity (see paragraph 3.2.2), an utterance with incongruence in the co-text may be easier to comprehend than an utterance with incongruence in context. After all, in the first case, the co-text helps the reader to detect the irony. This implies that people with little contextual knowledge about the topic of the ironic utterance may be able to understand the irony. Irony based on incongruence in context may only be recognized by the group that has the appropriate contextual knowledge.

The predictions with regards to reversal of valence (see paragraph 3.2.4) are clear as well. Various authors claim that ironic praise is used more often than ironic blame (e.g., Holman, 1972; Jorgensen et al., 1984; Kreuz & Glucksberg, 1989; Sperber & Wilson, 1995). Besides, various studies show that ironic praise is better understood than ironic blame (e.g., Gibbs, 1986a; Kreuz & Link, 2002; Kumon-Nakamura et al., 1995). This means that ironic praise is expected to be perceived as less complex than ironic blame.

The relation between the irony factor of relevance (see paragraph 3.2.5) and perceived complexity can be clearly hypothesized as well. If an ironic utterance is indirectly relevant, a reader has to make a number of extra inferences to see how an ironic interpretation of an utterance is relevant to a given co- and context. If an ironic utterance is directly relevant, a reader does not have to make these extra inferences. Instead, the irony can be solved directly. This means that directly relevant irony should be less complex than indirectly relevant irony.

The relationship between the different levels of the remaining irony factor – target – and (perceived) irony complexity seems more difficult to ascertain. Scholars who distinguish between different types of targets (e.g., Cros, 2001; Weizman, 2001; see paragraph 3.2.3) do not hypothesize about the influence of these types of targets...
on irony complexity. The influence of target on the perceived complexity of an ironic utterance is difficult to predict. Consider the following four examples:

(7.1.a) I did a great job!
(7.1.b) You did a great job!
(7.1.c) John did a great job!
(7.1.d) We did a great job!

When somebody did the job very poorly, utterances (7.1.a) – (7.1.d) can be interpreted as ironic comments. Utterance (7.1.a) is an ironic comment of the speaker about himself; the target is thus the sender of the message. Utterance (7.1.b) is an ironic comment about the addressee, who is also the target of the ironic remark. In utterance (7.1.c), John – a third party – is ironically targeted. Finally, in utterance (7.1.d), we – a combination of people that includes both sender and addressee – are targeted. If both speaker and addressee agree that the “job” is done very poorly, they should be able to interpret any of these utterances as ironic. Intuitively, it seems as if a difference in target between the four utterances does not influence the complexity of interpreting the utterance as ironic. It is thus hypothesized that the irony factor of target is not related to perceived irony complexity.

A final question is related to the role of genre in establishing perceived irony complexity. The previous chapters demonstrated that the use of irony factors and markers differed across genres. It may thus be that an ironic utterance in one genre is more complex than an ironic utterance in another genre. Even though there is no a priori reason to suppose that irony in one genre is more complex than irony in another genre, genre is still included in the analyses as a control variable.

7.2 Method
7.2.1 Material
The same sub-corpus that was used for reliability analyses of irony factors (see section 3.3.2), irony markers in the ironic utterance (see section 4.3.2) and the identification of co-textual irony markers (see section 5.2.2) was used. In this way, the influence of irony factors, irony markers in the ironic utterance and co-text could be well compared. This sub-corpus consisted of 60 texts (15 advertisements, 15 columns, 15 book and film reviews and 15 letters to the editor) that contained a total of 180 ironic utterances.
In addition, for irony factors, irony markers in the ironic utterance and irony markers in the verbal co-text, the coding results that were reported in Chapters 3 – 5 were used.

7.2.2 Perceived complexity
The level of perceived complexity of an ironic utterance was established in a similar way to Van Enschot (2006). Two student coders who had never seen the material before coding (MA students of Business Communication at Radboud University Nijmegen) were given a coding instruction to evaluate the complexity of ironic utterances. Coders were first instructed to read a text as they would do in a regular situation. Then, they were again presented with the same text – only now the ironic utterances had been marked in bold face. To evaluate the complexity of ironic utterances, coders had to fill out four items on seven-point Likert scales. These Likert scale items were “When I read the text, it was immediately clear that this utterance was ironic”*, “It took me a while to identify this utterance as ironic”, “The ironic utterance was very difficult to comprehend” and “The ironic utterance was obvious”*. Items marked with an asterisk were reverse scored so that a high score represents a more complex ironic utterance. A copy of this coding instruction can be found in Appendix X.

The reliability of these four items was high (Cronbach’s $\alpha_{\text{coder1}} = .94$; Cronbach’s $\alpha_{\text{coder2}} = .97$). To assess whether coders also agreed on the scores they had assigned to individual ironic utterances, Kendall’s $W$ was calculated. A Kendall’s $W$ score of .75 indicates that coders also relatively agreed which ironic utterances were perceived as easy and which ironic utterances were perceived as more difficult. Mean scores of coders 1 and 2 were then used to calculate the relative perceived complexity of each ironic utterance.

7.2.3 Data analysis
Three multiple linear stepwise regression analyses were used to assess which types of irony markers in the ironic utterance, co-textual irony markers and irony factors were related to the perceived complexity of the irony. A stepwise regression analysis checks which predictor explains the highest amount of variance. In a second step, the analysis checks which predictor (if any) explains the highest amount of the remaining variance, i.e., the total variance except for the degree of variance that is already explained by the first predictor. This procedure is repeated until no predictor significantly explains an
amount of the remaining variance. Predictors that do not explain a significant amount of variance are excluded from the regression models.

Since the number of types of irony markers was relatively high, they were included in a first regression analysis (Field, 2009, pp. 212-213). To make results comparable, the same was done for the co-textual irony markers. A final stepwise regression analysis contained the irony factors as well as the total number of irony markers in the ironic utterance and co-textual irony markers. In all three regression analyses, predictors were only included when they had been coded relatively reliably after the second round of coding (Cohen’s $k$ had to be at least .70). This meant that the irony factor of relevance (see Table 3.2) and the types of individual irony markers of ironic echo, change of register, focus topicalization, interjections and a difference in typography (see Table 4.2) were excluded from this analysis. In addition, outliers and cases that had an undue influence on the model (i.e., a Cook’s distance > 1.0 and a Mahalanobis distance > 15, respectively) were removed from the data (Field, 2009).

7.3 Results
The research question was concerned with the influence of irony factors, irony markers and genre on the perceived complexity of an ironic utterance. To account for the types of irony markers in the ironic utterance, a stepwise regression was conducted in which the types of irony markers in the ironic utterance were entered as predictors and perceived irony complexity was entered as a dependent variable. The types of irony markers in the ironic utterance that were included as predictors were metaphor, hyperbole, understatement, rhetorical questions, exclamations, tag questions, diminutives, capitalization, quotation marks, and other punctuation marks. Table 7.1 demonstrates that hyperbole was the only irony marker that had a negative influence on perceived irony complexity; inclusion of a hyperbole significantly reduced perceived irony complexity ($t(171) = -2.64, p < .01, \beta = -.20$). The model was robust.

Besides irony markers in the ironic utterance, different types of co-textual irony markers may be distinguished as well. A stepwise regression analysis with the types of co-textual irony markers as predictors (ironic utterances that precede the ironic utterance under discussion, metaphor, hyperbole, understatement, rhetorical questions, cynicism, a change of register and the use of humor; see paragraph 5.4) and perceived irony complexity as a dependent variable was conducted. Table 7.2 demonstrates that the number of ironic utterances that precede the ironic utterance...
under discussion is the only co-textual irony marker that had a negative relation to irony complexity; the more ironic utterances preceded a specific ironic utterance, the less complex that latter ironic utterance is perceived \((t(177) = -2.43, p < .05, \beta = -.18)\). The model was robust.

Table 7.1: Results of stepwise regression of types of irony markers in the ironic utterance on perceived irony complexity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>(t) (169)</th>
<th>(p)</th>
<th>(b) (SE(_b))</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
<th>(\beta)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>24.64</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td>3.32 (.14)</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>3.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyperbole</td>
<td>-2.64</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>-.67 (.25)</td>
<td>-1.16</td>
<td>-.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Excluded variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>(t)</th>
<th>(p)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metaphor</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understatement</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhetorical question</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclamation</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tag question</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diminutive</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitalization</td>
<td>-.39</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quotation marks</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other punctuation marks</td>
<td>-1.22</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: \(F(1,168) = 7.01, p < .01, R^2 = .04, CI\) stands for Confidence Interval, LL stands for Lower Limit, UL stands for Upper Limit.

The first two regression analyses considered the individual types of verbal irony markers in the ironic utterance and the co-text. A third regression analysis dealt with the influence of irony factors, irony markers and genre on perceived irony complexity. In this analysis, the total number of irony markers was entered as a predictor. Thus, a stepwise regression analysis with the total number of irony markers, irony factors (target \(\text{dummy coded; 3 levels}\), evaluativeness, incongruence and reversal of valence), the number of ironic utterances that precede the ironic utterance\(^5\) and genre \(\text{dummy coded; 3 levels}\)^6 as predictors and perceived irony complexity as a dependent variable was conducted\(^7\).
Table 7.2: Results of stepwise regression of types of co-textual irony markers on perceived irony complexity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$t$ (177)</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>$b$ ($SE_b$)</th>
<th>95% CI</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>23.27</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td>3.48 (.15)</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>3.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of ironic utterances preceding the irony</td>
<td>-2.43</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>- .08 (.03)</td>
<td>- .14</td>
<td>- .02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Excluded variables**

- Metaphor: .32 .75
- Hyperbole: .45 .65
- Understatement: .03 .98
- Rhetorical question: -1.18 .24
- Cynicism: -.41 .68
- Change of register: .19 .85
- Humor: -.70 .49

*Note: F(1,177) = 5.92, $p < .05$, $R^2 = .03$, CI stands for Confidence Interval, LL stands for Lower Limit, UL stands for Upper Limit.*

Table 7.3 demonstrates that two irony factors are related to perceived irony complexity; evaluativeness and reversal of valence. Results show that an explicitly evaluative ironic utterance is perceived as less complex than an implicitly evaluative ironic utterance ($t(168) = 4.05, p < .001, \beta = .29$). Ironic praise is also perceived as less complex than ironic blame ($t(168) = 2.19, p < .05, \beta = .16$). The number of ironic utterances that precede the ironic utterance is also related to perceived irony complexity; the higher the number of ironic utterances that precede the ironic utterance, the less complex an ironic utterance is perceived ($t(168) = - 2.86, p < .01, \beta = -.21$). Finally, an influence of genre was found; ironic utterances in letters to the editor were perceived as less complex ($t(168) = - 2.12, p < .05, \beta = -.16$). The model was robust.

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### Table 7.3: Results of stepwise regression of irony factors, the total number of irony markers in the utterance, ironic utterances that precede the ironic utterance and genre on perceived irony complexity (Step 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>t (168)</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>b (SEb)</th>
<th>95% CI LL</th>
<th>95% CI UL</th>
<th>β</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>5.11</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td>3.47 (.68)</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluativeness</td>
<td>- 4.05</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td>- .97 (.24)</td>
<td>- 1.44</td>
<td>- .50</td>
<td>-.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ironic utterances preceding the irony</td>
<td>- 2.86</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>- .09 (.03)</td>
<td>- .16</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reversal of valence</td>
<td>- 2.19</td>
<td>.030</td>
<td>- .66 (.30)</td>
<td>- 1.25</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>-.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genre: Letters to the editor</td>
<td>- 2.12</td>
<td>.035</td>
<td>- .72 (.34)</td>
<td>- 1.40</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Excluded variables**

- Total number of markers in utterance: .14, .89
- Incongruence: -.56, .58
- Target: Sender: .65, .52
- Target: 3rd party: -1.12, .26
- Genre: Columns: -.34, .74
- Genre: Book and film reviews: -.85, .40

*Note: F_{step 4} (4, 163) = 9.07, p < .001, All F changes were significant (at least p < .05); Step 1 R^2 = .10, Step 2 R^2 = .13, Step 3 R^2 = .16, Step 4 R^2 = .18; All R^2 changes were significant (at least p < .05). CI stands for Confidence Interval, LL stands for Lower Limit, UL stands for Upper Limit.*

### 7.4 Conclusion and discussion

This chapter addressed the relationships between irony markers, irony factors and genre on the one hand and perceived irony complexity on the other. It was found that hyperbole as an irony marker in the ironic utterance was negatively related to perceived irony complexity. Besides, the number of ironic utterances preceding the ironic utterance under discussion was a co-textual irony marker with a negative relation to irony complexity. These results provide empirical support for the claim that irony markers may reduce the complexity of an ironic utterance. Results for hyperbole and the number of ironic utterances in the co-text have both been confirmed by previous research. Kreuz and Roberts (1995) demonstrate that the use of hyperboles aids irony comprehension. Hodiamont et al. (2010) show that ironic utterances that are preceded by other ironic utterances are less complex than ironic utterances that have not been preceded by other ironic utterances.
It is surprising, however, that only two types of irony markers were related to irony complexity. It could be the case that other types of markers were not used enough to have a significant impact on irony complexity; only for irony markers that were used a certain minimal number of times in the corpus, the possibility of a relationship between that irony marker and irony complexity can be established. Although the fact that some irony markers were not used very often may explain why these irony markers were not found to relate to irony complexity, the lack of association between irony complexity and the total number of irony markers in the ironic utterance seems strange. It could be predicted that an ironic utterance that is marked by, say, four irony markers is less complex than an ironic utterance that is marked by only a single irony marker. Results in this chapter seem to suggest that this is not the case. Two explanations can be given for this result. A first explanation is that, in contrast to the predictions of irony theorists (e.g., Attardo, 2000b; Muecke, 1978; Seto, 1998), irony markers do not reduce the complexity of an ironic utterance. A second explanation is provided by Sperber and Wilson’s (1995) theory of optimal relevance. This theory predicts that speaker try to be optimally relevant. Table 4.8 showed that irony markers were used more often when the more difficult level of an irony factor was chosen. This means that an implicitly evaluative ironic utterance had more irony markers than an explicitly evaluative ironic utterance and that ironic blame had more markers than ironic praise. Speakers may thus intuitively feel when an ironic utterance is too difficult and compensate by using irony markers. Since the results reported in this chapter are correlational, causality cannot be inferred and neither of these hypotheses can be confirmed or rejected. Therefore, a follow-up experiment in the next chapter (experiment 2) investigates whether irony markers indeed reduce the complexity of ironic utterances or not.

The two irony factors that were related to perceived irony complexity were the explicitness of the ironic evaluation and reversal of valence. It was found that explicitly evaluative irony and ironic praise were perceived as less complex than implicitly evaluative irony and ironic blame. The results for valence confirm the results of earlier studies that also found that ironic blame was more difficult to comprehend than ironic blame (e.g., Gibbs, 1986a; Jorgensen et al., 1984; Kreuz & Glucksberg, 1989; Kumon-Nakamura et al., 1995; Pexman & Olineck, 2002). The claim that explicitly evaluative irony is less complex than implicitly evaluative irony has been confirmed in one other
study, with children as respondents (Bosco & Bucciarelli, 2008). The effects for adult readers found in this chapter should be experimentally replicated.

Finally, this chapter looked into the relation between genre and perceived irony complexity. Results suggest that irony that is used in letters to the editor is less complex. This result can be well explained. Letters to the editor are usually very short and may be written by non-professional text writers. This implies that authors need to be clear in a relatively few words. As a result, the irony is easier in this genre than in genres that are usually longer (book and film review, column), already framed as non-serious (column) or have a visual co-text (advertisements).

This chapter provides empirical support for the claims that not all ironic utterances work in the same way. Instead, differences in perceived complexity may be observed between individual ironic utterances. These differences can be partly explained by some irony factors and markers as well as the genre of the text. In this chapter, perceived complexity ratings were used for real ironic utterances published in actual texts (see e.g., Kreuz & Roberts, 1993). This means that the ecological validity of the ironic utterances is high. Nevertheless, these natural data made it difficult to control for certain aspects of the ironic utterances. Besides, the results presented in this chapter are correlational. To strengthen the results that were found in this chapter and to able to infer causality, results should thus be replicated in an experiment.

This chapter found the first empirical indication that the explicitness of the ironic evaluation may play an important part in determining irony complexity in natural texts. At the same time, it also found no relation between the use of irony markers and perceived irony complexity, in contrast to what theories on irony predict (e.g., Attardo, 2000b; Muecke, 1978; Seto, 1998). The next chapter includes two experiments that investigate these two aspects into more detail.
Chapter 8:  
The influence of irony factors and markers on comprehension of and attitudes towards irony

8.1 Introduction
The previous chapter dealt with the issue whether the perceived complexity of an ironic utterance was related to textual characteristics of the irony such as irony factors and irony markers. It showed that two irony factors were related to perceived irony complexity; reversal of valence and evaluativeness. The analysis demonstrated that ironic praise was perceived as less complex than ironic blame and that explicitly evaluative irony was perceived as less complex than implicitly evaluative irony. For irony markers in the ironic utterance, hyperbole was related to perceived irony complexity: the use of a hyperbole is associated with a decrease in the perceived complexity of an ironic utterance.

An important point to note about the analyses in the previous chapter is that the results are correlational. To be able to infer a causal relationship, experiments need to be conducted. A number of empirical studies has experimentally confirmed the effects of valence (e.g., Gibbs, 1986a; Jorgensen et al., 1984; Kreuz & Link, 2002). These experiments compared reading times of ironic praise to reading times of ironic blame and found that ironic praise was processed faster than ironic blame. From these data, the researchers conclude that ironic praise is better understood than ironic blame.

The explicitness of an ironic evaluation has received less scholarly attention. Bosco and Bucciarelli (2008) compared the ways in which children responded to explicitly and implicitly evaluative ironic utterances. In an experiment, children were read a small story that ended in either an explicitly evaluative ironic utterance (referred to by Bosco and Bucciarelli, 2008, as a simple irony) or an implicitly evaluative ironic utterance (referred to by Bosco and Bucciarelli, 2008, as a complex irony). Bosco and Bucciarelli (2008) found that children were better at comprehending explicitly evaluative than implicitly evaluative irony. The question remains whether these results can be generalized to adult readers. Various scholars demonstrate that children generally have problems in comprehending ironic utterances, whilst adults usually comprehend the same ironic utterances without any problems (e.g., Ackerman, 1983; C. Capelli,
Nakagawa & Madden, 1990; Fillipova & Astington, 2008). To be able to support the claim that the explicitness of evaluation of an ironic utterance can influence the complexity or comprehension of an ironic utterance, Bosco and Bucciarelli's (2008) results need to be replicated with a sample of adult respondents.

The results of irony markers in the analysis of the previous chapter are peculiar. Whilst various scholars predict that the use of irony markers reduces the complexity of an ironic utterance (e.g., Attardo, 2000b; Kreuz, 1996; Muecke, 1978), the results from the previous chapter do not support this hypothesis. Hyperboles were the only type of irony marker in the ironic utterance that was related to perceived irony complexity. These results contrast with the prediction that irony markers generally serve to reduce the complexity of an utterance. In addition, the total number of irony markers in an ironic utterance also did not reduce the complexity of an ironic utterance.

Paragraph 7.4 suggests two explanations for this effect. Firstly, it might be the case that, in contrast to claims of various irony scholars (e.g., Attardo, 2000b; Kreuz, 1996; Muecke, 1978), irony markers really do not reduce the complexity of an ironic utterance. A second explanation is that people who use irony also use the principle of optimal relevance (Sperber & Wilson, 1995). The principle of optimal relevance posits that speakers try to be as relevant as possible. For irony markers, this would mean that they are primarily used when a speaker intuitively feels that an ironic utterance is too difficult to understand without an irony marker (i.e., when the more difficult levels of an irony factor are used). This latter hypothesis is supported by Table 4.8, which shows that the average number of irony markers per ironic utterance is higher when the supposedly more difficult level of an irony factor is used than when the supposedly easier level of an irony factor is used. Therefore, the influence of irony markers on comprehension and perceived irony complexity should be investigated when the influence of irony factors is controlled for.

Besides looking at the influence of these textual characteristics of irony on comprehension and perceived complexity, the relationship between the use of irony and the attitude towards the utterance and text is of interest. An attitude can be defined as “a categorization of an object along an evaluative dimension” (Fazio, Chen, McDonel & Sherman, 1982, p. 341). Various studies have investigated the influence of figurative language use on attitudes towards the text and found that figurative language is liked better than literal language (e.g., McQuarrie & Mick, 2003b; Mothersbaugh et al., 2002; Van Enschot, 2006). These positive affective responses may have
persuasive effects. In advertising research, S. Brown and Stayman (1992) have demonstrated that a positive attitude towards an advertisement may influence brand attitude and purchase intention (see also Schilperoord & Maes, 2003). Therefore, the affective responses to an utterance or text with a rhetorical figure such as irony may be an important predictor of the question whether that text will have persuasive effects or not. However, not every advertisement with rhetorical figures or humor positively influences attitudes (cf. Eisend, 2009; Tom & Eves, 1999).

The question thus remains if and how the use of irony can increase the attitudes towards the utterance and text, a condition for irony having persuasive effects. On the one hand, it is possible that irony is liked better than non-irony. On the other hand, it is also possible that irony can only influence the attitude towards the utterance and text if it meets certain conditions. A first condition may be that irony has to be properly understood before it may influence attitudes: irony has to be recognized as irony in order to be liked (e.g., Lagerwerf, 2007). A second hypothesis is related to the perceived complexity of the ironic utterance. If an ironic utterance is perceived as too complex, the attitude towards that utterance may decrease. This implies that the influence of irony on the attitude towards the utterance or text may depend on comprehension and perceived complexity.

This chapter thus presents two experiments that assess the influence of irony and evaluativeness on comprehension, perceived complexity, and attitudes towards the utterance and text (experiment 1) and the influence of irony and markers on comprehension, perceived complexity, and attitudes towards the utterance and text (experiment 2). Its research questions are

RQ3a. What is the effect of the presence and features of verbal irony (i.e., the explicitness of evaluation and the use of markers) on (i) perceived complexity, (ii) comprehension, (iii) the attitude towards the utterance and (iv) the attitude towards the text?  

RQ3a refers to the degree in which irony is able to influence comprehension, perceived complexity, and attitudes. These variables may of course be related; it is possible that irony comprehension is related to the attitude towards irony. It is also probable that irony only has a positive influence on attitudes if it is properly understood. At the same time, irony’s perceived complexity may also influence attitudes. If an ironic utterance is
perceived as too complex, perceived complexity may have a negative influence on attitudes. This means that irony can also have an indirect effect (through comprehension or perceived complexity) on attitudes. The second research question is concerned with testing these indirect effects:

RQ3b. To what extent does the effect of irony on attitudes towards the utterance and text depend on perceived complexity and comprehension of the irony?

For this research question, it is expected that the attitude towards the utterance and text is higher for irony when it is understood and when it is perceived as relatively easy than when irony is not understood and perceived as relatively difficult.

8.2 Experiment 1
This first experiment looks at the influence of irony and the explicitness of evaluation on comprehension of the utterance, perceived complexity of the utterance and text and attitudes towards the utterance and text.

8.2.1 Method
Materials
In order to increase ecological validity of results, it was decided to use stimuli that were based on actual data. Most previous research on verbal irony used textoids as experimental stimuli (but for an exception; see Lagerwerf, 2007). These textoids are often completely constructed by the researchers, which may make them unnatural (e.g., Graesser et al., 1997; Katz, 2009). Therefore, in this experiment, actual texts were used and slightly edited so that they always ended in a stimulus sentence. Every stimulus sentence came in four different versions: explicitly evaluative irony, implicitly evaluative irony, explicitly evaluative non-irony and implicitly evaluative non-irony. The choice to slightly edit the existing text had the advantage of using stimuli with a higher ecological validity than textoids designed by experimenters. At the same time, it was possible to use the same stimulus text in all conditions, thus allowing the opportunity to control for the influence of the stimulus itself. After all, some texts can generally be liked better than others, with or without irony.

To allow for a multiple message design, it was decided to use stimuli from the genre of letters to the editor, because letters to the editors are usually relatively short.
The LexisNexis database of Dutch newspapers was used to look for potential stimuli. Words such as *brief* ("letter"), *brieven* ("letters") and *brief van de dag* ("letter of the day") were used as queries. Stimuli were selected if they met two conditions. Firstly, they should not be concerned with specific one-time events that would be difficult to comprehend out of context. Often, letters to the editor respond to certain newspaper reports, controversies or events. When these cases would have become "old news", the specific letter to the editor may be difficult to understand. Therefore, the first condition is that the letter to the editor could relatively easily be understood out of context. Secondly, the letter should not mention individual politicians, political parties or religions, thus preventing respondents' political or religious affiliations from influencing results.

After an initial search on LexisNexis, 30 letters were considered as possible stimuli. These stimuli were originally published in a Dutch national newspaper (*Algemeen Dagblad, de Volkskrant, Het Financieele Dagblad or Metro*) and were about a wide variety of topics. For the purpose of the study, the original letters were slightly edited to be understood out of context. The final sentence of these stimuli was manipulated for the presence irony (irony vs. non-irony) and the explicitness of evaluation (explicit vs. implicit evaluation). All other sentences in the stimuli were non-ironic. The letters were also made anonymous, as the names of the original authors were changed.

In a qualitative pre-test, seven expert respondents (all PhD students in the field of applied linguistics) judged the edited stimuli on how representative they considered them to be for the genre of letters to the editor. On the basis of this pre-test, 24 stimuli were selected and included in the experiment. One translated example is reproduced below. The other stimuli and their sources can be found in Appendices XI and XII.

**Chamber of Commerce**

Without your asking for it and without purchasing a specific service, an entrepreneur is obliged to pay quite an advance payment as contribution to the institution of the Chamber of Commerce (CoC) each year. In the past, I set up two foundations and two private limited companies (PLCs). For both the foundations and the PLCs, I have to pay a steep amount to the CoC, while nothing is done in return. To put it even stronger, when, in an exceptional case, you need a certificate from the CoC's register, you even have to pay for it. STIMULUS SENTENCE:

a. [ironic, explicitly evaluative]. Ah well, great that the CoC also works for the common guy.
b. [ironic, implicitly evaluative]. Ah well, the CoC apparently works for the common guy.
c. [non-ironic, explicitly evaluative]. A shame that the CoC does not work for the common guy.
d. [non-ironic, implicitly evaluative]. Ah well, the CoC apparently does not work for the common guy.

A. Ketelaars, Reuver

The stimuli were controlled for possible gender effects, the influence of irony markers, valence, target, incongruence and other ironic utterances. To control for possible gender effects of irony (e.g., Colston, 2005; Colston & Lee, 2004), no explicit mention was made of the speaker's gender. The sender was explicitly identified in a gender-neutral way at the bottom of every stimulus; only the first letter of the first name of the sender was shown. In the case of the Chamber of Commerce stimulus, for instance, the sender was listed as “A. Ketelaars” from the Dutch village of Reuver. Furthermore,
in every stimulus, one irony marker was included in every stimulus sentence, thus controlling for the influence of irony markers. To control for the influence of valence and targets, all utterances were ironic praise and all targets were third parties. Incongruence was controlled for, because all letters could be read out of context; the irony was based on incongruence in the co-text. To control for the influence of other ironic utterances, only the stimulus sentence was (possibly) ironic. Finally, in order to increase ecological validity, stimuli were presented as part of a “letter to the editor” section in a newspaper (see Figure 8.1).

**Instrumentation**

A questionnaire was used to measure respondents’ comprehension of, perceived complexity of, and attitudes towards the stimuli in the various conditions.

Comprehension was measured with an open question after each individual stimulus; respondents were asked to paraphrase their interpretation of the stimulus sentence in response to an open question. This question always had the same format: “Can you paraphrase into your own words what position [Name of author of the specific letter] takes with regard to [subject of the letter]?” In case of the *Chamber of Commerce* example, the question was thus “Can you paraphrase into your own words what position A. Ketelaars takes with regard to the Chamber of Commerce?”.

Answers to this open question were coded by the author into a binary variable, indicating whether a respondent had understood the utterance or not. A respondent who correctly understood the meaning of the stimulus sentence in the *Chamber of Commerce* example said something like “The CoC is not customer-friendly and is especially difficult to work with for small businesses” or “The CoC is much too expensive”. Respondents had not understood the utterance when they either presented an incorrect interpretation of the stimulus sentence or when they explicitly stated that they could not paraphrase the meaning of the stimulus sentence. An example of an incorrect interpretation of the stimulus sentence in the *Chamber of Commerce* example is “He believes that it is good that the CoC exists for small businesses”. A respondent who failed to elicit a meaningful interpretation of the stimulus sentence simply said “No, [I cannot paraphrase the position taken in the final sentence, CB]”. In some cases, the answers to the open questions could not be coded; respondents either did not fill out this question at all, responded with a statement that was off-topic or responded with a statement that did not make clear if they had interpreted the utterance literally or
ironically (e.g., “It is unclear whether he is in favor of it or against it”). In these cases, it was considered unclear whether a respondent had actually understood the final utterance or not.

In 86.0% of all cases, respondents had understood the utterance and in 9.2% of cases, they had not understood the utterance. In 4.8% of cases, it was unclear whether a respondent had correctly understood the utterance. This latter group was excluded from analyses that considered comprehension.

Perceived complexity can both refer to the perceived complexity of the stimulus sentence or perceived complexity of the text as a whole. Perceived complexity of the stimulus sentence was measured with two questions on seven-point Likert scales; “I consider the last sentence from the text as clear (in Dutch: helder)” and “I consider the last sentence from the text as easy to understand”. Reliability was high (Cronbach’s α = .89) and these questions were taken together as “perceived complexity of the utterance”.

Perceived complexity of the text was measured with a single-item, seven-point Likert scale; “I consider the text to be clear (in Dutch: duidelijk)”. Since respondents already spent considerable time filling in the questionnaire, it was decided to include one question to measure perceived complexity of the text (see e.g., Bergkvist & Rossiter, 2007). All complexity items were reverse scored so that a high score represents a more complex utterance or text.

Like perceived complexity, attitudes were measured for the attitude towards the stimulus sentence and the attitude towards the text as a whole. Attitudes towards the stimulus sentence were measured with two questions on seven-point Likert scales; “I consider the last sentence from the text as pleasant” and “I think the last sentence from the text succeeded well”. Reliability was satisfactory (Cronbach’s α = .78) and these questions were taken together as “attitudes towards the utterance”. Attitudes towards the text as a whole were measured with a single-item, seven-point Likert scale: “I consider the text to be appealing”.

Finally, respondents had to fill out some demographic questions. They were asked about their gender, age, major, nationality and native language.

Design
The experiment had a Latin-square 2 (irony vs. non-irony) x 2 (explicitly vs. implicitly evaluative) mixed design. The qualitative pre-test mentioned earlier had indicated that
Respondents considered the questionnaire with all stimuli to be much too long. Therefore, the stimulus set was divided into two. 100 respondents saw stimuli 1-12 (see Appendix XI) and 100 other respondents saw stimuli 13-24 (see Appendix XI). Every respondent saw all conditions of the experiment three times (explicitly evaluative irony, implicitly evaluative irony, explicitly evaluative non-irony and implicitly evaluative non-irony), but saw every individual stimulus in only one of the four conditions. The order in which stimuli were presented was randomized and counterbalanced across participants. In this randomization, care was being taken that no respondent saw an ironic stimulus two times in a row. In order to prevent respondents from guessing the topic under investigation, they also saw 6 filler stimuli. In these fillers, the stimulus sentence contained either a scheme (e.g., rhyme) or a trope different from irony (e.g., a pun). This choice was made to make sure that the stimulus sentences of the fillers were different from the stimuli in both the ironic and non-ironic conditions. Fillers were the same in all versions of the questionnaire, which always started and ended with a filler item. On average, it took respondents between 35 and 45 minutes to complete the questionnaire. All materials were administered in Dutch.

Respondents
A total of 200 respondents participated in the experiment. Participants were recruited at various locations on the campus of Radboud University Nijmegen and received a compensation of € 4,- for their participation. All respondents were students at Radboud University Nijmegen. Most respondents were science (42.5%) or social-science students (37.5%). 20% of respondents were enrolled in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities. A small majority of respondents was male (53.5%). Two respondents (1.0%) did not provide information about their gender. The average age of respondents was 20.4 years \((SD = 2.53; \text{range 17-31})\). Most respondents had the Dutch nationality (93%) and Dutch as their native language (90%). Nationality and native language had no impact on results.

