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Constructing a Pedagogy of Comedy: Sarcasm and Print Codes as Social Literacies in *Winnie-the-Pooh*

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This article provides a theoretical framework for a pedagogy of comedy that aids evaluation or instruction of the linguistic and social literacies that are part of speech act implicature and context. By understanding comedy's embeddedness in (an incongruence with) social and linguistic relationships and expectations, comedic texts and episodes can be heuristics that target areas of knowledge that are underdeveloped in groups or individuals. This article examines two types of comedy: sarcasm and meta-communicational commentary; and visual print literacy mistakes as social phenomena. While pedagogy often examines character traits in fiction, this article utilizes forms or frames of comedy borrowed from linguistic, cognitive, and educational research. Examining comedy frames, rather than character types, allows for meta-cognitive analysis of recurring, but individually situated, social and linguistic strategies and practices. The article examines episodes from Winnie-the-Pooh to provide practical classroom practices where instructors discuss comedy's social and communicational incongruence with social conventions and expectations (literacies) that are required to "get the joke." Through discussion of comedy's forms, gaps in linguistic and social knowledge can be identified in students, and reading strategies can be provided for understanding indirect communication and context.

Many of us have had the experience of returning to a favorite childhood text as adults and understanding the text differently. Comedy is no different. Whether the difference in understanding arrives in the form of a joke understood differently in childhood, or whether the joke becomes representative of a broader contexts involving human folly, pretensions, or

existential yearnings, comedy is often something you grow into.

Winnie-the-Pooh is one of many children's books that appeals to both adults and children. Certain brands of sarcasm, punning, and "creative" spelling by Christopher Robin and various animal characters in the novel are laughable to both children and adults. Many forms of humor involve character and story actions. These forms of comedy are recognizeable to individuals at various levels of print literacy (graphophonemic comprehension). However, *Winnie-the-Pooh* is rich in visual print jokes (misspellings, homophones, etc.). These jokes are only fully understood by a reader that can comprehend the alphabetic codes and graphemes of the printed English language.

Jokes also involve a second form of literacy--an advanced literacy of social actions, expectations, and maintenance that are required to understand the comic situations and the social consequences of character's behaviors and actions in the novel. Comedy then, can be a great aid in *teaching for understanding* (Perkins, 1993). Graves (1999) pinpoints the place of cognitive and the social research in learning since Perkins' call for teaching for understanding first appeared. Graves (1999) reports the following:

> [i]n the world of learning, the cognitive revolution and schema theory are now part of the old guard, while constructivism, situated learning, and sociocultural concerns are just a few of the new features of today's learning landscape. [...] A large part of [teaching for understanding] and its importance is the realization that in some ways schooling is not going well even for our best students, that all too few students attain the deep level of understanding critical in today's world. (para. 1)

This article will argue that a pedagogy of comedy can be structured theoretically by the "old guard" of cognitivism. Both social and cognitive research on comedy are useful to probe the requisite knowledge needed to understand the first cognitive frame of goal, failure, and consequence. The second frame, the comic, depends upon this sequence of goal, failure, and consequence to create the comedy. To understand comedy is to understand the social expectations structuring the variety of social literacies. It is to understand not only the visible event, but the predictable, non-comic, invisible expectations that are the foundation of any comic transaction. Thus, social knowledge positions comedy as a key tool in teaching for understanding.

It should be noted that the terms and concepts of child-reader and adult-reader, or child literacy and adult literacy, are not easily definable; we will speak only of an *advanced* or *advancing literacy* or *reader*, always using Perkins' idea of teaching for understanding and Graves' sociocultural comprehension as the framework for advancing literacy and referencing *advancing* (rather than *advanced*) readers. Although the goal of this article is a theoretical positioning of comedy as a useful, unique tool for teaching and evaluating reading practices, we, the authors, will also offer basic suggestions on how to turn a pedagogical theory of comedy into useful classroom plans.

Because of the choice of *Winnie-the-Pooh* as a text, as well as this article's interest in literacy levels in which learners struggle with context, the examples and applied pedagogy will focus on age groups within *Pooh's* readership and reading level. However, because the context and incongruent frames of comedy in comic texts present potential problems to any reader's social literacy, communication literacy, semantic knowledge fields, and contextual framing, the pedagogy outlined in theory could be applicable to comic texts at any level of readership.

