Irony aptness

RACHEL GIORA, SHANI FEDERMAN, ARNON KEHAT,
OFER FEIN, and HADAS SABAH

Abstract

In this paper, we test the hypothesis that irony aptness is sensitive to both ironiness and sophistication. In a previous study, we established irony gradedness as a function of narrowing the gap between what is said and what is referred to (Giora et al. forthcoming). Experiments 1A and 1B show that the higher the ironiness of a target, the more apt it is. This has been replicated for echoic ironies (Sperber and Wilson 1986, 1995) as well. Indeed, in Experiment 2, we show that echoic ironies rated as highly ironic due to the accessibility (rather than explicitness, see Gibbs 1986; Yus 2001) of the source of their echo are also evaluated as highly apt. In addition, we show that sophistication (as defined by Raskin and Triezenberg 2003) and aptness ratings are highly correlated, though ironiness and sophistication are not.

Keywords: Degree of irony; irony aptness; sophistication; accessibility; explicitness; negation.

1. Introduction: Irony aptness

The literature on aptness of figurative utterances has focused so far on metaphoric uses only. The views diverge between positing either comprehensibility or similarity as factors accounting for aptness ratings. Specifically, metaphor aptness and comprehensibility have been shown to be highly correlated (Chiappe et al. 2002; see also Blasko and Connine 1993). In addition, similarity between topic and vehicle concepts has been shown to play a crucial role in metaphor appreciation (Gentner and Humor 18–1 (2005), 23–39 0933–1719/05/0018–0023 © Walter de Gruyter
Wolff 1997), provided their domains are distant (Tourangeau and Sternberg 1981, 1982). Thus, the more relational properties (than attributes) involved in the interpretation the more apt the figurative statement (Aisenman 1999; Gentner and Clement 1988). Similarly, the more a comparison captures important features of the topic the more apt the figure in question (Blasko and Connine 1993; Chiappe and Kennedy 1999; Chiappe and Kennedy 2001; Chiappe et al. 2003; Chiappe et al. 2002).

In this study, we look into irony aptness. Unlike metaphors and similes, which rely on shared properties, irony highlights a difference or a contrast. Irony aptness should, therefore, be sensitive to the amount of the disparity involved in its interpretation. Given that disparity tends to be more difficult to process than similarity (Clark and Clark 1977) and that perceiving the humor and deriving the stance is a complex process (Giora 2003; Giora and Fein 1999; Giora et al. 1998; Schwoebel et al. 2000), irony aptness might also be sensitive to some complexity or sophistication. In this study, then, we test the hypotheses that both degree of ironiness and sophistication might independently play a role in irony aptness. In the experiments we ran, the items were all in Hebrew and the participants were all native speakers of Hebrew.

2. Irony aptness and degree of ironiness

On various accounts, irony may be viewed as a graded notion. For instance, the indirect negation view (Giora 1995), which assumes that irony depends on some considerable difference between what is said and what is referred to, the degree of this difference should determine degree of ironiness. On the relevance theoretic account (Sperber and Wilson 1986, 1995), which assumes that irony involves echoing a norm, an opinion, or an attributable thought, the degree of explicitness of that thought or opinion might be one of the factors determine degree of ironiness (Yus 2001).

2.1. Degree of ironiness: The indirect negation view

In previous studies, we showed that irony hinges on some significant disparity between what is said and what is referred to, while adhering to the relevance requirement (Giora 1995; Giora and Fein 1999; Giora et al. 1998). Indeed, there is ample evidence that the greater the disparity the
Irony aptness

more ironic the utterance (Giora et al. forthcoming; see also Colston and O'Brien 2000; Dukas 1998; Gerrig and Goldvarg 2000; Ivanko and Pexman 2003). Assuming that irony is indeed an end-product of computing some gap between what is said and what is referred to suggests that controlling the size of the gap should result in different degrees of ironiness, with a wide gap affecting high ironiness.