Data analysis
Since a counterbalanced design was used, only within-subjects results are reported for the direct effects (Raaijmakers, Schrijnemakers & Gremmen, 1999). This means that the direct effects were analyzed with a repeated measures ANOVA generalizing across participants\(^1\). Nevertheless, various respondents saw different stimuli in different
conditions. To account for the variation within stimuli, group mean centering was applied to the data (Field, 2009). In group mean centering, the mean score of every stimulus is subtracted from every individual score. This means that, if a specific utterance for instance has a complexity score of 5 and the mean complexity score of that utterance is 4, the group mean centered score becomes 1. In other words, if a group mean centered score of an utterance on, for instance, perceived complexity equals 0, this utterance has a completely average perceived complexity. If a group mean centered score of an utterance on perceived complexity is higher than 0, this utterance is perceived as more complex than average. If a group-mean-centered score of an utterance on perceived complexity is lower than 0, this utterance is perceived as less complex than average. The centering procedure thus allows for a comparison whilst taking individual variety in stimuli into account.

To test for the indirect effects (i.e., the extent to which the influence of irony on attitudes depends on either comprehension or perceived complexity), multilevel suppression analyses were carried out. Suppression is a special type of mediation analysis (Shrout & Bolger, 2002). In regular mediation, a mediator M (significantly influenced by independent variable X) explains an effect of a certain predictor on a dependent variable Y (see Figure 8.2). This means that without the mediator, X significantly influences Y. When the mediator is included, X no longer influences Y, but the effect of X is “taken over” by M (Baron & Kenny, 1986). In other words, in “normal” mediation, paths a, b and c are significant and path c’ is not (see Figure 8.2). It should be noted that this scenario can only take place if the polarity of ab (i.e., a multiplied by b) and c are equal.

In the case of a suppressor, the situation is different (Shrout & Bolger, 2002). In this case, without accounting for M, the effect of X on Y (the total effect c) is estimated too low. If M is accounted for, the effect of X on Y should be higher. This means that c’ should be higher than c and that the polarity of ab is different from c. Therefore, for suppression to take place, three conditions should be satisfied: (1) X should influence M, (2) M should influence Y (see Preacher & Hayes, 2008) and (3) the polarity of ab (a multiplied by b) should be different from c’ (Shrout & Bolger, 2002). The latter condition means that if ab yields a negative operator, c’ should yield a positive operator, and vice versa.

Figures 8.3 and 8.4 shows the expectations for the suppression effects that play a role in irony appreciation. Figure 8.3 shows the expectations for the influence of irony
on attitudes via comprehension. It is expected that the presence of irony has a negative influence on comprehension; irony is more difficult to comprehend than non-irony (e.g., Gibbs 1986a, Schwoebel et al., 2000). Comprehension is expected to have a positive influence on attitudes. The attitude towards the utterance or text will be higher when the utterance is understood than when it is not understood (e.g., Lagerwerf, 2007). Finally, the presence of irony is also expected to have a positive effect on the attitude towards the utterance; it is hypothesized that irony will be better appreciated than non-irony (e.g., Lagerwerf, 2007; Van Enschot, 2006).

![Mediation Diagram](image)

*Figure 8.2: General mediation model (based on Baron & Kenny, 1986; Preacher & Hayes, 2008)*

Figure 8.4 shows the expectations for the influence of irony on attitudes via perceived complexity. Again, irony is expected to have a positive influence on the attitude towards the text. Irony is also expected to have a positive influence on perceived complexity; irony will be perceived as more complex than non-irony (e.g., Giora & Fein, 1998). Finally, perceived complexity is expected to have a negative influence on attitudes; if an utterance is too complex, it will be less appreciated than an easier utterance (e.g., Giora et al., 2004; Van Mulken et al., 2005).

In reporting the different mediation analyses, two points should be noted. Firstly, the design of the experiment calls for a multilevel mediation analysis (Bauer, Preacher & Gil, 2006). Every respondent saw multiple instances of every condition. This means that various scores of every condition were provided by one individual (Level 1). These scores are then used to say something about this individual and to generalize to the population of individuals (Level 2). In other words, the mediation
analysis should take both the within and between effects of participants into account when computing the indirect effect. The SPSS script provided by Bauer et al. (2006) was used to impose this multilevel design upon the data and to compute the size of the indirect effect. The indirect effect that is reported is the random indirect effect, i.e., the indirect effect at the between-participants level. Secondly, to account for the variation in stimuli, the group-mean-centered dataset was used for these multilevel analyses.

Figure 8.3: Expected mediation effect for irony via comprehension on attitudes; Nested frames indicate levels of sampling, boxes indicate variables, arrows indicate relations.

Figure 8.4: Expected mediation effect for irony via perceived complexity on attitudes; Nested frames indicate levels of sampling, boxes indicate variables, arrows indicate relations.
8.2.2 Results

The first research question was concerned with the direct influence of the explicitness of an ironic evaluation on irony comprehension, perceived complexity of the utterance and the text, attitudes towards the utterance and the text and the persuasiveness of the text. Table 8.1 shows the average scores and standard deviations. Whilst the ANOVAs are computed on the group-mean-centered dataset, for reader convenience, the unadjusted means are given.

It was expected that the presence of irony had a negative influence on comprehension and a positive influence on perceived complexity. Both expectations were confirmed. Non-ironic utterances were better understood ($M = .96, SD = .19$) and perceived as less complex ($M = 2.76, SD = 1.37$) than ironic utterances (Comprehension: $M = .84, SD = .36, F(1,199) = 114.75, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .37$; Perceived complexity utterance: $M = 3.15, SD = 1.49, F(1,199) = 42.84, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .18$). The analysis of complexity of the text shows that a text without irony ($M = 2.81, SD = 1.32$) was found less complex than a text with an ironic utterance ($M = 3.01, SD = 1.46, F(1,199) = 18.31, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .08$). In contrast, the degree of evaluativeness had no influence on comprehension ($F(1,199) = 2.11, p = .15$), perceived complexity of the utterance ($F(1,199) < 1$) or perceived complexity of the text ($F(1,199) < 1$).

Whilst the interaction between the presence of irony and the degree of evaluativeness had no influence on comprehension ($F(1,199) = 1.41, p = .24$), the interaction was significant in the analysis of both the perceived complexity of the utterance ($F(1,199) = 10.69, p < .01, \eta^2_p = .05$) and the perceived complexity of the text ($F(1,199) = 6.77, p < .05, \eta^2_p = .03$). Explicitly evaluative irony was considered to be less complex than implicitly evaluative irony. This pattern was reversed for non-irony; a non-ironic, implicitly evaluative utterance was perceived as less complex than a non-ironic, explicitly evaluative utterance.

It was expected that the presence of irony had a positive influence on the attitude towards the utterance and text. An ironic utterance ($M = 4.48, SD = 1.39$) was better liked than a non-ironic utterance ($M = 4.28, SD = 1.24, F(1,199) = 13.02, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .06$). A text with an ironic utterance ($M = 4.65, SD = 1.45$) was liked better than a text with a non-ironic utterance ($M = 4.55, SD = 1.44, F(1,199) = 3.89, p = .05, \eta^2_p = .02$). The degree of evaluativeness had no significant influence on the attitudes towards the utterance ($F < 1$) and text ($F(1,199) = 3.52, p = .06$). The interaction between irony and the degree of evaluativeness had a significant influence
on the attitude towards the utterance ($F (1,199) = 9.76, \ p < .01, \ \eta_p^2 = .05$), but no influence on the attitude towards the text ($F (1,199) = 2.68, \ p = .10$). Explicitly evaluative irony was better appreciated than implicitly evaluative irony. This pattern was reversed for non-irony; a non-ironic, implicitly evaluative utterance was better appreciated than a non-ironic, explicitly evaluative utterance.

Table 8.1 Average scores (and standard deviations) of comprehension of the utterance (0 = utterance not understood, 1 = utterance understood), perceived complexity of the utterance and text (1 = low perceived complexity, 7 = high perceived complexity), and the attitude towards the utterance and text (1 = very negative attitude, 7 = very positive attitude), by condition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Irony</th>
<th>Non-irony</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explicit evaluative</td>
<td>Implicitly evaluative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>.86 (.35)</td>
<td>.83 (.38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived complexity utterance</td>
<td>3.08 (1.42)</td>
<td>3.21 (1.55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived complexity text</td>
<td>2.95 (1.40)</td>
<td>3.07 (1.51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude towards the utterance</td>
<td>4.54 (1.36)</td>
<td>4.42 (1.41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude towards the text</td>
<td>4.73 (1.38)</td>
<td>4.56 (1.52)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second research question was concerned with the extent to which the influence of irony on attitudes depends on comprehension and perceived complexity. Figures 8.5 and 8.6 show that comprehension suppresses the influence of the presence of irony on the attitude towards the utterance and text. These suppression effects are significant on a 5% level (attitude towards the utterance: random indirect effect estimate = -.11, $SE = .03$, 95%CI = -.17, -.05; attitude towards the text: random indirect effect estimate = -.10, $SE = .04$, 95%CI = -.18, -.02). This means that both an ironic utterance itself and a text with an ironic utterance are appreciated better when they are understood. Besides, an ironic utterance that is understood is liked better than a non-ironic utterance that is understood.

Figures 8.7 and 8.8 then show that the perceived complexity of the utterance suppresses the influence of the presence of irony on the attitude towards the utterance and text. These suppression effects are significant on a 5% level (attitude towards the utterance: random indirect effect estimate = -.18, $SE = .04$, 95%CI = -.25, -.11; attitude towards the text: random indirect effect estimate = -.13, $SE = .03$, 95%CI = -.19, -.06).
This means that both an ironic utterance itself and a text with an ironic utterance are appreciated better when they are perceived as relatively easy. Besides, an ironic utterance that is perceived as relatively easy is liked better than a non-ironic utterance that is perceived as relatively easy.
8.2.3 Conclusion and discussion

This experiment looked into the influence of irony and the explicitness of evaluation on comprehension, perceived complexity of the utterance and the text, and attitudes towards the utterance and text. The first research question was concerned with the
direct effects of irony and the explicitness of evaluation on these dependent variables. It was found that irony was more difficult to comprehend than non-irony, was perceived as more complex than non-irony and was better liked than non-irony. Effects of the interaction between irony and the explicitness of evaluation were also found. The results suggest that implicitly evaluative irony was perceived as more complex than explicitly evaluative irony and that an explicitly evaluative ironic utterance may be better appreciated than an implicitly evaluative ironic utterance. These results were reversed for non-irony: an implicitly evaluative non-ironic utterance was perceived as less complex and was liked better than an explicitly evaluative non-ironic utterance.

First of all, these results suggest that irony indeed has effects on comprehension, perceived complexity and attitudes towards the utterance and text. The use of irony leads to higher attitudes compared to non-irony. Since appreciation was hypothesized to be an important predictor of cognitive and behavioral attitudes (cf. S. Brown & Stayman, 1992; Schilperoord & Maes, 2003), irony may be a persuasive strategy that is worthy to use. The distinction between explicitly and implicitly evaluative irony also seems to have an impact on attitudes. The reason why this effect was not more pronounced may have to do with the use of stimuli and the type of respondents. The previous chapter demonstrated that irony in letters to the editor may be relatively easy. At the same time, respondents were university-level students and thus highly educated. This means that respondents already may have found the texts and the irony relatively easy, regardless whether the irony was explicitly or implicitly evaluative. Future research may thus seek to confirm results found in this experiment and the previous chapter by using more complicated texts or respondents with a lower level of education.

As well as a difference between explicitly and implicitly evaluative irony, some differences were found between explicitly and implicitly evaluative non-irony. For non-irony, the pattern is reversed compared to irony: implicitly evaluative non-irony was perceived as less complex and liked better than explicitly evaluative non-irony. It may be possible that explicitly and implicitly evaluative non-irony is perceived differently from explicitly and implicitly evaluative irony. In the case of non-irony, respondents may have perceived implicitly evaluative irony as a factional statement. This statement would be easier to judge than an explicitly evaluative utterance which explicitly attributes an evaluation to a factional statement.
The second research question was concerned with the extent to which the influence of irony on the attitudes towards the utterance and text depended on comprehension and perceived complexity. Results show that both comprehension and perceived complexity suppress the effect of irony on the attitude towards the utterance and the attitude towards the text. These analyses thus demonstrate that irony can change attitudes if it adheres to two conditions. First of all, readers should understand the irony; the effect of irony on attitudes increases if comprehension is taken into account. This implies that irony should be properly understood in order to have a positive influence on attitudes.

Secondly, irony can influence attitudes if it is not perceived as too complex. The multilevel mediation analyses show that irony is less understood and perceived as more complex than non-irony. They also demonstrate that a high perceived complexity and a low comprehension score decrease the attitudes towards the utterance and text. At the same time, irony – more complex and less understood than non-irony – is liked better than non-irony. This seeming contradiction can be explained by the hypothesis of the inverted U-curve (e.g., McQuarrie & Mick, 2003b; B. Phillips, 2000; Van Enschot et al., 2008; Van Mulken et al., 2005). This inverted U-curve models a text’s effectiveness and indicates that a text of moderate complexity is usually the most effective. The most effective text should be new or inviting enough to allow for processing whilst it ought to be easy enough to be solved relatively smoothly. In this case, moderately simple irony – more difficult than a non-ironic utterance and easier than a difficult irony – may be the most effective type of irony to use.

The results from the suppression analyses suggest that relatively simple irony is most effective when used to increase attitudes. Readers will understand relatively simple irony better than relatively complex irony. At the same, relatively simple irony will also be perceived as relatively easy.

However, the results from experiment 1 also suggest that irony has a positive influence on the attitude towards the utterance and text, even when comprehension and perceived complexity are not taken into account. Two explanations can be given for this effect. Firstly, the mere use of an ironic utterance can increase attitudes towards the utterance and text. Respondents notice that something peculiar happens in an ironic utterance, which they appreciate even when they do not understand it. A second explanation is related to the nature of the stimuli. The previous chapter demonstrated that irony in letters to the editor is perceived as relatively easy. The
direct effects of irony on attitudes towards the utterance and text can thus be caused by a ceiling effect: the utterances were too easy for comprehension and perceived complexity to completely suppress the effect of irony on attitudes towards the utterance and text. These two aspects were kept in mind when experiment 2 was conducted. The main research question of this experiment, however, was to investigate if irony markers can reduce perceived complexity and increase comprehension when irony factors are controlled for.

8.3 Experiment 2
The previous chapter found that the use of irony markers was not related to perceived irony complexity. Two possible explanations were given for this result. A first reason is that the claims of authors that irony markers can reduce an ironic utterance’s complexity (e.g., Attardo, 2000b; Kreuz, 1996; Muecke, 1978; Seto, 1998) should be amended. An alternative explanation is that irony markers are used in combination with the principle of optimal relevance. This implies that irony markers are only used when one or more irony factors are at a more difficult level. This second explanation entails that if these irony factors are controlled for, irony markers should reduce the complexity of an ironic utterance.

In order to see which of these explanations holds, experiment 2 was conducted. Although some scholars found evidence that a particular irony marker could reduce the complexity of an ironic utterance (cf. Kreuz & Roberts, 1995 for hyperbole), the effects of the use of irony markers in general on comprehension, perceived complexity and attitudes have received scant attention. Investigating the influence of irony markers in general could best be done by looking at the stacking of irony markers in one utterance. An ironic utterance with, say, three irony markers might be easier to comprehend than an ironic utterance with one irony marker. The latter ironic utterance may then be easier to comprehend than an ironic utterance without markers.

8.3.1 Method
Materials
The stimuli in experiment 2 were based on the stimuli from experiment 1. To increase the overall complexity of the irony, the six stimuli with the highest comprehension score in the previous experiment were excluded from this experiment. In this experiment, the independent variable of irony markers had three levels: no irony markers, 1 irony
marker and 3 irony markers. This manipulation enabled us to account for the possible effects of stacking irony markers in one utterance. An example of a manipulation is, again, the text about the Chamber of Commerce:

**Chamber of Commerce**

Without your asking for it and without purchasing a specific service, an entrepreneur is obliged to pay quite an advance payment as contribution to the institution of the Chamber of Commerce (CoC) each year. In the past, I set up two foundations and two private limited companies (PLCs). For both the foundations and the PLCs, I have to pay a steep amount to the CoC, while nothing is done in return. To put it even stronger, when, in an exceptional case, you need a certificate from the CoC’s register, you even have to pay for it. STIMULUS SENTENCE:

a [ironic, no markers]. It is nice that the CoC also works for the common guy.
b [ironic, 1 marker]. How nice that the CoC also works for the common guy!
c [ironic, 3 markers]. How nice after all, that the CoC works so obviously for the common guy!
d [non-ironic, no markers]. It is a shame that the CoC does not work for the common guy.
e [non-ironic, 1 marker]. What a shame that the CoC does not work for the common guy!
f [non-ironic, 3 markers]. What a shame after all, that the CoC so obviously does not work for the common guy!

A. Ketelaars, Reuver

It should be noted that an utterance with three markers always had three different types of markers. In the Chamber of Commerce example, for instance, the utterance with three markers includes an exclamation, an hyperbole (so obviously) and an interjection (after all). The utterance with one marker always had one of the markers from the condition with three markers. In the Chamber of Commerce example, the utterance with one marker had an exclamation. After manipulation, the stimuli were judged by two experts. The six stimuli that were judged to be most unnatural were not included in the experiment. This implies that twelve stimuli were included in this experiment.

Besides controlling for possible gender effects and the influence of valence and target (see paragraph 8.2), the influence of evaluativeness was controlled for. All utterances were explicitly evaluative. Finally, in order to increase ecological validity, stimuli again were presented as part of a “letter to the editor” section in a newspaper in a similar way to experiment 1 (see Figure 8.1). The stimuli were administered in Dutch and can be found in Appendix XIII.
**Instrumentation**

The questionnaire of experiment 1 was used to measure respondents’ comprehension of, perceived complexity of and attitudes towards the stimuli in the various conditions (see paragraph 8.2). It was found that 90.1% of all utterances were understood correctly and that 6.9% of all utterances were not understood. 3.0% of answers to the comprehension question could not be classified or were missing. Reliability of the questions measuring the perceived complexity of and attitude towards the utterance was at least satisfactory (Cronbach’s $\alpha_{\text{perceived complexity of the utterance}} = .92$; Cronbach’s $\alpha_{\text{attitude towards the utterance}} = .78$) and the items were taken together as “perceived complexity of the utterance” and “attitude towards the utterance”, respectively.

**Design**

The experiment had a Latin-square 2 (irony vs. non-irony) x 3 (no markers, 1 marker, 3 markers) mixed design. The order in which stimuli were presented was randomized and counterbalanced across participants. On average, it took respondents between 35 and 45 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

**Respondents**

A total of 151 respondents participated in the experiment. Participants were recruited at various locations on the campus of Radboud University Nijmegen and received a compensation of € 4,- for their participation. Respondents were students at Radboud University Nijmegen. Most respondents were students from the Faculty of Arts and Humanities (54.3%). Many respondents also came from the Faculty of Science (22.5%) or the Faculty of Social Sciences (22.5%). One respondent (0.7%) did not fill out in which program she was enrolled. A majority of respondents was female (73.5%). Two respondents (1.3%) did not provide information about their gender. The average age of respondents was 20.8 years ($SD = 2.48$; range 18-32). Most respondents had the Dutch nationality (96.7%) and Dutch as their native language (95.4%). Nationality and native language had no impact on results.

**Data analysis**

Data were analyzed in a similar way to experiment 1. Since a counterbalanced design was used, only between-subjects results are reported for the direct effects (Raaijmakers et al., 1999). This means that the direct effects were analyzed with a
repeated measures ANOVA generalizing across participants. The indirect effects were analyzed using a multilevel mediation analysis (Bauer et al., 2006). In the analyses, the dataset was again group mean centered.

8.3.2 Results
Table 8.2 shows the average scores for the presence of irony and the presence of markers on comprehension, perceived complexity of the utterance and text and the attitude towards the utterance and text. Whilst the ANOVAs are computed on the group-mean-centered dataset, the unadjusted means are given in the text for reader convenience.

It was expected that ironic utterances would be more difficult to comprehend and would be perceived as more complex than non-ironic utterances. Results indeed indicate that non-ironic utterances are easier to comprehend (M = .99, SD = .08), non-ironic utterances are perceived as less complex (M = 2.50, SD = 1.30) and that a text with non-ironic utterances is perceived as less complex (M = 2.69, SD = 1.33) than a text with ironic utterances (Comprehension: M = .86, SD = .35, F (1,149) = 116.53, p < .001, ηp² = .44; Perceived complexity utterance: M = 3.28, SD = 1.61, F (1,150) = 110.14, p < .001, ηp² = .42; Perceived complexity text: M = 3.10, SD = 1.50, F (1,150) = 51.78, p < .001, ηp² = .26).

A relationship was found for the presence of markers on comprehension (F (1.93,148) = 3.85, p < .05, ηp² = .03), perceived complexity of the utterance (F (2,149) = 9.47, p < .001, ηp² = .11) and perceived complexity of the text (F (2,149) = 5.42, p < .01, ηp² = .07). Pairwise comparisons show that an utterance with three markers is better understood (M = .95, SD = .22) and perceived as less complex (M = 2.71, SD = 1.37) than an utterance with no markers (Comprehension: M = .90, SD = .30, p < .05; Perceived complexity: M = 3.02, SD = 1.57, p < .001). Besides, an utterance with three markers is perceived as less complex than an utterance with one marker (M = 2.94, SD = 1.58, p < .01). Finally, a text with an utterance with three markers (M = 2.76, SD = 1.36) is perceived as less complex than a text with an utterance with no markers (M = 3.00, SD = 1.48, p < .01).

An interaction was found between the presence of irony and the presence of markers in the analyses of comprehension (F (2,148) = 9.03, p < .001, ηp² = .11), perceived complexity of the utterance (F (2,149) = 10.27, p < .001, ηp² = .12) and perceived complexity of the text (F (2,149) = 3.84, p < .05, ηp² = .05). An ironic
utterance with three markers was better understood than an ironic utterance with no markers and perceived as less complex than an ironic utterance with no markers or one marker. A text with an ironic utterance with three markers was perceived as less complex than a text with an ironic utterance with one or no markers. No effects were found for non-ironic utterances.

Table 8.2 Average scores (and standard deviations) of the comprehension of an utterance (0 = utterance not understood, 1 = utterance understood), perceived complexity of the utterance and text (1 = low perceived complexity, 7 = high perceived complexity) and the attitude towards the utterance and text (1 = very negative attitude, 7 = very positive attitude), by condition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Irony</th>
<th>Non-irony</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>no markers</td>
<td>1 marker</td>
<td>3 markers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>.82 (.39)</td>
<td>.86 (.35)</td>
<td>.91 (.29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>complexity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>utterance</td>
<td>3.54 (1.66)</td>
<td>3.39 (1.72)</td>
<td>2.92 (1.37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>complexity text</td>
<td>3.30 (1.55)</td>
<td>3.13 (1.55)</td>
<td>2.86 (1.36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>towards the</td>
<td>4.08 (1.48)</td>
<td>4.20 (1.52)</td>
<td>4.69 (1.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>utterance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>4.65 (1.42)</td>
<td>4.64 (1.44)</td>
<td>4.71 (1.50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>towards the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>text</td>
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The presence of irony did not have an effect on the attitude towards the utterance ($F < 1$) or text ($F < 1$). A main effect was found for the presence of markers on the attitude towards the utterance ($F (2,149) = 19.55, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .21$), but not for the attitude towards the text ($F < 1$). Pairwise comparisons showed that an utterance with three markers ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 1.28$) was liked better than an utterance with one ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 1.42$, $p < .001$) or no markers ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 1.38$, $p < .001$). Finally, an interaction effect was found for the presence of irony and the presence of markers on the attitude towards the utterance ($F (2,149) = 7.64, p < .01, \eta^2_p = .09$). An ironic utterance with three markers was liked better than an ironic utterance with one or no markers. Besides, a non-ironic utterance with three markers was liked better than a non-ironic utterance without markers. No interaction effect between irony and the presence of markers was found for the attitude towards the text ($F < 1$).
Figure 8.9: Mediation effect for irony via comprehension on attitude towards the utterance; Nested frames indicate levels of sampling, boxes indicate variables, arrows indicate relations, numbers indicate estimates and significance of effects, * = irony on comprehension, t = -8.59, SE = .02, 95%CI = -.17, -.10; ♦ = comprehension on attitude towards the utterance, t = 5.07, SE = .14, 95%CI = .43, .98; ♣ = irony on attitude towards the utterance, without comprehension, t = .81, SE = .06, 95%CI = -.07, .16; ♦ = irony on attitude towards the utterance, with comprehension, t = 2.90, SE = .06, 95%CI = .06, .29.

Figure 8.10: Mediation effect for irony via comprehension on attitude towards the text; Nested frames indicate levels of sampling, boxes indicate variables, arrows indicate relations, numbers indicate estimates and significance of effects, ♦ = irony on comprehension, t = -8.69, SE = .02, 95%CI = -.17, -.10; ♦ = comprehension on attitude towards the text, t = 4.03, SE = .15, 95%CI = .31, .91; ♣ = irony on attitude towards the text, without comprehension, t = .03, SE = .06, 95%CI = -.11, .12; ♦ = irony on attitude towards the text, with comprehension, t = 1.19, SE = .06, 95%CI = -.05, .20.
The second research question was concerned with the extent to which the influence of irony on attitudes depends on comprehension and perceived complexity. Figures 8.9 and 8.10 show the influence of comprehension on the relationship between irony and the attitude towards the utterance and text. Figure 8.9 shows that comprehension suppresses the influence of the presence of irony on the attitude towards the utterance.
towards the utterance. This suppression effect is significant on a 5% level (random indirect effect estimate = -.11, $SE = .04$, $95\% CI = -.19$, -.03). In contrast, comprehension does not suppress the attitude towards the text (random indirect effect estimate = -.05, $SE = .04$, $95\% CI = -.13$, .04). This means that an ironic utterance itself is appreciated better when it is understood. The influence of irony on the attitude towards the text does not depend on comprehension of the utterance.

Figures 8.11 and 8.12 then show the influence of perceived complexity on the relationship between irony and the attitude towards the utterance and text. Figures 8.11 and 8.12 show that the perceived complexity of the utterance suppresses the influence of the presence of irony on the attitude towards the utterance and text. These suppression effects are significant on a 5% level (attitude towards the utterance: random indirect effect estimate = -.42, $SE = .05$, $95\% CI = -.53$, -.32; attitude towards the text: random indirect effect estimate = -.28, $SE = .04$, $95\% CI = -.36$, -.20). This means that the presence of irony indeed positively influences the attitudes towards the utterance and text. However, the more complex an ironic utterance is perceived to be, the more negative the attitudes towards the utterance and text become.

### 8.3.3 Conclusion and discussion

This experiment looked into the influence of irony and markers on comprehension, perceived complexity of the utterance and the text, and attitudes towards the utterance and text. Research question 3a was concerned with the effects of irony and markers on these dependent variables. It was found that irony was more difficult to comprehend than non-irony and was perceived as more complex than non-irony. No direct influence of the presence of irony on the attitudes towards the utterance or the text was found.

The presence of markers also had various direct effects on the dependent variables. An utterance with three markers was perceived as less complex than an utterance with one or no markers. Besides, an utterance with three irony markers was liked better than an utterance with one or no markers. Respondents also understood an utterance with three markers better than an utterance without markers. A text with an utterance with three markers was also perceived as less complex than a text with an utterance without markers or an utterance with one marker.

The presence of markers alone also has effects. An utterance with three markers was better understood, perceived as less complex, and liked better than an utterance without markers. This implies that markers alone (and not necessarily in
combination with irony) can help to reduce a text’s complexity and increase attitudes. It is worthy to note that this effect was only found for an utterance with multiple markers; effects of an utterance with a single marker did not differ from effects of an utterance without markers.

Finally, the interaction between irony and markers also had various direct effects; (a text with) an ironic utterance with three markers was perceived as less complex than (a text with) an ironic utterance with one or no markers. Besides, an ironic utterance with three irony markers was liked better than ironic an utterance with one or no markers and an ironic utterance with three markers was better understood than an ironic utterance without markers.

These results confirm the results from experiment 1 that irony can influence comprehension and perceived complexity. Unlike the results in experiment 1, the use of irony had no direct effects on the attitudes towards the utterance and text. In addition, these results have implications for the results found in the previous chapter. In the regression analyses reported in Chapter 7, the total number of irony markers was not related to perceived irony complexity. One explanation for this finding was that authors of natural texts adhere to the principle of optimal relevance (Sperber & Wilson, 1995) and use irony markers to compensate for the more difficult levels of irony factors. One argument in support for this explanation could be found in Table 4.8, which shows that the number of irony markers is generally higher for the more difficult levels of irony factors than for the easier levels of irony factors. The results of experiment 2 also support this explanation; when the levels of irony factors are controlled for, irony markers serve to reduce the complexity of an ironic utterance.

Research question 3b dealt with the extent to which the influence of irony on the attitude towards the utterance and text depended on comprehension and perceived complexity. Results show that comprehension suppressed the effect of irony on the attitude towards the utterance and that perceived complexity suppressed both the effect of irony on the attitude towards the utterance and the attitude towards the text. In experiment 1, the suppressions that were found can be labeled as “partial suppressions”, a subtype of “partial mediations”; inclusion of the indirect effects made the direct effect (that was already significant) even more significant. This experiment showed that comprehension and perceived complexity can even work as complete suppressors; inclusion of the indirect effects changed a non-significant direct effect into
a significant direct effect. This means that the question whether irony is liked better than non-irony can be answered with a conditional yes. In other words, irony is liked better than non-irony, but only when it is understood and when it is perceived as relatively easy. When these conditions are not met (i.e., the irony is not understood or perceived as relatively difficult), irony is not liked better than non-irony.

Like in experiment 1, these results can be explained by the hypothesis of the inverted U-curve (e.g., McQuarrie & Mick, 2003a; Van Enschot et al., 2008). Irony is perceived as more complex and better appreciated than non-irony. However, if irony is perceived as too complex, appreciation decreases. Again, relatively simple irony seems to be the most effective strategy to increase attitudes towards the utterance and text.

8.4 General conclusion and discussion

The two experiments reported in this chapter show that irony is understood less well and seen as more complex than non-irony (i.e., a literal statement). Comprehension and perceived complexity of an ironic utterance are influenced by textual factors. The first experiment showed that an explicitly evaluative ironic utterance is understood better and seen as less complex than an implicitly evaluative ironic utterance. The second experiment demonstrated that an ironic utterance with three markers is better understood and seen as less complex than an ironic utterance without irony markers. These results suggest that textual factors such as the explicitness of an ironic evaluation or the presence of irony markers influence comprehension and complexity of an ironic utterance.

The two experiments in this chapter also showed that irony can increase the attitudes towards the utterance and text compared to non-irony. In order to do so, an ironic utterance should meet two conditions: it has to be understood and perceived as relatively easy. In case these conditions are met, the attitude towards the utterance and text is higher for an ironic than for a non-ironic utterance.

The first experiment also showed that irony had a positive influence on attitudes, even when comprehension and perceived complexity were not taken into account. This effect can be explained as a ceiling effect: irony no longer had a direct influence on attitudes when the easiest and most unnatural stimuli were excluded from the dataset in experiment 2. This implies that, in experiment 1, the overall complexity of the irony was low so that irony also had a direct influence on attitudes. When the
overall complexity of the stimuli was increased (by removing the easiest stimuli), this
direct influence disappeared. As a result, irony is liked better than non-irony, but only
when it is understood and perceived as relatively easy.

An important point should be noted about both experiments, which is that these
two experiments did not directly measure persuasiveness. The reason why
persuasiveness was not explicitly measured is that an inclusion of the actual standpoint
of a letter to the editor might interfere with the measure of comprehension.
Comprehension was measured with an open question in which respondents could fill
out anything that came to mind as their interpretation of the stimulus sentence. The
actual standpoint of the text could not be included, because it might interfere with the
comprehension question. After all, if the actual standpoint was included in the
questions, respondents could literally copy it as a response to the comprehension
question, thus making it difficult to assess whether a respondents has actually
understood the utterance. Even though persuasiveness was not measured directly,
results from the experiments may help in predicting the persuasiveness. In the
experiments, respondents were asked directly about their attitude towards the text. In
advertising research, the attitude towards the text (i.e., attitude towards the ad) is
usually taken as a predictor of persuasiveness (e.g., S. Brown & Stayman, 1992;

A follow-up study could include a persuasion measure by for instance
administering a post test, taken after all comprehension questions are filled out. A
second option would be the use of an indirect measure of persuasion (cf. Strick, 2009).
Strick (2009) for instance reports an indirect way in which respondents were given a
promotional flyer, asking them to participate in a research study at a designated time
and place. This promotional flyer was manipulated to fall into one of the conditions of
the experiment. Strick (2009) then measured the persuasiveness of each condition by
looking at the success rate: which version of the promotional flyer generated the
highest response rate? Future research may choose to use such an indirect measure
of persuasion to investigate the actual persuasiveness of verbal irony.
9.1 Conclusion and implications

This dissertation is concerned with the use and effects of verbal irony in written discourse. An important thread that can be found throughout this dissertation is that irony is best analyzed by focusing on its textual features. Three main topics were considered that are all related to irony’s textual features. Firstly, the textual features of verbal irony in written discourse were described. The second subject was concerned with the question if and how textual features of irony differ across various written genres. The final topic of this dissertation deals with the influence of textual features of verbal irony on irony complexity, irony comprehension and the attitudes towards the utterance and the text.

