Unraveling Irony: from Linguistics to LiteraryCriticism and Back

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Abstract

This article argues for the need to strengthen the dialogue between linguistics and literary criticism to enhance existing accounts of irony in both camps. The analytical categories arising from this work allow for a more systematic study of the ins-and- outs of ironic discourse. Our proposal starts from the cognitive-linguistic view of irony,based on the activation of an echoed and an observable scenario, which are mutuallyexclusive. The clash between them gives rise to an attitudinal element. To this analysis, our proposal adds, on the basis of the more socio-cultural view of literary criticism, a consideration of felicity conditions and a distinction between two basic types of ironist and interpreter, together with a discussion of the communicative consequenc- es of their possible ways of interaction. With these tools the article introduces a degree of homogeneity in the account of the relationship between irony and its socio-cultural context across different time periods.

1 Introduction

The study of irony has been one of the concerns of traditional rhetoric and philosophy (Preminger and Brogan, 1993; see also Booth, 1974; Kaufer, 1977; Grimwood, 2008) as well as of other disciplines related to language, such as literary theory or, more recently, of linguistic accounts dealing with language-based inferential activity (cf. Athanasiadou and Colston, 2017). In the non-literary camp, going beyond traditional rhetoric, significant work has been done in research fields that can broadly be regarded as part of the linguistic enterprise, such as pragmatics (e.g. Clark and Gerrig, 1984; Wilson and Sperber, 2012; see also Attardo, 2000; Alba-Juez and Attardo, 2014; Barnden, 2017; Bertuccelli, 2018) and psycholinguistics (e.g. Giora and Fein, 1999; Colston and Gibbs, 2002; Gibbs and Colston, 2012; Colston, 2017). To a smaller extent, there is also some work in Cognitive Linguistics, within Fauconnier and Turner's (2002) Blending Theory (e.g. Pálinkás, 2014; Coulson, 2005) and in terms of cognitive modeling (e.g. Ruiz de Mendoza and Galera, 2014; Ruiz de Mendoza, 2017a). These non-literary approaches have decomposed irony into constituents (e.g. Ruiz de Mendoza, 2017a), they have examined its communicative potential (Burgers and Steen, 2017) and the cognitive processes involved in its production and interpretation (Colston, 2017). They have also discussed possible heuristic procedures to find irony in discourse (Burgers et al. 2011) and determined the place of irony within the context of other figurative uses of language (cf. Wilson and Sperber, 2012; Ruiz de Mendoza and Galera, 2014; Athanasiadou, 2017). In the camp of literary criticism, we have well-known work by Muecke (1970), Booth (1974), Hutcheon (1994), Colebrook (2004), and Goff (2007), who have generally shown interest in the most sophisticated uses of irony as a tool to subvert and question the *status quo* with much more emphasis on socio-cultural factors, the artistic influences within them, and their interconnections. In general, the study of irony suffers from the traditional lack of dialogue between linguistics and literary studies (Hussein, 2015). The present paper is an initial attempt to build the bridge between these two global perspectives on irony. There are two potential advantages to this attempt. First, in a gen-eral way, it can enrich both literary and linguistic analysis. Second, in a more specific way, it can give rise to a more comprehensive account of irony. We

will show that linguistics, more specifically the strand of Cognitive Linguistics that develops Lakoff's (1987) seminal ideas on cognitive modeling (cf. Ruiz de Mendoza and Galera 2014), can bring into this venture a set of well-crafted analytical tools while the literary approach can supply a broader range of complex uses that are useful to refine the analytical apparatus of linguistic theory.

Bearing this in mind, the rest of this article is divided into five main sections. In Section 2, we address some methodological issues. In Section 3, we first examine the role of context and the notion of ironic echo; then, we distinguish between different types of ironist and interpreter, and discuss felicity degrees in irony. In Section 4, we use these analytical categories to approach well-known ironic uses from a historical perspective. Section 5 summarizes the main findings of this article.

2 A Brief Note on Methodology

The present study is partly meta-theoretical. It seeks to determine to what extent the goals and boundaries of two disciplines traditionally characterized by the lack of mutual dialogue affect the explanatory adequacy of an account of irony. Our first step has been to examine studies of irony produced within the literary and linguistic perspectives. This has allowed us to identify analyti-cal gaps in each orientation. The proposals in linguistic accounts of irony are mainly focused on decomposing the ironic act itself, while literary accounts are geared towards the connections between irony and its historical context. This meta-theoretical study has then given way to the main theoretical pursuit of the article, i.e. improving on the existing analytical apparatus by bringing the linguistic and literary perspectives into better alignment. Thus, our next step has been to draw together complementary insights from the linguistic and literary-theory approaches while developing a set of theoretical principles that can account for such a complementariness. For the linguistic part we have selected a model of linguistic analysis which addresses the cognitive and prag-matic aspects of the phenomenon. For the literary part, we have found that the understanding of irony involves a comprehensive notion of context, which includes social, cultural, and historical factors. These have received greater at-tention in literary studies. We have also found the need to redress the gener-ally neglected balance in linguistic theory between the speaker and receiver ends of communication in examining irony. This is important for any aspect of communication, of course, but we find it particularly important in the case of irony on two counts. First, as will become evident from Section 3, irony is more complex than, for example, metaphor or hyperbole. Second, precisely

because of its more complex nature it is potentially more difficult to detect its use, which can make it a highly elitist communicative resource. The resulting account sheds light on ironist and interpreter types, the degrees of felicity of irony, and the different irony types generated throughout history. Becauseof the heavy cultural load involved in irony, we have narrowed down our analy- sis to a heterogeneous sample of sources produced in the Western world.

3 Deconstructing Irony

The approach here proposed benefits from the more contextual, receiver-oriented nature of literary studies, and the finer-grained analysis provided by linguistic theory and its characteristic capacity to make high-level gener-alizations, generally assumed to be a desirable goal in linguistic analysis (cf. Goldberg 2002: 37). The sub-sections that follow provide basic analytical tools that will be used to describe and account for the nature of the various socio-historical uses of irony in Section 4. In addition, the discussion in Section 4 will provide feedback on the adequacy of these tools.