Literacy Studies

Current work in the field of literacy studies covers a broad expanse of issues. Briefly, these issues can be defined as orality's relation to literacy, the adoption of primary and secondary discourses, social learning, the psychology of learning, and psycholinguistic and cognitive research. Although this list is reductive, the list will suffice as context for a discussion of literacy, or, rather, *literacies*, in reading the *Pooh* stories. In understanding the differences in audience and interpretational strategies for child and adult, we shall turn to Gee's work in primary and secondary discourse adoption (2001). Gee's research exemplifies the current models of literacy in two ways. First, his definition of literacy involves social practices in what Street (2001) defines as the "ideological model" of literacy. This is a model which synthesizes the technical and cultural features of literacy into a relationship where literacy models do "not attempt to deny technical skill or the cognitive aspects of reading and writing, but rather understand them as they are encapsulated within cultural wholes and within structures of power" (p. 435). This model leads to what Swzed (2001) has referred to as "a plurality of literacies" (p. 423), and this plurality is of utmost importance when understanding the comedy of communication and print literacy mistakes in *Pooh*. As will be explained in detail later, comedy works from dual cognitive schemas--the implicitness of the expected event and the incongruence of the unexpected event. Both the expected and the unexpected must be understood by the reader to get the joke. Thus, the cognitive process can explain the psychology of laughter. However, because cognitive schemas based in personal and cultural experience and knowledge are triggered, students' social literacies, or the lack of, are the pedagogical core of comedy because the cognitive frame depends upon the social knowledge and understanding (social literacy) to get the joke.

Gee distinguishes between *primary* and *secondary* discourse acquisition, allowing general categories and criteria that apply well to the progress of a less advanced reader and their instructor who is "teaching for understanding" (Perkins, 1993). Gee's transition from primary to secondary discourse explains the process of becoming socially literate for both the more advanced and the less advanced reader. Gee (2001) suggests:

> [i]t is not just *how* you say it, but what you *are* and *do* when you say it. [...] At any moment we are using language we must say or write the right thing in the right way while playing the right social role and (appearing) to hold the right values, beliefs, and attitudes. Thus, what is important is not language, and surely not grammar, but *saying (writing)-doing-being-valuing-believing* combinations. (p. 526)

Literacy studies identify a primary discourse, learned in the home, which allows one to interact with others and negotiate the criteria that comprise one's environment (physical, mental, emotional, etc.). Beyond this most basic aspect of socialization and acculturation, and thus beyond the kinship group, individuals develop *secondary discourses* for non-familial institutions and peer groups. These secondary discourses are constructed through cultural, regional, religious, and economic influences. Examples of these institutions and groups include schools, churches, agencies, organizations, and businesses that "command and demand one or more Discourses" be mastered fluently for apprenticeship and eventual membership (Gee, 2001, p. 527). Gee refers to these as as the capitalized version of Discourse to mark such membership. (The authors will use the de-capitalized discourse to mark such membership and literacy.)

One way to mark discourse adoption would be a reader comprehending the unexpected social and linguistic performances and choices in the literary action (and thus the humor) of the *Pooh* stories. Such literacy is constituted by an advanced understanding of social behaviors,

routines, or consequences. Together these constitute social discourses. Recent research into reading utilizes Gee's distinction of *acquisition* and *learning* (Knoester, 2009). Acquisition is informal and happens in one's routine, natural environments. Learning is a formal process involving "explanation and analysis" that "involves conscious knowledge gained through teaching" (Gee, 2001, p. 539). Gee, Knoester, and others argue that reading practices and secondary discourse adoption should not be left to acquisition; rather, secondary discourse adoption must be an active part of formal learning. As this article argues in the next section, comedy theory suggests that an advanced, literate understanding of a discourse would be based in understanding the comic reversals of a particular discourse or discourses.

Literacy, Comedy Theory, and Critical Literary Theory

Since the introduction of cultural theory and social constructionist philosophies in the teaching of reading and writing in the late 1970s and early 1980s, critical literacy has become an emphasized component of the close reading process. Critical literacy dovetails with social literacy. Each is based upon the relationship of the individual/learner with the ideologies they or others are beholden to in particular contexts. Pedagogies based in critical literacy typically ask students to identify how identities are constructed and how hierarchical power relationships are structured, empowered, and enacted. Such pedagogies are commonly based upon cultural theories relating to gender, race, and class. These pedagogies build reading skills that provide a variety of reading positions for the student that also empower the student and promote equality and tolerance. Naturally, readers must first decode print and understand information and narrative; however, once information and narrative are understood, the ideological implications of their social discourse are open for discussion. In younger readers, such as those reading *Pooh*, these discourses may not be fully understood. Yet the same is true of social literacy for college-level readers struggling with the political literacies of *The Daily Show* or the historical context or undermining of grand narratives in a novel by Thomas Pynchon or Kurt Vonnegut. This potential misunderstanding is the meeting ground of critical literacy pedagogy and a pedagogy of comedy.