Previous research on irony (cf. Attardo, 2000a; Gibbs, 1986a; Wilson, 2006, and many others) treats the group of ironic utterances as a homogeneous group to which it is possible to generalize. Experimental research on irony (cf. Gibbs, 1986a; Jorgensen et al., 1984; Schwoebel et al., 2000, among many others) for instance typically uses a number of ironic stimuli in order to generalize to all ironic utterances. This dissertation shows that irony may not be this simple. Instead, ironic utterances can differ on many textual features such as irony factors and irony markers, which in turn are related to the genre in which an ironic utterance is used. Besides showing how ironic utterances can differ, these textual features are also predictors of effects that irony can have such as comprehension, perceived complexity and appreciation. Therefore, irony’s textual features should be taken into account in research on irony.

This final chapter of the dissertation gives an overview of the research project. It starts out with the main conclusions and implications with regard to the different three topics: (1) the use of textual features of irony, (2) the relationship between irony’s textual features and genre and (3) the influence of irony’s textual features on irony’s rhetoric effects (comprehension, perceived complexity and the attitudes towards the utterance and the text). In addition, this chapter contains a number of limitations and recommendations for further research.
9.1.1 Textual features of irony

The first research question was concerned with the ways in which verbal irony is used in Dutch, written discourse:

RQ1. What are the textual features of irony in written discourse?

In order to answer this question, a definition of irony was provided that opens up the identification of irony to empirical scrutiny. This research study defined verbal irony as "an evaluative utterance, the valence of which is implicitly reversed between the literal and intended evaluation". This means that the literal evaluation of an ironic utterance can be placed in the negative or positive domain of a scale of evaluation. In order to qualify an utterance as ironic, the valence of the literal evaluation needs to be reversed in the intended evaluation. In other words, if the literal evaluation is positive, the intended evaluation is negative (i.e., ironic praise) and vice versa (i.e., ironic blame).

The definition of irony has been operationalized into the Verbal Irony Procedure (VIP), a first method to identify irony in written discourse. This method consists out of four steps. Coders first read the entire text to get a sense of its general meaning. Then, coders look at each individual clause and determine whether it is descriptive or evaluative. For each evaluative utterance, coders determine whether the literal evaluation is congruent with the co-text. If this is not the case, coders analyze whether the valence of the literal evaluation can be reversed in the intended evaluation and whether both evaluations refer to the same object. If this is the case, the specific utterance was considered ironic. The VIP makes it possible to make the choices explicit in determining whether an utterance is ironic or not.

The VIP has been applied to a corpus of texts from various genres (i.e., commercial and non-commercial advertisements, columns, cartoons, book and film reviews, and letters to the editor) in which a total of 456 ironic utterances has been identified. The usage of four kinds of textual features has been analyzed: irony factors, irony markers in the ironic utterance, irony markers in the co-text and the use of visuals in relation to verbal irony.

Irony factors are features that are essential for an ironic utterance. If an utterance does not contain all of these factors, it is not ironic. Although the term "irony factor" was introduced by Attardo (2000b), this dissertation offers the first operationalization of irony factors. With the help of the definition of irony and the
operationalization provided by the VIP, five different factors have been identified: (1) evaluativeness, (2) incongruence, (3) target, (4) a shift in valence and (5) relevance. Every irony factor has at least two levels, the occurrence of which may differ across ironic utterances. A coding instruction was made in which the various levels of irony factors were operationalized. Results show that over 55% of ironic utterances in the corpus are explicitly evaluative and are not accompanied by incongruent information in the co-text. In addition, over 70% of ironic utterances have a third party as their target, are ironic praise and are directly relevant.

The second textual property that was considered was the use of irony markers in the ironic utterance. Various scholars (e.g., Attardo 2000b, Kreuz, 1996; Muecke, 1978; Seto, 1998) presented lists of irony markers. This research study gives an overview of these types of irony markers in the ironic utterance (e.g., metaphor, hyperbole) and divides them into four categories: tropes, schematic irony markers, morpho-syntactic irony markers and typographic irony markers. A coding instruction was made in which the various types of irony markers were operationalized. Results demonstrate that most ironic utterances are marked by at least one irony marker. In addition, the types of irony markers are not used in the same amount in the corpus. Types of irony markers that are used most often (i.e., > 50 times) are hyperboles, rhetorical questions, ironic echoes, changes of register and exclamations. In contrast, other types of irony markers (e.g., emoticons and tag questions) are hardly used (< 2 times) in the corpus.

The third textual property of ironic utterances is the use of co-textual irony markers. This dissertation showed that the co-text could mark irony by the use of previous ironic utterances. In about 66% of ironic utterances, the irony has been preceded by a previous ironic utterance. This means that an ironic utterance hardly occurs alone. Besides the use of other ironic utterances, this study aimed to identify other co-textual markers. Non-ironic utterances could also help to put the reader into an “ironic mood”, thus already announcing the use of irony. An exploratory analysis in which two coders were asked to identify and label these co-textual irony markers yielded a total of seven different co-textual markers. Metaphors, hyperboles, understatements, rhetorical questions and changes of register were irony markers in the ironic utterance that could also function as co-textual markers in non-ironic utterances. The use of cynicism and humor were found to be new co-textual irony
markers. The co-textual markers that were used most often were hyperboles, humor and a change of register.

The final textual property that was considered was the use of visuals. An analysis of visuals in multimodal texts from the corpus revealed that visuals help a reader in solving the irony in almost 80% of multimodal texts. Visuals can help a reader to identify irony by working as an irony marker (by highlighting and ridiculing the literal evaluation of the ironic utterance at the same time) or by illustrating incongruence (by contradicting the literal evaluation of the ironic utterance). The latter is more common; an incongruent image is found in almost 70% of cases in which the image helps a reader in detecting irony. Finally, an exploratory analysis investigated which pictorial elements actually helped the reader in detecting irony. Based on visual narratology (Verstraten, 2006), pictorial elements were classified into two categories; the mise en scène (referring to the persons, objects and locations that were shown in the picture) and cinematographic elements (referring to the issue how the elements from the mise en scène were shown). The pictorial elements that help a reader in detecting irony most often come from the mise en scène: the choice of objects and characters and a character’s positioning, body language and facial expression. This implies that visual irony markers either resemble kinetic cues that are used in face-to-face interactions (e.g., body language and facial expression) or as a replacement of the situational context (cf. the ironic environment introduced by Utsumi, 2000).

9.1.2 Irony and genre
The second research question also dealt with irony in usage. This research question connected the textual features of irony to the notion of genre:

RQ2. How do textual features of irony differ across various written genres?

Six genres were included in the corpus: commercial and non-commercial advertisements, columns, cartoons, book and film reviews, and letters to the editor. In general, results demonstrate that the use of the textual features of irony – irony factors and irony markers in the utterance and verbal co-text – indeed differed across genres. An exception is the use of visuals to help detect irony. These visuals were investigated in three multimodal genres (commercial and non-commercial advertisements and cartoons), but no differences between these three genres were found.
Table 9.1 summarizes the genre differences in their use of irony factors. The main distinction in genre differences can be observed between the multimodal (i.e., commercial and non-commercial advertisements) and the purely verbal genres (i.e., columns, book reviews and letters to the editor) in their usage of irony factors. Irony in multimodal genres is more often explicitly evaluative, ironic blame, indirectly relevant and has the addressee as its target. In contrast, irony in purely verbal genres is more often ironic praise, directly relevant and has a third party as its target. Most genre differences in the use of irony factors are thus related to the distinction between multimodal and purely verbal genres.

The same difference between purely verbal and multimodal genres can be found in the genre differences related to irony markers in the ironic utterance. Whilst tropes (with the exception of rhetorical questions) are mainly associated with the purely verbal genres, schematic, morpho-syntactic and typographic markers are mainly related to the multimodal genres. Additionally, an ironic utterance from a multimodal genre generally has more irony markers than an ironic utterance from a purely verbal genre. Like irony factors, the use of irony markers in the ironic utterance differs between purely verbal and multimodal genres. In contrast to irony factors and irony markers in the ironic utterance, few genre differences are found that are related to the use of co-textual irony markers. It was found that columns contain more tropes and other ironic utterances as co-textual markers.

These genre differences between purely verbal and multimodal texts may also be explained by looking at the individual genres. Table 9.1 shows that the genre of columns is the most striking genre in the group of purely verbal genres. A column usually contains an observation or comment of the author related to the topic of the column. Often, these observations are very personal, which may explain why the sender is often the target of the irony in this genre. Besides, many columns typically serve to criticize somebody or something, which may explain the high use of ironic praise. At the same time, many columns in the corpus are written by literary authors (e.g., Remco Campert, Herman Franke, Arnon Grunberg and Tommy Wieringa), which makes this genre the most literary genre in the corpus. This literary aspect may explain why the overall number of irony markers in this genre is relatively low; the authors seem to try to make their ironic utterances more complex.
Table 9.1: Genre differences in the use of irony factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of factor</th>
<th>Levels of factor</th>
<th>Purely verbal genres</th>
<th>Multimodal genres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Column</td>
<td>Book/ film review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluativeness</td>
<td>Explicitly evaluative</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Implicitly evaluative</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incongruence</td>
<td>Incongruent info absent</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incongruent info present</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sender</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Addressee</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target</td>
<td>3rd party</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ironic blame</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reversal of valence</td>
<td>Ironic praise</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>Directly relevant</td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>↑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indirectly relevant</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td>↓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. ↑ = Count for genre X is significantly higher than the expected score based on the general distribution (p < .05). ↓ = Count for genre X is significantly lower than the expected score based on the general distribution (p < .05). 0 = No significant difference between the count for genre X and the general distribution.

In contrast, the genre of commercial advertisements is the most striking multimodal genre that is included in the corpus. A commercial advertisement typically presents a positive evaluation of a product, service and/or corporation. Since a reader already knows that the final message is positive, the author of a commercial advertisement can use ironic blame relatively easy. The genre's default expectation thus makes it easier to solve the irony. In order to stimulate processing of an advertisement, advertisers may want to present their audience with a riddle that needs to be solved. This may explain why ironic utterances in this genre are more often implicitly evaluative and indirectly relevant than the ironic utterances in the other genres. At the same time, these riddles cannot be too difficult. After all, advertisers want their public to understand their advertisements. To help the addressee in doing so, the ironic utterances in this genre contain clues to help the reader, which are irony...
markers. As a consequence, the number of irony markers in this genre is relatively high compared to the other genres.

The description of the textual features of ironic utterances has shown that verbal irony can be formulated in many ways, depending on the irony factors and irony markers. The genre analysis has demonstrated that irony is used differently in the various genres in the corpus. Every genre deviates in some way from the general distribution of the corpus. This means that it is not possible to claim that a specific ironic utterance given out of its (genre) context is a “typical” example of verbal irony. A simple list of utterances as “typical” examples of verbal irony (e.g., Wilson, 2006) without an explanation of its context does not seem to be well grounded.

Instead, the results from the corpus analyses support findings by Biber (1993) and Steen (1999) who argue in favor of a usage- and genre-based approach towards discourse. Indeed, the analyses show that it is possible to give examples of ironic utterances that are typical for the use of irony in a particular genre. An ironic utterance like “Scandalous” to announce something positive – an example of ironic blame – is hardly typical for the use of irony in a book and film review or a letter to the editor. In contrast, an example of ironic blame is more typical for the use of irony in commercial advertisements. In other words, an isolated example of verbal irony can be perfectly used to illustrate how irony’s implicit reversal of evaluation works. However, an isolated example of verbal irony cannot be used as a “typical” example of verbal irony. The latter claim can only be made by introducing an example of verbal irony in a genre context.

9.1.3 Effects of irony
The third research question dealt with the effects of irony on perceived complexity, comprehension and appreciation:

RQ3. What is the relationship between the presence and features of irony, comprehension and appreciation?

Previous studies on irony tried to explain irony’s effects by looking at a variety of contextual elements like the gender of the speaker or the relationship between speaker and addressee (e.g., Colston & Lee, 2004; Katz et al., 2004; Pexman, 2005). This
dissertation demonstrated that textual features of irony — i.e., irony factors and irony markers in the ironic utterance and co-text — can also serve to predict its effects.

First, the relationships between irony factors, markers, and the perceived complexity of the irony was established. Coders rated a random selection of the ironic utterances from the corpus on their perceived complexity. Regression analyses then connected the use of irony factors and markers to these perceived complexity scores. For irony factors, the results showed that ironic blame was perceived as more complex than ironic praise. Besides, implicitly evaluative irony was perceived as more complex than explicitly evaluative irony. For irony markers, hyperboles and the number of ironic utterances that precede a specific ironic utterance are associated with a reduction in perceived complexity.

Two experiments then investigated the effect of irony, the explicitness of an ironic evaluation and the stacking of irony markers on comprehension, perceived complexity of the utterance and the text and the attitude towards the utterance and the text. Results show that irony was more difficult to comprehend than non-irony. In addition, an explicitly evaluative ironic utterance was perceived as less complex than an implicitly evaluative ironic utterance. The explicitness of the ironic evaluation also influenced the perceived complexity of the text as a whole; a text that ended with an implicitly evaluative ironic utterance was perceived as more complex than a text that ended with an explicitly evaluative ironic utterance. The stacking of irony markers can also reduce complexity and increase comprehension: An ironic utterance with three markers was better understood and perceived as less complex than an ironic utterance without markers.

The experiments also showed that irony may influence the attitude towards the utterance and the text. Irony has a positive influence on the attitude towards the utterance and text. The attitude towards an explicitly evaluative ironic utterance was higher than the attitude towards an implicitly evaluative utterance. An ironic utterance with three markers was also better liked than an ironic utterance with one marker or an ironic utterance without markers. Furthermore, the experimental results indicate that the influence of irony on the attitudes towards the utterance and the text depends on comprehension and perceived complexity of the utterance. This means that an ironic utterance that is understood is liked better than an ironic utterance that is not understood. In addition, an ironic utterance that is perceived as relatively easy is better appreciated than an ironic utterance that is perceived as relatively difficult.
An implication of the experimental results is that relatively simple irony is the most effective. Experiments 1 and 2 have shown that relatively easy irony has the most positive influence on the attitudes towards the utterance and the text. This result can be explained by the hypothesis of the inverted U-curve (e.g., B. Phillips, 2000; Van Mulken et al., 2005), which predicts that moderately complex stimuli are optimally innovative and the most effective in reaching their goals. This implies that authors who want to use irony to make a reader’s attitude more positive should choose to use easy forms of irony.

This research showed that comprehension and perceived complexity of the ironic utterance are related to textual features such as the use of irony factors and markers. The experiments showed that the influence of irony on attitudes depended on comprehension and perceived complexity. In a similar vein, the actual persuasiveness of irony may depend on the attitude towards the utterance and text. The hypothesis that needs to be addressed in future research is that the more positive the attitude towards the irony is, the higher irony’s persuasiveness. This hypothesis can be linked to the experiential route of persuasion (Meyers-Levy & Malaviya, 1999). The experiential route posits that if a reader enjoys processing a message, this message’s persuasiveness may increase. Since relatively easy irony has a positive influence on the attitudes towards the utterance and the text, it may work in a similar vein.

A comment should be made about the phenomenon of irony markers in relation to the stimuli of experiment 2. Markers could easily be added to both the ironic and the non-ironic statements. If an irony marker can just as easily be added to a non-ironic than to an ironic statement, what makes it an irony marker? Instead, irony markers may simply be used to mark a standpoint. This would imply that these markers should be referred to as standpoint markers (e.g., Houtlosser, 1995). In other words, an irony marker may not so much mark an irony as alert a reader to the fact that the author takes some kind of position. Since the author also made it apparent that he does not hold that position in earnest, it is up to the reader to decode that message. In other words, an irony marker may not mark irony, but rather alert the reader to the fact that an evaluative position is taken in the utterance.

Additionally, not all irony markers seem to be used in the same way. Tropes are mainly used as irony markers when irony factors are at their easier levels. In contrast, schematic and typographic irony markers are used to mitigate the more difficult levels
of irony factors. This result may be explained because of the difference between these types of irony markers. The category of tropes is related to the content of an ironic utterance; this group of irony markers requires some sort of reinterpretation to be noticed and understood. The other three categories of irony markers, instead, alert a reader by drawing attention to the form of an ironic utterance. It may thus be that the category of tropes works differently from the other categories of irony markers.

These two observations challenge the notion of irony markers as mentioned in the literature (e.g., Attardo, 2000b; Kreuz, 1996; Muecke, 1978; Seto, 1998). It may thus seem that irony markers do not really mark irony, but rather serve as a way to attract the attention of the reader. This means that an irony marker alerts a reader to the fact that something is going on in the utterance under discussion. One of the ‘things’ that could be going on is the use of verbal irony. An irony marker does not really alert the reader to the fact that the sentence is ironic, but rather that the sentence stands out from the rest of the text in some way.

9.1.4 Implications for irony processing models
The conclusions of this dissertation can have implications for the various processing models of verbal irony that were already discussed in Chapter 1. The first processing model that was discussed was the Standard Pragmatic Model (SPM; see e.g., Attardo, 2000a; Booth, 1974). The SPM subsumes that an ironic utterance is always first misunderstood. Only when the reader discovers that the literal evaluation of an ironic utterance does not fit the context, does he solve the irony. The SPM predicts that irony is always processed with this two-step processing strategy. This processing model thus only compares ironic utterances to literal utterances and says nothing about differences in processing between various ironic utterances. Since the effect studies reported in this dissertation have shown that some textual properties (e.g., the irony factors of evaluativeness and reversal of valence, the number of ironic utterances that precedes the irony and the number of irony markers) are related to perceived complexity and comprehension of the ironic utterance, the SPM may be amended. After all, these textual properties may be related to irony processing; an ironic utterance with a textual property that is associated with a low perceived complexity and a high comprehension score (e.g., explicitly evaluative irony) may be easier to process than an ironic utterance with a textual property that is associated with a high perceived complexity and a low comprehension score. This means that the inclusion of textual properties of
ironic utterances into the predictions of the SPM may make the SPM a richer model of irony processing.

The direct access view (e.g., Gibbs, 1986a; Gibbs, 1994) disputes the claim from the SPM that readers have to analyze the complete literal meaning before accessing the ironic interpretation. Instead, the direct access view argues that speakers do not have to "automatically analyze the complete literal meaning of linguistic expressions before accessing pragmatic knowledge to figure out what speakers mean to communicate" (Gibbs, 2003, p. 363; italics in original text). The direct access view also predicts that contextual features determine the ease with which irony is processed. The question whether the results found in this dissertation can also apply to the direct access view depends on the definition of "context" that is used. In this dissertation, a distinction was made between co-text and context. Co-text was said to refer to the utterances in the text with the exception of the utterance under discussion (Attardo, 2000b), whilst context was defined as the aspects outside of the text that can help in interpreting an utterance as ironic (Attardo, 2000b). If this distinction is upheld, the results of this dissertation do not say anything about contextual aspects that may facilitate irony processing and the same point that was made about the SPM can be applied to the direct access view; the theory may be amended to account for the textual properties of verbal irony.

However, the definition of "context" differs among scholars. In challenging the notions of the direct access view, Giora et al. (2007) for instance operationalize "context" by looking at an element that was defined in this dissertation as co-textual (i.e., the number of ironic utterances that precede the ironic utterance under discussion). If the definition of context is expanded to include co-text, the results of this dissertation have some implications for the direct access view. Firstly, even though the direct access view predicts that contextual features determine the ease with which irony is processed, it does not specify which contextual elements actually facilitate irony processing. The distinctions made in co-textual markers and visuals may help in specifying the contextual elements that help in irony processing. Furthermore, the use of textual properties was found to differ across various written genres. This means that the genre context itself may be an important predictor in determining how ironic utterances are processed and proponents of the direct access view may want to include the genre context in their predictions.
Finally, the direct access view would also be able to explain some of the results of the effect studies. This research showed that the inclusion of ironic utterances that set up an expectation for an additional ironic utterance has been associated with a decrease in perceived complexity of the ironic utterance. These previous ironic utterances can be labeled as contextual elements, which implies that the direct access view would thus be able to explain that these previous ironic utterances facilitate irony processing. A recent study by Giora et al. (2007) would challenge this notion, because they found that an increase in the number of ironic utterances that precede an ironic utterance did not reduce processing time of ironic utterances. However, Giora et al. (2007) used textoids as stimuli, which has a negative impact on the ecological validity of these stimuli (e.g., Graesser et al., 1997; Katz, 2009). In addition, the stimuli came from a different modality than written communication; Giora et al. (2007) manipulated irony in spoken communication (i.e., dialogues between two people). A recent study by Hodiamont et al. (2010) experimentally investigated the use of multiple ironic utterances, using (adapted) versions of real book, film and music reviews. Their research confirmed the results found in this dissertation and the expectations of the direct access view; an ironic utterance that was preceded by another ironic utterance was read (slightly) faster than an ironic utterance that was not preceded by another ironic utterance.

Whilst the direct access view is well capable of explaining the results found for the use of multiple ironic utterances, it does not say anything about the influence of irony factors and markers on perceived complexity and comprehension. After all, the direct access view subsumes that contextual factors may influence irony processing. This implies that, under the expectations of the direct access view, textual factors of the ironic utterances (such as irony factors and markers in the ironic utterance) should be less important in irony processing.

The Graded Salience Hypothesis (GSH; cf. Giora, 2003; Giora et al., 1998) subsumes that the speed with which an ironic utterance is processed is determined by the salience of that utterance. Salience is said to refer to the (1) frequency of usage and the degree of (2) familiarity, (3) conventionality and (4) prototypicality. The question whether the GSH is able to account for the textual properties distinguished in this dissertation depends on the object of the salience; what element should actually be salient? In early accounts of the GSH (cf. Giora, 1997; Giora, 2003), the GSH was mostly applied to lexical items or expressions. Since most of the textual properties
discussed in this dissertation are not fixed lexical items, this would imply that most of these textual properties do not play a role in determining the salience of an ironic utterance (and: according to the GSH: in irony processing). However, if the concept of salience would be expanded to also include the textual properties discussed in this dissertation, the results could have a number of implications for this model of irony processing. Firstly, since frequency of usage is one of the predictors of salience (Giora, 2003), the results reported on the frequency of usage of the various textual properties (see section 9.1.1) may help in establishing the salience of ironic utterances. This would imply that ironic utterances with textual features that are used more often (e.g., explicitly evaluative irony, ironic praise) are more salient in written discourse than ironic utterances with textual features that are used less often (e.g., implicitly evaluative irony, ironic blame). Some preliminary empirical evidence for this claim can be deduced from the observation that some these textual features of irony that were used relatively often (e.g., explicitly evaluative irony, ironic praise) were also associated with a lower perceived complexity and higher comprehension than textual features that were used less often (e.g., implicitly evaluative irony, ironic blame). Future research should investigate whether these textual features indeed influence salience and the processing of ironic utterances.

The genre context may also be connected to the concept of salience. Since the use of irony differs across written genres, it can be the case that specific textual features are salient in one genre whilst they are not so in another. In commercial advertisements, for instance, relatively more ironic blame is found than in the other genres. Since a commercial advertisement typically conveys a positive message about the product, service or advertiser, this relatively high use of ironic blame can be well explained. After all, this genre convention may guide a reader of ironic blame in commercial advertisements more easily towards an ironic interpretation than a reader of ironic blame in another genre. Genre conventions may thus be related to the issue which textual features of irony are conventional or prototypical in a certain context. Future research may want to investigate whether genre is related to the salience of an ironic utterance; what is conventional and prototypical (and thus: salient) in one genre (e.g., ironic blame in commercial advertisements) may not be conventional and prototypical (and thus: not salient) in another genre (e.g., ironic blame in columns).

This section has shown that the results of the study may have implications for the processing models of irony. In their current form, the three processing models do
not incorporate textual properties of irony into their assumptions for irony processing. With offline measures, this dissertation has shown that a number of these textual properties influence the perceived complexity and comprehension of ironic utterances. Future research should corroborate these findings with online experiments into irony comprehension that take the various irony factors and markers into account. If these online experiments confirm the results of this study, the processing models of irony should be amended to include the textual properties discussed in this dissertation. In that way, the various processing models would be able to better predict the difficulty with which a specific ironic utterance is processed.

9.2 Limitations and recommendations for future research

9.2.1 The use of irony
This dissertation reported a corpus analysis of the use of verbal irony in a number of genres of Dutch written discourse: commercial and non-commercial advertisements, columns, cartoons, book and film reviews, and letters to the editor. Since the corpus research has shown that the ways in which irony is used differs across these genres, results may not be extended beyond the genres included in the corpus. In other words, irony in, say, literary texts (cf., Booth, 1974), academic reports (cf. Myers, 1990) or editorials may be used differently from irony in the genres that are included in the corpus.

Another point is that the corpus consists of Dutch texts written for a Dutch audience. Goddard (2006) showed that irony can be considered as a cultural phenomenon, which means that people from one culture may not necessarily comprehend an ironic utterance from another culture. Of course, in order to understand an ironic utterance in natural discourse, a reader needs a certain amount of contextual (and cultural) knowledge. At the same time, irony may also be used differently in other cultures. Okamoto (2007) for instance claims that the Chinese language does not know irony, but that it does have hiniku, which has "considerable similarities" (Okamoto, 2007, p. 1143) with irony. Okamoto (2007) does not explain how hiniku differs from irony. Nevertheless, subtle differences may be found between irony and the concept of hiniku.

Of course, other languages can also use markers in different ways. The corpus discussed in this dissertation showed that diminutives can mark irony. Since English for instance does not have diminutives, this specific marker cannot be used in every
language. Other language-specific markers that have been associated with irony include the parenthetical focus discourse marker *tobože* in Croatian (Dedaic, 2005), and the marker *ré* in Sissala (Blass, 1990). In addition, different languages may use the same type of marker in different ways. For spoken irony, Cheang and Pell (2009) demonstrate that both English and Cantonese speakers use a different intonation to mark their ironic utterances. However, the nature of this different intonation was different between English and Cantonese speakers. The English speakers lowered the mean F0 tone, whilst the Cantonese speaker raised the mean F0 tone (Cheang & Pell, 2009). Close cross-cultural comparisons can thus reveal how various languages differ in the ways in which they mark irony.

A final observation about the compilation of the corpus is that all texts are contemporary. It should be noted that it is easier to look for irony in contemporary texts than in older texts, because it may not be possible to discover all references in these older texts. In addition, it may also be harder to identify ironic utterances that are based on contextual incongruence, because a contemporary reader may not have all necessary contextual knowledge about the specific text in the specific time period. Differences in language use between older and more contemporary texts may also show a shift in the usage of various irony markers across time. In other words, it may be possible that irony markers that were often used in 16th-century Dutch are hardly used as irony markers in 21st-century Dutch and vice versa.

In order to address these issues, the findings of the corpus research may be expanded by looking at other genres such as literary or academic texts. A comparison with even more genres can help to paint a picture in the ways in which irony is used. This comparison across genres can help to illustrate how irony is used across different genres. Of course, it is also possible to select other genres from other modalities than the written domain and consider the use of irony in for instance speeches, talk shows or film comedies. A second possibility is by using texts from the same genres in the corpus, but from other cultural backgrounds. This option allows a comparison between the use of irony in Dutch and another language or culture.

In this dissertation, the issue of reliability has received much attention. A first point that should be noted is that the identification of irony itself is a subjective matter. In order to deal with the issue that many people may have different ideas about what irony is, the Verbal Irony Procedure (VIP) was introduced and discussed in Chapter 2. Even though
the VIP makes the steps in identifying irony explicit, the labeling of ironic utterances remains subjective. The best way to deal with this issue is to use the VIP so that coders who disagree can see exactly why they disagree about their interpretation of an utterance as ironic. In this way, it can be made clear why coders would disagree.

A second reliability issue is related to the computation of Cohen’s Kappa. Various reliability analyses show that Cohen’s kappa is sometimes very low even though coders only disagree on a limited set of examples. As mentioned in Chapter 3, an explanation can be given by the paradox of kappa, which states that kappa may be low whilst the overall percentage of agreement is high, various examples of which could be seen in the corpus. The reason for this low kappa is that agreement of the uncommon categories weighs heavily on kappa (the paradox of kappa). Following Cicchetti and Feinstein (1990), this dissertation also reports positive ($p_{pos}$) and negative agreement ($p_{neg}$), two probabilities that indicate the chance that if one coder identifies an observation as belonging to a specific category, the other coder agrees. These measures can make it clear if a low kappa score is caused by the fact that a specific variable was hardly found or if coders simply do not agree on the coding of a specific variable.

Even though reporting positive and negative agreement can help in analyzing whether the low score of kappa may be caused by the fact that a specific variable was hardly found, it still means that the score of kappa is relatively low. This was especially the case after the first rounds of coding. After these first rounds, many kappa’s scored below the .60 threshold recommended by Landis and Koch (1977). Even though a second round of coding could usually help in bolstering reliability and the paradox of kappa may have decreased the level of kappa, the low kappa’s after the first round of coding are still a cause for concern. Future corpus research on irony should therefore take this reliability issue into account and try to increase reliability. One way to increase reliability may be to remove borderline cases from the corpus (cf. Wiebe, Wilson & Cardie, 2005). Of course, a problem is then how to define the criteria that determine what a borderline case actually is. A related problem is that the removal of borderline cases may decrease the validity of the observations (Steen, 2007, p. 216). A second (and more preferred) way to increase reliability is to critically analyze the coding instructions that were used in this research to see if they can be improved upon. Spooren (2004) for instance recommends to make the coding instructions as explicit and specific as possible. Even though the coding instructions used in this dissertation
were very specific (each irony marker and level of an irony factor was for instance illustrated with an example), the coding instructions may still be improved upon. These improved coding instructions may then have a positive influence on the reliability of future studies on irony.

Another point to note about the corpus is that the analyses of co-textual irony markers and visuals were exploratory studies. Since both co-textual markers and visuals have not yet received much empirical scrutiny, these chapters wanted to determine how co-text and visuals can be used to alert a reader to the use of an ironic utterance. These chapters thus provide the first empirical support on how co-textual markers and visuals can be used to mark verbal irony. In order to increase generalizability of results, the observations should be independently replicated in another corpus of ironic utterances.

A final point can be made about the visual analysis reported in Chapter 6, in which the different pictorial elements are listed that are used to steer a reader towards an ironic interpretation. Another step for future research might be to see how these pictorial elements can work together to form irony markers that are used in the visual mode. Future research may thus be concerned with analyzing how these pictorial elements may be combined into new visual irony markers.

9.2.2 Effects of irony

Some limitations and recommendations for future research can also be made in relation to the studies on the effects of irony. In this dissertation, all respondents were university students. This means that these respondents should be able to process the stimuli that were presented to them relatively easily. Lowrey (2008) argues that, besides the text under discussion, extra-textual factors may influence the perceived complexity of a stimulus. One of these factors is a respondent’s level of education (Lowrey, 2008, p. 165). Our respondents may have scored higher on comprehension and lower on perceived complexity than an average sample of the Dutch population. These individual characteristics of the chosen sample should be taken into consideration when interpreting the results from the regression analyses and the two experiments.

A related limitation has to do with the setting in which respondents dealt with the ironic utterances. Coders in the regression analyses had to fill out a number of complexity-related items for each ironic utterance. To prevent them from directly
focusing on the ironic utterances, they first had to read the text in a normal lay-out without knowing in advance which utterances were ironic. Nevertheless, they knew that every text they had to read would at least contain one ironic utterance. In a normal setting, readers do not know in advance that the text they read will or will not contain irony. A similar issue can be raised in respect to experiments 1 and 2. Even though the stimuli were presented as part of a letter-to-the-editor section in a newspaper (see Figure 8.1), the letters were reproduced on the material that respondents had to read. They did not have an actual newspaper and could not choose whether or not they would read the specific letters to the editor. Besides, after reading each letter, respondents had to fill out a number of questions. This implies that coders of perceived complexity and experimental participants had to adopt a reading strategy that might be rather different from the reading strategy they would adopt in a regular, non-research setting.

Two recommendations can be made with respect to experimental stimuli of future studies. On a general note, the stimuli used in future studies may want to control for specific textual features and present irony in a genre-context. Results on the use of textual features of irony in various genres can help in stepping away from the use of textoids, which has been widely critiqued (e.g., Graesser et al., 1997; Katz, 2009; Kreuz & Roberts, 1993). Instead, researchers may want to present their stimuli in a genre context and control for the various textual features. In this way, future experimental stimuli can gain in ecological validity.

