

LATVIJAS UNIVERSITĀTE

BAKALaura DARBS

RĪGA 2018

UNIVERSITY OF LATVIA
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STUDIES

HUMOUR IN *WELCOME TO NIGHT VALE* PODCAST

HUMORS „LAIPNI LŪDZAM NAKTS IELEJĀ” APLĀDĒS

BACHELOR THESIS

Santa Sudnika

Matriculation card No. ss14038

Adviser: lect. Tatjana Bicjutko

Riga 2018

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to lect. Tatjana Bicjutko for her time, guidance, and all the valuable advice given while writing this BA thesis.

Additionally, I would like to thank the staff of the University of Latvia for the knowledge, skills, and support provided during the four years of my English Philology studies.

Anotācija

Daiļliteratūrā humoru rada dažādi lingvistiskie un stila izteiksmes līdzekļi, no kuriem vairums ir plaši izpētīts. Tomēr mūsdienās popularitāti ir guvis jauns komisku stāstu prezentēšanas formāts – interneta radio aplāde – kura stilistiskās un stāstījuma īpatnības joprojām tiek pētītas salīdzinoši minimāli. Tādēļ šī darba mērķis ir noskaidrot kā humors tiek veidots komēdijas aplādē „Laipni lūdzam nakts ielejā” (*Welcome to Night Vale*). Lai to panāktu, tika veikta četru „Laipni lūdzam nakts ielejā” epizožu tekstu analīze. Pētījums atklāj, ka humoru šajā aplādē lielākoties veido hiperbolas, epitēti, atkārtotības un paradokss. Katrs no šiem stila izteiksmes līdzekļiem sagroza komunikācijas normas vai arī provocē lasītāja vispārējo zināšanu un žanra izpratnes shēmas. No tā izriet secinājums, ka humors aplādē „Laipni lūdzam nakts ielejā” galvenokārt ir balstīts lingvistiskajā inkongruencē starp formu un kontekstu.

Atslēgvārdi: lingvistiskā humora teorijas, inkongruence stāstījumā, tekstu analīze, stila izteiksmes līdzekļi, hiperbola, epitēti, atkārtotības, paradokss

Abstract

Humour in fiction is created by different linguistic means and stylistic devices, most of which have been subject to extensive research. However, nowadays a new format of comedic storytelling – the radio podcast – has emerged, and its stylistic and narrative characteristics are still explored minimally. Thus, the purpose of this research is to discover how humour is created in the comedy podcast *Welcome to Night Vale*. This was achieved by carrying out textual analysis of four select *Welcome to Night Vale* episode scripts. The research reveals that the humour in this podcast is mainly created by hyperbole, epithet, repetition, and paradox, all of which distort the basic rules of communication or challenge the readers' schemata of generic knowledge and genre expectations. Thus, the humour in *Welcome to Night Vale* is primarily based on the linguistic incongruity between form and context.

Key words: linguistic theories of humour, narrative incongruity, textual analysis, stylistic devices, hyperbole, epithet, repetition, paradox

Contents

Introduction	1
1. Humour and the Language of Humour.....	3
1.1. Theories of Humour.....	4
1.1.1. Prototype Theory	5
1.1.2. Essentialist Theory	6
1.2. Incongruities in Narrative	8
1.2.1. Pragmatics and Grice's Maxims.....	9
1.2.2. Schema Theory	10
1.3. The Language of <i>Welcome to Night Vale</i>	12
1.4. Stylistic Devices that Create Humorous Effect	15
1.4.1. Antithesis, Oxymoron, and Paradox.....	16
1.4.2. Hyperbole and Litotes	17
1.4.3. Pun and Zeugma	18
1.4.4. Repetition and Parallelism.....	19
1.4.5. Anti-climax.....	20
1.4.6. Epithet.....	21
2. Humour in <i>Welcome to Night Vale</i> Podcast	23
2.1. Methodology	23
2.1.1. Data Collection Tools.....	24
2.1.2. Procedure	24
2.2. Corpus.....	25
2.3. Results and Discussion	26
2.3.1. Stylistic Devices Creating Humour in episode 21: <i>A Memory of Europe</i>	26
2.3.2. Stylistic Devices Creating Humour in episode 22: <i>The Whispering Forest</i>	31
2.3.3. Stylistic Devices Creating Humour in episode 41: <i>Walk</i>	37
2.3.4. Stylistic Devices Creating Humour in episode 42: <i>Numbers</i>	40
2.3.5. Summary.....	44
Conclusions	45
Theses	47
References	48
Appendix 1	51

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

WTNV – Welcome to Night Vale

MVPS – Mostly Void, Partially Stars

GGCU – The Great Glowing Coils of the Universe

Introduction

Humour in writing can be manifested through various phonetic, grammatical, syntactic, and lexical stylistic means. The texts created for fictional podcast stories are no exception. The podcast is a relatively new medium of creative storytelling, and it is still growing and developing; however, while experimentation with different genres and narrative techniques is an on-going project, this area of expression often remains under-researched in literary and linguistic studies.

Previous studies on the topic of podcasting focus more on its practical application and functionality instead of its structural characteristics. For instance, while researching interaction through contemporary media and the behaviour of its users, Warschauer and Grimes have observed that ‘millions of people now [...] publish podcasts and video, build relationships through social network sites, and evaluate all the above forms of communication through feedback and ranking mechanisms’ (2007: 1).

However, there is a considerable amount of research done on the predecessor of digital podcasting, namely, radio broadcasts. From both cultural and stylistic perspective, ‘much of this newfound creativity [of podcasts] is arriving through a remediation of older radio forms, techniques, and styles’ (Bottomley, 2015). Nevertheless, there appears to be little to no linguistic analysis specifically of digital radio broadcasts available, which makes the subject matter open to inquiry. It appears that most of the research on radio, podcasts, and other types of modern media is related more to either its content or purpose, not the form. Yet, the endeavour to distinguish the linguistic peculiarities of podcasting is of importance as well, because it would allow to understand the stylistic direction taken by modern fiction that is primarily written to be presented in an audio format.

Therefore, *Welcome to Night Vale* has been selected for analysis. WTNV is ‘a twice-monthly podcast in the style of community updates for the small desert town of Night Vale, featuring local weather, news, announcements from the Sheriff's Secret Police, mysterious lights in the night sky, dark hooded figures with unknowable powers, and cultural events’ (Online 1). The description reveals quite explicitly that the genre of the show borders on comedy, horror, and fantasy. The series is accessible and widely popular on such platforms as *Apple Podcasts*, *Google Play*, *Spotify*, *YouTube*, and others. What is more, the fictional universe of WTNV is contained not only in over 100 podcast episodes (each around 25 minutes long), but also in five recorded live shows, two novels, and two script collections (from which the material for the present research is selected).

The goal of this paper is to reveal the means of creating humour in the scripts of *Welcome to Night Vale* podcast. Thus, the research aims at analysing most frequently used linguistic means forming stylistic devices that create humour, as well as the way they function and overlap in the narrative.

Accordingly, the research questions are: which stylistic devices creating humorous effect are most often employed in *Welcome to Night Vale*, and on which linguistic theories is the humour of the podcast based?

In order to answer the proposed research question, the following enabling objectives are applied:

- 1) to research the unique characteristics of the discourse of podcasts;
- 2) to gather and review theoretical material on humour and stylistic devices creating humorous effect in prose;
- 3) to single out the methodological framework for corpus collection and analysis;
- 4) to identify the stylistic devices creating humorous effect in the selected *Welcome to Night Vale* episode transcripts;
- 5) using the defined methodology, to analyse the devices in regard to what linguistic means are used to form them and what their functions are;
- 6) to compare and summarize the findings in the selected chapters;
- 7) to draw relevant conclusions about the type of humour prevalent in *Welcome to Night Vale* and the stylistic devices used to create it.

In order to achieve the proposed goal, two research methods are applied. The theoretical method used is that of literature review of the previous research and materials regarding theories on the topic of humour and stylistics. As for the empirical part, the method of textual analysis will be implemented.

The corpus for the present research consists of four selected *Welcome to Night Vale* episode scripts, available from two books by the authors of the podcast Joseph Fink and Jeffrey Cranor – *Mostly Void, Partially Stars* (MVPS) and *The Great Glowing Coils of the Universe* (GGCU). Both of these volumes are collections of texts created for the first two seasons of the podcast.

Regarding the structure, the paper consists of two chapters. Chapter 1 deals with the theoretical material reviewed for this study – theories of humour (mainly discussing the ideas of Salvatore Attardo and Walter Nash) and stylistic devices (focusing on the definitions and theories of Bussmann, Matthews, and Wales) that can be used for achieving humorous effect. Chapter 2 contains the empirical part, and it presents the findings of the research together with a detailed discussion of their analysis.

1. Humour and the Language of Humour

This chapter will explore the importance of context, allusion, and parody in humorous texts. Moreover, it will reflect upon various definitions of humour and what exactly is thought to make something funny. Finally, the informing principles of humour will be distinguished.

When discussing humour, comedy, jokes, and similar phenomena of language, one may find themselves struggling with definitions, and it is, mainly, because these areas of language use are connected with laughter after finding something funny. So, the problem lies in the fact that different people do not react to the same things in the same way, i.e. what one finds hilarious might offend another. Some enjoy the clever use of language in puns, while others find it annoying and puerile.

There are claims that humour as such is undefinable, as there are difficulties with the selection of a definite corpus of this phenomenon (Attardo, 1994: 3). For the sake of argument, one can also look at the discussion of the question – is humour timeless? For example, Croce states that humour can only be understood in a certain historical context (1903: 286); therefore, it is impossible to theoretically define it (Attardo, 1994: 7).

Nevertheless, there are some particular features in the language and the context of its use that indicate that an utterance is intended to be humorous, no matter if it makes one laugh or not.

The context is particularly relevant for intertextual jokes for they require allusions that go outside of the given work of literature and involve references to other texts (Attardo, 2001: 87). Therefore, the joke relies heavily on pre-knowledge and understanding of the reader – if an allusion used for humour is missed, the allusive joke fails as well. For Nash this seems to also include reference to different styles, thus overlapping with parody. He claims that in a humorous allusion the cited text does not necessarily have to be from any recognized piece of literature; instead, ‘any well-known form of words – from the language of politics, of advertising, or journalism, of law and social administration – will serve the requirements of wit’ (1985: 78). The idea is elaborated upon as he states that the textual component in allusion ‘may echo or mimic, rather than make a literal citation, and thus become a kind of minimal parody’ (ibid.) – so not quite a parody, but something closely resembling it.

By definition, parody is ‘a mocking imitation of the style of a literary work or works, ridiculing the stylistic habits of an author or school by exaggerated mimicry’ (ibid.: 185). However, parody is not always hostile, and many instances of literary caricature and burlesque ‘show affectionate familiarity with the things they imitate, and are a form of positive criticism, of stylistic analysis, and ultimately of tribute’ (Nash, 1985: 82). Indeed, in order to create a parody, one must be familiar with what makes the original work the way it is.

Nash delineates this by stating that by parodying something one may concisely and easily comment on typical syntactic features, vocabulary, phonology, and all other elements of a literary work (ibid.). Essentially, parody is not always critical of its referent, and it can rather signify respect and admiration. Therefore, it might be worthwhile to explore the linguistic features of texts that have inspired a comedic work of literature.

Nevertheless, simply looking at all the linguistic features in a comedic text is not enough – the importance lies in distinguishing which features exactly are the ones that assist in creation of humour. Thus, humour has to be somehow defined. In linguistics and anthropology humour has been perceived as ‘an all-encompassing category, covering any event or object that elicits laughter, amuses, or is felt to be funny’ (Attardo, 1994: 4). The *Oxford English Dictionary* seems to agree, defining humour as ‘the quality of being amusing or comic, especially as expressed in literature or speech’ (2018). In order to recognize this quality, Walter Nash distinguishes three informing principles of humour: ‘the working of our language, the varieties of our social experience, and our habitual modes of thought’ (1985: xi). The phrases ‘expression in literature or speech’ and ‘working of our language’ are the points on which this paper will focus. With such an approach, the analysis of a joke does not lie in trying to explain it, but rather in deciphering its linguistic and stylistic makeup (ibid.: xiii).

In summary, the context of the joke as well as the readers’ extent of knowledge and ability to perceive allusion are vital for humour to be noticed in the text. Additionally, in order to fulfil its function, the joke has to be recognized as funny or at least amusing. However, even if it fails to achieve such a reaction, there are still certain principles that inform the reader of the fact that an utterance was intended to be humorous, namely, how our language functions, the social context in which the joke occurs, and the ways in which people think.

1.1. Theories of Humour

This chapter will provide a brief overview of the main theories of humour in linguistics. It will also establish which of these theories is most appropriate for the present research.

In his book *Linguistic Theories of Humor*, Salvatore Attardo introduces three metatheories of humour: essentialist, teleological, and substantialist (1994: 1). Each has their own focus on humour as a linguistic phenomenon. The essentialist theories aim to discover the required conditions and elements for this phenomenon to take place, ‘to define the ‘essence’ of the phenomenon, i.e., what makes the phenomenon what it is’ (ibid.). Next, there are the more purpose-driven theories of teleology that aim to present the aims of humour,

claiming that its build-up is determined by these aims (ibid.). Finally, the substantialist theories ‘find the unifying factor for the explanation of the phenomenon in the concrete ‘contents’ of the phenomena’ (ibid.).

Thus, when analysing the ways in which humour is achieved through the employment of stylistic devices, it would be most fitting to approach the matter from the essentialist viewpoint. That entails breaking down the joke into several elements, in order to understand how it functions, and how language is used to make it work. It is useful to note that in this context Walter Nash describes language as

the trigger that detonates the humorous mass. About its functions, two things may be noted at this point. One is, that there is usually a centre of energy, some word or phrase in which the whole matter of the joke is fused, and from which its powers radiate; and the other is, that the language of humour dances most often on the points of some dual principle, an ambiguity, a figure and ground, an overt appearance and covert reality. (1985: 7)

This point of fusion is known as the ‘locus’ of the joke (ibid.). Adhering to this formulaic model of joke structuring, Nash expounds by mentioning ‘prelocation’ which is the ‘formulae that give ponderous warning of an approaching joke’ (ibid.: 8). Overall, the key features mentioned by the author for the creation of a successful humorous utterance are ‘timing’, which is the arrangement of charged components at carefully thought-out points in a structure, and ‘play with various dualities’, such as ambiguity, polysemy, implication, and others (ibid.: 9). And lastly, as discussed above, one must take into account the cultural and social facts, shared beliefs and attitudes, and the pragmatic bases of communication (ibid.).

Overall, out of the three theories of humour, the essentialist theory is deemed to be best for focusing on what features are to be analysed in a humorous text. These features include timing, semantic incongruity, and context.

1.1.1. Prototype Theory

Despite the fact that most theoretical research on humour has been done in what can be termed the ‘essentialist paradigm’, some researches have proposed that the prototypical approach to humour research would be more appropriate (Attardo, 1994: 8). This theory considerably clashes with the essentialist theory to which this paper will adhere; nevertheless, it is worth discussing for the sake of contrast.

The prototype theory is based on Wittgenstein's ‘family resemblances’ (ibid.). Wittgenstein exemplifies this in *Philosophical Investigations*, taking language as a concept for his subject of discussion: ‘Instead of producing something common to all that we call

language, I am saying that these phenomena have no one thing in common which makes us use the same word for all, — but that they are related to one another in many different ways’ (1958: 31). Basically, the same intuitive statement can be applied to games, humour, and other areas with no clearly definable common characteristics.

According to this theory, it could be stated that ‘if one puts aside the ‘internal subdivisions’ of humour and accepts a ‘broad’ reading of the concept, it follows that humour (or the comic, etc.) is whatever a social group defines as such’ (Attardo, 1994: 9). Certainly, this theory might be applicable to other fields of study (say, in psychology, where the researcher would be more concerned with the individual’s response to humour, manifested by laughter or lack thereof). However, when researching linguistic features of ‘the humorous’ it is better to follow the essentialist approach, in order to identify specific linguistic features that make something funny or signal the attempt and intention to do so (ibid.: 9-10).

In summary, the prototype theory is highly intuitive and does not aim to strictly define the distinguishing features of certain phenomena, such as humour. Therefore, this theory does not fit the present linguistic investigation at all, for, according to it, any text (which was never intended by the author to be comedic) found to be funny for any reason by someone, is indeed a humorous text.

1.1.2. Essentialist Theory

This section is dedicated to a more in-depth review of the essentialist theory of humour. The differences between prototype and essentialist theories will be explained, as well as a brief insight into how essentialism figures into philosophy of linguistics will be provided. Finally, the main essentialist sub-branch of interest, incongruity theory, will be described.

Essentialist theories are test-based (ibid.: 242), meaning that in order to classify something as one specific phenomenon, it has to meet certain criteria that would always characterize this phenomenon. These criteria are ‘called ‘necessary and sufficient’ conditions, and they allow one to predict that whenever these obtain, a given object belongs to a given class’ (ibid.).

By extension, when discussing humorous register, one also can mention the opposing polythetic theory of register. According to Attardo

polythetic/prototype theory of register characterizes the various registers which can be identified in linguistic use as having family resemblances among them. This eliminates the search for one underlying common feature (or set of features), i.e., it is not necessary to try to identify a common denominator in all

‘register’ situations, which has often caused vague definitions in the literature.
(ibid.: 244)

Therefore, we see wherein lies the difference between this theory and the prototype theory. With essentialism, one can speak of a common feature that always has to be present, even if other features differ. An example of such a feature could be a distinguished syntactic structure (ibid.); or when speaking of humour, the tactical use and arrangement of language in combination with the pragmatic context that triggers the appropriate response of laughter.

