

## **Humor, Satire and Verbal Parody in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*: A Relevance Theoretic Approach**

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### **Abstract**

Linguistic studies of jokes and other humorous texts provide varied perspectives on how humor is elicited through language. As opposed to the predominantly semantic approaches adopted by many linguistic theories of humor, studies conducted on humor within a Relevance Theoretic framework entail that comprehension of humor – as any other instance of communication – depends on the context as well as the cognitive abilities of the reader or hearer. This context and the background information that the reader/hearer possesses determines the relevance of the message, which in turn determines whether the reader/hearer is able to arrive at the intended humorous interpretation of the text/instance. Correspondingly, this paper aims to analyze the structural and pragmatic elements of satire and parody in Douglas Adams' humorous science fiction series *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* according to the tenets of Relevance Theory. The main focus of the analysis is to elucidate how the writer draws on various cultural stereotypes and particular genre styles for satirical and parodical purposes, and how this creates a cognitive background for the reader which is a necessary prerequisite to understand the intended humor.

**Keywords:** *humor, Relevance Theory, satire, parody*

### **1. Introduction**

Humor draws largely on linguistic resources like puns, wordplay and metaphors. Verbal humour has presented itself as a complicated phenomenon to linguists over the years because of its inherently dissociative properties: sometimes the very essence of humour lies in defying the rules of language usage. However, when it comes to a larger humorous text like a novel or a series, humor is not limited to and bound by linguistic resources. Writers use many devices like satire and parody for humorous purposes that extend to the narrative level. The socio-cultural background with which the writer plays and which s/he manipulates contributes significantly in making a literary text humorous. Secondly, there is also the question of style that constitutes the cultural/social elements as well as the genre specific linguistic features of different discourses.

In this context, this study aims to elucidate how humour is created in literary texts through parody and satire. The main concern of the analysis is the explication of the linguistic resources the author draws on, using a relevance theoretic framework. Relevance theory is taken as a framework because it provides an overarching account of how linguistic communication is comprehended, and more importantly its focus on the underlying cognitive

mechanisms. Although relevance theory was initially proposed to explicate real life, everyday instances of communication, it has been extended to analyze metaphors, irony, parody and literary texts (see section 2 for details on relevance theory and literary interpretation).

Where there is an array of literature available on linguistic studies of jokes, studies on humorous fiction still remain scarce. Humorous fiction doesn't receive as much critical attention as other genres of literature because mostly it is taken to be second or third degree literature (especially when it comes to literary criticism). However, when considered from a linguistic perspective works of humorous fiction, like that of Lewis Carroll's, Joseph Heller's and Douglas Adams' present interesting instances of communication – where more is implied than said and more often than not easily understood as well. Humour, then, is not only a device of entertainment, it is also an act of communication.

In the last half of the twentieth century, many models of communication have emerged including the code as well as the inferential model of communication. Following the same line of theoretical development in Pragmatics, relevance theory was proposed in the late 80s by Sperber and Wilson to extend the inferential model of communication – putting forward an overarching account of the human comprehension process. While relevance theoretic framework has been applied to a multitude of aspects including language usage and text interpretation, when it comes to humour, relevance theory proposes that the understanding of humour requires more effort on the part of readers as compared to other forms of communication. But, in this case the cognitive effects are also maximized which account for the humorousness of the utterance or text. The major propositions of relevance theoretic approach to humour entail that humorous effects arise when a listener or reader is able to resolve a conflict between what is said and what is implied – the incongruity resolution. While taking a cognitive stance to communication in general, relevance theory also pays an excessive attention to the context that guides the interpretative process whether it is the immediate context of the utterance/text or the broader socio-cultural context. Additionally, it can also give a substantial explanation of how humour is construed in broader 'narrative texts', where the comic elements encompass a variety of aspects apart from the exploitation of linguistic resources.

