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**STYLISTIC AND COGNITIVE ASPECTS OF 'FAMILY'  
IN ENGLISH JOKES**

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*Цими підписом засвідчую,  
що подані на захист рукопис  
та електронний документ  
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## Abstract

The study investigates the linguo-cognitive and stylistic properties of English family jokes, examining how the concept FAMILY is verbalized and interpreted through specific linguistic and cognitive mechanisms. The research treats the joke as a discourse genre that implies disruption of Idealized Cognitive Models of FAMILY by staging the incongruity between normative expectations and their violations. Through conceptual decomposition, frame and cognitive modeling, ethnolinguistic, stylistic and quantitative analysis applied to a corpus of 243 authentic English family jokes, the study reconstructs the multidimensional conceptual network underlying humorous representations of FAMILY. The findings establish that English family jokes constitute simultaneously a linguistic artifact, a cognitive performance and a social act that both presuppose and reinforce the shared conceptual repertoire of the speech community.

Key words: *concept FAMILY, conceptual network, cognitive models, English family jokes, incongruity, stylistics of humor*

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## Introduction

Family is a fundamental social and cultural institution that has always been a common source of humor in different cultures. Among various humorous genres, the joke stands out as a stereotyped and conventionalized discursive form that reflects the worldview of a particular society. English jokes about family are particularly revelatory – they expose stable social attitudes of the English-speaking community towards marital roles, parenting, kinship obligations and domestic conflicts. Whereas many studies have examined the phenomenon of humor and jokes in a general way, the convergence of cognitive and stylistic dimensions in English family jokes remains underexplored. This research addresses that gap by offering a comprehensive analysis of how the concept FAMILY is verbalized and interpreted through specific linguistic and cognitive mechanisms.

**The object of research:** English jokes about family.

**The subject of research:** stylistic and linguo-cognitive properties of English jokes representing the concept FAMILY.

**The working hypothesis of this study:** the concept FAMILY in English jokes is structured as a multidimensional conceptual network; the comic effect arises from systematic shifts between these conceptual layers and finds its expression through specific linguistic devices.

**The main aim of research** is to construct a holistic linguo-cognitive and stylistic model of the FAMILY concept materialized in English jokes. To achieve this aim, the following **objectives** have been set:

- to characterize the joke as a discourse genre reflecting worldview;
- to outline contemporary approaches to concept studies and the typology of the FAMILY concept;
- to identify the conceptual network of FAMILY in the joke corpus;
- to reconstruct basic frames underlying family jokes;
- to reveal cognitive models as fundamental mechanism of cognizing FAMILY;
- to interpret ethnocultural specificity and black humor realization;
- to register stylistic devices used to verbalize family nominators and determine their frequency throughout the corpus.

The research material comprises English jokes with an explicit focus on family relations that were collected from authentic online sources (Reddit r/jokes, Instagram, Facebook, X (Twitter), Threads, specialized humor websites). The total sample includes 243 jokes.

Due to the integrative nature of the study, a number of interconnected methods are applied: discourse typological analysis, intent analysis, conceptual decomposition and analysis, frame modeling, cognitive modeling, ethnolinguistic analysis, stylistic analysis, quantitative analysis, descriptive and interpretative textual analysis.

By combining several methods, the research captures both the implicit cognitive mechanisms and their stylistic realizations, thereby providing an integrated description of the representation of FAMILY in English jokes.

## Chapter 1. Theoretical background of the study

### 1.1. Joke as a discourse genre

In the early stages of linguistic thought development, the terms *text* and *discourse* were largely used interchangeably to denote verbal production in general. However, the subsequent differentiation of research paradigms led to a conceptual distinction between them. Unlike *text*, which is typically interpreted as a closed, grammatically organized verbal structure, *discourse* is understood as an integral and dynamic linguistic formation encompassing both the process and the product of speech activity, manifested through coherent text in interaction with extralinguistic factors (social, cultural, psychological and situational contexts) that determine its structure, content and pragmatic orientation (Rashidova, 2021).

Although a joke satisfies all criteria of textuality, at the same time, it is realized as a discourse phenomenon within a specific communicative situation where it acquires pragmatic orientation unfolding by the way of socially marked intentions of both speaker and addressee according to a dynamic comic scenario. Considering that a joke determines logical progression of narration and constructs the social roles of communicative participants, it is defined as a discursive practice (Самохина, 2012). The contextual and dynamic nature of a joke makes it possible to approach it as a culturally established recurrent form of verbal behavior – a discourse genre.

Anna Wierzbicka's conception, grounded in the theory of semantic primitives (Natural Semantic Metalanguage), interprets speech genres as socially determined models of communication representing conversational scenarios characteristic of a particular linguistic community describable through a universal semantic metalanguage. According to this framework, each genre is shaped as a sequence of elementary utterances reflecting the fundamental mental states and motives of speaking subjects whose communicative intentions establish the principal criterion for distinguishing genres, determining both the functional purposes and the types of speech acts involved. Therefore, the speech genre emerges as a conventionalized communicative scenario realized in accordance with socio-culturally conditioned norms and expectations (Goddard & Wierzbicka, 2016). Comparing the concept of *joke* in Anglophone culture with the specifically Polish *kawał*, Wierzbicka demonstrates that these linguo-cultural units reflect distinct conceptual structures rooted in their respective cultural contexts and, through a sequence of universal elementary components, constructs the formal structure of a joke:

*Joke*

(a) (–)

(b) *I say: one can know this (X)*

(c) *I think you know that this is not true (i.e. one can't know this)*

(d) *I say this because I want you to laugh*

(g) *I think we will both feel something good because of this* (Wierzbicka, 2003).

This model captures the speaker's fundamental communicative intentions: the creation of an expectation of truthfulness, the recognition of the falsity of what is said, the intention to provoke an emotional response and the achievement of emotional alignment with the addressee. Incongruity, which constitutes the basic mechanism underlying the production of the comic effect, arises when a logical or contextual sequence is disrupted and the expected element is replaced by an unexpected one, producing an effect of semantic displacement (Самохіна, 2012). This mechanism forms the basis of the Script-based Semantic Theory of Humor, according to which a joke necessarily presupposes at least two incompatible semantic scripts existing in semantic opposition to one another (Attardo & Raskin, 1991). At the moment of culmination (punchline), which works as the trigger of semantic shift, the addressee is compelled to retrospectively reinterpret the preceding text through the lens of an alternative script. It determines the moment when incongruity is recognized, activating cognitive tension generated by the conflict between incompatible semantic structures and subsequently producing its release in the form of laughter or another reaction typical for comic discourse. Such a theoretical model allows a joke to be understood as a form of speech activity integrating semantic ambiguity with a pragmatic orientation toward the achievement of a specific communicative effect.

According to John Searle, the minimal unit of speech activity is the speech act (Pearson, 1985). Searle maintained that every speech act is inherently conventional so far as it is grounded in socially established rules, whereas Peter Strawson proposed a more differentiated approach by distinguishing between institutional and non-institutional speech acts. Institutional speech acts operate via defined institutional conditions and are directed toward modifying the conventional status of a particular situation. Their successful realization depends upon formal factors such as the speaker's status, the context and the conventional force of the formula employed (Kissine, 2013, 2016). The indicated interpretation corresponds to the performative hypothesis, according to which certain utterances may transform reality. Non-institutional speech acts, by contrast, do not require formal institutional grounding and exist as flexible, dynamic communicative processes based on the speaker's intentions and dependent upon the addressee's interpretive capacity (Kissine, 2016). A hypothesis supported in the works of Searle suggests that every speech act contains an underlying performative formula in its deep structure: any utterance is embedded in an intentional structure signifying that a particular action is being performed through speech irrespective of whether the performative is explicitly expressed (Ваврінчик, 2014). A joke, perceived as the unfolding of a sequence of speech acts within an interactional context not restrained by fixed regulating procedures, may be interpreted as a non-institutional discourse genre possessing potential performativity manifested in its capability to generate normative consequences such as approval, condemnation, alteration of the speaker's symbolic status inside the discourse community or the production of group cohesion.

By managing the tone of interpersonal interaction, a joke performs a phatic function aimed at establishing and maintaining a favorable social environment simultaneously reinforcing or transforming social roles and hierarchies. In situations of social equality between speaker and addressee, joking generally contributes to the strengthening of solidarity and mutual trust. On the other hand, in the contexts of status inequality, a joke may fulfill a dual function: affirming the speaker's dominance or providing temporary reduction of tension and the mitigation of hierarchical barriers through shared humor (Самохина, 2012).

Thus, a joke as a discourse genre appears as a dynamic form of verbal interaction which, running within a concrete communicative situation and realized through intersubjectivity, both transmits and (re)constructs social relations.

## **1.2. Joke as a reflection of worldview**

The question of the nature of being, as well as the possibilities, instruments and limits of its cognition, occupies a central place within the research fields of numerous academic disciplines. Although the fundamental uncertainty surrounding the objective state of reality prior to its observation or interaction with it remains relevant, contemporary scientific discussions steadily recognize that consciousness is not simply an observer registering pre-existing properties of the world, but rather an active agent involved in the construction of reality.

The most radical assumptions suggest that physical characteristics usually attributed to objects (color, sound, smell or taste) do not exist outside the perceiving nervous system (for example, the human one) since they are products of the brain's processing of various physical stimuli, including electromagnetic radiation, sound waves, mechanical pressure etc., which are transformed into subjective sensory experiences of an interpretative nature (Zlatev, 2016).

A less radical alternative approach to the relationship between consciousness and reality is proposed by cognitive linguistics through the concept of experiential realism. According to this view, reality is acknowledged as objectively existing, however, human access to it is considered inevitably mediated by bodily organization (Lakoff, 1987/2008; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, cited in Evans & Green, 2018). Cognition is regarded as a process of active conceptualization in which reality is reconstructed as one of its possible interpretations in the form of semantic projections – its mental representations. In this way, multidimensional and potential reality, which before the interpretation, exists as a chaotic flow of information, becomes stabilized through bodily conditioned, psychologically and culturally mediated modes of perception. As a result, a *worldview* emerges as a meaningful and generalized model of reality reconstructed in both individual and collective consciousness through human interaction with the surrounding world (Mifsud & Sammut, 2023).

Due to the multilayered cognitive processing of experience and the classification of information, a system of concepts is formed in consciousness. *Concepts* – mental units of knowledge – are subsequently integrated into more complex structures that together constitute the *conceptual worldview* and enable the recognition, interpretation, classification and categorization of reality. By formalizing and fixing conceptual content into sign-based forms, language enables fixing and arranging a certain part of the conceptual worldview, transforming mental images into forms accessible for communication between individuals, transmission of cultural knowledge, preservation of shared experience, coordination of cognitive processes and collective meaning-making. It defines the *linguistic worldview* (Plotnikova, 2020; Yaremchuk, 2020).

As a genre capable of activating a typical cluster of stable sociocultural associations among representatives of a particular linguistic community, a joke is defined by O. Kolesnyk (2016) as a precedent phenomenon. From this angle, a joke may be viewed as a fragment of the linguistic worldview which, through mechanisms of comic verbalization, represents a particular aspect of the conceptual worldview by embodying and preserving established assumptions about social roles and communicative scenarios in the form of concise, often hyperbolized, yet representative narratives. In spite of the fact that precedent texts, including jokes, are dynamic structures that change through interpretation, their generic stability and reproducibility allow them to preserve the basic associative structures of collective experience.

The type of activity in which an individual is engaged determines which elements of reality become significant and appears as a sphere for the acquisition and accumulation of experience, the thematic content of which reflects the specificity of various social practices. Such practice-based semantic generalizations allow to construct a typology of jokes and distinguish professional jokes (doctor jokes, police jokes, office jokes, music jokes); ethno-specific jokes (Irish jokes, Scottish jokes); children's jokes (school jokes, baby jokes); animal jokes; political jokes; Christmas jokes and others (Грыба, 2021).

Family jokes, although potentially belonging to different worldviews, predominantly represent the *naïve worldview* by reflecting society's established perceptions of itself. Family jokes activate stable sociocultural associations that form the core of ethnic consciousness and ensure the cognitive integrity of the community, reinforcing stereotypes as objective reality despite their profound subjectivity and cultural contextuality (Акра, 2022; Дзюбенко, 2015). From the perspective of cognitive psychology, the naïve worldview performs the function of subconscious protection by limiting doubt and uncertainty in the perception of reality, thereby contributing to the psychological stabilization of the individual (Eapen, 2024).

Given the natural orientation of human beings as social creatures toward maintaining close interpersonal relationships, family relations are considered to be a fundamental social institution and a sacred union of individuals. For this reason, family jokes operate as verbalized gestalts – consolidated collective representations that,

through a system of linguistic signs, encode, preserve and transmit deep sociocultural constructs, behavioral patterns, worldview orientations created and reproduced across generations. In essence, family jokes represent a form of collective self-analysis that reveals stable patterns and models of family relationships established by a particular community through interaction and interpretation of reality.

### **1.3. Contemporary approaches to the study of concepts**

Despite the long-standing attention devoted by the academic community to the *concept* as an object of study across various disciplines, its multidimensional organizational and functional structure, together with the diversity of its identified properties and characteristics, has resulted in the absence of a universally accepted definition or interpretation. That is why the comprehensive understanding of the concept requires its interpretation as a multidimensional entity functioning across different levels of human existence.

The conditional level-based decomposition of the systemic organization of the concept proposed by N. V. Tatsenko (2017) distinguishes the following aspects of its existence: bodily, nervous-systemic, perceptual-emotional, conceptual-categorizing, linguistic, discursive and sociocultural. It is worth mentioning that the integrative nature of this system is highly emphasized as it cannot be reduced to any one of these levels separately – it constitutes the holistic result of their interaction. This model demonstrates the multilayered nature of the concept, in which the bodily level serves as the foundational basis for the formation of all subsequent dimensions. The interpretation of any mental phenomena inevitably requires viewing them primarily as fundamentally and intrinsically biologically conditioned processes.

Taking into consideration that their primary determinants originate in perceptual and neural mechanisms shaped by the basic principles of organismic functioning, it is necessary to trace this process beginning with the neurophysiological activity occurring in the brain. The flow of sensory information directed from receptor systems toward cortical and subcortical brain structures, particularly the hippocampus – a key component in memory formation and consolidation, ensures the primary encoding of experience within neural networks. Repeated co-activation of previously engaged neural pathways initiates mechanisms of long-term potentiation (LTP), involving the strengthening of synaptic connections, the formation of neural ensembles and the stabilization of memory traces (Carleton University, 2013). In this context, it is worth referring to the idea that neural and semantic networks intersect to form a unified “transversal neural-mental system” (Hardy, 1998). Thus, these neural associations, functioning as modular units of brain activity, make possible the phenomenon of *entrenchment* – the automatization of conceptual structures in the form of ready-made schemas for practically unconscious use (Тацєнко, 2017). The morphological correspondence of these networks is manifested in the fact that, just as synaptic

connections integrate neurons into ensembles, hierarchical and associative relations connect elements of the semantic system, where even partial activation may trigger the reconstruction of a conceptual sequence according to the *principle of pattern completion* (Yuste et al., 2024).

The modeling of the internal structure of the concept itself is represented by a range of approaches which, despite methodological differences, nevertheless demonstrate a shared orientation toward reproducing its complex organization. Most researchers adhere to the field model of the concept according to which it consists of central (nuclear) and peripheral zones. The nucleus, understood as the invariant meaning, functions as a stable representative center ensuring the primary identification of the concept. The periphery of the concept is interpreted in various ways: as additional conceptual features, connotations and subjective evaluations, image-perceptual elements or associative links with other concepts (Селіванова, 2017).

However, the outlined structural organization of the concept is not an end in itself. Having stabilized within its own structure and acquired the status of an integral cognitive unit, the concept emerges as a functionally loaded formation capable of performing two complementary functions. First, the concept must ensure the possibility of judgment – it must function as a representative carrier of material suitable for categorization, the evaluation of typicality and logical inference. Second, it must be suitable for integration into propositional structures and other mental constructions (Machery, 2009, cited in O’Shaughnessy & Sprevak, 2024). In Lakoff’s terminology, a *proposition* is understood as a coherent *idealized cognitive model (ICM)* (Селіванова, 2017) – a mental analogue of a fragment of reality and the internal organization of any statement. In particular, it functions as a logical structure integrating and organizing a set of concepts by establishing a logical subject (what is being conceptualized) and a logical predicate (the feature attributed to the object in the process of cognitive processing). Lakoff emphasizes that a considerable amount of knowledge organization is represented via ICM (Lakoff, 2008).

The described principles underlying the organization and activation of informational structures find further development in the processes unfolding at the next stage. At the conceptual-categorizing level, relevant features are synthesized, losing their status as isolated fragments of information and becoming organized into complex structures determined both by the process of defining the functional semantic content of the concept and by the establishment of its categorical boundaries. Conceptual models developed within cognitive linguistics describe various mechanisms of such knowledge organization and rely upon four fundamental sources: Charles Fillmore’s frame semantics, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson’s theory of conceptual metaphor and metonymy, Ronald Langacker’s cognitive grammar and Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner’s theory of mental spaces.

The transition of internal conceptual representation into speech form occurs through a multistage transformation process involving the selection of a relevant fragment of

knowledge, its correlation with a lexical concept, the formation of a lemma with syntactic characteristics, morphophonological encoding and, where necessary, articulatory realization (Levelt et al., 1999).

The integration of individual propositional structures into the propositional macrostructure of discourse marks the level at which concepts ultimately reveal their functional dimension, acquiring actualization relevant to a particular cognitive or communicative task (Андрейчук, 2014). As L. S. Pikhtovnikova notes, the dynamics of discourse correlate with the principles of a self-regulating system governed by positive and negative feedback mechanisms. The content of the “attractor” (the vector of internal organization) consists of the characteristics of the discourse participant as a linguistic personality, their communicative intentions and social expectations concerning the outcomes of discourse realization. Meanwhile, the content of the “repeller” (the structural limiting factors) establishes external constraints in the form of genre norms, traditions of presentation, volume restrictions, extralinguistic parameters and sociocultural archetypes of the communicants (Пихтовникова, 2017). Within discursive interaction, where the speaker’s communicative orientation intersects with the constraints imposed by socio-communicative conventions, concepts become actualized in ways relevant to a specific communicative task. From the perspective of the socio-discursive paradigm, the concept is regarded as an element of the shared “propositional fund” of communicants – a system of cognitive models ensuring the identity of meanings within a shared worldview. The intersubjective commonality makes possible the reproduction of collectively shared concepts in communication and the ethno-specific understanding of particular fragments of extralinguistic reality. Apart from this, the reconstruction of their axiological component allows researchers to identify the “collective unconscious” – a cognitive-cultural layer formed under the influence of socio-discursive factors and reflecting the socially recognized norms of a particular society (Приходько, 2009, cited in Андрейчук, 2014).

In conclusion, it seems reasonable to refer to the comprehensive definitional model proposed by A. N. Prykhodko, according to which the *concept* emerges as a *complex, multidimensional formation of “psycho-linguo-socio-cultural nature”*. More precisely, the conceptual basis (=conceptual substratum), passing through the filter of perceptual and image-based associations (=associative adstratum), becomes integrated with the value-regulative attitudes of both the individual and society, thereby emerging as a linguo-cultural formation in which cognitive, emotional and sociocultural parameters of reality converge (=value-based epistratum) (Приходько, 2013а).

#### **1.4. The concept FAMILY from a typological perspective**

As it has been stated, the concept is treated as a mental construct actualized and objectified through linguistic signs, so the analysis of the concept FAMILY should begin with an examination of its verbalization. The lexeme ‘family’ functions as the primary

carrier of conceptual information reflecting the generalized representations shared by a linguistic community regarding a particular fragment of reality. The verbalization of a concept possesses a historically layered character and the contemporary meaning of the lexeme emerges through a long process of semantic evolution. Therefore, the clarification of the concept's structure requires the reconstruction of its original meaning together with the dynamics of its transformation.

The earliest recordings of the form 'family' in English date back to 1388 (Oxford English Dictionary), which points to its relatively late incorporation into the lexical system. According to the Oxford English Dictionary and the Online Etymology Dictionary, the word derives from Lat. *famulus* "servant, slave," which later produced Lat. *familia* "family servants, domestics collectively, the servants in a household." A fifteenth-century glossary renders Lat. *familia* as a *menge*, from Anglo-French *maisine* "the household, the whole attendance upon the personal establishment of the feudal lord." The etymological survey reveals the following semantic shifts: "servants of a household"; "members of a household, the estate, property; the household, including relatives and servants" (15th c.) → "collective body of persons from one household under one head and one domestic government, including parents, children, servants and sometimes even lodgers or boarders" (1540s) → "those who descend from a common progenitor, a house, a lineage" (1580s) → "any group of things classed as kindred based on common distinguishing characteristics" (1620s) → "parents with their children, whether they dwell together or not"; "persons closely related by blood, including aunts, uncles, cousins" (1660s) → "a scientific classification between genus and order" (1753).

Two tendencies become evident: first, the semantic development proceeds from a concrete and functional meaning ("servants," "household") toward more abstract, value-oriented and socio-cognitive interpretations ("a community of blood relatives"), and second – the traced semantic evolution indicates the multidimensional and gradually layered nature of the concept FAMILY, which requires further examination of lexicographic sources as data sets of conventionalized modern meanings.

Regarding that a dictionary definition represents the most condensed form of lexical semantics, the following observations rely on componential (seme) analysis of definitions, in other words, on the construction of the nominative field of the concept through the identification of minimal semantic components (Голик, 2020 cited in Григорян, 2025). The analyzed definitions were selected from the following English-language dictionaries: American Heritage Dictionary, Cambridge Online Dictionary, Collins Dictionary, Longman Dictionary and Merriam-Webster Dictionary. The minimal semantic components (semes) identified in these definitions are marked through underlining.

The American Heritage Dictionary (n.d.) provides the following definitions of 'family': 1. a fundamental social group in society typically consisting of one or two parents and their children; 2. the children of one of these groups; 3. a group of persons related by descent or marriage; 4. people in the same line of descent, lineage; 5.

(obsolete) all the members of a household living under one roof; 6. a locally independent organized crime unit, as of the Cosa Nostra; 7. a group of like things; a class; 8. a group of individuals derived from a common stock; 9. (biology) a taxonomic category of related organisms ranking below an order and above a genus; 10. (linguistics) a group of languages descended from the same parent language, such as the Indo-European language family; 11. (mathematics) a set of functions or surfaces that can be generated by varying the parameters of a general equation; 12. (chemistry) a group of elements with similar chemical properties; a vertical column in the periodic table of elements; 13. (physics) any of the three generations of elementary fermions.

The Cambridge Online Dictionary (n.d.) contains the following definitions: 1. a group of people who are related to each other, such as a mother, a father, and their children; 2. the children of a family; 3. a group of people who care about each other because they have a close relationship or shared interests; 4. a pair of adult animals and their babies; 5. a large group of related types of animal or plant that is between an order and a genus; 6. a group of things that are related or have similar qualities; 7. a social group of parents, children, and sometimes grandparents, uncles, aunts, and others who are related; 8. a large group of related types of animals or plants.

The Collins Dictionary (n.d.) defines ‘family’ as: 1. a group of people who are related to each other, especially parents and their children; 2. children; 3. ancestors; 4. (of animals or plants) a group of related species.

The Longman Dictionary (n.d.) offers the following definitions: 1. a group of people who are related to each other, especially a mother, a father, and their children; 2. all the people you are related to, including those who are now dead; 3. children; 4. (technical) a group of related animals, plants, languages.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (n.d.) provides the following definitions: 1. the basic unit in society traditionally consisting of two parents rearing their children; 2. any of various social units differing from but regarded as equivalent to the traditional family; 3. spouse and children; 4. a group of individuals living under one roof; 5. a group of persons of common ancestry, a people or group of peoples regarded as deriving from a common stock; 6. a group of people united by certain convictions or a common affiliation, fellowship; 7. the staff of a high official (such as the President); 8. a group of things related by common characteristics such as a closely related series of elements or chemical compounds, a group of soils with similar chemical and physical properties (such as texture, pH, and mineral content) that comprise a category greater than the soil series, a group of related languages descended from a single ancestral language; 9. category in biological taxonomy ranking above a genus and below an order and usually comprising several to many genera; 10. a grouping of breeds based on similar lineage, function, or appearance 11. the descendants or line of a particular individual; 12. a set of curves or surfaces whose equations differ only in parameters; 13. a unit of a crime syndicate (such as the Mafia) operating within a geographical area.

On the basis of the conducted analysis, Table 1.1. was compiled to reflect the distribution of identified semes in the structure of the concept FAMILY. The vertical rows contain the extracted semantic components and the horizontal rows present the lexicographic sources in which a particular element of meaning is attested. The order of semes reflects their frequency.

Dictionary / Semantic Component (Seme)	American Heritage Dictionary	Cambridge Online Dictionary	Collins Dictionary	Longman Dictionary	Merriam-Webster Dictionary
people related by blood (consanguinity) – common ancestry / descent / lineage	+	+	+	+	+
parents and children	+	+	+	+	+
group of things with similar characteristics – category / class of things	+	+	+	+	+
group of related living organisms	+	+	+	+	+
children as a subset	+	+	+	+	
group of elements derived from a common stock	+	+	+		+
group of related languages	+			+	+
people living together / household / cohabitation	+				+
people united with emotional bonds		+			+
social group with shared interests		+			+
mathematical set	+				+
chemical group	+				+
crime syndicate unit	+				+
people related by marriage	+				
physics particle generations	+				
staff / retinue of an official					+

**Table 1.1. Semantic components of the lexeme ‘family’ in dictionary definitions**

The comparative overview of dictionary definitions demonstrates a considerable irregularity in the representation of particular semantic components. The most frequent semantic elements, including “*people related by blood (consanguinity) – common ancestry / descent / lineage*”, “*parents and children*”, “*group of things with similar characteristics – category / class of things*” and “*group of related living organisms*”, appear in all examined sources. Semes such as “children as a subset” and “group of elements derived from a common stock” occur in nearly all of them. The stability and recurrent appearance of specific semes in dictionary definitions result from their role in constituting the prototypical conceptual core that shapes the configuration of the concept FAMILY. The primary socio-genealogical frame, encompassing parent-child relations, lines of descent and marital relations, should also include the component of *shared household or cohabitation*. Although modern dictionaries mention this feature less frequently, it still endures as a relic of the original semantic model discussed in the etymological overview above.

Peripheral, or secondary, semes appear only in individual lexicographic sources. Three major directions of semantic derivation may be observed. The first includes sub-meanings such as “group of related languages”, “mathematical set”, “chemical group” and “physics particle generations”. These meanings most likely emerged through metaphorical transfer grounded in structural similarity between biological kinship and groups of elements, objects or entities demonstrating common origin, organization or characteristics. The second group includes meanings such as “crime syndicate” and “staff / retinue of an official”, where the structural and organizational model of the family extends to other types of ordered communities characterized by hierarchy, role distribution and mechanisms of internal regulation. In those cases, metaphorization is accompanied by increased emphasis on strategies of power and control. The third group includes meanings such as “people united through emotional bonds” and “social group with shared interests”, resulting from metaphorical transfer of the affective characteristics associated with the prototypical family. This process transfers qualities such as psychological closeness, a sense of belonging, mutual support and durability of interpersonal ties onto social groups lacking common genealogical origin yet functioning according to similar principles of internal integration.

The peripheral meanings of the lexeme family should be regarded as products of semantic transformation in which individual components of the prototypical core (common origin, hierarchical organization, internal solidarity or emotional integration) undergo selective actualization in new conceptual and communicative domains. Each of these fragments may increase its relevance in a new context and acquire an independent functional realization. Nevertheless, the very possibility of their autonomous existence retrospectively confirms the presence of corresponding elements in the nuclear zone of the concept FAMILY. Thus, the identified semantic characteristics provide the basis for further typologization of the concept FAMILY.

The study employs the typology of concepts proposed by A. Prykhodko because it offers a multidimensional classification encompassing both structural-semantic characteristics and functional parameters organized through the binary oppositions universality/specificity, regulativity/non-regulativity, parametricity/non-parametricity and positivity/negativity.

The distinction between universal and specific concepts in Prykhodko's classification relies on the central assumptions of cognitive semantics concerning the interaction between mental structures and culturally conditioned world models. Universal concepts possess ontological significance extending across the entire ecumene and remain rooted in fundamental transcultural spheres of human existence. Specific concepts, on the other hand, reflect localized historical and cultural scripts, values, prototypical scenarios that cannot be fully recoded outside a corresponding linguo-culture (Приходько, 2013а). From this perspective, FAMILY belongs to universal concepts because it denotes a basic form of organization common to all human societies which is evident in semes such as “parents and children”, “descent”, “lineage” and “ancestors”. Even so, universality does not exclude nationally conditioned or locally specific interpretations of the concept.

The opposition between regulativity and non-regulativity rests upon pragma-semantic parameters connected with teleology and intentionality – the ability of a concept either to establish culturally approved behavioral models, shape normative imperatives of social prescriptions or to denote a state, phenomenon or object of perception (Приходько, 2013а). FAMILY gravitates toward the regulative zone. The structure of the examined definitions supports this conclusion, since family appears as a social institution and naturally as a system of expectations and role distributions regulating its functioning. The presence of semes such as “social unit”, “household” and “parents rearing children” indicates that family establishes a normative framework, which permits the classification of FAMILY as a concept with dominant regulativity.

The typology of parametricity and non-parametricity, associated with structural-semantic properties, measurability, organizational clarity and the possibility of identifying a stable conceptual-frame basis (Приходько, 2013а), demonstrates that FAMILY possesses the characteristics of a parametrical concept. Lexicographic data reveal the existence of structurally describable parameters, including the number of family members, marital status, social stratification and the type of kinship relations.

In the opposition positivity and negativity, connected with the affective properties of a concept and its ability to accumulate the value orientations of a linguistic community (Приходько, 2013а), FAMILY cannot be reduced exclusively to either category. It may be assumed that it constitutes a polyvalent concept with a predominantly positive orientation, illustrated by semes such as “close relationships”, “shared interests”, “united through certain convictions” and “fellowship”. Nonetheless, the positive orientation may undergo modification in particular social and cultural contexts involving ironic interpretations as in humorous types of discourse.

Taken together, the conducted analysis of dictionary definitions alongside the structural-functional examination of the concept FAMILY makes it possible to conclude that in A. Prykhodko's typology FAMILY emerges as a universal, regulative, parametrical and polyvalent concept.

### **1.5. Linguo-cognitive approach to the analysis of nominative units**

While designation is viewed as the product of a particular way of interpreting and conceptualizing reality, attention naturally shifts to the mechanisms that connect human experience with the semantic organization of language. These mechanisms shape the strategies speakers use to name phenomena and determine how meaning is structured in linguistic units.

A central role in this process belongs to *categorization*, understood as the internal organization of knowledge through Idealized Cognitive Models (ICMs) – experience-based interpretive structures organized around prototypes, where category inclusion depends on proximity to a central, typical instance (Lakoff, 2008). In Lakoff's account, every ICM functions as a gestalt grounded in four major structuring principles: propositional structure, image-schematic structure, metaphorical projection and metonymic modeling, drawing respectively on the work of Charles Fillmore, Ronald Langacker, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (Lakoff, 2008). The architecture of ICMs is directly linked to the principles of embodied cognition, according to which human thought is shaped by bodily interaction with the environment. Lakoff and Johnson identify three dimensions of experience that underlie cognitive modeling: spatial and visual perception, which includes navigation and the recognition of spatial relations; motor activity and object manipulation; and aspectual structure, involving patterns of control and the temporal organization of actions such as beginnings, duration, progression and completion, all rooted in bodily experience (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999).

*Image schemas* mediate between bodily experience and conceptual structure. These recurring dynamic patterns transform sensorimotor experience into basic forms of cognition. Among the most fundamental are CONTAINER – which derives from experiences of bounded space and distinctions between inside and outside; PART-WHOLE – grounded in the perception of the body as an organized whole composed of coordinated parts; LINK – based on experiences of physical connection; CENTER-PERIPHERY – which organizes experience around central and marginal zones; and SOURCE-PATH-GOAL – reflecting the linear and directional structure of movement (Lakoff, 2008; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). The schemas constitute one of the primary cognitive resources involved in the construction of more complex conceptual structures, particularly in metaphorical mapping.

In an integrated theoretical framework combining the Neural Theory of Language, Johnson's theory of conflation, Grady's theory of primary metaphors and Fauconnier and Turner's conceptual blending theory, *metaphor* is treated as the result of stable

cross-domain associations, most often directed from bodily experience toward more abstract domains of thought (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). Johnson argues that primary metaphors emerge through repeated co-activation of sensorimotor and subjective-evaluative experience, initially perceived as an undifferentiated whole. The fusion gradually produces persistent associations between conceptual domains that later stabilize into metaphorical correspondences. More complex conceptual metaphors arise through the blending of primary metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). Lakoff and Johnson further emphasize that conceptual metaphors originate in recurring correlations within sensorimotor and sociocultural experience. These correlations are not similarities in themselves. Only through metaphorical mapping do they acquire structured form and become correspondences that organize perception and shape what speakers perceive as analogous or comparable. Cognitive metaphor theory traditionally distinguishes between orientational, ontological and structural metaphors, each reflecting a different level of conceptual organization. *Oriental metaphors* rely on spatial image schemas such as up-down, in-out or front-back and organize abstract concepts through bodily spatial orientation, as in HAPPY IS UP or SAD IS DOWN. *Ontological metaphors* emerge from interaction with physical objects and substances and allow events, emotions and mental states to be conceptualized as entities or containers, making them available for reference and categorization, as in INFLATION IS AN ENTITY or THE MIND IS A CONTAINER. *Structural metaphors* involve mappings between a more concrete source domain and a more abstract target domain, as illustrated by ARGUMENT IS WAR or LOVE IS A JOURNEY. Lakoff and Johnson, nevertheless, stress that these categories are not rigidly separated: any metaphor may simultaneously structure experience, create ontological entities and rely on orientational schemas (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003).

Unlike metaphor, which operates across conceptual domains, *metonymy* develops within a single Idealized Cognitive Model (Lakoff, 2008). Building on Austin's classical interpretation of metonymy as analogy and its later development in the work of Lakoff and Johnson, metonymy may be understood as a principle of semantic extension based on "stands for" relations, where a prototypical or nuclear sense becomes the center around which secondary meanings cluster through associative links (Lakoff, 2008). In rapid categorization or judgment, a typical case or cultural stereotype may come to represent an entire category metonymically, creating what Lakoff terms a representativeness structure. This explains why stereotypical images often dominate cognitive expectations: elements that objectively belong to a category may still be accepted or rejected depending on how closely they correspond to the dominant metonymic image (Lakoff, 2008). On the level of semantic productivity, metonymic processes generally follow three major strategies: elementary substitution (a part stands for the whole or a sign stands for its referent), chaining (successive relations of similarity or association generate a series of semantically distant but cognitively connected meanings), scenario economy (a fragment of a scenario evokes an entire ICM

structure through minimal linguistic expression) (Lakoff, 2008). These operational principles correspond to two broad types of metonymic association: intrinsic relations, which are relatively stable and cognitively motivated and extrinsic relations, which depend on situational or cultural-historical conditions (Croft & Cruse, 2004). Intrinsic relations include patterns such as PART-FOR-WHOLE, WHOLE-FOR-PART, INDIVIDUAL-FOR-CLASS, CLASS-FOR-INDIVIDUAL, ENTITY-FOR-ATTRIBUTE, ATTRIBUTE-FOR-ENTITY, as well as hyperbole, euphemism and ironic inversion. Extrinsic relations arise from contingent or context-dependent usage.

The distinct operational principles of metaphor and metonymy do not imply complete functional separation. Their interaction gives rise to *metaphonymy* – a phenomenon in which metaphorical and metonymic transfer overlap within the same conceptual act, intersecting or reshaping the interpretation of an utterance (Croft & Cruse, 2004). The interaction supports a gradient view of cognitive operations and demonstrates that semantic transfer is conditioned by broader conceptual configurations.

Fillmore's theory further clarifies how conventional scenarios and expectations define the range of possible metaphorical and metonymic interpretations. At the center of this approach lies the assumption that semantic organization – the body of knowledge associated with typical situations – precedes meaning construction itself (Lakoff, 1989; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). Language thus functions as a system of cues capable of activating a particular interpretive frame in the interlocutor's mind (Croft & Cruse, 2004). A *frame* may be described as an idealized cognitive model of a situation consisting of interconnected participants, objects, events, goals and consequences that provide the contextual conditions necessary for interpreting lexical meaning. Words acquire meaning only in relation to such a model because linguistic units' profile particular elements of a larger conceptual structure rather than representing it in its entirety (Lakoff, 1989, 2008; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999).

Fillmore also develops the concept of *case frames*, according to which predicates contain sets of potential semantic roles or deep cases describing typical participant configurations and event structures. Those semantic configurations determine the compositional structure of the predicate, while syntactic organization emerges through the projection of semantic roles onto syntactic positions (Kós-Dienes, 1985). Since event participants are not equally prominent in discourse, Fillmore introduces the notion of *salience*, which organizes arguments according to their relevance for speaker and addressee, taking into account factors such as animacy, degree of involvement and participation in change of state (Fillmore, 1977). This hierarchy helps explain why certain participants tend to occupy central syntactic positions, especially subject and object roles, while others remain implicit without disrupting the semantic integrity of an utterance (Croft & Cruse, 2004). Fillmore's model further suggests that lexical meaning is better analyzed through its relation to frame structure than through comparison with neighboring lexical items inside a semantic field. Whereas lexical field theory focuses

primarily on contrasts between related words, frame semantics places lexical units within broader experiential or culturally idealized scenarios that provide the conditions necessary for interpretation (Croft & Cruse, 2004; Kós-Dienes, 1985).

Whilst Fillmore emphasizes the external scenario underlying meaning, Ronald Langacker focuses on the dynamic process of conceptualization itself, arguing that the meaning of a linguistic unit is identical to the way a fragment of experience is mentally constructed by the speaker. According to Langacker, lexical meaning forms a network of interconnected nodes ranging from abstract schemas to more specific extensions. In light of prototypes that are often unstable and semantic development that remain unpredictable, semantic analysis must address the network as a whole rather than isolate individual meanings from it (Langacker, 1987, 2002; Croft & Cruse, 2004). A key analytical notion in Langacker's framework is the *cognitive domain* – any conceptual structure that provides the background necessary for interpreting meaning. Domains may consist of perceptual spaces, individual concepts, complex scenarios or entire knowledge systems. Many concepts are domain-dependent and cannot be understood independently of broader conceptual structures (Langacker, 1987; Croft & Cruse, 2004). Langacker distinguishes between *basic domains* (e.g. space, time, color perception), which are cognitively irreducible and *derived domains* formed through combinations of more elementary structures. Although some lexical units may rely primarily on a single domain, most meanings emerge from domain matrices in which several conceptual structures overlap and jointly contribute to interpretation (Langacker, 1986, 1987). Meaning, in Langacker's theory, is inseparable from *conventional imagery* – the speaker's ability to structure conceptual content through construal operations, including perspectivization, profiling and schematicity. Choosing a linguistic form therefore means choosing a particular way of conceptualizing experience. Grammar itself becomes a system of conventional means for organizing thought (Langacker, 1986). Morphemes, lexical items and syntactic constructions are treated as symbolic units of the same general type rather than sharply separated categories. Differences between them arise from variations in profiling and domain selection rather than from fundamentally different semantic status (Langacker, 2008; Croft & Cruse, 2004). This approach presupposes a dynamic and context-sensitive conceptual structure in which multiple interpretations may coexist and become activated depending on discourse conditions.