As Noam Chomsky, one of the most notable scholarly forefathers of essentialism, states: ‘it is possible that natural language has only syntax and pragmatics’ (Chomsky, 1995: 26). This kind of view excludes semantics as a component of a full linguistic theory; however, nowadays many essentialists do include it, with, as the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* puts it, a strong interest in ‘the syntax-semantics interface – the relationship between the surface syntactic structure of sentences and their semantic interpretation’ (2016). In terms of research, in which one focuses on both lexical and syntactic stylistic devices, the semantic aspect should most likely be taken into consideration as well.

Attardo further divides the modern essentialist theories of humour into three major groups – incongruity theories (of contrast), hostility theories (of aggression, superiority, triumph, and derision), and release theories (of sublimation and liberation) (1994: 47). Out of these three, it is the incongruity theory in particular that stands out in linguistic discourse. This theory is also linked with cognitive theories that prevail in the field of psychology, due to the fact that they are based on the discrepancy between two ideas in the broadest sense (ibid.: 48). McGhee states the following

The notion of congruity and incongruity refer to the relationships between components of an object, event, idea, social expectation, and so forth. When the arrangement of the constituent elements of an event is incompatible with the normal or expected pattern, the event is perceived as incongruous. (1979: 6-7)

Moreover, the essentialist outlook has made it possible for other theories to adopt some of the ideas of the incongruity theories, and so its ideas can overlap with hostility and release theories as well (Attardo, 1994: 49).

Presently, the essentialist outlook is to be applied when discussing the stylistic devices that are based on the incongruity principles and the linguistic means that form them. Humour and incongruence are closely related in all types of narrative, the former generally being the result of the latter.

To summarize, essentialist theory singles out specific conditions and criteria that must be met for something to be perceived as a certain phenomenon. What is more, this theory has

three sub-branches, one of which is of particular interest for this research – the incongruity theory. It is a theory which claims that humour arises from incompatible relationships between various elements and levels of a text, such as words, meanings, pragmatic expectations, and others.

1.2. Incongruities in Narrative

The following is an overview of how incongruities manifest themselves in the narrative. The examples of horror/ humour genre clash as well as the linguistic incongruity of *odd talk* will be illustrated. Lastly, the linguistic theories that are involved in creating incongruity (and thus, humour) will be mentioned.

Narrative humour may rely on nonsense, absurdity, and different communicative errors, purposefully crafted to be such. For example, this paper deals with the analysis of texts that display a semantic clash of humour and horror, a practice that aims to rapidly shift moods in the narrative (Carroll, 1999: 145). When it comes to discussing the two genres, one might say that they do have a lot in common, for both humour and horror ‘deal in the grotesque and the unexpected, but in such a fashion as to provoke two entirely different physical reactions’ (ibid.: 146).

In order to better understand the incongruity phenomena, one could look at the style of *odd talk*, which is the basis for both the comic and the absurd (Culpeper, Short, and Verdonk, 2002: 35). The first precept for odd talk is that ‘it needs to be context sensitive’ (ibid.: 39). This is important in fiction as well, for ‘the norms, values and modes of conduct which regulate how ‘real’ people organize their linguistic behaviour form the basis for interpreting the speech and action of the fictional characters in the world of a play’ (ibid.: 41). Moreover, nonsensical speech and irrational actions can ‘help to construct characters who have no obvious points of reference outside the dramatic text, making them easier to laugh at than those developed within the compass of dramatic ‘realism’’ (ibid.: 45). Besides the context, the incongruity can appear in other stages of linguistic organization, such as ‘the way characters tell stories to one another to the way sound patterns are used in their speech’ (ibid.: 48) to name a few examples. Culpeper also concludes that linguistic incongruence and odd talk, while filled with potential for laughter, are not always inherently humorous (ibid.: 48-49).

Linguistically, there are two theories that explain on what principles such incongruous narratives can be formed. One of these theories is that of the four maxims of communication, and the other is the schema theory, both of which will be looked upon in more detail in the following subchapters.

To sum up, narrative incongruity can occur on several levels. The discrepancy can be created between genres, behaviour and speech of the characters, narrative voices, and others. Essentially, in order to understand why such an approach works for producing a comedic effect, one has to delve deeper into a couple of linguistic theories.

1.2.1. Pragmatics and Grice's Maxims

This subchapter will introduce the four maxims of communication. Furthermore, it will be explained how the disregard of these maxims can be utilized for framing entire narratives, presenting punch-lines, and creating various types of irony.

Firstly, when considering the causes of incongruities, one should mention how humour is perceived from the point of view of semantics. Delia Chiaro notes that 'phonology, morphology, lexis, syntax, etc. is adopted in deliberate jokes to provoke laughter; however, some jokes rely on a supra-structure, pragmatics, such as playing with the rules of conversation' (1992: 6). Consequently, not only the structures and patterns of stylistic devices are taken into account in order to detect humour but also the pragmatic aspect, defined by *Cambridge English Dictionary* as 'how words can express things that are different from what they appear to mean' (2018). For example, the flouting of the four Grice's maxims is often involved in creating a comedic effect (Nash, 1985: 116).

The maxims coined by Paul Grice are based on the so-called 'cooperative principle', which defines what one's contribution to a conversation should be like – with an appropriate purpose and direction (Grice, 1975: 26). Here, he distinguishes four key maxims. First, there is the maxim of quantity, meaning that for a successful communicative situation to occur, the utterances used must be informative to an extent which is required (ibid.). Secondly, there is the maxim of quality, entailing that the utterances must be truthful and with adequate evidence (ibid.). The third maxim is that of relation, requiring relevance to the topic and the context (ibid.: 27). Finally, the fourth is the maxim of manner, postulating that the information must be presented in an orderly and non-ambiguous manner (ibid.).

One can easily see that if these rules are broken, the communicative situation can veer off into the direction of absurdity and, consequently, has the potential of generating a humorous reaction towards it. What is more, some literary works 'exploit the defective exchange, not simply as an occasional device of humour, but as an element in the very fabric of the work, expressing character, typifying relationships, and framing situations' (Nash, 1985: 118-119). Accordingly, when analysing the linguistic means employed in the writings

of comedy, such as the various stylistic devices, one must always consider the context in which these means are applied.

In comic narratives, the result of such contradicting situations is often that of irony, described by Wales as something that occurs when the used words seem to contradict what they mean in the given context (2001: 224). Irony can be signalled by the presence of ‘ambiguous structures or structures that contain contradictory expressions, which implicitly point to the opposite by polysemy, homonymy, or antonymy, or by ambiguous illocution’ (Bussmann, 2006: 596). Several other linguistic signals can create irony as well, such as modal particles, hyperbole, exclamative sentences, and intonation (ibid.).

When directed at some other individual, irony can turn into sarcasm, serving as a relatively polite form of criticism (Wales, 2001: 224). Another fact to note is that irony is not always verbal, but it can be situational as well. For example, when a reader of a novel is in the know of something that characters are oblivious to. This is known as dramatic irony (ibid.: 225).

Irony together with register humour serves as an illustration of humorous techniques that lack a distinct punch line but are instead based on the occurrence of small jab lines all through the text or stretches of text (Attardo, 2001: 103). Some jokes have easily distinguishable disjunctors (punch lines) (ibid.). Meanwhile, other humour forms might have diffuse disjunctors (i.e., markers), which are ‘any type of disjunctor which does not occur alone in a humorous (micro)narrative, insofar as it is unable to trigger the script-switch by its mere presence’ (ibid.).

Pragmatic incongruities illustrate diffuse disjunctors quite well since ‘the incompatibility/ inappropriateness between the context and some elements of the utterance is the sole necessary and sufficient marker of humorous or ironical intention’ (ibid.). Furthermore, it can be agreed that this marker that indicates incapability is arrived at inferentially and it is based upon some shared presuppositions; therefore, Attardo argues, ‘irony is entirely a pragmatic phenomenon’ (ibid.: 111). Essentially, ironic content does violate the maxim of quality by stating the opposite of what is true (Juez, 1995: 26).

In summary, Grice’s maxims of quantity, quality, relation, and manner, when subverted, can successfully shape a humorous narrative. Often the type of humour produced by this means is irony, due to the contradiction between what is said and the context in which it is said. Finally, it was established that there are various linguistic signals, disjunctors, and diffuse disjunctors that can mark an utterance as ironic.

1.2.2. Schema Theory

The present subchapter will focus on the second linguistic theory that explains how incongruous narratives function – the schema theory. After defining schemata, it will be explored how they operate in literature through various processes, such as schema refreshment and disruption.

Schema by definition is the ‘generalized knowledge about the sequence of events in particular sociocultural contexts’ (Bussmann, et al, 2006: 1031), or, as Catherine Emmott and Marc Alexander explain ‘cognitive structures representing generic knowledge’ (2011). Examples of this could be such everyday occurrences as going to a store, receiving news, or being introduced to somebody. Forms of knowledge organized in such manner create the essential basis for language comprehension, and it allows for the ‘processing of stories to be directed according to conventionalized knowledge about how stories are usually told, which sequences of occurrences are permissible and logical’ (Bussmann, et al, 2006: 1031).

While everyday communication mostly depends on preserving and reinforcing of schemata, in literature ‘surprising elements or sequences in the conceptual content of the text can potentially offer a *schema disruption*, a challenge to the reader’s existing knowledge structure’ (Stockwell, 2002: 79). What is important when analysing literary texts, is that schemata may operate in three fields, namely, there are world schemata, text schemata, and language schemata. As Stockwell explains,

World schemas cover those schemas considered so far that are to do with content; text schemas represent our expectations of the way that world schemas appear to us in terms of their sequencing and structural organisation; language schemas contain our idea of the appropriate forms of linguistic patterning and style in which we expect a subject to appear. (ibid.: 80)

Text and language schemata in combination are able to create broken expectations of textual or stylistic structure, and thus establish a discourse deviation, which allows for *schema refreshment* – amending of a schema and alteration of its membership elements – to take place (ibid.).

However, there are some thinkers who believe that when reading we do not follow any real-life schema, but, instead, one that appears exclusively in a literary context – they call this the *constitutive schema* (ibid.). This indeed proves to be true, if we consider the self-evident fact that what might be unexpected in reality, maybe appear mundane in literature, especially if one is accustomed to a certain style of writing; reading ‘re-registers’ the original schema and processes it in terms of literary factors’ (ibid.).

The Living Handbook of Narratology points out that it is valuable to utilize the schema theory ‘to account for the interpretation of a text where the discourse itself does not provide

all the information necessary for the discourse to be processed' (Emmott and Alexander, 2011). Therefore, schemata are crucial for the establishment of coherence, and the accumulation of dynamic details (ibid.). Essentially, 'the relationship between texts and schemata is two-way: while schemata tend to lay the ground rules for how a discourse will be interpreted, discourses themselves may prompt readers to 'tune' existing schemata and create new ones' (ibid.).

In summary, there is the world schemata (generic knowledge) and constitutive schemata (generic knowledge and expectations of certain literary context). Just as the violation of the cooperative maxims, the incongruities make one re-adjust certain schemata. The result might be confusion of the reader if these phenomena occur as an error, but if carefully and purposefully interwoven into a narrative, these strategies are able to signal humorous intent and amuse the audience.

1.3. The Language of *Welcome to Night Vale*

The *Welcome to Night Vale* (WTNV) podcast pertains to the comedy genre, playing on horror, surrealism and fantasy. For this research the published scripts of the podcast episodes were selected. This chapter, therefore, will reflect upon the difference between podcast scripts and conventional prose texts. Moreover, previous research and its findings on the language of WTNV will be presented. Finally, a brief comparative overview of the linguistic characteristics of the works that inspired this podcast (H. P. Lovecraft's short stories) will follow.

Certainly, the main difference between podcast scripts and other prose texts is that the first have been written specifically for being performed, then edited and presented in an audio format. This opens the inquiry of whether or not there would be any significant linguistic difference between regular comedic prose literature and the type of humour in such scripts.

Hugh Chignell writes that 'some comedy clearly works well on radio; the simply narrated joke for example or the sitcom based on strong and familiar characters and a good script' (2009: 13). Alison Ross has also written about spoken humour, yet she focuses primarily on the comparison of radio and television, noting that television and radio have replaced books as the main source of verbal entertainment (1998: 87). Ross also suggests that 'on radio the element of the unseen can be used to create laughs, as the listener [...] follows one step behind; this device is rather like the element of misdirection in many jokes and riddles' (ibid.: 87-88). Therefore, the unseen can intensify the humorous, sometimes being more effective than any type of visual media (such as pictures, comics, video, etc.).

Additionally, Marina Lambrou and Alan Durant have briefly touched upon the subject of analysis of media stylistics, describing the process as an ‘examination of a selected corpus of texts, identifying pervasive features of the type of text represented by the sample’ (Stockwell and Whitely, 2014: 4), as well as the purposes of such media, which may include advertising, artistic expression, propaganda, and others (ibid.: 3). However, these are all general observations relatable to the medium of radio, not focusing on the language used in it.

The research that has been done on this podcast is quite minimal, especially from the perspective of linguistics. However, there have been some observations made by linguist Gretchen McCulloch, who writes extensively about the language of the internet. Additionally, one may have a look at the language of literary works that have been compared to WTNV. Some of the most often mentioned references are to Stephen King, David Lynch, H.P. Lovecraft, and *The Twilight Zone* (Baker-Whitelaw, 2015). The short stories by H. P. Lovecraft, in particular, could provide valuable insights since he has been mentioned by the creators of the podcast as a vital influence in their work (Fink and Cranor, 2016: 160), and there is also a sufficient amount of research done on the writings by this author.

As mentioned previously, in WTNV horror converges with humour. Therefore, one may note some methods used for achieving horror in the podcast. In her article *The linguistics of horror*, McCulloch points out various characteristics of the language of horror in WTNV. First is the use of simple everyday language; she explains that ‘using purple prose to describe your indescribable horrors can make them feel less real, where using everyday language helps connect the audience and make them feel more like there’s some grotesque violation of normalcy going on’ (McCulloch, 2016).

Other observations made are that in the podcast there are few possessive ‘s- constructions (e.g. *the blood of the fallen* being preferred over *the fallen’s blood*), use of archaic words especially if they are shorter than their modern counterparts (e.g. *kin* for *family*), use of asyndeton, i.e. lack of commas before conjunctions (e.g. *They laughed and writhed and screamed and died in the gaze of a smiling god*, but not *They laughed, writhed, screamed, and died in the gaze of a smiling god*), use of poetic syntax (*The* + [adjective] constructions are common, as are *The* [adjective] *one(s)*), and breaking of expected word associations and collocations (e.g. *the toaster laughed* instead of a more expected *the toaster fell off a table*) (ibid.). General vagueness of the narration, as well as the importance of rhythm, are also highlighted as essential for building up the unique atmosphere that WTNV creates (ibid.).

In another article titled *Welcome to Night Vale: where even “not” isn’t what it seems*, McCulloch explores some more pragmatic peculiarities of the podcast. She mentions several

cases in which the narrative of WTNV violates Grice's Maxims of Relevance, Quantity, and Quality (McCulloch, 2014). There are several ideas that are not perceivable from the literal meaning of the passages, for they are often negated; essentially, the true meaning is arrived at intuitively, and the constant negation and repetition of negation, paradoxically enough, reinforces this. McCulloch hypothesizes that 'judicious use of implicature and other pragmatic devices make for better storytelling: [...] having to deduce that fictional characters are saying something different from their literal words makes them seem more real' (ibid.).

Generally, when listening to the podcast the real implications of a certain statement can be understood very clearly from the intonation of the narrator, although that is not always the case since, being constructed as a radio host, the narrator often reports something said by others. This is where the listener has to understand the pragmatics of the utterance, just as the reader would.

Next, when analysing the linguistic characteristics of WTNV, one may look at H. P. Lovecraft's fiction. His short stories were purely in the genre of horror; nevertheless, in WTNV the line between humour and horror is quite thin. It would be best to look at what features of Lovecraftian fiction correspond with the ones discussed just now in relation to WTNV.

Firstly, there is a shared element of vagueness. In all his descriptions Lovecraft tends to employ rather vague adjectives, and 'words like *indescribable*, *unknown* or *hideous* are offered to the reader with a gap which may only be filled by one's imagination and projection of things terrifying to the person' (Borowska, 2011: 10). Basically, 'frequent use of adjectives, particularly at the end of a text is one of Lovecraft's style markers' (ibid.). Another notable characteristic in his short stories is the intentional repetition of the phrase or its part (ibid.: 11), which can achieve emphasis as well as give a longer stretch of text a flowing rhythm. Lastly, the unusual or poetic constructions are also common for Lovecraft. He uses inversion quite a lot, where 'adjectives are often fronted in relation to the following clauses, verbs assume non-standard positions in the sentence' (e.g. *West of Arkham the hills rise wild, and there are valleys with deep woods that no axe has ever cut.*) (ibid.).

In general, all of these observations about Lovecraft's work correspond with the ones made about the language of WTNV. The only exception is the register. Whilst the podcast favours simple and mundane language, H. P. Lovecraft extensively utilized dense and scientific vocabulary from 'the realms of biology, chemistry, geology, astronomy, art, architecture, literature, mythology, and other disciplines' (Joshi, 1999: 252). Additionally, the practice of breaking word associations is not mentioned in relation to Lovecraft. It can be therefore inferred, that these two features (informal register and violation of word

associations) play a major role in the humorous side of WTNV (while not excluding the other features as well).