A second point is related to the complexity of stimuli. Future research may also be concerned with using more complex stimuli, because the stimuli in all conditions of experiments 1 and 2 were considered as relatively easy (all average scores on complexity were below the middle point of 4). Whilst letters to the editor can be well used as natural stimuli in a multi-message design, this particular genre may be relatively easy from itself. The regression analyses in Chapter 7 for instance showed that irony as it was used in letters to the editor was perceived as relatively easy. The experiment may thus be replicated with stimuli from other genres that may be perceived as more difficult. This manipulation would be a way to increase the perceived complexity of the irony whilst using the same kind of manipulation. Another way in which perceived complexity may be increased is by using other subjects. Lowrey (2008) argued that that perceived complexity may be influenced by extra-textual factors.
such as respondents’ level of education. Following Lowrey (2008), then, perceived complexity can also be increased by the use of different participant groups.

As mentioned before, the results of this dissertation can have implications for processing models of irony. It was argued that the SPM does not say anything about the influence of textual features on irony processing, whilst the direct access view could account for the influence of some textual features (i.e., co-textual markers and visuals) on irony processing. The GSH, finally, is well equipped to deal with the influence of irony factors and irony markers in the ironic utterance on irony processing. Even though this dissertation opens up the possibility of predicting the influence of textual features on irony processing, these hypotheses should still be tested. One way to test these predictions is by using experiments that measure online processing by either looking at the reading time of ironic utterance or by looking at the reaction time to a stimulus presented after an ironic utterance (e.g., a probe related to either the literal or intended meaning of an ironic utterance, cf. Giora et al., 2007). Of course, researchers may also want to use other experimental techniques to measure online processing such as fMRI techniques and eye tracking (see also Colston & Gibbs, 2007, p. 11).

Some fMRI (e.g., Eviatar & Just, 2006; Shibata, Toyomura, Itoh & Abe, 2009; Wakusawa, Sugiura, Sassa, Jeong, Horie, Kato, et al., 2007) and eye-tracking work (e.g., Climie & Pexman, 2008) has already been done on irony, but these research methods have hardly been used to verify processing models of irony. Instead, the fMRI studies have shown that irony is processed in different areas of the brain than literal language. The eye-tracking study (Climie & Pexman, 2008) used an implicit, metaphoric way to measure children’s responses to irony. Participants in this study had to watch a puppet show in which one of the puppets made either an ironic or a literal remark to another puppet. They were then asked whether the puppet was being friendly or mean. To answer this question, participants had to put a duck toy (explicitly associated with niceness) or a shark toy (explicitly associated with meanness) into an “answer box”. The eye-tracking component of the study then measured how often each participant looked at the duck and the shark before putting one of them into the answer box. Although this study provides some interesting insights, it does not give any information on how respondents in a “normal” situation would process a written text with ironic utterances. Therefore, future research may use various online processing tools to assess the impact of textual features of irony on irony processing.
Besides investigating irony processing, future research may also want to focus on persuasive effects of irony. Future research may want to investigate persuasion directly by including a persuasion measure. One way to measure persuasiveness is by administering various standpoints in a post test. A second way to measure persuasion is to use an indirect persuasion measure (e.g., Strick, 2009). In using such an indirect persuasion measure, respondents are asked to make a decision within a short time after being exposed to an experimental stimulus. In Strick's (2009) research, for instance, she manipulated a promotional flyer which asked respondents to participate in a scientific experiment. As an indirect persuasion measure, Strick (2009) looked at the type of flyer that persuaded respondents to participate in her experiment. Future research on irony could use a similar type of indirect persuasion measure to assess the persuasiveness of irony.

This dissertation has shown that irony can differ on many textual features. Previous studies that have used ironic stimuli to generalize to irony in general (cf. Colston & Lee, 2004; Gibbs, 1986a; Giora et al., 2005) may have oversimplified matters. Irony is not just one textual characteristic within which no differentiations can be made. Instead, ironic utterances come in a variety of ways. In order to predict their persuasive effects, the levels of irony factors and the use of irony markers should be taken into account.
Notes

Notes chapter 1: Introduction

1 In both Giora (1999, p. 921) and Giora et al. (1998, p. 83), the degree of prototypicality was not mentioned as one of the factors that determine salience.

2 For a more complete overview of the differences between the two modalities, see Jahandrie (1999: 131-148).

3 Nevertheless, some authors mix examples from oral with examples from written discourse without worrying about the differences between these two domains. Partington (2007), for instance, uses both televised political interviews and written texts. Okamoto’s (2007, p. 1147) corpus consists mainly of written examples, including novels, essays and newspaper articles. For reasons he did not specify, he also decided to add a number of spoken examples from TV programs. The implicit assumption underlying this choice is that examples from both domains are equally representative of one kind of speech act; the ironic speech act and that this speech act is equal in both the written and oral domain.

Notes chapter 2: Irony – Definition and operationalization

1 Parts of paragraph 2.2.1 – 2.2.5 are based on Burgers (2007).

2 In Quintilian’s (1959) classification of tropes and figures – some authors refer to these terms as tropes and schemes, see e.g., Van Enschot (2006) – irony is classified differently from the models that are quoted in the running text. Quintilian classifies irony both as a trope (Quintilian, 1959, pp. 333-335) and as a figure (Quintilian, 1959, pp. 399-401). When irony is seen as a trope, it is localized. Quintilian (1959, p. 401) gives the following example:

   (n1) Rejected by him, you migrated to your boon-companion, that excellent gentleman Metellus.

In the case of (n1), Quintilian argues that the irony is localized in two words (excellent gentleman) and that the rest of the utterance should be read as non-ironic. When irony is seen as a figure, the meaning “conflicts with the meaning and the tone of voice adopted” (Quintilian, 1959, p. 401). This can for instance mean that a text is completely ironic. Irony as a figure is thus created by a “sustained series of tropes” (Quintilian, 1959, p. 401).

3 In fact, the situation is even more difficult. D. Knox (1989, pp. 19-20) describes that, in medieval times, the word “opposite” in the standard definition of irony could refer to all four kinds of Aristotelian opposites: contraries like “good” and “bad”, contradictories like “good” and “not good”, relatives like double and half, and privation/ possession, like sight and blindness. In contemporary analyses of the standard definition, only the first two types of opposites (contraries and contradictories) are used in the interpretation of the standard definition of irony.

4 Thanks to Louis ten Bosch, who advised me to compare different definitions of irony on this aspect.

5 It is possible to argue that the literal meaning of utterance (2.4) is not completely true, because passenger B uses two hyperboles. Firstly, she probably does not love all people who signal (Barbe, 1995, p. 24). Even though signaling is appreciated, other factors may also influence the assessment whether somebody is liked or not. This implies that the choice for the word “love” is
an exaggeration as well. (Myers Roy, 1978, p. 17). These two aspects do not change the positive evaluation of signaling that is uttered in (2.4).

6 A theory that is very similar to the Gricean perspective comes from speech act theory. The most important concept in the approach to irony from speech act theory is “insincerity” (e.g., Amante, 1981; Haverkate, 1990; Lapp, 1992). This approach is “based on the thesis that irony is the intentional expression of insincerity (Haverkate 1990: 104). An ironic utterance is thus “superficially deceptive” (Amante, 1981, p. 77). An ironic speaker is insincere, but leaves clues in the text for the addressee to detect this insincerity (Lapp, 1992, p. 63). When a sender for instance takes to somebody about his rude behavior, she can say

\[(n2) \quad \text{Who taught you to be so polite? (Haverkate, 1990, p. 93).}\]

From the direct context (i.e., the addressee behaved in a rude manner), it can be deduced that the sender cannot sincerely mean that she found the behavior of the addressee polite. This then immediately makes clear that the sender is insincere in the literal meaning of (n2), enabling the addressee to infer the intended meaning (i.e., You are rude).

Authors from speech act theory thus connect irony to insincerity, a criterion that is closely connected to “untrue” (Attardo, 2000a, p. 803). Since this definition and the definition of irony as a flouting of the maxim of quality are quite similar, irony definitions from speech act theory can also be considered as Gricean definitions of irony (Attardo, 2000a, p. 801).

7 According to this maxim, an utterance u is “contextually appropriate if all presuppositions of are identical to or comparable with the context C in which u is uttered” (Attardo, 2000a, p. 818).

8 Even though Kihara (2005, p. 517) attacks Attardo (2000a) on this point, his argument seems very weak. He does not argue why irony cannot be characterized as relevant inappropriateness. In other words: he does not give any arguments or examples to explain why he considers Attardo’s (2000a) definition wrong.

9 The status of Relevance Theory as an alternative to Grice (instead of a Neo-Gricean approach) is disputed. Wilson and Sperber (2002, p. 249) seem to consider Relevance Theory as a Neo-Gricean perspective. They claim that their theory is an extension of one of the central claims of the Gricean pragmatic model; uttering and recognizing intentions. Other authors (e.g., Attardo, 2000a, Barbe, 1995) think of Relevance Theory as a different paradigm than Grice’s. Since the definitions of irony in a Neo-Gricean approach and a Relevance Theoretic approach are very different, I take the latter perspective.

10 In earlier definitions from Relevance Theory, Sperber and Wilson define irony as echoic mention (e.g., Sperber & Wilson, 1981, 1995) and echoic interpretation (e.g., Wilson & Sperber, 1992, p. 62-66). These definitions are very similar and the changes in labels hardly influenced the approach to irony. Kreuz and Glucksberg’s (1989) description of irony as echoic reminder is also comparable to Sperber and Wilson’s definition of irony as echoic use. For criticism on the concept of mention from these earlier definitions, see Clark and Gerrig (1984, pp. 122-124) and Attardo (2000a, pp. 805-807).

11 The etymology of the Greek word *eironeia* is disputed. Some scholars believe that the word originally meant “ignorance purposely affected” (Liddell & R. Scott, 1996, p. 491). Other scholars hypothesize that word goes back to a stock character from ancient Greek drama; the *eiron* ( ironic man, see e.g., Gibbs, 1994, p. 336). Both cases have a clear link with pretense.

12 This summary of the irony-as-pretense theory is rather crude. Within this group of scholars, two slightly different approaches exist. Certain authors (e.g., Cros, 2001) build on Ducrot’s (1984) notion of irony as *énonciation polyphonique* and use his terminology. According to Ducrot (1984), a sender L (*locuteur*) presents an utterance of a speaker E (*énonciateur*). The
audience knows that L does not take personal responsibility for this opinion. In contrast, he thinks that is absurd. Sender L pretends to present a certain opinion, whilst he at the same distances himself from it.

Another approach can be seen in Clark and Gerrig (1984). In this theory, a speaker S pretends to be another, ignorant speaker S’. This element of ignorance is not found in Ducrot (1984). For Ducrot (1984), it should only be clear that the locuteur does not share the opinion of the énonciateur. In the running text, the approach of Clark and Gerrig (1984) is used.

Okamoto (2007, pp. 1145-1146) proposes an amendment to Utsumi’s (2000) model; the communicative insincerity theory of irony. Okamoto (2007) agrees with Utsumi (2000) that an ironic remark is made when an ironic environment is evoked. Okamoto’s (2007, p. 1146) amendment to Utsumi’s (2000) model is that a speaker also has to make clear that she is insincere. Note 6 of this chapter showed that insincerity is also a central element in definitions of irony from speech act theory. Okamoto (2007) thus seems to integrate the two perspectives.

Of course, not all ironic utterances are about the same target. Cros (2001, pp. 202-203) distinguishes three types of targets. She says that an ironic speaker can target (1) him or herself, (2) the receiver or (3) a third party (i.e., somebody different from sender and receiver).

For other studies on irony using scales, see e.g., Giora et al. (2005). Kawakami (1984, 1988; summarized in Hamamoto, 1998, pp. 263-269) and Partington (2007). For other studies that see evaluation as a scalar phenomenon, see e.g. Lemke (1998) and Martin and White (2005).

A large part of the sections 2.3 and 2.4 also appears in Burgers, Van Mulken & Schellens (under review).

Nevertheless, this way of searching can actually generate some examples of verbal irony, cf. Claridge (2001, pp. 137-138). Kreuz and Caucci (2007) used slightly different strings to look for examples of irony and sarcasm (e.g., said sarcastically). However, they did so to make experimental materials and not to conduct a corpus study. Besides, a problem still remains that this strategy may not yield many ironic utterances in a corpus.

Pauw & Witteman is a Dutch daily talk show, whose hosts are called Jeroen Pauw and Paul Witteman.

The original Dutch text is as follows:

Hij nodigde op 27 november in het programma Pauw & Witteman SBS6-verslaggever Alberto Stegeman uit een kijkje te komen nemen en zelf te zien dat de boel op orde was. Diezelfde avond was Stegeman ironisch genoeg al op Schiphol, alleen zonder invitatie. Daar stelde hij opnieuw vast dat de beveiliging nog altijd niet deugde.

[1] Must Love Dogs

[24] Rapportcijfers:
[25] Film: 4
[26] Extra’s: 6

In order to provide a full picture of this utterance, the meaning of nota bene, the Dutch word that was translated with even, was looked up in the authoritative Dutch dictionary Van Dale (version 1.2 Network). The lemma for nota bene indicates that it literally means something like “pay attention”. However, Van Dale claims that nota bene is always used as a so-called “irony marker”, a clue that a writer can give to his readers that he is being ironic. For this utterance, the Van Dale dictionary seems to be mistaken; nota bene (or even) should be interpreted literally.

Notes chapter 3: Irony factors

1 Assuming of course that the picnic is something the speaker looked forward to.

2 The targets of irony are sometimes referred to as victims. However, a number of studies have used the concept of target (or victim) in slightly different ways. A first alternative definition of the term victim can be related to the audience of irony. As stated in paragraph 1.1, for any ironic utterance, two audiences can be distinguished; the audience that understands the irony and the audience that fails to understand the irony. The latter group of people (i.e., those who do not understand the irony) are sometimes described as irony’s victims (e.g., Katz & Lee 1993, p. 261; Kaufer, 1983, p. 453).

Gibbs and Izett (2005, p. 133) define the term victim in yet another way. When a listener has decoded an ironic utterance, he or she can agree or disagree with its intended meaning. They refer to the group who disagrees with the intended meaning as the group of victims. Because of these possibly confusing connotations of the term ‘victim’, the term ‘target’ will be used throughout this thesis to indicate the person(s) and/or object(s) the ironic utterance is directed at.

3 But for an exception, see Lee and Katz (1998, pp. 9-10). Lee and Katz (1998) argue that the identification of a target is a distinguishing feature between irony and sarcasm. They claim that sarcasm always has a specific target (a person who can explicitly be identified as the target, as in “Well done, John”, uttered when John has made a mess). Irony, in contrast, has no specific target. Its target is more general (as in “Nice weather” when the weather is bad). For an alternate view, see Clark and Gerrig (1984).

4 In this selection of texts, purely verbal genres were emphasized, because these texts generally contain more ironic utterances (see Table 3.2). In addition, the cartoons were also left out, because some of the cartoons may have been difficult to comprehend for the coders. These cartoons referred to specific news events and provided little co-textual support. There was some time between publication of the cartoons (March 2006) and reliability coding (Spring of 2008).

5 The exact method was used to calculate p-values when one or more expected counts were lower than 5. When all expected counts exceeded 5, the asymptotic method was used to calculate p-values (Ellis, 2006, pp. 240-241). Unless explicitly stated otherwise, the asymptotic method was applied.
In this inspection of residuals, the adjusted standardized residual was inspected (e.g., Field, 2009, pp. 698-699). If the value of this statistic was lower than – 1.96 or higher than 1.96, the outcome was considered significant on a 5% level.

The original Dutch text is as follows:

(3.10.1) Wat sneu voor uw astrologe Elodie Hunting
(3.10.2) dat ze er zo faaliekant naast zat met haar voorspelling aangaande de winnares van Idols (De Heer, 2006).

The original Dutch text is as follows:

(3.11.1) Zelden zo’n ontluisterend stukje televisie gezien dan “In het spoor van Peking Expres” op NET 5.
(3.11.2) Imagostyliste Dyanne Beekman is voor dit programma op pad gestuurd om Zuid-Vietnam te “ontdekken”.
(3.11.3) Prachtige natuur, rijke cultuur en natuurlijk een grimmige historie.
(3.11.4) Maar dat zien we niet (Peereboom Voller, 2006).

The original Dutch text is as follows:

(3.12.1) Met steun van reclame- en communicatiedeskundigen, journalisten, filmregisseurs en onderzoekers werden scenario’s ontwikkeld om de publieke opinie wereldwijd effectief te beïnvloeden.
(3.12.2) Daarin was niet alleen voorzien in de display van technologische hoogstandjes en visueel spektakel,
(3.12.3) die beelden verveelden de kijkers al snel
(3.12.4) zo was bekend uit onderzoek
(3.12.5) maar ook in ‘realistische oorlogsbeelden’ met ‘echte mensen’,

These cases had the problem of crossed-out text. This crossed-out text included the ironic utterances, but was still readable. As a result, a number of texts in the corpus showed two different texts at the same time; one that included the (readable) crossed-out text and one without the crossed-out text. The latter text included the intended evaluation, but should it be counted as co-text or context? One could argue that both texts are present in the same document, which would mean that the intended evaluation is present in the co-text. One could also argue that the two “texts” are two distinctly different texts, in which case the intended evaluation is not present in the co-text. In this case, it can equally well be claimed that the intended evaluation is present in the co-text and in the context.

The original Dutch text is as follows:

(3.13.1) “Softdrugs zijn niet gevaarlijk.”
(3.13.2) Laat je niets wijsmaken
(3.13.3) Elsevier

The original Dutch text is as follows:

(3.14.1) Een schijnbaar onbeduidend detail,
(3.14.2) maar ironisch en symbolisch in het licht van de geschiedenis:
(3.14.3) eind februari 2003, [sub (3.13.4) [sub (3.13.5)]] verwijderen medewerkers van de VN een levensgrote replica van de Guernica, [sub 4.13.6], uit een van de zalen van de Veiligheidsraad.
13 The original Dutch text is as follows:

(3.14.4) enkele dagen voordat de Amerikaanse minister van Buitenlandse Zaken Colin Powell in een wervelende power-point presentatie ‘bewijst’ dat [4.13.5]
(3.14.5) Irak over vernietigingswapens beschikt.
(3.14.6) Picasso’s beroemdste schilderij (Van Vree, 2006).

14 The original Dutch text is as follows:

(3.15.1) Ik heb trouwens net een nieuw bed van 1.80 gekocht,
(3.15.2) terwijl een eenpersoonsbed meer dan voldoende was.
(3.15.3) Maar mijn moeder spande samen met de verkoper,
(3.15.4) dus ik heb er ook een dekbed bij van 720 euro per stuk.
(3.15.5) Nee de euro heeft het leven niet duurder gemaakt (Umar, 2006)

15 The original Dutch text is as follows:

(3.16.1) Toch zie ik overal opeens leuke mannen.
(3.16.2) De lunches en dates bevallen goed.
(3.16.3) een sms van de blonde god negeer ik.
(3.16.4) Erg volwassen (Umar, 2006).

16 The original Dutch text is as follows:

(3.18.1) Het procede is dit
(3.18.2) Je haalt de beste scenes uit een aantal succesvolle films
(3.18.3) je verwart de blender met je tekstverwerker
(3.18.4) je stopt je hele verzameling daarin
(3.18.5) even drukken
(3.18.6) en je denkt dat (3.20.7)
(3.18.7) je een nieuw script hebt.
(3.18.8) Omdat er een aantal analfabeten werkt in Hollywood
(3.18.9) dat niet kan lezen
(3.18.10) maar wel tellen
(3.18.11) krijg je een zak met geld mee om dat prul dan ook daadwerkelijk te maken

17 The original Dutch text is as follows:

(3.19.1) Kees is in de auto.
(3.19.2) Het is druk op de weg.
(3.19.3) Henk wil ook op de weg.
(3.19.4) Kees steekt zijn middelvinger op.
(3.19.5) 'Nee' betekent dat.
(3.19.6) Goed zo, Kees

18 Let’s give an example of an utterance from the corpus which was hard to pin down as either ironic praise or ironic blame. In an advertisement for *Kanis & Gunnink* coffee, we find the slogan “just lie low” (*doe maar gewoon*). In other advertisements, this brand of coffee uses this particular slogan to distinguish themselves from their competitors by refraining from explicitly bragging about their product, thereby evoking a Dutch cultural value. In this specific ad, however, the slogan is used to advertise a special promotion designed for a special occasion.
(i.e., since Kanis & Gunnink had sold over 25 million coffee pads, they offer consumers a ‘2 for 1’ deal). In this ad, therefore, Kanis & Gunnink claim that they do not lie low; the promotion should be regarded as something special. It is unclear how this change of evaluation of the normal slogan should be interpreted in terms of ironic praise and blame. Laying low is something favorable. However, doing something special just for once is favorable as well. In this case, we see a difference in evaluation but no difference in ‘favorableness’ of the literal and ironic interpretation.

The original Dutch text is as follows:

(3.20.1) Schandalig
(3.20.2) Nu maar 1 euro
(3.20.3) Computer idee, doet niet moeilijk over computers

The original Dutch text is as follows:

(3.21) Doe maar gewoon

The original Dutch text is as follows:

(3.22.1) “Television will never be a medium of entertainment.”
(3.22.2) David Samoff, President RCA, 1955
(3.22.3) Zie de kansen
(3.22.4) die anderen laten liggen.

The original Dutch text is as follows:

(3.23.1) De laatste avond van mijn verblijf werd ik met matras en al omgedraaid.
(3.23.2) Vervolgens namen vijf academici plaats op dat matras.
(3.23.3) Voor de goede orde, ik lag eronder.
(3.23.4) In een plasje smeltwater.
(3.23.5) En er werd een vrolijk liedje gezongen.
(3.23.6) Dat heet ‘keren’.
(3.23.7) Ik heb ontdekt
(3.23.8) wat saamhorigheid is
(3.23.9) en nu ik weet
(3.23.10) wat het is
(3.23.11) ga ik er voorlopig mee door.
(3.23.12) Dit mag worden opgevat als waarschuwing (Grunberg, 2006).

Notes chapter 4: Irony markers in the ironic utterance

Of course, the examples from the corpus are actually results from the analysis and should thus actually be placed in the results section (see chapter 3). However, since all irony markers theoretically work the same (the alert a reader to the fact that a sentence is ironic) and to save space, these corpus examples are discussed in the introduction of this chapter.

It has to be noted that these metaphors have to be interpreted by language users as metaphors. Various scholars have argued that metaphors are central to the cognitive system with which people make sense of the world (e.g., Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff & Nuñez, 2000). These authors for instance claim that people use the conceptual metaphor TIME IS SPACE to conceptualize time. Following this claim, the word “in” in temporal statements such as “in May” or “in 2010” would be metaphorical; a temporal unit (i.e., the month May or the year 2010) is mentally conceptualized as a spatial container. These findings shed an interesting light on the human conceptual system, but expressions such as “in May” are hardly perceived as
metaphoric by ordinary users of language. Therefore, Steen (2008) makes a distinction between deliberate metaphors (i.e., “a relatively conscious discourse strategy that aims to elicit particular rhetorical effects” Steen, 2008, p. 223) and nondeliberate metaphors (i.e., metaphors that are unintentionally communicated as metaphors, including such basic meaning metaphors as TIME IS SPACE). In order for a metaphor to be seen as an irony marker, it needs to be recognized as a metaphor. This means that only a deliberate metaphor can function as an irony marker.

3 This definition of metaphor is very crude. Of course, the notion of metaphor is extensively dealt with in the literature. Various metaphor scholars have a number of competing theories about metaphor that differ in a number of ways. For an excellent overview, see Steen (2007).

4 The original Dutch text is as follows:

(4.3.1) Liefhebbers van vuurwapens in Amerika zijn meestal goed bewapend met argumenten.
(4.3.2) Een favoriete dooddoener is de kreet 'Guns don't kill people, people do' (Eijsvoogel, 2006).

5 Herenleed is a Dutch theater and TV comedy from the 1970s in which two gentlemen always had an absurdist dialogue. The gentlemen were played by actors Cherry Duyns and Armando.

6 The original Dutch text is as follows:

(4.3.1) Gepassioneerd is ook Zeemans diepe haat jegens Nederland,
(4.3.2) thuisbasis van luilakken, domoren en randdebielen.
(4.3.3) Benali laat zich in die weerzin gemakkelijk meeslepen.
(4.3.4) Het tekent de krachtsverhouding tussen beide correspondenten,
(4.3.5) die sterk aan Herenleed doet denken.
(4.3.6) Het parmantige geluid van Zeeman roept associaties op met het gezwollen gezwatel van Cherry Duyns (Peelen, 2006).

7 The Dutch text is as follows:

(4.6.1) In 'Banden' gaat het over de relatie tussen een moeder, haar zoon en haar broer.
(4.6.2) En die is niet al te best.
(4.6.3) Dat is al na een paar minuten duidelijk.
(4.6.4) De omgang is ruw,
(4.6.5) de communicatie is nihil,
(4.6.6) en er is voortdurend lawaai (Alkema, 2006).

8 Even though a rhetorical question can – in theory – also be considered as a morpho-syntactic irony marker (see paragraph 4.2.3), it is classified under the tropes. A reason is that many categorizations of tropes and figures list rhetorical questions under the category of tropes.

9 The Dutch text is as follows:

(4.8) Zal het haar lukken om de man van haar dromen te vinden? (Anonymous, 2006)

10 Note the similarity between this account and the pretense theory of irony, discussed in section 2.2.4.
A discussion may arise whether this repetition is an irony marker in the ironic utterance or an irony marker in the co-text (which is discussed in detail in the next chapter). A case can be made for both classifications which shows that this irony marker is a borderline case. Nevertheless, it was decided to include repetition as an irony marker in this chapter, because the repetition can only be recognized as an ironic clue at the moment that it is actually repeated, i.e., in the ironic utterance itself. For this reason, it was decided that a stronger case could be made to list repetition as an irony marker in the utterance than to list repetition as a co-textual irony marker.

The Dutch text is as follows:

(4.10.1) Dat Prick op basis zijn onderzoek geen hoge dunk heeft van de kwaliteit van veel zogenaamde 'onderwijsspecialisten' in de Tweede Kamer
(4.10.2) is volkomen begrijpelijk.
(4.10.3) Een nieuwe regering zou van de verbetering - niet vernieuwing! - van het onderwijs een centrale doelstelling moeten maken
(4.10.4) Dit is een project vergelijkbaar met de Deltawerken,
(4.10.5) maar wel veel moeilijker.
(4.10.6) Onderwijs is echter te belangrijk om het nog langer over te laten aan 'onderwijsspecialisten' (Tromp, 2006).

According to the authoritative Dutch dictionary Van Dale, one of the word meaning of the word so-called (in Dutch: zogenaamd) is "wrongly using a specific name or title"; this means that utterance (4.10.1) is non-ironic.

The original Dutch text is as follows:

(4.12.1) Kees is in de auto.
(4.12.2) Het is druk op de weg.
(4.12.3) Henk wil ook op de weg.
(4.12.4) Kees steekt zijn middelvinger op.
(4.12.5) 'Nee' betekent dat.
(4.12.6) Goed zo, Kees
(4.12.7) Henk is toch maar een suffe lul.

The original Dutch text is as follows:

(4.14.1) Natuurlijk is het weer een kwestie van geld.
(4.14.2) Blijkbaar ziet Amsterdam zich het liefst als een poenerige slaapstad met culturele armoede.
(4.14.3) Heel fijn!

The original Dutch text is as follows:

(4.16.1) Oh nee, hè?
(4.16.2) Niet weer die campagne die
(4.16.3) Je vaker tegenkomt dan je eigen campagne.

Readers who are familiar with the Star Wars films directed by George Lucas may recognize focus topicalization from the peculiar speech of the character of Yoda, who almost always uses focus topicalization. In THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK, for instance, instead of saying "They must be stopped", Yoda says "Stopped they must be". In this way, the character thus emphasizes the bit of information placed at the beginning of the sentence; the 'stopping' of the group of people referred to as 'they'.

The original Dutch text is as follows:
19 The original Dutch text is as follows:

(4.18.1) Stront: altijd leuk.
(4.18.2) Tot je een jaar of twee bent,
(4.18.3) kun je je nog vrolijk insmeren met eigen baksel,
(4.18.4) het trots tonen,
(4.18.5) of verdrietig uitzwaaïen.
(4.18.6) Gek genoeg vinden volwassenen dat na enige tijd niet meer grappig
(Truijens, 2006).

20 The original Dutch text is as follows:

(4.20.1) Ik heb trouwens net een nieuw bed van 1.80 gekocht,
(4.20.2) terwijl een eenpersoonsbed meer dan voldoende was.
(4.20.3) Maar mijn moeder spande samen met de verkoper,
(4.20.4) dus ik heb er ook een dekbed bij van 720 euro per stuk.
(4.20.5) Nee, de euro heeft het leven niet duurder gemaakt (Umar, 2006).

21 The original Dutch text is as follows:

(4.22.1) Lekker de laatste roddels doornemen met Geer Joling, Victor Brand of één
van de andere SBS6-entertainmentkoninginnenetjes.
(4.22.2) Uitzending gemist
(4.22.3) of krijg je niet genoeg van de laatste roddels over de gebroken nagel van
Rebecca Loos?
(4.22.4) Dan kijk je toch gewoon de herhaling nog een keer later op de avond
(Anonymous, 2006).

22 The original Dutch text is as follows:

(4.23.1) Zonder al te veel op de man te willen spelen, heb ik een beetje het idee dat
(4.23.2) de heer Verboon middels zijn ingezonden brief van 10 maart laat blijken
(4.23.3) dat hij gezegend is met een rijke fantasie
(4.23.4) en zich graag onmisbaar voelt
(4.23.5) ondanks dat hij zijn tijd graag verdoet met het bekijken of beschouwen van
voetbal, of het nuttigen van drankjes in een rokerige ruimte met veel lawaai
en danseressen in bikini
(4.23.6) (die hoogstwaarschijnlijk zijn sperma WEL waardig zijn, al is het maar voor
een nacht).
(4.23.7) Geconfronteerd worden met iemand (4.13.8) is dan al gauw bedreigend.
(4.23.8) die daar niet de voorkeur aan geeft (Klein Lebbink, 2006).

23 The original Dutch text runs as follows:

(4.26) Heel bemoedigend ...

24 The original Dutch text runs as follows:

(4.28.1) U brieft het bureau in een 360° Brainstorm Session®.
(4.28.2) Het bureau begint aan een Positioning Optimization™.
(4.28.3) Vervolgens wordt met behulp van het DemandStewardship®-model de
DemandVision® bepaald.
(4.28.4) Dit leidt tot een BrandStrategy™.
(4.28.5) Nu wordt eerst uw eigen organisatie onderworpen aan een rigoureuze
Resource Check™.
waarna de input voor de Creative Content wordt bepaald op basis van de Fact Analysis Research Technique (FART).

Dan bedenkt het bureau een goed idee.

The original Dutch text is as follows:

"Dit is het echte Vietnam",
als haar bootje bij een kleine werkplaats aanmeert.

Levine and Hullett (2002) note that SPSS reports partial $\eta^2$ (i.e., $\eta_p^2$) rather than $\eta^2$. Field (2009, p. 415) reports that the difference between the two measures of effect size is that $\eta^2$ looks at “the proportion of total variance that a variable explains” (Field, 2009, p. 415), whereas $\eta_p^2$ considers “the proportion of variance that a variable explains that is not explained by other variables in the analysis” (Field, 2009, p. 415).

The types of irony markers (e.g., metaphor, hyperbole, quotation marks) were also tested across genres. The results reflected these patterns; tropes (e.g., metaphor, hyperbole) were used relatively more often in purely verbal than in multimodal genres, whilst types of schematic (e.g., echo, change of register) morpho-syntactic (e.g., exclamation) and typographic irony markers (e.g., capitalization, crossed-out text) were used more often in multimodal than in purely verbal genres.

Notes chapter 5: Irony markers in the verbal co-text

1 The original Dutch text runs as follows:

Nee, ik word gecensureerd bij Metro, nou goed.
Sterker nog, ik schrijf mijn columns niet zelf,
ze zetten voor de gein mijn naam erboven en een fotootje ernaast.
Dûh.
Natuurlijk mag ik schrijven wat ik wil (Umar, 2006).

2 Rintje Ritsma and Lance Armstrong are two extremely skilled athletes. Ritsma is a famous Dutch speed skater who won multiple European and World titles. Armstrong is a racing cyclist who won the Tour de France seven times in a row between 1999 and 2005.