One of the most influential cognitive models connecting semantics and pragmatics is Gilles Fauconnier's theory of *mental spaces*. In contrast to classical formal semantics, which operates with complete models of possible worlds, Fauconnier describes thought as the dynamic construction of local and partial conceptual structures – mental spaces, representing fragments of knowledge, experience or imagined situations (Roldán-Riejos & Gilles, 2010). Mental spaces function as temporary cognitive workspaces activated and modified during speech and thought. They may correspond to present reality, hypothetical or counterfactual scenarios, fictional situations, beliefs, desires or assumptions (Croft & Cruse, 2004). This framework provides tools for explaining

complex semantic phenomena, particularly referential opacity and presupposition projection, which are difficult to model adequately in objectivist semantics. Each mental space contains conceptual entities represented either as roles or as values. A role constitutes a descriptive or functional position, whereas a value refers to the specific individual or token filling that role in a particular space (Fauconnier, 1997; Croft & Cruse, 2004). Connections between spaces are established through connectors that enable cross-space correspondences and projections (Lakoff, 2008). These links allow speakers to preserve discourse coherence even when several incompatible or alternative interpretations are simultaneously active.

The development of mental space theory eventually led to conceptual *blending theory*, formulated by Fauconnier together with Mark Turner. The theory describes the integration of two or more input spaces into a new blended space containing meanings and inferences that cannot be reduced to the simple sum of the original inputs. Blends may become highly conventionalized or remain creative and situational. They underlie a wide range of metaphorical, narrative and scientific constructions (Fauconnier, 1997; Fauconnier & Turner, 2002; Croft & Cruse, 2004; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). Unlike approaches that require complete and internally coherent representations of reality, mental space theory accommodates partial, flexible and context-dependent representations in which multiple understandings of the same situation may coexist simultaneously (Lakoff, 1987; Croft & Cruse, 2004).

All outlined theoretical perspectives form an adaptive network of cognitive resources that interact, overlap and reorganize themselves during speech, allowing meaning to emerge as a contextually shaped and qualitatively new product of conceptual activity. In the study of nominative units, this entails a shift away from the search for a single explanatory model toward the analysis of the integrative mechanisms underlying designation itself.

### **1.6. Linguo-cultural approach to the analysis of nominative units**

A comprehensive analysis of designation as a multidimensional phenomenon requires attention to the sociocultural environment in which it functions, as outside such a context the act of naming loses much of its significance. Unlike the previous subsection, which focused on the internal mental mechanisms underlying cognitive activity, the further theoretical interpretation of the research object calls for a shift beyond individual consciousness toward the sphere of collective cultural experience.

The linguo-cognitive and linguo-cultural approaches are methodologically complementary. The former examines the concept as a mental construct of individual consciousness through which the conceptual sphere of a speech community may be reconstructed and the latter approaches the concept as a representation of collective cultural experience internalized by language users. In such a way, the linguo-cognitive approach follows a trajectory “from the individual to culture,” while the linguo-cultural

approach proceeds “from culture to the individual” (Poliuzhyn, 2015). The emergence of linguo-culturology as an independent field of study grew out of ideas concerning the inseparability of language and culture formulated in the works of Wilhelm von Humboldt, Oleksandr Potebnia and others. The notion of language as a creative and activity-based phenomenon, together with the idea of language as an expression of the spirit of a people, later developed into a systematic theory of the linguistic worldview (Holubovska, 2009; Kravets, 2016). Linguo-culturology therefore developed as an integrative branch of modern linguistics concerned with the interaction between language and culture in communicative practice.

From this perspective, language is treated as a particular mode of cultural existence – a mechanism through which culture is preserved and transmitted over time (Kravets, 2016). In view of the fact that meaning takes shape through speakers’ awareness and communicative practice, the central notion of linguo-cultural analysis is the *linguo-cultural community* that simultaneously functions as the subject of cognition, the recipient of cultural values and the creator of a linguistic worldview (Kononenko, 2008; Shkoliarenko, 2019). Linguo-cultural community, as a collective subject, determines which fragments of reality become linguistically encoded and therefore which concepts acquire cultural significance. From a linguo-cultural perspective, a *concept* is understood as a mental formation of the individual that develops into a collective idea within a particular ethno- or linguo-culture at a specific stage of its sociohistorical development (Prykhodko, 2013). In this sense, concepts function as indicators of culture, while culture itself provides the environment for their existence and evolution. A concept therefore simultaneously: 1) emerges in individual consciousness as a “quantified” unit of knowledge and imagery; 2) becomes fixed in linguistic forms; 3) circulates in social memory as an element of collective consciousness (Prykhodko, 2013).

Within the taxonomy of concepts, a special role belongs to *cultural constants* – stable mental formations that preserve ethno-specific values and socially significant spheres of communal life. A distinct subgroup of cultural constants is formed by *concept-symbols* – highly abstract mental formations combining the properties of both concept and symbol. In this context, a symbol is viewed as a linguo-cultural unit that performs a substitutive function and acquires significance within social, political, religious or cultural communities. Concept-symbols are capable of condensing large amounts of cultural information into a compressed form, functioning as generalized models of cultural knowledge organization – *condensed frames* (Prykhodko, 2013). This points to one of the methodological difficulties of linguo-culturology: the implicit nature of cultural semantics, which is not always directly expressed in linguistic form (Shkoliarenko, 2019).

Particular importance in this type of analysis belongs to nominative means: lexical items, phraseological units and fixed expressions. Equally revealing, however, is the phenomenon of *lacunae* – the absence of designations for certain objects or situations that reflects the culturally conditioned selectivity of conceptualization (Skichko, 2021).

The very presence or absence of a linguistic unit used to designate a particular concept indicates its social and cultural relevance within a given linguo-culture. It means that acts of designation are selective and value-oriented: different linguo-cultural communities choose different aspects of the same experience for linguistic fixation.

Everything considered, the observations demonstrate that linguo-culturology has established itself as an interdisciplinary field concerned with the cultural conditioning of nominative processes. Its methodological framework, including concepts, cultural constants, concept-symbols and lacunae, provides the necessary tools for examining how a language community interprets and names surrounding reality in accordance with its own system of values and cultural priorities.

### **1.7. Research methodology**

The study draws on a corpus of English jokes about family collected from online humor databases and digital repositories. The corpus comprises 243 units selected according to the following criteria: thematic relevance (explicit reference to family members or family situations), sufficient length for stylistic and cognitive analysis and cultural attribution to the Anglophone tradition. The material was processed using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, each applied in accordance with the analytical tasks of the respective chapter.

*Discourse-genre analysis* is applied at the preliminary stage to establish the defining characteristics of the joke as a discourse genre with its compositional structure, pragmatic orientation and the mechanisms of comic effect production. This provides the analytical framework within which the cognitive and stylistic properties of family nominators are then examined.

*Conceptual analysis* is employed to reconstruct the conceptual network of FAMILY as it is verbalized in English jokes. The analysis proceeds through the identification of four types of constituent concepts: status-role concepts (designating family members and their social positions), locative concepts (reflecting spatial organization of family life), event concepts (encoding typical family situations and scenarios) and axiological concepts (capturing value judgements and attitudes embedded). This classification allows for a systematic description of how the concept FAMILY is structured in the joke corpus.

*Frame modeling* is applied to reconstruct the basic frames underlying English family jokes as structured mental representations of stereotyped situations. Frame analysis reveals which scenario slots are activated and deliberately distorted to produce the comic effect.

*Cognitive modeling* is used to identify the underlying cognitive models, primarily conceptual metaphors and image-schemas, that motivate the selection of nominators for family members and relations in English jokes.

*Ethnolinguistic analysis* is applied to interpret the cultural specificity of English family jokes. This method focuses on revealing how humor reflects and reinforces ethnocultural patterns including ethno-specific humor and dark humor.

*Stylistic analysis* constitutes the core method of Chapter 3. Its purpose is to classify and systematically describe the stylistic devices that create the comic effect and verbalize family nominators in English jokes. The analysis covers devices operating at three levels: lexical, lexico-syntactic, syntactic.

*Quantitative (statistical) analysis* is applied to measure the frequency and distribution of stylistic devices across the corpus. The results are presented in percentage terms and interpreted in relation to the role of each device type in verbalizing family nominators and generating the comic effect. This allows for evidence-based conclusions regarding dominant tendencies in the stylistic organization of English family humor.

*Descriptive and interpretative textual analysis* is employed throughout the study. It serves two purposes: to describe the structural and content features of each joke and to interpret the cognitive, cultural and pragmatic meanings embedded in jokes.

## Conclusions to Chapter 1

Chapter 1 has established the theoretical and methodological foundations of the study, assembling a multi-layered framework for the analysis of the concept FAMILY verbalized in English jokes.

The joke has been substantiated as a discourse genre with stable pragmatic and compositional characteristics: it functions as a textual unit in a dynamic communicative event governed by the mechanism of incongruity, realized through the opposition of at least two incompatible semantic scripts and resolved at the punchline. As a recurrent, culturally embedded form of speech behavior, the joke constitutes a fragment of the linguistic worldview and operates as a verbalized gestalt – a condensed repository of collectively shared sociocultural patterns. This dual status of the joke, as both a cognitive construct and a communicative practice, justifies its selection as the analytical object of the study.

The theoretical examination of the concept has revealed its fundamentally multidimensional character, integrating neurophysiological, perceptual, conceptual, linguistic, discursive and sociocultural dimensions into a unified, irreducible system. The concept FAMILY has been shown to occupy a structurally central position within this framework: it has been qualified, on the basis of lexicographic and typological analysis, as a universal, regulative, parametric and ambivalent concept whose prototypical core is rooted in the semantics of kinship, descent and co-residence. The semantic structure confirms that FAMILY is a conceptually loaded and culturally dynamic formation disposed to contextual modification and genre-specific reframing.

The linguo-cognitive and linguo-cultural approaches have been established as methodologically complementary analytical vectors. The former one, grounded in the apparatus of cognitive semantics (frame theory, conceptual metaphor and metonymy, image-schemas, mental spaces and idealized cognitive models) provides the tools for reconstructing the internal conceptual structure of FAMILY and the cognitive mechanisms underlying the selection of its nominators. The latter one situates these mechanisms within the broader context of collective cultural experience, treating designation as a selective act that encodes the priorities of a specific linguo-cultural community. The phenomenon of lacunae, alongside the presence of concept-symbols and cultural constants, demonstrates: what a community chooses to name is as analytically significant as the names themselves.

Overall, the listed theoretical positions converge on a single analytical principle that will govern the subsequent Chapters 2 and 3.

## Chapter 2. Linguo-cognitive peculiarities of the concept FAMILY verbalizers in English jokes

### 2.1. Conceptual network FAMILY in the discourse genre “joke”

Family jokes activate broad configurations of kinship knowledge in a comparably condensed form. The interpretation of joke texts relies on shared cognitive and cultural assumptions, while both explicit verbalization and meaningful omission indicate the relative conceptual salience of particular family-related categories. Due to the structural brevity of a joke as a text and its need to establish a recognizable social scenario with minimal linguistic material, jokes provide productive textual material for examining the internal organization of the concept FAMILY.

Further analysis employs a hierarchical model with seven levels: mega-level (FAMILY), meso-levels (CLAN, LINEAGE), macro-level (GENERATION), cata-levels (RELATIVE, FAMILY MEMBER), and micro-level (MOTHER, FATHER, CHILD, SIBLING etc.). Altogether, these levels capture the graded organization of the conceptual network FAMILY. The concepts will be examined in ascending order, moving from the micro-level up to the mega-level, in other words from specific family roles to higher-order, more abstract concepts.

**Level 7** comprises concepts denoting basic family roles: HUSBAND, WIFE, FATHER, MOTHER, SON, DAUGHTER, CHILD, GRANDFATHER, GRANDMOTHER, GRANDCHILD, GRANDSON, GRANDDAUGHTER. This level aligns with the basic level of categorization, known for high-frequency usage, dense informational content and an accumulation of associations tied to each concept. The units at this level function as actants: they represent key participants, enabling quick identification of the communicative situation – the roles of the interacting parties and the expected behavioral scripts. Each actant activates a set of culturally and socially entrenched features, making the joke a compact representation of fragments of the worldview.

(1) *A little boy asked his father: “Dad, how much does it cost to get married?” / The father replied: “I don’t know, son, I’m still paying for it.”* (Rob Sperry, 2019)

Here, the lexeme *father* (and its equivalent *dad*) is conceptualized within the naïve worldview through a set of features: ‘male sex’, ‘older age relative to the child’, ‘authority’, ‘life experience’ and ‘responsibility for the family’s material well-being’. The lexeme *son* activates the semantic features ‘male sex’, ‘younger age’ and ‘the position of a learner / someone who absorbs experience’. The humorous effect hinges on the interplay of precisely these status-role characteristics. Hypothetically, replacing *father* with a more general term like “relative” would erase the specific constellation of expected social and behavioral traits essential to creating the comic effect.

Similarly, the lexeme *wife* activates the features ‘female sex’, ‘married status’ and ‘expected loyalty to her own family’ in joke (2).

(2) *My wife accused me of hating her family and relatives... I said, “No, in fact, I like your mother-in-law a lot better than I like mine.”* (Sandy Sibert, 2025)

The WIFE role is structurally indispensable for the comic effect, as WIFE is a typical agent that triggers the conflict scenario “Accusing the husband of disliking her family” as a culturally entrenched pattern.

A more detailed analysis of status-role concepts verbalizing family members will be provided in the next subchapter (2.1.1 Status-role concepts).

Another point to be mentioned here is a notable difference between the cultural worldviews, for instance, in English and Ukrainian worldviews at the level of basic family roles. English jokes reveal no separate lexemes for concepts like ВУЙКО/VUYKO (=maternal uncle) and СТРИЙКО/STRYIKO (=paternal uncle). The English-speaking community generalizes uncle, which does not distinguish between maternal and paternal lines. Similarly, the concepts КУМ/KUM and КУМА/KUMA (=godfather/godmother in the context of spiritual kinship) have no direct lexical-semantic equivalents. In English jokes, roles of spiritual kinship, which are prominent in Ukrainian cultural and humorous traditions, are practically absent. Although English does have the lexemes *godfather* and *godmother*, they do not appear in family jokes: in popular humorous discourse, they tend to be associated either with criminal connotations (GODFATHER in the mafia hierarchy) or with fairy-tale motifs (FAIRY GODMOTHER). The likely reason lies in different religious and cultural traditions. In Orthodox culture, the christening ceremony creates a system of spiritual kinship conceptualized as a type of family bond. By contrast, in the religious contexts of English-speaking cultures (Anglican, Catholic, Protestant), the roles of GODPARENTS are largely interpreted as social or ceremonial, which limits their representation within the conceptosphere FAMILY.

All the concepts on Level 7 serve as “building blocks” for **Level 6 – FAMILY MEMBER**: any MOTHER, FATHER, SON etc., is a FAMILY MEMBER. This is a hyponymic relationship, with specific roles subordinated to the hypernym FAMILY MEMBER. In the discourse genre “joke”, the shift from Level 7 to Level 6 entails a change of focus: from the individual features of a role to the fact of group membership. It is this membership, not the specific role, that creates the semantic space for the comic effect.

For example, in joke (3), the representation of FAMILY MEMBER can be seen as a strategy for constructing a criminal situation (murder) in which the crucial point is that all actants belong to the same social space, thus contradicting the expectation of an external threat.

(3) *A man calls 911 to report a murder. / Operator: “Who is the victim?” / Man: “One of my family members.” / Operator: “Who is the perpetrator?” / Man: “Another family member.” / Operator: “Where did this happen?” / Man: “In my house.” / Operator: “And when did the murder take place?” / Man: “I don’t know, some time between now and the end of quarantine.”* (“A man calls 911 to report a murder”, n.d.)

The additional event component *quarantine* introduces a context of forced isolation and prolonged cohabitation in a confined space, provoking an escalation of intra-family conflicts regardless of the actants' individual traits or the role relationships among them.

Another example of the concept FAMILY MEMBER involves contrasting the individual with this homogeneous social community.

(4) *All my other family members are wealthy and successful. In order to stand out, I decided to become a panhandler instead. I beg to differ.* (Michael Walline, 2023)

The key here is the contrast between the expected, positively marked model of the group's success (verbalized as "wealthy", "successful") and the deviant self-presentation of the speaker who stands apart from the group (verbalized as "stand out", "panhandler", "I beg to differ").

**Level 5** represents the concept RELATIVE, which models relationships between participants by foregrounding the kinship tie (by blood or marriage). Unlike the generalized belonging characteristic of the FAMILY MEMBER level, this level focuses on a specific type of interpersonal bond. RELATIVE profiles the peripheral zone of family relations – a broad circle of kin with a reduced degree of individualization, which invites a generalized and stereotyped perception. Notably, in English jokes the lexeme *relatives* often carries negative connotations, evoking 'remoteness', 'irritation' and 'unwanted contact'.

In the next joke, the concept RELATIVES functions as a generalized nominative unit denoting a set of people connected by kinship.

(5) *The man is driving his wife to a family gathering when they suddenly see a herd of pigs crossing the road. Seizing the chance, the husband cheerily asks: "Hey, look! Are they some relatives of yours?" / And his wife quickly replies: "Yeah, my parents-in-law!"* ("The man is driving his wife to a family gathering", n.d.)

The comic effect arises from semantic manipulation of the category, which in different contexts is imbued with different features (relatives=pigs and relatives=parents-in-law), allowing negative evaluative meanings to unfold and creating a conflict situation.

**Level 4** represents the concept GENERATION, which organizes the set of RELATIVES into a taxonomy based on age differentiation. Here, individuals appear as bearers of typical traits that acquire a value dimension (e.g. 'older=conservative, wise'; 'younger=technologically savvy') and are realized through the "then vs now" opposition. Although GENERATION is a universal concept across linguo-cultures, its value content varies: in cultures with a strong ancestor cult (e.g. Chinese), it occupies a central place, whereas in English-speaking culture it is more often activated as a component or catalyst of the CONFLICT frame, particularly in the "PARENTS vs CHILDREN" opposition.

(6) *My Grandpa said, "Your generation relies too much on technology!" / I replied, "We'll see about that." / Then I unplugged his life support.* (@Verosika MayDay, 2022)

In this example, GENERATION structures the relationship between GRANDFATHER and GRANDCHILD as asymmetrical: the former is granted the right to evaluate and criticize and the latter is the target of that evaluation.

**Level 3**, represented by the concept LINEAGE, captures a diachronic genealogical community. Unlike GENERATION (synchronic snapshot), LINEAGE implies vertical inheritance over time, with an emphasis on the transmission of certain traits – physical, social or behavioral.

(7) *When dads become grandfathers... Their dad jokes grow exponentially, just like their lineage.* (“When dads become grandfathers”, n.d.)

The joke juxtaposes ‘dad jokes’ and ‘lineage’ through the model of quantitative growth (grow exponentially). The comic effect rests on a metaphorical comparison of two value-contrasting domains: DAD JOKES, which evoke ‘predictability’ and ‘stereotypicality’ (=negative evaluation) and LINEAGE that carries the basically neutral notion of continuing the family line.

In another example, LINEAGE appears implicitly, verbalized as “a long line”, where the lexeme *line* represents genealogical descent through spatial metaphor.

(8) *A man says: “I come from a long line of cowards. My great-great-grandfather ran away from the Civil War, my great-grandfather ran away from WWII, my grandfather ran away from Vietnam..” / Friend: “So what does your father do?” Man: “He’s a tax evader.”* (@blacklionking73, 2021)

The concept LINEAGE activates the frame of INHERITANCE (the passing down of a trait through generations), which, in this joke, materializes as the transmission of a negatively marked characteristic – ‘duty evasion’ – across different domains. LINEAGE establishes a narrative sequence that justifies the expectation of a repeated behavioral pattern and its potential twist for comic effect.

**Level 2** presents the concept CLAN, which models a complex social structure whose members believe in shared descent from a common (often legendary) ancestor, are united under a common surname and often share a territory. In other words, CLAN does not require that all genealogical links be traceable, a sense of shared identity is enough. In the English-speaking context, CLAN is culturally marked, pointing to the Scottish tradition of Highland clans.

(9) *In the old days, Clan MacLean often went raiding on the mainland or on other islands. One time they came back with ten dozen bottles of whiskey and one loaf of bread. When the chief saw the booty, he asked “Wha’s gaen ta eat a’ that bread?”* (“In the old days, Clan MacLean often went raiding on the mainland or on other islands”, n.d.)

Here, CLAN represents a generalized, functionally organized community capable of collective action. The meaning is realized through the predicate *went raiding*, which attributes unified agency to the subject (Clan MacLean): the CLAN acts as a single actant engaged in coordinated activity. The humor, meanwhile, draws on an implied, culturally shaped stereotype.

Beyond this dominant ethnographic context, CLAN can also appear independently of a specific ethnic community.

(10) *Our clan has a tradition of naming our children after deceased family members. We named our son “Grandpa.”* (“Our clan has a tradition of naming our children after deceased family members”, n.d.)

The semantic role of CLAN is spelled out through the predicate *has a tradition of naming*, which profiles the community as a bearer and transmitter of shared practices.

**Level 1** – the superordinate category of the highest order – is represented by the concept FAMILY. It encompasses all lower levels but cannot be reduced to any single one. At this level, FAMILY is an abstract socio-cultural template that gains content through the lower levels. In jokes, shifting to this level makes it possible to play with the universal human experience of belonging to a family.

(11) *My family is like a treasure to me... You need a shovel and a map to find them.* (“My family is like a treasure to me”, n.d.)

The first part of the joke sets up the metaphor FAMILY IS TREASURE, endowing FAMILY with the positive features ‘valuable’, ‘precious’. The follow-up, however, triggers a semantic shift by taking *treasure* literally, activating the scenario “Searching for a hidden object”. Instead of ‘value’, the joke foregrounds ‘inaccessibility’ or ‘hiddenness’. Thus, the concept FAMILY remains a generalized object of evaluation, but its axiological characterization undergoes a transformation.

Summing up, two points deserve emphasis:

1) Concepts at the basic level of categorization (HUSBAND, WIFE, FATHER, etc.) dominate English jokes because they enable rapid identification of the communicative scenario and pack maximum information into minimal linguistic means – a critical requirement for the comic effect;

2) The nucleus of the concept FAMILY is the nuclear family (FATHER, MOTHER, CHILD, etc.), while extended kinship ties (RELATIVES, CLAN, etc.) form the periphery. This follows from the higher frequency of everyday interaction within the nuclear family, which makes it more salient for meaning-making.

### 2.1.1. Status-role concepts

A society’s social order is reflected through a system of *status-role concepts* – cognitive structures that capture normatively expected behaviors and typical traits of those occupying particular social positions. A status-role concept functions as a compressed cultural script: it bundles together what the role-holder is permitted to do (powers), what they habitually do (typical traits), where they stand in relation to other roles (status) and what kind of behavior is expected from them (behavioral manifestations).

Jokes offer productive material for studying status-role concepts because their comic mechanism often depends on manipulating cultural expectations: exaggerating a typical trait, inverting authority, cancelling a privilege or shifting the role-holder from

one status to another. For a departure from the norm to be perceived as funny, the recipient must already know what the norm is. That is to say, a joke appeals to a cognitive model of the status-role concept shared by members of the culture.

This study examines status-role concepts within FAMILY in the following configurations: 1) HUSBAND-WIFE; 2) PARENT-CHILD (including FATHER-CHILD, MOTHER-CHILD, FATHER-MOTHER-CHILD); 3) SIBLING-SIBLING; 4) GRANDPARENT-GRANDCHILD (including GRANDFATHER-GRANDCHILD, GRANDMOTHER-GRANDCHILD, GRANDFATHER-GRANDMOTHER-GRANDCHILD).

The linguistic material allows status-role concepts to be arranged hierarchically, from the most abstract level (the type of role and its status position) down to the most concrete (actual behavioral manifestations in the joke text). The hierarchy proposed below is an analytical tool for tracing how social norms are realized in language.

- ROLE: spousal / parental / filial / sibling / grandparental
- ROLE → ROLE STATUS: dominant / subordinate / symmetrical
- ROLE STATUS → FUNCTION: controlling / protective / educational / resource-providing / emotional / mediating / evaluative
- FUNCTION → POWER: to make decisions / to punish / to allocate resources / to evaluate / to delegate / to set conditions
- POWER → PRIVILEGE: having the last word / evading responsibility / receiving care / accessing private information / appealing to the past
- PRIVILEGE → TYPICAL TRAITS: strictness / incompetence / naivety / omniscience / tendency towards deviance / hidden agency / unintentional humor
- TYPICAL TRAITS → BEHAVIORAL MANIFESTATIONS: verbal / non-verbal / gestural / postural / emotional

### **HUSBAND-WIFE Configuration**

(12) *A man got drunk and came home very late. He sat on the door step for thirty minutes trying to figure out what to tell his harsh and super strict wife the reason for his lateness. He gained courage, opened the door and found his wife and his son watching a late night movie. / He passed them and went upstairs, his heart pounding hard. To his surprise, his wife didn't say a word. Just to confirm, he decided to walk past them, and again back to the upstairs corridor. But his wife didn't say a word. He signal his son to come. And he asked him, "How come today your mother isn't speaking or even uttering a word?" / His son replied, "She asked me for lipstick and I gave her GLUE instead."* (Adeboyejo Micheal, 2025)

The joke contains verbalizers of the concept HUSBAND (“a man”, “he”) and the concept WIFE (“his [harsh and super] wife”). In “a man got drunk”, the predicate *got* signals a change of state, while *drunk* describes the state reached – ‘becoming intoxicated’, which carries the features ‘cognitive impairment’, ‘deviant behavior’, ‘loss

of control'. HUSBAND is simultaneously identified as the agent who initiates the change of state and as the experiencer who undergoes its consequences.

The excerpt “trying to figure out what to tell his harsh and super strict wife the reason for his lateness” contains a chain of predicates: try → [figure out → [what to tell → reason]]. The predicate *try*, which implies the agent's (HUSBAND's) goal, casts *figure out* as ‘a demanding task requiring effort’, while *figure out* itself profiles a creative-generative process close in meaning to ‘work out / invent’, aimed at constructing the content of *what to tell*. It presupposes that the result must meet the normative expectations of the addressee.

WIFE is represented with the semantic role of recipient, explicitly characterized as ‘strict’, intensified by *super*. Given the semantic feature *strict* (=demanding, evaluative), the content of *what to tell* must meet the parameters ‘causality’, ‘legitimation’ and ‘plausibility’. Thus, *reason* in this configuration takes on the function of ‘excuse’ – an explanation designed to minimize negative evaluation from WIFE.

The excerpt “He gained courage” realizes the metaphor COURAGE IS A RESOURCE: accumulating the resource is necessary for an action associated with fear, which conceptualizes the interaction with WIFE as a risk.

The final segment, “To his surprise, his wife didn't say a word”, contains two predicate structures linked by a stimulus-response relationship: *his wife didn't say a word* verbalizes ‘the absence of an action’; *to his surprise* verbalizes a state (=HUSBAND was *surprised*). Formally, the model can be represented as CAUSE/STIMULUS → STATE. The agent WIFE does not perform the expected verbal act, and that absence becomes the stimulus for HUSBAND's state, verbalized as *surprise* (semantic markers: ‘suddenness’, ‘violation of expectations’).

(13) *A man ... stayed out the entire weekend partying with the boys and spending his entire paycheck. When he finally appeared at home Sunday night, he was confronted by a very angry wife and was barraged for nearly two hours with a tirade befitting his actions. Finally, his wife stopped the nagging and simply said to him, “How would you like it if you didn't see me for two or three days” ... Come Thursday, the swelling went down just enough where he could see her a little out of the corner of his left eye.* (Grumpy & Married, 2025)

The opening phrase, “stayed out the entire weekend partying with the boys and spending his entire paycheck”, activates three predicates: *stay out* realizes HUSBAND's spatial estrangement from the family domain, where home is presupposed as the locus of normative presence (HOME IS A CONTAINER: IN=belonging/order, OUT=deviation from the norm); *party* verbalizes the content of that estrangement; *spend his entire paycheck* denotes the depletion of FAMILY RESOURCE, shifting the deviation into the dimension of material harm.

The excerpt “he was confronted by a very angry wife and was barraged for nearly two hours with a tirade” activates a model of verbal punishment. The passive *was confronted* syntactically marks HUSBAND as patient, while WIFE is realized as agent,

further characterized by the feature *very angry*. The predicate *barrage*, originally associated with ‘artillery fire’, is used figuratively to mean ‘an intense, continuous stream of actions or impacts’. In this fragment it activates a metaphorical projection: WIFE is conceptualized as SOURCE OF AN ATTACK, and HUSBAND as the TARGET. The lexeme *tirade* further specifies the nature of this impact, as it includes the feature ‘long abusive speech’. The temporal modifier *for nearly two hours* intensifies the duration, which ceases to be a purely quantitative feature and becomes a measure of impact – time acquires an evaluative dimension.

In the next excerpt “How would you like it if you didn’t see me for two or three days?” WIFE as agent activates a hypothetical scenario, requesting the addressee HUSBAND’s probable emotional state. This request is explicated through the predicate *not see (didn’t see)*, which contains the meaning ‘lack of perception’. Here, visual perception functions as conceptual metonymy: the physical impossibility of perception substitutes for emotional presence, by contiguity ‘not seeing’ = ‘not being together’ / ‘being deprived of contact’. WIFE appeals to the emotional suffering caused by separation, which, in her view, should provoke HUSBAND’s negative reaction. This stems from the conceptualization that PHYSICAL CLOSENESS IS EMOTIONAL CLOSENESS and accordingly PHYSICAL DISTANCE IS WEAKENING OF THE EMOTIONAL BOND. On this metaphorical basis, the logic of punishment is built: CLOSENESS=POSITIVE STATE, DISTANCE=SUFFERING.

Finally, the hypothetical “not seeing” is realized not on the level of emotional experience, as the wife’s cognitive model assumed, but literally – on the level of a physical inability to perceive visually, caused by traumatic injury. This is explicitly expressed in “the swelling went down”, “he could see her”. The metonymic meaning “not seeing=not being in contact” is cancelled in favor of the direct denotative meaning.

Summarizing the intermediate data again highlights the transformation of the HUSBAND role from agent into experiencer and patient. The loss of agentivity can be interpreted as a recurring marker of the genre. The comic effect arises at the level of the gap between POWERS (the formulated punishment=emotional separation) and BEHAVIORAL MANIFESTATION (the actual punishment=physical injury): the wife’s metaphorical scenario is realized through an unforeseen mechanism.

(14) *A husband and wife are celebrating their 25th wedding anniversary. After a nice dinner, the husband feels sentimental and says, “Honey, we’ve had such a successful run. What’s the secret to our partnership?” The wife smiles and says, “It’s simple. We have a clear division of labor. I handle the minor decisions, and you handle the major ones. That way, we never interfere with each other.” The husband nods proudly. “That’s right. For example, I’m the one who decides whether we should support the new trade tariff, how the government should handle the space program, and whether we should transition to a green energy economy.” “Exactly,” the wife agrees. “And I handle the minor stuff.” “Like what?” asks a friend sitting at the next table. “Oh, you know,” the wife says, “where we live, what house we buy, where the kids go to school,*

*what we do with our savings, what my husband does for a living, and who we see on the weekends. But for those big global issues? He's the boss.*" (Bright Side, 2026)

In the excerpt "We have a clear division of labour", the predicate *have* carries the meaning 'possessing a certain organizing principle', indicating an agreed model of distributing authority. The subsequent predicates *handle* (*the... decisions*) and *decide* realize such a model: *handle* verbalizes the managerial aspect, while *decide* verbalizes the act of choosing between alternatives. The patient, verbalized by the lexeme *decisions* and its contextual synonym *stuff*, is formally represented as a single entity – an object of a cognitive operation performed by both agents. However, its internal semantic structure proves to be polarized along three parameters:

- the semantic property 'size'. The opposition *minor vs major* is explicitly introduced in the excerpt: "I handle the minor decisions, and you handle the major ones." This binary opposition is grounded at the level of lexical semantics where *major* marks 'larger in size' (later also supported by the synonym *big global issues*), while *minor* marks 'smaller'.

- the semantic property 'importance' is based on the conceptual metaphor IMPORTANT IS BIG (and accordingly, UNIMPORTANT IS SMALL). This explains how the physical parameter of an object (size) becomes the source for shaping its axiological significance. Within human experience, *major*, big mark 'larger=more important, more central', while *minor* marks 'smaller=secondary, non-essential'.

- the semantic property 'referentiality'. Although conventionally *major* connotes 'important' and *minor* connotes 'unimportant', the actual content of these categories in the text demonstrates inversion. Decisions marked as 'major' receive a symbolic, declarative content, explicated through the husband's list: "whether we should support the new trade tariff, how the government should handle the space program, and whether we should transition to a green energy economy." These designations contain the features: 1) 'hypothetical', verbalized by the repeated "whether" and the modal "should", which indicate desirability rather than actual implementation; 2) 'abstract', as their content lacks a direct connection to the couple's experience, confirmed by the use of abstract nouns ("trade tariff", "space program", "green energy economy") that belong to the sphere of state institutions – a domain in which the HUSBAND's real participation is minimal; 3) 'symbolic': HUSBAND's decisions have a declarative character, their influence is imaginary, they express a position rather than change reality.

In contrast, decisions marked as *minor* carry pragmatic weight, explicated through the wife's list: "where we live, what house we buy, where the kids go to school, what we do with our savings, what my husband does for a living, and who we see on the weekends." This list is built from subordinate clauses, each explicating a sphere of WIFE's competence.

The analysis shows that the comic effect in this joke is achieved through semantic inversion: a gap opens between the lexical marking of the scale of decisions (major/minor) and their actual pragmatic significance. HUSBAND, despite being

formally assigned the sphere of ‘important’ decisions, is conceptualized as the bearer of symbolic power. WIFE, despite being formally assigned the sphere of ‘secondary’ decisions, is conceptualized as the bearer of real power. The comic effect arises from semantic inversion at all levels of the hierarchy simultaneously: the declared STATUS of HUSBAND (dominant) and his actual BEHAVIORAL MANIFESTATION (symbolic power) stand in direct contradiction. The same holds for WIFE: the declared STATUS (subordinate) and the actual POWERS (control over all key decisions) are inverted.

### **PARENT-CHILD Configuration**

(15) *What three words solve every Dad’s problem? / “Ask your mother!”* (ullasrock3, 2026)

The joke presents three personae: FATHER (“dad”), MOTHER (“mother”) and implied CHILD. CHILD initiates the communicative interaction, and the CHILD’s appeal is verbalized in the form of “Dad’s problem”. Although FATHER is represented as the owner of the problem, expressed through the possessive construction (“Dad’s problem”), the predicate *solve* implies that the person who actually solves the problem (=holds the relevant power/competence) is someone else. The phrase “Ask your mother” realizes a directive speech act by which FATHER redirects CHILD to MOTHER (=delegates solving the problem), so MOTHER turns out to be the ultimate recipient of the request and is assigned the functional role of ‘problem-solver’. The comic effect arises at the level of the gap between FATHER’s STATUS (hierarchically higher) and his BEHAVIORAL MANIFESTATION (delegating authority to MOTHER), which demonstrates the typical trait of ‘evading responsibility’.

The same issue – expectations attached to a specific gendered parental role – is developed by the following joke:

(16) *Having homosexual parents must be terrible. Either you have double dosage of dad jokes or you are stuck in cycle of “go ask your mom”.* (not-average-joe., 2022)

The joke presents the personae CHILD and PARENTS with the latter split into two possible configurations: FATHER+FATHER and MOTHER+MOTHER, each generating a specific type of comic effect. In configuration 1 (FATHER+FATHER), CHILD appears as the recipient of ‘dad jokes’, which are culturally viewed as ‘predictable’, ‘primitive’, ‘embarrassing’. The modifier *double dosage* adds the feature ‘excess’. The comic effect rests on the quantitative exaggeration of a typical trait of the FATHER role: if one FATHER produces an acceptable level of a specific kind of humor, two FATHERS produce twice as much, turning the moderate into the excessive and the tolerable into the unbearable.

In configuration 2 (MOTHER+MOTHER), the phrase “go ask your mom” is activated, which, similarly to what is presented in joke (15), contains the features ‘avoiding resolution’ and ‘passing on responsibility’. However, in a context featuring two MOTHERS, this structure creates an endless loop, adding the features ‘repetition’,

‘inescapability’. Thus, the homosexual family in the joke is conceptualized as a surplus of the role-specific trait of FATHER/MOTHER.

(17) *A woman knows all about her children. She knows about dentist appointments, soccer games, romances, best friends, location of friend's houses, favorite foods, secret fears and hopes and dreams. A man is vaguely aware of some short people living in the house.* (Matt Groening, n.d.).

The joke contains verbalizers of persona 1 MOTHER (“a woman”), persona 2 FATHER (“a man”), persona 3 CHILDREN (represented by the possessive construction “her children” and the phrase “some short people”).

In the first part “A woman knows all about her children”, the predicate *knows* realizes the semantic feature ‘possession of information’ (=involvement + a form of control and care) and all about intensifies ‘possession of information’ to the level of ‘comprehensive’, ‘unlimited’, activating ‘comprehensive possession of information’ as a TYPICAL TRAIT of MOTHER. The next excerpt unpacks the content of this total knowledge through a list of spheres of awareness: from concrete, everyday items (“dentist appointments”, “soccer games”), through social (“best friends”), to private (“secret fears and hopes and dreams”). The lexeme *secret* implies ‘privacy’, ‘intimacy’ = a special, restricted access to the CHILD’s inner world.

The next excerpt, “A man is vaguely aware of some short people living in the house”, contrasts with the previous one because the predicate *is vaguely aware*, in contrast to MOTHER’s *knows*, realizes the semantic feature ‘NOT possessing information’ or ‘fragmentary/indeterminate/minimal knowledge’. The object of FATHER’s awareness is the patient, verbalized as “some short people living in the house”, which carries the meaning ‘an indeterminate depersonalized set of objects coexisting in a space shared with FATHER, whose characterization is reduced to physical traits’. Such a formulation, pushing FATHER’s unawareness to a grotesque extreme, reduces the PARENT-CHILD bond and the FATHER role effectively appears functionally absent.

The comic effect arises from the maximal separation of the TYPICAL TRAITS of the two roles: MOTHER and FATHER occupy formally symmetrical positions in the status hierarchy, yet FATHER realizes diametrically opposed FUNCTIONS, POWERS, PRIVILEGES and TRAITS.

(18) *Teacher at parents meeting: -Your boy was caught smoking marijuana!!! / The mother angrily: -I can't believe it. I wonder where he found it from?? / -He said he got it from his best friend. / The father, wiping a happy tear: -He really said that....?* (“Teacher at parents meeting”, n.d.)

The fragment “was caught smoking marijuana”, with the predicate *was caught* in the passive voice, profiles CHILD as the object on whom the action of ‘exposure/apprehension’ is performed, while *smoking* with the complement *marijuana* contains the feature ‘illegal activity’, which in the conventional family hierarchy should provoke a negative reaction from the parents. In the next excerpt, which represents

MOTHER's reaction, "The mother angrily: 'I can't believe it. I wonder where he found it from?'" , the state verbalizer *angrily* marks MOTHER's emotional reaction as negative that matches the expectation. The predicate *can't believe* activates the semantic feature 'incompatibility with expectations'; *wonder (where he found it from)* implies 'a search for the cause (the source)'.

In the teacher's reply "He said he got it from his best friend", the phrase *best friend* has a dual semantic loading: 1) the generally accepted sense (best friend → close relationship, trust); 2) the context-specific sense (best friend → source/provocateur of CHILD's deviant behavior). The next excerpt, representing FATHER's reaction: "The father, wiping a happy tear: 'He really said that...?'" , contains a verbalizer of a physical action ("wiping a happy tear"), which is an outward manifestation of an internal state – the phrase *happy tear* carries the semantics of deep emotional moving. This activates an implicature: the referent of the designation "best friend" is FATHER himself, which he personally interprets as confirmation of a close, trusting relationship with CHILD. The simultaneous retention in the mind of these two models, which carry polar value characteristics: the socio-normative one (drugs → problem) and the contextual one (FATHER → best friend; best friend → source of the problem (drugs)), creates the comic effect.