To summarise, when comparing the linguistic peculiarities of WTNV and Lovecraft's short stories, i.e. works that inspired the podcast, it was inferred that two features (informal register and constant violation of word associations) play a major role in the humorous side of WTNV, for unlike other features, these two do not occur in Lovecraft's writing.

1.4. Stylistic Devices that Create Humorous Effect

The current chapter will explain on what principles the stylistic devices for analysis of humour in the podcast were selected. Additionally, it will introduce which aspects of these devices will be analysed in the empirical part of the research.

In this paper, the focus is put on the linguistic mode of humorous expressions, which encompasses the patterning of syntax, semantics, and sound (Nash, 1985: 21). This corresponds well with some of the main types of stylistic devices – syntactic, lexical, and phonetic. Two other modes for expressing comedic intent are the generic mode (allusion to facts, social conventions and traditions, culture, literary works, parodies of styles, and the interplay of form and content) and the interactional mode (the pragmatics of the response, relationship of executant and respondent, and the logic of what is proposed) (ibid.:21-22). These must be considered as an afterthought when conducting a linguistic analysis of comedic texts, for all three function together generating a single effect – humour.

Furthermore, with linguistic expression, there exist three subtypes. First, there is the *structural mimesis*, which can be identified by the recurrence and variation of joke-bearing syntactic structures (ibid.). Secondly, one can encounter *coupling mechanisms*; for example, features such as rhyme, rhythm, and alliteration, pointed antitheses, or convergent devices - alliterative coupling, semantic contrast, etc. (ibid.: 23). Lastly, humour can also be expressed via *semantic concords and dissonances*, that can be crafted by synonymy, hyponymy, and antonymy, or in 'normal' and 'deviant' collocations (ibid.).

When discussing the role of style and stylistic means in humour, one has to see the difference between the 'language of comedy' and 'humorous language.' In essence, any sentence can be a part of the 'language of comedy,' for it 'concerns a discursive relationship between all the parts of a text and its infrastructure' (ibid.: 126). Meanwhile, 'humorous language' is constantly 'layered', achieving its effects through combining sounds, through vocabulary, and through grammar and syntax (ibid.: 124); essentially, it 'denotes the stylistic properties of particular utterances (sentences, phrases, words)' (ibid.: 126).

Therefore, ‘language of comedy’ is more universal. It concerns the structure of the text and how all the elements are arranged in a comedic work – in a way, it is a set of rules. Thus, this paper will focus more on the ‘humorous language’ of the podcast and the unique style used by its authors. This involves tackling such questions as the choice of stylistic means, their density or lack thereof, and the effect that all these choices have on the work as a whole.

Finally, as the essentialist approach requires, it is important to distinguish what is it that the language of humour consists of. Paul Simpson put it in a very coherent way, explaining that

two key theoretical principles underpin the language of humour, the first of which is that humour requires an *incongruity*. The [...] concept applies more generally to (i) any kind of stylistic twist in a pattern of language or (ii) any situation where there is a mismatch between what someone says and what they mean. The second principle is that incongruity can be situated in any layer of linguistic structure. (Simpson, 2004: 45)

Therefore, the stylistic analysis of humour entails finding an incongruity in a text and identifying where it occurs in the language system (*ibid.*). Of course, not all incongruities are funny, so the analysis will have to consider certain allusions, pragmatic rules, text and language schemata, as well as ideas of the essentialist theory on the incongruity of humour. Nevertheless, according to the theory above, all stylistic devices that work on the principle of incongruity can be used for creating humour and will be overviewed one by one in the following chapters.

1.4.1. Antithesis, Oxymoron, and Paradox

The first subchapter on stylistic devices will introduce antithesis, oxymoron, and paradox. These devices will be defined, their differences compared, and their functions in a text discussed in detail.

By definition, antithesis is a syntactical stylistic device, which can be described as ‘the relation between successive units that are put in contrast’ (e.g. *A saint abroad, and a devil at home* (Bunyan)) (Galperin, 1977: 222; Matthews, 2003: 175). Antithesis is viewed in a structure of parallelism and is often signalled by antithetical conjuncts (such as *but, on the contrary, by comparison, etc.*) (Wales, 2001: 24).

Along with antithesis, it is also possible to list oxymoron and paradox. While antithesis is more of an opposition of two units (not contradicting each other) in a larger chunk of text, oxymoron deals exclusively with terms that contradict each other within a phrase (Bussmann, 2006: 848). Meanwhile, paradox is a self-contradictory statement – a sort of an expanded

oxymoron (e.g. Orwell's *War is peace, Freedom is slavery*) (Wales, 2001: 282). For this reason, this paper will deal with instances of oxymoron and paradox as one type of device. Furthermore, as Wales writes about paradoxes, she explains that 'the reader must probe beyond the literal meaning to find a deeper, usually more philosophical meaning which will reconcile the apparent absurdity' (ibid.). Essentially, the opposition uses metalanguage to convey the meaning (Jeffries, 2010: 49).

Whatever the more profound message might be, the initial confusion is a very effective prompt for amusement or laughter. The paradox is a definite favourite in advertisements, riddles, and poetry dealing with themes of confusion (Wales, 2001: 282); thanks to its baffling and thought-provoking nature, it is a device appropriate for catching the attention of the audience.

In summary, it has been determined that since function-wise oxymoron and paradox are quite similar, they can be grouped together when researching not the structure of stylistic devices (for there they do differ), but rather the way in which they operate (e.g. in creating humour). Generally, it can be concluded that antitheses and paradoxes inspire to make sense of the senseless – an activity which is both intellectual and humorous in its surface absurdity.

1.4.2. Hyperbole and Litotes

This section will define two devices that are opposites yet work on the same principle – hyperbole and litotes. Their functions and most common ways of use will also be explained.

Hyperbole, also known as exaggeration or over-statement, is a lexical stylistic device that functions as 'an exaggerated description intended to elicit alienation, revaluation, or any kind of emotional reaction, (e.g. *snail's pace, dead tired, heart of steel*)' (Bussmann, 2006: 524). Undoubtedly, laughter and amusement can be listed as one of these emotional reactions.

Sometimes hyperbole can be brought to an illogical degree, to *ad absurdum*; a case in point is an example from O. Henry '*He was so tall that I was not sure he had a face*' (Galperin, 1977: 176). When it comes to pragmatics, hyperbole defies Grice's maxims of quality and quantity by relating too much and warping the truth (Wales, 2001: 190). However, hyperbole should not be based on telling lies, and it should allow the reader to infer the reality of things (ibid.).

In a way, hyperbole can overlap with simile, periphrasis, and euphemism, i.e. other stylistic devices meant to intensify certain phenomena. However, in hyperbole all these types of periphrases do tend to be brought to an extreme, therefore making the hyperbole the end result of what might structurally appear like a simple simile or periphrasis.

Litotes, on the other hand, is more or less an opposite of hyperbole. *Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics* defines it as ‘understatement that intensifies meaning’ (Bussmann, 2006: 701), especially by ‘ironic’ use of a negative (Matthews, 2003: 1791). At its core, litotes employs a negation in combination with a noun or adjective that results in the creation of a positive meaning (e.g. *He is no coward*, meaning that he is brave) (Galperin, 1977: 246). Litotes usually adds extra connotation to the utterance, and the constructions containing this type of negation tend to have a stronger effect than simple affirmation (ibid.).

Pragmatically, just as the hyperbole, litotes also violates the maxims of quality and quantity by relating too little information (Wales, 2001: 239). Nevertheless, understatements can often serve the pragmatic function of politeness by minimising something negative or by downplaying certain information in order not to seem arrogant (ibid.). Furthermore, one can also find litotes being used for ironic statements, mainly when the discrepancy in what is said and what is meant is completely clear to both parties involved in an interaction (ibid.: 240).

A curious fact to note is that there is the possibility of the narrator consistently framing their work in overstatement, or they may regularly underplay something, in this way building up a different type of humorous frame and inviting the reader to accept a ‘different set of suppositions and anticipations’ (Nash, 1985: 170). This means that these two devices can be employed for creating a larger comic narrative, and not only serve a single joke.

Overall, both of these devices are inherently based on the warping of pragmatic conventions of clear communication. Furthermore, they may produce irony with their inferable connotations. Least but not last, these devices can pervade the whole narrative, not only a single joke, thus supporting the whole semantic structure of a text.

1.4.3. Pun and Zeugma

Next device to be discussed is the pun. Zeugma will also be included alongside with it, for they are both structurally and functionally similar.

Both pun and zeugma are lexical stylistic devices. They fit under the subcategory of devices that are based on polysemantic effect, and they both perform according to the interaction of primary and derivative logical meanings of words (Galperin, 1977: 148).

The pun is one of the most commonly used stylistic devices for creating humour. It can be found in the earliest English literary works, and before the emergence of the very term ‘pun’, all types of word-play were referred to as ‘paronomasia’ in rhetoric (Wales, 2001: 326). At its core, pun is a foregrounded lexical ambiguity that exploits polysemy or homonymy of

words (ibid.: 326-327). This means that it either plays with the literal and figurative meaning or two different meanings of a single word. As for the function, the whole point of using puns is ‘to produce a humorous or witty effect from the juxtaposition of meanings’ (ibid.). Thus, puns are very commonly used as punchlines in jokes, but not only. They are quite marked and easily catch the eye; consequently, puns are often included in newspaper headlines or advertisements (ibid.).

Another device known as zeugma, is commonly discussed alongside with puns. Basically, zeugma is utilized in specific ‘co-ordinated structures whose common predicate connects two semantically or syntactically unequal parts of the sentence’ (Bussmann, 2006: 1303). There is the syntactically incongruous zeugma (*He’s drinking beer, we wine*) and the semantically incongruous zeugma (*He travelled with his wife and his umbrella*) (ibid.). The first type is made out of a verb that serves more than one clause; meanwhile the second, the semantic zeugma, ordinarily is made up of two nouns that are governed by a single verb but with included variation in meaning (Wales, 2001: 412).

Overall, the single variable feature that helps distinguish pun from a zeugma is structural. For ‘zeugma is the realization of two meanings with the help of a verb which is made to refer to different subjects or objects (direct or indirect)’, while the pun is generally more independent.’ (Galperin, 1977: 151). Thus, the zeugma must adhere to certain grammatical rules in order to qualify as one. Puns have no such restrictions.

1.4.4. Repetition and Parallelism

Repetition and parallelism will be discussed in this subchapter. Both will be defined and compared in terms of what they have in common and how do they differ. Finally, their functions and ways in which these devices are most often implemented will be illustrated.

Repetitions and parallel structures are somewhat inescapable in formulaic jokes. Some would even go as far as to say that ‘repetition may be the single most important mechanism in comedy’ (Charney, 1978: 82). In regular narratives, lexical repetition is highly conspicuous, and for this reason, it is sometimes ‘avoided in favour of variation by synonymy, or substitution by pronouns, important means of cohesion’ (Wales, 2001: 341). With jokes, repeated lines tend to lead to the eventual punchline at the culmination of a joke.

There are various types of repetition. In narratives, one may encounter leitmotifs – reoccurring phrases or themes (ibid.: 342). The connection of lexical repetition and grammatical repetition (also known as parallelism) is characteristic of several rhetoric schemes; for example, anaphora, ‘repetition of words at the beginning of successive clauses’,

epistrophe, ‘repetition at the end of clauses’, and symploce, ‘repetition at beginning and end’ (ibid.). Moreover, one may also encounter phonological repetition, particularly common in poetry, such as repetition of rhythms, vowels, and consonants (ibid.). Functionally, repetition is useful for emphasis as well as ‘heightening emotion and ‘pointing’ an argument (ibid.).

Moreover, repetition can be accompanied by slight variation, thus introducing some novel elements (Attardo, 2001: 86). However, while repetition is the reoccurrence of exactly one and the same element, there is a separate device known as parallelism, which ‘requires some variable feature of the pattern – some contrasting elements which are ‘parallel’ with respect to their position in the pattern’ (Leech, 1969: 67).

Parallelism, another syntactic stylistic device, requires ‘identical, or similar, syntactical structure in two or more sentences or parts of a sentence in close succession’ (Galperin, 1977: 208). This creates a balanced arrangement achieved through repetition of the same syntactic forms, a balance that can often help create the rhythm necessary for certain verbally related jokes. Additionally, besides rhythm, parallel constructions frequently converge with other devices, such as antithesis and climax (Galperin, 1977: 208), for the form may be the same, but the meanings differ greatly, thus foregrounding certain parts of the text.

Unlike some other stylistic devices that are marked due to their deviation from linguistic rules, parallelism works the other way around – it introduces ‘extra regularities, not irregularities, into the language’ (Leech, 1969: 62). This foregrounded regularity can extend to both lexical and grammatical choices, operate on different structural levels at the same time, and display patterning on formal and phonological levels (ibid.: 65).

In summary, repetition and parallelism can undoubtedly be useful tools for setting up a premise for the joke. Curiously enough, textual humour develops across intricate networks that are rarely present in oral humour, and when attempts are made to expand spoken humour, the repetition of a joke-type or the active employment of a conspicuous situation or theme are used most commonly (Nash, 1985: 20). Thus, how this device is presented matters greatly, for it can be casual and expected in oral form, yet extremely marked and foregrounded in a written text.

1.4.5. Anti-climax

The following will be an explanation of what an anti-climax is and how it can create humour. This will be done by first defining its counterpart, climax, as well as the device that can be used to build up both – suspense.

In order to understand anti-climax, a device highly favoured by humourists, climax (also known as *gradatio*) should be defined. Essentially, climax is a way of ordering sentences (or equal parts of one sentence) in a manner that achieves a gradual increase in emotional tension or significance in the utterance (Galperin, 1977: 219; Wales, 2001: 58). Some authors see climax as synonymous with ‘denouement’, both conveying the resolution of an action (Nørgaard, et. al, 2010: 124).

Accordingly, anti-climax or bathos is the very opposite, putting the most important point first. In short, bathos ‘depends on a sudden lowering or deflation from a heightened tone for ironic effect; it has thus been much exploited in literature for humour and satire’ (Wales, 2001: 39). Basically, with anti-climactic utterances or even whole plots, there is an incongruity between the reader’s expectation and reality, thus generating an absurd, humorous outcome.

Climax and anti-climax are both often linked with suspense, and in such constructions ‘the information contained in the series of statement-clauses preceding the solution-statement are arranged in the order of gradation’ (Galperin, 1977: 218). Suspense is created when the matter of communication is organized in such a way that less important, descriptive, subordinate parts are situated at the beginning, while the main idea is being withheld till the end of the sentence (ibid.: 218). The purpose of this is to keep the reader in a state of uncertainty and expectation (ibid.). Furthermore, it puts the reader in a curious place in which their uncertainty interplays with what they do know already, thus making them guess, anticipate, or infer things, which is what makes the story progress (Leech and Short, 2007: 143).

Overall, suspense works well with both climax and anti-climax. However, climax can be used not only for humour, but also for evoking surprise or horror. Anti-climax, on the other hand, is mostly appropriate for creating a comedic effect.

1.4.6. Epithet

The final subchapter on stylistic devices that can create humour will concern epithets. Its definition and use will be provided, and the difference in its functions in rhetoric and grammar will be pointed out.

Epithet is an adjective (in most cases) that is ‘conventionally associated with a noun or with whatever or whoever it denotes’ (Matthews, 2003: 1014). Fundamentally, the term describes attributive adjectives and appositions; it is used ‘particularly in figures of speech of

expansion, especially in unusual semantic collocations or in special characterizations' (Bussmann, 2006: 372).

Especially common is the distinctive function of this device. In order to introduce someone or to simply reveal who they are, 'a descriptive word may be used to indicate something about the individual, such as personal characteristics, profession, location of dwelling, place of origin, memorable incident; this is an epithet (or, if humorous, a sobriquet)' (Trask and Stockwell, 2007: 180). Wales also notes that epithets may serve as nicknames, and even become abusive (2001: 132). The abuse, however, may become a tool for generating amusement.

There are some, such as Banfield (1982), who restrict epithet only to an 'of' noun phrase (e.g. *he's a miracle of a doctor*), yet traditionally in rhetoric it 'refers to an 'ornamental' adjective or adjective phrase which co-occurs either with a proper name in a kind of formula, or with a noun in a similar habitual collocation' (ibid.: 132-133). What is more, in functional grammar the epithet indicates a modifying space in a noun phrase structure, which can be either objective or subjective (ibid.: 133). Usually, this space is filled by an adjective, but participles can also serve as epithets (e.g. *lost cause*) (ibid.). Semantically, epithet is a highly expressive and marked stylistic device, with potential for creating curious effects in the narrative.

To summarize, epithet is a device that serves descriptive or identifying purposes. It can be objective or ornamental and subjective. Structurally, epithets are reliant on adjectives and participles, therefore, they can be easily identified. However, whether or not an epithet is humorous, depends on the objectivity/ subjectivity and other contextual factors.

The following chapter will concern the empirical part of this research. It will present the analysis of stylistic devices creating humorous effect in four WTNV episode transcripts selected from the books *Mostly Void*, *Partially Stars* and *The Great Glowing Coils of the Universe*. The empirical study will focus on the devices discussed above. By applying the method of textual analysis, this research aims at identifying which stylistic devices are employed to achieve humour in these transcripts, how they achieve humour, and which ones are the most frequent.

2. Humour in *Welcome to Night Vale* Podcast

In order to achieve the research goals, specific methodology has been selected and applied. The primary aims of this study were to detect what stylistic devices create humorous effect in the four selected WTNV transcripts and to analyse said devices in terms of their frequency and stylistic functions in the text. The following chapters will explain the methodology chosen for this endeavour, provide a brief overview of what is the WTNV podcast, as well as elaborate upon the corpus by discussing the linguistic peculiarities of radio podcasts in general.