3.1 *Context as Socio-cultural Knowledge Frames*
Irony is a strongly contextual phenomenon. Unlike metaphor, metonymy, and hyperbole, irony rarely provides straight-forward interpretations, but rather relies heavily on the context. In practice, literary theory and linguistics have approached the notion of context in somewhat different ways. Despite the-oretical claims on its importance within pragmatics and discourse studies (e.g. Vershueren, 2008), in practice, in the case of irony, its linguistic analy- sis is mostly carried out on an *ad hoc* basis in connection to the situation in which the ironic utterance is produced. This is also the case in the cognitive- linguistic attempts to deal with this phenomenon mentioned in the introduc-tion to this article. In literary theory, by contrast, the notion of context includesa detailed consideration of the socio-cultural and historical variables that canhave an effect on interpretation. Since authors of literary texts noticeably use such variables to achieve their rhetorical and artistic goals, literary theorists have never failed to address them in their full complexity as key to the un-derstanding of irony (e.g. Colebrook, 2004; Hutcheon, 1994). On the other hand, linguistics-oriented theorists have either ignored their explanatory role (e.g. Grice, 1975) or have simply acknowledged it superficially (e.g. Clark and Gerrig, 1984; Wilson and Sperber, 2012). It is in this connection that the linguis-tic analysis of irony may benefit from literary analysis.

Let us imagine a present-day situation where a foreign student arrives at a local bookstore in Germany and asks for the controversial text *Mein Kampf*,

written by Adolf Hitler. The bookseller remarks: *Of course we have that one; it's a best-seller in this country!* A superficial linguistic analysis of this example would claim that the context consists of the foreign student, the bookseller, and *Mein Kampf*. However, this view leaves aside relevant background knowl-edge on the cultural connotations of this book in present-day Germany and why it might not be on sale in the bookstore. The context of the interpreter (the foreign student) irrevocably marks the interpretation of the ironic statement. An Asian interpreter will have a different reading from that of a European one, and an educated foreign interpreter will be more likely to know about the meaning of certain culturally-loaded objects in other cultures than an un-educated one. More recently, linguistic pragmatics has proposed a broader concept of context that comprises cultural values, the observable situation, previous discourse, and world knowledge, which Sperber and Wilson (1995) call the interpreter's *cognitive environment*. However, such theorists have not yet devoted much effort to the systematization of contextual parameters.

Cognitive linguists, who add perceptual and cognitive processes to their analyses, base their understanding of context on the notion of knowledge *frames* (cf. Fillmore 1977, 1982, 1985). Frames are internally coherent schema-tizations of our experience of objects, characters, their properties, and rela-tions (see also Fillmore et al. 2003 and Boas 2005). The study of frames enables a systematic analysis of aspects of the communicative act related to world knowledge, which turns the context into a reality modeled by our brain rather than an objective external element. Furthermore, frames are dynamic and can change as our subjective and intersubjective experience of the world changes. For this reason, the notion of frame is not foreign to the inclusion of socio-cultural and historical variables. Strangely enough, the cognitive-linguistic ap-proach, in spite of its promising potential to explore socio-historical variables, has not yet taken them into account seriously for the study of irony.

The situation is somewhat different in literary studies of irony (e.g. Muecke 1969, 1970, Colebrook 2004, Hutcheon 1994). Muecke (1969:40–41) claims that achieving ironic meaning comes hand in hand with the interpretation of tex-tual and contextual clues. He further points out that these clues (and the ironic context itself) are at all times framed within a wider socio-cultural context. For instance, irony in Jane Austen's novels is sure to have been interpreted dif-ferently by Victorian women than it is interpreted today by a typical Western female audience. Following this premise, Colebrook (2004) carries out a study of irony tracing the evolution of its usage from Ancient Greece to postmodern- ism. According to this author, ironic uses in literary works emerge and experi-ence mutations throughout history owing to the evolution of artistic and social contexts. Similarly, Hutcheon (1994) claims that dissociation is not possible between the linguistic dimensions of irony and their historical, social, and

cultural context. Through the term *discursive community*, this author explains that conventions and perceptions are largely cultural, and further points out that they act as a determining factor in group cohesion. Indeed, a 21st century reader will interpret classical tragedies differently from a 5th century b.c. in-terpreter, and so would have happened had a medieval reader been confronted with irony in Wallace's (1996) *Infinite Jest.* In our previous example of the for-eign student in the German bookshop, a more decidedly contextual study of the ironic situation reveals the reasons why the student might not be able to recognize the ironic load in the bookseller's remark, i.e. based on the present-day German reticence to deal with issues related to the Nazi dictatorship. The inability to recognize this cultural situation might be common in the student's discursive community. Observations like these can be easily incorporated into a cognitive-linguistic account of irony through the notion of knowledge frames. In our view, frame-like structure comprising selected knowledge about the immediate world of our experience and any other relevant knowledge vari- able, including socio-cultural perceptions, underlies the scenarios constructed by speakers and interpreted by hearers to deal with ironic uses of language. The relevance of this assertion will become more evident in the next subsec-tion and later on in our discussion of ironic uses in Section 4.

3.2   *Ironic Echoing as a Cognitive Operation*
The notion of ironic *echo* was put forward by Sperber and Wilson (1986/1995) (see also Wilson, 2009; Wilson and Sperber, 1992, 2012). According to Wilson and Sperber (2012: 125) "irony consists in echoing a thought (e.g. a belief, an intention, a norm-based explication) attributed to an individual, a group or to people in general, and expressing a mocking, skeptical or critical attitude towards this thought". This formulation solves some, but not all of the prob-lems of previous pragmatic accounts. Initially, Grice (1975: 53) had explained irony as a "flouting" (i.e. an ostentatious breach) of the conversational maxim of truthfulness (or first maxim of quality) ('do not say that which you believe to be false') within his well-known Cooperative Principle. One weakness of this approach is that other figures of thought break the same conversational maxim in the same way. The metaphor *He is a pig* ('an immoral person'), the metonymy *I need a hand* ('help'), and the hyperbole *This bag weighs a ton* ('too much') all flout the maxim of truthfulness since they are not produced with the intention to deceive. Also, within pragmatics, Clark and Gerrig's (1984) Pretense Theory has looked at irony from the point of view of the speaker's attitude. Based on Grice's claim that "to be ironical is, among other things, to pretend", these authors have argued that irony is a type of pretense (Clark and Gerrig, 1984: 121) where the ironist openly feigns an attitude (Clark and Gerrig, 1984: 122). Thus, in talking to H (the hearer) ironically, S (the speaker)

pretends to be S' speaking to H'. H' is expected to take S' seriously while H is supposed to understand all the elements in the ironic scene. However, Pretense Theory fails to acknowledge that the notion of pretense is but the natu-ral outcome of echoing a thought in a situation where the speaker evidently does not entertain the thought. This means that the notion of echo has grater explanatory power than previous proposals within pragmatics. However, as we will see below, accounting for irony requires more than simply postulatingthe convergence of an echo and an associated attitude. A more complete ac-count of irony requires an explanation of the cognitive processes underlying its meaning effects in context, including the attitudinal element. This can be achieved by making use of the explanatory apparatus provided by Cognitive Linguistics.