3 The Kennedy march is a march in which contestants have to walk for eighty kilometers in the time span of eighty hours.

4 The original Dutch text runs as follows:

Omdat ik me gisteren, na het ontwaken, bepaald geen R. Ritsma of L. Armstrong voelde – in mijn borstkas leek een techno rave party te zijn begonnen met meer 'heartbeats per minute' dan me lief waren liet ik me doormeten.
Mijn huisarts is een flegmaticus met een bijzonder gevoel voor humor. […] Als een samoeraikrijger me morgen met zijn zwaard een been zou afkappen, dan zou mijn huisarts, na een blik op de stomp iets kunnen zeggen in de trant van:
'Dat wordt dit jaar geen Kennedymars,
vrees ik'.
Ik mag dat wel. […]
(5.3.11) We kijken samen naar het bolletje in de meter
gat naar een niveau kruipt dat niet echt past bij een R. Ritsma (Van de Beek,
2006).

(5.4.1) Arjen Robben is de helft van de tijd geblesseerd
(5.4.2) en een groot deel van de andere helft geschorst.
(5.4.3) Over hem hoeven we ons überhaupt geen zorgen te maken (Kok, 2006).

(5.5.1) De kolonel denkt
dat er dan 23 of zestig samenzweerders geweest mogen zijn,
de echte moordenaars waren hooguit tien in getal.
(5.5.4) Ook wil hij aantonen
dat Caesar wist
wat hem te wachten stond
en dat hij zich niet tegen het verraad had verzet.
(5.5.8) De zojuist vergoddelijkte vriend van het volk, [sub (5.6.9)] zou zo grotere
kans op onsterfelijkheid maken,
verra登 door die farizeeërs van een aristocraten,
luidde volgens de kolonel Caesars redenering.
(5.5.11) Hoor ik daar echo's van de stiekeme zelfmoord en het bewuste streven naar
heiligverklaring van Slobodan Milosevic?
(5.5.12) Goed werk overigens van Gerri Eickhof in het NOS Journaal
die sprak met de burgemeester van Milosevic' geboorteplaats Pozarevac
(5.5.14) zodat we nu weten
(5.5.15) hoe je die naam hoort uit te spreken:
klinkt als Pózzurrewutsj (Beerekamp, 2006).

(5.6.1) De laatste avond van mijn verblijf werd ik met matras en al omgedraaid.
Vervolgens namen vijf academici plaats op dat matras.
Voor de goede orde, ik lag eronder.
In een plasje smeltwater.
En er werd een vrolijk liedje gezongen.
Dat heet 'keren'.
Ik heb ontdekt
wat saamhorigheid is
en nu ik weet
wat het is
ga ik er voorlopig mee door.
(5.6.12) Dit mag worden opgevat als waarschuwning (Grunberg, 2006)

(5.7.1) Verboon schrijft:
'Haar ideaal is vermoedelijk:
vrouwen wereldwijd aan de macht,
massaal sperma invriezen, genoeg voor duizend jaar,
vervolgens alle mannen uitroeien
en foetussen van jongetjes aborteren.
En voliá!
(5.7.8) De volmaakte wereld!"
(5.7.9) Goed zo meneer Verboon,
(5.7.10) heel verstandig dat u zich hier tegen roert.
(5.7.11) Het schijnt verschrikkelijk te zijn om als een object gezien en gebruikt te werden door een macht
(5.7.12) die daartoe geweld gebruikt.
(5.7.13) Maar denkt u dat duizend jaar voldoende is? (Van den Hoek, 2006).

Notes chapter 6: Irony and visuals

1 The original Dutch text is as follows:

(6.1) Het grootste risico om ook miljonair te worden.

2 The original Dutch text is as follows:

(6.2.1) Leuk hoor, een heggenschaar.
(6.2.2) Maar het belt zo moeilijk.
(6.2.3) De leukste cadeau’s zijn iZi: mobiel bellen zonder abonnement.

3 The original Dutch text is as follows:

(6.3.1) Schandalig
(6.3.2) Nu maar 1 euro
(6.3.3) Computer idee, doet niet moeilijk over computers

Notes chapter 7: The relation between irony factors and markers and the perceived complexity of irony

1 Field (2009) argues that the number of predictors cannot be too high. If the number of predictors was for instance just as high as the number of cases, then each predictor would perfectly explain one case. Therefore, he claims that the sample size should be high enough for the inclusion of the total number of individual predictors. To analyze the minimum required sample size, Field (2009, p. 222) provides two formulas. To test the overall model, the minimum sample size is $50 + 8k$ (where $k$ stands for the individual number of predictors). The minimum sample size to test each individual predictor is $104 + k$. The sample size was high enough to allow for the three regression analyses reported in the next section.

2 Two irony markers – emoticons and crossed-out text – had a variance of zero in the selected sub-corpus and were thus not included in the regression analysis. Ironic repetition has a variance of zero after the deletion of outliers and individual cases with an undue influence. Before the deletion of outliers and individual cases, ironic repetition was found to have a positive effect on perceived irony complexity ($t(179) = 5.38, p < .001, b (SE_b) = 2.92 (.54), \beta =$
However, since this effect completely disappears when correcting for outliers and individual cases with an undue influence, it may be due to sampling error.

There was no multicollinearity (VIF = 1.00). A Durbin-Watson test showed that errors were independent (Durbin-Watson = 1.32) and a p-p plot showed that errors were normally distributed. Besides, only 2.3% of standardized residuals was outside of the domain <-1.96, 1.96 >, and 0% was outside of the domain <-2.58, 2.58 >, showing that the model fits the sample data well enough to draw conclusions from it.

There was no multicollinearity (VIF = 1.00). A Durbin-Watson test showed that errors were independent (Durbin-Watson = 1.095) and a p-p plot showed that errors were normally distributed. Besides, only 4.5% of standardized residuals was outside of the domain <-1.96, 1.96 >, and 0% was outside of the domain <-2.58, 2.58 >, showing that the model fits the sample data well enough to draw conclusions from it.

The total number of co-textual markers also was a significant predictor of perceived irony complexity (t(166) = -2.67, p < .01, b (SEb) = -.09 (.03), ß = -.20). However, when the total number of ironic utterances preceding the irony was removed from the total number of co-textual irony markers, the total number of co-textual irony markers was no longer a significant predictor of perceived complexity (t(166) = .36, p = .72, b (SEb) = .03 (.36)). Therefore, the number of ironic utterances preceding the irony was used as a predictor in this model rather than the total number of co-textual irony markers.

The baseline group for the dummy coding of target was the combination of sender, addressee and third party. The baseline group for the dummy coding of genre was the genre of advertisements.

The target of addressee had a variance of zero after the deletion of outliers and individual cases. Before the deletion of outliers and individual cases, however, the target of addressee was found to have a positive effect on perceived irony complexity (t(179) = 2.23, p < .05, b (SEb) = 1.50 (.67), ß = .16). However, since this effect completely disappears when correcting for outliers and individual cases, it may be due to sampling error.

Notes chapter 8: The influence of irony factors and markers on irony comprehension and appreciation

Various statisticians have debated how an experimental design such as the one reported in this experiment may be analysed (compare Clark, 1973 to Cohen, 1976; Raaijmakers et al., 1999; Wike & Church, 1976). Raaijmakers et al. (1999) advocate the use of F1 in experimental situations with a counterbalanced design, a suggestion that is adopted in this chapter.

Please note that the group mean centering procedure changed the variable of comprehension from a dichotomous into a continuous variable.

The author wants to thank Marije Boer for conducting this experiment. She did so in fulfillment of her MA Thesis in Dutch Language and Culture at Radboud University Nijmegen.
In the analysis of irony markers on comprehension, Mauchly’s test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been violated ($\chi^2 (2) = 5.64, p < .10$), therefore degrees of freedom were corrected using the Greenhouse-Geisser estimate of sphericity ($\epsilon = .96$). Field (2009, p. 459) shows that

"sphericity refers to the equality of variances of the differences between treatment levels. So, if you were to take a pair of treatment levels, and calculate the differences between each pair of scores, then it is necessary that these differences have approximately equal variances. As such, you need at least three conditions for sphericity to be an issue."\n
This means that sphericity is not an issue in experiment 1, because both independent variables (irony and explicitness of evaluation) had two conditions. Since the independent variable of the presence of markers in experiment 2 has three conditions, sphericity plays a role for this independent variable. The analysis for comprehension is the only analysis in which the sphericity condition was violated.

Recently, Hayes (2009) argued against Baron and Kenny (1986) and claimed that mediation can also occur when only the indirect effect is significant. Since the indirect effect is non-significant on a 5% level, this situation is not relevant for this analysis.
References


Hodiamont, D., Burgers, C. & Van Mulken, M. (2010). Lees vooral niet verder, ga iets nuttigs doen! De verwerking van meerdere ironische uitingen in dezelfde tekst [Do not read on,


Appendices
**Appendix I:**

**Overview of advertisements in corpus**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Year of publication</th>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Tag line</th>
<th>Website (source)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Camel</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Cigarettes</td>
<td>Nothing is sexier than lipstick on a Camel</td>
<td>Reclamearsenaal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canon</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Printer cartridges</td>
<td>Als uw favoriete kleur op is...</td>
<td>Reclamearsenaal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Idée</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Magazine</td>
<td>Schandalig!</td>
<td>Reclamearsenaal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daewoo</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Car</td>
<td>Heeft u inmiddels alle kleuren Hyundai gehad?</td>
<td>Reclamearsenaal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daewoo</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Car</td>
<td>Waarom bent u ooit Daihatsu gaan rijden?</td>
<td>Reclamearsenaal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doritos Cajun</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Chips</td>
<td>You make the rules</td>
<td>Reclamearsenaal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salsa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frisk Mints</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Sweets</td>
<td>Wanna kiss?</td>
<td>Reclamearsenaal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frisk Mints</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Sweets</td>
<td>Wanna die?</td>
<td>Reclamearsenaal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frolic</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Dog food</td>
<td>Zo lekker, ....</td>
<td>Reclamearsenaal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M&amp;Ms Crispy</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Sweets</td>
<td>Forget Crispy</td>
<td>Reclamearsenaal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M&amp;Ms Crispy</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Sweets</td>
<td>Move along!</td>
<td>Reclamearsenaal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M&amp;Ms Crispy</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Sweets</td>
<td>Eat new Crispy M&amp;Ms</td>
<td>Reclamearsenaal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Product</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
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Het Kerstnummer is uit
Vinden jullie sherry stoffig?
Is Jerez volgens jou een badplaats?
Gelukkig is het gros nog niet rijp voor sherry
Niew: Multipack voor elke trek
“Softdrugs zijn niet gevaarlijk”
“Windenergie heeft de toekomst”
“De opwarming van de aarde…”
“Twee gevangenen op een cel …”
“De hypotheekrente aftrek …”
“Ons milieu gaat alleen nog maar…”
“De trein is de oplossing voor het fileprobleem”
Bloemen houden van mensen
“We don’t like their sound …”
“Television will never be …”
“There is a world market for…”
Al uw rimpels weg in één minuut
We hebben 25 miljoen koffiepads verkocht
Balance is a beautiful thing
Een verdiende laatste plaats …
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Het leven is leuker zonder stemrecht
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Wegens doorslaand succes
Waarom gaat Israël een muur tussen ons bouwen?
Naam: Jeroen Sluijter
Naam: Gerry
Pap, wat deed jij in de eko-oorlog?
De Euro wordt van ons allemaal
Atoomstroom van Essent
Elseviers plan om multicultureel drama ...
easyTerrorist
Vrouwenemancipatie
Zalig Kerstfeest
Peper, bedankt!
Lekker onder de wol?
McAfrika
I amsterdamned
Bonusfestival
Bekende Nederlander Marijke Helwegen ...
Waar is Jimmy?

Reclamearsenaal
Duivenvoorden
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| Pamflet tegen bioindustrie | 2004 | Zijn ze niet om op te vreten? | Duivenvoorden |
Appendix II:
Overview of opinionative texts in corpus

Book, film and TV reviews
Cartoons
Collignon (March 15, 2006). Ben ik te min? *De Volkskrant*, p. 11.
Collignon (March 16, 2006). Next! *De Volkskrant*, p. 11.

Columns

265

**Letters to the editor**
Bruyns, R. (March 17, 2006). Discriminatie en racisme, de linkse lente is begonnen. *Spits*, p. 3

*Metro*, p. 8.
Theunisse, H. (March 15, 2006). TBS. *De Telegraaf*, p. 6
Appendix III:
Coding instruction irony factors

Enclosed, you find a file with a number of texts with ironic utterances. I want to ask you to score these ironic utterances on a number of irony factors in the attached Excel file “Form for irony factors”. Below, you find a short description of the irony factors.

PAY ATTENTION: I am aware that coding is a time-consuming activity. Do not code too much data in one session. Take regular breaks and try to spread out coding over several days.

Literal and intended evaluation
Before you score the ironic utterance on irony factors, it is first important to look at the ironic utterance itself. Why is it ironic? To do this, you look for the literal and intended evaluation of the ironic utterance. As you know, the literal and intended evaluations of the irony are contraries. They can both be placed on the same evaluation scale. In order to qualify as ironic, one of the evaluations is positive and the other is negative.

Let’s take the utterance “Great weather, eh?” when it rains as an example. The literal evaluation of this utterance is “It’s great weather”. The intended evaluation is “It is bad weather”. Both evaluations can be placed on an evaluation scale about the weather.

Evaluation scale: “Great weather, eh?”

Evaluation about the weather

In these two columns in the Excel file, you give your interpretation of the literal and intended evaluation of the irony.
Degree of certainty
In this column, you argue how certain you are that a specific utterance is ironic or not. To do this, you have three possibilities. It is possible that, during reading, you immediately recognized a specific utterance as ironic. In this case, you fill in “To me, it is perfectly clear that this utterance is ironic.”

It is also possible that you did not consider a specific utterance as ironic during reading. However, when you saw that the utterance was marked as ironic, you could provide a meaningful ironic interpretation of the utterance. In this case, you fill in “I understand that somebody else would consider this utterance as ironic, although I did not see it at first”.

Another possibility is that you do not consider a specific utterance as ironic. After considering why a specific utterance was marked as ironic, you did not find it ironic. In this case, you fill in “I still do not see why this utterance is marked as ironic”.

Irony factor 1: Incongruence
An important characteristic of an ironic utterance is that the intended evaluation always remains implicit in the utterance itself. A relatively easy example is the exclamation:

(1) Great weather, eh?

There is little reason to doubt the literal evaluation if somebody utters (1) on a sunny day at the beach. However, there is enough reason for doubt when somebody utters (1) when it is raining cats and dogs. This implies that (1) becomes some kind of riddle we need to solve to find the intended evaluation: “It is bad weather.” In some cases, a text immediately guides a reader towards an ironic interpretation: the intended evaluation is literally included in the text. In other cases, the reader has to deduce the irony him- or herself. In that case, the intended evaluation is not literally included in the text. For this irony factor, the goal is to determine whether the text directly guides the reader towards an ironic interpretation or not.

Example 1: Incongruence in the co-text
(1) Yesterday, I discussed the capitals of the Dutch provinces with my wife.
(2) I thought to remember from elementary school
(3) that Amsterdam is the capital of the province of North-Holland.
(4) My wife said:
(5) “Yeah, sure dude.
(6) Amsterdam is the capital of North-Holland.”
(7) I nodded my head in agreement.
(8) My wife then said:
(9) "What?
(10) I thought
(11) you were kidding.
(12) Amsterdam is not the capital of North-Holland at all.
(13) It is Haarlem."

In the above example, the narrator's wife is ironic in utterances 5 and 6 (ironic utterances are printed in bold). She literally repeats his words to show that she does not agree with him. To make clear that she did not literally mean the contents of utterances 5 and 6, the wife of the narrator says exactly what she means in utterance (12): Amsterdam is not the capital of North-Holland at all. In contrast to the narrator, she does know that Haarlem is the capital of the province of North-Holland. This immediately solves the irony in the text itself.

If the intended evaluation can be found literally in the text, you fill in "Yes" in column D2a on the "Form for irony factors". Besides, you fill in column D2b the number of the line in which the intended evaluation can be found. In this case, that would be "12".

This scenario is different in example 2

**Example 2: Incongruence with the context**

(1) Yesterday, I discussed the capitals of the Dutch provinces with my wife.
(2) I thought to remember from elementary school
(3) that Amsterdam is the capital of the province of North-Holland.
(4) My wife said:
(5) "Yeah, sure dude.
(6) Amsterdam is the capital of North-Holland."
(7) I nodded my head in agreement.
(8) My wife suddenly started laughing loudly.

Example 2 features the same ironic utterance as example 1. The difference is that the wife of the narrator does not literally say what she means in example 2: she responds with laughter to the narrator's nod. It is up to the reader to infer that the narrator's wife did not mean utterances (5) and (6) literally, but ironic. This means that the irony is not solved in the text itself.

If the intended evaluation cannot be found literally in the text, you fill in "No" in column D2a on the "Form for irony factors". You fill in nothing in column D2b.
Irony factor 2: Reversal of valence

This irony factor of the reversal of valence is concerned with the question whether the literal evaluation of an ironic utterance is positive or negative. Let’s clarify this with two examples:

Example 1: The literal evaluation is positive
(1) Yesterday, I discussed the capitals of the Dutch provinces with my wife.
(2) I thought to remember from elementary school that Master Pete always told me that Amsterdam is the capital of the province of North-Holland.
(3) My wife said:
(4) “Master Pete was a great geography teacher.”

In this example, the literal evaluation of utterance (6) is positive, because Master Pete is literally described as a “great teacher”. The intended evaluation is of course negative; Master Pete did not seem to know a lot about geography.

When the literal evaluation of an ironic utterance is positive, you fill in a P in column D3a on the “Form for irony factors”. Besides, you explain your choice in column D3b.

Example 2: The literal evaluation is negative
(1) Yesterday, I discussed the capitals of the American states with my wife.
(2) I thought to remember from elementary school that Master Pete always told me that Albany is the capital of the state of New York.
(3) My wife said:
(4) “Master Pete was a poor geography teacher.”

In example 2, the literal evaluation of utterance (6) is negative, because Master Pete is referred to as a bad teacher. The intended evaluation is of course positive; the narrator has learnt a lot about geography from Master Pete.

When the literal evaluation of an ironic utterance is negative, you fill in an N in column D3a on the “Form for irony factors”. Besides, you explain your choice in column D3b.

Factor 3: Evaluativeness

On this factor, you indicate whether the utterance is explicitly or implicitly evaluative. If the ironic utterance explicitly expresses a positive or negative evaluation, it can be considered explicitly evaluative. In this case, it means that somebody cannot objectively verify whether the statement
is true or not. An utterance is implicitly evaluative when it describes a state of affairs in reality without evaluating it positively or negatively; it is theoretically possible to empirically verify the claim.

**Example 1: Ironic utterance is explicitly evaluative:**

(1) Yesterday, I discussed the capitals of the Dutch provinces with my wife.
(2) I thought to remember from elementary school
(3) that Amsterdam is the capital of North-Holland.
(4) My wife said:
(5) “That really is a great remark.”

Utterance (5) from example 1 is ironic; the narrator’s wife does not consider her husband’s remark great at all. The utterance is also explicitly evaluative, because it contains the evaluative adjective “great”.

*When the ironic utterance is explicitly evaluative, you fill in Yes in column D4a on the “Form for irony factors”. Besides, you explain your choice in column D4b.*

**Example 2: Ironic utterance is implicitly evaluative:**

(1) Yesterday, I discussed the capitals of the Dutch provinces with my wife.
(2) I thought to remember from elementary school
(3) that Amsterdam is the capital of North-Holland.
(4) My wife said:
(5) “You probably studied geography!”

Utterance (5) in example (2) is ironic; a remark such as (5) is inappropriate when somebody makes a blunder like the narrator does. Besides, the utterance is empirically and objectively verifiable. It is possible to check whether the narrator actually did complete a degree in geography. No positive or negative evaluation is explicitly provided in the ironic utterance.

*When the ironic utterance is implicitly evaluative, you fill in No in column D4a on the “Form for irony factors”. Besides, you explain your choice in column D4b.*

**Factor 4: Target**

An ironic utterance is always about something or somebody. This object or person is referred to as the “target” of irony. Four types of targets can be distinguished:

- An ironic utterance can have the sender as its target.
An ironic utterance can have the addressee as its target.
An ironic utterance can have a third party as its target.
An ironic utterance can have a combination of sender, addressee and/or third party as its target.

For this irony factor, you score the ironic utterances on the question whom the target of the ironic utterance is. Sometimes, this target is the sender himself.

**Example 1: The sender is the target**

(1) Yesterday, I discussed the capitals of the Dutch provinces with my wife.
(2) I thought to remember from elementary school
(3) that Amsterdam is the capital of North-Holland.
(4) After my wife reprimanded me,
(5) I remarked:
(6) “My memory is still fantastic.”

The narrator of example 1 makes an ironic remark about himself in (5). He says that his memory is still fantastic, whilst the example shows that this is not the case. This means that the sender himself becomes the target of the irony.

When the target of the ironic utterance is the sender, you fill in S in column D5a on the “Form for irony factors”. You fill in nothing in column D5b.

**Example 2: The addressee is the target**

(1) Yesterday, I discussed the capitals of the Dutch provinces with my wife.
(2) She thought to remember from elementary school
(3) that Amsterdam is the capital of North-Holland.
(4) I told her:
(5) “You probably studies geography!”

Besides the fact that ironic utterance (5) is objectively verifiable, it also has the addressee as its target. The addressee (i.e., the narrator’s wife) is ironically reprimanded by the narrator. This makes the addressee the target of the irony. As a consequence, the target is the addressee (i.e., the person to whom the remark is directed).

When the target of the ironic utterance is the addressee, you fill in A in column D5a on the “Form for irony factors”. You fill in nothing in column D5b.
Example 3: A third party is the target of the irony

(1) Yesterday, I discussed the capitals of the Dutch provinces with my wife.
(2) I thought to remember from elementary school
(3) that Master Pete always told me
(4) that Amsterdam is the capital of North-Holland.
(5) My wife said:
(6) “Master Pete was a really good geography teacher.”

In example 3, it becomes clear that the irony is aimed at Master Pete who was clearly not a good geography teacher. The target is thus neither the sender (i.e., the narrator’s wife) nor the addressee (i.e., the narrator), but a third party (Master Pete).

When the target of the ironic utterance is a third party, you fill in 3 in column D5a on the “Form for irony factors”. In column D5b, you fill in who the target of the irony is. In this case, it is Master Pete.

Example 4: A combination of sender, addressee and/or third party is the target

(1) Yesterday, I discussed the capitals of the Dutch provinces with my friend Pete.
(2) We agreed
(3) that Amsterdam was the capital of North-Holland.
(4) When I came home
(5) And told my wife,
(6) she said:
(7) “You guys probably studied geography!”

In example 4, the target is a group; “you guys”. This group consists of two persons; the narrator (who is also the addressee) and Pete (a third party). In this example, the target is thus a combination of addressee (i.e., the narrator) and third party (i.e., Pete).

When the target of the ironic utterance is a combination of sender, addressee and/or third party, you fill in C in column D5a on the “Form for irony factors”. In column D5b, you explain whom the combination of targets consists of. In this case, it is the addressee and a third party.
Factor 5: Relevance:
For an ironic utterance, it is important to see whether it is directly relevant to the text in which it is used. An ironic utterance is directly relevant when it is immediately clear (i.e., with a small thought step) how and why the ironic utterance is connected to the rest of the text. This means that the subject of the irony is already embedded in the co-text. An ironic utterance is indirectly relevant when you have to make a large or even multiple thought steps to connect the utterance to the rest of the text. Let’s illustrate this with some examples.

Example 1: Ironic utterance directly relevant
(1) Shameful
(2) Now only 1 Euro
(3) Computer Idee, does not make computers difficult.

In this example, utterance (1) is ironic. This utterance deals with the price of the magazine Computer Idee. This - according to the advertisement - low price is also the central theme of this advertisement. You only have to make a small thought step to be able to place the ironic utterance in the co-text. In other words, utterance (1) is directly relevant.

When the ironic utterance is directly relevant, you fill in DR in column D6a on the “Form for irony factors”. In column D6b, you explain why the ironic utterance is directly relevant.

Example 2: Ironic utterance indirectly relevant
(1) Television will never be a medium of entertainment
(2) David Sarnoff, President RCA, 1955
(3) See the opportunities
(4) that others fail to grasp.
(5) Advertisers [sub 6] call 023-3463483
(6) who see the opportunities
The first utterance of the *Sprout* advertisement is ironic. The advertiser (*Sprout*) distances itself from the literal evaluation of David Sarnoff's words. Of course, the advertiser (and probably the addressee as well) believes that television has actually become a medium of entertainment. It is remarkable that the advertisement itself is not concerned at all with the question whether television has become a medium of entertainment or not. In fact, the advertisement deals with the magazine *Sprout* that sees the opportunities that others fail to grasp. The ironic utterance (utterance 1) is therefore indirectly relevant. The reader has to make an extra inference to deduce what the relationship is between the irony and the subject of the advertisement (i.e., that Sarnoff is one of the “others” from utterance (4) and that television-as-an-entertainment-medium is the opportunity he failed to grasp). In other words, the subject of the ironic utterance is not directly embedded in the co-text: the ironic utterance is not directly about the subject of the text. At least one extra inference is needed to be able to place the ironic utterance in the rest of the text: the ironic utterance is indirectly relevant.

*When the ironic utterance is indirectly relevant, you fill in IR in column D6a on the “Form for irony factors”. In column D5b, you explain why the ironic utterance is indirectly relevant.*

**Comments**

In this column, you can place general comments or comments you could not make in another column. You can also use this column to explain why you did not consider an utterance as ironic.
Appendix IV:
Coding instruction irony markers

The ironic utterances that you are about to judge may have so-called irony markers. An irony marker is a clue in an ironic utterance that may alert the reader to the fact that that utterance is ironic (Attardo, 2000b).

I want to ask you to indicate which irony markers are used in every ironic utterance on the “form for irony markers”. If you believe that a specific ironic utterance does not have any irony markers, please fill in “no” at the question “Irony markers in the ironic utterance”. It is also possible that you cannot see why a specific utterance is marked as ironic. In that case, I would like to ask you to indicate this in the column “I do not see any irony”. In that case, it is not possible to analyze this specific utterance any further. You do not fill in the remaining columns for that utterance.

Here, you find a short instruction and a number of examples for every individual irony marker in the ironic utterance. Please read this instruction before you start coding. I would also want to ask you if you want to specify the specific irony marker in the Excel file. You do so in the column “If yes, please identify the XXX marker”.

PAY ATTENTION: I am aware that coding is a time-consuming activity. Do not code too much data in one session. Take regular breaks and try to spread out coding over several days.

Metaphor
A metaphor is a comparison in which an X is compared to or replaced with a Y: an X is (like) a Y. In the literal meaning, Y is not related to X. Examples are: “Pete is a giant” and “Pete is a bear”. In these cases, it is not true that Pete is literally a giant or a member of the species of bears. Nevertheless, these comparisons are made. In these kinds of examples, a metaphor is used.

Metaphors can function as irony markers when the context shows that these metaphors are actually inappropriate. Suppose that John always brags about Pete’s appearance. You have never met Pete. When you do meet him, it turns out that Pete is about 1.50 meters in height. You could respond with:

(1) Pete is a giant
In this example, it is clear that (1) is used ironically; Pete is no giant, but rather a small guy. The metaphor is thus an irony marker.

Hyperbole
A hyperbole is an exaggeration; when you use a hyperbole, you exaggerate the actual situation. Examples are “that is the stupidest thing that has ever been said by anybody” or “I feel like the happiest person in the entire universe”.

In both cases, it becomes clear that the actual situation is much exaggerated. It is very improbable that you can be certain that a specific remark is the stupidest remark that has ever been said by anybody. Besides, you cannot be certain that you are the happiest person in the entire universe.

In a certain context, hyperboles can also function as irony markers. Let’s suppose that you have an important job interview. Just before you want to enter the office of your prospective employer, a car passes by that drives through a puddle of mud. This gets you covered in mud. You could say:

(1) I feel like the happiest person in the entire world.

In this case, the hyperbole serves as an irony marker, because the speaker is not happy at all with the current situation.

Understatement
An understatement is the opposite of a hyperbole. In a hyperbole, a speaker exaggerates in the literal evaluation of a message. In doing so, the speaker claims more than what is actually the case. In an understatement, however, somebody says less in the literal evaluation that what is actually the case. Examples are “I am a bit upset” (whilst somebody is furious) and “I was a little late” (after arriving one-and-a-half hours late at a meeting).

Both examples demonstrate that an understatement is really the antithesis of an exaggeration. This implies that a person weakens a strong emotion or expression. An understatement can also be used ironically. If Peter makes one stupid remark after another, it is possible to say:

(1) Peter is a little bit of a genius.

Example (1) is both an understatement and an ironic utterance. After all, the addition of “a little bit” takes the edge of the word “genius”. In addition, Peter does not make clever remarks at all, which makes utterance (a) inappropriate; Peter is not a genius at all. This means that utterance (1) is also an example of irony.
Rhetorical question
A rhetorical question is not an actual question; it is a question on which the speaker does not expect to receive an answer, because the answer is already clear. This means that a rhetorical question is more of a standpoint than an actual question. Please consider the following examples:

(1) Do you think I am Santa Claus?
(2) Do you also enjoy having those kinds of guests at your home?

Question (1) is an insincere question. The speaker does not expect the receiver to seriously contemplate whether he or she believes the speaker to resemble Santa Claus. This also makes utterance (1) an example of irony; the speaker does not have an important characteristic in common with Santa Claus (unlike Santa, the speaker does not give away presents). This makes utterance (1) an example of irony.

Question (2) is also an insincere question. When the guests are very troublesome, the speaker (ironically) communicates that he does not like to have these guests at his home at all. Like utterance (1), utterance (2) is actually a statement.

Repetition
The name already says it: in a repetition, a statement is made more than once. This can happen in a variety of ways. Firstly, a statement can be repeated that was used earlier in the text. This means that the statement is a direct repetition of an earlier utterance from the text. An example of an ironic, direct repetition is:

(1) This movie was fantastic.
(2) No, really fantastic.
(3) FAN-TAS-TIC.

In utterances (1) – (3), the speaker repeats his earlier statement that the movie was fantastic. If it is possible to deduce from the co-text that the speaker did not like the movie at all, utterances (1) – (3) are ironic. From utterance (2) onwards, the repetition of the word “fantastic” serves as an irony marker. This piece thus includes two repetitions: in utterances (2) and (3).
Echoic use
Besides a repetition in co-text, it is also possible to repeat an utterance from outside the text; a (well-known) remark somebody made on an earlier occasion. This makes for a repetition of an utterance that cannot be found in the direct co-text. An example:

(1) While his whining children jump around in the living room
(2) and he feels a migraine attack coming up,
(3) father Pete sighs:
(4) “There’s no place like home.”

In utterance (4) of example (1), not the speaker’s words, but rather a well-known expression is repeated (“There’s no place like home.”). Since father Pete is going crazy from the situation in his own home, he does not consider “home” the best place in the world. This example is thus a repetition of a well-known proverb. This category thus also includes expressions (not literally mentioned in the co-text) in which the (well-known) words from somebody different from the speaker are repeated.

Exclamation
An exclamation can also indicate irony. An exclamation is usually an incomplete sentence followed by an exclamation mark. Examples of possible ironic exclamations include:

(1) What beautiful weather!
(2) How clever!
(3) Ah, Tuscany in May!

Utterances (1) en (2) are a response to the weather (utterance 1) or a certain remark or behavior (utterance 2). When the weather is very bad and the remark to which utterance (b) is a response is very stupid, utterances (1) and (2) are examples of ironic utterances.

Utterance (3) can also be an example of an ironic remark. Suppose that you invite me to come to your summer retreat in Tuscany. After all, you tell me that the weather in Tuscany in May is always beautiful. When I arrive in Tuscany, it rains and it storms. Supposedly enthusiastic, I exclaim utterance (3). Through this remark (which is also an implicit repetition of an earlier utterance), I distance myself from the claim that the weather in Tuscany in May is always beautiful.
Tag question
A tag question is a short question at the end of a descriptive sentence. In English, tag questions are used fairly often as in “You really showed him, didn’t you?”. In this example, didn’t you is the tag question.

In Dutch, the tag questions are not used as often, but they can be used with words such as “hè” and “toch” as in “It is great weather, hè? of “That’s impossible, toch?”. Both of these examples now include a tag question; without the tag questions “hè” and “toch”, the Dutch examples would be descriptive utterances. The inclusion of the tag question makes them into interrogative sentences.

A tag question can also mark irony. When it rains heavily, utterance (a) is ironic, because it implies that the weather is anything but great.

(1) It’s great weather, eh?

Focus Topicalization
Focus Topicalization is a reversal in word order compared to the word order of a “regular” sentence. This means that the normal word order of a sentence is deviated from. Words that are usually not at the beginning of a sentence, are placed up front. Possibly ironic examples are:

(1) A great help you are!
(2) A problem it is not.