In an earlier study of Hebrew ironies (Giora et al. forthcoming), we controlled for degree of contrast by keeping the context constant while manipulating the strength of the ironic targets. We thus controlled for the difference between what is said and what is referred to by using expressions that ranged between opposite ends of a scale (exceptionally bright–stupid). Our results, indeed, showed that a top of the scale expression — an affirmative overstatement — (1a), which involves a wide gap between what is said and what is criticized, was rated as most ironic. A negated version of it (1b), was also considered ironic, albeit to a lesser extent. As anticipated, rather than eliminating the gap, the negation marker only narrowed it, resulting in some observable ironicity (on negation as mitigation see Giora et al. 2004). Less ironic than both was a statement that involves a negative non-overstated version of the affirmative overstatement (1c). In contrast, some opposite of the affirmative (1d), which hardly involves any gap between what is said and what is referred to, was evaluated as non-ironic. These results were replicated for other hedges as well:

(1) Although Max was working very hard preparing for his exams, he failed them all.
   a. Max is exceptionally bright. (Affirmative overstatement)
   b. Max is not exceptionally bright. (Negated overstatement)
   c. Max is not bright. (Negated non-overstatement)
   d. Max is stupid. (Opposite of the affirmative)

These results have also been replicated for other languages such as Russian and French (Chicheportiche and Rabits 2003). Thus, both speakers of Hebrew, Russian, and French have exhibited sensitivity to degree of ironiness as a result of various degrees of differences between what is said and what is referred to.

To test the hypothesis that irony aptness is sensitive to degree of ironiness, which resides in some gap between what is said and what is referred to, we designed Experiments 1A and 1B. In these experiments we aim to
show that items rated as highly ironic would also be rated as highly apt. In contrast, low ironiness items would score low on the aptness scale. The gradedness in ironiness assumed here has been established earlier as a function of mitigation by means of either a negation marker (Experiment 1A) or a hedge such as looks like (Experiment 1B) (Giora et al. forthcoming; on negation as mitigation see Giora et al. 2004).

Experiment 1A: Aptness and degree of ironiness as a function of negation

Method

Participants. Forty-eight undergraduates of Tel Aviv University (22 women, 26 men), aged 21–26 (M = 23.95, SD = 1.32), served as volunteer participants.

Materials. Materials were 18 contexts such as (1) followed by 3 target sentences. Eighteen contexts made up the experimental items (1), each followed by one of 3 target sentences (1a–c); in all, 54 target sentences. In addition, 16 contexts provided for filler items. Three booklets were prepared so that each student saw all the contexts but only one target of the triplet, presented in a random order.

Procedure. Subjects read the passages and were asked to rate each target on a 7 point aptness scale (in which 1 is not at all apt and 7 is highly apt).

Results

As illustrated by the top row in Table 1, results obtained from subject (F_s) and item (F_i) analyses support the hypothesis that aptness is sensitive to degree of ironiness. A one-way ANOVA performed on aptness ratings was found to be significant, F_s(2, 94) = 63.39, p < .0001, F_i(2, 34) = 56.66, p < .0001, and a linear planned contrast [1, 0, −1] showed that aptness ratings were graded according to the degree of ironiness, F_s(1, 47) = 75.11, p < .0001, F_i(1, 17) = 78.74, p < .0001.
Experiment 1B: Aptness and degree of ironiness as a function of hedging

The aim of Experiment 1B was to show that irony aptness is sensitive to degree of ironiness that is a function of narrowing the gap between what is said and what is referred to by means of a hedge such as looks like (on the mitigation function of looks like, see Caffi 2001: 450). The gradedness in ironiness tested here for aptness has also been established earlier (Giora et al. forthcoming).

Method

Participants. Forty-eight undergraduates of Tel Aviv University (21 women, 27 men), aged 21–26 (M = 24.31, SD = 1.50), served as volunteer participants.

Materials. As in Experiment 1A, only this time the mitigator is not a negation marker but another hedge:

(2) Although Max was working very hard preparing for his exams, he failed them all.
   a. Max is exceptionally bright. (Affirmative overstatement)
   b. Looks like Max is exceptionally bright. (Hedged overstatement)
   c. Looks like Max is bright. (Hedged non-overstatement)

Procedure. As in Experiment 1A.

Results

As illustrated by the bottom row in Table 1, results obtained from subject (F_s) and item (F_i) analyses were very similar to the results of Experiment 1A, thus lending further support to the claim that aptness is sensitive to degree of ironiness. A one-way ANOVA performed on aptness ratings was found to be significant, F_s(2, 94) = 22.56, p < .0001, F_i(2, 34) = 30.20, p < .0001, and a linear planned contrast [1, 0, −1] showed that aptness ratings were graded according to the degree of ironiness, F_s(1, 47) = 29.11, p < .0001, F_i(1, 17) = 70.90, p < .0001.
In Experiments 1A and 1B, we tested the hypothesis that aptness is sensitive to degree of ironiness. In Experiment 1A, ironiness gradedness was affected by the use of negation. In Experiments 1B, toning down was achieved via the use of a hedge ("looks like"). Findings from both experiments show that irony aptness is sensitive to degree of ironiness: the more ironic a statement the more apt it is.