The notion of echo has been incorporated into Cognitive Linguistics by Ruiz de Mendoza (2017a). In this account a distinction is made between *echoic mention*, as a pragmatic phenomenon, and *echoing* as a cognitive opera- tion on a par with other cognitive operations identified in Ruiz de Mendoza (2011, 2017b). Echoic mention results from the activity of echoing a previousthought, whether explicit (i.e. linguistically expressed) or implicit (as in the case of socio-cultural stereotyped cognitive models or in attributed beliefs). In this cognitive-linguistic account, it is further pointed out that the attitude of dissociation acknowledged by Wilson and Sperber arises from a clash, in the speaker's mind, between an *echoed scenario* and an *observable scenario*.The clash itself is the result of a *contrasting* cognitive operation that brings into focus the discrepancies between the two scenarios (Ruiz de Mendoza and Galera, 2014; Ruiz de Mendoza, 2017a,b). This dissection of the ironic act re-veals the intrinsic conceptual complexity of irony, which is present even in thesimplest uses of this figure of thought. Consider the sentence *Nice, sunny dayindeed!* in the following plausible scenario. Imagine it was uttered in a situa- tion in which the speaker thought he was going to enjoy good weather but in-stead the day is cold and rainy. Evidently, this utterance echoes a relevant partof the speaker's misled thought, with all the meaning implications that arise from the speaker's beliefs while having such thought; for example, a nice day is enjoyable, good for an outing, etc. This is the echoed scenario. The observable scenario contains elements that contrast sharply with the relevant elements of the echoed scenario, which include foul weather that cannot be enjoyed andis bad for an outing. This clash between scenarios has two consequences: one is the cancellation of erroneous assumptions; the other, since the speaker real- izes that he was wrong, is the activation of the attitudinal element, which in this example could be one of skepticism, frustration, or even irritation.

As noted in Section 2, other figures of thought are cognitively simpler than irony. For example, metaphor involves either correlating or comparing two

conceptual domains (Grady, 1999). Conceptual correlation arises from our everyday experience with the world. Thus, we think of quantity in terms of height because of our experience with piling up objects or pouring liquids into containers and seeing levels rise as the quantity gets bigger. This underlies expressions like *Taxes are always on the rise*, *Prices go up*, and *He has a high iq*. Comparison involves finding attributes shared by two conceptual domains in terms of primary properties such as color, size, and shape. For example, *Her teeth are pearls* leads to thinking of the whiteness and brightness of teeth through corresponding features in pearls.

This does not mean that metaphor cannot be complex, but metaphorical complexity, when it happens, does not arise from the combination of cognitive operations as in irony. It arises from one of two sources. One is the activation of complex scenarios. The other is what has been termed *metaphorical amalgamation*, which is the integration of at least two metaphors into one (Ruiz de Mendoza, 2017b: 152–155). An example of metaphorical complexity involving a complex scenario, is provided by the following lines from Romeo and Juliet (Act 5, scene 3: 92–93):

> Death, that hath suck'd the honey of thy breath,
> Hath had no power yet upon thy beauty.

These lines personify death and beauty, and attribute sweetness to the soul, to convey the impression of a willful struggle between death and Juliet, where Juliet's sweet life has been taken from her but not her beauty. An example of metaphorical amalgam is found in the sentence *My boss is a pig*, which integrates the correlation metaphor INMORALITY IS FILTH into the resemblance metaphor PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS (cf. Ruiz de Mendoza, 2017b: 153).

Turning back to irony, Ruiz de Mendoza (2017a: 184) notes that the element of pretense that some authors (e.g. Clark and Gerrig, 1984; Kumon-Nakamura, Glucksberg and Brown, 1995; Currie, 2006; Récanati, 2007; Popa-Wyatt, 2014; and Barnden, 2017) claim to be central to irony is in fact grounded in an echo. If we take again the example of the foreign student in the German bookshop, the utterance *Of course we have that one; it's a best-seller in this country!* is ironic not only because it contradicts the bookseller's intended meaning, but because what he says echoes a thought attributed to the student (i.e. that he thinks *Mein Kampf* can easily be found in any German bookshop because the book is highly popular), which clashes with what present-day Germans believe (i.e. that *Mein Kampf* is not a book for a common bookseller to distribute). Maybe the bookseller assumed that his remark (perhaps through its intonational fea-tures) could make the student become aware that there was something socially

unacceptable about his request that could lead him to re-examine his assump- tions on present-day Germans and detect the echo. Or the bookseller might have been too optimistic about the student's cultural background thus risking not being interpreted as ironic. The true nature of the "pretense" act (where the bookseller behaves as if it were obvious that he should have a copy of *Mein Kampf*) can only be unveiled if both the echoed scenario (that the bookseller has copies of *Mein Kampf*) and the observable scenario (that the bookseller won't sell *Mein Kampf*) are discovered and contrasted. Hence, the notion of pretense is epiphenomenal and should be integrated within a broader, cognitively- oriented scenario-based account of irony.

Other approaches to meaning construction within Cognitive Linguistics, like Blending Theory, though inclusive of the cultural nature of irony, have ex- cluded the notion of echo from their paradigms. Coulson (2005) claims that irony occurs in a blended mental space, which is a repository of conceptual structure projected from various input mental spaces (Fauconnier and Turner, 2002). In the case of irony, it is in a blended space where the tension between a counterfactual trigger and the expected reaction are brought together. Accord- ing to Coulson (2005), in the example *I love people who signal*, uttered by the speaker after being cut off in traffic, irony arises in the blended space where the expected reaction of the speaker (chastisement of the driver's action) and the counterfactual trigger (the compliment towards his action) converge. Evidently, this theory fails to acknowledge the existence of an observable scenario (the fact that the driver has broken traffic laws). Rather than with observable and echoic scenarios, Coulson (2005) deals with the conventional and counter-conventional dimensions of a situation. However, both dimen- sions may well be subsumed within the scenario-based account mentioned above. The speaker in *I love people who signal* echoes the social convention whereby obedience to the law is commendable. This is the counterfactual trig- ger. But the observable situation clashes with this echoed convention, which is intended to lead the interpreter to the derivation of negative attitudinal overtones. These are consistent with the expected reaction of criticism on the driver's disregard for traffic regulations. However, the blending approach to irony does not explain one of its central components: the speaker's attitude. Hence, despite the originality of the Blending Theory proposal, it is to be dis- carded in favor of an account in which the clash between echoed and observ- able scenarios underlies the ironic attitude.