Examples (1) and (2) emphasize the words “a great help” and “a problem”. If the word order would have been normal, the subject of the sentence (“you” and “it”, respectively) would have been placed in sentence initial position. Besides, utterances (1) and (2) can be examples of irony. When the person who is designated with the word “you” did something stupid and the object or concept that it referred to with “it” is a major problem, both utterances (1) and (2) are examples of irony.

Change of register
A change of register is actually a sudden change in style. An utterance draws your attention, because it (unexpectedly) uses words from another register: a relatively formal text suddenly uses informal words or vice versa. An ironic example is a mother who asks her 8-year-old son:

(1) Would you please be so kind as to clean your room sometime soon?
In this case, the language used in example (1) is much too formal and too polite given the situation. This means that utterance (1) includes words from two registers (i.e., mother wants her 8-year-old to do something and asking something in a very polite way) that do not match. This situation is referred to as a change of register.

**Capital letters**

Another way to mark irony is to write words in capital letters that are normally (i.e., according to Dutch spelling and grammar) written in a lower-case letter. Possibly ironic examples are:

1. Pete is a Real Gentleman.

In utterances a (Real Gentleman) and b (The Great Thinking Session) words are written with a capital letter that are usually written in a lower-case letter. If Pete is clearly not a real gentleman and “The Great Thinking Session” does not feature any actual thinking, the capital letters in utterances (1) and (2) are irony markers.

**Quotation marks**

Quotation marks can also be used to signal irony. Examples are:

1. The “freedom fighters” bombarded a hospital.
2. The “expert” will know the answer.
3. It was a “great” party.

The author of utterances (1), (2) and (3) questions the qualification of the person or object that is placed between quotation marks; the freedom fighters are actually terrorists (utterance 1), the expert probably does not know the answer (utterance 2) and the party was far from great (utterance 3). Quotation marks can thus serve as irony markers.

**Other punctuation marks**

Besides quotation marks, other punctuation marks may also signal irony. Examples are punctuation marks between square brackets (e.g., [!], [?], [?!]) or three dots (...). Examples of this type of irony marker are:

1. Fantastic ...
2. A great [?] idea.
Utterance (a) and (b) are ironic when the object referred to in a is not fantastic at all and the idea mentioned in b was not a good idea at all.

**Interjection**
An interjection is a discourse marker that is added to the text. This discourse marker may have the effect of a small imaginary dialogue in which the speaker distances herself from the previous speaker: an interjection is actually a small connector that announces something new. Examples include pfhew, well, yes, after all, etc.

(1) Well, that is a good idea.

Example (1) might illustrate an ironic utterance. When the object referred to with “that” does not represent a good idea, utterance (1) is an example of irony.

**Font type**
In some texts, the ironic utterance is placed in another font type of typography (e.g., a different color) from the rest of the text. A change in font type may thus be a clue that a text has an ironic utterance. It may serve as an irony marker.

**Emoticons**
An emoticon (also referred to as a smiley) such as 😊, :-) or ;-) may also mark irony. If an utterance has an emoticon, you fill in “yes” in this column.

**Other special signs**
Besides emoticons, a text can also have other special signs. These signs are also used in the running text. It is possible to consider symbols such as ®, © and ™. If special signs (no emoticons) are placed in an ironic utterance, you fill in “yes” in this column.

An extraordinary type of special sign is the so-called Junior Woodchucks Abbreviations. In the Disney stories of the Junior Woodchucks (a type of scouting organization to which Donald Duck’s nephews Huey, Dewey and Louie belong), an abbreviation can also form a word itself (e.g., W.H.A.D.A.L.O.T.T.A.J.A.R.G.O.N). This word then gives some information about the person or object it refers to. In the case of W.H.A.D.A.L.O.T.T.A.J.A.R.G.O.N, the title of one of the comic of the Junior Woodchucks, the title’s abbreviation tells you that the comic itself will feature a lot of jargon. When you encounter an abbreviation in which the abbreviation’s acronym also tells you something about the object that is abbreviated, you fill in “yes” in this column.
Diminutive
In some cases, an ironic utterance features a diminutive form. This diminutive can also help in recognizing the irony. A Dutch diminutive usually ends “-je” or a variation thereof (“-tje”, “-etje”, “kje”, “pje”). You can think of words such as boekje, boontje, jongetje, woninkje or bloesempje. When an ironic utterance has a diminutive, you fill in “yes” in this column.

Crossed-out text
In a number of cases, both the literal and the intended evaluation of an ironic utterance are included in the ironic utterance itself. It is possible to distinguish between the two, because one of the evaluations is crossed out (either the literal or the intended). This implies that crossed-out text may be a clue that an utterance is ironic. You fill in “yes” in this column when an ironic utterance has crossed-out text. An example of such an (ironic) utterance is:

(1) The terrorists freedom fighters made a bomb attack.

Different marker
It is possible that you believe that something in an ironic utterance serves as an irony marker, but that you cannot place it in one of the mentioned categories. In that case, you indicate the marker here. Besides, you argue (1) how you would describe this new marker and (2) the exact text that forms this marker.
Appendix V:
Coding instruction irony factors and markers –
second round

Dear coder,

In the second round of coding, you consider the items on which you differed in opinion with the second coder concerning one of the irony factors or markers in the ironic utterance. You have been given a filtered data file that only includes the utterances on which you differed in opinion with the other coder on at least one factor or marker. For every utterance, you only need to consider the factor(s) and marker(s) on which you differed in opinion with the other coder.

Let’s give two examples. In the data file for irony factors, you only need to consider the irony factor of target for the first utterance “Are those Germans so stupid then”. After all, on all other factors for this utterance, you agreed. For the second utterance (Oh no, eh?) you disagree on the factors of target and relevance. For this utterance, you then look at these two factors.

Let’s give an example about the markers: For the first utterance (Are those Germans so stupid then), you only look at Focus Topicalization, because you agree on all other markers for this particular utterance.

For the irony factors and markers on which you differed in opinion, you reconsider your and the second coder’s motivations. Then, you decide out of four possible codings:

- 1 = I stick to my original coding.
- 2 = I have reconsidered my opinion: the second coder is right.
- 3 = I think that something can be said for both our positions.
- 4 = I have reconsidered my coding into yet another coding, namely (This new coding can be placed into the column “Remarks”).

PAY ATTENTION:
I am aware that coding is a time-consuming activity. Do not code too much data in one session. Take regular breaks and try to spread out coding over several days.

You do this analysis independently from the other coders. Should you have any questions, please send an e-mail. Good luck!
Appendix VI:
Coding instruction co-textual markers of irony

What is irony?
An ironic utterance is always evaluative. When an utterance is called ironic, it should be possible to deduce two evaluations: a literal and an intended evaluation. The two evaluations are contraries. This means that one of the two evaluations (either literal or intended) is always positive. The other evaluation (intended or literal) is negative. Let’s clarify this with two examples.

A classic example of irony is the utterance “Great weather, eh?” when it rains. In a literal evaluation of this utterance, it seems as if the sender sincerely believes the weather to be great. The intended evaluation is that the sender does not consider the weather as great at all (but rather bad). In sum, it is possible to construct an evaluation scale for this utterance with the literal and intended evaluations.

Evaluation scale: “Great weather, eh?”

Evaluation about the weather

Great (Literal evaluation) 0 Bad (Intended evaluation)

Scale 1: Evaluation about the weather

Even when an utterance does not have an (evaluative) adjective, it can be ironic. The following lines are opening paragraph and the final two sentences of a DVD review of the film MUST LOVE DOGS.

(1) Sarah Nolan ([Diane] Lane) is a kindergarten teacher
(2) in Hollywood code a gigantic clue
(3) that this woman is selflessness incarnate
(4) but she is on her own nevertheless.
(5) Her boyfriend traded Sarah [sub 6] in for a younger specimen already over forty years of age
(7) Her impossibly amiable sisters want
(9) So they put an advertisement on a dating web site.
(10) Will she succeed in finding the man of her dreams? [...] 
(20) The movie is so cramped with dull clichés
(21) that even Cusack [sub 22] drowns in sugariness.
(22) one of the most gifted actors for this particular genre
(23) Just ignore this tearjerker.

Utterance (10) is ironic. In the literal evaluation of utterance (10), it seems as if the narrator sincerely wonders whether the character Sarah Nolan will succeed in finding the man of her dreams. This implies that the movie’s plot is presented as unpredictable. If we read utterance (10) ironically – based on utterances (21) – (24) – it means that the plot is very predictable. The reader already knows that the plot follows the cliché of the romantic comedy film. This means that Sarah will of course succeed in finding the man of her dreams. In sum, it is possible to construct an evaluation scale with the literal and intended evaluations.

![Evaluation Scale of Must Love Dogs](286)

**Irony markers**

How does a reader know that an utterance is ironic? Sometimes, authors of ironic texts can give clues in the ironic utterances themselves: so-called irony markers. An irony marker is an element of an utterance that may alert a reader to the fact that an utterance is ironic. When a party was not nice, it is possible to say ironically

(a) The party was nice.
Utterance (a) is an example of an ironic utterance without irony markers. It is possible to include an irony marker to this utterance which increases the difference between the literal and intended evaluation: a hyperbole:

(b) The party was fantastic.

Utterance (b) contains an evaluation of the same valence as utterance (a). However, since a hyperbole is added (fantastic instead of nice), the ironic utterance is marked. Another irony marker is repetition:

(c) The party was nice. No, really nice. NICE!

Repetition of the word ‘nice’ in utterance (c) alerts a reader to the use of irony. This can thus also be considered as an irony marker.

**Ironic markers in the co-text**

An utterance cannot be ironic in isolation. Besides the ironic utterance itself, the co-text (i.e., the non-ironic utterances in a text) can provide clues that irony may be used. These clues are called irony markers in the co-text; the subject of this analysis. The presence of irony markers in the co-text may bring the reader into an “ironic mood” which may make it easier to find irony. Let’s reconsider the opening lines of the DVD review of MUST LOVE DOGS:

(1) Sarah Nolan ([Diane] Lane) is a kindergarten teacher
(2) in Hollywood code a gigantic clue
(3) that this woman is selflessness incarnate
(4) but she is on her own nevertheless.
(5) Her boyfriend traded Sarah [sub 6] in for a younger specimen
(6) already over forty years of age
(7) Her impossibly amiable sisters want
(8) that Sarah starts meeting new men.
(9) So they put an advertisement on a dating web site.
(10) Will she succeed in finding the man of her dreams?

The first lines of the text already give a number of clues that can bring the reader into an ironic mood. Markers such as “Hollywood code” and “gigantic clue” (utterance 2) already indicate that something is going on with this movie. “Selflessness incarnate” (utterance 3) and “impossible amiable sisters” (utterance 7) are other clues that the reviewer considers the movie a cliché and the plot predictable.
I would like to ask you to indicate the irony markers in the co-text in the enclosed Word file. Use the marker for this task ( ). The ironic utterances (indicated in bold in the file “Corpus divided into units of analysis) may be ignored. After reading a text, you copy the markers to the Excel file and you fill in the markers in the lines of the utterances from which they come. You also give a short motivation why you considered something as a co-textual irony marker.

It is possible that one co-textual utterance has two elements that can be considered as co-textual markers (e.g., “Hollywood code” and “gigantic clue” in utterance 2). In that case, you list both markers as two separate markers (in the Excel file: markers 1 and 2).

PAY ATTENTION:
I am aware that coding is a time-consuming activity. Do not code too much data in one session. Take regular breaks and try to spread out coding over several days.
Appendix VII:
Coding instruction co-textual markers of irony
second round

Dear coder,

In the second round of coding, you reconsider the utterances on which you differed in opinion with the other coder. A file is attached to this instruction in which the utterances on which you differed in opinion are marked in yellow. Please look at every utterances that is marked in yellow. You can thus ignore all utterances that are not marked in yellow for this analysis.

If you differed in opinion about multiple markers in one utterance, then they are listed in one row and are all marked in yellow. You can find an example in row 143 of the Excel file, in which there is a difference in opinion about three markers: “team creative”, “blockbuster” and “folks”. I would like to ask you to give your judgment on all three of these possible markers. If, in a specific utterance, you agreed on one marker and disagreed on another marker, the marker you disagreed on is displayed first. An example is row 36 of the Excel file in which there was a difference in opinion on “musical ancestors”, but not about “cultural oafs”.

For co-textual markers on which you differed in opinion, you reconsider your and the second coder’s motivations. Then, you decide out of four possible codings:

  - 1 = I stick to my original coding.
  - 2 = I have reconsidered my opinion: the second coder is right.
  - 3 = I think that something can be said for both our positions.
  - 4 = I have reconsidered my coding into yet another coding, namely (This new coding can be placed into the column “Remarks”).

Please consider the previously given definition of irony markers in the co-text whilst coding. The co-text consists of the non-ironic utterances of a text. Like in ironic utterances, the co-text may contain clues that the author plans on using irony. These clues are referred to as “irony markers in the co-text” and could help to bring the reader into an ironic mood which makes it easier to detect the irony.
Please consider the (parts of) utterances that are marked as irony markers in the co-text with care before you determine if these (parts of utterances) can be considered as irony markers in the co-text or not.

**PAY ATTENTION:**
I am aware that coding is a time-consuming activity. Do not code too many data in one session. Take regular breaks and try to spread out coding over several days.

Good luck!
Appendix VIII:
Coding instruction verbal irony and visuals

Enclosed, you find a file with a number of texts with ironic utterances. I want to ask you to score these ironic utterances on a number of visual aspects in the attached Excel file “Form for analysis of visuals”. Below, you find a short description of the visual aspects. Pay attention: I am aware that coding is a time-consuming activity. Do not code too much data in one session (15 images max.). Take regular breaks and try to spread out coding over several days.

1. Literal and intended evaluation
Before you score the ironic utterance and visuals, it is first important to look at the ironic utterance itself. Why is it ironic? To do this, you give the literal and intended evaluation of the ironic utterance. As you know, the literal and intended evaluations of the irony are contraries. They can both be placed on the same evaluation scale. In order to qualify as ironic, one of the evaluations is positive and the other is negative.

Let's take the utterance “Great weather, eh?” when it rains as an example. The literal evaluation of this utterance is “It's great weather”. The intended evaluation is “It is bad weather”. Both evaluations can be placed on an evaluation scale about the weather.

Evaluation scale: “Great weather, eh?”

Evaluation about the weather

In these two columns in the Excel file, you give your interpretation of the literal and intended evaluation of the irony. To help you, the Excel file shows you the genre of the specific texts:

- **Commercial advertisement:** Advertisement from a commercial company, often used to alert the reader to a specific product or service.
**Degree of certainty**

In this column, you argue how certain you are that a specific utterance is ironic or not. To do this, you have three possibilities. It is possible that, during reading, you immediately recognized a specific utterance as ironic. In this case, you fill in “To me, it is perfectly clear that this utterance is ironic.” It is also possible that you did not consider a specific utterance as ironic during reading. However, when you saw that the utterance was marked as ironic, you could provide a meaningful ironic interpretation of the utterance. In this case, you fill in “I understand that somebody else would consider this utterance as ironic, although I did not see it at first”.

It is also possible that you do not consider a specific utterance as ironic. Even after considering why a specific utterance was marked as ironic, you did not see why the utterance was marked as ironic. In this case, you fill in “I still do not see why this utterance is marked as ironic”. In the column “Remarks”, you argue why you do not see the irony in an utterance and how you interpret the utterance.

**2. Visual marker: yes or no**

After you indicate how you interpreted an utterance in the text as ironic, you can continue to analyze the visual components of the message. Firstly, it is important to see if and, if so, how a visual element serves as an irony marker. Therefore, this first step helps in arguing whether the image serves as a visual irony marker or not.

A visual element serves as an irony marker when it helps in detecting and/ or solving the irony. This implies than an element of the
image should help you in determining the literal or intended evaluation of an ironic utterance. Let's illustrate this by means of two examples:

Figure 1 shows an advertisement for Autodrop with an image of the advertised products: four containers of Autodrop. The ironic utterance in the slogan literally claims that Autodrop is so tasty that it should be banned. The intended evaluation is that Autodrop is so tasty that it should be banned. The image displays the product. Based on this image, you cannot say anything about the question whether Autodrop is tasty or not. No elements from the image help to increase comprehension of the ironic utterance: there is thus no visual irony marker in this case. In these kinds of cases, you fill in “No”. Then, you argue in the column labeled “Explain” why you believe that the image does not contain a visual irony marker. You can then stop analyzing the image in relation to this particular ironic utterance.

A second example comes from Vox, the magazine of Radboud University Nijmegen, of September 18, 2008 (Figure 2). An article is entitled “Finally, into student housing!” The literal evaluation of this claim is that it is a good thing for new students to move into student housing. The intended evaluation is that the experience of student housing is not always nice. The image shows two female students who stay at a camping site. This is not presented as an attractive option. This means that elements from the image help to solve the irony in this case: this image does contain a visual irony marker. In these kinds of cases, you fill in “Yes”. You also explain your choice.
3. Visual irony marker: Literal or intended evaluation

We just concluded that an element from an image works as an irony marker. The next question is how the image achieves this. Theoretically, an image can be concerned with two things: the literal or intended evaluation of the irony.

When pictorial elements are concerned with the literal evaluation of the irony, these elements strengthen the literal evaluation of the irony. This expands the literal evaluation or makes the literal evaluation improbable. An example can be found in Figure 3, an advertisement for Wehkamp. Even though it seems as if the advertisement was issued by the “Committee for Small Dogs”, the advertisement was actually made by Wehkamp itself. The advertisement literally contains a negative utterance about the size of the Wehkamp catalogue (Down with the thick Wehkamp catalogue!), supported by the fake argument that the thick Wehkamp catalogue causes injuries in small dogs when they get the catalogue on their heads. The image illustrates this argument with a small dog with a relatively large turban of bandages on its head.

An element of the image – the dog with its bandages – thus illustrates the literal evaluation of the ironic utterance. It shows why the non-existent Committee for Small Dogs would argue that the Wehkamp catalogue should decrease in size. The image thus literally contains an element that makes it possible to complain about the size of the Wehkamp catalogue. This means that pictorial elements in Figure 3 illustrate the literal evaluation of the ironic utterance. In these cases, you fill in “Literal” in this column. You then argue in the column “Explain” why you believe that pictorial elements strengthen the literal evaluation of the ironic utterance.

When the visual marker strengthens the intended evaluation of the irony, then the image contradicts the literal evaluation of the ironic utterance. You can then see a contrast between the literal evaluation of the ironic utterance and an element from the image. An example can be seen in Figure 2, in which going into student housing is portrayed as something negative. This directly contradicts the positive claim in the utterance: the pictorial elements in Figure 2 illustrate the intended evaluation of the ironic utterances. In these cases, you fill in “Intended” in this column. You then argue in the column “Explain” why you believe that pictorial elements strengthen the intended evaluation of the ironic utterance.
4. Which aspect of an image serves as an irony marker?
We now identified whether a pictorial element serves as an irony marker or not. We also determined how that pictorial element can help in identifying the irony (via the literal or intended evaluation). The question that is to be determined now is how the image can help in detecting irony. To answer this question, we analyze on the basis of which aspects the image can be seen as an irony marker.

4.1 Choice of characters
The first question is whether the choice of characters (both animated as "real" characters) serves as an irony marker. What is the influence of the choice of this specific character on strengthening the literal or intended evaluation of the irony? In this category, you only judge the characters themselves. Their body language, facial expression, objects etc. are all dealt with in subsequent categories. In Figure 2, the two female students are the characters. Even though they are relevant to the situation, the choice for these particular students does not make the irony easier to solve. In Figure 4, the choice of characters does serve as an irony marker. We see the tail of a cat extending from a bag of Frolic dog food. In this way, the literal evaluation of the ironic utterance (So tasty, don’t tell the dog; i.e., the product is too tasty and thus bad) is strengthened. Even cats cannot get enough from this particular brand of dog food and open every bag they can get access to. In this Figure, the choice of a certain character (i.e., a cat) thus serves as an irony marker.

If you believe that one or more of the characters serve as irony markers, you fill in "yes" in this column. If you believe that the choice of characters does not work as an irony marker, you fill in “no”. If the image does not have any characters, you of course also fill in “no”. If you choose “yes”, you also explain your choice.
4.2 Position, body language and/or facial expression of characters

In this column, you indicate whether the position, body language and/or the facial expression of the character(s) serves as an irony marker. Considering the VOX example in Figure 2, it becomes clear that the body language of the two female students serves as a visual irony marker. After all, the utterance “Finally, into student housing” suggests happiness about student housing. However, we see that the students’ facial expression and body language suggests disappointment. This can be concluded from the facial expressions (left student: head angrily pointed downwards, right student: bored looked upwards) and body language (left student: closed position with arms crossed; right student: supports head with one hand, sits uncomfortably).

If you believe that the position, body language and/or facial expression of the characters serves as irony markers, you fill in “yes” in this column. If you believe that the position, body language and/or facial expression of characters does not work as an irony marker, you fill in “no”. If the image does not have any characters, you of course also fill in “no”. If you choose “yes”, you also explain your choice.

4.3 Clothing

Clothing may also help in detecting irony. If the clothing of one of the characters helps to strengthen the literal evaluation or to come to the intended evaluation, this aspect can also be called an irony marker. In Figure 2, this is not the case. The students wear normal, everyday clothes. In Figure 5, however, clothing does play an important part. In this (made-up) example, you see that Bols (a brand of jenever) is literally presented as a contemporary, modern choice. The intended evaluation is that Bols is a traditional and familiar choice. The image contradicts the literal evaluation of the ironic evaluation: we see a couple in old-fashioned, traditional costumes from Volendam. This makes that the image serves as an irony marker.

If you believe that the clothing of the characters serves as irony markers, you fill in “yes” in this column. If you believe that the clothing of characters does not work as an irony marker,
you fill in “no”. If the image does not have any characters, you of course also fill in “no”. If you choose “yes”, you also explain your choice.

4.4 Objects
In this column, you indicate whether you believe that objects serve as an irony marker in the image. This is the case in the Wehkamp example in Figure 3; the word ‘this’ in the utterance “This can never happen again” refers to the turban the dog has on its head. At the same time, it is absurd that a dog would have such a turban of bandages on its head in the first place. The object (turban on the dog’s head) thus serves as an irony marker.

If you believe that an object serves as irony markers, you fill in “yes” in this column. If you believe that the object does not work as an irony marker, you fill in “no”. If the image does not have any objects, you of course also fill in “no”. If you choose “yes”, you also explain your choice.

4.5 Location and setting
In this column, you indicate whether the location or setting of the image (i.e., the place in which the image is situated) serves as an irony marker. This is the case in the example in Figure 2: a contrast can be observed between the phrase “into student housing” and the location in which the picture is or seems to be taken. Based on the picture alone, it is unclear whether the picture is taken on an official camping site or on a regular meadow. In any case, this location in the open air stands in contrast to the phrase “student housing”, which would at the very least suggest a location inside a building with a roof. This opposition between the setting implied in the utterance and the setting that is displayed in the image make that the location also serves as an irony marker in this image.

If you believe that a location or setting serves as irony markers, you fill in “yes” in this column. If you believe that a location or setting does not work as an irony marker, you fill in “no”. If you choose “yes”, you also explain your choice.

4.6 Lighting and color
Lighting and color of an image could also serve as a visual irony marker. Pay attention: you should fill in nothing in this category if a specific color only draws your attention. (You should not fill in something like: “I notice that, in this image, a lot of red/ blue/ yellow/ lilac is used). You only fill in something in this category if color and lighting guide your interpretation in the way you wrote down in 2 and 3.
A (made-up) example in which color serves as an irony marker can be found in Figure 6. The ironic utterance “No modern cars as well!” in the advertisement for Garage Janssen is accompanied by an image of an old Chevrolet (definitely not a modern car). The image is set in a red tone; a red filter is placed on the image, which can also be seen on very old photos. Since the image is presented in this red tone, color is an irony marker in this image. The color combination is mainly associated with old photos which contrast with the “modern” cars which are literally evoked by the text.

If you believe that lighting or color serves as irony markers, you fill in “yes” in this column. If you believe that lighting or color does not work as an irony marker, you fill in “no”. If you choose “yes”, you also explain your choice.

4.7 Framing
Framing is related to the issue of what we do and do not see in an image. Every image is placed in a kind of frame: we do see something and we do not see other things. What is important can for instance not be seen in the image, may be placed in one of the corner or can be placed in the center. A (made-up) example of the last situation can be seen in Figure 7. In this made-up advertisement for clothing store Sting, Mickey Mouse’s pants (from 1935) can be seen, accompanied with the ironic utterance (Nice, fashion from last season!). The chosen framing immediately draws attention to the pants, because only Mickey’s shoes, pants and legs are shown. This then contrasts with the new Levi’s and Wranglers, two brands of jeans that are advertised in the final sentence.
If you believe that framing serves as an irony marker, you fill in “yes” in this column. If you believe that framing does not work as an irony marker, you fill in “no”. If you choose “yes”, you also explain your choice.

4.8 Depth and sharpness
Besides lighting and color, depth and sharpness of a photo is a cinematographic technique. Here, the question is not if an image has depth or sharpness, but rather the question whether depth and sharpness of an image works as an irony marker. The (made-up) example in Figure 8 for instance shows a photo of a female face that is out of focus with the caption “That is clear!”. In this example, the image sharpness helps in interpreting the utterance as ironic. Since the image is out of focus, it can be concluded that sharpness influences the interpretation of the ironic utterance in Figure 8.

If you believe that depth and sharpness serve as an irony marker, you fill in “yes” in this column. If you believe that depth and sharpness do not work as an irony marker, you fill in “no”. If you choose “yes”, you also explain your choice.

4.9 Camera angle
The camera angle from which a photo is taken is another cinematographic technique. For this issue, you ask yourself the question whether this choice of camera angle can be interpreted as a cinematographic technique. Again, this is only the case if you believe that the camera angle (the position from which the photo is taken) has a certain effect which makes it possible to consider that camera angle as an irony marker. A (made-up) example can be seen in Figure 9. In this Alfa Romeo MiTo advertisement, you see the ironic utterance “Think small!”. The camera angle of the advertisement helps in interpreting this utterance as ironic. After all, the picture is taken from a low camera angle (frog’s perspective), which makes the car seem relatively big. The contrast between the literal utterance and the image (caused by the camera angle) makes it easier to interpret the utterance as ironic. The camera angle thus serves as an irony marker in this image.

"Dat is duidelijk!"
of toch liever een bril van Pearle?

Figure 8: Depth and sharpness as an irony marker
If you believe that the camera angle serves as an irony marker, you fill in “yes” in this column. If you believe that the camera angle does not work as an irony marker, you fill in “no”. If you choose “yes”, you also explain your choice.

The final cinematographic technique is focalization. This means that you wonder whether the image takes the perspective of somebody or something (which you may know from novels). Again, you only list a possible focalization (narrative perspective) if you believe that it has a certain effect in seeing the image as an irony marker. An example is the BasiqAir advertisement in Figure 10. The ironic utterance is “Sorry that we are so cheap”. Besides two puns (the word ‘we’ can refer both to BasiqAir and to the Dutch, and the word cheap can refer to low prices as well as a lack of manners), this utterance is also ironic; BasiqAir offers an insincere apology for its “cheapness”. The image – which deals with various ways of cheapness – can only be interpreted with an assumption about focalization; the audience sees the image through the eyes of “we” (in this case, the Dutch). Like the Dutch do not have to be embarrassed about their eating habits, BasiqAir should not be embarrassed about their low prices.

If you believe that focalization serves as an irony marker, you fill in “yes” in this column. If you believe that focalization does not work as an irony marker, you fill in “no”. If you choose “yes”, you also explain your choice.

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**Figure 9: Camera angle as an irony marker**

**Figure 10: Focalization as an irony marker**

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4.10 Focalization

The final cinematographic technique is focalization. This means that you wonder whether the image takes the perspective of somebody or something (which you may know from novels). Again, you only list a possible focalization (narrative perspective) if you believe that it has a certain effect in seeing the image as an irony marker. An example is the BasiqAir advertisement in Figure 10. The ironic utterance is “Sorry that we are so cheap”. Besides two puns (the word ‘we’ can refer both to BasiqAir and to the Dutch, and the word cheap can refer to low prices as well as a lack of manners), this utterance is also ironic; BasiqAir offers an insincere apology for its “cheapness”. The image – which deals with various ways of cheapness – can only be interpreted with an assumption about focalization; the audience sees the image through the eyes of “we” (in this case, the Dutch). Like the Dutch do not have to be embarrassed about their eating habits, BasiqAir should not be embarrassed about their low prices.

If you believe that focalization serves as an irony marker, you fill in “yes” in this column. If you believe that focalization does not work as an irony marker, you fill in “no”. If you choose “yes”, you also explain your choice.
Remarks
Should you have any remarks about the text or about the image that you could not write down somewhere else, you can use this column.
Appendix IX:
Coding instruction verbal irony and visuals – second round

Dear coder,

In the second round of coding, you consider the items on which you differed in opinion with the second coder. In the Excel file that will be sent to you by e-mail, you will find your coding and that of a second coder (Coder 2). The items on which you differed in opinion with the second coder are marked in yellow in the Excel file. This means that you have to reconsider all items marked in yellow. You can skip the items that are NOT marked in yellow.

For the items on which you differed in opinion, you reconsider your and the second coder’s motivations. Then, you decide out of four possible codings:

1. 1 = I stick to my original coding.
2. 2 = I have reconsidered my opinion: the second coder is right.
3. 3 = I think that something can be said for both our positions.
4. 4 = I have reconsidered my coding into yet another coding, namely (This new coding can be placed into the column “Remarks”).

One remark that should be made beforehand is that, when you differed in opinion with the second coder on the question whether a visual marked the irony or not (Visual marker yes/ no), the entire row is marked in yellow. In case you agree with the second coder whether the visual does or does not mark irony, this influences all other codings for that particular item.

You do this analysis independently from the other coder. Should you have any questions, please send an e-mail.

Good luck!
Appendix X:
Coding instruction for perceived complexity of irony

Dear coder,

Thank you for participating in this research. I would like to ask you to analyze a number of texts. The analysis of these texts is about recognizing irony and judging these ironic remarks. Before you can start with this task, it is firstly important to define irony.

An ironic utterance is always evaluative. When an utterance is called ironic, it should be possible to deduce two evaluations: a literal and an intended evaluation. The two evaluations are contraries. This means that one of the two evaluations (either literal or intended) is always positive. The other evaluation (intended or literal) is negative. Let’s clarify this with two examples.

A classic example of irony is the utterance “Great weather, eh?” when it rains. In a literal evaluation of this utterance, it seems as if the sender sincerely believes the weather to be great. The intended evaluation is that the sender does not consider the weather as great at all (but rather bad). In sum, it is possible to construct an evaluation scale for this utterance with the literal and intended evaluations.

**Evaluation scale: “Great weather, eh?”**

**Evaluation about the weather**

![Evaluation Diagram]

Scale 1: Evaluation about the weather
Even when an utterance does not have an (evaluative) adjective, it can be ironic. The following lines are opening paragraph and the final two sentences of a DVD review of the film MUST LOVE DOGS.

(1) Sarah Nolan ([Diane] Lane) is a kindergarten teacher
(2) in Hollywood code a gigantic clue
(3) that this woman is selflessness incarnate
(4) but she is on her own nevertheless.
(5) Her boyfriend traded Sarah [sub 6] in for a younger specimen
(6) already over forty years of age
(7) Her impossibly amiable sisters want
(8) that Sarah starts meeting new men.
(9) So they put an advertisement on a dating web site.
(10) **Will she succeed in finding the man of her dreams?** […]
(20) The movie is so cramped with dull clichés
(21) that even Cusack [sub 22] drowns in sugariness.
(22) one of the most gifted actors for this particular genre
(23) Just ignore this tearjerker.

Utterance (10) is ironic. In the literal evaluation of utterance (10), it seems as if the narrator sincerely wonders whether the character Sarah Nolan will succeed in finding the man of her dreams. This implies that the movie’s plot is presented as unpredictable. If we read utterance (10) ironically – based on utterances (21) – (24) – it means that the plot is very predictable. The reader already knows that the plot follows the cliché of the romantic comedy film. This means that Sarah will of course succeed in finding the man of her dreams. In sum, it is possible to construct an evaluation scale with the literal and intended evaluations.

![Evaluation of the plot of MUST LOVE DOGS](image)

Scale 2: Evaluation of the plot of MUST LOVE DOGS
What does the task look like?
You get to read every text for two times. The first time, the text is presented normally in the booklet “The entire corpus”. This means that you get to read a text in a way as you would read it in a normal situation. Every text contains at least one ironic utterance. After you read the text in normal format, you open the booklet labeled “The entire corpus – divided into units of analysis”. In this version of the text, a number of utterances are printed in bold. These are ironic utterances. You give a judgment of these utterances printed in bold face with the following questions. You fill in your answers in the attached Access database.