Under a relevance-theoretic framework, relevance in case of humorous fiction is derived from the encyclopaedic knowledge and more importantly from the reader's ability to co-relate it to the exploitation of the narrative structure. The term Encyclopaedic knowledge is recurrently used by Sperber and Wilson (1995) and many other relevance theorists to refer to everything that is known about a certain object, entity or phenomena and thus varies from speaker to speaker – in short the knowledge that goes beyond the semantic (dictionary/lexical/logical) meaning. However, there is a common core of knowledge related to any particular

referent that communities usually share (Cruse, 2006). Owing to this, people have varied responses to any humorous instance and in many cases humor is culture bound as well.

In their reductionist account of Grice's inferential model of communication, Sperber and Wilson have put forth a cognitive framework for explicating the process of communication and comprehension. Relevance theory (and the Neo-Gricean approach in general) is reductionist in the sense that instead of Grice's conversational maxims, they argue for an 'all-purpose cognitive processing' guided by the search for 'relevance' (Lycan, 2008). Thus, relevance here must be taken as the central and single most important requirement for successful comprehension of any communicative act as proposed by Sperber and Wilson (1995). The human cognitive faculty inherently draws inferences from any relevant input (even in case of specifically linguistic communicative acts, the significance of co-text and context cannot be over-emphasized) and the encyclopaedic knowledge of the hearer/reader as well as the speaker/writer. Due to this inherent ability to search for relevance, the recipient of a communicative act keeps on looking for a plausible interpretation until s/he reaches the most relevant one (Wilson & Sperber, 2006).

Where at the outset 'Relevance Theory' does present problems of over-generalization, it provides an adequate account of the comprehension process for instances of communication where Grice's Cooperative Principle fails (Wilson & Sperber, 2006). Grice's account becomes inadequate especially in case of humorous fiction that transgresses not only the boundaries of linguistic norms but also the setting, as well as the sequence of events, in the fictional world of a novel/series. Getting humor, hence, in this case requires an active imagination on the part of the reader. This also demands an excessively creative process from the writer to make it comprehensible for the readers.

One of the central propositions that can be gleaned from relevance theoretic studies of humor (Galiñanes, 2000, 2005; Higashimori, 2011; Hu, 2012; Jin & Wang, 2012; Yus, 2003, 2008) is that the processing of humorous instances requires more cognitive effort as compared to -non-humorous acts due to their contradictory nature (in most if not all cases). This presents a contradiction to one of the two main principles of Relevance Theory – the cognitive principle of relevance – according to which the most relevant stimulus is the one that requires least effort and produces the most positive cognitive effects. Correspondingly, relevance theorists like Yus (2003, 2008) argue that in the case of humor the participants are aware of the humorous intentions of the speaker, or in some cases made aware of these intentions by certain humor markers like specific linguistic markers, questions like "have you heard that one?", and so forth. This awareness leads the hearer/reader to indulge in a process of resolving the cognitive dissonance associated with humor in return for increased cognitive effects.

## 1.1 Aims and Objectives of the Study

Where a number of studies have been conducted on humor under the relevance-theoretic framework and a few address literary texts including Trotter (1992), Furlong (1996) and Galiñanes (2000, 2005), satire and parody still remains a rarely discussed object of inquiry for relevance studies. The impetus for this study was Rossen-Knill and Henry's (1997) study of verbal parody. As opposed to literary critics who regard parody as a mode of criticism, Rossen-Knill and Henry take a different stance on parody as a linguistic phenomenon and extend the analysis to explicate the pragmatics of parodic instances in everyday conversations ranging from writing to gesturing, to literature and family conversations. They regard parody as a human behaviour and extend the propositions of literary critics to explain the structural and pragmatic aspects of parody.

This study aims to extend Rossen-Knill and Henry's (1997) analysis in order to both highlight the pragmatic aspects of parody and satire, and elucidate the related processes of humor elicitation and comprehension under the main tenets of Relevance Theory. While applying their main propositions, this study also illustrates the satirical elements of the selected text and relates it to the elicitation of humorous effects. The main research questions that the analysis answers are:

1. What are the structural and pragmatic aspects related to parody in the selected series?
2. How do parodic and satirical instances in the selected series create humor?