3.3   *A Taxonomy of Ironists and Interpreters*
In spite of the abundance of classifications of such aspects of irony as the degree of stability of its interpretation (Booth, 1974) and its uses in different

socio-historical contexts (Muecke, 1970), little has been done to classify other components of the phenomenon. As a result, there is not yet a discrete typol-ogy of the components of the ironic act. Producing such a typology is essential to further expand the analytical framework supplied by the cognitive-linguistic distinction between echoed and observable scenarios. The previous sections have provided initial evidence of the relevance of the interpreter's ability to recognize an ironic echo, which proves to be as important as the ironist's con-struction of the echoic utterance. When taking these factors together with a richer contextual approach into account, several types of ironists and inter-preters emerge. We provide but a first approximation to the basic categories that arise from the data analyzed so far. The resulting taxonomy will prove use- ful for the analysis of the more complex cases of irony discussed in Section 4.

We make an initial distinction between two basic subcategories: *solidary* and *hierarchical* ironists (see Table 1 below). Solidary ironists aim at being un-derstood and their ironic utterances are meant to be shared by the interpreter. On the other hand, hierarchical ironists look down on their audiences, who are not to be treated as their equals. Thus, the intentions of a speaker who ironizes with her friend about the weather differ from those of a company worker who uses irony to point to a difference in hierarchy with other co-workers. While

TABle 1   Basic types of ironists and interpreters

Ironist type	Description	Interpreter type	Description
Solidary	The ironist's remark is meant to be clear to the interpreter. The ironist has no intention to show any superiority over the interpreter.	**Naïve**	The interpreter does not share with the ironist all relevant interpre-tive clues.
Hierarchical	The ironist uses irony to mark himself off as superior to the interpreter. There are two main reasons for this, which are not exclusive of each other: a. Show superior economic, social, intellectual, political, or cultural status. b. Humiliate the hearer.	**Non-naïve**	The interpreter shares with the ironist all relevant interpretive clues.

the first type of ironist builds complicity, the second creates distance through humiliation for humiliation's sake.

It could be argued that the distinction between solidary and hierarchical ironists is but a manifestation of a general feature of communication that was essentially captured in Grice's (1975) well-known Cooperative Principle. A solidary ironist could be said to be a cooperative one and a hierarchical ironist an uncooperative one. However, this is not the case. Irony, whichever the type of ironist, is by definition a breach of the truthfulness maxim of the Coopera- tive Principle, like all other figures of thought. Solidary ironists are cooperative only in the sense that they do their best for their ironic attitude to be captured by the hearer. Hierarchical ironists, on the other hand, are hardly cooperative in this sense, since they use irony to show off their superior ingenuity and/ or address a select type of interpreter. Of course, many uses of language can be hierarchical (i.e. elitist), especially if they involve figures of thought, but irony, because of its greater conceptual complexity, is particularly apt for this purpose. This is clearly evidenced in some of the uses addressed in Section 4 later on.

The elitist nature of irony has often been noted in literary analysis (Hutcheon 1994: 40; see also Colebrook 2004). However, this is by no means a constitu- tive feature of all types of ironic utterances, nor is it exclusive of literature. As emphasized by Herrero (2009), Athanasiadou (2017), and Gibbs and Samermit (2017), among others, irony is an everyday language phenomenon and we can find ironic elitism in non-literary contexts (e.g. among classmates, when they act as clique, in a political debate, in a quarrel, etc.). In any event, the realiza- tion of the potential elitism of irony by virtue of its cognitive complexity al- lows for a distinction between two types of ironist and two types of interpreter. On the one hand, since *naïve* interpreters do not share with the ironist the necessary information to interpret the utterance, they are less likely to detect the echo and the clash of scenarios and may need extra clues to do so. On the other hand, *non-naïve* interpreters do share the necessary knowledge to derive the ironic meaning of the utterance and are more likely to identify the echo and the clash.

As shown in table 2 below, the basic types of ironist and interpreter can be combined, yielding several possible situations. To begin with, no matter wheth- er the ironist is hierarchical or solidary, if the interpreter is a naïve one, efforts will be meaningless and extra cues necessary in order to make interpretation feasible. When we have a non-naïve interpreter, irony is more likely to be suc- cessful, and more so if the target of the ironic remark is a well-delineated one. If the aim of an ironic remark is to express a personal attitude in the face of a breach of expectations (usually the case with solidary ironists), the role of the

TABle 2   Basic combinations of ironists and interpreters

	Naïve interpreter	**Non-naïve interpreter**
Solidary ironist	The ironist's efforts to be understood might not always be successful.	There is no need of solidarity, since the interpreter already shares the relevant interpretive clues to understand the irony.
Hierarchical ironist	Only useful when the ironic target differs from the interpret-er (e.g. when the ironist derides the target). Otherwise, there is no use in building irony, since it will not be interpreted as such.	Most relevant type of irony, intended to highlight the status of social relations.

non-naïve interpreter will be reduced to becoming aware of such a situation and taking a stance on it. Communicative situations based on a hierarchical ironist and a non-naïve interpreter are aimed at highlighting social relations. It is this combination that sometimes underlies sarcasm, understood as an aggressive type of irony with clearer cues and a clear target (cf. Attardo 2000: 795). Whether sarcastic or not, this combination results in an ironic type that is frequently exploited in literary texts.