Eckert (2008) argues in "Bridging the Pedagogical Gap: Intersections Between Literary and Reading Theories in Secondary and Postsecondary Literacy Instruction" that instructors should introduce "students to critical theory as scaffolding for meta-cognitively constructing meaning from text" (p. 112). Sarcasm as a theory of meta-commentary on social and communicational incongruence will be addressed repeatedly throughout this essay. For the moment, it is sufficient to say that such meta-commentary is part and parcel of sarcasm because sarcasm is a commentary upon realized and unrealized social actions and outcomes. Thus, it requires the two frames--the expected or actual and the incongruent--that comprise comedy as a form of advanced social literacy.

Of the relationship between literacy and literary study, Eckert (2008) argues:

> [t]he teaching of literary interpretation and the teaching of reading are not separate pedagogies; instead, crucial points of intersection between research in both fields provide the opportunity to link concepts of reading and interpretation for students and teachers. Indeed connections between literary theory and the elementary reading curriculum were identified in the mid-70s, beginning with the publication of research such as *The Child as Critic: Literature in the Elementary School* and Stott's 1981 report of research Children's Literature Association's Symposium on Teaching Literary Criticism in the Elementary Grades [...]. Both

> researchers found that students readily internalized such reading strategies and became more critical readers when they applied these theories. (p. 113)

Current cultural and literary theories involve large amounts of knowledge about the functionality and dysfunctionality of social and political systems. Literary theorist Peter Barry posits that since the 1970s, liberal humanism came to represent the past of literary criticism before cultural theory. For Barry (1995),

> [t]he word "liberal [...] roughly means not politically radical, and hence generally evasive and non-committal on political issues. "Humanism" implies something similar; it suggests a range of negative attributes, such as "non-Marxist," and "non-feminist," and "non-theoretical." (p. 3)

Barry's assessment of the current state of criticism suggests that the cultural and literary theories applied in our classrooms implicitly involve a critique of ideology and social structures. Comedy has also long been a form of social critique, both through outright mockery and ridicule and through subtle satirization that extends small excesses to the point of folly or lunacy. Thus, comedy theory overlaps with the goals of applied critical and literary theory and comedy can be fruitfully unpacked in a manner similar to non-comedic texts. However, because comedy uses indirect linguistic methods and statements such as sarcasm, irony, ridicule, and satirization, comedy also allows instructors an opportunity to investigate how students successfully and unsuccessfully interpret reading contexts that are indirect and can serve as meta-commentary in their communicational and social statements.

Orlando, Caverly, Sweetham, and Flippo (2008) echo Eckert's claim that literary and cultural criticism are not fruitfully applied as reading strategies during classroom practices. They state that "too often, secondary school teachers and college professors expect students to effectively use advanced reading strategies without explicitly teaching them how to do so" (p. 118). The remainder of this article will theoretically map sarcasm and print literacy (graphophonemic) comedy, then apply the comedy theories as reading strategies for *Winnie-the-Pooh*. Introducing theories of comedy to pedagogy supplies teachers with advanced reading strategies for their students, provides a reading frame and goals to students, and helps teachers identify contextual problems in textual episodes, individual students, or a collective of students. Although this article focuses on *Winnie-the-Pooh*, the concentrism of literary and cultural theory and comedy theory is ubiquitous; thus, a pedagogy of comedy can be used as a strategy with any age group and any text.

Comedy as a communicational, social, and literary form contains many varieties. For practical reasons, we will discuss two forms of comedy: the application of sarcasm to mask broken social conventions or elicit sympathy and visual jokes based in print literacy mistakes typical of a writer who has not mastered print literacy codes. Each of these forms of comedy operate upon the principles of Gee's secondary discourses. Yet understanding comedy in one discourse doesn't guarantee an understanding in all discourses. For example, one may understand the use of sarcasm to mask broken social convention in the sarcastic episodes in *Pooh*, yet not understand the oral/visual punning and comic misspelling in *Pooh*.

Introducing basic forms of comedy theory allows children to read the *Pooh* tales within a framework relating to social structures and relationships. This pedagogical approach promises opportunities for enterprising instruction. As Swzed (2001) suggests, all individuals contain "the existence of *literacy-cycles*, or individual activities that are variations conditioned by one's stage and position in life" (p. 423). Thus, forms of comedy offer students and instructors a chance to investigate patterns of social cues and miscues. This article will unpack similarities in comedy types so as to provide examples of two distinct comic categories that can be applied to lessons on

Winnie-the-Pooh. Naturally, these comic categories initiate a pedagogy of comedy based upon dual frames and social knowledge that can be applied to all comedic texts.