## 1.2 Why *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*?

Analysis in this paper is based on several excerpts from Douglas Adams' science fiction series *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. This series combines both the features of a satire and a parody with a story line distinctive of a science fiction (sci-fi here after) novel/series. Where a satire is aimed at exposing the faults of society, institutions and individuals, 'parody' mocks the style associated with a person, discipline or genre (Baldick, 2001). In more specific terms, satire is more dependent on the content and parody on the style but both are distinguished by a characteristic mocking attitude. Like most of the sci-fi novels *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* satirizes a futuristic albeit technology dominated world (or universe to be precise) and draws on the conventional styles of many institutions and fields for parodical purposes. Correspondingly, for humorous purposes, sci-fi presents an ideal genre allowing ridiculous notions and situations like time travel available to be exploited. Further, the extensive readership of the novel makes it possible to identify a specific and distinct style that characterizes parody and satire and can be attributed as a "humor marker" for the readers – guiding the whole comprehension process.

## 2. Extending the Relevance Principle: Echoic Utterances, Parodic Representation and Literary Interpretation

Instances of figurative language, like irony that flouts the maxim of truthfulness, can be regarded as special cases where relevance plays an important part in the comprehension process. According to Relevance Theory irony entails a specific use of echoic utterances. Echoic utterance is an utterance which “achieves most of its relevance by expressing the speaker’s attitude to views she [or he] tacitly attributes to someone else” (Wilson & Sperber, 2006, p. 621). Verbal irony entails an expression of dissociation on the speaker’s part from the views being expressed and echoed. Consider, for example, the following exchange:

A: It was a wonderful movie.

B: yeh! wonderful! (scornfully)

On one side the second utterance echoes the thought communicated in the first one and on the other it also entails dissociation from it. Wilson and Sperber (2006) contend that B’s utterance is ironic because it is “echoic” as “verbal irony consists in echoing a tacitly attributed thought or utterance with a tacitly dissociative attitude” (p. 622).

While elaborating on the comprehension of irony within the relevance theoretic framework, Zhao (2011) also asserts that when it comes to the comprehension of irony, relevance lies in the various incongruities that exist in an ironic utterance. Ironic utterances gain attention because there is an incompatibility between the information being provided through the contextual elements and what is being explicated by the utterance. The receiver, then, has to access some underlying contextual assumptions to recover the intended interpretation. This “contextual selection” is guided by the relevance principle:

After the addressee perceives incompatibilities between the contextual assumptions and the propositional content of the utterance, it is again relevance that guides him/her towards the conclusion that the mismatch is not gratuitous but deliberate, that the utterance should not be understood as an assertion, exclamation, directive, question or imperative, etc. in the normal sense, but should be understood as a critical commentary or evaluation, and that the utterance should not be taken as the surface value but as conveying dissociative attitudes such as satire, sarcasm, ridicule and banter. (Zhao, 2011, p. 177)

Wilson and Sperber (2006) further contend that irony is associated with a higher order of metarepresentations which are also involved in the comprehension of ‘illocutionary acts’. According to Wilson (2000) a “metarepresentation is a representation of a representation: a higher-order representation with a lower-order representation embedded within it” (p. 411). Grice had entailed that the communication process relies largely on metarepresentations: beginning from

metarepresentation of “an attributed utterance” and ultimately ending at a metarepresentation of “attributed thought” (Wilson, 2000). Metarepresentations gain particular importance in case of “echoic utterances”, like irony, which attain relevance mostly by representing the speaker’s attitude to an utterance or thought that he/she attributes to someone else. In Wilson’s contention, echoic utterances also include an additional layer of metarepresentation; as the utterance has not only to represent the attribution of thoughts to someone but also the speaker’s attitude towards it.

One of the key aspects of parody is the act of intentional re-presentation – any parodic instance recalls and alludes to its object. Like irony, the intentional re-presentation can target objects ranging from a linguistic form to individuals, to thoughts and beliefs. However, where the relevance theoretic account of echoic utterances does provide an explanation for the element of allusion in parodic instances, Rossen-Knill and Henry (1997) contend that parody requires two codes instead of one required for irony. Each of these two codes relates to specific speech events. When a parodic instance makes the hearer/reader recall the object of parody, it goes beyond merely referring or mentioning of the object as irony does. The speaker or the writer needs also to reconstruct the mental representation of the object that is being parodied. Thus, where echo is part of the re-presentation of the target object in any parodic instance, it is not enough to make the instance parodic unless the reproduction of the target object is made explicit. The re-presentation requires to be clearly identifiable as the hearer/reader needs to be aware of the original object in order to be directed towards it. Without this identification, the hearer/reader cannot reconstruct the original object of parody in order to compare it to the parodied version.