3.4   *The Felicity of Irony*

In principle, the way in which the ironist constructs the ironic act can have an effect on its degree of felicity. In this connection, a solidary ironist, who strives to provide enough interpretive clues by assisting the interpreter in building the right observable scenario and in detecting the elements of it that contrast with the echoed scenario, is likely to produce more felicitous cases of irony than a hierarchical ironist. However, the degree of felicity of an ironic act is ultimately a matter of the interpreter. Even a highly hierarchical ironist can be interpret-ed by a non-naïve interpreter given the right interpretive environment. This point should be beyond dispute. However, there are other less evident felicity requirements that relate not to the interpreter type but to other elements of the ironic event. Thus, the ironic import of any textual output is more easily recognized to the extent that the interpreter can recognize the clash between an echoed and an observable scenario. As noted in Ruiz de Mendoza (2017a), echoes can be full or partial, but partial echoes do not necessarily affect the

recognition of irony. For example, the utterance *A great man!* is only a partial echo of *Smith is a great man!* However, since the partial version can afford access, through contextualized pragmatic saturation (cf. Récanati, 2004), to all relevant information, it can be communicatively as efficient as its full counterpart (or even more, if following standard relevance-theoretic claims, we understand communicative efficiency in terms of the balance between processing economy and meaning effects). However, in our view, it is also necessary to distinguish accurate from inaccurate (or non-exact) echoes. The latter may not provide clear access to the target utterance or thought thus endangering the building of the relevant echoed scenario and, as a consequence, the recogni-tion of irony. For the same utterance above, *Smith is a great man*, a paraphrase like *Smith is a praiseworthy man* could destroy irony, unless the inaccuracy of the echo is compensated by ironic markers, whether in the form of extra-claus-al constituents (e.g. *Yeah, right, Smith is a praiseworthy man*) or through intonational or gestural support. The possible outcomes are summarized in table 3. If we return to the German bookstore example, the bookseller's remark might have been inaccurately recognized by the foreign student, who might realize that the book he is asking for has negative connotations in Germany, or even know that the author of the book was a Nazi. However, if the student knows about the book and its surrounding connotations and cultural meaning, he will attain a full recognition of the echo. The same can be said of ironies built into artistic and literary texts. In Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, the author acts as a hierarchical ironist who uses analogy to convey certain political views on the society of his time. The most naïve kind of interpreter might take the text as a true factual narration. Let us not forget that Swift's text was published only seven years after Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, which sought to make the reader believe that the adventures narrated in the novel were real even though they were not. In this literary context, while a naïve interpreter might read

TABlе 3 Degrees of felicity in irony

eCHO	CLASH	DEGREE OF FELICITY
+ RECOGNITION OF THE ECHO	+ RECOGNITION OF THE CLASH	++
+ RECOGNITION OF THE ECHO	− RECOGNITION OF THE CLASH	+
− RECOGNITION OF THE ECHO	+ RECOGNITION OF THE CLASH	−
− RECOGNITION OF THE ECHO	− RECOGNITION OF THE CLASH	−−

Gulliver's Travels as a fantasy book, a non-naïve one would identify the echo with enough precision to render the irony felicitous.

4   Ironic Uses and Cognitive Modeling

Literary accounts of irony have more often than not acknowledged the existence of various *ironic uses*, alternatively labeled *ironic types*. For example, we can differentiate between Socratic and postmodern irony, the former having an argumentative purpose while the latter is focused on cynicism (Sloane, 2001: 405). Muecke (1969) proposes a large number of irony types but without providing a solid classificatory criterion. Such labels as ironic modesty, irony by analogy, non-verbal irony, dramatic irony, unconscious irony, cosmic irony, self-betraying irony, irony of events, Catch 22 irony, reveal a highly heterogeneous collection of classificatory dimensions: modesty and analogy are ironic devices; verbal and non-verbal irony refers to the communicative situation; the label dramatic irony is associated with a literary genre, unconscious irony with the speaker's intent, and cosmic irony with fate; self-betraying irony has to do with the false image of characters, irony of events with the expected outcome of events, and Catch 22 irony, much like fate, with inescapable ("no-win") situations. A more recent study by Colebrook (2004) attempts to relate the historical contexts in Western literature to the wide variety of uses of irony. To Colebrook, some of these, as is the case with dramatic irony, can be found in works from different artistic periods. Nevertheless, this author fails to observe that these uses can be grouped according to their roots and that some of them, as is the case of postmodern irony, are but the result of the evolution of previ- ous ones. Instead, our study argues that there is a limited number of ironic uses that evolve over time and give rise to variants, many of which can be attested in literary language.

   In Ancient Greece we find the first uses of this figure of thought, known as Socratic, dramatic, satiric, and rhetoric irony. The Middle Ages introduced a fifth type, which, from the point of view of the view on cognitive processes introduced herein, consisted in echoing the author's creative processes. This ironic type would later be termed romantic irony. We consider these five uses *basic*, since they lie at the roots of other more sophisticated developments or *non-basic* uses, which comprise any of the five basic types in their adapta-tion to new social, historical, and cultural contexts. The distinction between basic and non-basic categories is grounded in only one taxonomic dimension, which is the purpose of irony understood in terms of its social, cultural, and historical context. Unlike other proposals, this distinction brings simplicity

and homogeneity into the account. Ironic uses will be explained in depth in the sections to follow.

4.1 *Basic Uses of Irony*

Basic uses of irony can be found in the earliest stages of development of irony, in Ancient Greece and the Middle Ages, when much of the communicative and transformative power of irony was yet to be discovered. Such a develop-ment goes hand in hand with socio-historical changes giving rise to particular communicative needs that press for ironic usage. Thus, Socratic, rhetoric, satiric, and dramatic irony were but responses to the needs to teach and per- suade that characterized the sophisticated political and educational system in Ancient Greece. Romantic irony, on a different note, begins in the Middle Ages as a self-reflective, playful resource.

4.1.1 Socratic Irony

Socratic irony, which was a component of Socrates's famous maieutic method, is based on the ironist feigning his ignorance to raise the pupil's awareness of the master's superior wisdom or simply to prove an adversary wrong. In his at- titude of pretense, Socrates would echo his own purported ignorance and his interlocutor's wisdom. However, in the maieutic discovery process the pupil would eventually discover that this assumption clashed with reality, where the pupil was ignorant while the philosopher was wise. The philosopher thus acts as a solidary ironist who guides an initially naïve interpreter into discovering truth. The philosopher's maieutic method is instrumental in helping his pupil to find the extra interpretive cues that are needed for him to reframe his think- ing and become aware of truth. At the end of this process, the interpreter is no longer a naïve one. Because of this, the degree of felicity of this type of irony is inherently elevated. A well-known example of Socratic irony is found in Plato's *Euthyphro* (Hamilton and Cairns 2005), which captures a dialogue between Socrates and Euthyphro near the court where both have a preliminary hearing. Euthyphro is there to present charges against his own father for manslaughter. Euthyphro is overly confident of his own critical judgment, which astonishes Socrates. Using irony, Socrates says that Euthyphro has a clear understanding of what is holy and unholy and that he hopes he can learn from him how to defend himself from the charges of impiety presented against him by Meletus. However, Euthyphro, who seems to abide by the logic of Meletus's charges, is subtly led to confront his own ignorance which eventually makes him excuse himself from the dialogue. In this dialogue Socrates echoes Euthyphro's beliefs on his own critical judgment, but this echo clashes with the observable sce- nario arising from Euthyphro becoming entangled in his own arguments and

proved wrong. This ironic clash reveals Socrates's critical attitude on the absurdity of the charges dropped against him. In the Socratic method, therefore, the interpreter is a learner and learning results from the interpreter becoming engaged in a reframing process that leads him to reconstruct the observable scenario in such a way that it will contrast sharply with his previous beliefs as echoed by the philosopher. As the interpreter constructs the right observable scenario, the clash with such previous beliefs proves them inconsistent.