(19) *Akpos, a father of five, won a toy at a raffle. He was confused on which of his kid he will give the toy. So he decides to call them, "Who is the most obedient?" he asks "Who never talks back to mother? Who does everything she says?... Who answers immediately she calls and who begs her when in need of something." / Five small voices answered in unison. "Okay, dad, you get the toy."* ("Akpos, a father of five, won a toy at a raffle", n.d.)

In the opening excerpt, "Akpos, a father of five, won a toy at a raffle", first, *a toy* appears as a resource characterized as 'intended for children', and second, the phrase *father of five* creates a situation of scarcity, which qualifies FATHER's internal state through the predicate *was confused*. The object of indecision is the set of children ("which of his kids") and the potential action expressed by the construction "will give" identifies the semantic roles: FATHER as agent, CHILDREN as potential recipients. A series of rhetorical questions then unfolds, structured on the principle of establishing criteria of 'obedience': all questions are united by a common referent – MOTHER, in relation to whom obedience is evaluated. Her role is conceptualized through the features: 'the one who has power', 'the one who is obeyed', 'the one for whom things are done', 'the one to whom one turns for help'.

The final excerpt, "Five small voices answered in unison. 'Okay, dad, you get the toy'" which presents CHILDREN as those who deliver the final verdict, contains the predicate *get*. This realizes the characterization of FATHER as 'the one who best meets the stated criteria' and then fixes FATHER in the role of recipient. Therefore, the object of transfer ("a toy") passes into the possession of the one who initially acted as the executor of the distribution procedure.

(20) *Insanity is hereditary. Parents get it from their children.* (Stephen Willetts, 2024)

The joke presents two personae: CHILDREN and PARENTS, who represent the semantic roles source and recipient respectively. Both are verbalized via hereditary, which points to a process of intergenerational transmission of biological traits, presupposing a vector from the older generation to the younger (PARENTS→CHILDREN). The patient is *insanity* – a lexeme with a negatively connoted meaning ‘mental state’/‘illness’. The comic effect arises from an inversion of the direction of transmission: the joke activates the reverse vector (CHILDREN→PARENTS), contradicting the model of biological heredity. The joke relies on a presupposition: the process of raising children is exhausting, it drains the PARENT’s psychic resources. Accordingly, if PARENTS “get insanity” from CHILDREN, the mechanism of transmission is precisely the daily interaction with children, which allows reinterpreting the notion of ‘heredity’. As a result, CHILDREN appear as an entity possessing a force ‘capable of transforming PARENTS’ mental state’.

### **SIBLING-SIBLING Configuration**

(21) *There was a little old lady who was nearly blind, and she had three sons who wanted to prove which one was the best to her. / The eldest son bought her a 15-room mansion, thinking this would surely be the best that any of them could offer her. / The second son bought her a beautiful Rolls Royce with a chauffeur included, thinking this would surely win her approval. / The last son had to do something even better, so he bought her a parrot that he had been trained for 15 years to memorise the entire Bible. You could ask the parrot any verse in the Bible, and he could quote it word for word. What a gift that would be. / Well, the old lady went to her first son and said, “Son, the house is just gorgeous, but it’s really much too big for me. I only live in one room, and it’s too large to clean and take care of. I really don’t need the house, but thank you anyway.” Then she confronted her second son with, “Son, the car is beautiful. It has everything you could ever want on it, but I don’t drive and really don’t like the chauffeur, so please return the car.” / Next, she went to her youngest son and said, “Son, I just want to thank you for your most thoughtful gift. That chicken was delicious.” (Mark Young, 2023)*

This joke contains verbalizers of the personae: SIBLING 1 (“eldest son”), SIBLING 2 (“second son”), SIBLING 3 (“last/youngest son”) and also MOTHER (“old lady”). At the start, key parameters of the comic situation are established: the scenario “Competitive interaction” (“three sons who wanted to prove which one was the best to her”) verbalizes the metaphor FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS ARE A COMPETITION (OBTAINING PARENTAL RECOGNITION IS A COMPETITION), in which SIBLINGS/CHILDREN realize the role of ‘competitors for MOTHER’s (PARENT’s) recognition’ (*the best* – a superlative containing the feature ‘hierarchization’; *prove*

implies the need for external evaluation). MOTHER, characterized as “nearly blind”, which will determine the subsequent evaluation of the gifts, appears as the object of competition, receiver and judge (or evaluator). The semantic roles within the gift-giving scenario are distributed as follows: SIBLING 1, SIBLING 2, SIBLING 3 – agents, MOTHER – recipient, GIFT 1 (mansion), GIFT 2 (Rolls Royce), GIFT 3 (parrot) respectively – theme. MOTHER establishes the evaluative category of ‘practicality’, ‘pragmatism’ (=correspondence to her real needs and lifestyle) as the most significant. In view of this, GIFT 1 and GIFT 2 are characterized as ‘luxurious’, ‘status-bearing’, though ‘useless’, while GIFT 3 is ‘spiritual’, ‘long-prepared’ (“time invested” → ‘valuable’). However, because of MOTHER’s physical disability (=distorted perception), it is recategorized as ‘edible’, which, more than the other options, satisfies MOTHER’s criterion of ‘practicality’, ‘pragmatism’ and this is the key mechanism for creating humor.

(22) *Two siblings are arguing, then one puts his hand level with his head and says “I’ve had it up to here with you.” / The second sibling steps back takes a breath and speaks. / “You know what? Fine.” / He leaves, and years later is set to go to the moon. / Once there on the televised broadcast he tells his brother, with his palm facing the earth, “I’ve had it to here.”* (“Two siblings are arguing, then one puts his hand level with his head”, n.d.)

The joke features the personae SIBLING 1 and SIBLING 2. The phrasing “Two siblings are arguing” immediately represents the interaction in the CONFLICT frame. The subsequent excerpts “one puts his hand level with his head” and “I’ve had it up to here with you” realize metaphors: THE BODY IS A CONTAINER, PATIENCE IS A SUBSTANCE (the body is a container with a certain capacity, the fill level of the container corresponds to the degree of exhausted patience – “up to here” carries the meaning ‘the container is filled to a critical mark’). Later, SIBLING 2 performs a spatial relocation and, first, duplicates the verbalization PATIENCE AS SUBSTANCE, but modifies the referent of the container (the body as container → the Earth–Moon distance as container → a spatial expansion occurs → the container acquires magnitude=the volume of the container’s fullness increases). Second, the image-schema UP-DOWN, in the context of the struggle for hierarchy in SIBLING-SIBLING interaction, realizes the metaphor UP IS SUPERIOR (HIGHER IS SUPERIOR). Both SIBLINGS are actualized as competitors in a struggle for dominance.

### **GRANDPARENT-GRANDCHILD Configuration**

(23) *What did the grandpa say when he couldn’t understand his grandson’s jokes? / He yelled, “Back in my days, at least jokes made sense!”* (“What did the grandpa say when he couldn’t understand his grandson’s jokes?”, 2023)

The joke contains verbalizers of two personae: GRANDFATHER (“grandpa”) and GRANDCHILD (“his grandson’s [jokes]”). The fragment “when he couldn’t understand his grandson’s jokes” contains the predicate *couldn’t understand*, which signifies

GRANDFATHER's inability to interpret a message received from GRANDCHILD. The lexeme *yelled* in the response "He yelled" introduces an emotionally marked reaction as 'loud', 'emotional', 'angry'. GRANDFATHER is realized as evaluator, making a judgement about the quality of the joke, and *yelled* is a marker that the evaluation has already occurred and is negative: the object (joke) has been deemed incompatible with GRANDFATHER's expectations, which is revealed in the direct speech "Back in my days, at least jokes made sense!". The phrase *Back in my days* activates the opposition 'past vs present', where the comic model acquires the following respective features: 'comprehensible', 'predictable' (verbalized as "made sense") and 'incomprehensible', 'unpredictable' (the implicature "jokes made sense" → now they don't). The joke thus rests on a lack of common ground: for a joke to prompt laughter, sender and receiver must share relevant knowledge and expectations. When that shared background is missing, communication proves ineffective. In view of this, GRANDFATHER presents his own perspective as a normative framework claiming universal validity of value standards.

(24) *A little boy comes running into the room and says, "Grandpa! Grandpa! Can you make a sound like a frog?" The Grandpa says, "I don't know, why?" / The little boy says, "Because grandma says as soon as you croak, we can go to Disneyland!"* (YZXFILE, 2021)

The joke contains verbalizers of three personae: GRANDCHILD ("a little boy"), GRANDFATHER ("Grandpa") and GRANDMOTHER ("Grandma"). The persona GRANDMOTHER is present through reported speech, introduced by the predicate *says*, but it is she who formulates the condition that determines the further course of events ("as soon as you croak, we can go to Disneyland"), and therefore she is the agent and her role is marked by the feature 'authoritative'. GRANDMOTHER uses the lexeme *croak* in its figurative sense – 'die', which creates a subsequent semantic divergence between the meaning she intends and how the word will be interpreted by GRANDCHILD. In turn, GRANDCHILD is the beneficiary of the event 'we go to Disneyland' (verbalized through the pronoun "we" and "Disneyland" that carries the meaning 'place for children's entertainment'). GRANDCHILD acts as the transmitter of information from GRANDMOTHER to GRANDFATHER and is characterized as 'ignorant', 'naïve', since he passes on the conditions created by GRANDMOTHER using the literal meaning of *croak* = 'make a sound like a frog'. Had GRANDCHILD understood the original message as GRANDMOTHER intended, he would probably not have conveyed it at all. In this interaction, GRANDFATHER acts in the role of patient with respect to the action denoted by *croak*– he is the object whose state (alive/dead) determines the possibility of reaching the desired event. Thus, in the current state (being alive) GRANDFATHER is an "obstacle" to reaching 'Disneyland'.

(25) *No one is more two-faced than your child telling all your business to Grandma.* (The Celeb Talk Guy, 2023)

The joke contains verbalizers of three personae: CHILD (“your child”), PARENT (represented by the possessive pronoun in “your child”) and GRANDPARENT/GRANDMOTHER (“Grandma”). CHILD realizes the semantic role of agent performing a communicative act (expressed by “telling”), GRANDPARENT/GRANDMOTHER is the recipient. The object of transmission is “all your business” (semantic role – theme), which carries the features ‘private’, ‘personal’. The phrase *your business* marks a certain piece of information, intensified by *all* (=identifies the full volume of transmitted information) as belonging to PARENT.

The persona GRANDPARENT/GRANDMOTHER is conceptualized through two different perspectives: from CHILD’s point of view, GRANDMOTHER appears as ‘reliable’, ‘trustworthy’; from PARENT’s point of view, GRANDMOTHER appears as ‘unreliable’, ‘untrustworthy’ → an undesirable acquirer of private information. This is why the persona CHILD is explicitly characterized by the lexeme *two-faced*: CHILD is attributed a dual loyalty – to PARENT and to GRANDPARENT, and as a result, this expression functions as an evaluative marker carrying a negative connotation (= ‘deception’, ‘betrayal’).

It is worth noting that structurally the text is a generalizing statement – an utterance that presents a “universal truth”. Grammatically, it is built as a comparative construction: No one is more X than Y, where X is a feature expressed by an adjective, and Y is the object of comparison. However, on the logical plane, given the combination of the negative pronoun *no one* with the comparative degree of the adjective, this construction functions as a superlative: it effectively asserts that Y (= CHILD) possesses the feature X (= two-faced) to the greatest degree among all other potential bearers.

The features listed above, summarized in Appendices A-H, allow the following patterns of status-role concept realization in the humorous discourse of family themes to be identified:

1) A gap between declared STATUS and FUNCTIONS, POWERS is the structural basis of the humor. The recognition of such incongruence by members of the culture produces the comic effect;

2) The exercise of PRIVILEGES acts as a trigger that activates the POWERS of another role (for example, HUSBAND exercises the PRIVILEGE of ‘autonomous behavior outside the home’ (jokes 12, 13), thereby activating WIFE’s POWER ‘to punish’);

3) The level of TYPICAL TRAITS in the tables captures how the joke reduces a complex status-role position to a single characteristic feature, which is then hyperbolized to the point of absurdity;

4) Despite its formally SUBORDINATE STATUS, the concept CHILD in humorous discourse systematically realizes agentive functions and the TYPICAL TRAIT of ‘naivety’ reinforces this process;

5) The analysis reveals a stable tendency: concepts that at the beginning of a joke occupy the position of agent sequentially move into the position of patient, experiencer

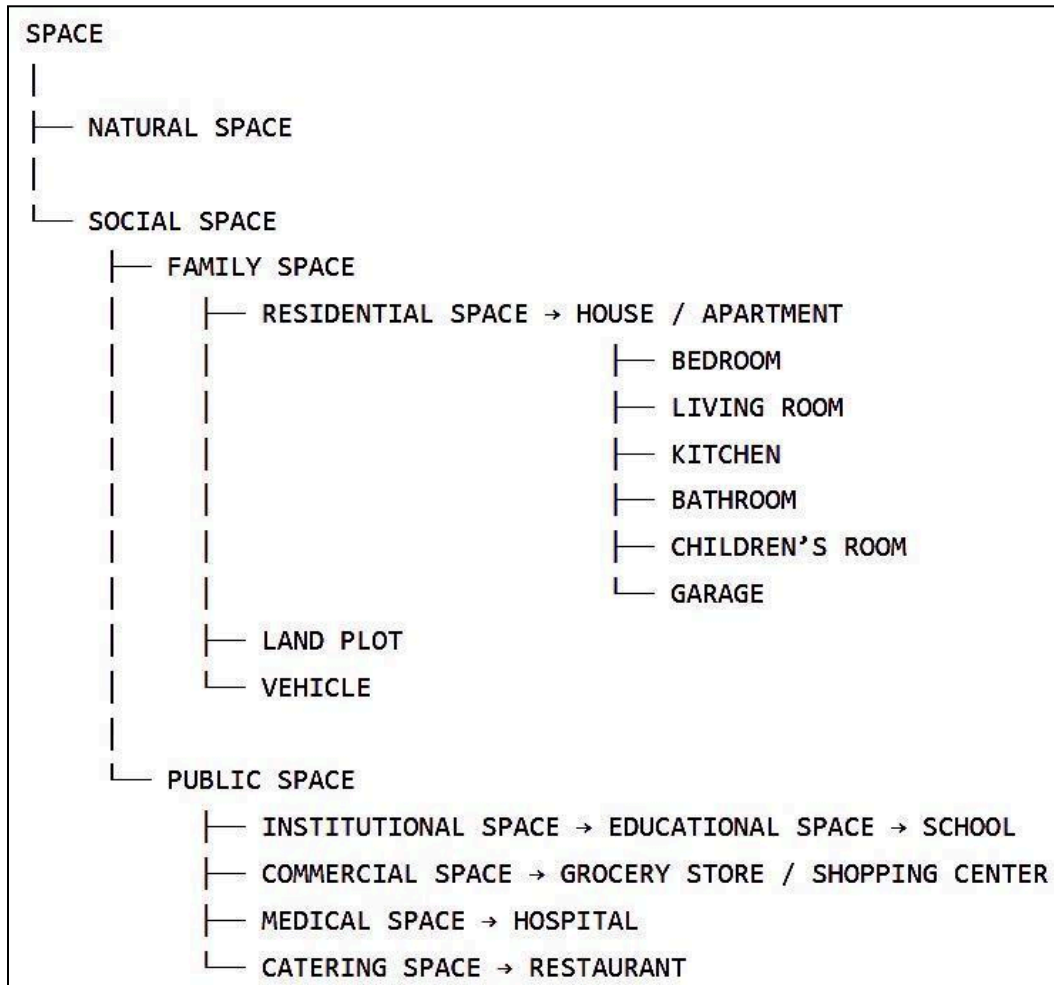
or recipient. The transformation of semantic role, therefore, is a typical marker of the genre “joke”.

### **2.1.2. Locative concepts**

Analyzing spatial structures in jokes first requires a clear methodological distinction between two terms used in this study. A *locus* is the ontological dimension of space – a physical or social place that forms part of a situation. A *locative concept*, by contrast, is the product of the cognitive interpretation and linguistic naming of that space. In other words, it is a mental unit that bundles knowledge about the functions, rules of behavior, typical participants and expected events tied to a particular locus.

Within the humorous genre, locative concepts work as meaning-generating mechanisms. They map out the space in which the objects or actants of a joke operate, define the parameters of their behavior, restrict or provoke certain actions and establish a set of expected scenarios that the unfolding narrative can then violate or drastically rework.

The spaces that serve as loci in humorous discourse can be arranged along a continuum from the most abstract to the most concrete. Figure 2.1. represents the constructed hierarchy of locative concepts existing in English family jokes.



**Figure 2.1. Hierarchical representation of locative concepts**

This hierarchy provides the analytical framework for examining exactly what conceptual knowledge each joke activates and how the level of the hierarchy shapes the mechanism of the comic effect.

The data show that the locative concepts of FAMILY SPACE and PUBLIC SPACE realize different humorous scenarios. The difference is rooted in their distinct frame characteristics: above all – in access parameters, also typical participants and norms of their behavior. Within FAMILY SPACE, the most productive level for generating humor is RESIDENTIAL SPACE and its subspaces.

The locative concept KITCHEN (SOCIAL SPACE → FAMILY SPACE → RESIDENTIAL SPACE → HOUSE/APARTMENT → KITCHEN) is activated in joke (26):

(26) *One day I entered the kitchen and saw mom cooking. / I asked: “What’s cooking, mom?” / She said: “You are adopted”.* (Deleted profile, 2024)

The verbalization of the locus through the lexeme *kitchen*, together with the predicate *mom cooking*, sets up the conditions for a literal interpretation of the child’s speech act “What’s cooking, mom?” as a question about the content of an ongoing

culinary activity. At the same time, the expression carries an idiomatic meaning – “used to ask about what is happening or what someone is planning”, which realizes the communicative pragmatics of ‘exchanging news’. The polysemy generated by this spatially based situation forms the basis of the comic effect.

The locative concept PARENTS’ BEDROOM (SOCIAL SPACE → FAMILY SPACE → RESIDENTIAL SPACE → HOUSE/APARTMENT → BEDROOM) operates in joke (27):

(27) *Johnny walks into his parents bedroom and sees dad with mom bent over the dresser, doing what parents do. Johnny is shocked. Dad notices and says “Johnny. go back to your room!” / Mom and Dad finish up and Dad heads down the hall to see how Johnny is doing. When he opens the door, there is Johnny pushing Grandma up against the dresser pretending to hump her. / Dad says “Johnny... what the hell are you doing!?!” / Johnny turns around and says “Not so funny when it’s your Mom is it?”* (“Johnny walks into his parents bedroom and sees dad with mom bent over the dresser”, n.d.)

PARENTS’ BEDROOM accumulates knowledge about a private space of marital interaction with restricted access for other family members. The child’s move into this locus is interpreted as a boundary violation, reflected both in the child’s reaction (“Johnny is shocked” = sudden surprise, discomfort) and in the father’s reaction (“Johnny, go back to your room!”), which verbalizes an attempt to restore privacy. The further development of the joke shows a spatial “mirroring”: the action is transferred to the locus of JOHNNY’S ROOM (HOUSE/APARTMENT → CHILD’S BEDROOM), where the child imitates the scene he has witnessed, underscored by the reappearance of the object ‘dresser’ as an attribute of both spaces. The opposition of two subspaces within a single RESIDENTIAL SPACE performs a structure-building function and generates the comic effect.

The locative concept LIVING ROOM (SOCIAL SPACE → FAMILY SPACE → RESIDENTIAL SPACE → HOUSE/APARTMENT → LIVING ROOM) is realized in joke (28):

(28) *A man and his wife was sitting in the living room. / Husband: Just so you know, I never want to live in a vegetative state, dependent on some machine and fluids from a bottle. If that ever happens, just pull the plug. / His wife got up, unplugged the TV and threw out all of his beer.* (OZFox42, 2025).

LIVING ROOM brings to mind ‘a shared relaxation zone for family members’. The semantic content of this concept is fleshed out through the leisure attributes ‘TV’ and ‘beer’, which become the referents for ‘machine’ and ‘fluids from a bottle’, providing the ground for an unexpected reinterpretation of the husband’s statement and thereby creating the humor.

The locative concept BATHROOM (SOCIAL SPACE → FAMILY SPACE → RESIDENTIAL SPACE → HOUSE/APARTMENT → BATHROOM) is activated in joke (29):

(29) *Every morning someone knocks on the bathroom door and asks, “How much longer?” The person inside says, “Just a minute.” / Apparently it’s the longest minute in our house.* (MemeLord344, 2019)

The construction *knocks on the bathroom door* signals the presence of a physical access boundary, and the question “How much longer?” further signals that a participant is waiting for access and that time inside the space is a limited resource. The locative concept BATHROOM encodes knowledge of a space of regular competition among family members, where one user’s occupancy time is perceived by others as disproportionately long, as confirmed by the final line: “Apparently it’s the longest minute in our house.”

The locative concept CHILD’S BEDROOM (SOCIAL SPACE → FAMILY SPACE → RESIDENTIAL SPACE → HOUSE/APARTMENT → CHILD’S BEDROOM) functions in joke (30):

(30) *A father passing by his son’s bedroom was astonished to see that his bed was nicely made and everything was picked up. Then he saw an Envelope, propped up prominently on the pillow that was addressed to ‘Dad’. With the worst premonition he opened the envelope with trembling hands and read the letter. / Dear Dad: It is with great regret and sorrow that I’m writing you. I had to elope with my new girlfriend because I wanted to avoid a scene with Mom and you. / I have been finding real passion with Stacy and she is so nice. But I knew you would not approve of her because of all her piercing, tattoos, tight motorcycle clothes and the fact that she is much older than I am. But it’s not only the passion...Dad she’s pregnant. Stacy said that we will be very happy. She owns a trailer in the woods and has a stack of firewood for the whole winter. We share a dream of having many more children. Stacy has opened my eyes to the fact that marijuana doesn’t really hurt anyone. We’ll be growing it for ourselves and trading it with the other people that live nearby for cocaine and ecstasy. In the meantime we will pray that science will find a cure for AIDS so Stacy can get better: She deserves it. / Don’t worry Dad. I’m 15 and I know how to take care of myself. Someday I’m sure that we will be back to visit so that you can get to know your grandchildren. / Love, Your Son John / PS. Dad, none of the above is true. / I’m over at Tommy’s house. I Just wanted to remind you that there are worse things in life than a Report card. That’s in my center desk drawer. I love you. Call me when it’s safe to come home.* (bachoo725, 2014)

CHILD’S BEDROOM stores knowledge of the child’s individual space with the typical semantic marker ‘mess’. This is expressed through the phrasing “was astonished to see that his bed was nicely made and everything was picked up”: the lexeme *astonished* signals a violation of expectations about the state of this space, so that ‘perfect order’ is interpreted as an anomaly. In the humorous discourse, this anomaly signals a hidden problem and thus drives the humor of the joke.

The locative concept GARDEN (SOCIAL SPACE → FAMILY SPACE → PLOT OF LAND → GARDEN) is realized in joke (31):

(31) *Grandma spends all of her time in the garden. / Because that's where she's buried.* (WizardofPasta, 2016)

The concept GARDEN brings together knowledge of a space of regular gardening activity with its typical participant – GRANDMOTHER. *Spends all of her time* denotes the regularity and expectedness of the persona's presence within this locus. The comic effect is generated by the twofold nature of the concept: the anticipated interpretation (GARDEN as a place of activity) is replaced by an unexpected one (GARDEN as a burial site), which activates a different frame.

The locative concept GARAGE (SOCIAL SPACE → FAMILY SPACE → RESIDENTIAL SPACE → HOUSE → GARAGE) is activated in joke (32):

(32) *Silly Sally, one day, burns down her garage, and her mother says, "Wait till your father gets home. You're in big trouble." / Silly Sally laughed and laughed. She knew her dad was in the garage.....* (duggangemma, 2025)

GARAGE encapsulates knowledge of a space functionally and role-wise associated with FATHER. The predicate *burns down her garage* verbalizes the child's infliction of damage, followed by a threat that foreshadows a punitive procedure: "Wait till your father gets home. You're in big trouble." Punishment is naturally expected from the person to whom this space belongs and who values it as significant – thus, the locus characterizes the role and identity of FATHER.

A separate consideration is the locative concept CAR (SOCIAL SPACE → FAMILY SPACE → VEHICLE → CAR), which appears in joke (33):

(33) *6 yo: Are we there yet? / Me, internally: Does it fucking look like we're there yet? We are literally driving down a road at 45 miles per hour: If we were there, we would be parked at our destination. WHAT DO YOU NOT UNDERSTAND ABOUT BEING "THERE??" / Me, to 6yo: 10 more minutes* (@copymama, 2019)

Unlike the subspaces of RESIDENTIAL SPACE, the locative concept CAR accumulates knowledge about a mobile FAMILY SPACE whose defining semantic component is 'movement'. The personae's stay inside this locus activates the JOURNEY frame, which includes the components 'shared confinement in a limited space' and 'temporal extension'. The 'temporal extension' generates tension between the personae, verbalized through the father's internal monologue with emotionally colored vocabulary and capitalization as a means of conveying irritation.

Locative concepts of PUBLIC SPACE realize a fundamentally different configuration of humorous scenarios, in which the participants' behavior is regulated by the norms of an external environment or institution. Some locative concepts, however, belong unambiguously to neither FAMILY nor PUBLIC SPACE but represent knowledge of threshold points where the two intersect. One such concept is BALCONY in joke (34):

(34) *Wife: Why do you go out in the balcony, when I start singing. / Husband: Because the people would think I am beating you.* (Kuey Andrea Malual, 2025)

BALCONY stores knowledge of a space between the private RESIDENTIAL SPACE and PUBLIC SPACE. The construction *go out in the balcony*, with its movement component (go out), identifies a transition between loci: inside (HOME) → outside (BACONY). Being in this locus ensures perceptual accessibility for an outside observer – pointed to by the lexeme *people* that implies PUBLIC SPACE with access to the threshold locus, while the predicate *would think* indicates the possibility of a mistaken interpretation by outsiders. The joke creates a situation in which the husband’s presence outside the space of the HOUSE serves to correct the potentially mistaken perception and interpretation that outsiders might form of events inside HOUSE. In this way, the locative concept BALCONY represents knowledge of a space where two modes of interpretation: private and public, intersect, producing the comic effect.

Among the locative concepts of PUBLIC SPACE, the concept SCHOOL (SOCIAL SPACE → PUBLIC SPACE → INSTITUTIONAL SPACE → EDUCATIONAL SPACE → SCHOOL) is realized in joke (35):

(35) *I had to pick my son up from school earlier after he was caught swearing. / When we got home I told my wife “apparently he said the C word” / “Well that wasn’t clever, was it?” / “No, it was cunt”* (“I had to pick my son up from school earlier”, n.d.)

SCHOOL gathers knowledge of an institutionally regulated space. The predicate *was caught swearing*, where *caught* conveys the existence of rules, their monitoring and the discovery of a deviation, combined with *swearing* which qualifies the type of infraction, leads to the early removal from the locus (“pick my son up from school earlier”). Together, these markers form a schema: in (SCHOOL)=staying within a normatively regulated space on condition of rule compliance, out (“pick up earlier”) =exclusion from the space as a consequence of violation. In general, the locus SCHOOL, with its given institutional rules, allows a deviation from the norm to be interpreted as a meaningful event that launches a humorous scenario, as also seen in joke (18).

The locative concept SUPERMARKET (SOCIAL SPACE → PUBLIC SPACE → COMMERCIAL SPACE → GROCERY STORE → SUPERMARKET) functions in joke (36):

(36) *The husband picks up a case of Budweiser and puts it in the cart. / “What do you think you’re doing?” asks the wife. / “They’re on sale, only \$10 for 24 cans” he replies. / “Put them back, we can’t afford them”, demands the wife. / They carry on with their shopping. A few aisles farther on, the woman picks up a \$20 jar of face cream and puts it in the basket. / “What do you think you’re doing?” asks the husband. / “It’s my face cream. It makes me look beautiful,” replies the wife. / Her husband retorts, “So does 24 cans of Budweiser and it’s half the price.”* (rickyhorrer, 2014)

SUPERMARKET accumulates knowledge of a space semantically defined by ‘operations of comparison’ and ‘choice’. The predicates *picks up*, *puts it in the cart*, *put them back* verbalize the process of including objects in and excluding them from the shared shopping space within the locus, based on an assessment of importance and a

weighing of alternatives. This concept sets up a specific type of conflict – a clash of competing values during a shared selection process, which is a productive scenario for humorous discourse.

The locative concept HOSPITAL (SOCIAL SPACE → PUBLIC SPACE → MEDICAL SPACE → HOSPITAL) is realized in joke (37):

(37) *My grandma asked me if I would visit her after she gets out of the hospital... / I told her no... I don't like going to graveyards.* (HippleNunter, 2022)

HOSPITAL bundles knowledge of a temporary-stay space associated with treatment and expected recovery. The predicate *get out* denotes the end of the stay within the locus and activates the RECOVERY frame, which is then reinterpreted via a shift to the locus GRAVEYARD, activating the DEATH frame. The locative concept HOSPITAL thus represents a semantically ambivalent space, where the alternative scenario (death instead of recovery) provides the basis for producing dark humor.

Finally, the locative concept RESTAURANT (SOCIAL SPACE → PUBLIC SPACE → CATERING SPACE → RESTAURANT) is activated in joke (38):

(38) *A husband and wife were dining at a 5-star restaurant. / When their food arrived, the husband said: "Our food has arrived! Let's eat!" / His wife reminded him: "Honey, you always say your prayers at home before your dinner!" / Her husband replied: "That's at home, my dear. Here the chef knows how to cook..."* (SolMGardner, 2020)

The designation *\*a 5-star restaurant\** pinpoints the locus RESTAURANT within the CATERING SPACE hierarchy. RESTAURANT encodes knowledge of a professionally organized (*\*5-star\**) dining space that provides a safe, quality service thanks to a competent agent whose culinary expertise guarantees a predictable and acceptable result (=the chef knows how to cook). The contrast of this locus with the domestic space ("That's at home") demonstrates the opposition PUBLIC / PROFESSIONAL vs. PRIVATE / AMATEUR, and this contrast forms the basis of the humorous effect.

To sum up, several mechanisms governing the functioning of locative concepts in jokes can be identified:

1) Locative concepts that accumulate knowledge about spaces with restricted or regulated access generate a comic effect through the conceptualization of boundary violations. Crossing a spatial boundary, whether physical or symbolic, contradicts expectations about the typical participants and their behavioral norms within the locus, triggering a humorous scenario;

2) Structural symmetry between two subspaces is a productive mechanism: an action performed in one locus is replicated or transferred to another while retaining key attributes, resulting in a comic scenario repetition in new spatial coordinates;

3) Violating expectations about the functional role of the space represented in the locative concept acts as a catalyst for humor. A specific subtype of this mechanism is the

semantic substitution of a space's attribute (when objects or participants belonging to the frame content of the locus are reinterpreted in an alternative manner);

4) When space is conceptualized as a scarce resource, conflict may be generated by the duration of participants' occupancy within the locus;

5) The comic effect can also be achieved by concealing the actual locus until the final line – the punchline.

### 2.1.3. Event concepts

An event concept refers to the cognitive representation of an event that organizes the relationships among participants, their roles and the spatiotemporal coordinates along which the event unfolds. Drawing on the approach developed by Bohmeyer et al. (2007) within the semantic typology of motion events, an event concept also reflects a language-specific segmentation of a continuous scenario into units. The authors define macro-event expressions through the Macro-Event Property, and cross-linguistic evidence confirms that principles of event segmentation vary from language to language (Vesnina, 2025). Thus, an event concept captures not only the structural ties between participants but also typified scenarios of their dynamic interaction, including action sequences and shifts in role configurations over the course of the event. This calls for singling out **INTERACTION and TRANSITION** as two fundamental event mega-concepts, each unfolding into a hierarchical model of subordinate concepts.

**INTERACTION** is best viewed as a mega-concept representing the universal sphere of interpersonal family interaction. It can be decomposed into six subordination levels, arranged from the most abstract down to the most concrete, each step adding greater scenario specificity in terms of conditions and forms of realization. At the meso-level (functional-typological), **INTERACTION** is first broken down by type and functional orientation: **HARMONIOUS INTERACTION**, **CONFLICTUAL INTERACTION**, **INSTRUMENTAL INTERACTION** and **RITUALIZED INTERACTION**.

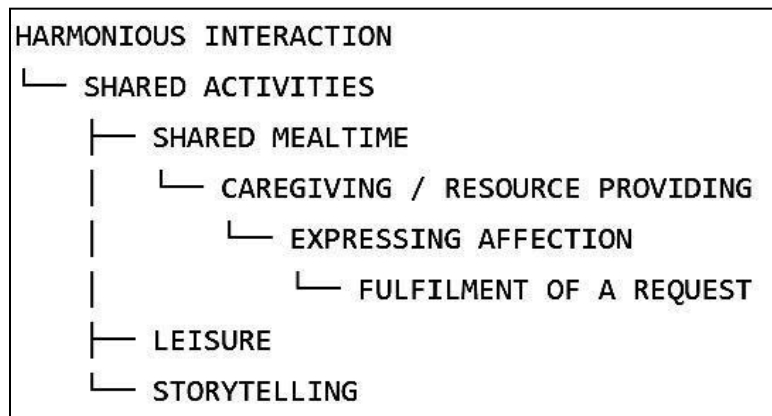
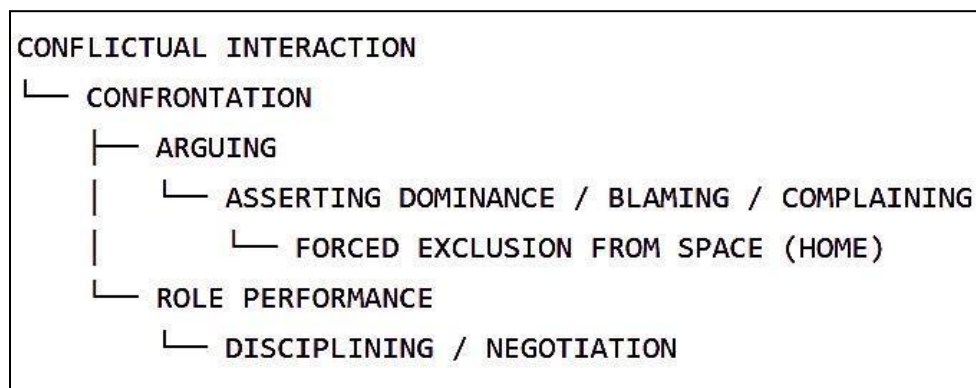


Figure 2.2. Hierarchical representation of the concept **HARMONIOUS INTERACTION**

For example, in joke (39), HARMONIOUS INTERACTION surfaces through a scenario of marital interaction within SHARED ACTIVITIES, more precisely SHARED MEALTIME as a routine domestic situation.

(39) *There was an elderly couple who in their old age noticed that they were getting a lot more forgetful, so they decided to go to the doctor. The doctor told them that they should start writing things down so they don't forget. They went home and the old lady told her husband to get her a bowl of ice cream. "You might want to write it down," she said. The husband said, "No, I can remember that you want a bowl of ice cream." She then told her husband she wanted a bowl of ice cream with whipped cream. "Write it down," she told him, and again he said, "No, no, I can remember: you want a bowl of ice cream with whipped cream." Then the old lady said she wants a bowl of ice cream with whipped cream and a cherry on top. "Write it down," she told her husband and again he said, "No, I got it. You want a bowl of ice cream with whipped cream and a cherry on top." So he goes to get the ice cream and spends an unusually long time in the kitchen, over 30 minutes. He comes out to his wife and hands her a plate of eggs and bacon. The old wife stares at the plate for a moment, then looks at her husband and asks, "Where's the toast?"* (Prudent\_Ratio1827, 2023)

SHARED MEALTIME appears as an act of CAREGIVING and RESOURCE PROVIDING, with the husband acting as the agent who fulfills the wife's request (verbalized as "get her a bowl of ice cream", "goes to get the ice cream"). Both actants – husband and wife – are characterized as forgetful, i.e., in need of support, which frames the act as a display of care and thus activates EXPRESSING AFFECTION. The comic mechanism arises on the transformation of the micro-level concept FULFILMENT OF A REQUEST. Initially, this concept operates as a stable, expected scenario verbalized through a series of escalating speech acts by the wife ("a bowl of ice cream" → "with whipped cream" → "and a cherry on top"), which build a structure of request refinement and imply increasing complexity. The humor is provoked when the referent of the request is suddenly swapped.

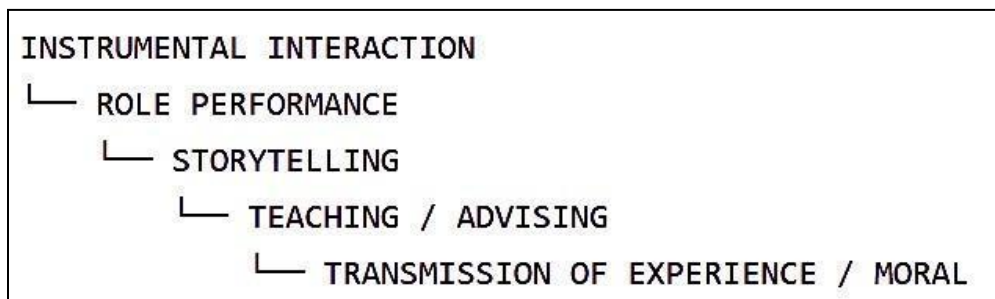


**Figure 2.3. Hierarchical representation of the concept CONFLICTUAL INTERACTION**

In contrast to HARMONIOUS INTERACTION, CONFLICTUAL INTERACTION marks the opposite model of marital interaction, realized here through CONFRONTATION, as in the next example.

(40) *A husband and wife get into a huge argument. / They are calling each other names, swearing, and throwing things at each other. / Finally the wife grabs a suitcase and throws a bunch of the husband's clothes into it and says, "that's it, I've had enough of you! Take this suitcase and GET THE HELL OUT!" / As he's leaving, she says, "I hope you die a slow, painful death. I want you to be miserable for every minute of the rest of your life!" / The husband pauses, looks back at his wife with a confused look on his face and says "so you want me to stay now?"* (Abunity, 2024)

CONFRONTATION materializes through the macro-level event ARGUING, explicitly marked by *a huge argument* and reinforced by *calling each other names* (=insulting, demeaning), *swearing* (=using offensive language), and the verbs *grabs [a suitcase]*, *throws [husband's clothes]* – all conveying sharp, aggressive motion. In this context, ASSERTING DOMINANCE emerges as one participant's (the wife's) push to seize control by altering the shared interaction space (verbalized through imperatives: "Take this suitcase and GET THE HELL OUT!"). These actions specify the micro-level event concept FORCED EXCLUSION FROM SPACE (HOME).