### 3. Aptness, degree of ironiness, and sophistication

To further establish aptness sensitivity to ironiness, it is necessary to examine other factors that might affect degree of ironiness. For instance, within relevance theory (Sperber and Wilson 1986, 1995), manipulating the explicitness of the source of the echo has been assumed to influence degree of ironiness (Yus 2001). In what follows, we test the explicitness hypothesis against the alternative that it is the accessibility of the source of the echo that accounts for degree of ironiness (section 3.1). We further propose to also consider the effect of sophistication on irony aptness (section 3.2).

#### 3.1. Degree of ironiness: The echoic mention view

According to relevance theory (Sperber and Wilson 1986, 1995), irony is a variety of an “echoic interpretive use in which the communicator...
dissociates herself from the opinion echoed with accompanying ridicule or scorn” (Wilson and Sperber 1992: 75). Such a view predicts that an ironic statement that echoes a thought or an opinion made explicit in previous contexts would make up a better instance of irony than an alternative that involves an implicit echo (Gibbs 1986). Thus, the ironic statement “This sure is an exciting life” should be comprehended more speedily in the echoic story (3) than in the non-echoic version (4). In the echoic version, it involves an allusion to a statement that is explicitly mentioned in the previous discourse (“the Navy was not just a job, but an adventure”), which makes the echo explicit. In the non-echoic version (4), the same ironic statement involves only an implicit echo, because it does not refer to any explicitly mentioned remark (Gibbs 1986):

(3) Echoic story

Gus just graduated from high school and he didn’t know what to do. One day he saw an ad about the Navy. It said that the Navy was not just a job, but an adventure. So Gus joined up. Soon he was aboard a ship doing all sorts of boring things. One day as he was peeling potatoes he said to his buddy, “This sure is an exciting life.”

(4) Non-echoic story

Gus just graduated from high school and he didn’t know what to do. So, Gus went out and joined the navy. Soon he was aboard a ship doing all sorts of boring things. One day as he was peeling potatoes he said to his buddy, “This sure is an exciting life.”

Indeed, findings in Gibbs (1986) showed that ironies with an explicit echo were read faster than ironies with an implicit echo (see also Jorgensen et al. 1984).

In this study, we wish to examine degree of ironiness within the relevance theoretic framework. However, instead of positing a relation between explicitness and ironiness, we propose to view statements as more ironic to the extent that the source of their echo (the speaker is dissociating herself from) is foremost on the comprehender’s mind, regardless of its explicitness (the accessibility hypothesis). The accessibility hypothesis thus predicts that both explicit and implicit echoes of discourse elements highly accessible to the comprehender would be rated as more ironic than ironies involving an explicit echo of a low accessibility discourse element. Specifically, because (5a) and (5b) refer to discourse elements that might
make up the next discourse topic and hence are of high accessibility (Giora 1985, 1988; Ariel 1988), they will score higher on the ironicity scale than ironies referring to less-accessible elements (such as 5c) that do not make up a natural discourse progression, despite their explicit mention in the previous discourse:

(5) John and Saul are home Friday night watching the Miss Universe competition on TV. During the late stages of the competition, the girls line up unimaginatively on the stage, and are asked for their opinion on current events in international politics. Miss Venezuela, Miss Cuba, and Miss USA give laconic, shallow, and plainly stupid answers, which prompt John’s remark:

a. “These girls are brilliant”. (Explicit echo of a potential discourse-topic)

b. “These girls are missing from the NASA Space Program”. (Implicit echo of a potential discourse-topic)

c. “Their line-up is the most imaginative thing on that stage”. (Explicit echo of a non-potential discourse-topic)

3.2. 

Sophistication

In addition to testing sensitivity of aptness to ironiness, we wish to examine its sensitivity to sophistication. Given that irony is rather hard to understand compared to literal and metaphoric counterparts (Colston and Gibbs 2002; Giora and Fein 1999; Giora et al. 1998; Schwoebel et al. 2000; Pexman et al. 2000), we suspected that low comprehensibility might play a role in the appreciation of irony. According to Raskin and Triefenbach (2003), elaborate comprehension processes involving a number of inferential steps contribute to the appreciation of utterances as sophisticated. Low comprehensible ironic items might thus be considered apt on account of their sophistication.