4.1.2 Rhetoric Irony

In rhetoric irony the interpreter is often not the same as the ironic target. This ironic form keeps the didactic purpose of Socratic irony, but the rheto- ric ironist is more hierarchical than the Socratic ironist, since the former uses irony as a form of subtle mockery that the ironic target is not intended to grasp. Demosthenes's or Cicero's speeches, for instance, often feature attacks to pub- lic figures that go undetected thanks to these two ironists' masterful use of irony. In rhetoric irony, the echoed scenario usually includes the belief that someone's attitude is admirable or at least not to be punished. This echoed belief clashes with the observable situation, which is clearly known to both the orator (the ironist) and his audience but not to his target (the so-called "victim"; cf. Muecke, 1969). As opposed to Socratic irony, the strong potential of rhetoric irony as a political tool has made its use recurrent throughout history until the present day. In Demosthenes's speech number 18, the orator recur- rently disparages Aeschines, one of the ten Attic orators, by using irony as an indirect way to convey the idea that his adversary is a charlatan. In "On the False Embassy", irony is used by Aeschines and Demosthenes, as part of their confrontation, to put each other down. While some passages remain hidden for most ironic interpreters, sometimes irony is made more evident, as when the orator compares the grandeur of Athens and Aeschines's abject condition (Demosthenes 18.180, in Gagarin, 2005: 209). Demosthenes's speech exploits the potential of irony to provoke empathy; the interpreters who successfully detect the echo and the clash of scenarios are brought closer to the ironist and his ideas since interpreting irony makes interpreters realize that they share knowledge with the ironist. Some degree of solidarity is sought to ensure that the interpreter does indeed derive the intended meaning. This links up with the issue of felicity in rhetoric irony. Thus, rhetorical irony, where the ironist is hierarchical towards the target of the ironic remark, but not towards the inter- preter, is less felicitous than Socratic irony. In the speech by Demosthenes cited above, empathy between the interpreter and the ironist regarding Aeschines stems from the felicitous interpretation of the ironic remark, which arises from the interpreter being capable of constructing the same echoed and observable

scenarios that the ironist has in mind. However, Aeschines (as a naïve target of the ironic remark) is left out of the ironist-interpreter ironic game.

4.1.3 Satiric Irony

A similar case can be found in satiric irony. Just like rhetoric and Socratic irony, satiric irony is aimed at persuading and teaching. Satire commonly uses allegory and parody to raise awareness on social issues (e.g. in the form of an exposé of human foolishness and vice) or to successfully convey ideology. Featuring a more markedly hierarchical ironist, criticism and contempt are more prominent in satiric irony than in Socratic and rhetoric irony. Furthermore, while in both Socratic and rhetoric irony the ironist is located in a non-fictional dimension, satire often requires the interpreter (usually the target) to construct a fic-tional world on the basis of extra knowledge. When this happens, satiric irony can become a more sophisticated ironic use which is more likely to be found in literary works. This additional effort on the part of the interpreter makes sa-tiric irony less felicitous than ironies that do not require such a reconstruction. Compare two types of ironic satire: Juvenal's *Satire Nine* and George Orwell's *Animal Farm*.

Juvenal subtly attacks professional homosexuality in his *Satire Nine*. He asks Naevolus, one such professional, why he looks so miserable. Naevolus replies his occupation is gone, complains against his former patron, and expounds the hardships of his vocation. Juvenal pretends to reassure Naevolus:

> Be not afraid; so long as these seven hills of ours stand fast, pathic friends will never fail you: from every quarter, in carriages and ships, those ef-feminates who scratch their heads with one finger will flock in. And you have always a further and better ground of hope—if you fit your diet to your trade.
>
> Juvenal in Ramsay 2004: 130–134

In its context, this text is deeply ironic since Juvenal was unsympathetic with homosexuals, which he had ridiculed in his *Satire Two*. Readers thus know that Juvenal's apparent sympathy, and his reassuring words, are in fact the opposite of what he would like the situation to be, but Naevolus does not. Furthermore, readers also know that Naevolus is not Juvenal's sole ironic target. In satire, like in allegory, each element is metonymic for the whole class to which it belongs. Thus, the real target is the antisocial habits of many Romans.

Animal Farm is a well-known satirical tale, fully nested within a fictional context, which, through allegory, denounces the evils of Soviet-area Stalinism. Old Major, an old boar on the Manor Farm, who represents Marx and

Lenin, summons the animals on a farm to rebellion against their abusive human masters. Led by two young pigs, Napoleon (who stands for Stalin) and Snowball (corresponding to Trotsky), the revolt takes place and the animals drive the farmer and all farm employees away from the farm. The animals take over the farm. Snowball teaches the animals to read and write, while Napoleon educates the puppies in the principles of animalism. Then, Napoleon and Snowball compete for preeminence. Napoleon has his dogs chase Snowball away and he declares himself leader taking credit for all of Snowball's good ideas and using his dogs to purge the farm from any animal supporting Snow-ball. The animals are never again called to meetings, they are practically en- slaved and constantly deceived by the new ruling class, who greedily stock upon the farm's produce for themselves. The pigs gradually start resembling hu-mans and the principles of animalism are abridged into the phrase "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others". Finally, the name of the farm is changed back to Manor Farm, the revolutionary traditions are abol- ished, and Napoleon holds a party for pigs and the local farmers with whom they have a new alliance. Outside, the animals gazing at the scene can no lon- ger distinguish between humans and pigs.

There are two ways in which irony develops in *Animal Farm*. One, which is external to the tale, is based on the allegorical connections between the plot (the echoed scenario) and historical reality (the observable scenario). But not all readers may be aware of the discrepancies between the part of the plot that is based on wrong beliefs and reality. For this reason, internal to the tale there is a clash between the ideal and the real, which is made explicit by the plot itself, where the high ideals of the animals' revolt are later abandoned in practice leaving them in the same impoverished and oppressed state they were before. The echoed scenario is thus provided by the allegory while the clash is supplied, if not by historical reality, by the internal development of the plot.