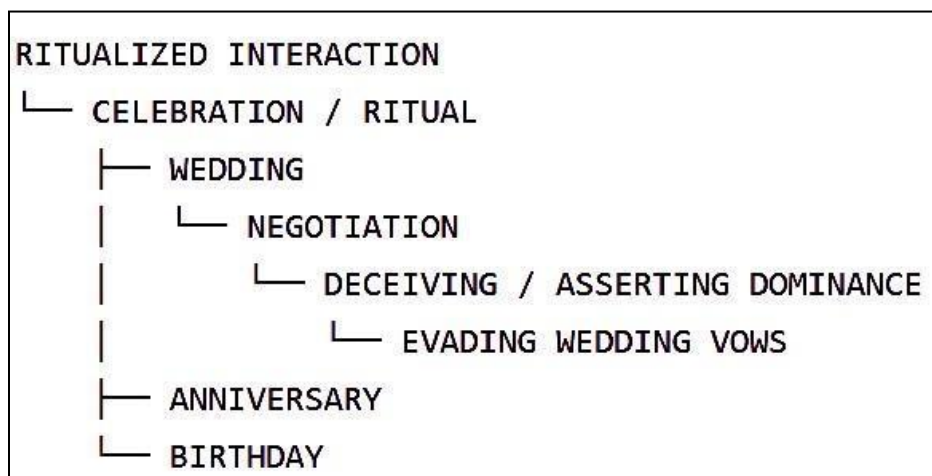
**Figure 2.4. Hierarchical representation of the concept INSTRUMENTAL INTERACTION**

The next joke activates INSTRUMENTAL INTERACTION, realized through STORYTELLING as a way for transmitting knowledge.

(41) *A teacher told her young class to ask their parents for a family story with a moral at the end of it, and to return the next day to tell their stories. / In the classroom the next day, Joe gave his example first, "My dad is a farmer and we have chickens. One day we were taking lots of eggs to the market in a basket on the front seat of the truck when we hit a big bump in the road. The basket fell off the seat and all the eggs broke." The moral of the story is not to put all your eggs in one basket. "Very good," said the teacher. / Next, Mary said, "We are farmers too. We had twenty eggs waiting to hatch, but when they did we only got ten chicks." The moral of this story is not to count your chickens before they're hatched. "Very good," said the teacher again, very pleased with*

*the response so far. / Next it was Barney's turn to tell his story: "My dad told me this story about my Aunt Karen. Aunt Karen was a flight engineer in the war and her plane got hit. She had to bail out over enemy territory and all she had was a bottle of whiskey, a machine gun and a machete." "Go on," said the teacher, intrigued. "Aunt Karen drank the whiskey on the way down to prepare herself. Then she landed right in the middle of a hundred enemy soldiers. She killed seventy of them with the machine gun until she ran out of bullets. Then she killed twenty more with the machete till the blade broke. And then she killed the last ten with her bare hands." "Good heavens," said the horrified teacher, "What did your father say was the moral of that frightening story?" The child said: "Stay away from Aunt Karen when she's been drinking." (eli5ask, 2021)*

The teacher's instruction "ask their parents for a family story with a moral" establishes a pragmatic frame in which STORYTELLING functions as a tool for achieving a didactic effect, signaled by the word *moral*. It sets up an expected role pattern: parents are to act as agents of experience transfer, activating the chain ROLE PERFORMANCE → PARENTING → TEACHING and ADVISING (the features 'warning' and 'danger avoidance' come through in "Stay away from Aunt Karen when she's been drinking"). While the story about Aunt Karen formally retains the STORYTELLING frame ("My dad told me this story"), its content is saturated with CONFLICTUAL INTERACTION, verbalized through a string of verbs denoting violent acts: "killed seventy... with the machine gun", "killed twenty more with the machete", "killed the last ten with her bare hands". In other words, the semantic field of CONFLICTUAL INTERACTION emerges inside INSTRUMENTAL INTERACTION, demonstrating how different forms of INTERACTION can be co-activated and interact semantically within a single joke.



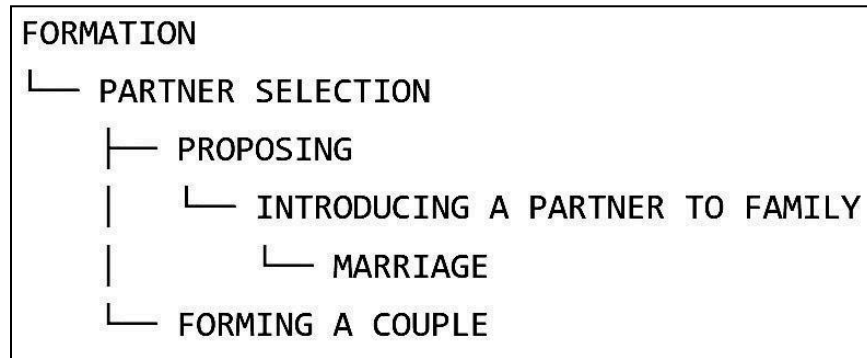
**Figure 2.5. Hierarchical representation of the concept RITUALIZED INTERACTION**

The next joke unfolds within RITUALIZED INTERACTION.

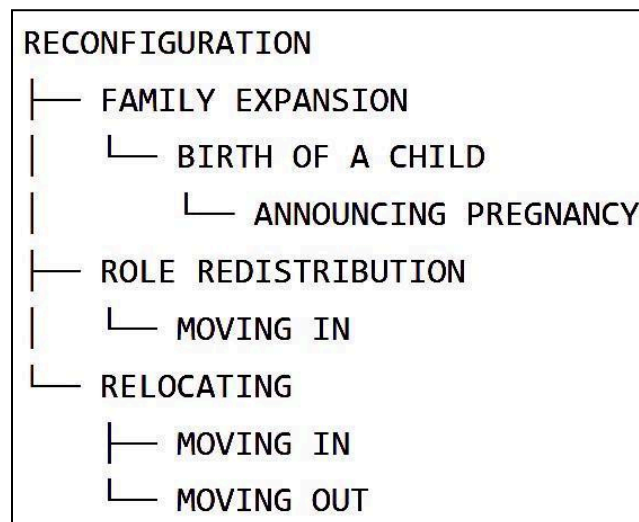
(42) *During the wedding rehearsal, the groom approached the vicar with an unusual offer. / “Look, I’ll give you €100 if you’ll change the wedding vows. When you get to me and the part where I’m to promise ‘to love, honour and obey’ and ‘forsaking all others, be faithful to her forever,’ I’d appreciate it if you’d just leave that part out.” He passed the clergyman the cash and walked away satisfied. / It is now the day of the wedding, and the bride and groom have moved to that part of the ceremony where the vows are exchanged. When it comes time for the groom’s vows, the vicar looks the young man in the eye and says: “Will you promise to prostrate yourself before her, obey her every command and wish, serve her breakfast in bed every morning of your life and swear eternally before God and your lovely wife that you will not ever even look at another woman, as long as you both shall live?” The groom gulped and looked around, and said in a tiny voice, / “Yes.” The groom leaned toward the vicar and hissed, “I thought we had a deal.” The vicar put the €100 into his hand and whispered back, “She made me a much better offer.” (orgasmic2021, 2021)*

RITUALIZED INTERACTION is narrowed down to RITUAL, CELEBRATION → WEDDING through the lexemes *wedding rehearsal*, *wedding vows*, *ceremony*, all carrying the feature ‘a socially scripted event that presupposes the fulfillment of role expectations’ (ROLE PERFORMANCE) – for instance, reciting traditional formulas (“love, honour and obey, be faithful... forever”). This script is then deformed via NEGOTIATION involving an outside (extra-family) ritual participant, the vicar (verbalized as “I’ll give you €100 if you’ll change the wedding vows” and accompanied by the action “He passed the clergyman the cash”). Accordingly, the event is driven by DECEIVING (through the covert agreement) and ASSERTING DOMINANCE, which comes through in the redistribution of power, for example, the transformed vows: “prostrate yourself before her,” “obey her every command,” “serve her breakfast in bed every morning.” At the micro-level, the central concept is EVADING WEDDING VOWS, directly verbalized in the request to “leave that part out” concerning “be faithful... forever.”

The other mega-concept, **TRANSITION**, represents the universal sphere of dynamic changes in the structure, composition and functioning of the family unit. Its decomposition yields five subordination levels. The meso-level gives the first specification of TRANSITION by identifying the vector of change the family system undergoes within its life cycle. Four basic vectors emerge: FORMATION / RECONFIGURATION / DISSOLUTION / LOSS.



**Figure 2.6. Hierarchical representation of the concept FORMATION**

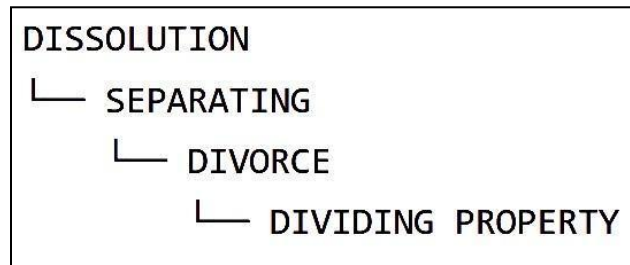


**Figure 2.7. Hierarchical representation of the concept RECONFIGURATION**

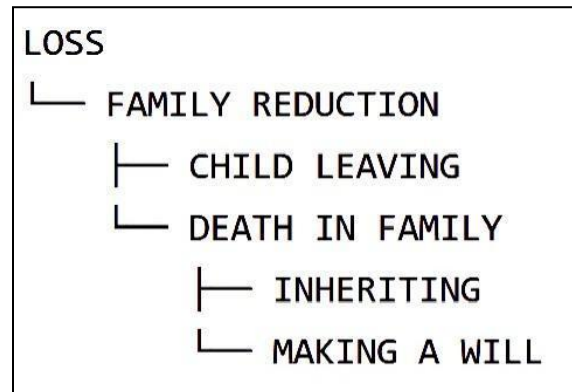
Joke (43) activates the TRANSITION mega-concept, primarily in the level FORMATION with partial involvement of RECONFIGURATION.

(43) *A boy and his father were having a heart-to-heart talk when the boy suddenly said... / BOY: Dad, I think I have found the girl I want to marry. / DAD: Oh really? Who is she? / BOY: Cynthia. / DAD: And what makes this Cynthia girl different from the others? / BOY: Oh, this one is pregnant.* (“A boy and his father were having a heart-to-heart talk”, 2015)

TRANSITION is concretized as FORMATION through PARTNER SELECTION, verbalized in the son’s statement “I think I have found the girl I want to marry.” This line, oriented toward a future union, triggers the chain RECONFIGURATION → FAMILY EXPANSION → MARRIAGE → PROPOSING → INTRODUCING A PARTNER TO FAMILY. The punchline “this one is pregnant” verbalizes the micro-concept ANNOUNCING PREGNANCY while simultaneously activating another branch of the hierarchy: FAMILY EXPANSION → BIRTH OF A CHILD → ANNOUNCING PREGNANCY.



**Figure 2.8. Hierarchical representation of the concept DISSOLUTION**



**Figure 2.9. Hierarchical representation of the concept LOSS**

Joke (44) foregrounds TRANSITION in the DISSOLUTION phase that then shifts toward LOSS.

(44) *A married couple is driving down the interstate doing 55 mph. The husband is behind the wheel. / His wife looks over at him and says, “Honey, I know we’ve been married for 15 years, but I want a divorce.” The husband says nothing but slowly increases speed to 60 mph. She then says, “I don’t want you to try to talk me out of it, because I’ve been having an affair with your best friend, and he’s a better lover than you.” / Again the husband stays quiet and just speeds up as his anger increases. / She says, “I want the house.” Again the husband speeds up, and now is doing 70 mph. She says, “I want the kids too.” / The husband just keeps driving faster, and faster, now he’s up to 80 mph. / She says, “I want the car, the checking account, and all the credit cards too.” / The husband slowly starts to veer toward a bridge overpass piling, as she says, “Is there anything you want?” / The husband says, “No, I’ve got everything I need.” She asks, “Really? What’s that?” The husband replies just before they hit the wall at 90 mph, “I’ve got the airbag!” (CryticaLh1T, 2015)*

The underlying scenario unfolds through the macro-concept DIVORCE, explicitly verbalized in “I want a divorce,” which simultaneously realizes SEPARATING, marking the process of marital breakdown. Then a series of the wife’s speech acts: “I want the house,” “I want the car, the checking account, and all the credit cards”, verbalizes the micro-concept DIVIDING PROPERTY. The husband’s climactic line “I’ve got the airbag!” reinterprets the entire scenario: from a socio-legal separation to a potential

physical catastrophe. Thus, two event lines intersect: DIVORCE (as a form of DISSOLUTION) and DEATH IN FAMILY (as a form of LOSS).

Joke (45) contains two phases: FORMATION and RECONFIGURATION.

(45) *I introduced my girlfriend to my family today. My kids really liked her but my wife seemed mad.* (Lorenzo D-boy Dorsey, 2024)

“I introduced my girlfriend to my family today” verbalizes the micro-concept INTRODUCING A PARTNER TO FAMILY and realizes PARTNER SELECTION within FORMATION (the lexeme *girlfriend* activates semantic features such as ‘romantic relationship’, ‘potential new marital union’). “My kids really liked her” expands the frame by introducing kids, which implies an already established family structure and motivates the shift to RECONFIGURATION, since the new partner is entering a pre-existing family.

Joke (46) activates TRANSITION through the LOSS phase tied to impending death and the ensuing INHERITING.

(46) *Isaac, through hard work, became wealthy. As he lay dying, he talked to his wife, Sophie. “Sophie... here are my last wishes.” / “Whatever you want, I’ll do.” / “First, the business I leave to Morty, our eldest.” / “Morty!” Sophie protested. “Morty’s always with the girls. Better to leave it to Jeffrey.” / “OK, Jeffrey,” he sighed. “Now, the bonds I leave to Thelma.” / “Better me,” argued Sophie. “In two days, she’ll spend at Bloomingdale’s.” / “Alright. The summer house I leave to our Ava.” / “She’s not spoiled enough? Leave it to Morty.” / Finally, summoning his last ounce of strength, Isaac sighed, “Sophie... who’s dying here - me or you?”* (“Isaac, through hard work, became wealthy”, n.d.)

The LOSS meso-level is fleshed out through the chain FAMILY REDUCTION → DEATH IN FAMILY explicitly verbalized in “As he lay dying” (=approaching death). Within this context, the cata-level INHERITING is activated, realized through the repeated constructions “I leave to Morty / Thelma / Ava” where the predicate *leave* functions as the verbalizer of property transfer and activates the micro-concept MAKING A WILL. At the same time, the joke’s structure also accommodates the RECONFIGURATION meso-level through the macro-concept ROLE REDISTRIBUTION, verbalized in the wife’s interjections: “Better to leave it to Jeffrey,” “Better me,” “Leave it to Morty.” These fragments mark a contestation of the resource redistribution decision as an act of asserting control over it.

Summing up the analysis, three points stand out:

1) It is impossible to treat the identified mega-concepts INTERACTION and TRANSITION as autonomous because a relationship of systematic interdependence holds between them. On the one hand, any TRANSITION is realized through a sequence of concrete INTERACTION acts that drive its dynamic unfolding; on the other, INTERACTION itself contains TRANSITIONS that reflect changes in states, roles and configurations within the system. INTERACTION and TRANSITION thus structurally overlap;

2) Despite the productivity of the hierarchical model of event concepts, the data show that their real-time activation is nonlinear: concepts are triggered simultaneously from different nodes of the network – belonging to different levels and even different branches, forming complex configurations of cross-interaction. This suggests that the structure of a joke is built through the concurrent activation of several conceptual nodes, between which relations of contradiction are often established for the sake of comic reinterpretation;

3) Given these observations, event concepts have the potential to be treated as scripts that fuse culturally conditioned prototypes of social practices, interaction types and the roles embedded in them.

#### 2.1.4. Axiological concepts

Axiological concepts are a class of mental units that represent the fundamental values of human existence – the system of evaluations and priorities that shape the behavioral strategies of individuals and communities, organized along a principle of hierarchical significance. Among the axiological concepts that surface in English jokes, this study singles out the mega-concepts **LIFE**, **ORDER** and **KNOWLEDGE**, each realized through a branched, multi-level system of concepts.

**LIFE** is best viewed as a mega-concept that captures the fundamental value of existence as such, together with the drive for self-preservation, reproduction and development. It can be represented through the following hierarchy:

- Socio-culturally conditioned value concepts that define how life is organized and sustained within a national community: SECURITY, WELL-BEING, HEALTH, MEDICINE, DEMOGRAPHICS, NATIONAL RESOURCES, SOCIAL PROTECTION;
- The inter-collective meso-level (interaction of social groups, material-economic and organizational structures): INFRASTRUCTURE, RESOURCES, MONEY, PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY, UTILITIES;
- The macro-level (intragroup) concretizes the concept within the family as a micro-society, where life support takes the form of an ordered interaction system: PROVIDING FOR THE FAMILY, FAMILY BUDGET, RESOURCE DISTRIBUTION;
- The individual-professional meta-level (activity characteristics of the subject): WORK CAPACITY, RESPONSIBILITY, RATIONALITY, PLANNING;
- The individual-regulatory meta-level captures the motivational-need basis of the concept as the internal mechanisms that direct behavior toward maintaining one's own existence and well-being: SELF-PRESERVATION, SATISFACTION OF NEEDS;
- The micro-level (personal-material) represents the direct realization of LIFE through basic means of subsistence: FOOD, WATER, CLOTHING, SHELTER,

MEDICINE, which form the material foundation of individual existence and reveal the value of life in everyday practices.

In humorous texts, the concept LIFE is most frequently activated through the LIFE-DEATH opposition. The joke below models a situation in which LIFE as the supreme value is represented through the LIFE-DEATH opposition (here, DEATH as a potential threat to life), verbalized as “your husband will surely die” and “regain his health completely” (HEALTH metonymically stands for LIFE as its integral component).

(47) *A woman accompanied her husband to the doctor’s office. After his checkup, the doctor called the wife into his office alone. He said, “Your husband is suffering from a very severe stress disorder. If you don’t do the following, your husband will surely die.” / Each morning, fix him a healthy breakfast. Be pleasant at all times. For lunch make him a nutritious meal. For dinner prepare an especially nice meal for him. Don’t burden him with chores. / Don’t discuss your problems with him, it will only make his stress worse. No nagging. And most importantly, make love with your husband several times a week. If you can do this for the next 10 months to a year, I think your husband will regain his health completely.”* On the way home, the husband asked his wife. / “What did the doctor say?” / “He said you’re going to die,” she replied. (Deleted profile, 2021)

The excerpt “If you don’t do the following, your husband will surely die” sets up a cause-and-effect relationship: LIFE appears as an unconditional good, which necessitates self-sacrifice on the wife’s part. The sacrifice aimed at saving life is concretized as SATISFACTION OF NEEDS, particularly through the provision of FOOD (“fix him a healthy breakfast,” “make him a nutritious meal”). The humorous effect arises from the violation of expectations concerning existentially vital values.

Given that LIFE is understood through the mechanisms that sustain it, it is worth examining the relationship between LIFE, HEALTH and MEDICINE, which stand in a relation of hierarchical interdependence: LIFE as a mega-concept encompasses the fundamental value of existence, HEALTH functions as its necessary condition and MEDICINE as the practices for maintaining and restoring that condition.

(48) *My family is furious at me for implying my Sister is an idiot for not vaccinating her child... / I suppose the funeral wasn’t the right place to say it.* (“My family is furious at me”, n.d.)

In this joke, the concepts HEALTH and MEDICINE are verbalized indirectly through the lexeme (*not*) *vaccinating*. MEDICINE appears, on the one hand, as a system of knowledge and norms aimed at preserving LIFE, and on the other, as a space of social conflict and evaluation (here – in the context of vaccination). The cause-and-effect relationship ‘not vaccinating → death’ functions as an indicator of threat to the basic value LIFE. However, DEATH receives an atypical interpretation: it is evaluated not as a tragedy but as an occasion to voice criticism, which provokes dark humor.

In the next example, LIFE is represented in an economic dimension.

(49) *Six guys were playing poker when Smith loses \$500 on a single hand, clutches his chest and drops dead at the table. Showing respect for their fallen comrade, the other five complete their playing time standing up. After the game, Mr. Roberts looks around and asks, “Now, who is going to tell the wife?” / They draw straws. Rippington, who is always a loser, picks the short one. They tell him to be discreet, be gentle, don’t make a bad situation any worse than it is. Rippington says, “Gentlemen! Discreet? I’m the most discreet man you will ever meet. Discretion is my middle name, leave it to me.” / Rippington walks over to the Smith house, knocks on the door; the wife answers, asks what he wants. / Rippington says, “Your husband just lost \$500 playing cards.” / She hollers, “TELL HIM TO DROP DEAD!” / Rippington says, “I’ll tell him.” (Dave Khanoyan, 2017)*

Here, the concept of LIFE is realized through the interrelation of the concepts of financial provision, primarily RESOURCE and MONEY (verbalized as “\$500”), which, in the context of family interaction, structure the FAMILY BUDGET (=money as a material resource directly related to ensuring the family’s life activity). The loss of RESOURCE, represented by the predicate *loses \$500*, signifies a potential threat to the functioning of the family. The preceding activity “playing cards” is interpreted as an irrational use of RESOURCE and, more broadly, as a violation of the value of RESPONSIBILITY (=fulfilment of duties toward the family). The reaction to the loss, manifested in the behavior of the HUSBAND (“clutches his chest and drops dead at the table”) and the WIFE (“TELL HIM TO DROP DEAD!”), indicates the high significance of MONEY. The joke models an inversion of the axiological hierarchy: whereas in the prototypical image MONEY serves as a means of sustaining LIFE (LIFE>MONEY), here it is conceptualized as a higher value (MONEY>LIFE).

Another fundamental value of human existence is **ORDER**, a mega-concept that represents the pursuit of stability and predictability in human life.

- At the meso-level, ORDER is concretized through sociocultural institutions and mechanisms that organize social life: LAW, SOCIAL NORMS, CONTROL, and through inter-collective interaction: COOPERATION, AGREEMENT, COORDINATION/ALIGNMENT;
- At the macro-level, ORDER gains concreteness within the family as a micro-society through: FAMILY ROLES, DISTRIBUTION OF DUTIES, FAMILY HIERARCHY, LEADERSHIP;
- At the individual-professional cata-level, it manifests through ORGANIZATION, PLANNING, DISCIPLINE, DAILY ROUTINE/SCHEDULE;
- At the individual-regulatory level, through NEED FOR ORDER, STABILITY, PREDICTABILITY as the motivational foundations of behavior;
- At the micro-level, it is realized in concrete material practices: A TIDY ROOM, THINGS PUT AWAY, A CLEAN DESK, A SCHEDULE, A TO-DO LIST, A CALENDAR.

The studied linguistic material shows that the concept LAW is activated through the opposition of a norm and its violation.

(50) *Akpos was always stealing his mother's money any where she hid it. The mother, very confused about what to do, decided to talk to her husband about it: / WIFE: I don't know where to hide my money from Akpos. He has discovered all the secret places I keep my money. / HUSBAND: It's very simple. I know where you can hide the money from him. He won't know where it is. / WIFE: (excited) Where? / HUSBAND: In between his school books!* (John Adesogan, 2022)

The phrase *mother's money* implies the notion of private property, and *stealing* is an act of criminal or at least moral transgression that destabilizes ORDER. The reaction to this violation of ORDER is the implementation of strategies aimed at restoring CONTROL, strategies that are nevertheless acknowledged as ineffective (“He has discovered all the secret places”). The emotional state marker *very confused* reflects disorientation and loss of CONTROL and *excited* signals the expectation of restored STABILITY and PREDICTABILITY. The further development, verbalized by the predicate “decided to talk to her husband about it” captures an attempt at joint regulation, in which communication between the spouses serves the function of COORDINATION OF ACTIONS, while the husband's line “I know where you can hide” represents an act of transmitting relevant knowledge and thus realizes the concept MUTUAL ASSISTANCE.

The violation of the value ORDER can also be traced in the next joke.

(51) *My wife and I have come to the mutual agreement that we do not want children. And the judgement that is coming at us from family, friends, co-workers, it's just crazy. / And the kids aren't taking it very well either.* (mralex, 2023)

Here a conflict between individual and social norms comes to the fore. Social norms structure the notion of a “correct” life script: the verbalization “judgment from family, friends, co-workers” represents the collective reaction of condemnation as a mechanism for maintaining SOCIAL ORDER, where the refusal of parenthood is interpreted as a deviation. Meanwhile, the lexeme *crazy* carries the meaning ‘devoid of sense, beyond the ordinary’. At the same time, the phrase “my wife and I have come to the mutual agreement” designates intra-family interaction as a process of COORDINATION and AGREEMENT, in which the decision *do not want children* emerges as a consensual choice of two equal agents, which in turn allows it to be interpreted as expressing the outcome of PLANNING.

In the following material, tension shifts to the intra-family level, where the establishment of ORDER is ensured through instruments of unilateral CONTROL.

(52) *Jealous husband: “My wife where are you?” / Wife: “At home love.” / Husband: “Are you sure?” / Wife: “Yes” / Husband: “Turn on the blender.” / Wife: (turns blender on) reeereeeereeee / Husband: “Ok my love goodbye.” / Another day, Jealous husband: “My wife where are you?” / Wife: “At home love.” / Husband: “Are you sure?” / Wife: “Yes” / Husband: “Turn on the blender.” / Wife: (turns blender on)*

*reeereeeeee / Husband: “Ok my love goodbye.” / The next day, the husband decides to go home without notice, finds his son alone and asks him “Son, where is your mother?” / Son: “I don’t know, she went out with the blender.....” (“Jealous husband”, n.d.)*

The mechanism of COORDINATION is explicated through the imperative “Turn on the blender” that represents a process of aligning actions aimed at achieving a goal – confirming the wife’s presence at home. Yet this COORDINATION is one-sided, initiated exclusively by the husband and realized through the wife’s subordination, which allows the interaction to be interpreted as an expression of FAMILY HIERARCHY. This model is further reinforced by linguistic markers: the attribute “jealous husband” points to jealousy as a motivational factor for establishing control, the repeated address “my wife” carries a sense of possession, the imperative “Turn on the blender” functions as a command. As a result, the role distribution is clear: the husband acts as the initiator of the check, asks questions and gives orders, the wife answers, follows instructions and confirms the expected information. Moreover, the quality *jealous* allows the husband’s behavior to be seen as a manifestation of NEED FOR ORDER, STABILITY and PREDICTABILITY, additionally verbalized through the repeated question “Are you sure?”, which signals doubt and, accordingly, insufficient control achieved. It is worth noting separately that the BLENDER, as a household appliance, is conceptualized through a secondary function, created within the scenario, confirming the wife’s whereabouts.

Concepts that correlate with real everyday referents can also integrate an axiological component, as illustrated in the next example.

(53) *When I got to the supermarket, I couldn’t find the shopping list my wife had given to me. / Luckily, I found one someone else had dropped so could use that one.* (Baindemousse, 2025).

SHOPPING LIST qualifies as a tool for organizing domestic tasks: it organizes the shopping, as well as the DISTRIBUTION OF DUTIES, and ensures COORDINATION among family members. The fragment “the shopping list my wife had given to me” captures the model of instruction transfer from wife to husband (“my wife had given to me”), so the wife appears as the initiator and coordinator of the action and the husband as the executor. However, “I couldn’t find” marks a disruption of this COORDINATION (loss of the SHOPPING LIST as a means of organizing and transmitting knowledge → destabilization of the action flow). The subsequent fragment “I found one someone else had dropped so could use that one” demonstrates the mechanism of restoring COORDINATION, driven by the fact that the NEED FOR ORDER remains unsatisfied.

The next fundamental concept **KNOWLEDGE** should be approached as a mega-concept that represents the universal value of making sense of the world and accumulating experience.

- At the meso-level, KNOWLEDGE is concretized through sociocultural forms of organizing and transmitting information about the world: COGNITION, EDUCATION, CULTURE, TRADITIONS, COLLECTIVE MEMORY, within which knowledge is consolidated as a social norm and passed between generations as an element of national identity;
- At the inter-collective meso-level, the concept KNOWLEDGE is activated through processes of KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE, where it acts as a resource that circulates among different social groups, ensuring the mutual enrichment of collective experience;
- The macro-level (intragroup) reflects the realization of the concept KNOWLEDGE within the family as a social environment, where it operates through the mechanisms of MENTORING, UPBRINGING, KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER, KNOWLEDGE ACQUISITION;
- At the individual-professional cata-level, KNOWLEDGE is concretized through POSSESSION OF KNOWLEDGE (COMPETENCE), BEING EDUCATED, BEING QUALIFIED;
- The individual-regulatory cata-level represents the motivational-need basis of the concept: CURIOSITY, INQUISITIVENESS, NEED FOR UNDERSTANDING as the internal stimuli that drive a person toward cognitive activity;
- The micro-level (personal-material) captures the realization of KNOWLEDGE in everyday life, represented by objects such as a FAMILY MEMBER'S STORY, a FAMILY ALBUM, HOMEWORK, a NOTEBOOK, a BOOK/TEXTBOOK, which serve as material carriers and instruments for preserving, transmitting and actualizing knowledge.

(54) *A kid asks his dad "What's worse: ignorance or indifference?" / "Johnny", responds his dad, "I neither know nor care."* (ccalvoj, 2014)

In this joke, the concept KNOWLEDGE is represented through opposition 'ignorance' contrasted with 'indifference' (contrast is created with particular context), and additionally "What's worse?" qualifies both states as negative. The comic effect arises from the fact that KNOWLEDGE is a value, and its absence, represented by the predicate *neither know*, is a deviation from the expected norm.

(55) *A child asked his father, "How were people born?" So his father said, "Adam and Eve made babies, then their babies became adults and made babies, and so on." The child then went to his mother, asked her the same question and she told him, "We were monkeys then we evolved to become like we are now." The child ran back to his father and said, "You lied to me!" His father replied, "No, your mom was talking about her side of the family."* (theonethatworkshard, 2024)

Here, KNOWLEDGE is realized through components such as CURIOSITY, INQUISITIVENESS and NEED FOR UNDERSTANDING: "A child asked his father... went to his mother, asked her" signals the child's cognitive activity that, notably, turned to both parents in search of an answer. So, KNOWLEDGE is realized through

MENTORING, UPBRINGING and KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER as a specific functional role of parents within the family. Both parents are viewed through the feature POSSESSION OF KNOWLEDGE (COMPETENCE), each offering a different interpretation of human origins. Thus, the concept KNOWLEDGE is concretized through the interaction of concepts such as CULTURE, TRADITIONS and COLLECTIVE MEMORY, which are manifested in the opposition of two different knowledge systems: the traditional model (the biblical story “Adam and Eve...”), which is part of cultural and religious tradition, and the scientific one, referring to the theory of evolution. Within the humorous text, the concept KNOWLEDGE appears as an object of ironic interpretation.

Next, it is fitting to provide an example of material objects that represent the idea of the concept KNOWLEDGE.

(56) *“We should look at old family albums more often,” said the dad. / “Why?” / “So we remember what happiness looked like before we became a family.” (“We should look at old family albums more often”, n.d.)*

In this joke, the FAMILY ALBUM is actualized as a material carrier of KNOWLEDGE, preserving COLLECTIVE MEMORY of the past: “We should look... so we remember” implies turning to the ALBUM as an object capable of restoring access to information.

Summing up the analysis, several typical features emerge:

1) Axiological inversion proves productive for jokes, where a less significant concept within the value hierarchy is presented as more important than a higher-level concept. The mismatch between the expected and the actual system of priorities often becomes a source of comic effect;

2) A process is observed in which material objects acquire an additional abstract meaning: the designation of a concrete object goes beyond its direct sense and begins to serve as a carrier of an abstract concept, such as CONTROL or ORDER;

3) The joke features a mechanism of conceptual “compression,” where a complex value collision traversing several levels of the conceptual hierarchy is condensed into a single unexpected line, most often – the punchline.

## **2.2. Basic scenarios of family jokes from the standpoint of frame semantics**

The event concepts examined earlier are defined by their dynamic nature. They unfold over time, involve participants and circumstances, so together constitute an event as a unified chunk of experience. The compositional complexity of event concepts makes them compatible with the notion of a frame: a knowledge structure that models a typical scenario or situation and consists of a set of slots, each corresponding to a specific aspect of that situation.

To analyze event concepts in the corpus of English family jokes, this study applies the typology of basic frames developed by S. A. Zhabotynska. According to this

framework, the semantic analysis of linguistic material involves mapping elements of meaning onto one another and integrating them within a conceptual schematic structure. To build such schemas, Zhabotyńska distinguishes five basic frames: the Thing Frame, the Action Frame, the Possession Frame, the Identification Frame and the Comparison Frame (Жаботинская, 2004). Within this subsection, the typology is applied to several event concepts selected from the corpus: CONFLICT, PARENTING, HOLIDAY, CELEBRATION and DEATH.

### Thing Frame CONFLICT

SOMETHING is THAT MANY – CONFLICT is THAT MANY

- CONFLICT lasts (for) YEARS: (57) *Why was the younger sibling so good at hide-and-peek? Because they had years of experience hiding from their older sibling's wrath.* (“Why was the younger sibling so good at hide-and-peek”, n.d.)

SOMETHING is SUCH – CONFLICT is SUCH:

- CONFLICT is PROLONGED: (58) *My wife and I decided to never go to bed angry at each other. We've been awake since Monday.* (Dad Jokes, 2026)

- CONFLICT is PERMANENT: (59) *Marriage lets you annoy one special person for the rest of your life.* (Anonymous, n.d.)

- CONFLICT is EVERYDAY/CYCLICAL: (60) *Marriage is setting the alarm clock to the same time every night and then arguing about who should get up first.* (Hazel Mishra, 2024)

- CONFLICT is BIG: (61) *My neighbours' family had a huge fight yesterday. Allegedly it started when their son introduced his girlfriend and granny responded: 'See what happens when you don't pray?'* (StenSoft, 2015)

- CONFLICT is INTENSE: (62) *When we were kids, our fights were legendary. Now they are just passive-aggressive texts.* (Hooman, n.d.)

- CONFLICT is FURIOUS: (63) *In a furious argument, the wife tells her husband “I should've married the devil he would've made a better husband than you!” The husband responds “you would've been arrested because marriage between relatives is illegal in this country”* (Delegated profile, 2019)

- CONFLICT is DANGEROUS: (64) *I play the world's most dangerous sport. I disagree with my wife.* (SpartanTank, 2017)

- CONFLICT is INSIGNIFICANT: (65) *I despise it when a couple has a minor quarrel and the girlfriend updates her Facebook status to “single”. I mean, I fight with my parents all the time, but I never update my status to “orphan”.* (Stationary-Event, 2023)

- CONFLICT is FUTILE: (66) *Arguing with a women is like reading a “Terms and Conditions”—in the end you ignore everything and just click “I agree”* (Modern Momma Ph, 2024)

SOMETHING exists SO – CONFLICT exists SO:

- CONFLICT exists EXPECTEDLY/PREDICTABLY: (67) *A man wakes up at home with an awful hangover... He forces himself to open his eyes, and the first thing he sees is a couple of aspirins and a glass of water on the side table. He sits down and sees his clothing in front of him, all clean and pressed. He looks around the room and sees that it is in perfect order, spotless, clean. So is the rest of the house. He takes the aspirins and notices a note on the table. "Honey, breakfast is on the table, I left early to go grocery shopping. Love You!" Totally shocked with the note, he goes to the kitchen and sure enough there is a hot breakfast and the morning newspaper. His son is also at the table, eating. He asks, "Son, what happened last night?" His son says, "Well, you came home around 3 AM, drunk and delirious. Broke some crockery, puked in the hall, and gave yourself a black eye when you stumbled into the door". Confused, the man asks, "So, why is everything in order and so clean, and breakfast is on the table waiting for me? I should expect a big quarrel with her!" His son replies, "Oh, that! Mom dragged you to the bedroom, and when she tried to take your clothes n shoes off, you said, "LADY LEAVE ME ALONE! I'M MARRIED!" (star\_bary, 2015)*

- CONFLICT exists REGULARLY: (68) *A 55 year old lady suddenly started learning to swim instead of her usual routine of going to a temple !!!! Everyone was curious and asked her: "why the change in your interest to swimming now a days?" The lady, with a look of helplessness replied: "Whenever my son and daughter-in-law quarrel with each other my Daughter-in-law always asks my son : - "If your mom and I fall into water, whom will you save first?" And because I do not want to put my son in a difficult position, I am learning to swim!" A few days later husband and wife were quarrelling again and the daughter-in-law unreasonably asked: "Now tell me! If your mom and I fall into water, whom will you save first?" Husband replied: "I don't have to get into the water, my mom knows to swim, she will save you." Wife refused to relent: "No, you have to jump into the water, and have to save one of us". Whom will you save? Husband replied: "Then you will surely die.... because I don't know to swim .... and my mom will definitely save me first." (omarkhn26, 2020)*

- CONFLICT exists CYCLICALLY: (69) *Everytime I go to a wedding my grandpa pokes me and says, "You're Next" So then everytime i go to a funeral with him, i poke him and say, "You're next." ("Everytime I go to a wedding my grandpa pokes me", n.d.)*

- CONFLICT exists LATENTLY/NON-VERBALLY: (70) *There was a couple riding in a car together, arguing. Neither wanted to concede the argument, so they didn't stop. Eventually, they both got tired out, and settled into an angry silence. / A few miles down the road, they passed a barn full of the most disgusting pigs and cows imaginable. The angry wife sniped at her husband, "Are those part of your family?" / The husband responded, "Yes, they're my in-laws." (crazyfortaco, 2022)*

- CONFLICT exists UP TO A CERTAIN LIMIT: see joke (22) *...one puts his hand level with his head and says "I've had it up to here with you." ... he tells his brother, with his palm facing the earth, "I've had it to here."*

SOMETHING is/exists THERE – CONFLICT is/exists THERE:

- CONFLICT is/exists IN A LODGE: (71) *A couple was having a quarrel in a lodge... The man calls the manager and says, “I’m having an argument with my wife, and now she wants to jump out the window please come fast!” The Manager angrily responds, “I am sorry sir this is your personal issue, please do not waste my time again.” The Husband replies back, “The window is not opening. This is not a personal issue, this is a maintenance issue.”* (Daily Jokes, 2024)

- CONFLICT is/exists IN A CAR: see joke (70) ... *a couple riding in a car together, arguing...*

- CONFLICT is/exists IN A POOL: (72) *My brother and I used to fight in the pool until the day our mom told us to divide it in half and stay on our side. I picked the top half.* (My brother and I used to fight in the pool, n.d.)

- CONFLICT is/exists IN A HOSPITAL: (73) *It was very difficult to switch off my mother in law’s life support system. I had to fight my wife and two doctors to do it.* (porichoygupto, 2018)

- CONFLICT is/exists AT A WEDDING: see joke (69) *Everytime I go to a wedding...*

- CONFLICT is/exists AT A FUNERAL: see joke (48) ...*I suppose the funeral wasn’t the right place to say it.*

SOMETHING is/exists THEN – CONFLICT is/exists THEN:

- CONFLICT is/exists WITH EVERY MARITAL QUARREL: see joke (68) *The lady, with a look of helplessness replied: “Whenever my son and daughter-in-law quarrel with each other ...*

- CONFLICT is/exists AT A SOCIALLY SIGNIFICANT MOMENT (a celebratory moment): (74) *A husband and wife had a bitter quarrel on the day of their 40th wedding anniversary. The husband yells, “When you die, I’m getting you a headstone that reads, ‘Here Lies My Wife - Cold As Ever.’” “Yeah?!” she replies. “When you die, I’m getting you a headstone that reads, ‘Here Lies My Husband - Stiff At Last.’”* (Karpukoly, 2018)

### **Action Frame CONFLICT**

SOMEONE acts on SOMEONE:

- AGENT (SUBJECT OF CONFLICT, PERSON) acts on PATIENT (MALEFACTIVE): see joke (73) ... *I had to fight my wife and two doctors to do it.*

SOMEONE acts SO:

- AGENT (SUBJECT OF CONFLICT) acts by means of an INSTRUMENT.

(75) *My grandma used to say “kill them with kindness... / ...and if that doesn’t work, kill them with whatever’s handy”. / She’s set to be released from prison in 2049.* (@TalentedTortuga, 2026)

See joke (62) *Now they [fights] are just passive-aggressive texts.*

- AGENT (SUBJECT OF CONFLICT) acts toward RECIPIENT: see joke (70) ...