The Particulars of *Winnie-the-Pooh* and Comic Understanding Too

The basics of comedy, whether for laughter or education, are the same for children and adults. Sutton (1994) has observed that in the relationship between comedy and audience "the spectator must be induced to adopt an attitude of superiority towards the surrogate" (p. 56). Only with recognition of what is socially or linguistically "wrong" can a reader become superior to comedic characters and actions. This ability to identify what is wrong is part of social literacy and a requirement to advance as a reader. English (1994) remarks in *Comic Transactions* that humor "is an event not an utterance" that must be attributed to "social incongruity" rather than formalistic discourse analysis procedures (p. 5,7). However, the "utterance" of social incongruity is comprised of discourse and context that depend upon linguistic and social frames. Apart from comedy theory, cognitive linguistic research into comedy similarly defines comic events as ‘‘incongruous’’ and double-framed. Coulson (2001) finds that we use cognitive frames as the following:

> representational structures to structure experience of ongoing activity. Moreover, frames serve as interpretive resources for socially defined activities [...] Although individuals constantly interpret their own and each other's activities, [...] culture provides us with the resources we need to interpret ongoing activity and to define what is real. (p. 35)

This research posits that even simple one-line jokes involve "pragmatic reanalysis that results in substantial alteration to the message-level representation" (Coulson, 2001, p. 69), and the result of such reanalysis is a new frame to produce a new understanding. In short, comedy and laughter ensue, not the tragedy or realism of unrealized goals. Similarly, cognitive linguist Attardo's research on humor has found that incongruity is the key factor in understanding double-meaning. Attardo (2002) states that frames can be oppositional, but "the oppositional requirement is essentially an incongruity" (p. 232).

This identification of comedy with incongruity can be applied to pedagogy in several basic manners. First, instructors can guide students toward the recognition that two frames always exist in comedy--what should have happened or what one or more characters were expecting to happen versus what did happen. Because of its incongruence, comedy offers a predictable method of close reading to guide students--the identification of two frames. Second, such probing and guiding by instructors can increase the instructors' own understanding of students' social knowledge by having students identify how the comic frame is incongruous with the first.

Third, by inquiring what social or moral implications arise from the comic incongruity, instructors can assess for discussion, not just students' understanding of social expectation, but both the variance of social expectation and normal social function as well. While expectation and consequence are variable, the ability of students to understand qualities of each is still useful in gauging students' social and cognitive understanding of social interactions, which correlates to the "meaning" of episodes, scenes, and other narrative slices of text. Applied directly to the *Pooh* text, to read the comedy of *Pooh* with an advanced *social literacy* requires that one reacts with laughter or sympathy to the characters' mistakes with the codes of print literacy or that one must understand the general social conventions as satirized with representative character stereotypes, situation types, or sarcasm.

Thus, the double frames of comedy are important when discussing comedy involving social action. Print literacy mistakes are also social actions and can be discussed for the social messages their alphabetic incongruity suggests. For the comedy of *Pooh* to work, some episodes may have to be explained to the advancing reader so that this reader can slowly come to an understanding of social conventions and practices in general, as well as improper social practices in need of correction.

Without explanation or understanding for the child reader, the social satire of *Pooh* can be potentially dangerous, or at least educationally benign, never targeting for correction the actions and behaviors demonstrating exclusion, stereotyping, and sarcasm. Sarcastic texts do offer an opportunity to teach for social justice and empathy. Bracher (2009) advocates an approach to social justice and literature where

> by repeatedly directing readers' attention to [suffering] helps establish attention scripts and person schemas that help readers recognize these same features in Others who they encounter outside the text and to thus respond to these Others with greater sympathy and justice. (p. 374)

Our argument agrees with Bracher, with the exception that this article addresses issues that touch on emotions other than suffering. For maximum pedagogical utility, we will select episodes that can be utilized in the classroom to not only address literacy mistakes with students, but also the emotional result of such mistakes and embarrassment that appear in the novel. Thus, instructors can evaluate how much social knowledge students have to understand the comic situations, yet instructors can also evaluate students' emotional positions regarding episodes of ignorance, embarrassment, sympathy, or lack of sympathy. The fictional character's emotional residue from the comic incongruence is another facet of social literacy that *Winnie-the-Pooh* and comedy in general can address.

In the *Pooh* series, Christopher Robin's own growth over the course of *Winnie the Pooh* and *The House at Pooh-Corner* from a beginning literacy to an advanced literacy includes both print and social literacies and mimics a child's own improved spelling and recognition of social practices. Christopher Robin knows he must pack up his imaginary friends and enter the adult world. In *Benign Humorists* Carlson (1975) states:

> [b]y the end of *The House at Pooh Corner,* however, Milne seems to have run out of blisses and good cheers. Reality bears as Milne shows Christopher Robin [...] threatened by adolescence [...]. Christopher Robin "suddenly knows" that he must leave the enchanted lands of Pooh and his friends. For Christopher Robin, knowledge and insight rudely reveal the implausibility of living a pure, primitive existence free of earthly concerns. He learns that the world demands his work and participation. (p. 54)

Thus, Christopher Robin himself comes to represent, through his changes, the types of literacy that distinguish the less advanced and more advanced reader. The less advanced reader, like Christopher Robin, must enter the social world of the adult and its inescapable socially-contextualized knowledge.