2.1. Methodology

This section will expand on the methodology applied in carrying out the present research. The qualitative research method used in this work ‘to describe and interpret the characteristics of written or recorded text’ (Frey, Botan and Kreps, 1999: 225) is that of textual analysis. This method aims to ‘describe the content, structure, and functions of the messages contained in texts’ (ibid.) One of the approaches to textual analysis is called content analysis, which will be the primary way of analysing the corpus.

Essentially, text analysis of particular content is based upon a number of consecutive procedures which aim to systematize the elements of a text (for example, these can be words, idioms, sentences, paragraphs, stylistic devices, or similar units of text comprising a larger body), thus enabling the researcher to ‘meaningfully interpret and make inferences about the patterns in the content of the overall body’ (Yang and Miller, 2008: 689). In other words, it identifies, enumerates, and analyses occurrences of specific messages and message characteristics embedded in texts (Frey, et al, 1999: 236).

Additionally, this method appears to balance on the verge of being either quantitative or qualitative research method, since it shares some aspects of both types. Nowadays, it is perceived as more qualitative (Dörnyei, 2007: 245). However, it originates as a quantitative research method of ‘examining written texts that involves the counting of instances of words, phrases, or grammatical structures that fall into specific categories’ (ibid.). The reasoning behind the change is that the categories employed in content analysis are derived inductively from the analysed data and are not predetermined (ibid.).

Nevertheless, this research is interested in both aspects of content analysis. The qualitative view directs the focus on the meanings associated with messages, while the quantitative approach serves systematic step-by-step procedure used to answer research

questions and test hypothesis by registering the number of times message variables occur (Frey, et al, 1999: 236).

Firstly, one must start by selecting the texts for analysis. In content analysis, ‘researchers study texts that already exist rather than asking people to produce texts’ (ibid.: 239). This research adheres to this principle by analysing ready-made and published transcripts. The particular four episodes for analysis have been selected in twos from each of the two volumes of transcripts, out of a total of 49 episodes (first volume, MVPS, containing episodes 1-25, and the second, GGCU, episodes 26-49). From both volumes first two consecutive episodes from the last ten entries have been chosen; namely, episodes 21 and 22 from MVPS, and episodes 41 and 42 from GGCU. This ensures that the chosen corpus is random, yet symmetrical and determined systematically. Moreover, last episodes of each volume seem to be a better choice than, for example, first ones, since by that point the podcast would have more definitely taken its characteristic form and style.

The second step to prepare for content analysis is *unitising* - identifying the appropriate message unit to code (ibid.). Next, there is the process of developing content categories into which units can be classified, which is ‘done through the use of nominal measurement procedures’; a very creative process since there is an infinite number of categories into which it is possible to classify the units (ibid.). These units will be the stylistic devices (described and elaborated upon in the theoretical section of this paper) that serve a humorous purpose in the selected corpus, and the groups will be their types.

In summary, the text analysis process has several clear-cut steps to follow. This method entails the sequence of coding the units, searching for patterns, making interpretations, and building theory (Ellis and Barkhuizen, 2005: 253). The inferences which can be made from the collected units and their patterns are what yield the results and allow to draw conclusions about the text.

2.1.1. Data Collection Tools

The stylistic devices used to create humour in the text were identified and classified manually by the researcher. The devices found were counted manually as well. Finally, the collected data about the number of each device in every chapter was converted into bar chart figures, by utilizing *Microsoft Excel*, with the aim of providing a visual overview of the findings.

2.1.2. Procedure

The research procedure applied in this study is described below.

- 1) The first step was the selection of the transcripts for the analysis. The procedure of this selection is described above in the methodology section.
- 2) The stylistic devices were extracted from the four chapters separately.
- 3) The collected stylistic devices were sorted according to their type into groups, namely, into antithesis, paradox, hyperbole, litotes, pun, zeugma, repetition, parallelism, anti-climax, and epithet.
- 4) The qualitative content analysis of the gathered data was performed, inferring the role and function of each stylistic device in the text.
- 5) Additionally, the analysis of quantity of each device was carried out by manually counting the instances of each extracted stylistic device, in order to compare their distribution across the episodes.

2.2. Corpus

The corpus selected for this research consists of four scripts from *Welcome to Night Vale* podcast. These scripts have been published in chapters (each chapter corresponding to each episode) by the authors of the podcast Joseph Fink and Jeffrey Cranor in book format comprising two volumes.

Each chapter is 5-6 pages long and comprises of various separate segments in no particular order, such as the narrator's personal stories, advertisements, traffic announcements, public service announcements, proverbs, news reports, and others. There is a single narrator, named Cecil, for all of these segments. Nevertheless, he occasionally reports the words of others, and there are some rare appearances of different voices.

The episodes that will be analysed in the following chapters of this paper are the following: episode 21: *A Memory of Europe*, episode 22: *The Whispering Forest* (from MVPS), episode 41: *Walk*, and episode 42: *Numbers* (from GGCU).

2.3. Results and Discussion

After the analysis of the selected corpus, a total of 155 stylistic devices that are used for creating humour were extracted from the four episodes (all of which are listed in Appendix 1). In MVPS *ep.21* a total of 37 devices were found, while in *ep.22* there are 49. From the GGCU chapters, *ep.41* contains 26 devices, and *ep.42* has 43 (on average it would be 38 per episode).

The overview and the analysis of the results are presented in the following chapters. The results from each WTNV episode will be analysed separately and then summarized in order to draw the final conclusions.

2.3.1. Stylistic Devices Creating Humour in episode 21: *A Memory of Europe*

Episode 21: *A Memory of Europe* is an episode filled with strange and surreal reports from the Night Vale radio host Cecil – something that is typical of all the episodes of this podcast. Throughout the regular segments of the broadcast, the narrator also shares bits and pieces of memories from his youth when he went backpacking through Europe.

Overall, the script for *ep.21* adheres to the regular fragmented structure of WTNV podcast, with various unrelated news segments interspersed with a certain larger narrative that pervades the whole episode (in this case – the titular memories of Europe) coming up now and then, as well as serving for the purpose of a reflective conclusion. The prevailing stylistic devices used for humour in this episode are paradox, (8) epithet (5), anti-climax (5) and hyperbole (4). The amount of these devices can be seen in Figure 2.1. below.

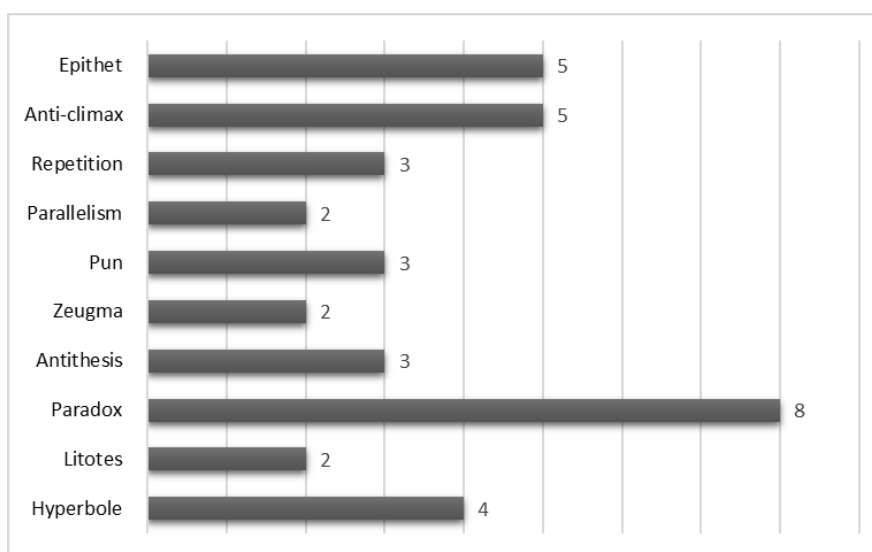


Figure 2.1 Stylistic devices creating humour in episode 21: *A Memory of Europe*

The first device to discuss, therefore, should be the most common one – paradox. A total of 8 cases were found in ep.21, in most of which this device creates self-contradiction by connecting a certain noun with a description that unequivocally does not fit with it, such as in the cases of ‘*a culture that doesn’t even have any people*’; ‘*a country with no population*’ or ‘*the beautiful face of that young man from Luftnarp, with his gaping mouth and ashy skin.*’ Clearly, there can be no mention of a culture or a country in a place where there are no people, and the words *gaping mouth and ashy skin* do not provoke associations with a beautiful face; thus, the comedic effect is produced by the subversion of certain expectations that we associate with the initially introduced object. Structurally, it can be observed that the noun is always presented first, and so the description that follows can effectively surprise the reader.

The same principle is present in other paradoxical utterances, such as ‘*the conference was simply a workout for her denial skills, which she says she must keep sharp through constant practice, and which she also says do not exist*’ and ‘*Scientists won’t investigate it because they’re not real.*’ Here, the paradox manifests itself through introducing an element with some additional information about it (the denial skills that must be kept sharp; the scientists that refuse to investigate something) and then denying the existence of said element. Logically, this makes the additional information meaningless, making the statement quantitatively and relationally flawed. In one case, the paradox is achieved via temporal incongruity – ‘*Apparently the specimen was found when your dead body was examined. Oh, you know what? I’m sorry. This report is from next week.*’ The idea is the same – to defy expectation and confuse the audience with an excess of seemingly irrelevant information. Moreover, this is done in such a nonchalant, casual manner (produced by simple vocabulary and adverbs such as *simply, apparently*), that this can be viewed as active schema refreshment in the narrative, meaning what is said must be accepted as part of the fictional context, even if it appears realistically odd.

Next, a device closely linked with paradox, i.e. antithesis, could be encountered 3 times in this chapter: ‘*the unknown but presumably fearsome and dangerous aggressors from the buried city*’; ‘*Fines for traffic violations in these marked areas are double. All fines outside of the marked areas are quadruple, as usual.*’; ‘*Svitz [...] is perfect for the visitor with a strong constitution and a low tendency for hallucination.*’ Essentially, this is a device of contrast and in the examples found there is a bit of gradation where the first element appears mundane while the second obtains a sudden incongruous intensity (e.g. something unknown suddenly being referred to as dangerous, or the requirement to have a strong constitution being paired with the requirement to not experience hallucinations). Therefore, these cases of antithesis

also function through challenging schemata while producing illogical notions in grammatically conventional structures. Here, one may see this practice of putting more irrelevant and obvious information before new and unique details as a flouting of maxims of quantity and manner. The result is nonsensical yet amusing.

Another common device appearing 4 times in ep.21 is hyperbole. It is used in over-exaggerated statements ('*Simone Rigadeau [...] released a statement today, saying that the world has ended*') as well as in vivid descriptions of actions ('*please hold all conversations in a loud declamatory manner, facing outward, and making dramatic gestures*') or people ('*man in the tan jacket was described as impossible to remember, but presumably a man of some kind, with facial features and limbs*'; '*you were a portrait of agony, your skin a myriad of pulsing, angry colors*'). The first three examples conspicuously reach the level of *ad absurdum*, violating the communicative maxim of quantity, which is not uncommon for this podcast, as has already been witnessed from the aforementioned devices. Additionally, the second and the last examples rely heavily on vivid epithets (*dramatic gestures, portrait of agony*), another prevalent device, occurring 5 times in this chapter.

Indeed, epithets in this podcast are often hyperbolic ('*the usual ugly American tourist*'; '*work crews are slithering on certain sections of Route 800*'), or repetitive when serving as part of a character's name (distinctive function). One example of an epithet used for distinction would be the reference to '*Simone Rigadeau, the transient living in a recycling closet in the Earth Sciences building at Night Vale Community College*' – the underlined part is repeated quite often across the chapters, essentially becoming a part of the character's name and identity. This kind of lengthy epithets, focusing on a very specific aspect of one person (such as where they live, their appearance, or what is their occupation) are humorous, in a way providing more information than is necessary too often, and thus, once again one can see the flouting of Grice's Maxim of quantity.

A thing to note is that the maxims of quality, quantity, and relevance are often warped by litotes. Cases of understatement were few in this chapter, usually following longer stretches of text that were built upon hyperbole ('*line of patriotic volunteers, armed to the teeth and forming an unbroken perimeter along the whole of the bowling area. Teddy admits that this will make bowling slightly more difficult than usual*' – reaction in the second statement to the first is seriously underplayed) or hyperbole in combination with paradox ('*Scientists announce that they have discovered the world's deadliest spider, a previously unknown species that is as hard to spot as its bite is hard to survive. Apparently the specimen was found when your dead body was examined. [...] Oh, you know what? I'm sorry. This report is from next week. [...] Never mind. No need to worry about that report for a few days*'

– quality-wise, the paradox makes the truthfulness of the statement questionable, while from a perspective of quantity there is too much extra information for a simple report about the discovery of a deadly spider). The combination of these devices resembles a punch-line of the joke – the incongruous, exaggerated statements are negated and undermined, producing an ironic effect as the end result.

Furthermore, there is one more device that depends on shifting the intensity of the utterance – anti-climax. It appears twice in the narrative: ‘*Eventually I was knocked out on one of our falls and when I awoke, it was in a different country, I had aged by years, and no one I talked to knew where the country of Svitz was, or even had heard of it. Anyway, it was a lovely place and I would say it’s a must-see for any European traveler’; ‘*And I swear listeners, I swear, that in the moment of crossing I felt a single claw graze against my back. I swear I felt the endless wind of Franchia turn hot and wet, the breath of the beast inches away from my neck. So visit Franchia! But, you know, watch out for the monster that I may or may not have only imagined!*’ There is an explicit incongruity between the mysterious and terrible events described and the sudden change in tone and mood at the end of the utterance, which suddenly sounds cheerful and casual, containing short sentences and even encouraging exclamations. In this case, the reader has no real-life schemata to refer to (since instant aging and being pursued by a monster is not quite something one experiences often), yet there are some expectations from the constitutive schemata (i.e. that of literary context), particularly when one is aware of the genre. These examples start with an exposition that would be fitting for the horror genre, yet they end so anti-climatically, completely disregarding the genre expectations. Generally, such cases of anti-climax are the best illustrations of the horror-humour interplay in WTNV.*

However, there is another use of anti-climax in these texts. Namely, it has the same effect of understatement, only used in combination with another stylistic device – allusion. In most cases, these allusions appear during the ‘advertisement’ segments of the broadcast. To illustrate: ‘*Seven lights in the window, seven lights in the hall, seven lights seven lights all in all. / Six notes in the melody, six notes form a dirge, six notes to rid you of the urge. [...] Two eyes wide and desperate, two eyes squinting scared, two eyes open yes but nothing there. / One light in the window, one light in the hall, one light one light all in all. Taco Bell. Live más.*’ The case shows a long stretch of dramatic, poetic text, gradually building up suspense through its parallel, rhythmical structures, till finally the text turns out to be simply a Taco Bell ad. The way of revealing this is technically ingenious, for the repeated grammatical pattern is cut short with the sudden use of elliptical sentences, introducing the brand and its

slogan. Finally, what adds to the humour is the frivolous nature of the brand – a simple, well-known American fast food chain.

Moving on to parallelism, besides the above-mentioned case, there were not many other examples, only these two: *'Hang a map of a place you'll never go on your living room wall. Draw new streets. Tear off bodies of water. Wait for news crews to arrive.'*; *'The man in the tan jacket was described as impossible to remember, but presumably a man of some kind, with facial features and limbs. The Apache Tracker was described as a real jerk, just now, by me.'* In the first case, the construction of [verb in the imperative] + [direct object] is repeated, achieving gradation of action and ending quite unexpectedly, which again is a good example of breaking the schema of what maps are like; thus, even with the gradual build-up, the ending of the paragraph is unexpected and non-sensical. Meanwhile, the other example of parallel sentences is anchored more in lexical repetition, using the *was described as* line from the objectively reported first sentence for the subjectively humorous remark in the second. This is made possible by adding to the relevant description of some mysterious man an irrelevant offhand remark about the Apache Tracker; consequently, the sudden disregard of the relation maxim is what makes this comical.

Repetition, a similar device, mainly serves the function of humorous gradation. The three instances of repetition in ep.21 are the following: *'She was then heard to deny the sky, the existence of a loving deity, and eggs. Eggs aren't real, she said. Nah-uh. Show me an egg. That's not an egg. What's an egg?'*; *'As their motto goes: A thousand ways in, no way out, eat fresh. Eat so terribly, terribly fresh. Terribly, awesomely, gruesomely, terrifyingly fresh'*; *'Europe is not just about looking at monuments and talking to monuments and licking monuments.*' The same words, such as *egg* or *fresh* are repeated for emphasis. It is especially curious in the second case, where the popular, concise slogan *Eat Fresh* (an allusion to Subway sandwiches) is modified with a string of adverbs that have a strong negative connotation. In the third utterance, there is a repetition of both the word and the construction, as well as a peculiar avoidance of punctuation. The lack of commas gives the sentence a more rapid flow, not even allowing one to stop and think about what they are reading, so the absurdity may be realized at least a millisecond later.

Finally, there are two devices left – pun (3 instances) and zeugma (2 instances), working on the principles of polysemy. Puns such as *'this is a small price to pay for safety. The other price for safety is \$2.25'*; *'And remember: wear seat belts. They are a cool fashion statement and easily obtained by cutting them out of your own car and crafting them into any number of accessories'*; *'PROVERB: Ask your doctor if right is left for you'* appear in the midst of news reports and are presented matter-of-factly as part of these reports (not being singled out as

jokes). Therefore, the second meaning of the word, on which the pun is based, becomes a reality in the fictional work, altering the schemata associated with the first introduced meaning, and the polysemy is a tool of shaping the narrative of this world, where one might actually pay a small fee for their safety or wear seatbelts as accessories.