*The angry wife sniped at her husband ...*

- AGENT (SUBJECT OF CONFLICT) acts for a PURPOSE: see joke (57) ... *they had years of experience hiding from their older sibling's wrath.* (Purpose: to establish a boundary / territory)

(76) *As a mom, I'm constantly worried about the safety of my children. Like especially the one who's been rolling her eyes and talking back to me.* (Eve Czapak, 2023) (Purpose: for control / discipline / restoring hierarchy / authority)

- AGENT (SUBJECT OF CONFLICT) acts because of a CAUSE:

(77) *My teen is mad at me and it could be because of any number of horrible things I did this morning: stood in the kitchen, poured coffee, stared out the window, said good morning, breathed...* (Kelly Pinter, 2025) (Cause: everyday morning activities)

(78) *During an argument with her husband, a wife was just about to calm down. But then her husband asked her to calm down...* (My Happy World, 2020) (Cause: the request to calm down)

### Comparison Frame CONFLICT

Similarity (analogy). SOMETHING-referent is like SOMETHING-correlate:

- CONFLICT is like PRO FORMA ENGAGEMENT: see joke (66) *Arguing with a women is like reading a "Terms and Conditions"—in the end you ignore everything and just click "I agree"*

- CONFLICT is like ADVERSARIAL REFLECTION OF THE SELF: (79) *Having a sibling is like having a mirror that argues.* (“Having a sibling is like having a mirror that argues”, 2025)

Likeness (metaphor). SOMETHING-referent is as if SOMETHING-correlate:

- CONFLICT is as if a GAME: see joke (57) *Why was the younger sibling so good at hide-and-seek? ...*

- CONFLICT is as if a SPORT: see joke (64) *I play the world's most dangerous sport...*

- CONFLICT is as if an EXERCISE: (80) *My brother's favorite exercise? Sibling squabbles* (“My brother's favorite exercise? Sibling squabbles”, 2025)

- CONFLICT is as if an ARMED ATTACK: (81) *Never doubt a mother! She can carry a screaming toddler, two gallons of milk, talk on her cell phone, and still shoot you daggers for looking at her crazy.* (Ares Piere, n.d.)

- CONFLICT is as if the END OF THE WORLD: (82) *An old married couple got into a petty argument. (He would call it petty; she would have called it Armageddon.) / As was their nature, neither of them would admit the possibility that they might be wrong. Finally, to her credit, the wife said, “Look, I'll tell you what. I'll admit I'm*

wrong if you admit I was right.” / “Fine,” he said. / She took a deep breath, looked him in the eye, and said, “I’m wrong.” / He grinned and replied, “You’re right.” (Grumpy & Married, 2024)

- CONFLICT is as if a THERMAL PROCESS: (83) Science teacher: “When is the boiling point reached?” Student: “When my mother sees my report card!” (Papyrus Publ, 2022)

### Thing Frame DEATH

SOMETHING is SUCH – DEATH is SUCH:

- DEATH is PROPHETIC: (84) A father put his 3-year-old daughter to bed and listened to her prayers: “God bless Mommy, God bless Daddy, God bless Grandma and good-bye Grandpa.” The father asked, “Why did you say goodbye Grandpa?” “I don’t know, it just seemed like the right thing to say.” The very next day, the grandfather died. That evening: “Good night Mom, good night Dad, goodbye Grandma.” Grandma dies the next day. A few weeks later: “Good night Mom, goodbye Dad...” The father leapt out of bed, turned on every light in the house, ran outside and stayed in his car until morning. He went to work — nothing happened. He came home and his wife said: “Thank God you’re here — the mailman dropped dead on our porch this morning!” (Shaffie Weru, 2016)

- DEATH is PEACEFUL: (85) When I die I want to go peacefully in my sleep like my Grandfather. / Not screaming, shouting and swearing like the other 83 passengers. (GeorgeWGunn, 2022)

SOMETHING is/exists THERE – DEATH is/exists THERE:

- DEATH is/exists AT THE FUNERAL HOME: (86) A grieving family arrives at the funeral home just ahead of the wake for their dear departed husband/father. They are taken to the back to see the body, and are disappointed to see he is not in his favourite blue pinstripe suit, but in a tan suit. Then they are horrified to notice the body is not their father at all. (“A grieving family arrives at the funeral home”, n.d.).

- DEATH is/exists AT HOME: (87) A man on his deathbed, with all his family around him, grabs his wife’s hand: “Sanjita, are you here?” “Yes, my husband.” “My daughters, are you here?” “Yes, Papa.” “My sons, are you here?” “Yes, Father, we are all here.” The dying man’s face darkens: “Then who’s in the f\*\*ing shop?” (“A man on his deathbed, with all his family around him”, n.d.)

SOMETHING is/exists THEN – DEATH is/exists THEN:

- DEATH is/exists DURING SEXUAL INTERCOURSE: (88) Upon hearing that her elderly grandfather had just passed away, Katie went straight to visit her 95 year-old grandmother and comfort her. when she asked how her grandfather had died, her grandmother replied, “He had a heart attack while we were making love on Sunday morning.” Horrified, Kate told her grandmother that 2 people nearly 100 years old

*having sex would surely be asking for trouble. “Oh, no my dear,” replied granny. “Many years ago, realizing our advanced age, we figured out the best time to do it was when the church bells would start to ring. It was just the right rhythm. Nice and slow even. Nothing too strenuous, simply in on the Ding and out on the Dong.” She paused to wipe away a tear, and continued, “He’d still be alive if the Ice Cream truck hadn’t come along.” (beast\_playz, 2018)*

### **Action Frame DEATH**

SOMEONE acts on SOMEONE – AGENT (SUBJECT OF DEATH, PERSON) acts on PATIENT (MALEFACTIVE):

- AGENT (dying husband) strikes MALEFACTIVE (enemy Samy) through PATIENT (wife). (89) *From his deathbed, the husband called his wife and said: “One month after I die I want you to marry Samy.” “Samy! But he is your enemy!” “Yes, I know. I’ve suffered all these years — so let him suffer now.” (Gunawardena, 2009)*

- AGENT (dying father) deliberately deceives PATIENTS (friends) to protect MALEFACTIVE (widow/mother from potential suitors). (90) *A father tells his son he has had a good long life and wants to stop at the pub on the way to celebrate. He sees several of his friends and tells them he is dying of AIDS. When the friends leave, the son asks: “Dad, you’re dying of cancer. Why did you tell them AIDS?” The father replies: “Because I don’t want any of them sleeping with your mother after I’m gone.” (sexxc, 2020)*

AGENT (SUBJECT OF DEATH) acts toward RECIPIENT:

- AGENT (grandmother) directs a warning to RECIPIENT (grandfather-driver), who becomes part of a fatal road situation. (91) *A senior citizen was driving down the freeway... / when his wife called his cell phone. / “Honey, I just heard on the news that there’s a car going the wrong way on Route 280. Please be careful!” / “It’s not just one car,” said the man, “It’s hundreds of them!” (OrangeHippo376, 2018)*

- AGENT (SUBJECT OF DEATH) acts because of a CAUSE: (CAUSE: the daughters’ behavioral pattern – regular trips to WalMart, used as a guarantee of posthumous visits.) (92) *A elderly woman decided to prepare her will and told her preacher she had two final requests. First she wanted to be cremated, and second, she wanted her ashes scattered over Walmart. “Walmart?” the preacher exclaimed. “Why Walmart?” / “Then I’ll be sure my daughters will visit me twice a week.” (no\_bon3s\_about\_it, 2025)*

### **Comparison Frame DEATH**

Likeness (metaphor). SOMETHING-referent is as if SOMETHING-correlate:

- DEATH is as if RETURNING HOME: (93) *“Hardly worth going home, is it?” — The funeral director looks at the elderly couple (97 and 95) leaving the funeral home and says this as a joke. (“Hardly worth going home, is it?”, n.d.)*

- DEATH is as if a BANK TRANSACTION: (94) *Lying on his deathbed, the rich, miserly old man calls to his wife: “I want to take all my money with me. Promise me you’ll put it in the casket.” After the man dies, just before the undertaker closes the coffin, she places a small metal box inside. Her friend looks at her in horror: “Surely you didn’t put the money in there?” “I did promise him I would,” the widow answers. “So I got it all together, deposited every penny in my account, and wrote him a check. If he can cash it, he can spend it.”* (Blue Downs United Church, 2025)

### **Thing Frame PARENTING**

SOMETHING is SUCH – PARENTING is SUCH:

- PARENTING is ASYMMETRICAL IN EFFECTIVENESS: (95) *“Eat your broccoli!” says the mother. “No!” exclaims the boy. The father then leans toward the boy and whispers something in his ear. The boy quickly eats his broccoli and goes to his room. “What did you tell him?” she asks. “I told him that if he didn’t eat his broccoli, his vegetables would have died for nothing.”* (Nature Mind, 2025)

- PARENTING is RITUALISTIC: (96) *Johnny was reading the bible to his cat and his mother thought that was really sweet, but later she heard a terrible noise. / “Johnny, what is going on?” / “I am baptizing the cat.” / “But he doesn’t like water!” / “Well he shouldn’t have joined my church then...”* (Scott Hogue, 2022)

SOMETHING exists SO – PARENTING exists SO:

- PARENTING exists THROUGH AN OBJECT LESSON: (97) *A mother was teaching his child about the side-effects of alcohol. She gets two short glasses, filling one with water and the other with whiskey. “I want you to see this,” she says to her son. She puts a worm in the water — it swims around. She puts a worm in the whiskey — it dies immediately. “Now, what does that tell you?” The son thinks for a moment: “It tells me that if you drink whiskey, you won’t have worms.”* (Ukporumba Nneka Precious, 2026)

- PARENTING exists THROUGH AVOIDING AN EXPLANATION: (98) *A boy is writing a paper on childbirth and asks his parents, “How was I born?” / His mother awkwardly answers, “The stork brought you.” / “Oh,” says the boy. “Well, how were you and Daddy born?” / “Um, well, the stork brought us, too, and Grandpa and Grandma.” / The boy begins his paper, “This report has been very difficult to write due to the fact that there hasn’t been a natural childbirth in my family for three generations.”* (LordsandLadies48, 2017).

SOMETHING is/exists THERE – PARENTING is/exists THERE:

- PARENTING is/exists ON A BUS: (99) *A girl goes on a school trip by bus. When she gets home she rushes to her mother: “On the bus, Daddy told me to offer my seat to a random lady, so I did.” Her mother replied: “Oh wow! You did the right thing, honey.*

*Where was Daddy?” “He was standing on the bus too.” (“A girl goes on a school trip by bus”, n.d.)*

SOMETHING is/exists THEN – PARENTING is/exists THEN:

- PARENTING is/exists DURING BEDTIME: (100) *A small boy is sent to bed by his father. / Five minutes later: / “Da-ad...” / “What?” / “I’m thirsty. Can you bring me a drink of water?” / “No. You had your chance. Lights out.” / Five minutes later: / “Da-aaaad...” / “WHAT?” / “I’m THIRSTY... Can I have a drink of water?” / “I told you NO! If you ask again, I’ll have to spank you!!” / Five minutes later... / “Daaaa-aaaad...” / “WHAT??!!” / “When you come in to spank me, can you bring me a drink of water?” (“A small boy is sent to bed by his father”, n.d.)*

### **Action Frame PARENTING**

SOMEONE acts on SOMEONE – AGENT (SUBJECT OF PARENTING, PERSON) acts on PATIENT (MALEFACTIVE):

- AGENT (mother) punishes the first son (MALEFACTIVE-1), but thereby provokes the second son (MALEFACTIVE-2). (101) *A mother asks her young sons what they want for breakfast. The first little boy says, “I’ll have some @#%^& pancakes.” The mother angrily sends him to his room for cursing. She glares at the other little boy and asks, “What do you want for breakfast?!” The second boy says: “Well, I sure don’t want the @#%^& pancakes!” (Andy Simons, 2025)*

SOMEONE acts SO – AGENT (SUBJECT OF PARENTING) acts by means of an INSTRUMENT:

- AGENT (SUBJECT OF PARENTING) acts by means of a REMOTE CONTROL: (102) *Why do parents always win arguments with their kids? Because they have custody of the remote control.* (David Hudson, n.d.)

SOMEONE acts SO – AGENT (SUBJECT OF PARENTING) acts for a PURPOSE:

- AGENT (SUBJECT OF PARENTING) acts to EXPLAIN THE CONCEPT OF DEATH: (103) *A four-year-old and his father went to the beach. There was a dead seagull on the sand. The boy asked: “Dad, what happened to the birdie?” His dad told him: “Son, the bird died and went to heaven.” The boy replied: “And God threw him back down?” (M.A. Rothman, 2024)*

- AGENT (SUBJECT OF PARENTING) acts to INSPIRE THE CHILD: (117) (104) *My parents told me to follow my dreams... so I went back to bed.* (shahidawrites, n.d.)

SOMEONE acts SO – AGENT (SUBJECT OF PARENTING) acts because of a CAUSE:

- AGENT (SUBJECT OF PARENTING) acts TO ENSURE FAMILY REUNION AT CHRISTMAS: (105) *A man in Scotland calls his son in London the day before Christmas Eve: “I hate to ruin your day, but I have to tell you that your mother and I are divorcing. Forty-five years of misery is enough.” “Dad, what are you talking about?!” the son screams. “We can’t stand the sight of each other anymore. Call your sister in Leeds and tell her.” When the son calls his sister, she screams: “They’re not divorcing — I’ll call Dad!” The sister calls: “You are NOT getting divorced! Stay there — we’re coming for Christmas.” The father hangs up and says to his wife: “Done. They’re both coming for Christmas and paying their own flights.” (Melliope, 2024)*

### Comparison Frame PARENTING

Similarity (analogy) – SOMETHING-referent is like SOMETHING-correlate:

- PARENTING is like a CONSTANT FAILURE: (106) *Parenting is like trying to nail Jell-O to a wall — just when you think you’ve got it, something changes.* (Shelly Fourer, 2024)

- PARENTING is like a ROLLER COASTER: (107) *Raising kids is like a roller coaster — fun, terrifying, and too expensive.* (bisma, 2025)

### Thing Frame HOLIDAY

SOMETHING is SUCH – HOLIDAY is SUCH:

- HOLIDAY is UNWANTED: (108) *A guy walks into a bar and orders a beer. “I hate this time of year. My wife and I can never agree on the holidays,” he complains to the bartender. “I want to travel to exotic places and stay in 5-star hotels.” “That sounds fun. What does she want to do?” the bartender asks. “She wants to come with me.” (“A guy walks into a bar and orders a beer”, n.d.)*

- HOLIDAY is a RELOCATION: (109) *Traveling with kids comes with many — shall we say — challenges. There’s a reason parents joke that vacations with children are not actually vacations — they’re relocations.* (Caroline Bologna, 2023)

SOMETHING exists SO – HOLIDAY exists SO:

- HOLIDAY exists IN A STATE OF EXHAUSTION: (110) *After a long drive to Canada, border patrol agents asked my father the name of us five kids in the back. Dad was so tired that he drew a blank. The brief lapse resulted in Dad being hauled in for questioning. After convincing them that he hadn’t kidnapped us, he was released — 15 hours later.* (“After a long drive to Canada, border patrol agents asked my father the name of us five kids in the back”, 2023)

SOMETHING is/exists THERE – HOLIDAY is/exists THERE:

- HOLIDAY is/exists IN THE VIRGIN ISLANDS: (111) *Our family was on vacation in the Virgin Islands, and I went on a walk with my six-year-old grandson, Matteo. We came across a large turtle. Matteo was fascinated and stayed to watch it for*

*more than an hour as it slowly made its way to the ocean. Awed by what he had witnessed, he looked up at me and said: “Grandpa, that is the slowest thing I have ever seen.” Then added: “Except for you.” (“Our family was on vacation in the Virgin Islands”, 2023)*

- HOLIDAY is/exists AT DISNEYLAND: (112) *We waited on line to enter the Space Mountain ride at Disney World alongside a woman and her son. The boy wasn't tall enough to go on the ride, but his mother had a solution. She took a pair of high heels out of her backpack and forced him to wear them. (“We waited on line to enter the Space Mountain ride at Disney World”, 2023)*

SOMETHING is/exists THEN – HOLIDAY is/exists THEN:

- HOLIDAY is/exists WHEN A FAMILY MEMBER DIES: (113) *One day a boy asked his grandfather: “Hey Grandpa, can you make a frog sound?” “Sure I can,” replied the grandfather. “But why did you want to know?” “Well,” says the boy, “Grandma says that when you croak, we can all go to Hawaii.” (Charlie Yates RN, 2025)*

### **Action Frame HOLIDAY**

SOMEONE acts on SOMEONE – AGENT (SUBJECT OF HOLIDAY, PERSON) acts on PATIENT (MALEFACTIVE):

- AGENT wife ACTS (sends a frank confession to her husband in the form of a postcard) on PATIENT-MALEFACTIVE husband (receives a hint of infidelity during her vacation). (114) *My wife told me: “Sex is better on holiday.” That wasn't a very nice postcard to receive. (Jim Maxwell, 2025)*

- AGENT husband ACTS (proposes a hidden transport for a skunk to his wife) on PATIENT-MALEFACTIVE wife (receives an absurd recommendation). (115) *My wife found a cute baby skunk on our holiday. She wanted to bring it home. I told her they won't let her take it on the plane — she'd need to hide it down her panties. “But what about the smell?” she asked. “Well,” I said, “if it dies, it dies.” (palebluedotcitizen, 2023)*

AGENT (SUBJECT OF HOLIDAY) acts toward RECIPIENT:

- AGENT grandmother ACTS (addresses her grandchild with a message about a “Shakespeare seat” in a form of pun) toward RECIPIENT grandchild (receives a cultural “lesson” from grandma). (116) *Years ago, my grandparents took me on a vacation to Disneyland. Grandma was excited for me when we boarded the plane. She exclaimed that I was lucky, because I got the Shakespeare seat. “Why is it the Shakespeare seat, Grandma?” “You are in seat 2-B, so it's the Shakespeare seat.” (“Years ago, my grandparents took me on a vacation to Disneyland”, n.d.)*

AGENT (SUBJECT OF HOLIDAY) acts for a PURPOSE:

- AGENT Paddy (husband) ACTS (takes his wife on vacation) for the PURPOSE of (avoiding pregnancy in his absence). (117) *Paddy says to Mick: "I'm ready for a holiday, only this year I'm going to do it a bit different. Three years ago I went to Spain and Mary got pregnant. Two years ago I went to Italy and Mary got pregnant. Last year I went to Majorca and Mary got pregnant."* Mick asks: "So what are you going to do this year?" Paddy: "I'll take her with me." (Dave Hopkinson, 2024)

### Comparison Frame HOLIDAY

Likeness (metaphor) – SOMETHING-referent is as if SOMETHING-correlate:

- HOLIDAY is as if PANDEMONIUM: (118) *You call it a pandemonium. We call it a family vacation.* ("You call it a pandemonium", n.d.)

- HOLIDAY is as if RELOCATED PARENTING: (119) *Parents don't actually go on vacation, they just take care of their kids in a different city.* (That Baddie Mama, 2024)

### Thing Frame CELEBRATION

SOMETHING is THAT MANY – CELEBRATION is THAT MANY:

- CELEBRATION is 30 SECONDS: (120) *My wife is turning 32 soon. I've told her not to get her hopes up for her birthday. "After all," I said, "The celebrations are only going to last half a minute."* "What are you talking about?" she asked. I said, "It's your thirty-second birthday." (madazzahatter, 2017)

SOMETHING is SUCH – CELEBRATION is SUCH:

- CELEBRATION is EMOTIONAL: (121) *The last wedding I was at was very emotional. / Everybody was crying, the Bride and Groom, the whole reception, the priest.. / Even the massive cake was in tiers..* (Bellechewie, 2022)

SOMETHING exists SO – CELEBRATION exists SO:

- CELEBRATION exists WITH ATTRIBUTES: (122) *Son: MOM, why is the cake smiling? MOM: Because it's a party! Son: Then it's a laughing layer cake!* ("Son: MOM, why is the cake smiling", n.d.)

SOMETHING is/exists THERE – CELEBRATION is/exists THERE:

- CELEBRATION is/exists IN A RESTAURANT: (123) *After performing a circumcision, a rabbi joined the family at a restaurant to celebrate. As they were leaving, the rabbi ran back into the restaurant. A waiter asked, "Everything ok?" The rabbi answered, "I forgot to leave the tip!"* ("After performing a circumcision, a rabbi joined the family at a restaurant", n.d.)

- CELEBRATION is/exists ON THE DANCE FLOOR: (124) *Husband takes the wife to a disco. There's a guy on the dance floor giving it large – break dancing, moonwalking, back flips, the works. The wife turns to her husband and says: "See that*

guy? 25 years ago he proposed to me and I turned him down.” / Husband says: “Looks like he’s still fucking celebrating!!” (“Husband takes the wife to a disco”, n.d.)

SOMETHING is/exists THEN – CELEBRATION is/exists THEN:

- CELEBRATION is/exists ON THANKSGIVING: (125) *My uncle used to ruin every Thanksgiving with his drinking problem, but now he found Jesus and ruins it with that.* (Carla Parks, 2025)

### **Action Frame CELEBRATION**

SOMEONE acts on SOMEONE – AGENT (SUBJECT OF CELEBRATION, PERSON) acts on PATIENT (MALEFACTIVE):

- AGENT grandma ACTS (bakes a pie intended for a future funeral celebration) on PATIENT-MALEFACTIVE dying grandfather (denies him the satisfaction). (126) *An old man is lying on his death bed. He smells the delicious aroma of freshly baked apple pie. He calls over his grandson and whispers, “Boy, go ask your grandma for a slice of that pie.” The boy scampers off and returns a minute later, replying, “Grandma says no, it’s for after the funeral.”* (“An old man is lying on his death bed”, n.d.)

- AGENT parents ACT (organize a celebration in honor of one son / RECIPIENT) on PATIENT-MALEFACTIVE (wrong the other twin-son). (127) *It never occurred to me how much my parents favored my twin brother until they asked me to pick up the cake for his surprise birthday party.* (Heidi Lucky, 2026)

SOMEONE acts SO – AGENT (SUBJECT OF CELEBRATION) acts by means of an INSTRUMENT:

- AGENT grandpa ACTS (yells, speaks in volumes) by means of INSTRUMENT (unit-of-measurement words: gallons, liters, pints). (128) *Why did grandpa yell “gallons, liters, pints” the day after the Christmas party? Because he likes to speak in volumes.* (Neilas Šurkus & Marisha Kazaryan, 2022)

SOMEONE acts SO – AGENT (SUBJECT OF CELEBRATION) acts toward RECIPIENT:

- AGENT people ACT (give a shout-out) toward RECIPIENT (grandpa). (129) *Why do people give a shout-out to their grandpa on their birthdays? Because that is the only way grandpa can hear them.* (“Why do people give a shout-out to their grandpa on their birthdays?”, 2025)

SOMEONE acts SO – AGENT (SUBJECT OF CELEBRATION) acts for a PURPOSE:

- AGENT mom ACTS (produces a non-standard gift request) for the PURPOSE of (defining a material gift → socio-status outcome / marital tie). (130) *I asked my mom*

*what I could get her for Mother's Day. She said she'd really like a doctor for a son-in-law.* (Deirdre Kaye, 2021)

### Comparison Frame CELEBRATION

Similarity (analogy) – SOMETHING-referent is like SOMETHING-correlate:

- CELEBRATION is like a PUZZLE: (131) *Our family reunion is like a puzzle — all the pieces are a little bit different, but we somehow manage to fit together, even if it's a little bit messy.* (Jessica, 2025)

- CELEBRATION is like an AIRPORT: (132) *The family reunion is like a crowded airport, full of baggage, delays, and a few unexpected layovers, but we always arrive, eventually.* (Jessica, 2025)

The frame analysis of five event concepts (CONFLICT, DEATH, PARENTING, HOLIDAY, CELEBRATION) allows a number of observations to be formulated regarding the internal organization of each frame and the systematic regularities that emerge across the corpus:

1) Thing Frame: slots as an invariant matrix. All five concepts exhibit an identical slot structure in the Thing Frame: the parameters THAT MANY, SUCH, SO, THERE and THEN recur in everyone. The isomorphism of structure despite differing content points to the basic frame as a cognitive tool. The SUCH slot is the most densely populated across all frames. Each concept receives a set of qualitative features reflecting its typical properties within family discourse. The joke's punchline is built on violating or paradoxically confirming that qualitative feature. The THERE slot contains a set of locative concepts, examined in Subchapter 2.1.2. Notably, one and the same locative concept can serve different event concepts, which suggests that spatial organization remains stable regardless of event type;

2) Action Frame: recurring role configurations. Across all frames, the schema AGENT acts on PATIENT (MALEFACTIVE) – a subject that suffers the negative consequences of the action can be traced. This configuration forms the comic foundation of the joke. The analysis also demonstrates that an AGENT that embodies a family role often violates the role script prescribed by their status or swaps places with the MALEFACTIVE. The mechanism of status-role inversion was already described in Subchapter 2.1.1 (Status-role concepts), and the frame analysis reaffirms that violations in these slots trigger the comic effect. The CAUSE slot is filled by an absurd notion or remains concealed until the punchline, which likewise serves as a trigger for humor. The INSTRUMENT slot is filled by concepts of everyday household items, reinterpreted as tools of action/influence (carriers of power, revenge) – a process examined in Subchapter 2.1.4.;

3) Comparison Frame: source domains with axiological loading. The Comparison Frame represents high variability at the level of correlates, yet a systematic pattern can be traced: the source domains SPORT, ARMED ATTACK, THERMAL PROCESS,

END OF THE WORLD, ROLLER COASTER, PANDEMONIUM, PUZZLE, etc., correlate with the axiological concepts discussed in Subchapter 2.1.4. Most often, they carry a negative or ambivalent coloring.

4) Systemic isomorphism – frame violation. The humor is built on a typical cognitive mechanism: a frame with certain expected slot values is activated and then an unexpected substitution or deformation of one of the slots at any level occurs.

### 2.3. Cognitive models underlying FAMILY nominators

Humorous discourse genres, and jokes in particular, provide critical insight into how FAMILY is conceptualized because they reproduce fixed cognitive models that can then be bent or broken to generate a comic effect. The analysis that follows draws on conceptual metaphor theory and image schemas. Two main types of conceptual mapping are distinguished: *ontological metaphors* and *structural metaphors*.

The metaphor **FAMILY IS CONTAINER** rests on the IN-OUT image schema and brings with it structural elements: 1) an interior; 2) contents; 3) an exterior; 4) the possibility or impossibility of entry and exit, together with the conditions governing them. In the jokes examined here, these features map onto such properties of family relationships as the ‘restriction of freedom’, ‘forced co-presence’, ‘controllability’ and the ‘difficulty or impossibility of leaving’.

(133) *Marriage is like prison. Most people who get out within a couple of years are going right back in.* (tylerfowlercomedy, 2025)

The lexeme *prison* activates CONTAINER with rigid boundaries and limited access to the outside. The predicates *get out* and *go (right) back in* denote the basic parameters of the CONTAINER schema: exit and entry. Their combination produces a cyclical effect: exit is not final – the space holds the subject beyond its borders and eventually pulls them back, which additionally embodies the CYCLE image schema.

(134) *Why do women have to cook for their men? Because by law, all prisoners have to be fed.* (Sunset Heaven, 2025)

Here *prisoners* signals the restriction of one person’s freedom, while *have to be fed* carries the sense of obligation, of actions determined for another person inside CONTAINER.

Forced entry into the family space, driven by submission to external control, appears in the next joke.

(135) *The daughter of a warden sees her husband crying / Wife: What’s wrong honey? / Husband: Do you remember when I got you pregnant and your father told me if I didn’t marry you he would put me in prison for 25 years? / Wife: Yeah, so? / Husband: Well, I would have gotten out yesterday.* (“The daughter of a warden sees her husband crying”, n.d.)

The lexeme *warden*, linked to the father, introduces a ‘controller’ who regulates access to CONTAINER. The predicate *put in* represents the act of forcible placement

inside CONTAINER. The line “I would have gotten out yesterday” verbalizes a hypothetical exit, retrospectively contrasted with the state of being “inside the marriage”.

When analyzing the content that fills the FAMILY IS CONTAINER model, it is worth stressing that in a discourse genre “joke”, the interior space acquires an evaluative, often predominantly negative charge, which at the same time characterizes the participants in the situation and marks their behavior as well as interaction types. For example, in joke (139) the phrase “mad house” names the family space as one defined by ‘chaos’ and ‘noise’, thereby evaluatively qualifying those who occupy it.

(136) *I live in a mad house so why not join them.* (Brian Thomas, 2025)

The predicate *join* indicates entry into the space – joining the chaos already underway inside.

(137) *My family is like a human zoo. We have all sorts of species: the drama llama, the party penguin, and the couch potato sloth.* (David Hudson, n.d.)

Here the CONTAINER model is realized through *zoo* that frames the space as ‘a segmented environment where each member takes on the traits of a distinct biological species, with a hyperbolized characteristic feature’. The zoomorphic component will be examined in a more detailed way later in Subchapter 3.2. FAMILY members nominators in the structure of stylistic devices.

It is important to note separately that, despite the variety of environments used to make sense of FAMILY, the space of HOME is the prototypical one.

(138) *I was raised in a broken home. My father was a drunk carpenter.* (TheRealWorldNigeria, 2017)

The idiomatic expression “broken home” (=a family in which the parents have divorced) represents the semantics of a ‘damaged’ CONTAINER, with features such as ‘loss of wholeness’ and ‘disruption of internal ties’. Moreover, the contents of this space are concretized through the figure of the father, whose characterization combines professional semantics (“carpenter”) with a state semantics (“drunk”): the first activates the feature ‘maintaining and restoring the integrity of the space’, while the second introduces ‘dysfunctionality’. This further underlines a pattern in which the properties of the container are determined by the characteristics of its contents – the family members. A similar pattern is activated in the next joke.

(139) *The house doesn't seem big because the kids are gone – it seems big because we've shrunk so much from the lack of chaos.* (Dave Coverly, 2023)

The locative concept HOUSE acquires a relational property: its size is defined by the presence or absence of *chaos* as an internal substance correlated with kids. The predicate *we've shrunk* metonymically transfers a property of the container (“it [the house] seems big”) onto its inhabitants, who “shrink” in proportion to the disappearance of chaos. Thus, the CONTAINER schema works through the following logic: the contents (chaos) make the container expand, the absence of chaos correspondingly

enlarges the empty space, forcing the inhabitants to “shrink” to a scale that no longer fills the boundaries.

The corpus of English family jokes also realizes the metaphoric model of the **NEST IS CONTAINER** where the family space is conceptualized as a bounded container intended for the temporary stay of its inhabitants, primarily children.

(140) *MOTHER NATURE GIVES A SIGN TO ALL YOUNG ANIMALS WHEN IT'S TIME TO LEAVE THE NEST. YOUR TIME IS NEAR, SON - I'VE GOT RHEUMATISM IN MY SHOULDER FROM TAKING OUT THE PURSE!* (Karsten Schley, 2013)

The predicate *leave the nest* verbalizes exit from CONTAINER and notably frames it as a ‘naturally regulated process’ (“MOTHER NATURE GIVES A SIGN”).

Within the metaphoric model FAMILY IS CONTAINER, spatial structuring can also narrow down to the boundaries of an individual body or of the subject “I” as a whole.

(141) *My family is like a straitjacket — they keep me together but also restrict my movement.* (“My family is like a straitjacket”, n.d.)

The lexeme *straitjacket* verbalizes CONTAINER that tightly encloses the body, thereby pointing to a model of restriction inside the self. The predicate *keep me together* implies the function of holding the whole together (=preventing the subject’s “disintegration”), while *restrict my movement* denotes the limitation of physical and, indirectly, behavioral capacity.

The next piece of linguistic material also demonstrates the construal MARRIAGE IS A CONTAINER supported by COUPLE IS COMPOSITE WHOLE (PART-WHOLE) that undergoes internal structuring into parts.

(142) *The lobotomist ran off with my wife... / And I think he took off with my better half.* (“The lobotomist ran off with my wife, n.d.)

Although the lexeme *half* directly verbalizes the division of WHOLE into segments on the basis of the PART-WHOLE schema, and better introduces an axiological hierarchy by assigning higher value to one of those parts, the predicate *took off* captures the removal of that part from CONTAINER, which can be interpreted as a violation of its integrity.

It should be highlighted that the **FAMILY IS CONTAINER** metaphor shows high frequency that allows several conclusions to be drawn about the patterns governing the CONTAINER image schema in comic discourse about the family: 1) the contents of CONTAINER (e.g. chaos) shape the perception of the CONTAINER’s size and state (e.g. big, broken); 2) the comic conceptualization of FAMILY demands negative marking in order to outline discomfort: CONTAINERS (prison, straitjacket, mad house) are overwhelmingly spaces of restricted freedom, additionally the prototypical HOUSE appears either broken or emptied; 4) reciprocal metonymic transfers between CONTAINER and contents are observable: the inhabitants acquire the properties of the space (“we’ve shrunk”) and the space acquires the properties of the inhabitants (mad, chaotic).

**FAMILY IS UNIT / TEAM** captures a way of making sense of FAMILY as an integral object where membership often implies the CONTAINER image schema with the spatial opposition IN-OUT, as in the following joke.

(143) *If we're not making fun of you, are you even part of the family?* (Michael Paul, 2024)

In this joke, part of the family realizes the “inside/outside” opposition: those inside the space are marked by the feature ‘made fun of’, and those outside are not. This supports the idea that the boundary between metaphors (in this case, ontological and orientational) is not rigid and many metaphors are hybrid in nature.

However, as will be shown below, the metaphor FAMILY IS UNIT / TEAM does not always involve spatial movement and thus captures a state rather than an action. The PART-WHOLE schema takes priority over IN-OUT: it endows the abstract FAMILY with the property ‘physical wholeness’.

(144) *I didn't realize staying at home in self isolation with my kids was going to be this tough. Might have to join a gang to survive this.* (“I didn't realize staying at home in self isolation with my kids was going to be this tough”, n.d.)

The PART-WHOLE schema is realized through the predicate *join a gang* that verbalizes the act of integrating a part (the speaking subject) into a whole (“gang” as a tightly knit group). Put differently, viewing the family as WHOLE that integrates subgroups such as 1) parents and 2) children (gang) – which in itself demonstrates the decomposition of WHOLE into parts, makes it possible, given the scenario (where “being in the parents subgroup” is characterized as ‘tough’, whereas “gang” implies ‘a high degree of solidarity’), to reinterpret “gang” as the dominant and, in a certain sense, autonomous WHOLE, integration into which offers an advantage (“to survive”) and thus replaces the dysfunctional family WHOLE.

In the next joke, FAMILY is conceptualized as an integral object – a ship's crew in which each member is assigned a functional role.

(145) *We're a tight-knit family: I'm the captain, they're the crew, and we're all going down with the ship!* (Jonas Grinevičius & Ieva Pečiulytė, 2025)

First, the lexeme *tight-knit* activates the semantic feature ‘a high degree of internal ties’, stressing the indivisibility of WHOLE. Second, the phrase “we're all going down with the ship” verbalizes the feature ‘shared doom / inseparability of fate’ which underlines ‘non-negotiable solidarity of the team members’.

The metaphor **FAMILY IS ORGANISM / BODY** demonstrates how FAMILY is conceptualized as a corporeal WHOLE where individual members acquire the functions of anatomical parts necessary to sustain the life of WHOLE.

(146) - *Xavier, how many sons do you have? / I have 3 sons. 1st PhD, 2nd engineer, 3rd thief / Why does your “3rd” son still live in your home? / Because he is the*

*backbone of the family. He is the only one earning in the house, while the others are currently jobless.* (Frank Winne, 2025)

(147) *Mom carries for 9 months, Dad carries for 25 years, both are equal, still don't know why Dad is lagging behind because he is the backbone of the family.* (Anupam Sahni, 2023)

The lexeme *backbone* is central to both examples: it activates the semantic feature ‘foundational central support system of a structure’, which makes it possible to argue that the CENTER-PERIPHERY image schema underpins this metaphor. In joke (146), the projection onto the family context provides the content for designating by the phrase “backbone of the family” the family member who performs the function of materially providing for the family (“He is the only one earning in the house”), and who therefore metaphorically occupies CENTER, while the remaining members find themselves on the PERIPHERY as elements dependent on him.

In joke (147), the repeated predicate *carries* combined with the temporal markers *for 9 months* and *for 25 years* verbalizes the meaning ‘prolonged support’ performed by different subjects (Mom – in the context of carrying a child, Dad – presumably in the context of financial provision). The asymmetry between these roles is ironically made explicit: equality is asserted (“both are equal”) and then undercut by the formulation “Dad is lagging behind”, which can be interpreted as a verbalization of the FRONT-BACK image schema (*behind* directly marks a position ‘in back of’ an implied reference point). Nevertheless, the lexeme *backbone* serves as the final marker of the significance of the central paternal role within the metaphoric model FAMILY IS ORGANISM / BODY.

The corporeal conceptualization of the family opens up the possibility of its further construal through the physical sensations and loads experienced by the body, which leads to the metaphor **FAMILY IS A BURDEN**.

See joke (140) ... *I'VE GOT RHEUMATISM IN MY SHOULDER FROM TAKING OUT THE PURSE!*

In this joke, the model is realized through, first, the *lexeme* *shoulder*, which designates the part of the body that undergoes physical loading, and second, the *lexeme* *rheumatism*, which contextually denotes a negative consequence of physical impact. It is appropriate to invoke the FORCE image schema that models interaction through the parameters of source, direction and intensity of force, as well as through a sequence of cause-and-effect links whereby one element exerts an influence on another: within the joke, the action *taking out the purse* is interpreted as the source of loading (=BURDEN that provokes the mentioned chronic physical discomfort).

Another example of this metaphor is the use of the idiomatic expression “old ball and chain” in the following joke.

(148) *We could tell Jimmy was joking when he called his wife the old ball and chain, but I think he does feel a bit like he doesn't get out enough.* (“We could tell Jimmy was joking when he called his wife the old ball and chain”, n.d.)

The phrase “ball and chain” verbalizes the features ‘weight’, ‘attachedness’ and ‘restriction of movement’ that transfers those physical characteristics onto the domain of marital relations.

The analysis now turns to structural metaphors in which the concept FAMILY is understood via a more complex, systematically organized source domain. The metaphor **FAMILY IS TREE** rests on mapping the organizational model of a tree onto the concept FAMILY. In such a way, FAMILY TIES are construed as a branching system of descent and inheritance.

(149) *I told my Kentucky raised girlfriend her family tree doesn't fork... it spoons. She did not find it humorous.* (popularloser, 2015)

The designation *family tree* directly activates the metaphoric mapping FAMILY IS TREE. Branching, as a typical property of FAMILY (verbalized by the predicate [*doesn't*] *fork* = to divide into two or more branches), is reinterpreted in the context of the joke through the predicate *spoons* that implies the absence of branching (=the absence of external marital ties).

The next joke transforms the prototypical image of TREE in order to achieve a comic effect.

(150) *My family is so dysfunctional that our family tree is a tumbleweed.* (“My family is so dysfunctional”, n.d.).

The lexeme *tumbleweed* realizes a semantic deviation of the source domain: instead of the prototypical image of TREE with a fixed root system and characteristic vertical organization, it activates the image of a TUMBLEWEED – a plant without roots that moves under the influence of external forces. This accordingly verbalizes the target-domain features ‘loss of stability’, ‘absence of rootedness’ and ‘severed ties’, which directly correlates with the evaluation dysfunctional.