Which ironic items would be harder to understand? Ironies echoing implicit or low accessibility information should involve more inferential steps compared to explicit or high accessibility information, and would therefore contribute to the sophistication of that utterance, and thus to its aptness. Given the sophistication assumption, we expect both explicitness and accessibility to have a negative effect on sophistication, since both decrease inferential steps.
In Experiment 2, we set out to explore the effects of both ironicity and sophistication on irony appreciation.

### Experiment 2: Aptness, degree of ironiness, and sophistication

To test aptness sensitive to ironiness that is a result of the accessibility of the echo involved, we first had to establish degree of accessibility of the echoes to be used in the experiment. On the assumption that accessible discourse constituents would make up best next discourse topics or text continuations (Ariel 1988, 1990; Giora 1985, 1988), we ran a pretest in which we asked participants to rate the extent to which a given continuation (either 5a, 5b, or 5c) is coherent with its prior context.

#### PRETEST

**Method**

**Participants.** Twenty four students of Tel Aviv University (16 women, 8 men), aged 23–31 (M = 27.71, SD = 3.25), served as volunteer subjects.

**Materials.** Materials were made up of 16 contexts such as (5), ending in either 5a, 5b, or 5c.

**Procedure.** Participants had to indicate their best, second best, and least preferred choice (on a 1–3 fitting scale, where 1 indicates their best choice and 3 indicates their least preferred choice). They thus had to decide which of the three targets was the most coherent and contextually fitting ending, which was the second best, and which was the least fitting ending.

#### Results and discussion

Results obtained from subject (but not from item) analysis confirmed the assumed accessibility differences. They distinguish accessible from less accessible candidates for next discourse-topics. A one-way ANOVA, F(2,46) = 3.68, p < .05, and a significant planned contrast [−1, −1, 2], F(1,23) = 7.88, p < .01 show that while the two targets, which either implicitly (5a: M = 1.93, SD = 0.24) or explicitly (5b: M = 1.94, SD =
revolve around accessible elements, did not differ from each other (regardless of explicitness), they did differ significantly from targets not assumed to be potentially next discourse-topics, despite their explicitness (5c: M = 2.14, SD = 0.23). These findings establish hierarchy of echoes in terms of the accessibility, rather than in terms of the explicitness of their source.

Based on these findings, we now attempt to show that ironies involving accessible echoes, whether explicit (5a) or implicit (5b), would be rated as more ironic than ironies that involve less accessible though explicit echoes (5c).

**Method**

**Participants.** Fifty three participants (31 women and 22 men, all but 4) students of Tel Aviv University, aged 22–38 (M = 26.31, SD = 3.22), served as volunteer subjects.

**Materials.** Materials were 16 contexts (5) each followed by one of three target sentences (5a–c); in all, 48 targets.

**Procedure.** Participants were asked to rate the ironicity, sophistication, and aptness of each target on three 7 point scales (where 1 was either not ironic, not sophisticated, or not apt and 7 was either most ironic, most sophisticated, or most apt).

**Results and discussion**

Results of 5 participants whose scores showed hardly any differentiation and were very low (between 1–2) on all the scales were discarded from the analysis. Below, we summarize the results obtained for each of the variables: ironicity, sophistication, and aptness.

**Ironicity**

As shown in the top row of Table 2, results obtained from subject (F_s) and item (F_i) analyses confirmed our hypothesis regarding ironicity. A one-way ANOVA performed on ironicity ratings was found to be
significant, $F_s(2, 94) = 12.32$, $p < .0001$, $F_i(2, 30) = 5.33$, $p < .05$, and, specifically, a planned contrast $[1, 1, -2]$ show that, as anticipated, ironies involving an accessible echo (5a,b) were significantly more ironic than ironies involving a less accessible echo (5c), regardless of explicitness, $F_s(1, 47) = 19.55$, $p < .0001$, $F_i(1, 15) = 9.19$, $p < .01$. These results suggest that it is the accessibility (in terms of a relation to a discourse-topic, see Giora 1985) rather than the explicitness (Gibbs 1986; Yus 2001) of the source of the echo that affects degree of ironiness.