1. When I read the text, it was immediately clear that this utterance was ironic.
   Complete disagreement 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Complete agreement

2. The ironic utterance was very difficult to comprehend:
   Complete disagreement 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Complete agreement

3. It took me a while to identify this utterance as ironic:
   Complete disagreement 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Complete agreement

4. The ironic utterance was obvious:
   Complete disagreement 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Complete agreement

I am aware that coding is a time-consuming activity. Do not code too much data in one session. Take regular breaks and try to spread out coding over several days.
Appendix XI:
Stimuli Experiment 1

1. Chamber of Commerce
Without your asking for it and without purchasing a specific service, an entrepreneur is obliged to pay quite an advance payment as contribution to the institution of the Chamber of Commerce (CoC) each year. In the past, I set up two foundations and two private limited companies (PLCs). For both the foundations and the PLCs, I have to pay a steep amount to the CoC, while nothing is done in return. To put it even stronger, when, in an exceptional case, you need a certificate from the CoC’s register, you even have to pay for it. STIMULUS SENTENCE.

A. Ketelaars, Reuver

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Irony</th>
<th>Non-irony</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explicitly evaluative</td>
<td>Ah well, great that the CoC also works for the common guy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicitly evaluative</td>
<td>Ah well, the CoC apparently works for the common guy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Driver’s license
To renew my driver’s license, I waited at city hall for forty-five minutes with good and well-taken passport photos. Once it was my turn, I was told that the photos did not meet the required standards. So, I made new passport photos. I waited for twenty minutes at the photographer’s and another forty-five minutes at city hall. The result? A driver’s license, the size of a credit card! Again, I had to wait for half an hour to pick it up. STIMULUS SENTENCE

R. Vervoert, Woudrichem

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Irony</th>
<th>Non-irony</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explicitly evaluative</td>
<td>In sum, great that my municipality holds customer service in high regard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicitly evaluative</td>
<td>In sum, my municipality holds customer service in high regard.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Volunteer teachers

Last year, I spent three months trying to apply for a voluntary position as a teacher of Dutch for foreigners. Fifteen years ago, I had studied Dutch Language and Culture for five years and last year, I wanted to be socially active: teaching people who need to pass the Basic Integration Exam seemed like a good idea. Impossible! I did not have the necessary qualifications. And the only way to get them was to redo my entire studies. From next year onwards – so I read in yesterday’s newspaper – the qualifications for these types of voluntary jobs are revised: now, you will only need to present yourself as a volunteer. STIMULUS SENTENCE

G. de Bakker, Amsterdam

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Irony</th>
<th>Non-irony</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explicitly evaluative</td>
<td>Really, this is an excellent solution for the shortage of qualified teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicitly evaluative</td>
<td>Really, this will quickly solve the shortage of qualified teachers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Childfree zone

A group of deliberately childless people from our neighborhood suggests to introduce childless hours at the local Albert Heijn supermarket. In this way, they can shop calmly and undisturbed. You see, children make a lot of noise and disturb these people in their grocery shopping. It is only tremendously difficult to plan your grocery shopping for people like me who have children. And all this, whilst we, large families, actually need a lot of groceries. STIMULUS SENTENCE

L. Janssen, Delft

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Irony</th>
<th>Non-irony</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explicitly evaluative</td>
<td>A fantastic proposal from the childless people to keep children out of the supermarket, which will certainly be supported by everybody.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicitly evaluative</td>
<td>This proposal from the childless people to keep children out of the supermarket will certainly be supported by everybody.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Traffic rules

Policemen complain about mandatory refresher courses about their knowledge of traffic rules. They believe that such a course takes too much time and that it is unnecessary. Since late, however, I notice something particular. I often see that clearly recognizable police cars ignore the traffic rules: they do not signal, they drive above the maximum speed or they needlessly run a traffic light. Last week, I even saw that two motorcycle policemen almost ran into an elderly couple on a pedestrian crossing. STIMULUS SENTENCE

C. Roelants, Gouda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Irony</th>
<th>Non-irony</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explicitly evaluative</td>
<td>As I said, this type of policeman performs excellently without such a mandatory refresher course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicitly evaluative</td>
<td>As I said, this type of policeman definitely needs such a mandatory refresher course.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Foreign aid

As long as I can remember, our government gives a large sum of money as foreign aid to fight hunger and poverty in Africa. However, you cannot turn on the TV without seeing images of Africans who massacre each other with the most modern weapons. Even children have to fight. How do they pay for all this? With our foreign aid! Even the most violent regimes and biggest dictators receive our money to finance their wars. STIMULUS SENTENCE.

T. van Herwijnen, Ede

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Irony</th>
<th>Non-irony</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explicitly evaluative</td>
<td>A great success, foreign aid to Africa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicitly evaluative</td>
<td>Just carry on with that foreign aid to Africa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicitly evaluative</td>
<td>Don't carry on with that foreign aid to Africa.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Insurance companies

Insurance companies stubbornly continue to deceive their insurance-premium-paying customers. Of course, employees of insurance companies already know it: it is not allowed to refuse declarations, even when the terms of the policy claim that they were submitted too late. They can put into the insurance policy that declarations have to be submitted within one or two
years, but this is not allowed according to the civil code. That clearly states that insurance companies cannot lay down a time limit at all. 

W. Burema, Berkel en Rodenrijs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Irony</th>
<th>Non-irony</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Explicitly evaluative</strong></td>
<td>Great that insurance companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>apparently follow the civil code to the letter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implicitly evaluative</strong></td>
<td>Insurance companies apparently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>always follow the civil code to the letter.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Fish

Yesterday, the newspaper reported on groundbreaking scientific research which showed that fish suffer pain when they are dissected alive and their intestines are removed without anesthesia. Please imagine that this would happen to you. That your intestines are removed without anesthesia. And now it is apparently scientifically demonstrated that a fish is then in pain.

B. Meijer, Emmen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Irony</th>
<th>Non-irony</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Explicitly evaluative</strong></td>
<td>Really, that is truly groundbreaking research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implicitly evaluative</strong></td>
<td>Really, we did not know that yet.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Laptops

The seventh grade of high school in my place of residence uses only laptops, I read in yesterday’s newspaper. In my mind, I wander to my own time at the mulo [an older form of high school, CB]. Teacher Mutter told beautiful stories about his childhood in Indonesia every Friday afternoon. He sat relaxed behind his lectern and treated us to the most beautiful adventures, filled with suspense and delivered very vividly. But nowadays, there are laptops with lots of documents, programs, games and other fuss.

C. den Dulk, Horst.
### Irony vs. Non-irony

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explicitly evaluative</th>
<th>Indeed, such a machine is much better than teachers with stories such as Teacher Mutter.</th>
<th>Indeed, such a machine is much worse than teachers with stories such as Teacher Mutter.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implicitly evaluative</td>
<td>Indeed, such a machine can replace teachers with stories such as Teacher Mutter without problems.</td>
<td>Indeed, such a machine cannot replace teachers with stories such as Teacher Mutter at all.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### 10. Day care

What kind of nonsense do I hear in the media lately? Day care should have longer opening hours on workdays: from 8 AM to 8 PM. Children are picked up around bedtime. But what about Saturday when parents need to go grocery shopping? And Sunday, when many parents want to sleep late, because they both work the entire week? STIMULUS SENTENCE

R. van Leeuwen, Bergen op Zoom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Irony</th>
<th>Non-irony</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explicitly evaluative</td>
<td>In other words, ideal if day care is always open: every day from 7 AM to 10 PM.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicitly evaluative</td>
<td>In other words, day care should have longer opening hours: every day from 7 AM to 10 PM.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

### 11. The good old days were better

Old people always claim that the good old days were better. For a long time, I believed that this was nonsense, but now, at age 52, I have a different opinion. Can I have the 1980s back please? In which it was not done to watch TROS television, or to like Father Abraham or Koos Alberts. No quality newspaper would even consider writing about these things. But now we have Jan Smit and Jeroen van der Boom and, sure, suddenly it is all allowed and my newspaper spends half the front page on them. And it was positive. STIMULUS SENTENCE

A. Zwaagstra, Wassenaar
12. Keep on working until age 65

The Hague nowadays all wants us to keep on working until the age of 65, without exceptions. Have these people ever considered what this means for some people? Are they interested in the Average Joe on the shop floor? For twenty-five years, I worked in construction as an electrician. Recently, I saw a bricklayer who looked very old. When I asked about his age, the man turned out to be only 56. During the entire day, a bricklayer bends his back to lift bricks of 5 kilograms with his one hand and to scoop a wad of cement of three kilograms on his trowel with his other hand. Since the bricks and the cement are placed next to him, his bended back also makes a gyrating movement. Not a single back can endure this load for forty years, which is why not a single bricklayer healthily makes retirement at age 65. Nevertheless, all bricklayers will have to work this long. STIMULUS SENTENCE

H. de Man, Scheveningen

13. Soccer player

Last Wednesday's newspaper reported on a soccer player, who is supposed to have received money to defeat an opponent with his club AA Ghent. And I always thought that this is completely normal: I also get money to do my job. But the Belgian Soccer Association has nevertheless decided to investigate the matter. STIMULUS SENTENCE

H. Pasman, Lage Zwaluwe.
Irony | Non-irony
---|---
Explicitly evaluative | Fortunately, even the Belgians know what the word bribery means. | Absurd that Belgians do not know what the word bribery means.
Implicitly evaluative | Even the Belgians know what the word bribery means. | The Belgians do not know what the word bribery means.

14. Idealism
Before my retirement, I was a teacher, and idealistic. My colleagues and I cared about our students, exerted ourselves for them, in spite of our meager salaries. We consciously chose this profession. The same thing applied to doctors. They were always ready when somebody appealed to them for help. It was a calling; they consciously chose their profession. But now, I read in the newspaper that weekend doctors do not like to get out of their beds when a patient calls them. And I also read about teachers who chose their profession only for the long holidays, but who would ‘easily run away’ if their vacations were to be cut short. STIMULUS SENTENCE

D. van Voorschoten, Alkmaar

15. Elementary school “The Firefly”
To my amazement, I read that elementary school “The Firefly” in Voorschoten received the F. L. Wright Award for Architecture yesterday. I work almost every day in that building. Since the designer did not consider a decent air ventilation system, it is freezing cold in winter and bloody hot in summer. Then, the temperature in the inside garden rises above 40 degrees Celsius. You take some air and run through it before you can start breathing again. When the sun hits the classroom walls, you have a splitting headache at the end of the day. Moreover, our students have not attended school for a number of days now, because the ceiling panels are falling down. STIMULUS SENTENCE

T. Verhaeghen, Voorschoten
### 16. Relationship therapist

Relationship therapist Jan van Schoffelen gives consultations to unintended-childless couples [ongewenst kinderloze stellen, CB] who consider a divorce. Van Schoffelen claims that these unintended-childless people often try to save their relationships by moving to another place or by “having” a child through an adoption. You cannot give a bigger proof of ignorance for the feelings of unintended-childless couples than by using the expression “having a child”. Like it is something like “having” a kilo of sugar from the shelf. STIMULUS SENTENCE.

J. van Bavel, Spijkenisse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Irony</th>
<th>Non-irony</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Explicitly evaluative</strong>&lt;br&gt;In sum, how wonderful it is to be allowed to work in such an award-winning building.</td>
<td>In sum, what a misfortune it is to have to work in such an award-winning building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implicitly evaluative</strong>&lt;br&gt;In sum, the design is a “paragon of clarity and functionality” (as the judges stated).</td>
<td>In sum, the design is certainly not a “paragon of clarity and functionality” (as the judges stated).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 17. Employment protection

Human resources director Fleuren from KPN states that employees should be pressured by, among other things, relaxing the laws of dismissal. Does Fleuren really believe that employees will work harder when they run the risk to be fired at any moment? KPN should invest in employees by for instance offering them a career perspective. Fleuren actually argues in favor of a culture of fear amongst employees: how long will I keep my job? Employees no longer get inspired; they just get bullied. STIMULUS SENTENCE

P. Anselma, Utrecht
Irony | Non-irony
--- | ---
**Explicitly evaluative** | Sure, a great plan from KPN to increase the number of motivated employees. | Sure, a poor plan from KPN to increase the number of motivated employees.

**Implicitly evaluative** | Sure, with this plan, KPN will get many motivated employees. | Sure, with this plan, KPN will get many unmotivated employees.

### 18. Biologic food
The Customer's Guide [*Consumentengids*, CB] claims that biologically-grown vegetables are just as healthy as normally-grown vegetables. There is almost no difference with respect to minerals, vitamins, etc. The Customer’s Guide, however, misses one important aspect. There are of course much more pesticides and remainders of fertilizer in normally-grown vegetables than in biologically-grown vegetables. **STIMULUS SENTENCE**

T. Bosma, Apeldoorn

| Irony | Non-irony |
--- | ---|
**Explicitly evaluative** | Of course, a beautiful conclusion from the Customer’s Guide that these chemicals have no effect on the consumer’s health. | Of course, a shameful conclusion from the Customer’s Guide that these chemicals have no effect on the consumer’s health. |

**Implicitly evaluative** | Of course, these chemicals have no effect on the consumer’s health. | Of course, these chemicals also have an effect on the consumer’s health. |

### 19. Lid
McDonald’s is going to equip the McFlurry cups with hedgehog-friendly lids. The cups that are thrown away everywhere appear to hold a great attraction for the average hedgehog. However, the eating animals get their heads stuck in the opening of the cup, and then starve. Instead of issuing fines, or putting a deposit on McFlurry cups, McDonald’s decided to make the cups “hedgehog-friendly”. That is putting things on their heads! Nobody cares if those cups are just thrown out. **STIMULUS SENTENCE**

W. van Ommen, Roermond
### Irony vs. Non-irony

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Irony</th>
<th>Non-irony</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Explicitly evaluative</strong></td>
<td>Of course, when it does not bother the hedgehogs, it is fine to throw those cups into the verge.</td>
<td>Of course, even when it does not bother the hedgehogs, it is still not fine to throw those cups into the verge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implicitly evaluative</strong></td>
<td>Of course, when it does not bother the hedgehogs, we can throw those cups into the verge.</td>
<td>Of course, even when it does not bother the hedgehogs, we cannot throw those cups into the verge.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

#### 20. Astrotime

I zap at six thirty AM across TV channels and find the program “Astrotime” on RTL 4. You can call for advice, because it is live. The guest is François Boulanger and the host is wearing a checked shirt. On RTL 5, the same program with the same host is on, and you can call for advice, because it is live. Its guest is Helmut Lotti and here, the host wears a beige shirt. On RTL 7, the same program with the same host is also on, and you can call for advice, because it is live as well. But its guest is Coco de Meijere and the host is wearing a white shirt. STIMULUS SENTENCE

F. ter Heijden, Lelystad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Irony</th>
<th>Non-irony</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Explicitly evaluative</strong></td>
<td>Great that Astrotime is apparently three times live on TV.</td>
<td>Fraudulent that Astrotime is apparently not live on TV.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implicitly evaluative</strong></td>
<td>Astrotime is apparently three times live on TV.</td>
<td>Astrotime is apparently not live on TV.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

#### 21. Traffic jams in the city center

In the old days, our city center used to have just roads. They were wide roads, with enough space for everybody. Nowadays, you increasingly come across dug-up streets in a crowded city center. They are often treeless streets, where cars, public transport, cyclists and pedestrians are each assigned their own narrow lane, even equipped with extra traffic lights. And even, in the middle of the road, a redundant traffic regulator supposedly tries to steer everything in the right direction. The entire day, this all leads to long traffic jams in the center of almost every city in the Netherlands. Everything then gets completely stuck. And now, our city council plans to completely renovate the city center during the next five years! STIMULUS SENTENCE
### 22. Social service sector

Geriatric care, maternity care, homecare, all female things. From these sectors, we hear a lot of complaints about salaries and collective labor agreements (CAOs). The women in these professions would not make enough money. Their managers consider these appeals as rubbish. But that is not correct. The pressure of work only increases, society calls for increasingly more control, the pressure to perform grows and they also have to work more irregular shifts.  

**STIMULUS SENTENCE**

B. de Ridder, The Hague

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Irony</th>
<th>Non-irony</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Explicitly evaluative</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indeed, fantastic that our city council</td>
<td>Indeed, ridiculous that our city council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thinks that it can solve the problem of</td>
<td>thinks that it can solve the problem of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>traffic jams in the center in this way.</td>
<td>traffic jams in the center in this way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implicitly evaluative</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indeed, in this way, our city council</td>
<td>Indeed, in this way, our city council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>solves the problem of traffic jams in</td>
<td>does not solve the problem of traffic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the center.</td>
<td>jams in the center.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 23. Mathematics

And there we are. Every year, it is the same old story. “Students from the Teacher’s Training College [*pabo, CB*] massively fail a math’s test at the level of the sixth grade”. I am one of those failed students. I believe that reporters and politicians should also take that test. Let's see if they can pass it. One of the questions I was presented with was: “What is the weight of the planet Earth?”  

**STIMULUS SENTENCE**

R. Molenaar, Zwolle.
24. Housewives in commercials

For years now, I have been annoyed by commercials in which women are portrayed as simple creatures for whom a clean house stands for the highest level of happiness or in which women are talked to as if they were babies. The worst are those commercials that feature children to play on women’s (maternal) feelings. A six-year-old boy, for instance, who seems to know better than his mom which brand of laundry detergent you should use. STIMULUS SENTENCE

E. Timmermans, Breda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ironic</th>
<th>Non-ironic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explicitly evaluative</td>
<td>Of course, these are highly credible commercials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicitly evaluative</td>
<td>Of course, every six-year-old boy cares about the brand of laundry detergent his mother uses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix XII:
### Sources of stimuli of experiments 1 and 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name stimulus</th>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kamer van Koophandel (Chamber of Commerce)</td>
<td>Het Financieele Dagblad</td>
<td>August 23, 2008</td>
<td>p. 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rijbewijs (Driver’s licence)</td>
<td>Algemeen Dagblad</td>
<td>September 11, 2008</td>
<td>p. 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Vrijwilligers als docent (Volunteer teachers)</td>
<td>Volkskrant</td>
<td>June 19, 2008</td>
<td>p. 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kindvrije zone (Childfree zone)</td>
<td>Volkskrant</td>
<td>August 23, 2008</td>
<td>p. 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Verkeersregels (Traffic rules)</td>
<td>Volkskrant</td>
<td>September 12, 2008</td>
<td>p. 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ontwikkelingshulp (Foreign aid)</td>
<td>Volkskrant</td>
<td>September 9, 2008</td>
<td>p. 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Verzekeraars (Insurance companies)</td>
<td>Het Financieele Dagblad</td>
<td>September 6, 2008</td>
<td>p. 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Vissen (Fish)</td>
<td>Algemeen Dagblad</td>
<td>August 19, 2008</td>
<td>p. 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Laptops (Laptops)</td>
<td>Algemeen Dagblad</td>
<td>September 23, 2008</td>
<td>p. 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Kinderopvang (Day care)</td>
<td>Algemeen Dagblad</td>
<td>March 1, 2006</td>
<td>p. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Vroeger was het beter (The good old days were better)</td>
<td>Volkskrant</td>
<td>November 20, 2006</td>
<td>p. 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Doorwerken tot je 65ste (Keep on working until age 65)</td>
<td>Algemeen Dagblad</td>
<td>September 26, 2008</td>
<td>p. 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Voetballer (Soccer player)</td>
<td>Algemeen Dagblad</td>
<td>March 28, 2006</td>
<td>p. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Idealisme (Idealism)</td>
<td>Volkskrant</td>
<td>April 18, 2007</td>
<td>p. 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Relatietherapeut (Relationship therapist)</td>
<td>Algemeen Dagblad</td>
<td>April 8, 2006</td>
<td>p. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Ontslagbescherming (Employment Protection)</td>
<td>Volkskrant</td>
<td>October 31, 2006</td>
<td>p. 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Biologisch voedsel (Biologic food)</td>
<td>Algemeen Dagblad</td>
<td>January 30, 2006</td>
<td>p. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Deksel (Lid)</td>
<td>Algemeen Dagblad</td>
<td>May 12, 2007</td>
<td>p. 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Astrotijd (Astrotime)</td>
<td>Metro</td>
<td>August 23, 2008</td>
<td>p. 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Files in de binnenstad (Traffic jams in the city center)</td>
<td>Volkskrant</td>
<td>December 2, 2008</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>De zorg (Social service sector)</td>
<td>Algemeen Dagblad</td>
<td>September 2, 2008</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Rekenen (Mathematics)</td>
<td>Algemeen Dagblad</td>
<td>September 19, 2008</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Huisvrouwen in reclames (Housewives in commercials)</td>
<td>Algemeen Dagblad</td>
<td>September 6, 2008</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix XIII:
Stimuli Experiment 2

1. Chamber of Commerce
Without your asking for it and without purchasing a specific service, an entrepreneur is obliged to pay quite an advance payment as contribution to the institution of the Chamber of Commerce (CoC) each year. In the past, I set up two foundations and two private limited companies (PLCs). For both the foundations and the PLCs, I have to pay a steep amount to the CoC, while nothing is done in return. To put it even stronger, when, in an exceptional case, you need a certificate from the CoC’s register, you even have to pay for it. STIMULUS SENTENCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Irony</th>
<th>Non-irony</th>
<th>Type of markers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No markers</td>
<td>It is nice that the CoC also works for the common guy.</td>
<td>It is a shame that the CoC does not work for the common guy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 marker</td>
<td>How nice that the CoC also works for the common guy!</td>
<td>What a shame that the CoC does not work for the common guy!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 markers</td>
<td>How nice after all, that the CoC works so obviously for the common guy!</td>
<td>What a shame after all, that the CoC so obviously does not work for the common guy!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Volunteer teachers
Last year, I spent three months trying to apply for a voluntary position as a teacher of Dutch for foreigners. Fifteen years ago, I had studied Dutch Language and Culture for five years and last year, I wanted to be socially active: teaching people who need to pass the Basic Integration Exam seemed like a good idea. Impossible! I did not have the necessary qualifications. And the only way to get them, was to redo my entire studies. From next year onwards – so I read in yesterday’s newspaper – the qualifications for these types of voluntary jobs are revised: now, you will only need to present yourself as a volunteer. STIMULUS SENTENCE

G. de Bakker, Amsterdam
3. Childfree zone

A group of deliberately childless people from our neighborhood suggests to introduce childless hours at the local Albert Heijn supermarket. In this way, they can shop calmly and undisturbed. You see, children make a lot of noise and disturb these people in their grocery shopping. Only, it is tremendously difficult to plan your grocery shopping for people like me, who have children. And this all, while we, large families, actually need a lot of groceries.

L. Janssen, Delft

4. Insurance companies

Insurance companies stubbornly continue to deceive their insurance-premium-paying customers. Of course, employees of insurance companies already know it: it is not allowed to
refuse declarations, even when the terms of the policy dictate that they were submitted too late. They can put into the insurance policy that declarations have to be submitted within one or two years, but this is not allowed according to the civil code. That clearly states that insurance companies cannot lay down a time limit at all. STIMULUS SENTENCE.

W. Burema, Berkel en Rodenrijs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Irony</th>
<th>Non-irony</th>
<th>Type of markers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No markers</td>
<td>It is nice that insurance companies follow the civil code.</td>
<td>It is annoying that insurance companies do not follow the civil code.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 marker</td>
<td>How nice that insurance companies follow the civil code!</td>
<td>How annoying that insurance companies do not follow the civil code!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 markers</td>
<td>How nice indeed that insurance companies always follow the civil code!</td>
<td>How annoying indeed that insurance companies never follow the civil code!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Social service sector

Geriatric care, maternity care, homecare, all female things. From these sectors, we hear a lot of complaints about salaries and collective labor agreements (CAOs). The women in these professions would not make enough money. Their managers consider these appeals as rubbish. But that is not correct. The pressure of work only increases, society calls for increasingly more control, the pressure to perform grows and they also have to work more irregular shifts. STIMULUS SENTENCE

B. de Ridder, The Hague
Irony Non-irony Type of markers

No markers
It is thus logic that female occupations deserve female salaries.
It is thus illogical that female occupations deserve female salaries.
None

1 marker
It is thus completely logic that female occupations deserve female salaries.
It is thus completely illogical that female occupations deserve female salaries.
-hyperbole (completely (il)logic(al))

3 markers
Com-plete-ly logic thus that female occupations deserve female salaries.
Com-plete-ly illogical thus that female occupations deserve female salaries.
-exclamation
-hyperbole (completely (il)logic(al))
-Typography (com-plete-ly)

6. Housewives in commercials

For years now, I have been annoyed by commercials in which women are portrayed as simple creatures for whom a clean house stands for the highest level of happiness or in which women are talked to as if they were babies. The worst are those commercials that feature children to play on women’s (maternal) feelings. A six-year-old boy, for instance, who seems to know better than his mom which brand of laundry detergent you should use. STIMULUS SENTENCE

E. Timmermans, Breda

No markers
I believe that these are plausible commercials.
I believe that these are implausible commercials.
None

1 marker
I believe that these are extremely plausible commercials.
I believe that these are extremely implausible commercials.
-hyperbole (extremely)

3 markers
Yes, extremely plausible commercials do I believe these to be.
Yes, extremely implausible commercials do I believe these to be.
-focus topicalization
-hyperbole (extremely)
-interjection (yes)

7. Fish

Yesterday, the newspaper reported that groundbreaking scientific research showed that fish suffer pain when they are dissected alive and without anesthesia and their intestines are
removed. Please imagine that this would happen to you. That your intestines are removed without anesthesia. And now it is apparently scientifically demonstrated that a fish is then in pain. STIMULUS SENTENCE

B. Meijer, Emmen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Irony</th>
<th>Non-irony</th>
<th>Type of markers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No markers</strong></td>
<td>This is what I call innovative scientific research.</td>
<td>This is what I do not call innovative scientific research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 marker</strong></td>
<td>This is what I call groundbreaking scientific research.</td>
<td>This is what I do not call groundbreaking scientific research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3 markers</strong></td>
<td>That is indeed what I call “groundbreaking scientific research”.</td>
<td>That is indeed what I do not call “groundbreaking scientific research”.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Idealism

Before my retirement, I was a teacher, and idealistic. My colleagues and I cared about our students, exerted ourselves for them, in spite of our meager salaries. We consciously chose this profession. The same thing applied to doctors. They were always ready when somebody appealed to them for help. It was a calling; they consciously chose their profession. But now, I read in the newspaper that weekend doctors do not like to get out of their beds when a patient calls them. And I also read about teachers who chose their profession only for the long holidays, but who would ‘easily run away’ if their vacations were to be cut short. STIMULUS SENTENCE

D. van Voorschoten, Alkmaar
### Irony Non-irony Type of markers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of markers</th>
<th>Irony</th>
<th>Non-irony</th>
<th>Type of markers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No markers</strong></td>
<td>Luckily, teachers and doctors no longer have ideals these days.</td>
<td>Sadly, teachers and doctors no longer have ideals these days.</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 marker</strong></td>
<td>What a luck that teachers and doctors no longer have ideals these days!</td>
<td>How sad that teachers and doctors no longer have ideals these days!</td>
<td>- exclamation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3 markers</strong></td>
<td>What a luck indeed that teachers and doctors are no longer bothered by any ideals these days!</td>
<td>How sad indeed that teachers and doctors are no longer bothered by any ideals these days!</td>
<td>- exclamation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. **Relationship therapist**

Relationship therapist Jan van Schoffelen gives consultations to unintended-childless couples [ongewenst kinderloze stellen, CB] who consider a divorce. Van Schoffelen claims that these unintended-childless people often try to save their relationships by moving to another place or by “having” a child through an adoption. You cannot give a bigger proof of ignorance for the feelings of unintended-childless couples than by using the expression “having a child”. Like it is something like “having” a kilo of sugar from the shelf. STIMULUS SENTENCE.

J. van Bavel, Spijkenisse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of markers</th>
<th>Irony</th>
<th>Non-irony</th>
<th>Type of markers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No markers</strong></td>
<td>That a relationship therapist has no sympathy for this, is good.</td>
<td>That a relationship therapist has no sympathy for this, is bad.</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 marker</strong></td>
<td>That a relationship therapist has no sympathy for this, is fantastic.</td>
<td>That a relationship therapist has no sympathy for this, is ridiculous.</td>
<td>- hyperbole (fantastic/ ridiculous)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3 markers</strong></td>
<td>Isn’t it fan-tast-tic that a relationship therapist has no sympathy for this?</td>
<td>Isn’t it ri-di-cu-lous that a relationship therapist has no sympathy for this?</td>
<td>- hyperbole (fantastic/ ridiculous)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

325
10. The good old days were better
Old people always claim that the good old days were better. For a long time, I believed that that was nonsense, but now, at age 52, I have a different opinion. Can I have the 1980s back please? In which it was not done to watch TROS television, or to like Father Abraham or Koos Alberts. No quality newspaper would even consider writing about these things. But now we have Jan Smit and Jeroen van der Boom and, sure, suddenly it is all allowed and my newspaper spends half the front page on them. And it was positive. STIMULUS SENTENCE

A. Zwaagstra, Wassenaar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Irony</th>
<th>Non-irony</th>
<th>Type of markers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No markers</td>
<td>It is nice that my quality</td>
<td>It is annoying that my</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>newspaper wants to keep up with</td>
<td>quality newspaper wants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the times.</td>
<td>to keep up with the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 marker</td>
<td>Isn't it nice that my quality</td>
<td>Isn't it annoying that my</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>newspaper wants to keep up</td>
<td>quality newspaper wants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with the times?</td>
<td>to keep up with the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>times?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 markers</td>
<td>Isn't it fan-tast-tic that my</td>
<td>Isn't it hor-ri-ble that my</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>quality newspaper wants to</td>
<td>quality newspaper wants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>keep up with the times?</td>
<td>to keep up with the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>times?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. Biologic food
The Customer’s Guide [Consumentenbond, CB] claims that biologically-grown vegetables are just as healthy as normally-grown vegetables. There is almost no difference with respect to minerals, vitamins, etc. The Customer’s Guide, however, misses one important aspect. There are of course much more pesticides and remainders of fertilizer in normally-grown vegetables than in biologically-grown vegetables.

T. Bosma, Apeldoorn
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Irony</th>
<th>Non-irony</th>
<th>Type of markers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No markers</strong></td>
<td>The Customer's Guide draws a fine conclusion about the healthiness of normally-grown and biologically-grown vegetables.</td>
<td>The Customer's Guide does not draw a fine conclusion about the healthiness of normally-grown and biologically-grown vegetables.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 marker</strong></td>
<td>It is indeed a fine conclusion that normally grown vegetables are just as healthy as biologically-grown vegetables.</td>
<td>It is indeed not a fine conclusion that normally grown vegetables are just as healthy as biologically-grown vegetables.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3 markers</strong></td>
<td>A fantastic conclusion indeed that normally grown vegetables are just as healthy as biologically-grown vegetables.</td>
<td>A ridiculous conclusion indeed that normally grown vegetables are just as healthy as biologically-grown vegetables.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**12. Traffic jams in the city center**

In the old days, our city center used to have just roads. They were wide roads, with enough space for everybody. Nowadays, you increasingly come across dug-up streets in a crowded city center. They are often treeless streets, where cars, public transport, cyclists and pedestrians each are assigned their own narrow lane, even equipped with extra traffic lights. And even, in the middle of the road, a redundant traffic regulator supposedly tries to steer everything in the right direction. The entire day, this all leads to long traffic-jams in the center of almost every city in the Netherlands. Everything then gets completely stuck. And now, our city council plans to completely renovate the city center during the next five years! STIMULUS SENTENCE

P. Jonker, Amsterdam
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Irony</th>
<th>Non-irony</th>
<th>Type of markers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No markers</strong></td>
<td>This is a nice way to solve the problem of traffic-jams in the city center.</td>
<td>This is a poor way to solve the problem of traffic-jams in the city center.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 marker</strong></td>
<td>This is indeed a nice way to solve the problem of traffic-jams in the city center.</td>
<td>This is indeed a poor way to solve the problem of traffic-jams in the city center.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3 markers</strong></td>
<td>Indeed, the ideal way to solve the problem of traffic-jams in the city center!</td>
<td>Indeed, a foolish way to solve the problem of traffic-jams in the city center!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary in Dutch

Lotto, het grootste risico om miljonair te worden!
Autodrop, zo lekker, het zou verboden moeten worden.