The structural metaphor **FAMILY IS WAR** is based on the mapping of such features as 1) the presence of two or more opposing sides; 2) a struggle for power, resources or victory in argument; 3) tactics and strategies; 4) a space where the conflict takes place; and 5) the presence of winners and losers.

(151) *What is the difference between a marriage and a war? A marriage is a war in which the enemies can sleep together.* (Robert Mugabe Quotes, 2026)

The lexeme *war* activates the semantic features ‘conflict’ and ‘hostility’, while *enemies* additionally introduces the feature ‘confrontation of sides’.

(152) *I come from a family of competitive eaters. The Thanksgiving table is our battleground.* (justjakelive, 2025)

Here the lexeme *competitive eaters* introduces the semantic feature ‘competitiveness’. *Thanksgiving table* names a family space that is normally associated with togetherness and gratitude but in this context is equated with *battleground* (= a space of armed conflict).

The next joke activates the FAMILY IS WAR metaphor indirectly, which could justifiably be qualified as **FAMILY IS POLITICAL REGIME**.

(153) *It’s 6 AM and I’ve already been told to get up and make a sandwich. I didn’t birth a child—she’s a tiny dictator.* (Felicia Ellis, 2025)

The phrase “tiny dictator” combines the semantic features ‘disproportionately large power given small physical size’ (tiny) and ‘authoritarian rule without limits’ (dictator). The predicate *told to get up* activates the semantic feature ‘receiving an order’, which maps DICTATORIAN GOVERNANCE onto FAMILY INTERACTION.

In the context of competitive FAMILY interaction, it is also important to single out the metaphor **FAMILY IS COMPETITION**, characterized by the features 1) participants with defined roles; 2) behavior regulated by rules; 3) orientation toward a certain outcome.

154) *Having one child makes you a parent; having two makes you a referee.* (David Frost, n.d.)

The lexeme *parent* in the first part captures the prototypical family function PARENT as the basic position of care and responsibility, whereas *having two (children)* marks the trigger for a change in the social role PARENT. Implicitly, then, the claim is that two children represent a quantitative parameter of family composition that motivates the emergence of competitive interaction. Therefore, the lexeme *referee* maps the notion of “sports officiating” onto the functional role of PARENT – the regulation of disputes inside FAMILY.

The metaphor **FAMILY IS MACHINERY** is grounded in a cognitive transfer from the source domain TECHNICAL DEVICES AND MAINTENANCE onto the target domain FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS during which the following features are correlated: 1) functional flaws (malfunction, missing parts); 2) controllability via switching on/off; 3) the need for technical maintenance.

(155) *A two-year-old is like a blender without a top - at least with a blender, you can eventually turn it off.* (Bucky Flowers, 2023)

The lexeme *blender* verbalizes an appliance whose operation is accompanied by unwanted, unpleasant sounds, and the construction *without a top* denotes the absence of a noise-suppression mechanism. Together, these are projected onto the child’s behavior, explicating the features ‘excessive intensity’ and ‘uncontrollability’. The part “you can eventually turn it off” introduces the parameter ‘controllability’ via switching on/off that is typical of technical devices.

The next joke also activates the domain TECHNICAL CACTIVITY associated with diagnostics, repair and maintaining the functioning of mechanisms (verbalized as “the occupation mechanics”).

(156) *How do mechanics keep their relationships strong? With regular maintenance.* (Randall Munroe, 2026)

Additionally, the lexeme *maintenance* denotes the process of regular technical servicing aimed at preventing malfunctions that is mapped onto FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS in such a way that they are conceptualized as a system that requires “technical” intervention to be preserved.

The metaphor FAMILY IS JOURNEY is based on the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL image schema and demonstrates the mapping of such features from the source domain of JOURNEY onto the target domain of PARENTHOOD: 1) the presence of a starting point; 2) movement along a certain trajectory; 3) the presence of an endpoint.

(157) *Parenthood is a journey except it's just traveling from room to room putting away the same toys all day long.* (Sheila Thomas, 2023)

In this joke, the metaphor is realized through the direct naming *journey* and *traveling*, which verbalize the process of movement, while PATH and GOAL are concretized as “from room to room”. However, the presence of an endpoint is effectively cancelled by the predicate *putting away the same toys all day long* where the movement is characterized as ‘repetitive’, ‘cyclical’, which can be interpreted as the realization of the CYCLE image schema.

#### Conclusions:

1) None of the source domains examined carries a neutral or positive connotation – a persistent negative evaluation of family space, relationships and roles can be observed. This is conditioned by the fact that humorous discourse operates by violating the idealized cognitive model (ICM) of DFAMILY;

2) In the process of metaphorical mapping, several image schemas are often realized simultaneously, with one acting as the dominant schema and the others as auxiliary ones or as modifiers of the first, for example: CONTAINER+CYCLE (=the impossibility of final exit), SOURCE-PATH-GOAL+CYCLE (=parenthood as a journey vs cyclical movement without an endpoint). This indicates that the comic effect can arise at the intersection of at least two schemas when one is activated as expected while the other undermines its structural logic;

3) Although CYCLE does not function as the central schema in any of the jokes examined, it is systemically present as a modifier of other schemas. This accounts for humor’s tendency to construe FAMILY as a concept with the features ‘no alternative’ and ‘no way out’;

4) The activation of multiple image schemas practically rules out the construal of FAMILY SYSTEM in a stable state as the joke always introduces dynamics and gravitates toward describing a micro-scenario.

## Conclusions to Chapter 2

Various forms of analysis applied in Chapter 2 allow us to come up to a number of outcomes that go beyond the separate findings of each subchapter, so converged into a unified it is proposed to be regarded as observations of how the concept FAMILY is constructed in humorous discourse.

It has been demonstrated that the joke as a genre activates the Idealized Cognitive Model of FAMILY, then violates it following distinguished cognitive routes: status-role inversion, spatial boundary transgression, axiological reranking and event script disruption. Each of those underwent independent examination but all of which represent a single generative mechanism: the exploitation of the gap between the prototype and its realization. The enumerated types of concepts are implicating nodes in a single network: a locative concept activates a set of role expectations, a status-role concept activates a set of event concepts, an event concept activates an axiological frame in which the outcome is evaluated. By disrupting one node of a frame, it triggers a cascade of reinterpretations across the entire network. Additionally, the analysis of cognitive models in section 2.3 shows that the concept FAMILY is constructed through schemas that emphasize enclosure, cyclicity and absence of an exit point.

It may be assumed that this is what makes FAMILY so productive as a comic concept. The joke, as a genre, requires two things simultaneously: a norm stable enough to be recognized and a violation noticeable enough to be spotted – FAMILY provides both. A member of the linguistic and cultural community is a carrier of knowledge about a prototype/ICM of FAMILY and, at the same time, an experiencer of reality of family relations that diverges from that model. FAMILY's enclosure, cyclicity, resistance to exit (so to say "CONTAINER-WITHOUT-EXIT") – keeps the gap between idealized and realized permanently open and available for comic exploitation as it cannot produce narratives of resolution, it can only produce narratives of recurrence. At the level of discourse structure, a family joke is a text that builds toward a punchline which does not solve the problem it stages, provoking the recurrence of the discursive form that the concept FAMILY generates. Presumably, the cognitive structure of the concept FAMILY and the structure of the genre at its fundamental level are analogous.

The fact that family jokes are culturally recognizable and cross-generationally stable indicates them as part of the shared conceptual repertoire of the community that requires further consideration from the ethno-linguistic and stylistic standpoints which are implemented in the next chapter.

## Chapter 3. Stylistic features of English jokes about FAMILY

### 3.1. Linguo-stylistic mechanisms of humor creation

The linguo-stylistic mechanisms of humor creation are viewed as a set of interrelated linguistic and cognitive operations through which a comic effect is constructed at the textual level. These mechanisms operate simultaneously on two levels: the linguistic level – where lexical choice, syntactic structure, stylistic devices and pragmatic implicature organize the surface form of the joke, and the cognitive level – where the same linguistic units trigger the activation, collision and restructuring of mental representations (frames, scripts, stereotypes). The section examines two principal varieties of such mechanisms existent in English family jokes: Subsection 3.1.1. investigates ethno-specific humor whose comic potential rests on culturally marked linguistic units; Subsection 3.1.2. addresses dark humor whose comic effect is grounded in the deliberate clash of a socially normative script incorporating concepts evaluated as unacceptable for humorous manipulations.

#### 3.1.1. Manifestations of ethno-specific humor

Humor is one of the most culturally sensitive genres of verbal behavior because the accomplishment of its decoding depends on the recipient's background knowledge. According to the ethno-pragmatic approach developed by Anna Wierzbicka and Cliff Goddard, verbal communication is analyzed through the lens of cultural scripts – implicit normative models of thinking and acting shared by members of a particular linguo-cultural community, among which jocular irony, for instance, has been singled out as a distinct object of study (Goddard & Wierzbicka, 2016; Wierzbicka, 1994).

Ethno-specific humor is a variety of humor whose comic effect rests on an appeal to culturally marked knowledge shaped by historical, social and linguistic factors that make it inseparable from the cultural environment of its origin (Mohebbi, 2023). Within this framework the *ethnocultural markers* may be distinguished – those are linguistic units (as will be shown below: toponyms, anthroponyms, realia, precedent texts etc.) that activate a specific cognitive structure (frame, script, stereotype) in the recipient's mind that is necessary for decoding humor. The typology of ethno-specific markers summarized in Table 3.1. covers six types, each corresponding to a particular dimension of cultural memory.

Type of ethnocultural marker	Content
Geo-cultural	Activates perceptions tied to a specific country, region, city or local culture

Socio-typical	Represents bearers of stereotyped cultural traits
Historical-political	Alludes to historical and political events and conflicts
Socio-institutional	Reflects specific models of everyday life, social practices, services and brands
Media-precedent	Alludes to films, advertisements and popular texts
Ritual-festive	Represents holidays, traditions, rituals, national dishes and normative behavioral models

**Table 3.1. Ethnocultural markers in English family jokes**

**Geo-cultural markers** are a class of linguo-cultural units that contain stereotyped knowledge associated with a particular geographic locus. Among them two subtypes can be distinguished: 1) markers of the nationwide level where the name of a country as a whole geographic and cultural entity carries culturally marked connotations; 2) markers of the regional level where the connotations are adjoined to a region or state.

(158) *There is a Spanish family on holiday in England / When they are in England, the trains are packed and everyone is drunk and half naked. Everywhere is mayhem and the little Spanish boy is confused why. “Dad, why is everyone celebrating, is there an event or something happening?” The dad replies, “The sun has come out.”* (There is a Spanish family on holiday in England, n.d.)

The toponym *England* – a nationwide-level marker, activates the frame “British national identity” with the slot ‘climate’. The subframe includes such slots as ‘cloudiness’, ‘rarity of sunshine’ and ‘the nation’s weather-sensitivity’. The comic effect is achieved through the clash of two slots: the frame ‘sunny weather as a normal occurrence’ (activated by the perspective of the Spanish family) and the slot ‘sunny weather as an exceptional event’ (entrenched in British cultural consciousness). The appearance of the sun (= normal meteorological phenomenon in most cultures) acquires the feature ‘cause for mass chaos’ (“the trains are packed”, “everyone is drunk and half naked”, “everywhere is mayhem”). The outsider perspective of the Spanish boy, who does not share the British cultural code, intensifies the comic effect for recipients who do.

(159) *Donald MacDonald from Scotland went to study at an English university and was living in the hall of residence with all the other students there. After he had been there a month, his mother came to visit him (no doubt carrying reinforcements of tatties, salt herring, oatmeal and whisky). / “And how do you find the English students, Donald?” she asked. / “Mother,” he replied, “they’re such terrible, noisy people. The one on that side keeps banging his head on the wall and won’t stop. The one on the other side screams and screams all night.” / “Oh Donald! How do you manage to put up with*

*these awful noisy English neighbors?” / “Mother, I do nothing. I just ignore them. I just stay here quietly, playing my bagpipes.” (Peter Redmond, 2022)*

The toponym *Scotland* combined with the ethnically marked anthroponym *Donald MacDonald*, activates the frame “Scottish identity” containing such components as ‘stubbornness’, ‘national pride’ and ‘bagpipes as a cultural artifact’. The realia lexemes *tatties*, *salt herring*, *oatmeal* and *whisky* further saturate the context with Scottish culture. The comic effect arises through irony: the line “stay here quietly, playing my bagpipes” contains the semantic contradiction of ‘playing quietly’ against ‘bagpipes’ as an incredibly loud instrument. In this way, the joke also taps into the sociocultural subtext of Anglo-Scottish rivalry.

160) *In New York, when a married couple gets into a fight, it’s called domestic violence. / In Alabama, it’s known as sibling rivalry.* (“In New York, when a married couple gets into a fight, it’s called domestic violence”, n.d.)

The toponym *Alabama* activates the frame “the American South” that includes the slot ‘incest’ present in US mass culture. The opposition New York (=civilized, progressive America) vs Alabama (=backwardness, the “Deep South”) is constructed through antithesis reinforced by the parallel syntactic structures.

(161) *A man crosses the Mexican border seeking better living conditions for his family. / Then his constituency calls for him to resign as a senator from Texas* (Microwave\_Warrior, 2021)

The toponym *Texas* activates the frame “Texan political identity” whose key slots include ‘conservatism’, ‘tough migration policy’ and ‘nationalism’. The comic effect is created through the ironic clash of frames: the individual identified as a Mexican migrant (the frame “Illegal immigration”) turns out to be a Texas senator (the frame “Local authority”) – a representative of the political force that typically opposes such migration.

**Socio-typical markers** are stereotyped social, ethnic or behavioral types, verbalized mainly through anthroponyms that acquire generalized connotative meanings within a given linguo-cultural community. The data suggest two subtypes: 1) ethnonymic (membership in a particular ethnic group, mostly in postcolonial contexts, e.g. Akpos, Kwame); 2) socio-role (a behavioral script, cultural labels for quickly characterizing a personality type, e.g. Karen, Chad, Kevin).

(162) *MUM: Akpos, why are you crying? / AKPOS: I’ve hurt my finger. / MUM: When? / AKPOS: Half an hour ago. / MUM: I didn’t hear you crying then. / AKPOS: No, I thought you were out* (“MUM: Akpos, why are you crying?”, n.d.)

(163) *(Mom in the kitchen) / KWAME: Mom, do you need a hand? / MOM: Thanks dear, I’ve got it covered. / (5 mins later) / MOM: Kwame, you are not doing anything abi? You cannot help me wash the dishes in the kitchen? / KWAME:???* (“Mom in the kitchen”, n.d.)

In examples (162) and (163), the anthroponyms *Akpos* and *Kwame* represent the tradition of West African English-language humor – a legacy of colonial history where

prolonged British presence led to the integration of local names and cultural realia into English linguo-culture. It can be assumed that *Akpos* and *Kwame* serve as markers of “outsider status” for a Western recipient unfamiliar with these names, and, respectively, as markers of “insider status” for the African diaspora. The national coloring is further intensified by the ethnically marked vocabulary: *abi* in joke (163) is a particle that is part of Nigerian Pidgin, derived from Yoruba, and used at the end of a sentence for confirmation, corresponding to English question tags “right?” or “isn’t it?”

(164) *Father: Karen you are a fat fuck. Our fucking kids are dead because of your anti-vaccine bullshit. You can get divorced with me and take the fucking kids. I don't care. / Karen: Can I talk to your manager?!* (“Father: Karen you are a fat fuck”, 2019)

(165) *Mom: I'm taking your brother to Soccer Practice / Daughter: Ugh, you're such a Karen.* (MrAdemola123, 2020)

The anthroponym *Karen* is a social archetype that has acquired stable connotations in American mass discourse. Joke (164) activates the frame representing collective knowledge of the ultra-entitled white middle-class woman with such features as ‘stupidity’, ‘arrogance’, ‘ideological blindness’ and ‘anti-vaccine activism’. Joke (165) activates a related but somewhat different frame – the “Soccer mom” – a typical middle-class American mother marked by ‘excessive nurturance’, who drives kids to sports practices, actively interferes with coaches and other parents, and is notable for immoderate demandingness and a tendency toward trivial complaints.

(166) *Kevin is woken up for school. / Kevin is woken up by his mother. / “Rise and shine, Kevin! Time to go to school!” / “But mom, I don't want to get up.” / “No, you're getting up now, no excuses.” / “Name me two good reasons for why I should get up now and go to school..” / “First of all: You're 54. And second of all, you're the principal!”* (“Kevin is woken up for school”, n.d.)

The anthroponym *Kevin* is a label that activates the frame “Loser teenager” with slots ‘evasion of responsibility’ and ‘dependence on one’s mother’. The comic effect is produced through an ironic refutation of this frame: the character’s age (54) and status (school principal) contradict the expectations encoded in the name.

(167) *Chad's wife decided to surprise him on his birthday and to show him that she's a cool wife, she took him to a strip club. / At the club: / Bouncer: Hi Chad! How you doing tonight? / Wife: How does he know you? / Chad: We play golf together! / Bartender: Evening Chad! The usual? / Wife: And how does he know you?! / Chad: Um, he's on the bowling team! / Hot blonde stripper: Hey sexy, champagne room again tonight? / At this point the wife loses it and storms out of the club, dragging Chad with her, into a taxi. / Taxi driver: Hey Chad! Boy... You picked a fat one tonight huh? Same motel?* (“Chad's wife decided to surprise him on his birthday”, n.d.)

As the example shows, the anthroponym *Chad* activates the stereotypical frame “Alpha male” that which in contemporary English (especially American) humorous discourse is filled with typical features: ‘sexual desirability in multiple social circles’, ‘absence of emotional reaction to exposure of infidelity’ = ‘expertise in lying’.

**Historical-political** markers are understood as allusions to historical events, political figures, conflicts or social tensions that form part of the collective memory of a linguo-cultural community that frequently carry an evaluative (satirical, critical) coloring.

(168) *The trump family is flying from New York to DC / Donald looks down on the cities below and says “I think I’ll throw a 1000\$ bill out of the window and make some american happy. Melanie says “Oh honey why not throw 10 100\$ bills and make 10 americans happy?” / So then Ivanka says “Even better daddy, throw 100 ten dollar bills out of the window and make 100 americans happy?” To that the pilot says “ Why dont you all jump out the window and make the whole country happy?”* (NatoBall, 2017)

The anthroponyms *Donald*, *Melanie*, *Ivanka* are historical-political markers that activate the frame “The Trump family,” understood as the elite’s detachment from ordinary people, with slots such as ‘ostentatious wealth’, ‘performative charity’ and ‘popular discontent’. The realia *1000\$ bill* (=a rare note associated with the elite) is also a historical-political marker. The graded forms of symbolic generosity (1000 → 10×100 → 100×10), where the total sum remains unchanged, satirize the “generosity” of those with excessive means, that culminates in the pilot’s final line “Why don’t you all jump out and make the whole country happy?” which activates the slot ‘a hidden wish of a substantial part of the American electorate’. The joke draws on society’s processing of real scandals around Trump’s charitable activities – the questionable practices of the Trump Foundation and the tendency for symbolic gestures.

(169) *My wife and I are both unemployed. My mum died in a car crash. We have three children and we’re all staying in my grandma’s place, and my grandma died this week. My dad has to work at 73. I’ll do any job to take care of my family. Please share. / Sincerely, / William, Prince of Wales* (budenmaayer, 2022)

The anthroponym *William, Prince of Wales* is a historical-political marker that activates the frame “The British monarchy” with slots ‘wealth’, ‘privileged status’, ‘state support’. This frame clashes with the generic frame of the “Charity appeal post” (a recognizable internet genre), whose slots are ‘poverty’ and ‘helplessness’. The enumeration of misfortunes: unemployment, the death of his mother and grandmother, three children, a 73-year-old father working – contains allusions to real events in Prince William’s life that heightens the ironic effect for the informed recipient. The comic effect hits at the moment of reading the signature “Sincerely, William, Prince of Wales” – the exact point where two contradictory frames collide.

(170) *An Irish girl tells her mom she decided to be a prostitute. / her mom says “A WHAT”?! / The daughter says “a prostitute” / then the mom says “thank god... I thought you said a Protestant”* (ax\_and\_smash, 2016)

The ethnonym *Irish* and the term *Protestant* (a marker of religious identity) activate the frame “The Irish Catholic-Protestant conflict” with slots ‘centuries-long interdenominational struggle’, ‘prejudice against Protestants in a Catholic environment’ and ‘religious identity as a core value’. The comic effect is created by an absurd

axiological hierarchy: from the perspective of an Irish Catholic mother, religious disgrace (being a Protestant) turns out to be morally worse than social disgrace (being a prostitute). This hyperbolically reflects the depth of interfaith tension.

**Socio-institutional markers** represent specific models of everyday life, among them institutional systems, commercial brands and services that are typical or unique for the linguo-cultural community. These markers are predominantly verbalized through realia words – proper names of companies or institutions that have no equivalents in other cultures and require the recipient to possess knowledge of the country’s socio-institutional structure.

(171) *My wife just got back from a thrilling trip to Walmart. / My wife walked in from Walmart, slammed the grocery bags on the counter, and fumed, “That cashier was a complete and utter b\*tch!” / Trying to be helpful, I asked, “Just to be clear... were you at self-checkout?” / I’ll be sleeping on the couch for a week.* (A-CommonMan, 2025)

The lexeme *Walmart* is a socio-institutional marker that points to the American domestic context and activates, in the mind of the informed recipient, the frame “Mass American discounter.” Decoding the comic effect draws on a slot of this frame – ‘self-checkout as a source of negative user experience’: Walmart was one of the first and most recognizable American retailers to introduce self-checkout machines on a large scale, around which a stable cultural narrative of technical glitches and customer irritation has formed. This slot enables the husband’s ironic follow-up: if his wife was serving herself at the checkout, then her “anger at the cashier” is unfounded.

(172) *A widowed Mama was talking about her recent break-up with the businessman she was seeing, telling all to her married daughter, Sheila. / “So, Mama,” said Sheila, “Why did you stop seeing that nice senior businessman? You told me how much alike you are. You both love art and hate opera; you both love cats and hate dogs; you both love tea and hate coffee– / “And,” added Mama, “we both love our Social Security checks and hate each other.”* (Marnie Winston-Macauley, n.d.)

Here *Social Security* designates the US government pension program unique to the United States, and *checks* (once physical, now largely direct deposit) evokes decades of American experience. In the popular consciousness, the Social Security check is a symbol of basic survival for many American retirees, and in joke (172) it serves as the basis of an axiological inversion (=marital relations as a financial transaction → which undermines the idealized image of the family).

(173) *I hate calling my mom on Mother’s Day. I’m the oldest of seven kids. It’s easier to get through to Comcast.* (The Old Hen, 2026)

The joke contains the name Comcast – America’s largest cable and internet provider infamous for poor customer service and the difficulty of reaching a human operator. The humorous effect rests on a comparison: getting through to a mother (who has seven children = permanently busy) is even harder than getting through to Comcast.

**Media-precedent markers** are allusions to well-known films, advertising slogans, television shows, songs or other products of mass culture that belong to the shared

cultural knowledge base of the linguo-cultural community. Such markers are characterized by intertextuality, functioning as verbal triggers that activate entire precedent texts (or their key fragments) in the recipient's mind, creating a comic effect by transferring a familiar plot or image into an everyday context.

(174) *Every time I leave the house with my four kids for a trip, I understand more and more how the McCallisters were able to forget Kevin at home.* (@XplodingUnicorn, 2021)

In joke (174), the narrator's personal experience is juxtaposed with the plot of the iconic American film "Home Alone" in an ironic form of reflection. The anthroponyms *McCallisters* and *Kevin* themselves function as a compressed allusion: merely uttering the surname is enough to activate the entire narrative.

(175) *One morning, a grandmother was surprised to find that her 7-year old grandson had made her coffee. Smiling, she choked down the worst cup of her life. When she finished, she found three little green Army men at the bottom. Puzzled, she asked, "Honey, what are these Army men doing in my coffee?" Her grandson answered, "Like it says on TV, Grandma. The best part of waking up is soldiers in your cup.'* (Zack Morgan, 2025)

Joke (175) contains a reference to the advertising slogan of the American coffee brand Folgers "The best part of waking up is Folgers in your cup" which exists in American linguo-culture as a precedent text. In this example, the slogan undergoes a naïve literalization by the child – a transformation that is nevertheless decoded by those recipients who possess background knowledge of the original.

**Ritual-festive markers** indicate national holidays, traditions, rites, rituals, the dishes associated with them and the normative behavioral models that are unique to or typical of the linguo-cultural community. These markers are verbalized through realia words (names of holidays, ritual acts, dishes) and activate frames of collective experience.

(176) *What's something usually insulting, but not on Thanksgiving? / A family member giving you the bird.* (Viltė Domkutė & Justė Kairytė-Barkauskienė, 2022)

The joke features the lexeme *Thanksgiving* containing knowledge of the US national holiday that activates a normative script in the American recipient: the expression of gratitude and the traditional family meal featuring a turkey. In this context, the phrase *giving you the bird* acquires a humorous double meaning: 1) serving turkey as the traditional dish; 2) the idiomatic expression meaning "to show someone extreme anger or contempt by raising the middle finger". The collision of these two interpretations produces the comic effect.

In conclusion, the conducted analysis brings in several conclusions:

1) Ethnocultural markers are most frequently realized as toponyms, anthroponyms and realia – linguistic units that signal an utterance's belonging to a particular cultural space and activate in the recipient's mind the relevant cultural frame with specific slots necessary for decoding the comic effect;

2) The mechanism of generating humor runs as follows: activation of a cultural frame → violation of expectations → comic effect;

3) Full decoding of an ethno-specific joke is possible only for a bearer of the corresponding cultural code. The degree of this asymmetry varies: from widely recognizable markers (Trump jokes) to narrowly targeted ones (Akpos/Kwame – mainly for the African diaspora).

### 3.1.2. Stylistics of dark humor

Dark humor is a form of the comic that turns taboo concepts (DEATH, ILLNESS, VIOLENCE, PHYSICAL DISABILITY) into sources of laughter. From a linguo-cognitive standpoint, its mechanism depends on the clash of incompatible mental structures, namely frames or scripts (Raskin, 1985). The humorous effect sets at the moment of frame-shifting when elements of an initially activated frame are unexpectedly reorganized and reinterpreted within a second, incompatible one. This produces frame blends (Hofstadter & Gabora, 1989): hybrid, paradoxical situations where the tragic and the comic coexist. Why such a paradox feels funny is explained by Incongruity Theory: humor arises when a recipient registers a mismatch between the expected interpretation of a situation and the one that actually unfolds (Attardo & Raskin, 1991). In dark humor, the incongruous element is the taboo concept itself that abruptly violates the normative script set up at the beginning of the text. An additional factor is psychological distance, as captured by benign violation theory (McGraw & Warren, 2015): a situation is perceived as humorous when the breach of a moral or social norm is far enough removed from the recipient (tempo-spatially or emotionally) to feel non-threatening, yet close enough to create tension and, in turn, a release through laughter.

The corpus of family jokes examined here foregrounds several recurring dark-humor concepts: DEATH, ILLNESS, MUTILATION, VIOLENCE, DISABILITY, MURDER, TERRORISM, CANNIBALISM and INCEST. The analysis that follows takes a semantic-stylistic approach to each of these, tracing how frame blends and frame shifts are linguistically realized.

(177) *The last words my grandma told my grandfather was “Sweetie, I’ll see you in heaven!” / Since then, grandpa has been kicking puppies and setting fire to orphanages.* (porichoygupto, 2019)

This joke brings together DEATH and VIOLENCE TOWARD ANIMALS AND CHILDREN. The comedy is caused by a conflict between two scripts: Script 1 “Christian salvation” includes the slots ‘a believer’, ‘a righteous life’, ‘death’, ‘the soul ascending’, ‘heaven’, ‘eternal bliss’, ‘reunion with loved ones’ (verbalized through “last words”, “heaven”); Script 2 “Deliberate sin” contains the slots ‘sinner’, ‘immoral acts’, ‘cruelty’, ‘hell’, ‘eternal torment’ (verbalized by “kicking puppies”, “setting fire to orphanages”). The incongruity appears at the slot level: ‘righteous life’ from Script 1 cannot coexist with ‘immoral acts’ from Script 2, and the slot ‘reunion with loved ones’

(=positive connotation) is re-read as ‘an unwanted outcome’ which motivates the shift into Script 2. The humor relies on an implicature: the husband fears meeting his wife in heaven so much that he deliberately earns himself a place in hell. The stylistic mechanism driving the frame shift is anticlimax.

(178) *My mom died when we couldn't remember her blood type. / As she died, she kept telling us to "be positive," but it's hard without her.* (CryptographerFar3282, 2022)

The joke represents the concept DEATH. The frame blend draws on two structures: Frame 1 “Critical medical situation” with slots ‘patient’, ‘urgent need for information’, ‘blood type’, ‘death due to missing data’; Frame 2 “Emotional support” with slots ‘consolation’, ‘life advice’. Incongruity arises through the clash between the slot ‘medical information’ (Frame 1) and the slot ‘moral guideline’ (Frame 2). Both are activated simultaneously because the expression *be positive* is homonymous: it refers both to ‘the blood type B+’ and to ‘a dying wish to stay optimistic’. The joke imitates a confessional narrative which contrasts sharply with its cynical pun.

(179) *A little girl asks her mum: "Mummy, why do we never visit grandma?" / "Oh darling, you don't remember? She fell of the balcony..." / "And where is she now?" / "Well... she went to heaven" / The little girl thinks about it for a moment... / "Wow, that's a big bounce" (kinotico, 2022)*

Here again, the concept DEATH is shown. The humor emerges through a frame shift between Frame 1 “Death of a relative” with slots ‘accident’, ‘fall from a height’, ‘fatality’, ‘euphemistic dispatch to heaven’; Frame 2 “Child’s game” with slots ‘jump’, ‘trampoline’, ‘height of the bounce’, ‘excitement’. The shift occurs in the slot ‘dispatch to heaven’: the mother fills it with euphemistic content (death → paradise) while the child, lacking that cultural code, interprets the same slot literally (heaven → physical height → a big jump). The incompatibility between the slot ‘fatality’ of Frame 1 and the slot ‘excitement’ of Frame 2 is what creates the incongruity. The child’s exclamation “Wow!” with its positive connotation further amplifies the contrast with the tragic subtext.

(180) *Once two ladies came before King Solomon, fighting over a boy. "He's my son-in law" one said "No he's mine" countered the other. After thinking for a few minutes the King finally decided on a ruling. "Bring me my sword and we will cut the boy in half, they will each get half." "No" the first lady screamed "don't cut him in half I would rather the second lady get the whole son-in-law." Ah Hah said King Solomon with a big smile I now know who is the real mother-in-law. For a only the real mother-in-law would stand quietly while her son-in-law gets cut in half." (swtchicgurl(op), 2012)*

This joke foregrounds MURDER and FAMILY CONFLICT. Stylistically, it builds on a biblical allusion that activates Script 1 “The Judgment of Solomon” with slots ‘two women’, ‘a child’, ‘a dispute over motherhood’, ‘a wise king’, ‘a threat to cut the child in half’, ‘the true mother sacrifices her claim to save the child’. This script blends with the static Frame 2 “Mother-in-law hatred”, whose slots are ‘mother-in-law’,

‘son-in-law’, ‘family conflict’. The concept MURDER is further detailed through a subframe-script “Cutting in half” as an automated event sequence: ‘fetch weapon’ → ‘cut’ → ‘divide into halves.’ The blend is achieved by substituting the slots of Script 1: ‘true mother’ → ‘true mother-in-law’, ‘infant’ → ‘son-in-law’. The parable’s logic is formally preserved but its moral content is completely inverted.

(181) *Isis suicide bomber kills himself & 78 other family members after deciding to work from home.* (Mike Gregor, 2026)

The central concept here is TERRORISM. The comic effect depends on a frame shift between Frame 1 “Terrorist attack” with slots ‘suicide bomber’, ‘mass killing’, ‘religious motivation’; Frame 2 “Remote work” with slots ‘home as workplace’, ‘family nearby’; Frame 3 “Family cohabitation” with slots ‘forced proximity with relatives’, ‘accumulated irritation’. Incongruity emerges at the intersection of the slot ‘mass killing’ (Frame 1) and the slot ‘unbearability of domestic life’ (Frame 3) guided through ‘family nearby’ (Frame 2): the second one is implicitly reimagined as the motivation for a terrorist act, equating everyday domestic frustration with religious fanaticism.

(182) *Mommy, Mommy! Grandma’s got a bruise. / Shut up and eat around it!* (Tim Nelson, n.d.)

Here the demonstrated concept is CANNIBALISM. The joke rests on a frame blend of Frame 1 “Concern for a relative’s health” with slots ‘child notices a problem’, ‘informing an adult’, ‘expected medical help’; Frame 2 “Consuming a meal” with slots ‘food’, ‘product defect’, ‘continuing the meal’. Incongruity occurs when the slot ‘relative as an object of care’ (Frame 1) clashes with the slot ‘food as an object of consumption’ (Frame 2). At their intersection, a hybrid slot emerges: ‘grandma as a dish’. This generates the CANNIBALISM scenario, creating a contrast between the everyday scene of a family at the dinner table, the concern for a relative, and the act of eating her.

(183) *A boy asked his mom “Mom, What is dark humor?” / The mom said to the boy “See that man with no hands? Tell him to clap.” / The boy then said to his mom “But mom, you know I’m blind!”* (CryingCars\_, 2022)

This joke realizes the concept DISABILITY through a cascading shift among three scripts. Script 1 “Child’s curiosity” containing the sequence ‘child asks a question’ → ‘parent answers’ → ‘child receives a verbal explanation’; Script 2 “Didactic demonstration” that follows ‘parent gives a concrete example’ → ‘student observes’ → ‘student learns’; Script 3 “The addressee’s own disability” runs ‘the child was supposed to perform an action’ → ‘it turns out the child is blind’ → ‘the action is impossible’. The frame shift has retrospective force: Script 3 reveals that Script 2 was, from the outset, a deliberate staging of dark humor by the mother, with the child as its immediate victim.

(184) *Mommy, Mommy! Why do I have to hop everywhere? / Shut up or I’ll chop off the other leg!* (Tim Nelson, n.d.)

The concepts activated are MUTILATION and VIOLENCE AGAINST A CHILD. The humor is built on a shift between Script 1 “A child’s complaint” with the sequence

‘child feels discomfort’ → ‘asks for the reason’ → ‘expects an explanation or help’; Script 2 “Punishment through mutilation” with the sequence ‘child’s disobedience’ → ‘amputation as punishment’ → ‘threat of repetition’. Script 2 retrospectively discloses that the first amputation was the result of a similar punishment, completely inverting the expected role of a parent as protector.

(185) *Grandma yells across the room: “Billy, what’s the name of that german guy who drives me crazy?” / “It’s Alzheimer, grandma”.* (Bad\_brazilian, 2020)

Built around the concept ILLNESS, this joke activates a frame blend based on the idiom “drives sb crazy”. Frame 1 “Everyday irritation” has slots ‘annoying person’, ‘emotional reaction’, ‘trying to recall a name’, ‘hypothetical German’. Frame 2 “Neurodegenerative disease” includes ‘Alzheimer’s disease’, ‘cognitive decline’, ‘memory loss’, ‘confusion’. The incongruity is produced when the slot ‘irritation caused by another person’ (Frame 1) meets the slot ‘symptoms of dementia’ (Frame 2). The linguistic mechanisms are: 1) a pun based on the dual reference of the proper name *Alzheimer* (the physician’s surname → the disease); 2) deidiomatization (the literal reading) of the phrase “to drive someone crazy” (=a state of annoyance → a symptom of dementia).

(186) *My friend in Alabama lost his Mom, his Sister, and his Wife in a car accident. He really loved that woman.* (“My friend in Alabama lost his Mom, his Sister, and his Wife in a car accident”, n.d.)

This joke reveals the concepts DEATH and INCEST. The shift occurs between Frame 1 “Family tragedy” with slots ‘car accident’, ‘death of three female relatives: mother, sister, wife’; Frame 2 “Consanguineous marriage” with slots ‘one woman in three family roles’, ‘incest’, ‘Alabama as a stereotypical locus of incest’. Incongruity arises through the clash between the slot ‘three distinct persons’ (Frame 1) and the slot ‘one person in multiple roles’ (Frame 2). The stylistic device is anacoluthon in the form of the phrase “that woman”: the anaphoric reference to *his Mom, his Sister, and his Wife* displays a deliberate grammatical disagreement, forcing the recipient to reinterpret the three as a single individual. Additionally, the toponym *Alabama* functions as a trigger of a cultural stereotype (a regional marker associated with consanguineous relationships).

The analysis points to several tendencies in how dark humor operates in English family jokes:

1) The humorous effect is produced by the clash of two or more conceptual frames or scripts; one of which corresponds to a socially normative scenario, while the other activates a taboo concept that disrupts the expected event logic. Incongruity between them occurs at the level of incompatible slots;

2) The taboo concept is often not named directly. Instead, the recipient derives it through implicature, the literalization of a euphemism, a pun or a grammatical anomaly;

3) The incongruity between the activated frames or scripts generates cognitive tension that is resolved at the moment of frame-shifting. The mechanisms that drive this shift include pun, anticlimax, retrospective reinterpretation and implicit slot substitution;

4) The perception of a situation by a vulnerable individual and the interpretation of a message by a “naïve” recipient motivate the literalization of a euphemism, metaphor or idiom that in turn triggers a frame shift;

5) Intertextual elements (an allusion to a precedent text and toponyms), as triggers of cultural stereotypes, function as devices for activating the background knowledge needed to recognize the incongruity.

### 3.2. Stylistic devices for nominating FAMILY members

#### 3.2.1. Lexical devices

The lexical level of language covers units whose stylistic potential is realized directly through the word. Stylistic analysis here focuses on the dynamics of lexical meaning: the interplay between a word’s denotative core, its connotative components and its contextual setting. This interplay manifests in several types of modification:

1) Stylistic devices:

a) based on a shift of reference (metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, personification, allegory);

b) based on quantitative distortion of a feature (hyperbole, meiosis);

c) based on the profiling of a feature (epithet);

d) based on semantic contrast / opposition of meanings (antiphrasis, oxymoron).

2) Stylistically marked vocabulary:

a) adding evaluative connotation (dysphemism, pejorative);

b) signaling a communicative register (colloquialism).

3) Individual-author lexical coinages (occasionalism).

4) Fixed linguistic expressions (idiomatic expressions).

**STYLISTIC DEVICES. Metaphor** is a linguistic and cognitive phenomenon involving the transfer of properties from one object (phenomenon, action) and its linguistic sign onto another object (phenomenon, action) on the basis of analogy or contrast (Кравець, 2023). For this study, a semantic-stylistic typology of metaphors is employed, supplemented and detailed in the works of T. Yeshchenko, where the phenomenon of metaphor is linked to the lexical-semantic processes of “animation”, “objectivation” and “synesthesia” (Єщенко, 2010).

Within *metaphor-ANIMATION*, properties of the living world are transferred onto inanimate objects, phenomena or abstract concepts. Depending on the nature of the semantic shift, the following subtypes are distinguished: 1) anthropometaphors (attributing human activities, psychophysiological states or social roles to the non-living); 2) zoometaphors (likening to the animal world); 3) botanometaphors (transfer of plant characteristics); 4) chimerometaphors (combining features from different biospheric spheres – human, animal, plant simultaneously).

*Metaphor-OBJECTIVATION* rests on the transfer of features from the domain of abstract, mental or social experience to the material world – immaterial phenomena are conceptualized as objects of material reality: through terminological vocabulary, names of household items, materials, food etc.

*Metaphor-SYNESTHESIA* is based on the transfer of features received through several sensory organs. Here subtypes are distinguished according to the direction of sensory transfer: visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile. A typical feature of synesthetic metaphor is the interference of sensory impressions (e.g. visual-auditory, tactile-visual images) creating an effect of multidimensional perception of reality.