**Sophistication**

As shown in the mid row of Table 2, results obtained from subject ($F_s$) and item ($F_i$) analyses show that, as anticipated, sophistication is related to implicitness. A one-way ANOVA performed on sophistication ratings was found to be significant, $F_s(2, 94) = 13.59$, $p < .0001$, $F_i(2, 30) = 5.13$, $p < .05$. Specifically, a planned linear contrast $[1, 0, -1]$ showed that, as anticipated, the implicit echoes (5b) were rated as more sophisticated than the explicit echoes of a non-potential discourse-topic (5c), which, in turn, were more sophisticated than explicit echoes of a potential discourse-topic (5a), $F_s(1, 47) = 34.52$, $p < .0001$, $F_i(1, 15) = 9.75$, $p < .01$. In addition, results further support the accessibility hypothesis, showing that items sharing explicitness but diverging in accessibility indeed differed in terms of sophistication, with the less accessible items (5c) scoring higher on the sophistication scale (3.37) than more accessible items (5a) (2.98). Sophistication, then, is a matter of implicitness and low accessibility, which should complicate comprehension processes, as envisaged by Raskin and Triezenberg (2003).

**Table 2.** Mean irony, sophistication, and aptness ratings as a function of the accessibility the source of the echo SD in parentheses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Explicit echoes of a potential discourse-topic 5a</th>
<th>Implicit echoes of a potential discourse-topic 5b</th>
<th>Explicit echoes of a non-potential discourse-topic 5c</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ironicity ratings</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>3.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophistication ratings</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>3.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aptness ratings</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>3.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results show that both accessibility and sophistication affected irony aptness (bottom row of Table 2). A one-way ANOVA performed on aptness ratings was found to be significant in the subject analysis, $F_s(2, 94) = 3.73$, $p < .05$; $F_s(2, 30) = 1.00$, $p = .38$. Specifically, items that were both ironic and sophisticated (i.e., implicit echoes of a potential discourse-topic, 5b) were rated more apt than items that were low in either ironiness (5c) or sophistication (5a). This pattern of results was confirmed by a planned contrast $[-1, 2, -1]$, $F_s(1, 47) = 8.32$, $p < .01$, $F_s(1, 15) = 1.48$, $p = .24$. In addition, correlation tests revealed that irony aptness is correlated with both sophistication and ironicity.

Consistent with the findings in Experiments 1A and 1B, the correlation between ironicity and aptness (with regard to items) was high and significant (0.56, $p < .001$). Similarly, the correlation between sophistication and aptness was also high and significant (0.58, $p < .001$). Regardless, the correlation between ironiness and sophistication was neither strong nor significant (0.25, $p = .09$).

As in Experiments 1A and 1B, Experiment 2, then, supports that claim that irony aptness is related to ironiness, but this time as a function of the accessibility of the echo rather than as a function of the size of the gap between what is said and what is referred to. In addition, it also shows that, regardless, irony aptness is also related to sophistication. Though, in and of themselves, sophistication and ironiness are differentiated and unrelated factors, they each affect irony aptness ratings independently.\(^2\)

4. General discussion

In this paper, we investigated the notion of irony aptness. We tested the hypothesis that both ironicity and sophistication should induce irony appreciation.

Ironicity

To examine the relation of ironicity and aptness, we looked into the notion of degree of ironicity in the framework of two theories of irony — the indirect negation view (Giora 1995; Giora et al. 1998) and relevance theory...
(Sperber and Wilson 1986, 1995). Though these theories have different predictions as to which factors should affect irony gradedness, irony aptness should be sensitive to degree ofIronicity, regardless of the type of irony.

In Experiments 1A and 1B, we tested the implications of the indirect negation view according to which irony hinges on some significant gap between what is said and what is referred to. Degree of ironiness was achieved via mitigation markers—a negation and a hedge (see Giora et al. 2004; Giora et al. forthcoming). Indeed, as anticipated, results showed that ironies exhibiting a large gap between what is said and the situation referred to were rated as more ironic than ironies exhibiting a smaller gap.

In Experiment 2, we tested ironiness in terms of relevance theory (Sperber and Wilson 1986, 1995; Wilson and Sperber 1992). According to this view, irony involves echoing a norm, an opinion, or a thought with an accompanying ridicule or scorn. Such a view might predict that ironies whose source of echo is made explicit in the immediate context would make up a better instance of irony than those whose source is implicit (Gibbs 1986; Yus 2001). Alternatively, it might be more plausible to come up with a more general assumption according to which, regardless of explicitness, ironies whose source of echo is accessible would make up a better instance of irony than those whose source is of low accessibility, and hence more difficult to retrieve. The notion of accessibility we propose is that of a relation to a discourse-topic (Giora 1985; see also Ariel 1990). Giora (1988) showed that discourse items enjoying high accessibility as a result of primacy and recency effects due to their serial discourse position (whether initial or final) make up a better candidate for the next discourse-topic. We therefore predicted that ironies scoring high on the accessibility scale in terms of their superiority as the next discourse segment will also score high on the ironicity scale. And if aptness is indeed sensitive to degree of ironiness, items high on ironicity due to the accessibility of the source of the echo will score high on the aptness scale.