Additionally, these two codes are significant in order to understand parody because the hearer/reader’s recognition of the similarity between the parody and object is central to the process of parody comprehension and, secondly the speaker/writer has to make the resemblance apparent enough for the hearer/reader while simultaneously making it distinct from the other objects that might bear any similarity to the target (Rossen-Knill & Henry, 1997). This can be further elaborated if the concept of demonstration is incorporated in the act of re-presentation. While a demonstration does takes its meaning from the object it demonstrates (that could be a process or a person’s action or beliefs), the meanings transform as they are used in a new context by a new speaker – thus presenting a new rendition of the object of demonstration.

Apart from the comprehension of figurative devices, Relevance Theory provides an ample account for literary interpretation. Literary interpretations are, more often than not, vague and different readers can come with different interpretations of the same work. Relevance Theory also accounts for such interpretations as every receiver decodes a message on the basis of contextual assumptions s/he deems appropriate. In relation to the propositions of Relevance

Theory, literature presents a totally different case of communication and comprehension as instead of making the texts as relevant as possible, mostly the writers tend to do the opposite, thus, complicating the relevance principle. Trotter (1992) asserts that literary works entail totally different levels of relevance as opposed to everyday communication as “literature might be defined as a form of communication more grossly underdetermined than most by linguistic structure... literature tests to the limit not our powers of encoding and decoding, but our powers of inference” (p. 12). The uniqueness of literary texts can be accounted for by examining the relation between the various linguistic forms and their pragmatic interpretations. The interpretation process is based on contextual assumptions which include the propositions that are recently processed, an extended relation to previous discourse and the encyclopedic knowledge. This, in turn helps to extend the context and optimize the relevance process.

Similarly, Furlong (1996) argues that literary interpretation can be defined as a search of “intended relevance” because while reading a text a reader looks for the meaning the writer intended to make by drawing on the available (and intended) contextual assumptions. As Relevance Theory entails that utterances that carry more relevance are more likely to gain the hearer’s attention, literary works present an opposite case where most of the readers are unable to find appropriate contextual factors to infer the meaning and hence literary works enjoy a comparatively less readership – James Joyce’s stream-of-consciousness novels, for example. Both conditions of relevance: minimum effort and maximum contextual support are usually not fully met in literary works. In Furlong’s contention the process of literary interpretation follows the same path of inference predicted by Relevance Theory. As interpretation of any literary work is a response to it, Relevance Theory entails that people read literary works because they believe that they are somehow relevant to them and will make sense in a specific way. Readers expect that the writer provides evidence for his/her intended thoughts to be communicated. Furlong (1996) argues that what a reader interprets from a literary work is aimed at seeking this relevance and recovering the intended effects instead of just being a description of that work. Moreover, as Pilkington (2000) asserts Relevance Theory allows literary texts to be understood not in terms of the properties of the text but in terms of the cognitive properties that can account for the effect literary texts have on their readers.

### **3. The Pragmatics of Verbal Parody and Satire in *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy***

Parody and satire are perhaps the two most frequently used comic techniques in literature. Even in serious literary works like Shakespearean comedies or Dickens’ novels, the comic element derives from either the parodical rendering of some aspect of real life or through a satirical tone. The use of parody in literature is as old as the tradition of writing itself whether it be Aristophanes

*Frogs* or a contemporary work like Douglas Adams *Hitchhiker* series in the present case. Parody and satire, however, are distinguished in the sense that they are not characterized by the content but represent an attitude towards the phenomenon being parodied or satirized. Some critics of literature and other performing arts regard parody as a “high art form”. Parody also highlights the “inter-textual” nature of language: how our language usage draws on previous texts and styles to build new texts and styles. On the same lines, Dentith (2000) defines parody as a cultural phenomenon chiefly, while alluding to a range of linguistic as well as social norms that can be termed as a cultural practice “which provides a relatively polemical allusive imitation of another cultural production or practice” (p. 9). According to Dentith (2000), parody is ‘polemical’ because of its attacking nature – a characteristic feature of parody – which is referred to as ‘critical attitude’ in this section.