The illustrative material presented below in Table 3.2. allows us to trace how these models are realized in English jokes.

Type of metaphor	Subtype of metaphor	Example
Metaphor-ANIMATION	Anthropo-metaphor	(187) <i>Your momma is so big, when God created light, He first had to move that <u>walking eclipse</u> out of the way.</i> (ARIES1124, 2019)
	Botano-metaphor	(188) <i>The <u>apple</u> doesn't fall far from the tree, but sometimes it rolls into chaos.</i> (Amelia Chrisch, 2026)
	Zoo-metaphor	See joke (137) ... <i>We have all sorts of <u>species</u>: the <u>drama llama</u>, the <u>party penguin</u>, and the <u>couch potato sloth</u>.</i>
	Chimero-metaphor	(189) <i>Mommy, Mommy! What's a <u>werewolf</u>? / Shut up and comb your face!</i> (Deleted account, 2022)
Metaphor-OBJECTIVATION		(190) <i>Being siblings means you always have a <u>punching bag</u>... with feelings.</i> (Happy, 2025)
Metaphor-SYNESTHESIA	Gustatory	(191) <i>She: This wine is described as <u>full bodied and imposing with a nutty base, a sharp bite, and a bitter aftertaste</u>. / He: Are you describing the wine or your mother?</i> (Mia Sidener, 2015)
	Tactile	(192) <i>My husband has a prickly personality. I told him it's okay — that's why I married a <u>cactus</u>.</i> (Elise Xavier, 2020)

**Table 3.2. Typological classification of metaphorical representation of FAMILY members in English jokes**

The examples show that all types of metaphors as nominators of FAMILY members appear in English jokes, even though their frequency is uneven. The most productive is metaphor-ANIMATION. Metaphor-OBJECTIVATION is also present in the material, but it performs a more generalized function of presenting family relations through material or object images. Metaphor-SYNESTHESIA proves the least productive in the material under study and is, thus, not a typical source of comic effect within the designation of FAMILY members.

**Personification** is a stylistic device that consists in endowing non-human entities (objects, phenomena, animals or abstract categories) with human characteristics, actions or psychophysiological states. Most often personification is treated as a variety of metaphor-ANIMATION, though it can also be interpreted as an independent stylistic device, a broader principle of artistic modeling of reality (ЄЩЕНКО, 2010). In this study, personification is singled out as a separate stylistic device given the presence of material demonstrating its specific character: unlike metaphor-ANIMATION, where an object is given isolated human traits, in personification inanimate, abstract entities are conceptualized through socially defined roles of family members, which entail established patterns of interaction, a system of duties and behavioral patterns, as shown in the next example.

(193) *There was a young woman who was very much interested in marrying this wealthy old gentleman. After he proposed, she suggested, “we might even have some children!” The old gentleman replied, “Oh, no, my parents won’t let me.” “What do you mean?” asked the young woman “Who are your parents?” He replied, “Mother Nature and Father time.” (“There was a young woman who was very much interested in marrying this wealthy old gentleman”, n.d.)*

The comic effect here is built on the fact that the abstract concepts ‘nature’ and ‘time’ are correlated with the role of ‘parents’ granted with power over the character’s behavior, which highlights the idea of human subordination to the laws of existence in the context of family hierarchy.

**Allegory** is a stylistic device consisting in the correlation of elements from one conceptual domain with another, whereby abstract content is represented through a system of concrete images, each of which acquires a relatively fixed semantic value within a unified narrative model.

(194) *A little boy goes to his dad and asks, ‘What is Politics?’ / Dad says, ‘Well son, let me try to explain it this way: I am the head of the family , so call me The President. Your mother is the administrator of the money, so we call her the Government. We are here to take care of your needs, so we will call you the People. The nanny, we will consider her the Working Class. And your baby brother, we will call him the Future. Now think about that and see if it makes sense.’ So the little boy goes off to bed thinking about what Dad has said. / Later that night, he hears his baby brother crying, so he gets up to check on him. He finds that the baby has severely soiled his*

*diaper. So the little boy goes to his parents' room and finds his mother asleep. Not wanting to wake her, he goes to the nanny's room finding the door locked, he peeks in the keyhole and sees his father in bed with the nanny. He gives up and goes back to bed. / The next morning, the little boy says to his father, 'Dad, I think I understand the concept of politics now.' The father says, 'Good, son, tell me in your own words what you think politics is all about.' The little boy replies, 'The President is screwing the Working Class while the Government is sound asleep. The People are being ignored and the Future is in deep shit.' (Ceilea, 2017)*

The humorous effect of joke (194) is provided by an allegory that likens family roles to political institutions. At the same time, the semantic components 'corruption' and 'governmental indifference' is brought to the fore: each family role becomes the bearer of a specific social meaning, and the child's interpretation of what he witnessed exposes the cynicism of the system through a naïve-literal interpretation.

**Metonymy** is a stylistic device that transfers a name from one object to another based on their natural connection.

See joke (17) ...*A man is vaguely aware of some short people living in the house.*

Here metonymy, according to the typology proposed by H. Paul, St. Ullmann and others (Зайцева, 2012), is realized through two types of contiguity: 1) attributive metonymy ('short' as a feature belonging to the referent, instead of a direct name, implements the model "property → bearer of property"); 2) locative (spatial) metonymy ('living in the house' substitutes a direct designation with an indication of family membership through shared living space, i.e. implementing the model "place → inhabitant"). Both types of metonymy together shape the image of the father as someone who perceives his own children through the minimally necessary, purely external features – physical size and location, which emphasizes emotional distance and paternal detachment.

**Synecdoche**, considered a variety of metonymy, is a stylistic device based on the quantitative transfer of meaning (using a part instead of the whole).

(195) *If I wanted to hear the pitter patter of little feet, I'd put shoes on the cat.* (futurepielover, 2023)

Synecdoche functions on two levels: as a general linguistic, idiomatically fixed unit (pitter patter of little feet = kids), and in its literalized form (little feet (body part) = kids). The clash of these levels foregrounds the speaker's ironic attitude toward parenthood: through the substitution of the referent (child → cat), the meaning 'unwillingness to have children' is actualized.

**Hyperbole** is a stylistic device that signifies a deliberate exaggeration of properties or quantities to enhance expressiveness.

(196) *I wonder what my parents did to fight boredom before the internet. I asked my 17 brothers and sisters and they didn't know either.* (corporalcrocodile, 2024)

Hyperbole works by violating the maxim of quality. Joke (196) presents information that is obviously implausible, prompting the addressee to recognize an

implicature: the exaggerated number of children serves as the carrier of a semantic component – a hint at the parents’ sexual activity as an alternative to entertainment.

**Meiosis** is a stylistic device meaning a deliberate understatement of properties or quantities.

(197) *My brother thinks he’s hilarious. He’s half right.* (Happy, 2025)

The quantitative understatement of the feature ‘hilarious’ – *half* – derives the implicated meaning ‘absolutely not hilarious’. Understatement here is a tool of irony: instead of a direct denial of the brother’s abilities, the speaker relies on a simulated concession that in fact completely discredits the referent.

**Epithet** is a stylistic device that singles out a characteristic or defining trait of an object, phenomenon, concept or action and shapes a particular emotional-evaluative attitude toward it.

(198) *There was a king ready to abdicate. So he brought in his 3 sons. He tells them, “Each of you will receive a trial, the first to complete their trial will become king. “Beginning with his eldest son, a brave and foolhardy man of great stature he says, “You are to bring me your grandmother’s emerald ring, lost decades ago in the wreck of the Windbreaker, from the bottom of the stormy North Sea.” “Right away, Father.” said the eldest son, departing at once, determined to become king. Then to his middle son, Nimble and Self-righteous, “You are to retrieve your great grandfather’s shield, bearing our coat of arms, from the deadly jungles of India, lost at the site of a battle since forgotten.” “I shall do so at once, Father.” said the middle son, and so he too departed at once. Then he beckoned for his youngest son, a young man Intelligent, but meek next to his older siblings, to approach. “Yes, Father?” The son inquired. To which the King replies, “Bring me a coke, I never liked those assholes.” (“There was a king ready to abdicate”, n.d.)*

The fairy-tale narrative of the joke about the heirs’ trials, constructed with the use of epithets, ends with an effect of defeated expectation, which produces a humorous shift. The punchline, however, destroys this system of expectations, for it turns out that the distribution of tasks is determined not by the sons’ virtues but by the father’s personal dislike (=parental favoritism as a hidden norm of family dynamics).

**Antiphrasis** – the basis of irony, is a stylistic device realized through the use of a lexeme or phrase in a meaning opposite to its normative semantic content, in order to implicitly convey a negative evaluation.

(199) *After being married for 50 years, I took a careful look at my wife one day and said.... / “Fifty years ago we had a cheap house, a junk car, slept on a sofa bed, and watched a 10-inch black and white TV. But hey I got to sleep every night with a hot 23-year-old girl. Now... I have a \$750,000 home, a \$45,000 car, a nice big bed, and a large-screen TV, but I’m sleeping with a 73-year-old woman. / So I said to my wife: / “It seems to me that you’re not holding up your side of things.” / My wife is a very smart woman. / She told me to go out and find a hot 23-year-old girl and she would make sure that I would once again be living in a cheap house, driving a junk car, sleeping on a sofa*

*bed, and watching a 10-inch black and white TV. / Aren't older women great? They really know how to solve an old guy's problems!* (The Successful Male, 2024)

In the presented example, the emphasis is on the plot of marital balance of power, where the final word remains with the woman. Antiphrasis realizes an insincere compliment, which is an ironic assessment by the speaker of the situation.

**Oxymoron** is a stylistic device consisting in the deliberate combination of semantically opposite, logically incompatible concepts that together create a new, paradoxical meaning or image.

(200) *Siblings are built-in frenemies since birth.* (Happy, 2025)

In the joke, the oxymoron *frenemies* realizes the contradictory unity of 'friends + enemies', denoting the paradoxical duality of the family role SIBLING. The combination of clashing semantic components underscores the key idea: brother-sister relationships are inherently ambivalent.

**STYLISTICALLY MARKED VOCABULARY.** **Dysphemism** is a process involving the replacement of a neutral word with a stylistically lowered, rude or vulgar unit that actualizes negative evaluation.

(201) *At a session with a marriage counselor, the wife snapped at her husband: "That's not true! I do so enjoy sex!" / Then, turning to the counselor, she explained: "But this animal expects it four or five times a year!"* (Rita Welch, 2017)

In this joke, the dysphemism *this animal* (→ husband) lowers the status of the referent, likening him to a creature devoid of culture and self-control. The negative evaluation thus created is subverted in the punchline that serves as the catalyst for the comic effect.

**Pejorative** is a lexical unit whose semantic structure incorporates a negative evaluative connotation as a constant component of its meaning that manifests irrespective of context.

(202) *A little boy gets a toy plane. The boy loves his plane. He flies it all over the house. One day, the boy is in the living room with his plane while his mom is in the kitchen washing dishes. She listens to the boy playing and hears him say, "Vroom, vroom, vroom. All you mother fucking people want to get on, get on. All you mother fucking people want to get off, get off." Angry, his mom rushes into the living room, takes the plane away, and sends him into his room. After 15 minutes, she starts to feel bad and tells the boy, "If you don't use that kind of language, you can play with your plane." The boy returns to the living room, his mom to the kitchen. She listens again to the boy playing, she hears him say, "Vroom, vroom, vroom. All you very nice people want to get on, get on. All you very nice people want to get off, get off. If you have a problem with 15 minute delay, you can go talk to the bitch in the kitchen!"* (A little boy gets a toy plane, 2017)

In joke (202), the designation *the bitch in the kitchen* deliberately underestimates the image of the referent (the mother). The pejorative here carries a double load: on the

one hand, it mimics a child's revenge for punishment and on the other, it foregrounds the ironic semantic component of the unpredictable consequences of the upbringing process.

**Colloquialism** is a linguistic unit characteristic of informal, conversational usage. These include typical nominative units: *mom, dad, grandpa, sis, bro*, etc. A separate subtype of colloquialisms worth singling out are *terms of endearment* – words or phrases used to express tenderness, love, closeness or affection toward a person.

(203) *During their silver anniversary, a wife reminded her husband: “Do you remember when you proposed to me, I was so overwhelmed that I didn’t talk for an hour?” / The husband replied: “Yes, honey, that was the happiest hour of my life.”* (During their silver anniversary, a wife reminded her husband, n.d.)

Other typical terms of endearment found in jokes are *sweetheart, sugar, darling, baby, babe, love, dear*. It should be emphasized that they function, as in joke (203), predominantly as forms of address. In the given example, the address *honey* acts as a marker of feigned tenderness: it models warm marital relations, which in context is interpreted as cynical. The term of endearment intensifies the situation of marital irony, sharpening the contrast between the form of address and the content of the utterance.

*Diminutives* are another type of colloquialism, defined as modified forms of words (usually through suffixes) that express smallness, endearment or emotional closeness.

(204) *Little Johnny sees his Daddy's car passing the playground and going into the woods. Curious, he follows the car and sees Daddy and Aunt Jane kissing. / Johnny finds this so exciting and can barely contain himself as he runs home and starts to tell his mother excitedly. / “MOMMY, MOMMY, I WAS AT THE PLAYGROUND AND DADDY AND...” / Mommy tells him to slow down, but that she wants to hear the story. / So Johnny tells her. “I was at the playground and I saw Daddy's car go into the woods with Aunt Jane. I went to look and Daddy was giving Aunt Jane a big kiss, then he helped her take off her shirt, then Aunt Jane helped Daddy take his pants off, then Aunt Jane laid down on the seat, then Daddy...” / At this point, Mommy cut him off and said, “Johnny, this is such an interesting story, suppose you save the rest of it for supper time. I want to see the look on Daddy's face when you tell it tonight.” / At the dinner table, Mommy asks Johnny to tell his story. He describes the car into the woods, the undressing, laying down on the seat, and, “then Daddy and Aunt Jane did that same thing Mommy and Uncle Jeff used to do when Daddy was in the Army.”* (Dr\_Cimarron, 2016)

Apart from those shown in the joke (204), other typical diminutives in humorous context include: *granny, nana, grandpa, pop, poppy, sis, sissy, brother, bro, hubby, wifey*. In jokes, such lexical units have a special pragmatic function: they mark a child's perspective, naivety, non-seriousness or an ironic attitude toward events, which creates potential for mockery.

**INDIVIDUAL-AUTHOR LEXICAL COINAGES.** **Occasionalism** is a unique speech unit that does not belong to the common lexicon, but is formed according to the language's existing derivational models for a specific artistic text or speech situation.

(205) *A pregnant woman falls into a coma and doesn't wake up until after her babies are born. She immediately asks the doctor about them. / "Your twins are doing great! You had a boy and a girl. Your brother named them for you." Like any sister would be, she was quite displeased. "Oh, no. My brother is an idiot. What'd he name them?" "Your daughter's name is Denise," the doctor began. Mom was pleased. That wasn't so bad. "And the boy?" "Denephew." (glue, 2021)*

The occasionalism 'Denephew' is formed through the derivational model of blending (Denise + nephew) and functions as the punchline. The novel lexical unit simultaneously ensures the comic effect of confirming the brother's "predictable idiocy".

**FIXED LINGUISTIC EXPRESSIONS.** **Idiom** is a stable word combination whose holistic figurative meaning is semantically equivalent to a single word.

(206) *Why was the violinist's younger brother envious of him?*

*Because he was always second fiddle (Force\_Glad, 2023)*

In this joke, the idiom is played upon by actualizing its literal meaning alongside the idiomatic one, modeling junior status as an entrenched subordination within the family hierarchy.

The conducted analysis demonstrates that lexical stylistic devices turn out to be a productive tool for creating a comic effect in the English joke as confirmed by the variety of employed techniques. Several typical patterns can be identified:

1) A distribution of functions between two types of devices is traceable: stylistic devices predominantly perform a nominative function, designating FAMILY members through semantic transfer, while stylistically marked vocabulary carries out evaluative or role marking of the referent;

2) The literalization of a figurative meaning is a mechanism of humor common to formally different devices: synecdoche, idiomatic expressions;

3) Colloquialisms can perform a "narrative" function: they fix the narrator's social position and perspective, so that, for example, a child's perspective of narration itself becomes a source of comic effect.

### 3.2.2. Lexico-syntactic devices

The lexico-syntactic level covers stylistic means whose effect emerges from the interplay between the semantic value of lexical units and their syntactic arrangement. This group includes: 1) stylistic devices (litotes, simile, periphrasis); 2) nominative-pragmatic means (euphemism); 3) figures of speech (antithesis, gradation – climax/anticlimax); 4) pun; 5) irony and sarcasm.

**STYLISTIC DEVICES.** **Litotes** is stylistic device that has been interpreted in several ways: as a variety of meiosis realized through a negative construction to assert a positive quality (Britannica Editors, 2018); as an ironic form of understatement where negating the opposite reinforces the truth of the statement (Karp et al., 2020); as a

specific type of periphrasis that replaces a direct statement with the negation of the contrary concept (Шкіль, 2023).

(207) *My wife is not a terrible cook but at our house we pray after we eat.* (Rodney Dangerfield, 2019)

Here, litotes operates as a two-part structure: the clause “not a terrible cook” implies the assertion “she cooks tolerably”, the contrasting clause introduced by ‘but’ – “we pray after we eat” – cancels the positive effect of the understatement, turning it into sarcasm. Litotes highlights both the assessment of the wife’s culinary incompetence and the insincerity of the compliment as a form of veiled criticism.

**Simile** is a stylistic device that compares two unlike things, explicitly signaled by conjunctions such as ‘like’ or ‘as’.

(208) *Little brothers are like bop bags, you hit 'em and they keep bouncing back for more.* (Melissa Giroux, n.d.)

The comparison of a younger brother to a bop bag (=a punching bag that bounces back) foregrounds a behavioral trait: resistance to insults and annoying persistence as a recognizable feature of the “little brother” persona.

**Periphrasis** is a stylistic device of indirect nomination realized through a descriptive phrase that highlights salient features of an object or person.

(209) *The great thing about having four kids is having four people to watch me bring in the groceries all by myself* (@PaigeKellerman, 2018)

Here, periphrasis replaces the direct naming “kids (who don’t help)” with “four people (to watch me bring in the groceries all by myself)” ironically exposing a typical behavioral trait of the role KIDS.

**NOMINATIVE-PRAGMATIC MEANS. Euphemism** is a linguistic device that employs an indirect, softened designation for phenomena or realities generally perceived as socially undesirable, taboo or uncomfortable.

(210) *A wife decides to surprise her husband with the big news. She’s practically vibrating with excitement when he walks into the kitchen. / “Hey,” she says sweetly. “I made something for you.” / He opens the oven, stares inside for a few seconds, then goes: “...Why is there just one sad, burnt roll in here?” / Her smile twitches. “It’s not a roll. It’s a bun.” / “Okay,” he nods. “A sad, burnt bun.” / “No,” she says, “It’s a bun.” She inhales. “Where was it?” / “In the oven?” he answers cautiously. / “Right,” she says, forcing a smile. “So we have... a bun... in the oven.” / He looks at the bun. Then at her. Then back at the bun. “Yeah. I just took it out.” / She blinks. “Codie,” she says slowly, “Think.” / “I am thinking,” he says. “I’m thinking you ruined a perfectly good roll.” / Her eye twitches. “It’s. Not. A. ROLL.” / “Okay, okay! Bun! It’s a bun! What do you want from me?” he says, hands up. / She just stares at him for a long second, all excitement completely gone. Then finally explodes: “I’M PREGNANT, YOU ABSOLUTE IDIOT.” (“A wife decides to surprise her husband with the big news”, 2015)*

In the joke (210), the euphemism *have a bun in the oven* performs two functions simultaneously: it softens the meaning ‘pregnant’ and generates a comic effect through the literalization of the established idiomatic phrase “to have a bun in the oven” used to announce or describe a pregnancy. The joke is built on the husband’s persistent refusal to grasp the figurative meaning, taking only the literal one. The collision between the two levels of understanding reflects a communicative breakdown inside a married couple.

**FIGURES OF SPEECH. Antithesis** is a stylistic figure based on the juxtaposition of semantically opposite elements to intensify contrast.

(211) *First child @ 11 months - only eats homemade organic vegetable purées / Fourth child @ 11 months - just stole the last of her brother’s french fries* (@UnfilteredMama, 2019)

In the provided example, antithesis is realized through the parallel juxtaposition of two situations (\*First child @ 11 months... vs Fourth child @ 11 months...\*) united by the shared age parameter that justifies their comparison. The humorous effect comes from the contrast in parenting strategies, tracing the degradation of parental idealism from the first to the fourth child as a typical trajectory.

**Gradation** is a stylistic figure based on the ordering of linguistic units according to a change in their intensity that can unfold in two directions: ascending – with a gradual increase (climax), and descending – with a gradual decrease (anticlimax).

(212) *My sister is my friend, my partner in crime, my chaos coordinator.* (Joe, 2026)

(213) *1st Kid: packs 3000 things in diaper bag / 2nd: Packs 10 things / 3rd: Packs 5 things / 4th: Nothing. There’s a diaper in the glove compartment.* (@PaigeKellerman, 2016)

Joke (212) realizes the climax: the nominative units successively raise emotional intensity: from neutral (“friend”) through more expressive (“partner in crime”) to maximally charged (“chaos coordinator”). The final component triggers a humorous effect through the unexpected intensification of sibling-relationship traits. In joke (213), anticlimax appears as a gradual reduction of quantitative and semantic intensity (3000 → 10 → 5 → 0). The series ends in a comic decrease of expectation, provoking an ironic interpretation of the decline in parental anxiety and hyper-control.

**Pun** occupies a distinct place among lexico-syntactic devices because it resists being classified unequivocally as either a lexical or syntactic one. A pun is based on wordplay relying on lexical-level phenomena such as polysemy, homonymy and paronymy – for that reason it is traditionally treated as a lexical stylistic device. Yet contemporary research also distinguishes structural-semantic and structural-syntactic puns that require a particular syntactic arrangement of homonymic or paronymic elements for the humor to arise (Bielova & Lobzova, 2021). This justifies discussing pun within the framework of lexico-syntactic devices separately.

(214) *An elementary school teacher was meeting her new class. She pointed to one student and asked “What does your father do for a living?” The boy said “My father’s a magician! He has a new act that ends with sawing people in half.” “That’s wonderful!”*

said the teacher. “And do you have any siblings?” “Yes,” said the boy- “I have a half brother and a half sister.” (Arkvoodle42, 2026)

(215) *A man frantically calls the doctor and says, “My wife is pregnant and her contractions are only two minutes apart now!” “Is this her first child?” the doctor responds. The man replies, “No! This is her husband!”* (A man frantically calls the doctor, n.d.)

Joke (214) contains a lexical-semantic pun based on the polysemy of the word *half*. In the first part of the dialogue, *half* appears in the phrase “sawing people in half” (=cutting people into two parts as a magical illusion performed by the father). In the final line, “half brother and half sister”, *half* acquires the literal meaning “step-siblings”. The pun operates on the lexical-semantic level: the clash of two meanings occurs within a single lexeme. Joke (215) presents a structural-syntactic pun grounded in the ambiguous reference of the demonstrative pronoun *this*: in the fragment “Is this her first child?” the pronoun *this*, functioning anaphorically, points to the preceding situation (the pregnancy/contractions), which the husband reinterprets as deixis referring to himself (=this man who is speaking). The comic effect is motivated by the homonymy achieved through structural ambiguity at the syntactic level.

A separate problem in the classification of stylistic devices is the status of irony and sarcasm. It is explained, first, by the fact they lack an invariant formal structure of their own and are each time materialized through other, previously described means. Second, irony and sarcasm require a broad context (situational, discursive, sociocultural), including the speaker’s intentions and the hearer’s presuppositions, which brings them close to phenomena at the pragmatic level of language – a view empirically supported by contemporary research (Athanasiadou, 2023; Kenty, 2022; Sembodo et al., 2025). Within this study, **irony** is understood as a lexico-syntactic device when an utterance acquires a meaning opposite or substantially different from its literal content, producing a contrast between form and communicative intention. **Sarcasm** is regarded as a variety of irony characterized by a heightened degree of negative evaluation.

(216) *Of all your children, the only one who won’t grow up and move away is your husband* (Linda Tortorete, 2024)

(217) *My brother thinks he is funny. I think he is adopted.* (Naveed Ahmad, 2025)

Joke (216) demonstrates irony built on antithesis: the opposition “children who grow up and leave” vs “husband who doesn’t grow up and doesn’t leave” implies the meaning “the husband behaves infantilely, never matures” and performs the metaphorical mapping husband as one of the children. Joke (217) is an example of sarcasm, as it carries a plainly devaluing intention. Constructed syntactically on parallelism [*someone*] *think(s)*, the joke contains an antithesis (funny vs adopted) devoid of logical contrast, which provokes a sense of dissonance.

Summing up, the analysis points to the following regularities:

1) The comic effect in a joke results from the intersection of several stylistic mechanisms at different levels;

2) The devices examined frequently work through the mechanism of defeated expectation: the stylistic organization controls the pacing of information disclosure – it builds a predictable plot trajectory, postpones the punchline and determines the moment at which the originally established meaning is demolished (the incongruity-resolution mechanism).

### 3.2.3. Syntactic devices

Syntactic stylistic devices are understood as transformations of syntactic structure that produce a specific expressive effect. The analysis in this subsection draws on the classifications proposed by O. M. Morokhovsky, O. P. Vorobyova and colleagues (1984). These researchers distinguish two main parametric systems for grouping syntactic stylistic means. The first system classifies devices according to the type of transformation applied to an underlying model: 1) devices based on reduction of the initial model (aposiopesis, asyndeton); 2) devices based on expansion of the initial model (enumeration, emphatic constructions, parenthetical constructions). The second system classifies devices according to the nature of the relations between syntactic structures, the ways their meanings are transposed and the character of the links between elements. Three groups emerge: 1) devices grounded in the formal and semantic interaction of several syntactic constructions or sentence models within a given context (parallelism, chiasmus, anaphora, epanalepsis); 2) devices based on the transposition of meaning of a syntactic structure or sentence model within a context (rhetorical question); 3) devices based on the transposition of meaning in the ways components are linked within sentences or between sentences (parceling).

**Aposiopesis** is a stylistic device that involves a deliberate, sudden break in an utterance, leaving the thought formally unfinished. Its emotional and informational charge is meant to be understood by the addressee even without explicit verbalization.

(218) *An old crippled man was just about as close to death as possible. His family of five—a beautiful wife and four children—stood around his deathbed awaiting the inevitable. Three of the children were tall, good-looking, and athletic, but the fourth and youngest was no doubt the ugly runt of the family. / “Darling wife,” the husband whispered, “assure me that the youngest child really is mine. I want to know the truth before I die, I will forgive you if—” / The wife gently interrupted him, and said, “Yes, my dearest, absolutely ... no question ... I swear on my mother’s grave that you are his father.” / The man then died, happy that he had finally asked the question that had bothered him for so many years. / After the passing of the beloved husband, the wife sighed under her breath, “Thank goodness he didn’t ask about the other three.” (John Colton, n.d.)*

Here, aposiopesis “I will forgive you if—” leaves the sentence hanging and prompts the recipient to mentally complete it: the unspoken component is interpreted as a condition tied to the confirmation or denial of paternity. The device of breaking off,

without offering an explicit nomination, generates a semantic designation of family relations.

**Asyndeton** is a stylistic means manifested in the absence of conjunctions between homogeneous components (parts of a sentence, clauses of a complex sentence).

(219) *Bachelor comes home, checks out what's in the fridge, goes to bed. Married man comes home, checks out what's in the bed, goes to the fridge.* (kitkatJulianna, 2017)

In joke (219) asyndeton appears in the form of conjunctionless links between predicates within each sentence serving to dynamically contrast two family statuses: 'bachelor' and 'married man'. The asyndetic listing imitates the "mechanical" performance of routine actions highlighting how family status determines a behavioral pattern. Additionally, asyndeton underscores the parallel structures and makes the contrast especially prominent in the context of exterior similarity.

**Enumeration** is a stylistic device characterized by the sequential introduction of homogeneous components of an utterance (names of objects, actions or attributes) in order to emphasize their plurality and diversity, thereby creating a particular expressive effect.

(220) *A lawyer just lost a career making/breaking case so Satan sees this as an opportunity to approach him and make him an offer. Satan: I will make you the most successful lawyer in history. You will never lose a case again. You will be famous. You will be wealthy beyond your wildest imagination. Lawyer: What's the catch? Satan: I want the souls of your parents, your siblings, your spouse, your children and all your future descendants for damnation in hell for all eternity. Lawyer: Okay, but what's the catch?* ("A lawyer just lost a career making/breaking case", n.d.)

This illustrates enumeration as a series of homogeneous elements that present a taxonomic model of kinship, where each item is marked by a relation (the pronoun 'your') to a single central figure (the lawyer). The pragmatic effect of the device lies in the contrast between the exaggerated list, which is expected to provoke a negative emotional reaction from the lawyer and his indifferent reply "Okay, but what's the catch?".

**Emphatic constructions** are stylistic devices used to highlight individual components of an utterance in order to intensify its expressiveness. Cleft sentences are one type of emphatic construction: they split a sentence into a main and a subordinate clause so as to foreground a particular element. Traditionally, cleft sentences are divided into it-clefts, wh-clefts and reverse wh-clefts.

(221) *It's a sunny morning in the Big Forest and the Bear family is just waking up. Baby Bear goes downstairs and sits in his small chair at the table. He looks into his small bowl. It is empty! "Who's been eating my porridge?" he squeaks. Father Bear arrives at the table and sits in his big chair. He looks into his big bowl. It is also empty! "Who's been eating my porridge?" he roars. Mother Bear sticks her head out the kitchen door and yells, "For Pete's sake, how many times do we have to go through this? It was Mother Bear who go up first. It was Mother Bear who woke everybody else in the*

house up. It was Mother Bear who unloaded the dishwasher from last night and put everything away. It was Mother Bear who went out into the cold early morning air to fetch the newspaper. It was Mother Bear who set the table. It was Mother Bear who put the cat out, cleaned the litter box and filled the cat's water and food dish. And now that you've decided to come down stairs and grace me with your presence, listen good because I'm only going to say this one more time: I haven't made the f\*cking porridge yet!" (Don Bendell, 2025)

In the joke (221), the family member Mother Bear is each time singled out through an emphatic it-cleft construction. This accentuates her as the sole performer of every listed action, in contrast to the passive roles of Father Bear and Baby Bear (=a hyperbolic representation of the unequal distribution of household duties).

Beyond the described construction, a less studied variety of cleft sentences is the *there-cleft*. It is recognized within two functional types are recognized: 1) specificational there-clefts (specifying one or more values for the highlighted element in an open proposition); 2) presentational there-clefts (introducing a new entity and the situation it participates in into the discourse) (Davidse et al., 2023). The authors reject the common view that the matrix of cleft sentences carries no semantic load and serves uniquely as an information-structural role. Instead, they argue that it-clefts have an identifying clause as their matrix and carry an exhaustiveness implicature, while there-clefts contain an existential clause and merely assert the existence of a referent.

(222) There was a dad who tried to keep his wife happy through labour by telling jokes, but she didn't laugh once. Know why? It was the delivery. (Winona Creek, 2025)

In the demonstrated joke, the there-cleft performs a presentational function: the construction introduces a new entity (a dad) into the discourse and outlines the situation he takes part in ("trying to support his wife during labor with jokes"). This entity is introduced precisely to set up an expectation that is then unexpectedly resolved in the punchline. Analyzing humorous texts with the there-cleft suggests that this syntactic device is quite productive for a range of discourse genres, particularly humorous micro-narratives and storytelling.

**Parenthetical constructions** are a stylistic device at the syntactic level realized through the insertion of additional elements (words, phrases, clauses) into the structure of an utterance. They serve to provide a subjective evaluation, clarification or commentary, as well as to organize the text and modify its pragmatic impact on the addressee.

See joke (82) An old married couple got into a petty argument. (He would call it petty; she would have called it Armageddon.) / As was their nature, neither of them would admit the possibility that they might be wrong. Finally, to her credit, the wife said ...

The example illustrates two types of parenthetical construction: he first is realized as a parenthetical sentence – a full two-member clause, set off by parentheses from the main text. This formally signals the information's status as supplementary, although

semantically it is crucial for understanding the conflict: the same phenomenon (a petty argument) receives two opposing evaluations: the husband's downplayed one ("petty") and the wife's hyperbolic one ("Armageddon") are modeling the husband as rational and the wife as emotional and dramatic. The second type, represented by "to her credit", set off by commas, is a parenthetical element (a disjunct) that expresses the speaker's attitude toward the action described.

**Parallelism (syntactic)** is a device that employs an identical syntactic structure in two or more adjacent linguistic units, creating an effect of symmetry.

(223) *The whole family are having breakfast together when... / The young Grandson looks over at his 18 year old newlywed wife and asks her, "Will you pass the honey, honey?" She giggles and passes the honey. / His father, not to be outdone, looks over to his beautiful wife and asks, "Will you pass the sugar, sugar?" She laughs, "You're still a charmer," and passes the sugar. / The Grandfather looks up, makes eye contact with his wife of 55 years and asks, "Will you pass the tea... bag?" (RockIngChairDad, 2022)*

In this joke, parallelism structures the family hierarchy: three generations are arranged within an identical syntactic pattern, which creates predictability. The expectation is that the third line will reproduce the template "Will you pass the X, X?" where the second X is a vocative term of endearment identical to the direct object designating the item requested, as in the first two cases (honey, honey; sugar, sugar). The expectation is violated: in the third line, the added component bag creates the unexpected phrase "tea bag". Moreover, the pause marked in writing by an ellipsis is a syntactic means of suppressing the expected repetition of the vocative.

**Chiasmus** is a stylistic device consisting in the mirrored, crosswise placement of structurally or semantically corresponding elements within an utterance (an AB-BA pattern). A special derivative of chiasmus is **antimetabole**, defined as a combination of chiasmus and antithesis – a two-part stylistic figure in which the same words are repeated but with a change in their syntactic functions and meaning.

(224) *The rooster may rule the roost but the hen rules the rooster.* (Lizard Lick Towing And Recovery, 2025)

Schematically, the antimetabole in joke (224) can be represented as  $A \rightarrow B, C \rightarrow A$ , where  $A$  = the rooster,  $B$  = the roost,  $C$  = the hen. In terms of nominating family members, the animal images metaphorically designate the spouses: rooster – husband, hen – wife. This stylistic device makes it possible to model a redistribution of family roles, opposing the husband's traditional dominance (rooster rules the roost) with the unexpected assertion of the wife's power (hen rules the rooster). The shift in syntactic position of the lexeme *rooster* demonstrates its transition from subject to object, while the introduction of a new subject 'hen' verbalizes the wife as agent.

**Anaphora** is a stylistic means involving the repetition of identical linguistic elements (sounds, words or constructions) at the beginning of adjacent sentences or their parts.

(225) *My wife doesn't hold grudges — she just remembers facts forever. My wife doesn't argue — she just presents evidence. My wife doesn't interrupt — she just finishes my sentence better.* (Majid Akbari, 2026)

The material demonstrates that anaphora provides rhythmic unity to the enumeration so that each new sentence is perceived as a continuation of the same pattern. The opposition created by the negative form of the predicate and the apparent cancellation of a negative evaluation introduced by the dash, produces an ironic effect.

**Epanalepsis** is a stylistic figure and a type of repetition in which the beginning of a sentence, clause or line is repeated at its end (structurally, A ... A).

(226) *My brother is my best friend until he tells on me. Then, he's my brother.* (Brother Quotes, 2025)

Despite the fact that parceling breaks the joke's structure into two independent sentences, epanalepsis creates a construct of development: from the semantics of a neutral family nomination ("my brother" as a family member) to an ironic reinterpretation. It can be hypothesized that in this case epanalepsis combines with **antanaclasis** – a stylistic device in which a lexeme is repeated within adjacent constructions but acquires a different meaning: the first nominative unit *brother* carries a neutral connotation, while the second – a negative one. Epanalepsis, as a ring structure, emphasizes the ironic cyclicity of this process.

**Rhetorical question** is a device based on using an interrogative form without the intention of obtaining an answer. It serves to highlight a particular meaning, imply an obvious answer or stimulate reflection in the addressee.

See joke (19) ... "*Who is the most obedient?*" he asks. "*Who never talks back to mother? Who does everything she says?*..."

Here, the rhetorical questions function as a tool of indirect designation of a family member through a set of ascribed behavioral traits – formally idealized, prototypical of an "ideal child". The repetition intensifies expressiveness and creates an effect of mounting expectation, focusing attention on the child as a potential recipient of the toy. In the end, however, the children's reply "Okay, dad, you get the toy" ironically reinterprets the initial designation and marks a shift in the expected reference.

**Parceling** is understood as the segmentation of a unified syntactic structure into intonationally and punctuation-isolated communicative parts with the aim of enhancing expressiveness and foregrounding individual elements of the utterance.

(227) *My wife gives me sound advice. 99% sound. And 1% advice.* (Kenei Kangbai, 2025)

In the example, the designation *my wife* unfolds in two stages: first, positively marked (= "able to be trusted because of having a lot of ability or knowledge"); second, ironically reinterpreted (= "useless/meaningless conversations"). Parceling activates the shift in the semantic content of the lexeme *sound* and accentuates the contrast in meanings through the fragmentation of subsequent sentences and the elliptical reduction of their structure.

The analysis of syntactic stylistic devices in jokes allows the following observations to be made:

1) The devices under study function in two main directions: they provide the structural organization of the text and provoke a semantic reinterpretation of the utterance;

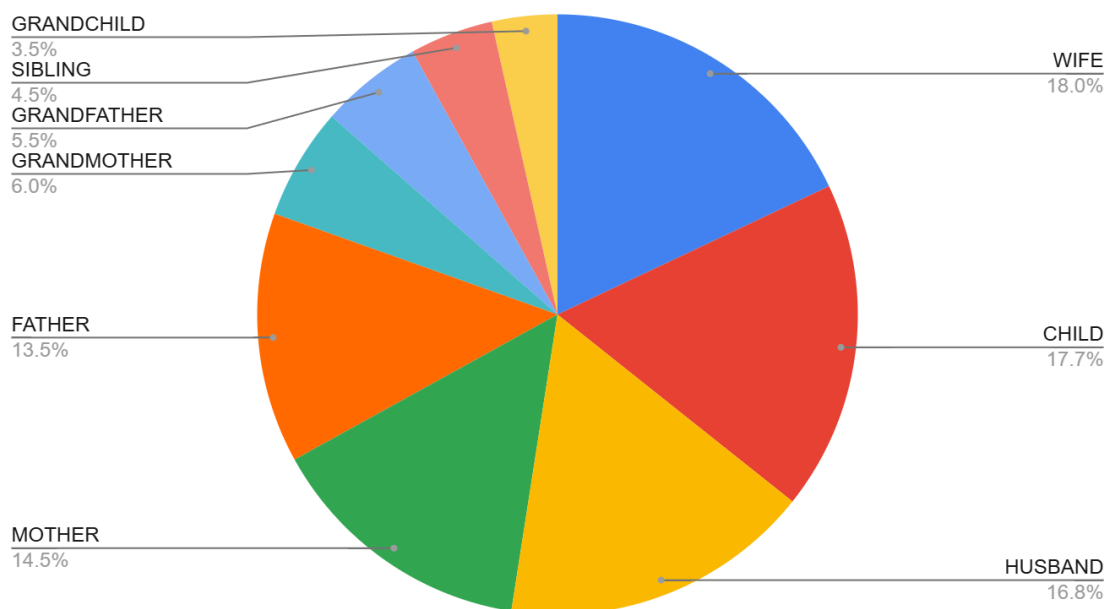
2) As at previous levels of analysis, a characteristic feature is the layering of several devices simultaneously. This further confirms the stylistic complexity and variety of ways in which the comic effect is created;

3) Syntactic means contribute to modeling the representation of status and role patterns of family relations including through the dynamic unfolding of the scenario.