Our findings indeed show that where the source of the echo is accessible, items score higher on the ironicity scale than when that source is less accessible, regardless of the explicitness of the source. These findings contest earlier findings suggesting that it is the explicitness of the source of the echo that makes its retrieval easier (Gibbs 1986; Jorgensen et al. 1984). Instead, our findings suggest that while ironiness is indifferent to the explicit/implicit distinction, it is sensitive to the degree of accessibility of the source of the echo.
Having established degree of ironiness as a function of the accessibility of the source, we further show that ironiness and aptness ratings are highly correlated. Aptness, then, is sensitive to ironiness, regardless of the type of irony.

Sophistication

In addition to testing aptness sensitivity to irony gradedness, we have also tested its sensitivity to sophistication. Given Raskin and Triezenberg’s (2003) view of sophistication as related to low comprehensibility, we show that factors related to low comprehensibility such as low accessibility and implicitness (on how implicitness slows down processing, see Gibbs 1986) play a significant role in sophistication ratings. Indeed, items involving an implicit echo were rated as highly sophisticated and highly apt. Irony aptness, then, is sensitive to sophistication.

Irony aptness

In all, findings in this study support our hypothesis that irony aptness is sensitive to both ironiness and sophistication. Degree of ironiness affects aptness, regardless of the type of irony. In addition, sophistication, which, among other things, is related to low comprehensibility (Raskin and Triezenberg 2003), also influences aptness ratings. Though these factors play a role in shaping irony appreciation, they are not correlated, contributing to irony aptness independently. (For replication of our results with participants assumed to be highly sophisticated, such as copy-writers and grad students of literature, see Rubanenko 2004).

Tel Aviv University

Notes

Correspondence address: giorar@post.tau.ac.il

1. Specifically, “within-domain distance relates negatively to aptness and ... between-domain distance relates positively to aptness. The first half of the prediction receives fairly consistent support ... the second half of our basic predictions receives less consistent support” (Tourangeau and Sternberg 1981: 50).
2. One could argue, though, that our results might be influenced by register. To preclude this possibility, we collected register ratings from 14 Linguistics students of Tel Aviv University (9 women, 6 men), aged 19–30 (M = 25.07, SD = 2.81), who are familiar with the notion of ‘register’. Results showed that the correlation between register and all the other findings (of aptness, sophistication, irony) was neither significant nor strong, reducing the possibility that register might have affected our results.

3. The difference between our findings and Gibbs’ might be a result of two different notions of implicitness. While for Gibbs, it is the source of the echo that is implicit, for us, it is the reference to it that is implicit. In addition, Gibbs showed processing differences. Here we only talk of irony grading.

References

Aisenman, R.

Ariel, M.

Blasko, G. D., and C. Connine

Caffi, C.

Chicheportiche, S., and R. Rabits
2003 Negation as mitigation: The case of Russian and French. Unpublished Ms., Tel Aviv University.

Chiappe, D. L., and J. M. Kennedy
1999 Aptness predicts preference for metaphors or similes, as well as recall bias. *Psychonomic Bulletin and Review* 6, 668–676.

Chiappe, D. L., J. M. Kennedy, and P. Chiappe
2003 Aptness is more important than comprehensibility in predicting recognition bias and preference for metaphors and similes. *Poetics* 31, 51–68.

Chiappe, D., J. M. Kennedy, and T. Smykowski

Clark, H. H., and E. V. Clark

Colston, H. L., and R. W. Jr. Gibbs

Colston, H. L., and J. O’Brien


Rubanenko, G. 2004 Irony aptness as a function of sophistication. Unpublished Ms., Tel Aviv University.
Schwoebel, J., S. Dews, E. Winner, and K. Srinivas
2000 Obligatory processing of the literal meaning of ironic utterances: Further
Sperber, D., and D. Wilson
Tourangeau, R., and R. J. Sternberg
Wilson, D., and D. Sperber
Yus, F.
1999 On reaching the intended ironic interpretation. International Journal of
Communication 10, 27–78.

Irony aptness