Adverteerders kunnen – zoals in deze voorbeelden – ironie gebruiken in hun campagnes om hun producten aan de man te brengen. In sommige gevallen werkt zo’n ironische uiting uitstekend, maar in andere gevallen wordt ironie niet begrepen en krijgt de ontvanger een verkeerd beeld van de bedoelde boodschap. Het meeste onderzoek tot nu toe heeft zich dan ook vooral bezig gehouden met de vraag hoe een ironische uiting begrepen wordt. Bij dit onderzoek wordt dan het begrip van een ironische uiting vergeleken met een begrip van een niet-ironische – over het algemeen een letterlijke – uiting. Er is, zeker in onderzoek naar ironie in schriftelijke communicatie, nauwelijks aandacht voor de verschillen tussen ironische uitingen onderling. In gesproken communicatie kan een zender als de ironie verkeerd begrepen wordt, eventueel nog ingrijpen. In geschreven communicatie is dat niet het geval en is het dus belangrijk dat de zender zijn ironische uitingen dusdanig vormgeeft dat de kans op onbegrip wordt geminimaliseerd. De eerste onderzoeksvraag is dan ook:

OV1. Hoe wordt ironie gebruikt in geschreven teksten?

In dit onderzoek wordt deze vraag beantwoord door een analyse van vier verschillende aspecten van ironie. Deze aspecten zijn (1) ironiefactoren (eigenschappen die een ironische uiting onderscheiden van een niet-ironische uiting), (2) ironiemarkeerders in de ironische uiting (aanwijzingen dat een uiting ironisch dient te worden opgevat), (3) ironiemarkeerders in de co-text (aanwijzingen in de co-text om de lezer in een ironische stemming te brengen) en (4) het gebruik van afbeeldingen.

Naast het feit dat veel ironieonderzoek geen tot nauwelijks onderscheid maakt tussen verschillende ironische uitingen, is veel van het experimentele onderzoek naar ironie gebaseerd op onderzoek met zgn. 'textoids' (door onderzoekers opgestelde teksten). Verschillende onderzoekers zetten vraagtekens bij de ecologische validiteit van dit soort stimuli (bv. Graesser, Millis & Zwaan, 1997; Katz, 2009). In meer realistische teksten, daarentegen, staat een ironische uiting nooit op zichzelf, maar
wordt deze gebruikt in een bepaalde discourse-situatie. In geschreven communicatie behoort een ironische uiting vaak tot een tekst, die weer tot een bepaald genre behoort. Het is mogelijk dat het gebruik van ironie verschilt tussen verschillende genres. Daarom is onderzoeksvraag 2:

OV2. Hoe verschilt het gebruik van ironie in uiteenlopende schriftelijke genres?

Een vervolgvraag op de vraag hoe ironie wordt gebruikt in taal, is de vraag of verschillen in het gebruik van ironie ook verschillende effecten op de lezer hebben. Het tweede deel van dit proefschrift richt zich dan ook op deze vraag. De hierbij behorende derde onderzoeksvraag is dan ook:

OV3. Wat is de relatie tussen de aanwezigheid en aspecten van ironie, begrip en waardering?

Het gebruik van ironie
Het eerste deel van dit proefschrift (H. 2 t/m 6) beschrijft het gebruik van ironie. In Hoofdstuk 2 worden definities van ironie vanuit verschillende theoretische achtergronden besproken en vergeleken. Uit deze verschillende definities blijkt dat de verschillende auteurs het eens zijn over vijf kenmerken van een ironische uiting. Een ironische uiting is allereerst evaluatief. Ook is ironie gebaseerd op een tegenstelling tussen de letterlijke en de bedoelde betekenis van een uiting. Daarnaast heeft een ironische uiting altijd een doelwit en is altijd relevant in de context. Op basis van deze vijf kenmerken wordt ironie in dit onderzoek gedefinieerd als een "evaluatieve uiting waarvan de letterlijk positieve valentie negatief moet worden geïnterpreteerd of de letterlijk negatieve valentie positief moet worden geïnterpreteerd". Een ironische uiting kun je dus altijd op een evaluatieschaal plaatsen. Als de letterlijke evaluatie positief is, dan is de bedoelde evaluatie negatief (en vice versa).

Op basis van deze definitie is ironie geoperationaliseerd in de Verbal Irony Procedure (VIP), een codeerschema om ironie op te sporen in geschreven taal. De VIP kent vier stappen. Na het lezen van de hele tekst (stap 1), moet een codeur per uiting drie beslissingen nemen om te bepalen of die uiting ironisch is. Allereerst moet de codeur bepalen of de betreffende uiting descriptief of evaluatief is (stap 2). Als de uiting evaluatief is, dan bepaalt de codeur of de letterlijke evaluatie congruent is met de rest
van de tekst (stap 3). Als de letterlijke evaluatie incongruent is met de rest van de tekst, dan bepaalt de codeur of de evaluatie congruent zou zijn, als deze een tegengestelde valentie zou hebben. Als dat het geval is, dan is de uiting ironisch (stap 4).

De VIP is vervolgens toegepast op een verzameling teksten uit zes verschillende genres (commerciële en niet-commerciële advertenties, cartoons, columns, recensies en ingezonden brieven) die mogelijk ironie zouden kunnen bevatten. Na het toepassen van de VIP bestond het corpus uit 213 teksten waarin in totaal 456 ironische uitingen voorkwamen. In de hoofdstukken 3 t/m 6 is dit corpus gebruikt om verschillende tekstkenmerken van ironie te analyseren.

Hoofdstuk 3 gaat over het gebruik van zgn. ironiefactoren (Attardo, 2000b) in geschreven taal. Kenmerkend voor deze ironiefactoren is dat ze essentieel zijn voor een ironische uiting; zonder deze factoren is een uiting niet meer ironisch. De ironiefactoren kunnen op verschillende manieren tot uitdrukking komen in ironische uitingen. Hoofdstuk 3 onderscheidt vijf ironiefactoren.

De eerste factor is het evaluatieve karakter van de uiting, dat uit twee niveaus bestaat: expliciet en impliciet evaluatieve ironie (bv. Kohvakka, 1996). Als een ironische uiting expliciet evaluatief is, bevat deze een evaluatief woord. Om de bedoelde betekenis te infereren moet de letterlijke betekenis van dit woord worden omgekeerd. Een voorbeeld hiervan is de uiting “Mooi weertje, hè”, terwijl het regent. Bij een impliciet evaluatieve ironische uiting moet de ontvanger zelf infereren dat de uiting een evaluatie bevat om de ironie op te lossen, zoals in het geval van de uiting “Nou, de zon schijnt”, terwijl het regent en de spreker een buitenactiviteit gepland had. De resultaten laten zien dat een kleine meerderheid (56,9%) van de ironische uitingen in het corpus expliciet evaluatief is.

De tweede factor is incongruentie, die ook uit twee niveaus bestaat: incongruentie op basis van co-tekst en incongruentie op basis van context (bv. Toolan, 1994). Bij incongruentie op basis van co-tekst bevat de co-tekst van de ironische uiting informatie die incongruent is met de letterlijke betekenis van de ironische uiting. Bij incongruentie op basis van de context bevat de co-tekst geen informatie die incongruent is met de letterlijke betekenis van de ironische uiting. In dit geval moet de lezer contextkennis gebruiken om de ironie op te sporen. De resultaten geven aan dat een kleine meerderheid van de ironische uitingen in het corpus (56,6%) incongruent is met de context.
Het doelwit van de ironische uiting is de derde ironiefactor (bv. Weizman, 2001). Deze factor gaat over de persoon of het object waartegen de ironische uiting is gericht. Vier verschillende doelwitten worden onderscheiden: zender, ontvanger, een derde partij of een combinatie van zender, ontvanger en/ of derde partij. Als een ironische uiting gericht is op de zender, dan levert de zender in feite commentaar op zichzelf. Als de ironie tegen de ontvanger is gericht, dan wordt de ontvanger becommentarieerd. In het geval van een derde partij als doelwit wordt commentaar gegeven op iemand die noch de zender, noch de ontvanger is. De laatste mogelijkheid is dat de ironie betrekking heeft op een combinatie van zender, ontvanger en/ of derde partij. Een voorbeeld is een ironische uiting over Nederlanders in het algemeen terwijl spreker en ontvanger beide ook Nederlanders zijn. De resultaten laten zien dat een derde partij het vaakst het doelwit is van de ironie in het corpus (74,4%). De zender (8,8%), ontvanger (7,9%) of een combinatie (9,0%) zijn minder vaak het doelwit van ironie.

Omdat bij ironie de letterlijke evaluatie altijd omklapt, is een verandering van valentie de vierde ironiefactor (bv. Kreuz, 1996). Deze verandering kan op twee manieren plaatsvinden. Een ironische uiting is letterlijk positief (ironic praise, zoals in het voorbeeld van “Mooi weertje, hè?”) of letterlijk negatief (ironic blame, zoals in het voorbeeld van “Slecht weertje, hè?” terwijl de zon schijnt). In het corpus blijkt ironic praise het vaakst voor te komen (76,8%).

De relevantie van een ironische uiting is de laatste ironiefactor (bv. Wilson & Sperber, 2002). Het kan voor een ontvanger meteen duidelijk zijn wat het doel van een ironische uiting in een bepaalde tekst is. De ironie is in dat geval direct relevant. Als er enkele gedachtesprongen nodig zijn om te bepalen waarom een ironische uiting in een bepaalde tekst relevant is, dan is de ironie indirect relevant. In het corpus zijn de meeste ironische uitingen (80,5%) direct relevant.

Het blijkt dat de ironiefactoren niet in elk genre op dezelfde manier en in dezelfde frequentie tot uitdrukking komen. Zo komt ironic blame bijvoorbeeld vaker voor in commerciële advertenties dan in de andere genres. Omdat de ontvanger van een commerciële advertentie per definitie een positieve boodschap verwacht over product, dienst en/ of bedrijf, is het makkelijker om ironic blame te gebruiken dan in een genre waarbij de ontvanger niet per definitie een positieve boodschap bevat.

De resultaten laten zien dat elk van de genres van het corpus bij minimaal één ironiefactor afwijkt van de verdeling over het corpus. De grootste verschillen zijn te vinden tussen de commerciële advertenties en columns. De commerciële advertenties
bevatten vaker *ironic blame*, zijn vaker impliciet evaluatief en indirect relevant dan een gemiddelde ironische uiting in het corpus en hebben vaker de ontvanger als doelwit. Columns daarentegen bevatten vaker *ironic praise* en zijn vaker direct relevant dan een gemiddelde ironische uiting in het corpus en hebben juist minder vaak de ontvanger als doelwit.

Het gebruik van ironiemarkeerders in de ironische uiting is het tweede tekstkenmerk dat geanalyseerd wordt. Dit zijn metacommunicatieve aanwijzingen die een lezer "attent maken op het feit dat een uiting ironisch is" (Attardo, 2000b, p. 7). In tegenstelling tot ironiefactoren, zijn ironiemarkeerders weglaatbaar uit de ironische uiting. Hoofdstuk 4 laat zien dat ironiemarkeerders vaak voorkomen in ironie; een ironische uiting in het corpus heeft gemiddeld 1,66 markeerders (SD = 1,20, range = 0 – 6). Deze markeerders zijn onder te verdelen in vier categorieën: (1) tropen, (2) schematische, (3) morfosyntactische en (4) typografische markeerders. In die categorieën zijn verschillende typen markeerders te onderscheiden. Zo behoort de hyperbool tot de tropen en vormen aanhalingstekens een typografische markeerder.

De eerste twee categorieën (tropen en schematische ironiemarkeerders) zijn gebaseerd op het onderscheid tussen tropen en schema's. Een trop is een stijlfiguur waarbij de letterlijke betekenis afwijkt van de bedoelde betekenis. In deze categorie vallen de typen markeerders metafoor, hyperbool, understatement en retorische vraag. Een schema is een stijlfiguur waarbij de nadruk wordt gelegd op de vorm en er geen betekenisverschil is tussen de letterlijke en bedoelde betekenis. Schematische markeerders zijn herhaling (i.e., herhaling van een eerdere, niet-ironische uiting uit dezelfde tekst), echo (i.e., herhaling van een eerdere, niet-ironische uiting afkomstig van buiten de betreffende tekst) en registerwisseling. In de ironische uitingen in het corpus komen 207 tropen als ironiemarkeerders en 283 schematische ironiemarkeerders voor.

Morfo-syntactische ironiemarkeerders zijn markeerders die de nadruk leggen op de vorm van de ironische uiting, zoals uitroepen, *tag questions*, focus topicalisatie, interjecties en verkleinwoorden. Typografische ironiemarkeerders, daarentegen, gebruiken typografische kenmerken om ironie aan te duiden zoals een ander lettetype, hoofdletters, aanhalingstekens, andere leestekens, emoticons, doorgestreepte tekst en andere speciale symbolen. In de ironische uitingen in het corpus komen 151 syntactische ironiemarkeerders en 119 typografische ironiemarkeerders voor.
Er blijkt een relatie te bestaan tussen de niveaus van de verschillende ironiefactoren en het gebruik van ironiemarkeerders. Zo worden er over het algemeen meer ironiemarkeerders gebruikt bij impliciet evaluatieve ironie, indirect relevante ironie en *ironic blame* dan bij respectievelijk expliciet evaluatieve ironie, direct relevante ironie en *ironic praise*. Ook bij ironie op basis van incongruentie met de co-tekst worden meer markeerders gebruikt dan bij ironie op basis van incongruentie met de context. De resultaten voor de afzonderlijke categorieën ironiemarkeerders bevestigen over het algemeen dit totaalbeeld. Een uitzondering is de categorie tropen; tropen worden juist vaker als ironiemarkeerders gebruikt bij *ironic praise* en direct relevante ironie dan bij *ironic blame* en indirect relevante ironie.

Bovendien blijkt er een relatie te bestaan tussen het gebruik van ironiemarkeerders en het genre van de tekst. Een analyse over het totaal aantal markeerders per uiting bevestigt het beeld van de analyse van ironiefactoren: genrerelaties in ironiegebruik worden gevonden tussen de multimediale en puur verbale genres. Het blijkt dat ironische uitingen in multimediale genres (commerciële en niet-commerciële advertenties en cartoons) over het algemeen meer ironiemarkeerders bevatten dan ironische uitingen in puur verbale genres (columns, recensies en ingezonden brieven). Dit geldt grosso modo ook voor de verschillende categorieën ironiemarkeerders. Een uitzondering is wederom de categorie tropen; tropen worden juist vaker als ironiemarkeerders gebruikt bij puur verbale genres dan bij multimediale genres.

De resultaten suggereren dat tropen ironie mogelijk op een andere manier markeren dan de andere drie categorieën ironiemarkeerders. Een mogelijke verklaring hiervoor is dat tropen vooral gericht zijn op de inhoud van de ironische uiting; een ontvanger moet de letterlijke betekenis decoderen om de bedoeling van een troop te begrijpen. De andere drie categorieën daarentegen zijn vooral gericht op de vorm van een ironische uiting; de ontvanger hoeft deze markeerders niet op te lossen, maar kan ze meteen begrijpen.

De analyses van ironiefactoren en ironiemarkeerders in de ironische uiting stelden de ironische uiting zelf centraal. In de hoofdstukken 5 en 6 staat de co-tekst van de ironische uiting centraal. Hoofdstuk 5 beschrijft de identificatie van co-tekstuele ironiemarkeerders. Deze categorie ironiemarkeerders heeft betrekking op co-tekstuele elementen die de ontvanger in een ironische stemming brengen en zo het begrip van
ironie zouden kunnen vergemakkelijken. Een eerste co-tekstuele ironiemarkeerder is het gebruik van meerdere ironische uitingen in één tekst. Immers, als een ontvanger al enkele ironische uitingen heeft gelezen in de betreffende tekst, zal het gebruik van ironie minder als een verrassing komen dan wanneer de ontvanger nog geen ironische uitingen heeft gelezen.

Maar er zijn meer co-tekstuele markeerders van ironie denkbaar. In hoofdstuk 5 wordt allereerst een exploratieve analyse besproken waarin verschillende categorieën co-tekstuele markeerders worden geïdentificeerd. Het blijkt dat er twee categorieën co-tekstuele markeerders kunnen worden gevonden: tropen en zgn. tone-of-voice-markeerders. De tropen die als co-tekstuele markeerders kunnen functioneren zijn dezelfde als de tropen die een ironiemarkeerder in de ironische uiting konden zijn: metaforen, hyperbolen, understatement en retorische vragen. De categorie tone-of-voice markers bevat – naast de registerwisseling die ook een markeerder in de ironische uiting was – de co-tekstuele markeerders cynisme en humor. Een opmerkelijke constatering bij deze co-tekstuele markeerders is dat de categorieën van morfosyntactische en typografische markeerders niet terugkomen als co-tekstuele markeerders; deze categorieën markeren blijkbaar alleen in de ironische uiting zelf.

Er blijkt ook een relatie te bestaan tussen het gebruik van co-tekstuele markeerders en het genre van de tekst. In columns worden relatief vaker meerdere ironische uitingen en tropen als co-tekstuele markeerders gebruikt dan in de andere genres.

In multimediale teksten zoals cartoons, commerciële en niet-commerciële advertenties is het gebruik van afbeeldingen een tweede co-tekstueel element dat kan helpen om ironie in een tekst op te sporen. Uit de analyses in hoofdstuk 6 blijkt dat de afbeeldingen in de multimediale teksten relatief vaak (in ongeveer 80% van de teksten) helpen om de ironie op te sporen.

Als een afbeelding helpt om ironie op te sporen, dan kan dit op twee manieren gebeuren. Een afbeelding kan helpen om ironie op te sporen op een manier die vergelijkbaar is met de co-tekstuele markeerders: ze brengen de lezer in een ironische stemming. Een afbeelding geeft dan de letterlijke betekenis van een ironische uiting weer en laat tegelijkertijd zien dat deze letterlijke betekenis absurd is. Daarnaast kan een afbeelding op dezelfde manier werken als de ironiefactor incongruentie: een afbeelding kan informatie weergeven die incongruent is met de letterlijke betekenis van
de ironische uiting. De resultaten laten zien dat – als een afbeelding helpt om ironie op te sporen – de tweede manier vaker (69,2%) voorkomt dan de eerste (30,8%).

Een derde analyse in hoofdstuk 6 is erop gericht om te achterhalen welke beeldelementen in een afbeelding precies helpen om ironie op te sporen. Hiervoor is een exploratieve, narratologische analyse (Verstraten, 2006) uitgevoerd. In deze analyse is een onderscheid gemaakt in beeld- en beeldelementen uit de mise-en-scène (elementen die aangeven wat er in een afbeelding wordt getoond, zoals personages, objecten, locatie) en beeld- en beeldelementen uit de cinematografie (elementen die aangeven hoe zaken in een afbeelding worden getoond, zoals de kleur, de camerahoek en de belichting van de afbeelding). De analyses laten zien dat beeld- en beeldelementen uit de mise-en-scène vaker helpen om de ironie op te lossen dan cinematografische beeld- en beeldelementen. Bovendien lieten de analyses zien dat er in één afbeelding meestal meerdere beeld- en beeldelementen verantwoordelijk zijn voor het helpen bij het oplossen van de ironie. De analyses lieten geen verschillen tussen de verschillende multimediale genres zien.

**Het effect van ironie**

De analyses in de hoofdstukken 3 t/m 6 laten zien hoe ironie wordt gebruikt in verschillende genres. De vraag is of de tekstkenmerken die in deze hoofdstukken worden beschreven ook effect hebben op de lezers van ironie. In hoofdstuk 7 wordt onderzocht of er een relatie bestaat tussen de ironiefactoren, ironiemarkeerders in de ironische uiting en co-tekstuele ironiemarkeerders (tekstkenmerken) en de gepercipieerde complexiteit van een ironische uiting (lezerseffect). Om deze vraag te beantwoorden is een gerandomiseerde gestratificeerde steekproef uit het corpus getrokken. Deze steekproef bestond uit 60 teksten, gelijk verdeeld over de genres advertenties, columns, recensies en ingezonden brieven. Deze teksten zijn in een willekeurige volgorde voorgelegd aan een tweetal beoordelaars die de teksten nog niet eerder hadden gezien. Deze beoordelaars moesten de teksten eerst lezen op een “normale” manier. Daarna kregen ze de tekst nogmaals te zien, maar waren de ironische uitingen vet gedrukt. Daarop moesten de beoordelaars een viertal vragen beantwoorden over de gepercipieerde complexiteit van de betreffende ironische uitingen. Via stepwise regressie-analyses is vervolgens onderzocht of de tekstkenmerken de gepercipieerde complexiteit van de ironie konden voorspellen.
De analyse van markeerders in de ironische uiting laat zien dat alleen de markeerder hyperboel gerelateerd was aan de gepercipieerde complexiteit van de ironie; een ironische uiting die gemarkeerd was met een hyperboel werd relatief minder complex gevonden dan een ironische uiting die niet gmarkeerd was met een hyperboel. De analyse van co-tekstuele markeerders liet zien dat hetzelfde gold voor het gebruik van meerdere ironische uitingen in een tekst. Hoe meer ironische uitingen aan een ironische uiting vooraf gaan, hoe minder complex de betreffende ironische uiting gevonden wordt.

In een derde analyse werden de ironiefactoren, het aantal ironische uitingen dat aan de uiting vooraf gaat, het totaal aantal ironiemarkeerders in de ironische uiting en het genre van de tekst gerelateerd aan de gepercipieerde complexiteit van de ironische uiting. De resultaten laten zien dat verschillende aspecten van ironie gerelateerd waren aan de gepercipieerde complexiteit van ironie. Zo bleken een expliciet evaluatieve ironische uiting en *ironic praise* minder complex dan respectievelijk een impliciet evaluatieve ironische uiting en *ironic blame*. Wederom bleek dat hoe meer ironische uitingen een ironische uiting vooraf gaan, hoe minder complex de betreffende ironische uiting wordt gevonden. Ook werd ironie in een ingezonden brief relatief minder complex gevonden dan ironie in de andere genres.

De regressieanalyses die gerapporteerd worden in hoofdstuk 7 moeten geïnterpreteerd worden als correlatie resultaten; op basis van deze resultaten kan niet tot een causaal verband worden geconcludeerd. Om causaliteit aan te tonen zijn twee experimenten uitgevoerd, die gerapporteerd worden in hoofdstuk 8. Het effect van het al-dan-niet expliciet evaluatieve karakter van een ironische uiting is nog nauwelijks empirisch onderzocht is. Daarom focust het eerste experiment op het effect van ironie en van het expliciet of impliet evaluatieve karakter ervan op begrip, gepercipieerde complexiteit van de uiting en tekst en de waardering voor de uiting en de tekst. Het experiment had een latin-square 2 (ironie: wel en geen ironie) x 2 (evaluatiefeheid: expliciet en impliciet evaluatief) mixed design. Voor het experiment werden 24 ingezonden brieven gemanipuleerd die eindigden met een gemanipuleerde stimuluszin (expliciet evaluatieve ironie, impliciet evaluatieve ironie, expliciet evaluatieve letterlijke uiting en impliciet evaluatieve letterlijke uiting). Elke respondent zag elke conditie van het experiment 3 keer en beoordeelde in totaal twaalf verschillende stimuli en zes fillers. Na het lezen van elke stimulus, moesten alle tweehonderd respondenten vragen
beantwoorden over begrip, gepercipieerde complexiteit van de uiting en de tekst en hun attitude t.o.v. de tekst.

De resultaten laten zien dat ironie slechter wordt begrepen en als complexer wordt gezien dan niet-ironie. Daarnaast werden een ironische uiting en een tekst met een ironische uiting hoger gewaardeerd dan een letterlijke uiting en een tekst met een letterlijke uiting. Een expliciet evaluatieve ironische uiting bleek minder complex te worden gevonden dan een impliciet evaluatieve ironische uiting. Daarnaast werd expliciet evaluatieve ironie ook beter gewaardeerd dan impliciet evaluatieve ironie.

Vervolgens zijn er multilevel suppressieanalyses uitgevoerd om te onderzoeken of de attitude t.o.v. de uiting en de tekst gereduceerd wordt door het begrip en de gepercipieerde complexiteit van ironie. Deze analyses lieten zien dat begrip en gepercipieerde complexiteit inderdaad suppressors zijn voor de attitudes t.o.v. de uiting en de tekst. Alleen als een ironische uiting werd begrepen, had het gebruik van ironie een positief effect op de attitudes t.o.v. de uiting en de tekst. Bij gepercipieerde complexiteit gold dat een ironische uiting die als relatief eenvoudig werd gepercipieerd hoger gewaardeerd werd dan een ironische uiting die als relatief complex werd gepercipieerd.

Experiment 2 focust op ironiemarkeerders in de ironische uiting. De analyses uit hoofdstuk 7 lieten zien dat het aantal markeerders niet gerelateerd is aan de gepercipieerde complexiteit van de ironische uiting. Een mogelijke verklaring hiervoor is dat markeerders vooral gebruikt worden bij de moeilijkere niveaus van de ironiefactoren. Om te zien of ironiemarkeerders leiden tot een beter begrip als er gecontroleerd wordt voor de invloed van ironiefactoren, is experiment 2 uitgevoerd. Experiment 2 is bovendien opgezet om de resultaten van experiment 1 te repliceren. Dit experiment had een latin-square 2 (ironie: wel en geen ironie) x 3 (markeerders: 0 markeerders, 1 markeerder, 3 markeerders) mixed design. Twaalf stimuli uit de stimulusset van experiment 1 werden aangepast voor dit experiment. De instrumentatie was gelijk aan die van experiment 1. De 151 respondenten hadden niet deelgenomen aan het eerste experiment.

De resultaten laten zien dat ironische uitingen wederom slechter werden begrepen en complexer werden gevonden dan niet-ironische uitingen. In tegenstelling tot in experiment 1, werden er in experiment 2 geen hoofdeffecten gevonden van ironie op attitudes. Markeerders hadden invloed op begrip, gepercipieerde complexiteit en waardering. Hoe meer markeerders er in de uiting voorkomen, hoe hoger het begrip
van de betreffende uiting, hoe minder complex de uiting wordt gepercipieerd en hoe hoger de uiting wordt gewaardeerd. Daarnaast waren ook de interacties van ironie en markeerders significant: Hoe meer markeerders er in een ironische uiting voorkomen, hoe hoger het begrip van de betreffende ironische uiting, hoe minder complex de ironie wordt gepercipieerd en hoe hoger de ironie wordt gewaardeerd.

Daarnaast werden de suppressieanalyses van experiment 1 gerepliceerd. Deze analyses lieten zien dat begrip een suppressor is voor de attitude t.o.v. de uiting en dat gepercipieerde complexiteit een suppressor is van de attitudes t.o.v. de uiting en de tekst. Alleen als een ironische uiting werd begrepen, had het gebruik van ironie een positief effect op de attitudes t.o.v. de uiting. Bij gepercipieerde complexiteit gold dat een ironische uiting die als relatief eenvoudig werd gepercipieerd hoger gewaardeerd werd dan een ironische uiting die als relatief complex werd gepercipieerd. Deze resultaten ondersteunen de hypothese dat de attitude t.o.v. een stimulus wordt bepaald volgens een zgn. omgekeerde U-curve: een relatief eenvoudige ironische uiting krijgt de hoogste waardering. Deze relatief eenvoudige ironische uiting is complexer dan een letterlijke uiting, maar minder complex dan een relatief moeilijke ironische uiting.

Conclusie en discussie

Hoofdstuk 9 bevat de conclusies van het onderzoek, gaat in op de beperkingen ervan en geeft een aantal suggesties voor vervolgonderzoek. De eerste onderzoeksvraag was:

OV1. Hoe wordt ironie gebruikt in geschreven teksten?

Het onderzoek heeft laten zien dat er veel variatie zit in de manieren waarop ironie gebruikt kan worden in geschreven discourse. Ironische uitingen kunnen van elkaar verschillen op het gebruik van ironiefactoren en ironiemarkeerders in de ironische uiting. Bij de ironiefactoren is het opvallend dat bepaalde niveaus (bv. ironic praise, direct relevante ironie) veel vaker worden gebruikt dan andere niveaus (bv. ironic blame, indirect relevante ironie). Bij de markeerders valt daarnaast op dat de categorie tropen anders lijkt te functioneren dan de overige drie categorieën (schematische, morfo-syntactische en typografische markeerders). Terwijl de laatste drie categorieën bijvoorbeeld grosso modo vaker voorkomen bij de complexere niveaus van ironiefactoren, komen tropen juist voor bij de eenvoudigere niveaus van ironiefactoren.
Daarnaast kan de co-tekst ook helpen om ironie op te sporen door co-tekstuele markeerders en afbeeldingen. Zo blijken co-tekstuele markeerders onder te verdelen in eerdere ironische uitingen, tropen en *tone-of-voice* markeerders. Bij de afbeeldingen blijken vooral beeldelementen uit de *mise-en-scène* de lezer op het spoor van ironie te zetten. Dit betekent dat de ene ironische uiting de andere ironische uiting niet is en dat er rekening moet worden gehouden met deze zaken wanneer er gegeneraliseerd wordt naar ironische uitingen in het algemeen.

De tweede onderzoeksvraag was:

**OV2. Hoe verschilt het gebruik van ironie in uiteenlopende schriftelijke genres?**

De resultaten van dit onderzoek hebben laten zien dat het gebruik van de ironiefactoren, ironiemarkeerders in de ironische uiting en co-tekstuele markeerders verschilt tussen de genres in het corpus. Hierbij is het belangrijk om op te merken dat elk genre in het corpus minimaal één keer van de standaardverdeling afwijkt. De voornaamste verschillen bestaan tussen de puur tekstuele en de multimediale genres. Zo bevatten ironische uitingen in puur verbale genres bijvoorbeeld over het algemeen minder ironiemarkeerders dan ironische uitingen in multimediale genres. Deze genreverschillen geven aan dat het belangrijk is om ironie in authentieke teksten te bestuderen en om bij het onderzoek naar ironie altijd het genre van de tekst te betrekken.

De derde onderzoeksvraag was:

**OV3. Wat is de relatie tussen de aanwezigheid en aspecten van ironie, begrip en waardering?**

De resultaten van dit onderzoek hebben laten zien dat tekstkenmerken zoals ironiefactoren, ironiemarkeerders en co-tekstuele markeerders zich goed lenen om te voorspellen wat de gepercipieerde complexiteit van een ironische uiting is. Met name het al-dan-niet evaluatieve karakter van de ironische uiting, de valentie van de ironie, de vraag of er een hyperbool in de ironische uiting voorkomt en het aantal ironische uitingen dat aan de ironie vooraf gaat blijken een belangrijke rol te spelen bij de
gepercipieerde complexiteit van ironie. Daarnaast hebben de experimenten laten zien dat de attitudes ten opzichte van de uiting en de tekst afhangen van de gepercipieerde complexiteit van een ironische uiting. Dit betekent dat deze tekstkenmerken van ironische uitingen ook kunnen voorspellen of een bepaalde ironische uiting een positief effect heeft op ontvangers of niet.

In hoofdstuk 9 zijn ook enkele beperkingen van het onderzoek en aanbevelingen voor vervolgonderzoek aangegeven. Allereerst zijn alle teksten in het corpus hedendaagse Nederlandse teksten uit een zestal genres. Dit betekent dat vervolgonderzoek zal moeten uitwijzen of de resultaten van dit onderzoek ook opgaan voor oudere, niet-Nederlandse teksten of voor ironie in andere genres. Een tweede discussiepunt is de betrouwbaarheid van de coderingen. Verschillende betrouwbaarheidsanalyses gaven aan dat ironiefactoren en ironiemarkeerders soms moeilijk betrouwbaar te coderen zijn. Dit betekent dat vervolgonderzoek nog een kritische blik zal moeten werpen op de codeerinstructies en deze eventueel aan zal moeten passen. Een derde beperking van de corpusanalyses is dat de analyses in de hoofdstukken 5 (co-tekstuele markeerders) en 6 (afbeeldingen) exploratief waren. Dit betekent dat de resultaten uit deze hoofdstukken gerepliceerd moeten worden in vervolgonderzoek.

Een kritische reflectie moet worden geplaatst bij de respondenten en setting van de effectstudies. Bij de experimenten waren alle respondenten studenten. Daarom verdient het aanbeveling om de onderzoeken te repliceren bij een heterogenere groep respondenten. Daarnaast was de setting bij de codering van de gepercipieerde complexiteit en de afname van de experimenten geen natuurlijke leessituatie.

Vervolgonderzoek naar ironie zou rekening moeten houden met genres waarin ironie gebruikt wordt en moeten proberen om stimuli in een genrecontext te presenteren. Daarnaast zou vervolgonderzoek stimuli kunnen gebruiken uit een ander genre dan ingezonden brieven om te zien of de resultaten ook opgaan voor ironie in andere genres.

Deze dissertatie heeft laten zien dat ironie kan verschillen op een veelvoud aan tekstkenmerken. Eerder onderzoek dat ironische uitingen als een homogene groep behandelt, heeft het object van onderzoek daardoor te zeer gesimplificeerd. Vervolgonderzoek naar ironie moet rekening houden met de ironiefactoren en -markeerders en de genres waarin ironie gebruikt wordt.
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