In Which Sarcasm is Used as Communication by Rabbit and Eeyore

Both Rabbit and Eeyore turn to sarcasm, a form of comedy calling attention to linguistic and social conventions that create and maintain communication. Each uses it to indicate his awareness of reasonable social convention and to draw attention to social and emotional urgencies that would be overlooked in polite correspondence and social etiquette. This section

shall first discuss the pragmatics and meta-awareness of linguistic and social maintenance that create sarcasm. Afterward, the emotional pragmatics of sarcasm shall be discussed. Each of these aspects of sarcasm--the linguistic, the social, and the emotional--has proven to be difficult in reading studies of children ages 5-9. Although the ability to interpret sarcasm in speech and text increases with age, studies suggest that sarcasm and irony continue to be an interpretive problem in both speech and text for adults as well (Colston and O'Brien, 2000; Giora et al., 2005; Giora et al., 2009), with literal interpretations often chosen over ironic interpretations, even in predictive contexts (Giora et al., 2009). It is our belief that a pedagogy of comedy can help address the problem of context, sarcasm, and reading in readers of all levels. However, our examples shall focus on episodes from *Winnie-the-Pooh*.

Pinker (2007) attributes sarcasm to pragmatics--in particular to Gricean maxims of speech, where implicature, including sarcasm, is most interesting when "observed in the breach" (p. 378) of direct conversation. According to Pinker, sarcasm flouts the "Maxim of Quality;" one speaker says "something that is patently not true" (p. 379), but the implication of the statement allows the audience to assume the correct meaning. While Pinker's discussion of sarcasm is incomplete, Pinker's connection of sarcasm to pragmatics implies that sarcasm is social, for pragmatics "involves the appropriate use of language in social contexts" (Becker, 1991, p. 327).

As a form of comedy, sarcasm requires two frames. One frame contains the expected direct response and one frame contains the sarcastic reply that implies a meaning. As with comedy in general, the incongruence of the second frame with the expected frame of response creates the sarcasm and comedy. Beyond the basic incongruence of comedy, sarcasm offers unique challenges to advancing readers as well. In *Talk Is Cheap: Sarcasm, Alienation, and the Evolution of Language,* Haiman (1998) posits that there are two basic requirements for sarcasm:

> First, [a response] underlines the fact that sarcasm is not one possible message among several but rather a commentary on any possible message. Second, [sarcasm] expresses the intuitive idea that sarcasm is primarily expressed by intonational or even paralinguistic means. (p. 28)

As can be seen in Haiman's theory of sarcasm, sarcasm can be challenging to advancing readers because of the "commentary" function sarcasm serves, which is based upon incongruence. Also, sarcasm can also be challenging because of the loss of intonation and paralinguistic means that define a written text.

In *Winnie-the-Pooh*, Rabbit uses sarcasm (as does Eeyore) in his humorous moments. When Pooh and Rabbit are preparing to go on the ‘‘Expotition,’’ Pooh asks Rabbit ‘‘. . . is that you?’’ (p. 114). Rabbit responds, ‘‘Let’s pretend it isn’t . . . and see what happens’’ (p. 114). Sarcasm here is working from the two situational frames identified by Haiman. One frame contains the desired social situation and conventions. The other frame is a response that acknowledges itself as "play" rather than a sincere and expected social response. Sarcasm's requirements are illustrated perfectly in Rabbit's response. Rabbit knows that a proper response to Pooh's question would be to acknowledge that yes, it is he, Rabbit, at the door. Thus, Rabbit's comic response is not an answer, but sarcasm's "commentary," a meta-message complicating the assumed response of such a social situation as answering the door and greeting a friend. Sarcasm becomes comic through its recognition and commentary *upon* social convention. Sarcasm is based in the convention and expectation of social interaction and correspondence. Therefore sarcasm is based upon the comprehension of recurring communication situations. However, it is the local and contextual factors of a communication event that must be understood to create or maintain the a particular event's sarcasm. Probing students for the expected outcome/response, how the sarcastic response comments on normal social expectations or responses, how the

characters react to the commentary on social functioning, and how the readers feel about the commentary on social function can each help advance a reader's social and emotional understanding of both a text and the world. These questions will also help instructors evaluate the strengths and gaps in their students communication, social, and emotional knowledge.