4.1.4 Dramatic Irony

The three uses of irony discussed above share their verbal nature. It is through language that it is built and interpreted. On the other hand, dramatic irony is largely –if not mostly– situational. In this type, as in some cases of satiric irony, the ironist builds a fictional world where irony is inserted. It is often the case in theatrical works that characters address the audience, elevating them to a priv-ileged position where they possess information other characters do not. This information is often related to the character's fate, as in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*. This is what authors like Muecke (1970: 29) have called the irony of fate. Dramatic irony, as we find it in Ancient Greece, was aimed at teaching the audience a lesson. The playwright (the ironist) used this figure to reinforce

the popular devotion to the gods and their power as well as the punishment awaiting anyone who trespassed the threshold of *hybris*. Ironists in dramatic irony are solidary to the extent that they want every member of the audience to understand their point. Irony in this situation arises from the clash between the idea that it is possible to override divine designs (the echoed scenario) and what takes place on stage (the observable scenario). Similar to satiric irony, dramatic irony demands a greater interpretive effort, which renders this type potentially less felicitous than, for instance, Socratic irony. In *Oedipus the King*, the oracle had told Oedipus, when he was young, that he would kill his father and marry his mother. He spends his life trying to escape his predicted fate and, at one point, he receives promising signals that the oracle could have been wrong. However, in the end, after a series of misinterpretations of events, he finds out that he has been defeated by fate. What renders this tragedy ironical is the fact that the audience knows what Oedipus himself does not know. They are thus capable of detecting the clash between the protagonist's erroneous assumptions and what can be observed on the stage. The cathartic effect of the play, an essential didactic feature of classical tragedy, precisely arises from the audience's recognition of this clash.

4.1.5   Metafictional Irony

The fifth use of irony has its roots in the Middle Ages, but it was not until the 18th century that it acquired the label that is used today: romantic irony. However, we prefer to use the term metafictional irony, which we consider more appropriate in view of its presence in non-romantic contexts. We will argue that the key to this use of irony lies in its metafictional elements, which result in the enhancement of the attitudinal element.

The Middle Ages are characterized by a growing concern with the concept of authorship and the meaning of artistic and literary works. The author is raised from anonymity to an acknowledged creative position. This is evidenced by literary pieces such as *The Book of Count Lucanor and Patronio* or Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, which offer a reflection upon the author's creative process. In this context, irony presupposes a certain degree of ideological and artistic development, as well as experimentation. It highlights the boundary lines between the literary work and how it is created and between the fictional and non-fictional world, as in dramatic irony. Then, as in Socratic irony, the ironist's own position is backgrounded to give prominence to the interpretation end of the ironist's utterance. The attitudinal element stands out by highlighting the author's role as a creative genius, but not necessarily in a hierarchical manner. It is only romantic irony, which we will consider a non-basic use of irony, that incorporates hierarchical implications owing to the change of historical context.

In its origins, metafictional irony did not involve a hierarchical ironist, its aim being the playfully breach of the boundaries between fiction and reality. The attitudinal element was enhanced through the clash of scenarios between what was perceived as real through the suspension of disbelief (the fictional world) and the observable situation (that there is an author behind the text and thus the fictional world is not real). One of the first authors to use metafic- tional irony was Chaucer. As Dane (1991) points out, Chaucerian irony brings together the longer-lived rhetorical irony and innovative metafictional ele- ments. For instance, in *The Canterbury Tales,* the author allows the protago- nists of the text to decide whether to change the course of the narration. The author speaks through the characters and challenges literary conventions by making evident that there is a creative entity behind the fictive world that is taken as real. In a similar fashion, Cervantes's *Don Quixote* digresses about the authenticity of the manuscript readers have in their hands. Both authors echo their own creative processes through fiction and make them clash with the ob- servable situation. From this clash arises the authors' attitude of dissociation. Neither of the two cases present hierarchical ironists but rather solidary ones. The felicity of metafictional irony in *The Canterbury Tales* and *Don Quixote* lies in the interpreter's detection of the fact that the author need not be a hidden entity, but rather a creator, a particularly useful tool to assert one's creative identity at the time.

4.2   Re-adapted Ironic Uses

Irony has evolved hand in hand with its social, historical and artistic context. Every context brings together a particular set of ideas and circumstances that make some uses of irony more useful and consequently more popular. The ba- sic uses of irony explained above, i.e. dramatic, satiric, romantic, and rhetoric, have survived over time and have found a place in literary works that belong to different periods of time.

The simple and persuasive nature of rhetoric irony as a political tool has made this use of irony pervasive throughout history, mainly in political speech- es. Although rhetorical irony can at times be found in literary works, it is main- ly in debates and the political sphere that it has more prominence (Al-Hindawi and Kadhim, 2017). As Al-Hindawi and Kadhim (2017) note, political speeches recurrently use irony as a tool to persuade the audience. For instance, in one of Barack Obama's electoral speeches, he criticized Romney's longstanding ap- pearance on commercials: "I feel happy for the state of Wisconsin – you've had a lot of commercials about Governor Romney's sales pitch" (Al-Hindawi and Kadhim, 2017: 290). Obama's disparaging remark was intended to gain him more voters by gearing the audience's attention to Romney's purportedly

empty marketing, which was the observable scenario clashing with people's knowledge of Romney's commercials. Like Demosthenes' words, cited in Section 4.1.2., Obama's speech was elitist and resulted in the complicity between the ironist and the target interpreter.

The dramatic use of irony in Ancient Greece found a place again in the Renaissance, with the flourishing of theatre. Especially in the United Kingdom, during the Elizabethan era, the dramatic scene recovered its status as a means of entertainment and lost some of its religious character, emphasized during the Middle Ages. Works such as Shakespeare's tragedies *Hamlet* or *Othello* featured again characters that addressed the audience, who was able to engage in the protagonist's fate. Dramatic irony, which proves to be a useful way of activating the interpreter's participation, can even be found in present-day film, an artistic medium that has much in common with theatre. For instance, throughout Pixar's *Toy Story*, the audience knows the toys are alive while the humans on the screen do not. These humans misinterpret reality, which they echo throughout the film. These echoic assumptions then clash with what the audience knows, but only from the point of view of the audience. This means that only the audience can grasp the irony of this situation. In parallel, the toys also make erroneous assumptions within the fictional context of the story. For example, Buzz Lightyear and his fluorescent green companions erroneously believe that The Claw is a living being rather than a machine operated by Sid, the terrible toy owner. The audience, of course, is again aware of reality, which clashes with the toys' similarly echoic belief. As was the case with the humans, the irony inherent to this situation is only evident to the audience. In spite of this instance of dramatic irony not being aimed at teaching a moral lesson, as in classical tragedy, the democratic nature of this type of irony prevails. Hence, dramatic irony keeps its high degree of felicity.