The same applies to zeugma. There are two extracted examples: '*feeling like I had not only gained a good meal, but a few new good friends.*' and '*no matter how blessed you are by luck or the government or some remote, invisible deity.*' Both are semantically incongruous yet the second involves a bit of gradation, which makes it stand out more, and appears more eccentric due to its imagery and modification of the *blessed by luck* word association.

In summary, this chapter affirmed the presence of certain linguistic characteristics noticed before by McCulloch: simple vocabulary, constant disruption of word associations, lack of commas, vagueness in narration, markedly rhythmical stretches of text, and the humour/ horror interplay are all conspicuously present. As for the incongruities that are meant to achieve humour, there are both the constant disruption of schemata (in paradoxes, antitheses, anti-climaxes, parallelisms, and puns) as well as the play with basic conversational rules (in paradoxes, antitheses, hyperbole, epithets, litotes, parallelism, and repetition). Essentially, linguistic games are used to create a type of warped new reality with its own possible and impossible rules, forming a new and unique constitutive schema for reading this work.

2.3.2. Stylistic Devices Creating Humour in episode 22: *The Whispering Forest*

Full of various oddities and bits of existential horror, episode 22 is themed around nature. The main event reported by the radio host is a sudden appearance of a sentient pine forest in the middle of the desert, in which the town of Night Vale is located.

The reporting style of *The Whispering Forest* is mostly the same as in the previous episode; however, here one encounters capitalized fragments of speech attributed to a literal, talking forest, and the graphical device of capitalization is likely to have been intended for the narrator as a cue for a change of voice. As concerns the stylistic devices, the most prevalent ones are repetition (11), epithet (10), hyperbole (7), and paradox (5), with others appearing in

similar quantity to the previous episode (as can be seen in Figures 2.1. and 2.2.).

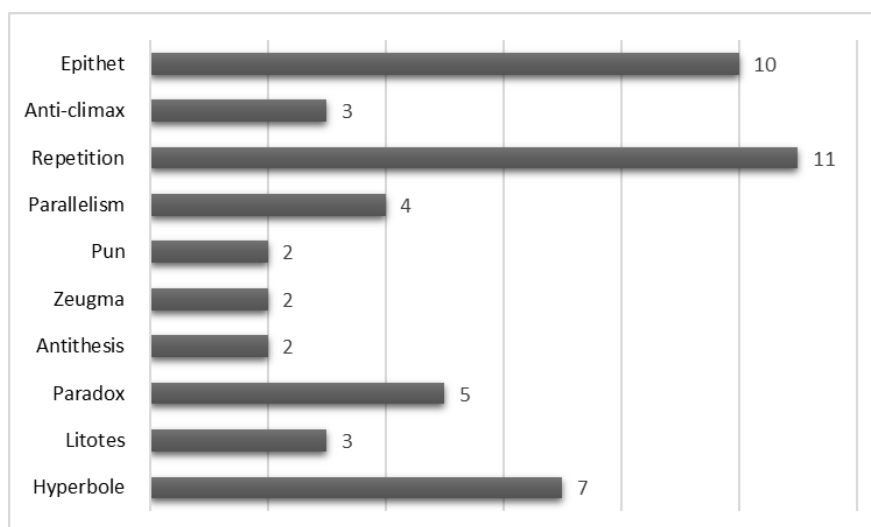


Figure 2.2 Stylistic devices creating humour in episode 22: *The Whispering Forest*

Unlike ep.21, in which paradox is the predominant stylistic device, in ep.22 repetition prevails. Repetition occurs throughout various news reports, for example, about an oncoming parade (*'Saturday afternoon is a secret parade. You will know where and when it is, if and when you are chosen to see its secret floats and hear its secret songs'*), instructions about keeping a dream journal (*'It seems hard at first, because you have to get in the habit of writing first thing in the morning, and also because the City Council's ban on all writing utensils is still in full effect'; The sooner you start this process, listeners, the sooner you can start actualizing your existence, exploring your inner self, and the sooner the Sheriff's Secret Police can track down and arrest those vile miscreants who keep dreaming about horses'*), or reporting the dangers of the forest (*'There is no reason to go explore nature. No reason'*). Such repetitions as occur in the dream journal examples add rhythm to the text, thus serving as a cohesive device, tying together the otherwise incongruous semantic notions (like how the inconvenience of getting into the habit of writing is equalled with the impossibility of writing due to a ban on writing utensils, or how exploring one's inner world suddenly shifts to also facilitate the duties of the Secret Police).

Furthermore, in the first and the last example, there is another purpose for the repetition – emphasis. The paradoxical notion of a highly secretive parade and the confident statement about the uselessness of nature exploration are casually emphasised by the narrator exploiting the maxim of quantity.

Nevertheless, the reason for the high number of repetitions in this particular chapter is the introduction of another voice – that of the forest. The sentient Whispering Forest often uses this device: *'YOU ARE GOOD. AND YOU LOOK GOOD.'; DO YOU WANT TO HANG*

OUT MORE? LET'S HANG OUT AND TELL SOME JOKES AND MAYBE PLAY GAMES.; *'YOU ARE A GOOD FRIEND. LET US BE FRIENDS.;* *'DO YOU PLAY GUITAR? WOULD YOU LIKE TO PLAY GUITAR? DO YOU LIKE MUSIC?'* Here, the device functions as a means of comic, indirect characterization. The forest was first introduced as ominous and menacing, yet now its speech portrays it as the very opposite – curious, chatty, and eager to make friends. Overall, it is a prime example of narrative incongruity for the purposes of humour.

Together with repetition, parallelism also appears in news reports – 2 cases in the same one about the dream journal (*'Dream journals can be a spiritually satisfying exercise in understanding your unconscious mind, helping you to fully examine your being and balance your emotions. They also can be rife with useful data for government officials and corporate marketing executives'; 'Step one: Find a foreign dictionary or hymnal. [...] / Step two: Carve out several pages [...]. / Step three: Write down your dream [...]. / Step four: And this is the most important step of all: Eat the paper you wrote the dream on and then place a bird skeleton in the book. / Finally, bury the book near a magnolia or willow tree and repeat each day'*) as well as 2 more in the community calendar (*'Thursday is recycling pickup day: paper goes in blue bags, plastic in clear, and any teeth you have lost because of last week's public water mishap should be gently placed in a wooden box and set afire'; 'Friday at the Night Vale Recreation Center are cooking classes for beginners'*). The first dream journal report example has the same function as the repetition – producing cohesion between two incompatible ideas. Similarly, the second example and those from the daily calendar present a conventional listing pattern that breaks down a process step-by-step, yet the process described itself is filled with absurd and grotesque components. Thus, the commonplace form together with abnormal contents that do not adhere to the readers usual understanding (or scheme) of keeping a dream-journal, elicit amusement.

The second most common device used for humour in this chapter is epithet. They are often used to express certain (mostly negative and sarcastic) attitudes of the narrator – *'those vile miscreants who keep dreaming about horses'; 'I can't imagine what all those academic types and bureaucratic pen pushers were going on about'*. An interesting case is this *'stay away from the Whispering Forest. Do not listen to its hollow compliments, its sappy flattery'* for it transfers the characteristics that could be attributed to an actual forest (hollow tree trunks, tree sap) to the speech of the forest, functioning as a pun.

As in the previous chapter, here epithets are found when naming certain character as well, for example *'The school board president, an enormous Glow Cloud that drops animals from great heights and casts a looming fog of despair over all it covers, added'; 'a vague, yet*

menacing, government agency.' The hyperbolic adjectives of archaic style (*fog of despair*) are evident in these modifiers and other instances as well ('*Incorrect shoppers will receive a bout of uncontrolled sobbing and a horrifying chill up their spine*'; *They cited the ever-widening night sky as the impetus for this decision*'; etc.). These vague, commonly occurring, and over-exaggerated adjectives are yet another example of the narrative's disregard of quantity and manner maxims of communication.

Speaking of hyperbole, it was used 7 times in this episode, in various segments and running gags, such as in relation to 'the Moon is fake' joke ('*It explores how the moon is a government-created myth to keep us all from knowing about the ancient alien machinery that controls the oceans*') and in a presentation of a press statement ('*Department agreed with this sentiment in a prepared statement wherein they just wrote the word No on a single piece of paper, but with hundreds of Os and maybe two dozen Ns so it reads kind of like Nnnnnnooooooooooooooooooooo [read in slow-motion style]*'). The first case is rich with adjectives that would be more characteristic to a science fiction story rather than a news podcast. In the second example, the hyperbole is also represented graphically with the excessive amount of *Os*, as well as in the instruction on how it should be read (the *slow-motion style*).

Additionally, hyperbole is implemented in several explicitly ironic statements, to exemplify: '*I thought that was a beautiful story and it brought some meaning to the otherwise meaningless life of an intern*'; '*The Night Vale School District announced that schools will be closed all of next week because nothing really matters*'; and '*How can we place any importance on something so insignificant as math or spelling or history when the void has already swallowed our tiny existence?*' These are vivid illustrations of existential humour, denying existence and importance of real and significant things – of basic schemata from everyday life.

Similarly, litotes creeps into the narrative at times playing down the reaction that the narrator and the characters in his narration have towards the impossible events related. After a description of several citizens being forever engulfed by the forest, the comment made by Cecil is '*The good news is that none of those we lost today are technically dead*,' devaluing the described horrors with the noun phrase *the good news* and the adverb *technically*. Similarly, after casually mentioning the return of a dead celebrity, it is reported that this famous individual '*will just hover over music lovers' shoulders and disapprove of their misguided musical tastes*' – the adverb *just* comically minimizes the expected reaction one would have to such an event, while the *misguided musical tastes*, in a way serving as the

punchline, implies that the music people listen to today is so bad, a ghost would literally come back from the dead to judge them.

Lastly, the third and final case of litotes ‘*And we will have them, always, or at least however long trees live, which I think is fairly long. I’m not really sure. I had a hamster as a child and it died in, like, two weeks, so what do I know?*’ is presented to be as extremely casual and nonchalant by way of using such adverbs as *really* and *like*, that are of quite a conversational register, just as the rhetorical question *so what do I know* at the end – all of these features together considerably lower the modality of the initial statement that at a first glance was quite profound. Basically, in *we will have them, always*, the adverb *always* implies strong epistemic modality, which is then gradually lowered (*or at least; however long; fairly; not sure; like; what do I know* – all of these mark the gradual restraint of the initial claim).

Next, instances of paradoxical constructions could be encountered quite often in this chapter as well. Firstly, there are such paradoxes that are incongruous with the schemata of reality itself: ‘*Monday is the opening of the new exhibit at the Children’s Science Museum. The exhibit is called “THE MOON IS A LIE”*’ and ‘*Tuesday, Buddy Holly returns.*’ The denial of the existence of the Moon and the report of a return of a long-dead celebrity, presented as casual and legitimate news stories (in the community calendar format, which employs the aforementioned parallel structures that create its formulaic mundanity) alter the limits of what is possible and impossible to the level of absurdity.

Some other paradoxes were the regular logical inconsistencies achieved by altering word associations: ‘*Saturday afternoon is a secret parade*’; ‘*Nothing is real, I don’t think*’ (double negative used for emphasis); and ‘*It’s hard to say how these dense, piney woods have cropped up in a vast desert wastescape.*’ Again – hyperbolic, adjective-filled utterances are used to build the imagery, yet the register of the language is not overly high, adhering to that of a public news broadcast.

Moreover, the antithetical statements function similarly. The two cases present in ep.22 contrast two distinct ideas. The first case, ‘*he still has intern tasks to do here at the radio station, like filing ad contracts and renaming the wingless insects*’ connects these incongruous ideas of office paperwork and insect classification with the coordinating conjunction *and* which ties the two phrases together, although they do not fit together semantically. In the other example, ‘*Larry said he wanted to stay, but that he remembered that he had cable TV and didn’t want to miss anything just because there was some beautiful nature he’d never explored, so he went home to catch an Iron Chef America marathon*’ the aim is to separate the ideas of nature exploration and television watching, exalting one over

the other in a manner that conveys irony, so the conjunction *but* and the conjunction with the adverb *just because* are the grammatical devices that achieve this effect.

Moving on, anti-climax, a device that appears thrice in this podcast will be discussed. In the main narrative line of this episode, anti-climax obstructs the built-up suspense about the terrors of the forest: *‘as he neared the woods’ edge, he felt a terrible sense of fear and began to tremble and sweat, but then he heard a small, ungendered voice whisper, “YOU LOOK SO NICE TODAY, LARRY. I LIKE WHAT YOU HAVE DONE WITH YOUR BEARD.’* Here, one can see the contrast between adjectives *terrible* and *small* as well as the following visual contrast of an all-upercase print (often used for portraying a loud, menacing type of speech) and the nice and friendly message that alleviates the sense of fear described before it.

Moreover, there were more anti-climactic passages that ended with an allusion. For example, *‘You recall this living nightmare. You take comfort in its familiar pain. You smell fermentation and can hear a dull, unending beeping. Someone shouts in a language you do not know. You love your family. You love them. Welcome to Red Lobster. Come see what’s fresh today.’* The anti-climax is built up with a pattern of parallel constructions starting sentences with [You + verb], which is broken and contrasted with [Someone + verb], then turning back to the initial pattern, repeating the last one (*You love*) twice, and then ending with the utterly out-of-place Red Lobster ad and slogan. Overall, in this example there is an interaction of three stylistic devices – parallelism, repetition, and anti-climax.

Finally, there are 2 cases of pun and 2 of zeugma to reflect upon. The puns in the extracted cases are both based on idioms: *‘There is a thin, semantic line separating weird and beautiful, and that line is covered in jellyfish’* and *‘PROVERB: If you love someone, set them free. Set them free now. This is the police, and we have you surrounded.’* Respectively, the idioms *thin line* and *set free* are taken literally and turned into a physical line (presumably a rope or a wire of some sort) and a situation where somebody is kept captive and is required to be released. What also should be noted is that a pun once again appears at the end of the podcast, in the short Proverb segment. These proverbs (which are normally supposed to be short, abstract sayings expressing well-known truths), in which idioms are understood literally, once again shows that this fictional universe follows abstract schemes and rules of reality and communication of its own.

As concerns the two zeugmas, they, similarly to so many other devices in this podcast, are based upon disruption of expectation, i.e. schemata. To illustrate: *‘In the Hands-on Learning Room, children will be able to make their own moons out of Styrofoam and aggressive propaganda, just like the Masons did’* and *‘Amateur chefs can learn about knife skills, the basics of baking, and a seminar about whether or not deer feel pain or are just*

sad.' The first example also contains an allusion to the Mason secret society, thus expanding the running gag of the Moon being just a conspiracy. The second case displays semantic incongruity, linking the verb *learn* with topical culinary skills and non-topical facts about deer.

In conclusion, this chapter relies on repetition and parallelism as devices of cohesion that bring together the various incongruous ideas, as well as assist characterization of an entity whose speech is being directly reported. The hyperbolic epithets also serve the purpose of characterization, adding a bit of irony to the narrator's attitude. Hyperbole, litotes, and paradox all effectively alter the schemata of both reality and literature, while anti-climax achieves humour by concluding lengthy stretches of suspenseful, poetic text with brief allusions to something that is a part of the commercial American every-day life. Most stylistic devices utilize a lot of adverbs and adjectives, the most notable example being litotes, where the adverbs are used for gradually decreasing epistemic modality. All of this essentially is comedic in its overabundance of information (flouted quantity maxim), style of reporting (flouted manner maxim), implied meanings (flouted maxim of quality) and its logical inappropriateness to reality (flouted relation maxim).

2.3.3. Stylistic Devices Creating Humour in episode 41: *Walk*

This episode slightly differs from the previous two, for it introduces a second narrator – intern Dana. During one of Cecil's regular news reports, which in this episode is about strange new walk signals, the narration is constantly interjected by another voice, which relates her experiences from a strange desert other-world. For this reason, a lot of information from the main reports is constantly cut short and lost to the listener/ reader.

Due to the introduction of another voice, there are less humorous remarks (for Dana's narration is a lot more serious and contemplative), and therefore – less stylistic devices used to create them. This can be seen in Figure 2.3. Despite this, ep.41 contains a lot of hyperbole (6 cases), as well as repetition (4), parallelism (4), paradoxes (3), and antithesis (3).

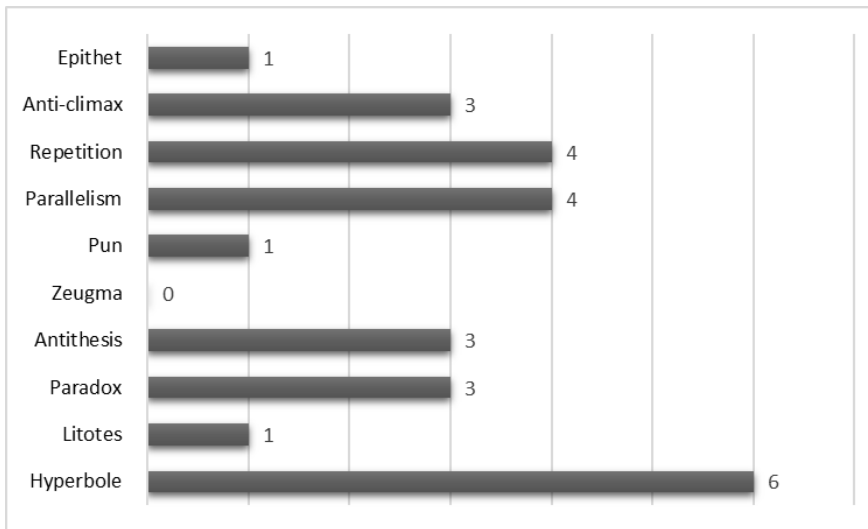


Figure 2.3 Stylistic devices creating humour in episode 41: *Walk*

Hyperbole in this script occurs in both narrative strands, i.e. in Cecil’s (e.g. *This is the worst malfunctioning of walk signals Night Vale has seen since the time all their lightbulbs were accidentally replaced with poison gas dispensers*) and Dana’s one (e.g. *My eyes hurt, so through my subjectivity, the entire world hurt*). There is a semantic absurdity in the first example, and an extreme generalization created with the adjective *entire* in the second, as is typical for hyperbole. The first one is made humorous by playing with the reader’s expectation of what types of walk signal malfunction could occur and revealing something hard to imagine as reality – schema disruption has taken place. Meanwhile, in the other case, the truth is warped, although the warping is forewarned.