Eeyore relies heavily on sarcasm. In the "Birthday Scenes," Eeyore tells Pooh it is his birthday: "Can't you see? Look at all the presents [...]. Look at the birthday cake. Candles and pink sugar'" (p. 76). Pooh, of course, can't see them because they aren't there (nor is an illustration provided). He professes to being unable to see them. Eeyore responds "Neither can I. . . Joke" (p. 76). Not only is Eeyore making the joke, but, in a not-so-subtle manner, he teaches readers how sarcasm works. A social convention, a birthday celebration, is expected, but has not materialized. Acknowledging that the two could imagine the framework of the social custom invokes the social custom while also creating a joke to reconcile the breaking of social custom and Eeyore's expectations of a party. Although passages announcing themselves as sarcastic or comic are few and far between, instructors may wish to seek out passages in comedic texts wherein the characters are talking or acting in ways that demonstrate to each other evidence of both the expected and incongruent behaviors. Passages of this nature, which provide details of both expected and unexpected behaviors or outcomes, may be an easy inlet to demonstrate how comedy works because the advancing reader has information from both frames in the text and needn't "invent" or "imagine" what should have happened.

Research on Sarcasm, Reading, and Interpretation

Context is always challenging to readers. Speech acts and indirect messages are complicated to interpret for younger readers. Bamberg's research (2001) on children and contextual interpretation of sarcasm has shown that children struggle to understand sarcastic contexts and implicature through the age of nine, while Lavall and Bert-Erboul's study (2005) of French children found that children younger than seven can understand sarcasm through intonation, but children do not detect sarcasm through context until age seven.

Discussing sarcasm with young readers is one strategy to increase their contextual awareness. Lavall and Bert-Erboul's research (2005) focuses upon children's problems with recognizing the context--the implicature, the breaking of the maxim of quality--in sarcastic communication. Bamberg (2001) also acknowledges contextual problems in young readers' struggles with context and interpretation, but Bamberg adds the "pragmatics of emotion" (p. 66) to contextual understanding.

Oatley (1992) suggests emotion is used in pragmatic communication to mark role adjustment, as when a person states "I am not angry" to correct the perception of their emotional state in social settings (p. 218). Regarding the emotional context of the Eeyore scene, the sarcasm in this scene hides the pain Eeyore feels in his forgotten birthday. In Eeyore's birthday episode, Eeyore uses sarcasm to mark himself as deserving of pity. Bamberg (2001) has found that children from the ages of five through nine have trouble differentiating between *attributing blame* and *eliciting sympathy*. Bamberg attributes the ability by age nine to differentiate blame attribution and sympathy elicitation to a better understanding of "the pragmatics of emotion" (p. 66).

To reconcile young reader's contextual problems through discussion of *Winnie-the-Pooh,* a pedagogy of comedy would suggest discussing the emotional aspect of sarcasm as not incorrect *social behavior*, but as indirect, social expression of individual feelings and the eliciting of sympathy. Naturally, not all sarcasm involves such sympathy. Class discussion focusing on the

character's intent when using sarcasm would aid young readers who struggle with contextual interpretations of blame attribution and sympathy elicitation, or of sarcasm and context in general. Doing so provides an inlet into advancing reader's emotional literacy as applied to the texts they read, which in turn increases their emotional literacy, reading skills, and contextualization of communicational or behavioral incongruence.

A second instance of sarcasm dealing with the pragmatics of emotion occurs when Eeyore loses his tail. Pooh asks him ‘‘And how are you?" (p. 45). Eeyore responds ‘‘Not very how. . . I don’t seem to have felt at all how for a long time’’ (p. 45). This exchange invokes the nonsensical logic that is related to sarcasm that can confuse readers. Of *Pooh*'s comedy, Carlson (1975) has intoned that Milne was a "frustrated philosopher" who often used "incisively deductive logic" (p. 49) to critique modes of existence. Of comedy in general, Attardo (2002) argues that linguistic theories often inscribe humor as "a violation of Grice's co-operative principle" of pragmatics (p. 232), and the "how" joke is a case for both claims. The meta-commentary of sarcasm elevates such small talk toward ontological status. Eeyore hasn't had a state of "how" in his feelings for quite some time. The concept of ontology, of how one is, is thrust upon the term "how" in Eeyore's sarcastic answer that is based, like Eeyore's previous episode, in the immediate situation's social etiquette. He doesn’t answer the question; he refutes the ontological grounds that are part of the situation’s pragmatics. Cognitively speaking, dissonance for the child comes from an unexpected response that makes an *interrogative* lexical item represent a *state* of existence--a question ("how") to represent an answer. Textually and pedagogically speaking, in previous examples of Eeyore's sarcasm, a word's semantic came from a script of social etiquette and a script of sarcasm. Now, in Eeyore's case, we see another script for eliciting sympathy through sarcasm. However, the effect is achieved by using an abstract linguistic category--the interrogative--to represent states of being, rather than structure a predictable question and answer pragmatic occurrence, making this an extremely complicated use of sarcasm marking a character's emotional state.