Moreover, parody can encompass words (verbal parody), action (used in theatre comedies) and even style. Rossen-Knill and Henry (1997) regard parody as a communicative act “which is enacted in various ways, through gesturing, writing or speaking; and in various contexts – e.g., on street corners, in family conversations, and in literature” (p. 720). For Rossen-Knill and Henry, verbal parody involves a re-presentation (not to be confused with ‘representation’ as a ‘simple depiction’ but signifying a ‘re-enactment’) that can utilize any linguistic form and targets individuals, actions, events and even thoughts and beliefs. Verbal parody in this sense refers to any expression that conveys some parodic meaning which may refer to a particular thing or person in the world.

*The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* is an extended satire on the modern world and highlights the insignificance of worldly concerns in comparison to the vastness of the universe. The series present a number of parodical descriptions of various entities and personas like politicians, philosophers, linguists and especially bureaucrats that are represented through Vogons. The Vogons make up for the Galactic bureaucracy and are characterized by their inefficiency, lengthy official processes and their insistence on thwarting any real progress in the galaxy. Consider, for example, the following extract from the series:

- (1) *‘Vogon Constructor Fleets. Here is what to do if you want to get a lift from a Vogon: forget it. They are one of the most unpleasant races in the Galaxy— not actually evil, but bad-tempered, bureaucratic, officious and callous. They wouldn’t even lift a finger to save their own grandmothers from the Ravenous Bugblatter Beast of Traal without orders signed in triplicate, sent in, sent back, queried, lost, found, subjected to public inquiry, lost again, and finally buried in soft peat for three months and recycled as firelighters. . . On no account allow a Vogon to read poetry at you.’*[Italics and single quotation marks in original]. (p. 50)

As it has been mentioned before, in order to be parodical any particular expression has to re-present some object or process which in this case is conveyed through the staggering official processes. It must also be noted that the instances of stereotypes and character frames discussed in the preceding section also embody an implicit parodical rendering of different personas – Zaphod re-presenting the ‘spendthrift politicians’ and Arthur a ‘self-obsessed narrow minded middle class man’ (which is one of the many interpretations of his character). Some other important instances of parody from the series are reproduced here (larger excerpts are quoted to clarify the parodical rendering implicit in the text):

- (2) ‘Oh yes,’ said Arthur, ‘I thought that some of the metaphysical imagery was really particularly effective. . . counterpoint the surrealism of the underlying metaphor of the . . . er . . . of the poet’s compassionate soul . . . which contrives through the medium of the verse structure to sublimate this, transcend that, and come to terms with the fundamental dichotomies of the other . . . and one is left with a profound and vivid insight into . . . into . . . er. . . Into whatever it was the poem was about!’ he yelled. (p. 62)
  
- (3) The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy defines *the marketing division of the Sirius Cybernetics Corporation as ‘a bunch of mindless jerks who’ll be the first against the wall when the revolution comes’, . . . Curiously enough, an edition of The Encyclopedia Galactica that had the good fortune to fall through a time warp from a thousand years in the future defined the marketing division of the Sirius Cybernetics Corporation as ‘a bunch of mindless jerks who were the first against the wall when the revolution came’.*[Italics and single quotation marks in original]. (pp. 83-84)

(2) is an extract from the part where Arthur is trying to comment on the poetry of the Vogon Captian which according to the ‘Guide’ (the fictional *Hitchhikers’ Guideto the Galaxy* after which the series is named, from which excerpts are quoted in the series) is the worst thing that can happen to you when it comes to Vogons. But Arthur’s struggle to save himself and Ford by complementing the torturous poetry is humorous because of the two reason: one arises from the situation irony of the incident and secondly through the implicit parody of literary critics which is made apparent to the readers by the used of terms specific to literary criticism like ‘verse structure’, ‘fundamental dichotomies’ and ‘vivid insight’. Similarly, (3) is also an extract from the *Hitchhiker’s Guide* and parodies the antagonistic discourse of socialists versus capitalists – where the capitalists (or commercialists) are signified by the “marketing division of the Sirius Cybernetics Corporation” and the socialists by the claim that the marketing division “will be the first against the wall when revolution came”.