Schemes come up also in the case of litotes use: *‘Of course usually [walk signals] show either a graphic photo of a run-over pedestrian, indicating you should wait or time lapse photography of flowers wilting, indicating that it is safe to cross.’* The casual mention (marked by *of course usually*) of a run-over pedestrian under-states the morbidity of such an image, while irony is added by referring to this image as an indicator not to cross the street. The incongruity occurs from what is unsaid – the fact that the image would become a reality if one were to disobey the sign.

Parallelism in this chapter is functionally the same as in the previous two. However, one interesting case is this: *‘the City Council said that they were definitely at City Hall ready to receive the concerns of their constituents, and not, say, hiding in a hastily dug hole in Mission Grove Park, keeping as still as possible and breathing through their dirt gills until this all blows over.’* This passage exemplifies another one of McCulloch’s observations about the podcast – the way it uses repeated negative statements, thus implying that the negation is

actually an affirmation. In this case, the listing of what the City Council is *not* doing does exactly that.

Next, repetition, having been more or less subtle in regular narration before, is used in one community calendar as a joke in itself: *'Thursday is a lost cause, but we will keep on fighting. [...] we dream of the Thursday that could be if only we lived Thursday to the full potential of its Thursday-ness, not expecting it to be anything but Thursday, embracing every inch of its Thursday reality and living each Thursday moment anew, only to wake the next Thursday and again impose, unsuccessfully, our imagined Thursday onto the unyielding frame of Thursday, our Thursday, a lost cause.'* Here, the insistent, almost hypnotic repetition of the word *Thursday* makes the word lose its sense. It is also an example of symploce, with the same line repeated at the beginning and at the end of the paragraph, which works for emphasis.

Turning to the paradoxes on ep.41, they, albeit still amusing, tend to veer of into a more philosophical direction: *'I don't know how it happened, or how long this vision in which we all pretend to be real will last.'*; *'But life solves all our problems against our will.'* The pronouns *we* and *our* make the statements appear proverbial and by extension – profound. Of course, there is also the occasional strange and physically impossible paradox: *'Please move your brain so we can get to the drugs. And stop leaving it there. We've talked about this.'*

There are a few cases of antitheses as well. Structurally, they are statements of opposition, linked by the antithetical conjunct *but* as in the following instances: *'Warlike, towering, but also distant and listless.'*; *Thursday is a lost cause, but we will keep on fighting.'* In another example, the opposition is synonymic, contrasting the words *different* and *same*: *'We will get up, say, "Yes, today is a different day than before," believing this against all evidence, eating food like that matters, going to jobs that mean the same thing as they did before.'* There is a hint of irony in the final example, signalled by the various parallel statements (starting with the participles *believing*, *eating*, *going*) that are semantically contrasted with the initial one.

Anti-climax, already established as the device used in all of the ads, does the same in this episode: *'An entire lifetime it will take him, and even then he will die unfinished, undone in midst of doing, having gone slowly to nowhere much. Then a bell will ring, from his hand maybe, or from somewhere else, and then nothing. Mountain Dew. Do the Dew.'* The device is also employed for transitions between the news segments. After the above-mentioned rambling contemplation of Thursdays, there is the sudden conclusion of *'This has been the community calendar.'* In other chapters, the segment titles precede the segments themselves, yet here, by being put at the end, the title catches the audience off-guard and is more comedic.

Furthermore, anti-climax proves to be the key device for the conclusion of the episode. After Dana's narration, the text switches back to Cecil with the following lines: '*—and so we are all saved again. I'll be honest, Night Vale. That was the most worried I've been in some time, and how we were saved was so unlikely and miraculous that I feel that today will become one of the standard tales told every year on Frightening Day. Certainly it is a story I will never forget.*' The joke is, of course, the fact that the unlikely and miraculous resolution was not revealed to the reader, just told about using very emphatic adjectives and adverbs.

Finally, there are some devices left that were quite scarce in terms of humour. In this episode there are no zeugmas, one epithet ('*being a good mountain unbeliever*' – part of a running gag in the podcast of denying the existence of mountains), and a single pun (at the very opening of the episode: '*At a loss for words? Here's a few you can use: WELCOME TO NIGHT VALE*'). As in the previous instances, the pun is based on interpreting an idiom literally.

Overall, ep.41 proves that in this podcast certain stylistic devices are associated with the main narrator, for with the introduction of another voice, the amount of these devices, especially epithets, and litotes, decrease considerably. As for the linguistic signals for humour, there were both incongruities in schemata as well as the maxims, although the maxims are violated more often since the narrative contains several notable repetitions.

2.3.4. Stylistic Devices Creating Humour in episode 42: *Numbers*

The final episode under analysis, titled *Numbers*, is centred around a story of a radio station that broadcasts an endless chain of seemingly random numbers. There has been a sudden change in the style of this broadcast, and the narrator Cecil is determined to investigate the cause of this change.

The narrative is mainly dominated by the usual voice of Cecil, aside from some short interjections of the mysterious broadcaster of the numbers, which does not alter the style of the episode too much. Figure 2.4. reveals that there is a strong prevalence of hyperbole in this episode (12 instances), as well as of epithets (8) and parallelisms (7).

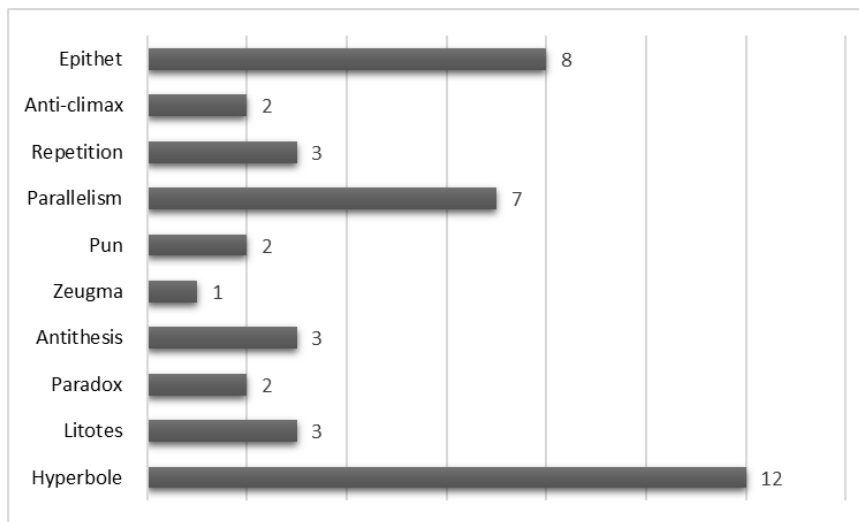


Figure 2.4 Stylistic devices creating humour in episode 42: *Numbers*

The hyperbole in ep.42 is constantly made with adjectives adverbs and pronouns that deal with absolutes. For example: ‘Accept no substitute. Accept nothing.’; ‘This will result in you keeping a wide, even circle around the center of the loop, or Vector H, as we all remember singing as toddlers’; ‘*PROVERB*: Ignore all the haters telling you that everything isn’t a sandwich. Everything is a sandwich.’ Such statements are not only exaggerated, but impossible, and therefore – humorous. One case that really stands out is this – ‘There is no worse fate than working for a radio station owned by an organization whose goals are not your own, constricted to the limited language they allow you, and relaying messages that you do not understand or agree with. That would be awful.’ Here the pragmatic rule of implication takes place, for knowing the context (what the podcast is like) and seeing this very specific list of things implies ironically that this ‘worst of the fates’ is that of the current narrator himself.

More occurrences of hyperbole can be spotted in the directions of the number station broadcaster for the narrator (‘[Female voice doing top of her lungs, teenager alone in a car, a cappella version of the chorus of Katy Perry’s “Roar”]), in casual remarks by the narrator (‘with all my scouting badges and public school education on armed insurrection’), and in addressing the audience and converging with the device of rhetorical question (‘Much of your life is already taken up in futile action, why add one more?’). Consequently, these examples demonstrate how hyperbole in this podcast works to create humour on three levels – that of presentation (how it is read), narrative limits of the constitutive schemata (what is presented as usual and unusual, possible and impossible in the narration in contrast to reality), and linguistically (through incongruities, for example, in collocations, contrasting elements in paralleled structures, implications from form and meaning, etc.).

The three examples of the opposite device, litotes, can also illustrate these three levels. First, there is the comment ‘*Local numbers station WZZZ has resumed its transmission, although the format is a little . . . different than before*’ followed by the usual broadcast of numbers suddenly broken up by normal speech, which is not just *a little* different, for the whole manner of broadcasting has changed and the joke is built upon that. Next, there is the offhand remark of ‘*I had to bleed a little on the front doors to make them open, of course, but that’s just part of having a good security system,*’ which indicates that in the WTNV world, the schemata for how doors work is not like one would assume. Lastly, there is one rhetorical question, answered in quite an unusual way: ‘*What is next for any of us? Death presumably, with some stuff before that.*’ Linguistically, the pragmatics of the question is ignored, and an extreme answer is given; moreover, it is given in connection with an adverb *presumably*, as if death also might not happen to some of us, and it is all topped off with the understatement *some stuff before that*, encompassing a whole life into the informal phrase *some stuff*.

Carrying on with other stylistic devices, there is a relatively high use of comic epithets in this episode. They tend to appear in amidst what would usually be set expressions, such as *the sun is rising*, or *a few minutes later* (‘*The sun is still rising and setting loudly on most days*’; ‘*here I am inside, a few carefully planted explosives later*’). Some are of lower, more simple register (‘*such showy political stunts*’) while some use slightly archaic constructions or are more extravagant (‘*the listening ones*’; ‘*The condo rental office is still in there, still bubbling black like a pot of boiling squid ink with flashes of light like distant dying stars*’). Notably, in the second example, the use of such elaborate similes and alliteration in relation to the condo forms a distinct humorous discrepancy.

Next device to be analysed is parallelism. The episode opens up with this device, as well as with another allusion to an essential part of American culture, a Walt Whitman poem: ‘*I sing the body electric. I gasp the body organic. I miss the body remembered.*’ Gradation of adjectives takes place, creating a particular, strange image. Such gradation occurs several times, twice with the repeated adverb *no*, till it reaches a heightened emotion at the end: ‘*No transfer in ownership of most of the town, nor unrest in the streets, nor a declared war by a tiny civilization under a bowling alley could change how it operates*’; ‘*There is no chair, no snack fridge, no coffee kept full of the fuel all radio professionals need to keep our voice going and our heart beating.*’ Rhythm achieved by then similar length of each paralleled phrase and the emphasis of the repeated element – two notable effects of this device can be seen here.

Now, the unique ad segment of this podcast is an interplay of parallelism, repetition, and anti-climax. And as usual, it ends with an allusion, this time, to Hulu – a popular video

subscription service. In the advertisement, there is grammatical and semantic repetition: ‘*Hulu. Let’s talk about watching things. Let’s talk about watching rather than actually watching. Let’s think about talking about watching a secondhand experience. Let’s continually abstract ourselves from what we believe is the world.*’ The parallelism lies in the [Let’s + verb] formula, while the lexical repetition is that of the word *watching*. Furthermore, there is this instance of exaggerated repetition appearing with some sound directions: ‘*Hulu. Hulu. Hulu. Hulu. Hulu. Hulu. Hulu. Hulu. [Repeated as a staticky sound getting louder and louder. Static cuts off and repeating “Hulu” stops.]*’ The result is hyperbolic, due to the indication of a loud staticky sound (which is characteristic to horror narratives) and the insistent repetition. The humour, however, arises from the clash between the exaggerated manner of presentation with the meaning of the repeated thing - a simple, well-known brand. As for the anti-climax, this time it does not occur because of the allusion itself, for the ad starts with it, but rather because of the specific directions for the narrator: ‘*Hulu.com. Sign up now, and get the latest episode of [Loud digital squeal].*’ Essentially, the ad is cut short, with a peculiar type of aposiopesis.

The paradoxes and antitheses are few but equally effective in creating utter absurdity. Some examples would be the paradox ‘*We reached out to the management of WZZZ for comment, but then realized we still have no idea who manages it*’ and the antithetical statements ‘*every time, we swear will be early and leisurely, but always end up late and meager*’ and ‘*plans are faulty at best and delusion at most.*’ The antithetical oppositions use quite conventional word pair structures to convey some pessimistically humorous statements.

Finally, puns and zeugmas will be analysed. There is only one zeugma (*ancient wisdom lost along with the station architects*) and two puns (‘*Children are also taught this simple memory device so we can remember when running and screaming is useful. The memory device goes like this: knife.*’; ‘*If they do catch me, I’ll tell them that I’m taking the mobile broadcasting equipment for a walk. I would have to do that some time today anyway*’). The zeugma is once again that of the semantically incongruous type, combining the figuratively lost wisdom with literally lost architects. As for the puns, there is the collocation *memory device* with the second element, *device*, punned upon – a literal device, *knife*, is mentioned. In the second case, it is done with the first element of *mobile broadcasting equipment*, so that *mobile* is understood as something that can be taken for a walk. Thus, while in the previously analysed episodes puns are mainly structured upon a literal understanding of idioms, in ep.42 they are rooted in the dismantling of collocations.

To sum up, the examples of certain devices, like hyperbole and litotes, are numerous and allow one to see how humour functions on several levels of the narrative. Furthermore,

the high expressiveness of epithets and parallelisms could be seen in the main narrator's speech. The analysis of the various stylistic devices used in the ad segment revealed that the combination of horror and humour relies heavily on the interplay between form and meaning. Lastly, it was concluded that the approach of altering word associations and collocations can be a useful tool for creating puns.

2.3.5. Summary

The analysis of prevalence across all four selected chapters reveals that hyperbole is the most often used stylistic device for creating humour in WTNV (29 cases), followed by epithet (24), repetition (21) and paradox (18). The number of other devices can be viewed in Figure 2.5.

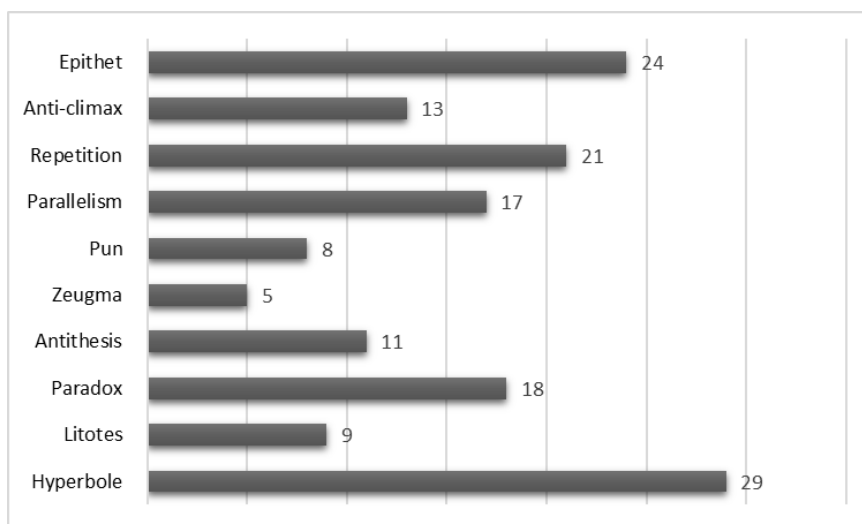


Figure 2.5 Total of stylistic devices creating humour in WTNV

As discussed above, the most prevalent devices are based on incongruity, proving its importance in the podcast; meanwhile, devices such as pun and zeugma that function slightly differently (on the principles of polysemy) are the most infrequent.

As for the means of producing the incongruities in the narrative, there are cases of both disregard for Grice's Maxims and alterations of various schemata to produce the so-called *odd talk*. Some stylistic devices are involved in producing both types of incongruity, and they are paradox, antithesis, repetition, and parallelism. Meanwhile, the four pragmatic rules of communication are often challenged by hyperbole, litotes, and epithets. The cognitive context (generic knowledge) incongruities are then more typical in anti-climactic passages as well as in the utterances containing pun and zeugma.

Conclusions

This research explored the topic of humour in online radio broadcasting. The goal was to reveal the means of creating humour in the scripts of *Welcome to Night Vale* (WTNV) podcast. By doing so, the research questions were formed: which stylistic devices creating humorous effect are most often employed in *Welcome to Night Vale*, and on which linguistic theories is the humour of the podcast based?

Essentially, WTNV is one of the most successful and acclaimed comedy podcasts on various online radio streaming platforms. Its appeal lies in its unique style of storytelling, which combines humour with the elements of horror, surrealism, and fantasy. What is more, the podcast constantly expands across other mediums, such as live shows and books.