Sarcasm then, can be a useful pedagogical tool for complicated and less complicated textual episodes. Based in linguistic and social expectation, the differences in sarcasm's two pairs of overlapping frames offer an opportunity for students of any age with any text to examine dual frames in discourse and to then compare them to similar sarcastic episodes. Moving away from situation framing, sarcasm also offers instructors the opportunity to stress the amount of cooperation required and the quality of information required in communication practices.

The third instance of Eeyore’s sarcasm occurs toward the end of the ‘‘Expotition’’ scene also contains a frame for eliciting sympathy. When Pooh falls on the thistle, Eeyore moves in to eat, but it isn’t enough for him to eat, so he has to use more sarcasm: "'It don’t do them any Good, you know, sitting on them,’ he went on, as he looked up munching. ‘Takes all the Life out of them. Remember that another time, all of you. A little Consideration, a little Thought for Others, makes all the difference'’’ (p. 121-122). Eeyore satisfies two of his palettes in this scene: one for derogatory humor which elicits sympathy, and the other for thistle. The sarcasm is used for laughs. The physical comedy of sitting on thistle and the application of Eeyore's personification of the thistle are recognizable forms of comedy for the advancing reader. The personification of the thistle suddenly makes it an object deserving of pity. This is comic, yet it also contains Eeyore's strange sincerity based in an awareness of others' emotional status. The text is once again teaching through sarcasm, addressing a social literacy of *individual feeling* and *humanity*, much as in the birthday cake episode and "I haven't been feeling very how" episode. The moral becomes universal and is an advancing reader's existential salve to humanity's own ugliness: Have pity or join those who do not; have pity, for the world often lacks compassion;

have pity, for one has only defenses such as the non-expressive meta-commentary of sarcasm as a response to very real emotional events deserving pity and sympathy. This episode again approaches the theme of compassion through sarcasm rather than realism and would serve as useful demonstration of Bracher's claim of using literature to teach empathy. Focusing on episodes of sarcasm which create sympathy, and discussing as well episodes that do not create sympathy, will help advancing readers contextualize and interpret indirect communication forms such as sarcasm, whether for the interpretation of a direct message or for the problem of emotional literacy captured in Bamberg's sympathy/blame binary.

In Which We Consider the Humor of Graphophonic Mistakes

Winnie-the-Pooh is laced with visual humor in its illustrations and its characters' reading, writing, and signmaking. Recognizing the relationship between graphophonics (letter and sound) and semantic knowledge in writing errors requires an advanced semantic knowledge separate from graphophonic (letter and sound) literacy. The whole language movement is defined by its gestalt of reading cues existing on the phonemic, syntactic, and semantic levels. Research by Wise et al. (2007) suggests that knowledge of individual phonemes is not possible without direct instruction in which holistic representations of words are broken into phonemes. Thus, semantic knowledge supports graphophonic learning, another trait of whole language pedagogy. Oulette and Fraser's research (2009) suggests that semantic knowledge (meaning), even in situations involving nonsense words, provides better recall of graphophonic representations.

Oulette and Fraser's findings relate directly to a pedagogy of comedy based in not only functional literacy, but social literacy. Advancing readers can learn, and instructors can discuss, the relationship between holistic language and graphophonics in episodes of *Pooh* where graphophonics devoid of semantic comprehension are privileged for comic effect or, conversely, where incorrect spelling does not spoil semantic comprehension. Because the communicational indirection in this form of comedy exists in the graphophonemic level and not on the semantic level, this form of comedy provides less confusion on the semantic level for advanced readers; however, the emotional reaction to the characters' literacy mistakes is also part of a social literacy based in sympathy toward those not yet fully literate. This emotional literacy is yet another area identified by a pedagogy of comedy.

When we are introduced to Piglet, we find he is not literate enough to read and understand an incomplete sign next to his house. His lack of literacy is not from graphophonic problems, but from semantic knowledge, i.e., content. Milne (1926) describes the scene:

> Next to his house was a piece of Broken Board which had: "TRESPASSERS W" on it. When Christopher Robin asked the Piglet what it meant, he said it was his grandfather's name, and had been in the family for a long time. Christopher Robin said you couldn't be called Trespassers W and Piglet said yes, you could, because his grandfather was, and it was short for Trespassers Will, which was short for Trespassers William. And his grandfather had had two names in case he lost one—Trespassers after an uncle, and William after Trespassers. (p. 34)

Verbally, we see Christopher Robin challenging Piglet, causing Piglet to invent an answer. In the illustration on the accompanying page, the sign (which likely reads *Trespassers will be prosecuted*) is broken, with more room for writing below the Trespassers W portion. The humor controls this part of the episode, exploiting the gap between less advanced and more advanced readers. Simultaneously, the episode pinpoints the real-world, semantic knowledge of trespassing that must be gained to complete the graphophonic clue ("T") and become advanced readers. The episode also demonstrates the need to invent such real-world knowledge when a gap exists

between technical literacy (the decoding of letters and text), and encyclopedic semantic knowledge.