Re-enactment and re-presentation in these cases is possible only because the implicit allusions are made conspicuous by specific markers like the jargon of literary criticism in (2) and the emphasis on “revolution” in (3). In terms of relevance this is the most distinguishing characteristic of verbal parody that facilitates the humorous interpretation of these instances. It is also evident that parodical rendering in essence entails a critical attitude and accounts for most of the satirical undertones in the series. Parody, then, is less expressive of information and indicates largely the author’s take on the subject being parodied.

Rossen-Knill and Henry (1997) contend that within the relevance theoretic framework four essential features are necessary for parody including: a) conspicuous verbal re-presentation of the object, b) flaunting of this re-presentation, c) critical attitude and, d) comic tone (act). Where the role of verbal re-presentation is mostly in maximizing the relevance of the verbal expression and making it more accessible for the reader, the comics effects depend largely on how this expression is flouted. This requires both creativity and subtlety on the part of the writer, failing which the critical as well as comic effects wouldn’t be produced and Douglas Adams manages to do both in the *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*.

Furthermore, in the present case most of the parodical elements are concentrated in the excerpts given from *The Guide* which can also be termed as “formulates”. The term ‘formulates’ was introduced by Nash in his model of comic narratives (Ermda, 2008, pp. 102-105) that accounts for different reflections, comments and asides indicating the writer’s attitude towards an event or situation. In the case of *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* they are distinct from localized jokes because they constitute small stretches of narrative within the series – commenting on the central conflict in many situations and setting a background in others: (1), for instance sets a background for the torturous poetry read by the Vogon Captain to Arthur and Ford as a punishment. See another two examples from the series:

- (4) ‘We,’ said Majikthise, ‘are Philosophers.’ . . . ‘We are quite definitely here as representatives of the Amalgamated Union of Philosophers, Sages, Luminaries and Other Thinking Persons, and we want this machine off’ . . . ‘You just let the machines get on with the adding up,’ warned Majikthise, ‘and we’ll take care of the eternal verities, thank you very much. You want to check your legal position, you do, mate. Under law the Quest for Ultimate Truth is quite clearly the inalienable prerogative of your working thinkers. Any bloody machine goes and actually finds it and we’re straight out of a job, aren’t we? I mean, what’s the use of our sitting up half the night arguing that there may or may not be a God if this machine only goes and gives you his bleeding phone number the next morning?’ (pp. 148-149)

This extract depicts the intervention of two philosophers Majikthise and Vroomfondel who are protesting the commissioning of Deep Thought, the most powerful super-computer ever designed in the galaxy, to find answer to the ultimate question of “life, universe and everything”. Embodying a satirical representation of philosophers in general this extract conforms to certain widely held stereotypes about thinkers – pointing to a deliberate creation of ambiguity and complexity on their part. But, in terms of relevance, this embedded stereotype helps the readers to get the ‘intended joke’ in this instance.

Apart from the aspects of ‘re-enactment’ and flouting which occurs by the phrase pointing to possibility of Deep Thought finding God’s phone number, voice shifting can also be observed in this example. Voice shifting over here refers to shifts in narrative voices: from characters to an omnipresent narrator. Despite the fact that (4) is also another excerpt from ‘*The Guide*’, voice shifting serves two purposes: i. It distances the narrator from the person speaking – implying a critical attitude towards the subject of parody and; ii. allows a more direct expression (which is closer to reality) from the speaker facilitating the readers to identify the person/profession being parodied.