In order to begin the analysis, a literature review was carried out. By reviewing the various theories of humour summarised by Attardo (1994), it was concluded that the essentialist theory is best suited for this research due to its systematic nature. Next, a sub-branch of linguistic essentialism, namely, the incongruity theory, which focuses on the incompatibility between textual elements (McGhee, 1979: 6-7), was singled out. Furthermore, two incongruity-based linguistic theories were explored – the theory of Grice's Maxims of communication (Grice, 1975) and the Schema theory (as explained by Bussmann, Stockwell, Emmott and Alexander). Finally, a break-down of stylistic devices based on the principle of incongruence was provided as well, these devices being antithesis, paradox, hyperbole, litotes, pun, zeugma, repetition, parallelism, anti-climax, and epithet.

Also, previous research on the language of WTNV by McCulloch, and research on the language of H. P. Lovecraft's short stories (which have inspired the podcast) by Borowska (2011) was reviewed. By comparing the results, it was inferred that two features (informal register and collocation disruption) may play a major role in the humorous side of WTNV, for unlike several other features that both share, these two do not occur in Lovecraft's works.

For the empirical part, the method of textual analysis was used to extract stylistic devices that create humour from WTNV episode scripts. Furthermore, the ways in which they function, and on bases of which two linguistic theories they create humour was investigated.

The results reveal that most prevalent devices used for creating humour are hyperbole, epithet, repetition, and paradox. Moreover, the results prove that the humour in WTNV is based on the linguistic incongruity between what is being said and the context in which it is said. This incongruity is often produced by disregarding the pragmatics of communication, for example, by framing large chunks of the narrative in hyperbole, thus defying the maxim of

quantity, or by repeating negations that convey the true meaning of a passage through implication, consequently, using maxims of quality and manner for the purpose of comedy.

Another way in which incongruity is achieved by stylistic devices can be found within the schema theory. The reader's generic knowledge is often challenged by the presence of multiple paradoxes, antitheses, and incongruous parallelisms. Logical sequences that would have certain expectations in constitutive schemata of a literary work are often disrupted with anti-climactic conclusions. What is more, such devices as pun and zeugma are used for creating new schemata for the narrative. The same tends to happen with other devices.

Some observations about the language style of the podcast were made as well, and they reaffirm the previous research done on the podcast (McCulloch, 2014) and the language of horror in it (McCulloch, 2016). Namely, the narrative often tends to drastically modify collocations and word associations, especially in paradoxes and zeugmas. The language is dense with adverbs and adjectives that help express the attitudes of the narrator or that create a certain mood, especially in epithets and paradoxes. Additionally, clashes of register can at times be perceived as well, especially in the ad segments that use more complex syntax and poetic language at first, yet they are concluded with a simple slogan and an allusion to some common American product or service.

Lastly, an observation was made that the number and type of stylistic devices are affected by the amount of reported speech and the number of voices present in each episode. The data was quite consistent in the episodes with just the single main voice of Cecil being present; meanwhile, in episode 41, due to the incorporation of another voice, the stylistic devices creating humour decreased in number.

In regard to the limitations of this research, it could certainly be expanded by analysing the humour of more WTNV chapters, for at this point there are a total of 127 episodes, therefore, by selecting four episodes, only around 3% of the total has been explored. Moreover, since there seems to be no analysis of stylistic devices employed in either classical radio broadcasts or online podcasts, it is quite probable that the present study will have to be continued, for it is limited in terms that it only comments on the humour of one specific podcast. More could be discovered by carrying out comparative analyses with other comedy podcasts or works of humorous prose.

Overall, the findings of the present research do provide an insight into how humour is created in one of the most popular and acclaimed podcasts. A framework for analysis has been produced, as well as the data has been compiled and reviewed, the results of which may be used for further research, be it an extension of the same theme, or a comparative analysis with a different podcast.

Theses

- 1) A sub-branch of the essentialist theory of humour, namely, the incongruity theory, is best suited for analysing various types of incompatibility in a text.
- 2) There are two major incongruity-based linguistic theories that explain the way humour operates in a text – the theory of Grice's Maxims of communication and the Schema theory.
- 3) Previous research shows that informal register and constant violation of word associations play a major role in the humorous side of WTNV.
- 4) The most often used stylistic devices for creating humour in the selected WTNV chapters are hyperbole, epithet, repetition, and paradox, and the least often used are zeugma, pun, litotes, and antithesis.
- 5) The humour in WTNV is largely based on the incongruity of *odd talk* and is mainly produced by playing with conversational rules, i.e. quantity, quality, manner, and relevance maxims of communication.
- 6) The second means for creating the incongruity effect in the podcast is that of making changes and deviations in language, textual, and world schemata.
- 7) Antithesis, paradox, anti-climax, parallelism, and repetition in WTNV rely heavily on gradation that reaches a structurally and semantically unexpected conclusion.
- 8) Epithets are mostly used either for the humorous naming of characters or for characterizing somebody through their speech.
- 9) The anti-climax, allusion, and gradation are always used for achieving humour in the advertisement segments of each episode.
- 10) Polysemantic humour, manifested through puns and zeugmas, is not presented as a conscious joke in the narrative, but rather as part of the narrative's constitutive schemata.
- 11) The main linguistic characteristics of jokes in WTNV are simple vocabulary, modified collocations, lack of conventional punctuation, abundant use of vague or modality-lowering adverbs and adjectives, markedly rhythmical stretches of text, and the overlap of humour and horror.
- 12) The number and type of stylistic devices in each episode is affected by the amount of reported speech and the number of other voices present.

References

- 1) Attardo, S. (1994) *Linguistic Theories of Humor*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- 2) Attardo, S. (2001) *Humorous Texts: A Semantic and Pragmatic Analysis*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- 3) Baker-Whitelaw, G. (2015) "Welcome to Night Vale," where David Lynch meets "The Twilight Zone". Available from <https://www.dailydot.com/upstream/welcome-to-night-vale-podcast/> [Accessed on 16 April 2018].
- 4) Borowska, A. (2011) *H.P. Lovecraft's Style in Translation: A Case Study of Selected Stories and Their Polish Versions*. Toruń: Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika.
- 5) Bottomley, A. J. (2015) Podcasting, Welcome to Night Vale, and the Revival of Radio Drama. *Journal of Radio & Audio Media*, 22 (2).
- 6) Bussmann, H., Trauth, G. (ed.) and Kazzazi, K. (ed.), (2006) *Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics*. London: Routledge.
- 7) *Cambridge English Dictionary* (2018) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Available from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/pragmatics> [Accessed on 21 March 2018].
- 8) Carroll, N. (1999) Horror and Humor. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. 57, 2: 145-160.
- 9) Charney, M. (1978) *Comedy High and Low: An Introduction to the Experience of Comedy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- 10) Chiaro, D. (1992) *The Language of Jokes: Analysing verbal play*. USA and Canada: Routledge
- 11) Chomsky, N. (1995) Language and nature. *Mind*, 104: 1–61.
- 12) Culpeper, J., Short, M. and Verdonk, P. (eds.), (2002) *Exploring the Language of Drama: From Text to Context*. New York: Routledge.
- 13) Dörnyei, Z. (2007) *Research methods in applied linguistics: Quantitative, qualitative and mixed methodologies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 14) Ellis, R. and Barkhuizen, G. (2005) *Analysing Learner Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 15) Emmott, C. and Alexander, M. (2011) Schemata. *The Living Handbook of Narratology*. Hamburg: Walter de Gruyter. Available from <http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/schemata> [Accessed on 8 March 2018].
- 16) Fink, J. and Cranor, J. (2016) *Mostly Void, Partially Stars: Welcome to Night Vale Episodes, Volume I*. London: Harper Perennial.

- 17) Fink, J. and Cranor, J. (2016) *The Great Glowing Coils of the Universe: Welcome to Night Vale Episodes, Volume 2*. London: Harper Perennial.
- 18) Frey, L., Botan, C. and Kreps, G. (1999) *Investigating communication: An introduction to research methods*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- 19) Galperin, I. R. (1977) *Stylistics*. Moscow: Higher School.
- 20) Grice, P. (1989) *Studies in the Way of Words*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.
- 21) Janko, R. (1984) *Aristotle on Comedy: Towards a Reconstruction of Poetics II*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- 22) Jeffries, L. (2010) *Opposition in Discourse: The Construction of Oppositional Meaning*. London: Continuum.
- 23) Joshi, S. T. (1999) *A Subtler Magick: The Writings and Philosophy of H.P. Lovecraft*. Gillette: Wildside Press.
- 24) Juez, L. A. (1995) Verbal Irony and the Maxims of Grice's Cooperative Principle. *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses*, 8: 25-30.
- 25) Leech, G. N. (1969) *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*. New York: Longman.
- 26) Leech, G. and Short, M. (2007) *Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose*, 2nd ed. Harlow: Longman.
- 27) Matthews, P. H. (2003) *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 28) McCulloch, G. (2014) Welcome to Night Vale: where even “not” isn’t what it seems. *All Things Linguistic*. Available from <https://allthingslinguistic.com/post/58454602380/welcome-to-night-vale-where-even-not-isnt-what> [Accessed on 16 April 2018].
- 29) McCulloch, G. (2016) The linguistics of horror. *All Things Linguistic*. Available from <https://allthingslinguistic.com/post/132692150326/the-linguistics-of-horror> [Accessed on 16 April 2018].
- 30) McGhee, P. E. (1979) *Humor: Its Origin and Development*. San Francisco-Reading: Freeman.
- 31) Nash, W. (1985) *The Language of Humour*. New York: Longman.
- 32) Nørgaard, N., Montoro, R. and Busse, B. (2010) *Key Terms in Stylistics*. London: Continuum.
- 33) *Oxford English Dictionary* (2018) Oxford: Oxford University Press. Available from <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/humour> [Accessed on 20 January 2018].
- 34) Ross, A. (1998) *The Language of Humour*. New York: Routledge.
- 35) Simpson, P. (2004) *Stylistics*. New York: Routledge.

- 36) *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2016) Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Available from <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/linguistics/#Ess> [Accessed on 25 March 2018].
- 37) Stockwell, P. (2002) *Cognitive Poetics: An Introduction*. London: Routledge.
- 38) Stockwell, P. and Whitely, S. (2014) *The Cambridge Handbook of Stylistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 39) Trask, R. L. and Stockwell, P. (ed.), (2007) *Language and Linguistics: The Key Concepts*. New York: Routledge.
- 40) Wales, K. (2001) *A Dictionary of Stylistics*, 2nd ed. Harlow: Longman.
- 41) Warschauer, M. and Grimes, D. (2007). Audience, Authorship, and Artifact: The Emergent Semiotics of Web 2.0. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 27: 1-23.
- 42) Wittgenstein, L. (1958) *Philosophical Investigations*, 3rd ed. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- 43) Yang, K. and Miller, G. J. (eds.), (2008) *Handbook of Research Methods in Public Administration*. New York: Taylor & Francis Group.

Internet sources

- 1) Available from <http://www.welcometonightvale.com/> [Accessed on 4 April 2018].

Appendix 1

Stylistic Devices Creating Humour in *Welcome to Night Vale*

Episode 21

Hyperbole [4]	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sheriff's Secret Police report that the conversation was too quiet for them to hear and reminds all citizens to please <u>hold all conversations in a loud declamatory manner, facing outward, and making dramatic gestures</u> to increase both the ease and excitement of their surveillance duties.• They say you were <u>a portrait of agony, your skin a myriad of pulsing, angry colors.</u>• The man in the tan jacket was described as <u>impossible to remember, but presumably a man of some kind, with facial features and limbs.</u>• Simone Rigadeau [...] released a statement today, saying that <u>the world has ended.</u>
Litotes [2]	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This watch will consist of a line of patriotic volunteers, armed to the teeth and forming an unbroken perimeter along the whole of the bowling area. Teddy admits that this will make bowling <u>slightly more difficult than usual</u>, and league games may have to be rescheduled or made illegal...• Scientists announce that they have discovered the world's deadliest spider, a previously unknown species that is as hard to spot as its bite is hard to survive. Apparently the specimen was found when your dead body was examined. [...] Oh, you know what? I'm sorry. This report is from next week. [...] <u>Never mind. No need to worry about that report for a few days.</u>
Paradox [8]	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The <u>beautiful face</u> of that young man from Luftnarp, <u>with his gaping mouth and ashy skin</u>• Trish Hidge, from the Mayor's Office, called a press conference today, in which <u>she stood in front of a large truck</u> painted in

	<p>bright neon colors and decorated with flashing lights, <u>and resolutely denied the truck's existence.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Hidge admitted afterward that the conference was simply a <u>workout for her denial skills</u>, which she says she must keep sharp through constant practice, and <u>which she also says do not exist.</u> • <u>Scientists</u> won't investigate it because <u>they're not real.</u> • To see a <u>culture that doesn't even have any people</u>, a <u>country with no population</u> • Apparently the specimen was found when <u>your dead body</u> was examined. Oh, you know what? I'm sorry. <u>This report is from next week.</u> • Merely call out "Hello?" <u>after long silent intervals</u> and hear your call echo back to you from the depths of the knotted, crumbling arches, <u>unanswered.</u> <u>The beauty, oh listeners, of intercultural exchange.</u> • And how did Simone get this Subway wrapper, given that all Subway restaurants <u>have many entrances but no exits?</u>
Antithesis [3]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the unknown but presumably fearsome and dangerous aggressors from the buried city • Fines for traffic violations in these marked areas are double. All fines outside of the marked areas are quadruple, as usual. • Svitz [...] is perfect for the visitor with a strong constitution and a low tendency for hallucination
Zeugma [2]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I left them, rattling away in their local tongue and frozen in a caricature of human terror, feeling like I had not only <u>gained</u> a good <u>meal</u>, but a few new <u>good friends</u>. • no matter how <u>blessed</u> you are by <u>luck</u> or the <u>government</u> or some <u>remote, invisible deity</u>
Pun [3]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • this is a small <u>price</u> to pay for safety. The other <u>price</u> for safety is \$2.25, which is how much he would like every single good Night Vale citizen to pay him for this important defensive service • And remember: <u>wear seat belts</u>. They are a cool fashion statement and easily obtained by cutting them out of your own car and crafting them into any number of <u>accessories</u>.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PROVERB: Ask your doctor if <u>right</u> is <u>left</u> for you.
Parallelism [2]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Hang a map</u> of a place you'll never go on your living room wall. <u>Draw new streets</u>. <u>Tear off bodies</u> of water. <u>Wait</u> for <u>news crews</u> to arrive. • <u>The man in the tan jacket</u> was described as impossible to remember, but presumably a man of some kind, with facial features and limbs. <u>The Apache Tracker</u> was described as a real jerk, just now, by me.
Repetition [3]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She was then heard to deny the sky, the existence of a loving deity, and <u>eggs</u>. <u>Eggs</u> aren't real, she said. Nah-uh. Show me an <u>egg</u>. That's not an <u>egg</u>. What's an <u>egg</u>? • As their motto goes: A thousand ways in, no way out, eat <u>fresh</u>. Eat so terribly, terribly <u>fresh</u>. Terribly, awesomely, gruesomely, terrifyingly <u>fresh</u>. • Europe is not just about looking at <u>monuments</u> and talking to <u>monuments</u> and licking <u>monuments</u>.
Anti-climax [5]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eventually I was knocked out on one of our falls and when I awoke, it was in a different country, <u>I had aged by years, and no one I talked to knew where the country of Svitz was, or even had heard of it</u>. Anyway, it was a lovely place and I would say it's a <u>must-see for any European traveler</u> that can find it. • "<u>The world ended three or four decades ago</u>," scrawled on a Subway sandwich wrapper. "I don't know what this thing is that we're living in, but it's not the world. Scientists won't investigate it because they're not real. <u>Turkey with extra Swiss</u>." • For more on this world-ending story, we now go live to the sound of an aquarium pump: [<i>Sound happens as described</i>] • And I swear listeners, I swear, that in the moment of crossing I felt a single claw graze against my back. I swear I felt the endless wind of Franchia turn hot and wet, the breath of the beast inches away from my neck. <u>So visit Franchia!</u> But, you know, watch out for the monster that I <u>may or may not have only imagined!</u> • Seven lights in the window, seven lights in the hall, seven lights seven lights all in all. / Six notes in the melody, six notes form a

	<p>dirge, six notes to rid you of the urge. / Five ways of escaping, five ways all blocked off, five ways, each one broken and lost. / Four words in a whisper, four words in your ear, four words that fill you up with fear. / Three taps of a finger, three taps on a wall, three taps as you try to stall. / Two eyes wide and desperate, two eyes squinting scared, two eyes open yes but nothing there. / One light in the window, one light in the hall, one light one light all in all. <u>Taco Bell. Live más.</u></p>
<p>Epithet [5]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simone Rigadeau, <u>the transient living in a recycling closet in the Earth Sciences building at Night Vale Community College</u> • <u>work crews are slithering</u> on certain sections of Route 800 • I asked for a plate of whatever they found most delicious, adding a quick “please” in the local language to indicate that I was trying to blend in and was not the <u>usual ugly American tourist</u>. • They <u>graciously responded</u> by letting out a <u>guttural</u> rattle, in unison, and by not moving • I walked into the kitchen and devoured some of the <u>less moldy potatoes</u> and a few <u>mysterious and slightly sour sausages</u>.