### 3.2.4. Stylistic devices for nominating FAMILY members in a quantitative dimension

The quantitative distribution of stylistic devices used for the nomination of FAMILY members in the corpus of 243 English family jokes reveals patterns that define the genre's humorous strategies.

All nine sub-concepts (WIFE, CHILD, HUSBAND, MOTHER, FATHER, GRANDMOTHER, GRANDFATHER, SIBLING, GRANDCHILD) were registered in both direct designation and indirect reference (pronouns, implicit mention). The raw frequencies of jokes featuring each concept – WIFE (72), CHILD (71), HUSBAND (67), MOTHER (58), FATHER (54), GRANDMOTHER (24), GRANDFATHER (22), SIBLING (18) and GRANDCHILD (14) – are displayed with their percentage in Graph 3.1.



**Graph 3.1. Percentage distribution of FAMILY members concepts in the corpus**

The two most frequent concepts, WIFE and CHILD, together represent more than 30% of the corpus, underscoring their cultural centrality as primary agents of family comic conflict. At the opposite end, GRANDCHILD (5.8%) typically occupies secondary roles within narrative structures. The unbalanced distribution reflects the genre's intrinsic thematic hierarchy: the nuclear-family dyad (spouses and direct offspring) generates the core jocular tension as the extended kin enter the humorous frame infrequently.

Shifting from the frequency of status-role concepts to the stylistic means of their verbalization, it first should once again be mentioned that it is common for a single nomination to combine several stylistic devices simultaneously – the fact that the analysis has taken into account. The complete matrix of devices and their distribution across the individual FAMILY member concepts is provided in Appendix I, and the ten most frequent devices for each concept are presented in Table 3.3.

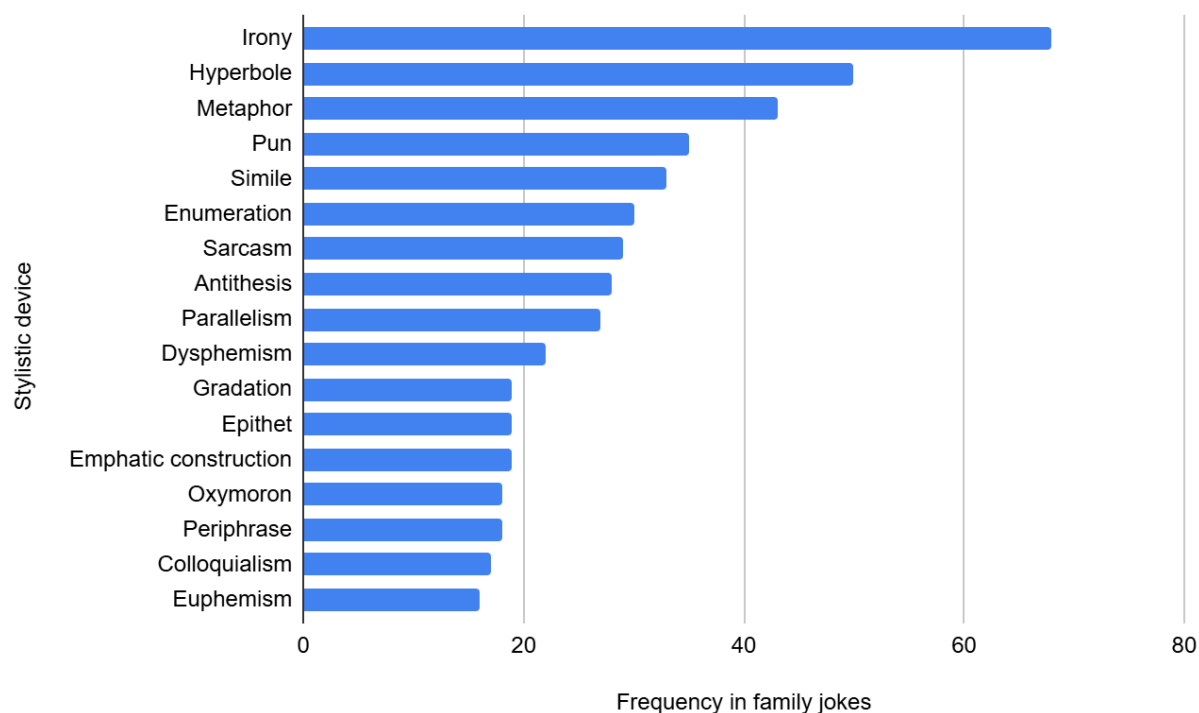
	Irony	Hyperbole	Metaphor	Simile	Pun	Enumeration	Sarcasm	Antithesis	Parallelism	Dysphemism
WIFE	12	8	9	6	7	4	6	5	5	3
HUSBAND	11	7	6	4	6	3	5	4	3	3
MOTHER	9	8	5	4	3	7	3	4	6	4
FATHER	8	6	5	3	4	4	3	4	3	3
CHILD	10	9	7	8	5	6	4	4	4	5
SIBLING	3	2	4	3	2	1	1	2	1	2
GRANDFATHER	6	4	3	2	3	2	3	2	2	1
GRANDMOTHER	7	5	3	2	3	2	3	2	3	
GRANDCHILD	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1		

**Table 3.3. Matrix of 10 most used stylistic devices nominating FAMILY member concepts**

Irony emerges as the dominant means of verbalizing all nine concepts, with particular prominence in the designation of WIFE (12 instances) and HUSBAND (11). Hyperbole ranks second intensifying stereotypical traits: for WIFE (8), HUSBAND (7), MOTHER (8) and CHILD (9) it magnifies nagging, laziness, overprotectiveness and mischief respectively. The relatively high frequency of similes applied to CHILD (8) suggests a tendency to construct children's comic image through explicit, often degrading or animalizing, comparison. The elevated use of enumerations for MOTHER (7) disposes the typical rhetorical accentuation of maternal reproach and repetitive complaints. Sarcasm and dysphemism, though less frequent overall, are applied asymmetrically: sarcasm appears more in spousal roles (WIFE – 6, HUSBAND – 5), dysphemism are spread in usage for CHILD (5), reinforcing the “naughty child” stereotype through coarse or pejorative naming. Puns occur predominantly with WIFE (7) and CHILD (5), creating double-meaning humor that reinterprets family relations. Antitheses and parallelism are distributed relatively equally, serving to frame domestic

conflicts as binary oppositions and to generate rhythmic comic structures. The peripheral roles (GRANDMOTHER, GRANDFATHER, GRANDCHILD) display noticeably fewer stylistic devices naturally due to reduced representation in the corpus, yet irony remains the leading strategy even there, indicating that the same fundamental comic mechanism operates across all FAMILY member designations – only scaled according to the roles' prominence in the narrative.

Shifting from role-specific patterns to the corpus as a whole, the frequencies of each device across the nine sub-concepts are brought into focus. Graph 3.2. demonstrates a consolidated stylistic profile characteristic of the family-joke genre based on the corpus of the study.



**Graph 3.2. Aggregate frequency of stylistic devices used for nominating FAMILY members in the corpus of English family jokes**

Ironies (68), hyperboles (50) and metaphors (43) form the dominant triad. They are followed by puns (35), similes (33), enumerations (30), sarcasm (29), antitheses (28) and parallelism (27). Further down the scale, dysphemism (22), gradation, epithets and emphatic constructions (19 each), oxymora and periphrases (18), colloquialisms (17) and euphemisms (16) expand the repertoire. The prevalence of irony and hyperboles indicates that the humor of family jokes relies fundamentally on indirect evaluative distortion: roles, behavior patterns, actions are presented exaggeratedly or ironically perceived, creating a distance that encourages amusement. Metaphors and similes contribute to conceptual blending that defamiliarizes the household, while puns and

sarcasm add a sharper, often critical, linguistic edge. The relatively low frequency of euphemisms, in contrast with a substantial presence of dysphemism, suggests that the genre favors a discrediting, anti-idealizing viewpoint over softening or polite reformulation. Enumerations, antitheses and parallelism provide structural rhythm and reinforce comic contrast.

Taken together, the quantitative findings support an observation: the family joke genre constructs a vertically structured, evaluatively charged model of kinship through a wide range of stylistic means.

### **3.3. Text-arranging devices**

In this study, text-arranging devices are understood as the set of compositional and structural techniques that organize a joke as a coherent text aimed at producing a comic effect. The analysis is based on the structural typology proposed by V. O. Samokhina, which divides jokes by formal feature into three main types: dialogic, monologic and mixed – each characterized by a compressed or expanded volume and a specific set of text-arranging devices (Самохіна, 2010). Since the corpus of English family jokes contains a significant number of stable textual patterns, an additional genre classification has been introduced. The structural and genre varieties are summarized in the Table 3.4. below.

Form	Volume	Structural variety	Structural subtype	Genre variety
Dialogic	compressed	narrative jokes		dad jokes
				“Mommy, mommy” jokes / “shut up” jokes
				“Knock-knock” jokes
Monologic	compressed	one-liners	aphorism jokes	
			pseudo-definition jokes	
			“Yo mama” jokes	
	two-liners	riddle jokes		
	expanded	narrative jokes	cumulative jokes (triples)	
Mixed	compressed	narrative jokes		
	expanded	narrative jokes		

**Table 3.4. Varieties of English family jokes based on structural and generic typology**

### **STRUCTURAL CLASSIFICATION: DIALOGIC FORM**

The dialogic form of jokes is structurally a unity consisting of two or more utterances. Its main features are spontaneity, relatively rapid exchange of remarks, where each component of the exchange is conditioned by the preceding one, and an orientation toward achieving a comic effect by violating the expected course of interaction. Within the dialogic form, one finds the structural variety of the narrative joke, as well as three genre varieties: dad jokes, “mommy, mommy” jokes and “knock-knock” jokes.

Dialogic narrative jokes are those in which the event is conveyed exclusively through the characters’ lines, with authorial commentary either absent or minimal.

(228) *Daughter: “Mom, I’m dating the neighbor”*

*Mother: “But he could be your father...”*

*Daughter: “Age doesn’t count for me, Mom!”*

*Mother: “ I don’t think you understand...” (Daughter: “Mom, I’m dating the neighbor”, n.d.)*

The joke (228) is built purely as a dialogic unity without authorial speech, following the pattern  $A \leftrightarrow B$  (where A and B are communicants). The daughter’s first line gives information that calls for an evaluative reaction from the mother, whose response proves to be a warning containing a hidden meaning. Tension is created because the daughter interprets the remark “...he could be your father” in one way (=age gap), while the mother encodes a different meaning (=biological paternity). The mother’s final line does not spell out the real meaning leaving it to the recipient to uncover the true sense.

Another typical model of the dialogic narrative joke is:

NS:  $A \leftrightarrow B$  (where NS is narrator’s speech – an introductory exposition line, and A and B are communicants).

(229) *A couple woke up one morning after they had a fight the night before.*

*HUSBAND: Do you know the meaning of WIFE?*

*WIFE: What's the meaning?*

*HUSBAND: It means ‘Without Information Fighting Everytime.’*

*WIFE: You are wrong, it means ‘With an Idiot For Ever!’ (Chichi Richi, 2026)*

The exposition, expressed through the narrator’s speech (NS) in joke (229), outlines the communicative situation and introduces the conflictual aspect of the interaction, thus preparing the recipient for the fact that the ensuing exchange is its continuation. The subsequent dialogic organization arises from the husband’s provocation and is capped by the punchline in the wife’s reply. The whole text works as a concise mockery of marital squabbles through the hyperbolized stereotypical model of “you’re to blame / no, you’re to blame”.

Dialogic narrative jokes also feature the pattern (NS = AP):  $A + B \dots n$  (where A is the first character, B – the second, n – other characters and NS may be replaced by an authorial parenthetical – AP):

(230) *Girlfriend: “Oh no how am I gonna tell dad I’m pregnant?”*

*Me: “Leave that to me.”*

*\*later at dinner\**

*Her dad: \*coughs\* “I need water.”*

*Me: “Oh no! Grandpa needs water!” (GNR8\_, 2020)*

Joke (230) shows that the position of AP varies, so the model can be modified:  $A + B + AP + (AP \subset C) + B$ . The position of the AP is critical for the humorous effect: 1) later at dinner shifts the chronotope and brings all three speakers together, creating the narrative condition for the communicative event; 2) *\*coughs\** mimics a physiological reaction and serves as the trigger for the final line. Thus, the combination of dialogue structure with embedded parentheticals gives the text a two-level structure through the clash of two interpretations (a literal need for water vs the announcement of a new family status).

## GENRE VARIETIES OF THE DIALOGIC FORM

**Dad jokes** are a genre of jokes considered a subtype of anti-humor (or groan humor) characterized by the absence of a classic punchline – the punchline turns out to be banal or absurd.

(231) *Son: “Mom, Dad, I’m gay.”*

*Mom: \*Stares at Dad\**

*Dad: \*Clenches fist\**

*Mom: “Don’t!”*

*Dad: \*Sweats Profusely\**

*Mom: “...”*

*Dad: “HI GAY, I’M DAD”* (“Son: “Mom, Dad, I’m gay.”, 2016)

Joke (231) is built on a pun based on homonymy: *gay* (=homosexual orientation) vs *Gay* (=name). The father interprets the coming-out event as a self-introduction, ironically devaluing the act of seeking social acceptance with a nonsensical reaction.

**“Mommy, Mommy” jokes / “Shut up” jokes** are a type of dark humor with a fixed compositional model: 1) the line “Mommy, Mommy!” + a curious/naïve statement by the child; 2) a cruel reply from the mother in the imperative.

(232) *Mommy mommy! I hate my sister’s guts!*

*Shut up and finish your dinner!* (HoodooSquad, 2026)

The humorous effect of joke (232) is realized through the literalization of the idiomatic expression “hate someone’s guts” (=to hate someone) vs its direct meaning (=the cannibalism motif). The laconic dialogic form ensures maximum speed of perception and a sharp effect of defeated expectation.

**“Knock-knock” jokes** are a popular format of short dialogic jokes in English-speaking culture with a rigid structural frame:

(1) *Knock knock.*

(2) *Who’s there?*

(3) *X.*

(4) *X who?*

(5) *Punchline (a play on the name X in an unexpected context).*

For example:

(233) *Knock knock*

*Who’s there?*

*Nana!*

*Nana who?*

*Nana your business.* (Joan Soriano Honoridez, 2025)

The comic effect arises from the transformation of *Nana* within an idiom: in lines 1-4 *Nana* is presented as an anthroponym (the name of the person behind the door), but

the fifth line “Nana your business” is a homophone of the idiom “none of your business”.

### STRUCTURAL CLASSIFICATION: MONOLOGIC FORM

The monologic form of jokes is a structural type of humorous narrative delivered on behalf of a single, usually recognizable, speaker, where the entire plot, characters and climax are presented by the narrator without interruption. Monologic jokes are divided into: 1) compressed (including one-liners, aphorism jokes, pseudo-definition jokes, riddle jokes); 2) expanded (narrative jokes, cumulative jokes, e.g. triples).

**One-liners** are a structural variety of jokes consisting of a single sentence or line where the comic effect is realized through an unexpected final part of the utterance.

(234) *My wife says I never listen... or something like that.* (Micky Flanagan Fans, 2026)

Joke (234) consists of a single sentence divided into two semantic parts: the main statement “My wife says I never listen” introduces the plot line – the speaker reports being accused by his wife of inattentiveness; the final fragment “or something like that” serves as the punchline. The structure of the joke first activates the typical scenario “Complaint about marital relations”, but the narrator, attempting to reproduce his wife’s words, finishes the line with a hedge that signals imprecision, the approximate nature of the quotation, and thereby ironically proves the criticism’s validity.

**Aphorism jokes** are short witty sayings with an unexpected finale that combine the comicality of a joke with a generalized, paradoxical or semantically deep thought, bringing it closer to an aphorism.

(235) *Silence is golden, unless you’re a parent...Then silence is suspicious!* (Learning and Exploring Through Play, 2025)

The structure of the joke (235) contains an opening in the form of the maxim “Silence is golden” followed by the statement “unless you’re a parent...”, which destroys the universality of the initial saying. The comic effect is based on a shift in the meaning of silence: in the first part it acquires a positive connotation (=peace), while in the second it becomes negative (=an atypical state for kids → potential danger).

**Pseudo-definition jokes** are a type of joke built in the form of a quasi-definition, where instead of an objective interpretation an ironic, paradoxical or absurd reading of a concept is offered.

(236) *Alarm clock – a device to wake people who have no children!* (“Alarm clock – a device to wake people who have no children!”, 2019)

The joke is built on the transfer of the alarm clock’s feature ‘a device for waking people’ onto children, activating the implicature “parents don’t need an alarm clock because their children wake them”, which rests on shared social knowledge.

**Two-liners** are a structural variety of jokes built on a two-part structure in which the first phrase creates the context of the utterance and the second delivers an unexpected comic effect.

**Riddle jokes** are a type of humorous text constructed in the form of a pseudo-dialogue consisting of a question and an answer, typically voiced by a single speaker. The comic effect arises from the incongruity between the expected logical answer and the paradoxical, absurd resolution.

(237) *What do you get when you cross two siblings from Alabama and an escort business? / A family discount* (“What do you get when you cross two siblings from Alabama and an escort business?”, n.d.)

Here, the comic effect is realized through the polysemy of the phrase *family discount* that in its literal meaning is understood as “a discount for family members”, but in the context of the joke hints at sexual relations between close relatives – a stereotype typical of “Alabama jokes”. The punchline activates a cultural stereotype.

**Expanded monologic narrative jokes** are a kind of humorous text understood as an extended narrative told in the first or third person, in which the sequential development of events culminates in an unexpected comic resolution.

(238) *I got 50 dollars from my mom. She told me to take my brother to the movies, but not to bring him home before 6, so they had time to prepare his surprise birthday party. That’s the day I realized he was the favorite twin.* (Eric Lawrence, 2023)

The text of the joke (238) has a narrative structure: exposition “I got 50 dollars from my mom”, development of the action “mother’s instructions”, climax “That’s the day I realized he was the favorite twin”. The comedy is realized through a gradual reevaluation of the situation: initially it is presented as neutral (the narrator carries out a task), and only the final phrase forces the recipient, having learned the sibling relationship type (twins), to reinterpret the entire narrative.

**Cumulative jokes (triples)** are a variety of jokes whose structure contains a multiple repetition of a certain plot element with the gradual addition of new details, ultimately leading to a comic finale.

(239) *First child eats dirt, dad calls the doctor.*

*Second child eats dirt, dad cleans out their mouth.*

*Third child eats dirt, dad wonders if he still needs to make lunch.*

(Longjumping\_Glass157, 2025)

The joke (239) consists of three parallel constructions united by a common narrative opening “[number] child eats dirt”, after which the father’s reaction is given. The gradation of indifference “alarm → minimal intervention → full acceptance of eating dirt as an alternative to lunch” creates a series of escalating absurdity that reaches its peak in the finale.

## GENRE VARIETIES OF THE MONOLOGIC FORM

**“Yo mama” jokes** are a type of joke aimed at mocking the interlocutor’s mother through hyperbolized statements about her weight, intelligence or behavior. This type of joke is realized through a two-component structure: the initial formula “Yo mama is

so...” that sets the comic context and the final punchline, in which the statement is taken to an offensive comic effect.

(240) *Yo Mama is so fat that every time she sits down, they have to add a new country to the map.* (PapaSmurf333, n.d.).

The joke (240) is built on a fixed model: the first component, presented as the opening formula “Yo Mama is so fat”, introduces the target of mockery (the interlocutor’s mother) and the trait (excessive weight); the second component, the punchline, is an unreal, hyperbolized justification. Thus, two incompatible frames are overlaying: the parameters of the human body and the scale of geopolitical space – the act of sitting down is conceptualized as a “tectonic shift”. The humor rests on the impossibility of literal interpretation, which is nevertheless presented as a logical consequence.

Dad jokes (anti-humor / groan humor) were examined and characterized above within the dialogic form but the material shows that they can also be realized in monologic form.

(241) *Why couldn’t the dad help his son put his shoes on? They weren’t the dad’s size!* (OPTimberSycamore, 2024)

At first glance, the structure of the joke reproduces a riddle joke: the question part “Why couldn’t the dad help his son put his shoes on?” creates in the recipient an expectation of a logical answer that would explain the cause of the failure, and the answer “They weren’t the dad’s size!” is presented as one that fully matches the “question-resolution” format. However, this illustrative material should be qualified as a typical example of dad jokes as a subtype of anti-humor, whose defining feature is a banal, absurd punchline that does not satisfy the listener’s expectations.

### STRUCTURAL CLASSIFICATION: MIXED FORM

**Compressed mixed-form narrative jokes** are relatively short to their category of humorous stories that combine narration and the dialogic speech of characters in their structure.

(242) *Grandma saw on TV news that a car is driving against the traffic on the highway. / Remembering that grandpa is coming back home from the city on the same highway, she called him to warn him. / “Honey, be careful driving, apparently there is a person driving in the wrong direction on the road.” / “What do you mean a person?” Grandpa yelled, “Everyone is driving insanely today!”* (davaokid, 2022)

The structure of the joke (242) is presented as a narrative: an exposition that introduces the motive for the call transitions into dialogue. Humor is created through a conflict of perspectives: the grandmother’s message is based on the presupposition “one wrong-way driver”, while the grandfather’s reaction reveals that he himself is that wrong-way driver, perceiving everyone else as driving incorrectly.

**Expanded mixed-form narrative jokes** are jokes, as represented in the example (243), characterized by a developed compositional structure with a setup, development

of events and an unexpected comic resolution, in which authorial narration and the characters' lines are combined.

(243) *Johnny is staying with his grandparents. Grandma goes out to get groceries, while Grandpa stays home to look after Johnny. When Grandma gets home, the house is a mess. All of the couch cushions are torn up, paint is all over the walls, and the dog is hiding under the bed. Grandma asks Grandpa: "What the hell happened?" Grandpa replies: "Do you remember two days ago, when we caught Johnny sneaking chocolate before dinner?" / "Yes..." / "Well, you remember that I made him eat chocolate until he barfed. And after that, he didn't like chocolate no more." / "Yes, but today-" / "And you remember yesterday, when we caught Johnny playing video games past his bedtime?" / "Yes..." / "Well, you remember I made Johnny play video games until his eyes hurt. And after that, he didn't like video games no more." / "Yes, but what happened today?" / "Well, today I caught him sneaking some from our cocaine stash." ("Johnny is staying with his grandparents", n.d.)*

#### Conclusions:

1) The textual structure of a joke correlates with the mechanism of comic effect creation. In the dialogic form, humor is born through the clash of two communicative perspectives; in the monologic form, through the effect of defeated expectation; and the mixed form synthesizes both principles;

2) Structural and genre classifications are complementary. The structural form describes the organization of speech in the text and the genre variety describes the cultural formula and the recipient's expectations;

3) Humor is a system with rules and expectations. The joke as a discourse genre presupposes that both sides – the teller and the recipient – possess certain shared information, including recognition of a stable structural and genre form. Collective knowledge about cultural stereotypes and the typical ways of interaction among characteristic participants forms part of the recipient's presuppositional background, making it possible to decode the received information and recognize incongruity. All this testifies that the joke is a cultural construct;

4) The diversity of structural and genre varieties, given a relatively limited number of humor-creation mechanisms (pun, semantic shift, literalization of an expression, substitution) may indicate that the comic is invariant, while the structural and genre varieties are variable means of its realization. In other words, the same mechanism can be realized through different textual forms, and in each case, it remains recognizable and therefore – productive.

### **Conclusions to Chapter 3**

Viewing the findings from the ethnocultural, lexical, syntactic and textual levels of analysis together, a single structuring principle emerges: the English family joke is a culturally framed, cognitively anticipated and stylistically regulated genre that produces humor through exploitation of incongruity-resolution mechanism. Whether the “inappropriateness” is ethnoculturally triggered (activation of a cultural frame followed by expectation violation), semantically driven (clash of incompatible conceptual scripts) or structurally developed (controlled withholding and release of information), the cognitive trajectory remains invariant: the recipient is led along a stable interpretive path and then forced into an abrupt reorientation.

Stylistic organization, in this view, is the primary instrument of humor production. Stylistic means provoking literalization of figurative meaning, frame substitution, defeated expectation, retrospective reinterpretation, recurring at the lexical, syntactic and textual levels, repeatedly emerge simultaneously within a single joke, thus standing for a complex set of internalized processing mechanisms, often grounding, among other things, on shared cultural knowledge ensuring sufficient scope of knowledge for humor decoding as cognitive performance.

## General conclusions

The concept FAMILY occupies a position of structural primacy within human cognition that no other social formation quite matches. Unlike most conceptual domains, which are acquired through cultural exposure or deliberate learning, FAMILY is experienced before it can be reflected upon: the family unit constitutes the primary environment of human cognitive and social development, and membership in it is among the few genuinely universal conditions of human existence.

Precisely because the family is experienced so uniformly, human cognition constructs a stabilized, idealized representation around it – an Idealized Cognitive Model in which roles are clearly distributed, boundaries are maintained, affective bonds are reciprocal, behavioral expectations are reliably fulfilled. ICM functions as a prototype against which particular instances are measured. The idealized model of FAMILY is collectively constructed, sustained and transmitted through communicative practice. It is, in short, a shared fiction that is socially necessary and perpetually at odds with lived experience. This tension is what a joke, as a discourse genre, inhabits and exploits. The study has demonstrated that the English family joke functions as a mechanism of ICM disruption: it activates the idealized model, develops the recipient's adjustment with its normative expectations and then introduces an incongruity that renders those expectations untenable. The joke stages the permanent discrepancy between what FAMILY is supposed to be and what those who live in one know it to be. This is why family jokes are recognizable and cross-generationally stable: they do not invent their incongruities but reveal those already latent in the structure of the concept itself.

The analysis has shown that the concept FAMILY, as activated in humorous discourse, spreads into a network of interconnected sub-concepts: status-role, locative, event and axiological – each of which constitutes its own structured domain of collective knowledge. They have been regarded as cognitive nodes, each encoding precipitated cultural understanding of how roles are distributed, how domestic space is organized, how family events unfold and how actions within the family unit are evaluated. Together, they form an interlocking semantic architecture in which no single sub-concept is isolable. The family joke, even in its most compressed form, draws on this entire relational network simultaneously. The joke operates by targeting specific components of the mentioned network: individual frame slots, script stages, and subjecting them to manipulation: inversion, substitution or displacement. The disruption of a single node is sufficient to destabilize the entire interconnected structure, producing the cascade of reinterpretation that culminates in the punchline.

These cognitive operations are observable through language. The research includes the analysis of lexical, lexico-syntactic and syntactic devices has established that stylistic organization is the primary instrument through which mental structures are activated and ultimately disrupted. Devices such as irony, hyperbole, pun, sarcasm, and dysphemism are the mechanisms by which incompatible frames are simultaneously

loaded into the recipient's cognitive space, so that the release of information is timed to maximize incongruity, and the shift from one interpretive frame to another is triggered. The layering of multiple devices within a single joke – a recurrent pattern across the corpus, reflects the cognitive complexity of the operations being performed: the simultaneous management of several conceptual frames requires equally simultaneous stylistic signaling at multiple levels. Form and cognitive function are, at this level of analysis, inseparable.

The entire outlined process, however, is conditional on reception and decoding, which emphasizes the recipient's role in constructing meaning through prior knowledge. It includes command of the relevant ICM that the joke activates, awareness of the stylistic conventions that signal incongruity, and, in the case of ethno-specifically marked humor, possession of the cultural code without which the frame cannot be activated at all. Humor, from this perspective, is therefore an intersubjective event: it occurs in the space between the encoded incongruity and the culturally competent decoder. Thus, the family joke is simultaneously a linguistic artifact, a cognitive performance and a social act – the one that both presupposes and reinforces the shared conceptual repertoire of the community that produces and circulates it.

The findings of the study open several directions for continued inquiry. The conceptual framework, developed here, may be applied comparatively across other linguo-cultures, enabling systematic investigation of whether the depicted genre's structure is language-specific or cross-linguistic. The quantitative stylistic profile established for English family humor provides a baseline against which data from other languages could be measured, potentially revealing culturally specific strategies of comic nomination and frame manipulation. The study's methodology combining cognitive-semantic, linguo-cultural and stylistic analysis within a corpus-based framework may equally serve as a model for the investigation of humor in other discourse genres where the same mechanisms of ICM disruption are supposedly functional.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Status-role concept HUSBAND

	ICM	Enacted in jokes
Role	Spousal	
Role status	Declared dominant	Enacted subordinate
Function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Breadwinner / provider</li> <li>● Head of household</li> <li>● Decision-maker</li> <li>● Protector of family order</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Evader of responsibility</li> <li>● Recipient of punishment</li> <li>● Agent of norm violation</li> <li>● Passive experiencer</li> </ul>
Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To make decisions</li> <li>● To set behavioral norms</li> <li>● To allocate resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To construct excuses</li> <li>● To spend family resources autonomously</li> <li>● No actual authority exercised</li> </ul>
Privilege	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Autonomous action outside the home</li> <li>● Final word in conflict</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Exploits the privilege of autonomous action → triggers WIFE's punitive power</li> <li>● Privilege becomes the mechanism of self-undermining</li> </ul>
Typical traits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reliability</li> <li>● Moral authority</li> <li>● Accountability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Tendency towards deviance (drinking, partying)</li> <li>● Cowardice</li> <li>● Recklessness with shared resources</li> </ul>
Behavioral manifestations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Verbal authority / commands</li> <li>● Physical protection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Non-verbal anxiety</li> <li>● Physical vulnerability</li> <li>● Emotional: surprise when unpunished</li> </ul>

**Appendix B****Status-role concept WIFE**

	ICM	Enacted in jokes
Role	Spousal	
Role status	Declared subordinate	Enacted dominant
Function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Supportive / domestic</li> <li>● Emotional caregiver</li> <li>● Secondary decision-taker</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Controlling (strictness, silence as weapon)</li> <li>● Punitive agent (physical violence)</li> <li>● Real power-holder (manages all key decisions)</li> </ul>
Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Influence through care</li> <li>● Limited household management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Power to punish (verbal barrage, physical force)</li> <li>● Power to withhold speech as sanction</li> <li>● Power to set actual life conditions</li> </ul>
Privilege	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Receiving care and protection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Having the last word</li> <li>● Accessing private space</li> <li>● Delegating symbolic decisions to HASBAND while retaining real ones</li> </ul>
Typical traits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Patience</li> <li>● Supportiveness</li> <li>● Emotional availability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Strictness / harshness</li> <li>● Hidden agency</li> <li>● Strategic intelligence</li> </ul>
Behavioral manifestations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Verbal warmth</li> <li>● Domestic action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Non-verbal sanction: silence</li> <li>● Verbal: tirade as artillery</li> <li>● Emotional: anger</li> </ul>

## Appendix C

## Status-role concept FATHER

	ICM	Enacted in jokes
Role	Parental	
Role status	Declared dominant/symmetrical	Enacted subordinate
Function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provider</li> <li>● Authority figure</li> <li>● Educator</li> <li>● Protector</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Delegator of responsibility to MOTHER</li> <li>● Functionally absent in CHILD's life</li> <li>● Covert participant in CHILD's deviant behavior</li> <li>● Recipient of CHILD's evaluation</li> </ul>
Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To make decisions</li> <li>● To educate</li> <li>● To discipline</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To delegate</li> <li>● No disciplinary power exercised</li> </ul>
Privilege	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Commanding obedience</li> <li>● Setting norms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Evading responsibility</li> <li>● Receiving recognition from CHILD as 'best friend'</li> </ul>
Typical traits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reliability</li> <li>● Competence</li> <li>● Moral example</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Incompetence in CHILD rearing</li> <li>● Deviance / irresponsibility</li> <li>● Unintentional humor</li> <li>● 'Dad joke' production as trait</li> </ul>
Behavioral manifestations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Directive speech</li> <li>● Protective action</li> <li>● Moral guidance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Verbal delegation: 'ask your mother'</li> <li>● Emotional: happy tear at being called best friend'</li> <li>● Ignorance of CHILDREN's existence (expressed non-verbally)</li> </ul>

## Appendix D

## Status-role concept MOTHER

	ICM	Enacted in jokes
Role	Parental	
Role status	Declared symmetrical	Enacted dominant
Function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Emotional caregiver</li> <li>● Domestic organizer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● De facto problem-solver</li> <li>● Omniscient tracker of CHILD's life</li> <li>● Normative evaluator</li> <li>● Central authority figure</li> </ul>
Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Emotional influence</li> <li>● Domestic decisions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To set conditions of obedience</li> <li>● To evaluate CHILD's behavior</li> <li>● Receives all delegated problems from FATHER</li> </ul>
Privilege	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Receiving care from SPOUSE</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Being the ultimate arbiter of family life</li> <li>● Accessing CHILD's inner world</li> </ul>
Typical traits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Nurturing warmth</li> <li>● Partial knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Omniscience</li> <li>● Emotional responsiveness – anger in case of norm violation</li> </ul>
Behavioral manifestations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Verbal warmth</li> <li>● Caretaking action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Verbal: anger, interrogation</li> <li>● Non-verbal: serving as the reference point around which all family roles orient</li> <li>● Postural: the one whom everything revolves around</li> </ul>

## Appendix E

**Status-role concept CHILD/GRANDCHILD**

	ICM	Enacted in jokes
Role	Filial	
Role status	Declared subordinate	Enacted dominant
Function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Recipient of parental care</li> <li>● Object of socialization</li> <li>● Obedient follower</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Initiator of communication</li> <li>● Transmitter of information between adults</li> <li>● Agent of parental destabilization</li> <li>● Informant / betrayer of PARENT to GRANDPARENT</li> </ul>
Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● None – subordinate position</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To redirect adult interaction</li> <li>● To transmit private information across generational boundaries</li> <li>● To give symbolic recognition</li> </ul>
Privilege	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Receiving care, protection, resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Accessing GRANDPARENT as confidant</li> <li>● Evaluating and passing verdict on PARENT</li> </ul>
Typical traits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Naivety</li> <li>● Obedience</li> <li>● Dependence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Naivety as agentive force</li> <li>● Dual loyalty</li> <li>● Unintentionally humorous</li> </ul>
Behavioral manifestations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Passive reception</li> <li>● Obedient response</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Verbal: initiating requests, delivering verdicts</li> <li>● Non-verbal: unanimous group action</li> <li>● Emotional: excitement, enthusiasm</li> </ul>

## Appendix F

## Status-role concept SIBLING

	ICM	Enacted in jokes
Role	Filial	
Role status	Declared symmetrical	Enacted competitive (dominant + subordinate)
Function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Peer companionship</li> <li>● Mutual support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Competitors for parental recognition</li> <li>● Rivals in asserting dominance</li> </ul>
Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● None hierarchically</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To escalate conflict</li> <li>● To evaluate and outperform</li> </ul>
Privilege	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Mutual recognition</li> <li>● Shared resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Claiming superiority</li> </ul>
Typical traits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Solidarity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Competitive escalation</li> </ul>
Behavioral manifestations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Verbal negotiation</li> <li>● Cooperative action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Gestural: hand-level patience gesture</li> <li>● Postural: stepping back, spatial repositioning</li> <li>● Non-verbal: broadcasting from the Moon</li> <li>● Verbal: disputing</li> </ul>

## Appendix G

**Status-role concept GRANDFATHER**

	ICM	Enacted in jokes
Role	Grandparental	
Role status	Declared dominant	Partly-subordinate
Function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Wisdom-transmitter</li> <li>● Normative authority by age</li> <li>● Family elder</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Normative evaluator who fails to decode the present</li> <li>● Patient whose life/death determines family outcomes</li> </ul>
Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Appealing to tradition and past</li> <li>● Setting generational standards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Appealing to the past as a critical standard: 'back in my days'</li> <li>● No power over present family behavior</li> </ul>
Privilege	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Respect and deference</li> <li>● Receiving care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Appealing to the past</li> <li>● Being passively positioned as both patient and obstacle</li> </ul>
Typical traits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Wisdom</li> <li>● Dignity</li> <li>● Generativity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Communicative incompetence across generations</li> <li>● Emotional instability: yelling</li> </ul>
Behavioral manifestations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Calm authoritative speech</li> <li>● Wise counsel</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Verbal: yelling, complaining</li> <li>● Emotional: frustration, indignation</li> </ul>

## Appendix H

**Status-role concept GRANDMOTHER**

	ICM	Enacted in jokes
Role	Grandparental	
Role status	Declared subordinate	Enacted dominant
Function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Caring elder</li> <li>● Comforter</li> <li>● Family memory-keeper</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Strategic manipulator</li> <li>● Recipient of private information about PARENTS (=their children)</li> </ul>
Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Soft authority through love and memory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Power to set conditions framed as desire</li> <li>● Power to receive and hold private information</li> </ul>
Privilege	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Deference</li> <li>● Being cherished</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Accessing private information from CHILD about PARENTS</li> </ul>
Typical traits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Warmth</li> <li>● Passivity</li> <li>● Unconditional love</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Dark humor</li> <li>● Hidden manipulation</li> <li>● Trustworthy confidant for CHILD, threat for PARENT</li> </ul>
Behavioral manifestations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Verbal warmth</li> <li>● Physical affection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Verbal (reported): death-wish</li> <li>● Non-verbal presence: operates entirely through reported speech / mediated transmission</li> <li>● Positional: confidant, information node</li> </ul>

## Appendix I

## Matrix of stylistic devices distributed across the FAMILY member concepts

Stylistic Device	WIFE	HUSBAND	MOTHER	FATHER	CHILD	SIBLING	GRANDCHILD	GRANDFATHER	GRANDMOTHER	TOTAL
Irony	12	11	9	8	10	3	2	6	7	68
Hyperbole	8	7	8	6	9	2	1	4	5	50
Metaphor	9	6	5	5	7	4	1	3	3	43
Pun	7	6	3	4	5	2	2	3	3	35
Simile	6	4	4	3	8	3	1	2	2	33
Enumeration	4	3	7	4	6	1	1	2	2	30
Sarcasm	6	5	3	3	4	1	1	3	3	29
Antithesis	5	4	4	4	4	2	1	2	2	28
Parallelism	5	3	6	3	4	1	0	2	3	27
Dysphemism	3	3	4	3	5	2	0	1	1	22
Gradation (Climax/Anticlimax)	3	4	3	2	4	1	0	1	1	19
Epithet	3	2	3	2	4	1	1	1	2	19
Emphatic construction	3	2	4	2	4	1	0	1	2	19
Oxymoron	4	2	2	2	3	3	0	1	1	18
Periphrase	4	3	3	2	2	1	0	1	2	18
Colloquialism	3	2	3	2	4	1	0	1	1	17
Euphemism	2	1	2	3	3	0	1	2	2	16
Anaphora	2	1	4	2	3	0	0	1	1	14
Meiosis	2	2	2	1	3	1	0	1	1	13
Personification	1	2	2	2	2	1	0	1	1	12
Pejoration	2	2	2	1	3	1	0	0	1	12
Rhetorical question	2	1	2	2	3	0	0	1	1	12
Paradox	2	2	1	2	2	1	0	0	1	11
Occasionalism / Neologism	2	1	1	1	2	2	0	0	0	9
Phraseologism	2	1	2	1	2	0	0	1	0	9
Allegory	1	1	1	3	2	0	0	0	0	8
Antiphrase	2	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	8
Chiasmus	1	1	1	2	2	1	0	0	0	8
Litotes	1	1	1	1	2	0	0	1	0	7
Aposiopesis	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>621</b>