Similarly, Palmer (2005) asserts that parody constitutes two acts: the successful repetition of a ‘discursive entity’ and a simultaneous transformation of it. However, this transformation is not limited to discourse only and also entails a significant alternation in our perception of the parodied entity. From a relevance theoretic approach (as entailed by Rossen-Knill & Henry (1997) the following model for parody can be outlined for extract (4) :

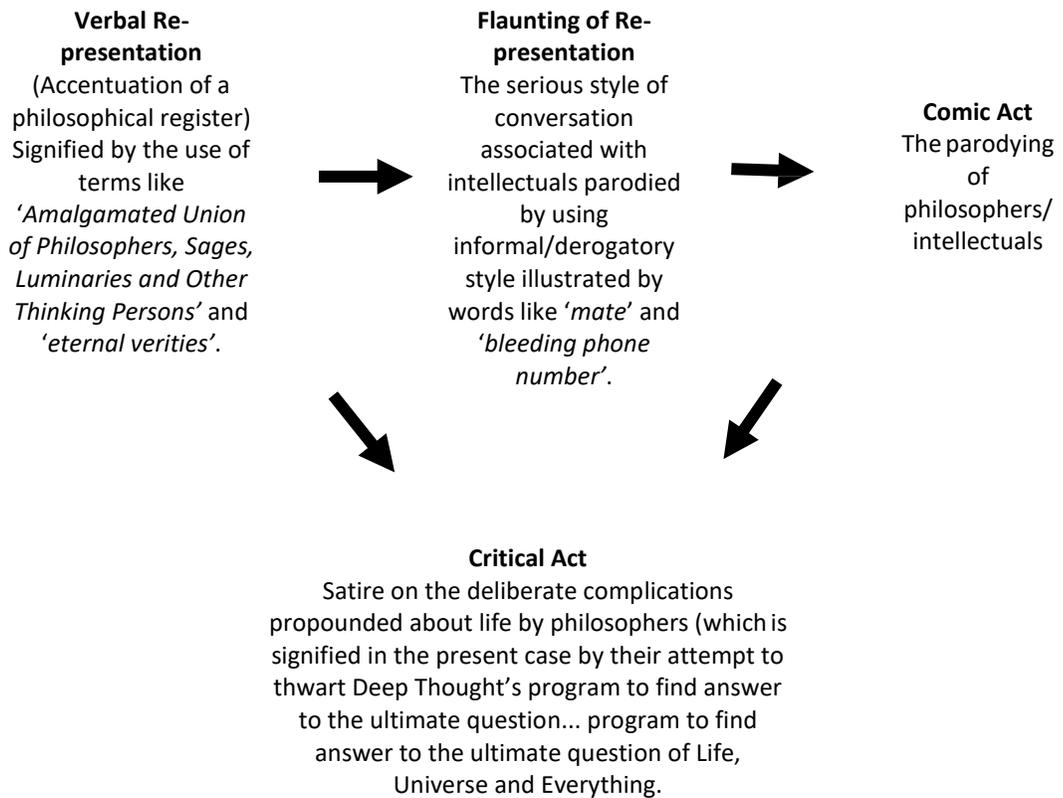


Fig 1: A relevance-theoretic model of Parody in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*

Moreover, Simpson (2003) in his discussion on the 'discourse of satire', contends that a satirical text draws on two "discourses", underscored by two distinct features, as evident in the above example and in the extracts quoted before: one echoes the discourse of the philosophers/intellectuals (re-presentation) and the other counteracts it (the act of flaunting). Simpson terms the later feature as the 'dialectic' referring to the phenomena of opposition (dialectic here must be understood as signifying the terms literal meaning as a 'conflict') found in parodical texts. Here it must be noticed that not every instance of parodical texts is satirical and vice versa. However, this distinction is not applicable in the present case because most of the extracts quoted in this section are parodical as well as satirical – stemming from the general satirical tone of the novel. Nonetheless, it is evident that the comic properties of these parodical texts originate from both the re-presentational and 'dialectical' features and excluding any of the two, from any particular instance, would render them non-comical. In

the case of (4) for instance, the discipline specific register is not enough to make this extract comical, the flaunting plays an equal part. Similarly see the following excerpt from the series:

- (5) One of the major problems encountered in time travel is not that of accidentally becoming your own father or mother. There is no problem involved in becoming your own father or mother that a broad-minded and well-adjusted family can't cope with... The major problem is quite simply one of grammar, and the main work to consult in this matter is Dr. Dan Streetmentioner's *Time Traveller's Handbook of 1001 Tense Formations*. It will tell you, for instance, how to describe something that was about to happen to you in the past before you avoided it by time-jumping forward two days in order to avoid it. The event will be described differently according to whether you are talking about it from the standpoint of your own natural time, from a time in the further future, or a time in the further past and is further complicated by the possibility of conducting conversations while you are actually travelling from one time to another with the intention of becoming your own mother or father... Most readers get as far as the Future Semiconditionally Modified Subinverted Plagal Past Subjunctive Intentional before giving up; and in fact in later editions of the book all the pages beyond this point have been left blank to save on printing costs. (pp. 269-270)

Extract (5) is taken from the *Restaurant at the End of the Universe* (the second novel in the *Hitchhiker* series) and sets a background for subsequent events before Zaphod and others embark on a time travel to dine at the restaurant that is located in a time instead of a space continuum (in a time just before the end of the world). But Douglas Adams eloquently manipulates this situation to criticise various rules of grammar which are made apparent by such terms as "Future Semiconditionally Modified Subinverted Plagal Past" and "Subjunctive Intentional". The comic impact is further increased by a comparison with far serious problems as becoming "your own mother". But on the other side, this extract also satirizes the difficulty of understanding language rules to effectively communicate one's message according to the standards.

In addition, like the previous examples, (5) is ironic or to be precise an instance of "irony within irony"; a term used by Simpson (2003) who contends that satire is a particular case of "irony within irony" – with the implications defying the semantics of the text on two levels: representing a negative attitude to not only what is said but also how it is said and in relation to whom (the target). However, the echoic qualities of this text come not from echoing someone from the novel itself but arise from the reference to broader genre of linguistics and grammar within it.

In short, it can be concluded that parody relies largely on the manipulation of a 'discourse style' of the "target" – the entity/person/institution being parodied. However, for a critical attitude and for making a parodical text "satirical" as well, the text has to illuminate the shortcomings of the 'target' being parodied: in (1) for example, this is done by highlighting the hectic official procedures related to the bureaucracy but the comical element come from the hyperbolic rendition of this shortcoming on one side and the flaunting of style on the other as in apparent in (4) and (5). Furthermore, from a relevance theoretic approach to be specific and Pragmatics in general, the success of parody comes not only from the text itself but from the "opposition" embedded in the text.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The Relevance Principle entails that the process of comprehending any instance of communication, whether it be of any kind, is guided by the relevance of the input. In case of written communication and humorous literary texts, as is the present case, the reader has to rely largely on his/her encyclopedic knowledge to fully understand the content on one hand and the identification of writer's intention of humor on the other. Keeping these assumptions in regard, this study aimed to elucidate the structural and pragmatic aspects of parody and satire and how they render the text humorous. The analysis illustrates that Douglas Adams adopts a particular parodical style in the series: using it to implicitly comment on different institutions and social norms. By mimicking the genre specific styles (including the register) the parodical instances are made apparent and understandable for the readers. As *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* can also be interpreted as a satire, the critical attitude is conveyed through a dual stream of discourses found in different instances of parody, one imbibing the discourse of the target and the other flaunting it. Where the former serves the purpose of making the text conspicuous for the readers in terms of identifying the "target", the latter lays bare its shortcomings.

Hence, it can be argued that both parody and satire also serve the purpose of social critique – their function is not only to make the readers laugh but they also point to the flaws of different institutions. Style, in humorous fiction, is distinguished by a parodical style adopted by the writer that serves to foreground different events as well as opinions expressed by the characters. As it was elaborated in the analysis, parody draws much of its relevance from its inter-textual features that are highlighted by the re-presentation of the specific discourse style associated with the entity being parodied. However, like most of other features of verbal humor, parody also embodies opposition of ideas in that it defies the norms of the 'target' discourse, that is, flaunts it.

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