The mocking nature of satiric irony makes it especially appropriate for contexts where political conflicts and turbulences take place, as is the case with Swift's *A Modest Proposal* or *Gulliver's Travels*, and Orwell's *1984.* Other contexts such as the 60s in the United States triggered the production of a great deal of satirical works that strongly relied on irony, such as Burroughs' *Naked Lunch*, where several controversial aspects of American society at that time, such as drugs or racism, are portrayed through a parodic characterization. In many satires the attitudinal element is magnified through the creation of a fictional world. The degree of felicity and the way the clash between scenarios takes place remains essentially the same, thus proving its efficiency and contextual versatility.

Metafictional irony reached its peak in the romantic period, in which it developed into *romantic* irony. In this period, the German poets used metafictional reflexivity to protest against the ideals of the Age of Reason.

At that point, the initial playfulness of romantic irony paved the way for the author's dissociation from the outer world. From this moment onwards, the romantic ironist became blatantly hierarchical with no special interest in the interpreter's understanding of the irony. On the contrary, the romantic ironist gave priority to showing his attitude towards his ideological context. Hence, romantic irony exploited the most elitist and potentially least felicitous type of irony. Without losing its strong attitudinal nature, the romantic use of irony was also exploited as a tool for artistic experimentation. This is the case of Sterne's *The Life and Adventures of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman.* In Sterne's novel, the narrator irrupts into the novel, addresses the reader, and reflects upon the creative process of the text, thus breaking the wall between fiction and reality. Through the narrator, the author echoes his own creative processes and conveys an attitude of playfulness and dissociation from both reality and the fictional world that he builds.

Metafictional irony has furthermore given rise to postmodern irony, which keeps self-reflexivity and a frequent metafictional character adapted to its con- text. Postmodernism, which made of irony its insignia, used it to subvert and critically revisit the *status quo* (Nicol 2010: 111). Often combined with satire, postmodern irony relates to romantic irony to the extent that its main aim is to convey an attitude by making the reader question the literal meaning of the ut- terance. Just like its romantic predecessor, postmodern irony is predominantly elitist since it is mostly directed to a learned type of audience. Its elitism ac- counts for its lower degree of felicity in comparison to, for instance, Socratic irony. This is evident in magic realism, which combines a realistic view of life with surreal elements of dreams and fantasy. Clear examples are Rushdie's *Shame* and Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* where the metafictional and magic realism elements target a non-naïve kind of interpreter. Magic realism and metafiction most typically appear in the form of Historiographic Metafiction (Hutcheon 2002). In *Shame*, Rushdie builds a Pakistan-inspired world that is used to satirize Pakistani political issues that arose from the relationship be- tween Iskander Harappa and General Raza Hyder (Chaabane 2015). Rushdie builds echoed scenarios through a fairytale format that clashes with various aspects of the real political situation of Pakistan as observable scenarios. In Carter's text, the attitude of criticism arises from the clash between the mi- sogynistic story set in the Victorian times and reality, where male dominant attitudes and policies still take place. Postmodern irony is again a product of its context. Postmodernism turns irony into a tool to revisit the past critically by making the interpreter think; with it, romantic irony has once more evolved thanks to the ironist's purpose within a new context.

This overview of ironic uses across history, even if necessarily brief, attests to the efficacy of the analytical tools discussed in Section 3. The analysis of the more complex uses of irony, mainly provided by literature, shows the pres- ence of the same basic ingredients of the ironic act. They way in which these are exploited underlies the various ironic uses with their different degrees of cognitive and communicative complexity. Let us contrast the ways of activa- tion of the echoed scenario in Socratic irony with those of satiric irony dis- cussed above. In Socratic irony the echoed scenario reflects the philosopher's pretense, which coincides with the pupil's erroneous beliefs, but clashes with what the philosopher actually believes to be true (the equivalent of the observ- able scenario). If the maieutic method is successful, the interpreter will be- come aware that the echoed scenario, in which he believed, is the wrong one. In satiric irony, by contrast, the echoed scenario is provided by the allegory and the observable scenario by social, cultural, or historical reality. Ultimately, different types of echo underlie different ironic uses, different ironic uses cast the ironist and interpreter into different roles, and the extent of the recogni- tion by interpreters of the echo and the clash yield different degrees of felicity of the ironic act.

5   Conclusions

An explanatorily adequate account of irony benefits from interdisciplinarity, which includes a consideration of the literary and linguistic perspectives. On the one hand, as a deeply contextual figure of thought, an account of irony is to regard both the receiver and the speaker ends of the communicative act as equally important. Such a consideration opens the door to a study of potential combinations of ironist and interpreter types. On the other hand, as an echo-based phenomenon, irony relies on interpreters' knowledge (both cultural and communicative) and their ability to engage in the ironic game. The approach defended in this article thus combines the finer-grained, more analytical lin- guistic methodology with the more contextual literary view. As opposed to pre- vious literary and linguistic studies, we have argued that, both cognitively and communicatively, the elements of the ironic act may be combined differently, thus resulting in a variety of possible outcomes. Thus, ironic effects (which are mainly attitudinal) result from the creation of contrasting echoed and ob- servable scenarios. Such factors as the ironist's communicative position (i.e. whether hierarchical or solidary) and the recognizability of echoed scenarios allow us to determine the felicity of ironic acts, which is gradable. We have

further noted that some ironic uses have reappeared in different time periods. This has allowed us to distinguish between basic and non-basic uses of irony,where the latter result from the adaptations required by the socio-cultural requirements of such periods. In sum, the literary and non-literary evidence which we have gathered shows that a scenario-based approach provides a solid starting point for a comprehensive account of irony. This account should be complemented with a taxonomy of ironists and interpreters, a set of criteria to assess felicity degrees, and an in-depth explanation of ironic uses. In turn, the theoretical status of these constructs is best established in their relation to the premises of the scenario-based account.

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