Episode 22

<p>Hyperbole [7]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department agreed with this sentiment in a prepared statement wherein they just wrote the word No on a single piece of paper, but with <u>hundreds of Os</u> and maybe <u>two dozen Ns</u> so it reads kind of like Nnnnnnoooooooooooooooooooooo [<i>read in slow-motion style</i>] • The Night Vale School District announced that schools will be closed all of next week because <u>nothing really matters</u> • <u>We are ants, crushed daily by the indifferent feet of the universe</u> and it’s just no good anymore. • I thought that was a beautiful story and it brought some meaning to the <u>otherwise meaningless life of an intern</u>.
-----------------------------	---

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It explores how the moon is a <u>government-created myth to keep us all from knowing about the ancient alien machinery that controls the oceans.</u> • “How can we place any importance on something so insignificant as math or spelling or history when the void has already swallowed our tiny existence?” • “Nothing is real, I don’t think. Whatever. Who cares?”
Litotes [3]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be no performance or book signing, and no one will see him. <u>He will just hover over</u> music lovers’ shoulders and disapprove of their misguided musical tastes. • <u>The good news is that none of those we lost today are technically dead.</u> • And we will have them, always, or at least however long trees live, which I think is fairly long. I’m not really sure. I had a hamster as a child and it died in, like, two weeks, so what do I know?
Paradox [5]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monday is the opening of the new exhibit at the Children’s Science Museum. The exhibit is called “<u>THE MOON IS A LIE.</u>” • It’s hard to say how these <u>dense, piney woods</u> have cropped up in a <u>vast desert wastescape</u> • <u>Nothing is real, I don’t think.</u> • Saturday afternoon is a <u>secret parade.</u> • Tuesday, Buddy Holly returns
Antithesis [2]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • he still <u>has intern tasks</u> to do here at the radio station, like <u>filing ad contracts</u> and <u>renaming the wingless insects</u> • Larry said he wanted to stay, but that he remembered that he had <u>cable TV</u> and didn’t want to miss anything just because there was <u>some beautiful nature he’d never explored</u>, so he went home to catch an <i>Iron Chef America</i> marathon.
Zeugma [2]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the Hands-on Learning Room, children will be able to <u>make</u> their own moons out of <u>Styrofoam</u> and <u>aggressive propaganda</u>, just like the Masons did • Amateur chefs can <u>learn</u> about <u>knife skills</u>, the <u>basics of baking</u>, and a <u>seminar about whether or not deer feel pain or are just sad.</u>

<p>Pun [2]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a thin, semantic <u>line</u> separating weird and beautiful, and that <u>line</u> is covered in jellyfish. • PROVERB: If you love someone, <u>set them free</u>. <u>Set them free</u> now. This is the police, and we have you surrounded.
<p>Parallelism [4]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Dream journals can be</u> a spiritually satisfying exercise in <u>understanding</u> your unconscious mind, <u>helping</u> you to fully examine your being and balance your emotions. <u>They also can be</u> rife with useful data for government officials and corporate marketing executives. • <u>Step one</u>: Find a foreign dictionary or hymnal. It is strongly preferred that you choose something in Russian or Ukrainian, but German will work, too. / <u>Step two</u>: Carve out several pages, creating a secret compartment in the book. / <u>Step three</u>: Write down your dream, in great detail, the moment you wake up. / <u>Step four</u>: And this is the most important step of all: Eat the paper you wrote the dream on and then place a bird skeleton in the book. / Finally, bury the book near a magnolia or willow tree and repeat each day. • <u>Thursday</u> is recycling pickup day: <u>paper goes in blue bags</u>, <u>plastic in clear</u>, and any <u>teeth</u> you have lost because of last week’s public water mishap should be gently placed <u>in a wooden box and set afire</u>. • <u>Friday</u> at the Night Vale Recreation Center are cooking classes for beginners.
<p>Repetition [11]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It seems hard at first, <u>because</u> you have to get in the habit of writing first thing in the morning, and also <u>because</u> the City Council’s ban on all writing utensils is still in full effect. • <u>The sooner</u> you start this process, listeners, <u>the sooner</u> you can start actualizing your existence, exploring your inner self, and <u>the sooner</u> the Sheriff’s Secret Police can track down and arrest those vile miscreants who keep dreaming about horses. • and the woods told him they <u>loved</u> him. “WE <u>LOVE</u> YOU LARRY” • the <u>Whispering</u> Forest reportedly <u>whispered</u>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “YOU ARE <u>GOOD</u>. AND YOU LOOK <u>GOOD</u>. • DO YOU WANT TO <u>HANG OUT</u> MORE? LET’S <u>HANG OUT</u> AND TELL SOME JOKES AND MAYBE PLAY GAMES. • YOU ARE A GOOD <u>FRIEND</u>. LET US BE <u>FRIENDS</u>.” • Saturday afternoon is a <u>secret</u> parade. You will know where and when it is, if and when you are chosen to see its <u>secret</u> floats and hear its <u>secret</u> songs. • Sunday is the day we decided last fall we would clean up around here. <u>You</u> promised. We need to clean up, okay. And that’s this Sunday. Don’t make other plans. <u>You</u> always do that. <u>You</u> are always doing that. • DO YOU <u>PLAY GUITAR</u>? WOULD YOU LIKE TO <u>PLAY GUITAR</u>? DO YOU LIKE MUSIC?” the forest apparently whispered. • There is <u>no reason</u> to go explore nature. <u>No reason</u>.
Anti-climax [3]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • as he neared the woods’ edge, <u>he felt a terrible sense of fear and began to tremble and sweat</u>, but then he heard a small, ungendered voice whisper, “YOU LOOK SO NICE TODAY, LARRY. I LIKE WHAT YOU HAVE DONE WITH YOUR BEARD. AND JUST LOOK AT THAT BELT. IS THAT NEW?” • You recall this living nightmare. You take comfort in its familiar pain. You smell fermentation and can hear a dull, unending beeping. Someone shouts in a language you do not know. You love your family. You love them. <u>Welcome to Red Lobster</u>. Come see what’s fresh today. • he went home to catch an <i>Iron Chef America</i> marathon
Epithet [10]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the school board said, <u>swigging on a bottle of table wine and bobbing their heads weakly</u> • The school board president, an enormous Glow Cloud [...] added, “GROVEL, MORTALS. PUT YOUR TONGUES TO THE SOIL AND BEG FOR YOUR <u>WORTHLESS LIVES</u>.” • They cited the <u>ever-widening night sky</u> as the impetus for this decision.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school board president, <u>an enormous Glow Cloud that drops animals from great heights and casts a looming fog of despair over all it covers</u>, added • <u>a vague, yet menacing</u>, government agency • those <u>vile</u> miscreants who keep dreaming about horses • I can't imagine what all those <u>academic types</u> and <u>bureaucratic pen pushers</u> were going on about. • <u>Incorrect shoppers</u> will receive a bout of <u>uncontrolled sobbing</u> and a <u>horrifying chill</u> up their spine from the legendary rock and roller himself. • stay away from the Whispering Forest. Do not listen to its <u>hollow compliments</u>, its <u>sappy flattery</u> • maybe it's more of an <u>echoey scream</u>. It's hard to say. They did not include stage directions in their press release.
--	--

Episode 41

<p>Hyperbole [6]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get enough <u>minutes</u> and you have days, have months, have years, <u>have the whole of your life</u>. • Walk, the signals say, and the <u>pedestrians walk. In unison, arms swinging in a rigid rhythm</u>. • This is the worst malfunctioning of walk signals Night Vale has seen since the time <u>all their lightbulbs were accidentally replaced with poison gas dispensers</u>. • My eyes hurt, so through my subjectivity, <u>the entire world hurt</u>. • Communication is difficult. <u>It is impossible</u>, some say, communicating the idea of its impossibility to others. • There are so many things in this world to be scared of. Why add to that number when the only cause is you know nothing about them and they are huge?
<p>Litotes [1]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Of course usually</u> [walk signals] show either a graphic photo of a run-over pedestrian, indicating you should wait or time lapse photography of flowers wilting, indicating that it is safe to cross.

Paradox [3]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I don't know how it happened, or how long <u>this vision in which we all pretend to be real</u> will last. • But <u>life solves all our problems against our will</u>. • <u>Please move your brain</u> so we can get to the drugs. <u>And stop leaving it there</u>. We've talked about this.
Antithesis [3]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Warlike, towering</u>, but also <u>distant and listless</u>. • Thursday is a <u>lost cause</u>, <u>but we will keep on fighting</u>. • We will get up, say, "<u>Yes, today is a different day than before</u>," believing this against all evidence, eating food like that matters, going to jobs that <u>mean the same thing as they did before</u>
Zeugma [0]	
Pun [1]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>At a loss for words? Here's a few you can use: WELCOME TO NIGHT VALE.</u>
Parallelism [4]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I remember <u>I am Dana</u>. Or <u>I am Dana's double</u>. <u>One of us</u> killed the other with a stapler. Even I don't know <u>which one</u>. • They haven't seen me. Or if they've seen me, they haven't cared. Or if they've cared, they haven't done anything with that feeling. • Here is what I found: Dust, mostly. Emptiness. A sense of loss as I thought about the distance between myself and those I love. An interesting rock, but I can't find it anymore. • the City Council said that they were definitely at City Hall ready to receive the concerns of their constituents, and not, say, hiding in a hastily dug hole in Mission Grove Park, keeping as still as possible and breathing through their dirt gills until this all blows over. Incidentally, their comment continued, if you happen to see a conspicuous pile of earth in any parks, maybe just throw some leaves on it or put a bench over it to make it less obvious. No biggie. Just if you get a chance that'd be cool, the council concluded, their voices noticeably muffled.
Repetition [4]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>I will keep trying</u>. <u>I don't have to keep trying</u>. [...] <u>I don't have to keep trying</u>. Remember that, I say to myself, as <u>I keep trying</u>. • <u>Thursday</u> is a lost cause, but we will keep on fighting. [...] we dream of the <u>Thursday</u> that could be if only we lived <u>Thursday</u> to the full potential of its <u>Thursday-ness</u>, not expecting it to be

	<p>anything but <u>Thursday</u>, embracing every inch of its <u>Thursday</u> reality and living each <u>Thursday</u> moment anew, only to wake the next <u>Thursday</u> and again impose, unsuccessfully, our imagined <u>Thursday</u> onto the unyielding frame of <u>Thursday</u>, our <u>Thursday</u>, a lost cause.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listeners, there is a <u>walk</u> signal in my studio. <u>Walk</u>, it says. I must <u>walk</u>. The signal is saying so. I will have to leave my desk in order to do that. And, so, before I go, I take you to the <u>walk</u>ther . . . the <u>weaalk</u> . . . the <u>walk</u>. <u>Walk</u>. <u>Walk</u>. <u>Walk</u>. • I have these memories, but memories prove <u>nothing</u>. Experiences also prove <u>nothing</u>. There are many proofs for <u>nothing</u>.
Anti-climax [3]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An entire lifetime it will take him, and even then he will die unfinished, undone in midst of doing, having gone slowly to nowhere much. Then a bell will ring, from his hand maybe, or from somewhere else, and then nothing. <u>Mountain Dew</u>. <u>Do the Dew</u>. • Thursday, a lost cause. <u>This has been the community calendar</u>. • —and so we are all saved again. I’ll be honest, Night Vale. That was the most worried I’ve been in some time, and how we were saved was so unlikely and miraculous that I feel that today will become one of the standard tales told every year on Frightening Day. Certainly it is a story I will never forget.
Epithet [1]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being a <u>good mountain unbeliever</u>

Episode 42

Hyperbole [12]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As her term approaches its end, Mayor Pamela Winchell has taken to <u>calling emergency press conferences as much as five times a day</u>, up from the usual one or two. • Accept no substitute. <u>Accept nothing</u>. • We don’t know what this means or why it is happening, I could say, <u>referring to anything in the world</u>. • But like anyone who grew up in Night Vale, Dana has been told <u>over and over again</u> what to do if you find yourself in a
-----------------------	--

	<p>geographical loop, continually returning to the same place no matter which direction <u>you run screaming</u>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This will result in you keeping a wide, even circle around the center of the loop, or Vector H, <u>as we all remember singing as toddlers</u> • I had to reach far back into my past to remember the skills that got me my <u>Advanced Siege Breaking Tactics scout badge from when I was twelve</u>. • Even with all my scouting badges and <u>public school education on armed insurrection</u>, I don't think there's anything I can do. • PROVERB: Ignore all the haters telling you that everything isn't a sandwich. <u>Everything is a sandwich</u>. • [Female voice doing <u>top of her lungs</u>, teenager alone in a car, a cappella version of the chorus of Katy Perry's "Roar"] • [<i>Top of lungs</i> a cappella of "We Are Young"; cut off after half a line or so.] • <u>There is no worse fate</u> than working for a radio station owned by an organization whose goals are not your own, constricted to the limited language they allow you, and relaying messages that you do not understand or agree with. That would be awful. • Much of your life is already taken up in futile action, why add one more?
Litotes [3]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is next for any of us? Death presumably, <u>with some stuff before that</u>. • Local numbers station WZZZ has resumed its transmission, although the format is <u>a little . . . different</u> than before. • I had to bleed a little on the front doors to make them open, of course, <u>but that's just part of having a good security system</u>.
Paradox [2]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>We reached out to the management</u> of WZZZ for comment, but then realized <u>we still have no idea who manages it</u>. • Hulu. The pulsing life of your body is an <u>undeniable fact</u>. But <u>deny it anyway</u>.
Antithesis [3]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We do know that plans are <u>faulty at best</u> and <u>delusion at most</u>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hulu. The terror you feel in quiet moments is <u>not misplaced, just mistimed.</u> • every time, we swear will be <u>early and leisurely</u>, but always end up <u>late and meager.</u>
Zeugma [1]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using ancient <u>wisdom lost</u> along with the station <u>architects</u>
Pun [2]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are also taught this simple memory <u>device</u> so we can remember when running and screaming is useful. The memory device goes like this: <u>knife.</u> • If they do catch me, I'll tell them that I'm taking the <u>mobile broadcasting equipment</u> for a <u>walk</u>. I would have to do that some time today anyway.
Parallelism [7]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>I sing</u> the body electric. <u>I gasp</u> the body organic. <u>I miss</u> the body remembered. • <u>No</u> transfer in ownership of most of the town, <u>nor</u> unrest in the streets, <u>nor</u> a declared war by a tiny civilization under a bowling alley could change how it operates. • So we reached out in general, directing questions out into the still of today, <u>at</u> suspicious birds, <u>at</u> passersby checking their phones, <u>at</u> ourselves hunched over breakfasts • Hulu. <u>Let's talk about</u> watching things. <u>Let's talk about</u> watching rather than actually watching. <u>Let's think about</u> talking about watching a secondhand experience. <u>Let's continually</u> abstract ourselves from what we believe is the world. • <u>The first step</u> is to stop running and stop screaming. / <u>The second step</u> is to stop trying to move away • There is <u>no chair</u>, <u>no snack fridge</u>, <u>no coffee</u> kept full • of the fuel all radio professionals need to keep <u>our voice going</u> and <u>our heart beating.</u>
Repetition [3]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hulu. Let's talk about <u>watching</u> things. Let's talk about <u>watching</u> rather than actually <u>watching</u>. Let's think about talking about <u>watching</u> a secondhand experience. • The sky will break open, and water will fall. <u>One more time. One more time.</u>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hulu. Hulu. Hulu. Hulu. Hulu. Hulu. Hulu. Hulu. Hulu. [Repeated as a staticky sound getting louder and louder. Static cuts off and repeating “Hulu” stops.]
Anti-climax [2]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hulu.com. Sign up now, and get the latest episode of [<i>Loud digital squeal</i>]. • Let me take this moment to apologize for that lengthy monologue just now by the man in a tan jacket holding a deerskin suitcase. [...] I don’t even remember what it was he said. [...] I don’t even remember what the man was wearing or carrying with him, or that it was even a he, or that any time has passed at all. And that concludes whatever I was just saying before this sentence.
Epithet [8]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sun is still <u>rising and setting loudly</u> on most days • It still broadcasts a <u>monotone</u> female voice, reading out <u>seemingly random</u> numbers • She ended the conference by popping hundreds of orange balloons, methodically and with her back turned to the audience. But despite this big finish, onlookers commented that her heart no longer seemed to be in such <u>showy political stunts</u> • [<i>Female voice doing top of her lungs, teenager alone in a car, a cappella version of the chorus of Katy Perry’s “Roar”</i>] • Hello? Hello? I am talking to you who listens. <u>To the listening ones</u>. Whatever you call that. • The condo rental office is still in there, still <u>bubbling black like a pot of boiling squid ink with flashes of light like distant dying stars</u> • In any case, there have been no <u>giant black cubes</u> appearing overnight anywhere, so it seems that condo construction has been halted • But here I am inside, a <u>few carefully planted explosives later</u>.

Dokumentārā lapa

Bakalaura darbs „Humour in *Welcome to Night Vale* Podcast” (Humors „Laipni lūdzam nakts ielejā” aplādēs) izstrādāts LU Humanitāro zinātņu fakultātē.

Ar savu parakstu apliecinu, ka pētījums veikts patstāvīgi, izmantoti tikai tajā norādītie informācijas avoti un iesniegtā darba elektroniskā kopija atbilst izdrukai.

Autors: Santa Sudnika _____ .05.2018.

Rekomendēju/nerekomendēju darbu aizstāvēšanai

Vadītāja: lekt. Tatjana Bicjutko _____ .05.2018.

Recenzents: asoc. prof. Vita Kalnbērziņa _____

Studiju metodiķe: Samanta Matecka _____ .05.2018.

Darbs iesniegts Anglistikas nodaļā _____ .05.2018.

Darbu pieņēma: _____

Darbs aizstāvēts bakalaura gala pārbaudījuma komisijas sēdē

2018. gada..... jūnijā, prot. Nr., vērtējums

Komisijas sekretāre: _____