Advancing readers would understand not only the missing portion of the sign, but the comic error of Piglet's incorrect attempt at making sense of the sign. Laughing at Piglet is to laugh as a reader who understands the semantic mistake of Piglet and Piglet's "childish" attempt to make sense of the visible, orthographic elements before him without the content of world knowledge. Thus, laughing at the episode requires not only the semantic knowledge of signs reading *Trespassers will be prosecuted*; the laughter also requires knowledge of how graphophonics are related to semantic knowledge and how the two work in conjunction to create reading comprehension.

Such knowledge, or meta-knowledge, of how the reading process works may not be the primary goal of reading. However, students can benefit from distinguishing between problems with graphophonics or problems with semantic content. The former will require aid from a master reader; the latter potentially can be solved with a trip to the encyclopedia. Recognizing the difference between the two can help advancing readers better solve their own problems and understand themselves as readers in a process of becoming literate. Thus, the Piglet episode teaches students the value of content in the reading process; the episode may also teach the value of content to educators, parents, and politicians. In their article "Content Knowledge--the Real Reading Crisis," Kato and Manning (2007) regret the lack of emphasis on content due to behaviorist classroom practices, standardized testing implemented through the No Child Left Behind act, and changes in local curricula to better suit the standardized test requirements. For those wishing to impress upon their students (or adults) an understanding of the reading process, Piglet's problem is a simple explanation of graphophonic versus content-based reading strategies. Such recognition is important.

Christopher Robin can be the target of visual humor and literacy as well. When Pooh goes to see Owl, he has to read two signs. This joke is only effective if the reader looks at the book. If *Winnie-the-Pooh* is read out loud, and children's books certainly are, then the reader would miss this joke. Nash (1985) argues that wordplay from homophony or phonetic elision (misspellings, missing phonemes) "requires the phonetics of non-standard English" (p. 139). Such instantaneous use of a "non-standard English"--that is, an English of alternative or "wrong" spellings with unchanged semantic meaning from standard English--is possible only through the reader's ownership of the standard English language codes.

How might these spelling mistakes, Nash's "non-standard English," be used in teaching practices? Cognitive linguist Hidalgo-Downing (2000) has argued that "experience is usually coded in positive terms, rather than in negative terms. [...] [P]ositive terms are more informative than negative terms; we describe things by what they are and not usually by what they are not" (p. 37). The phonetics of non-standard English are acknowledged as mistakes because they trigger *correct* graphophonic and semantic knowledge schemata. Thus, pedagogy focusing on an explication of why such jokes are funny would supplement the instructor's knowledge of a student's correlation between or struggles with graphophonic and semantic literacy. Instructors can gauge a student's knowledge of the reading and writing process by asking why such errors exist, why we can still make meaning out of misspelled words, and why we can't. The short answer is that spelling mistakes or omitted words that damage semantic meaning damage reading in general. Moreover, instructors could have students assess the nature of the mistakes by the *Pooh* characters. Also, this could begin a discussion of literacy as a process, with both the characters of *Pooh* and an instructor's students in process.

A fine example of Nash's "non-standard English" can be seen when Pooh looks to Owl

to make sense of ‘‘PLES RING IF AN RNSER IS REQIRD’’ or ‘‘PLEZ CNOKE IF AN RNSNR IS NOT REQIRD’’ (p. 48). Each misspelled term activates the appropriate graphophonic, synatactic, and semantic schemas. The reader is informed that Christopher Robin made the signs; thus, the errors in spelling are attributed to him. Owl makes an attempt to qualify the chastisement for poor spelling by saying that Owl spells his name ‘‘WOL," an attempt to elicit sympathy that is similar to Eeyore's use of sarcasm.

For instructional purposes, this episode dovetails with the previously explicated Piglet episode. Both episodes contain a literacy "gap," whether in reading or writing; together these illustrate that literacy is, indeed, a journey. Furthermore, they illustrate that literacy is a community goal--a goal that can elude some. The more advanced readers/writers in the novel, such as Owl, demonstrate sympathy (as Owl does in the episode above with Christopher Robin) when literacy mistakes are made. Literacy mistakes are, much like sarcasm, typically surrounded by an emotional residue involving at least slight victimage and potential embarrassment, even in fictional characters in a book that is often comic; the emotional residue involves sympathy from the community of animals, an important feature to point out to advancing readers. The above episode of Pooh, Owl, and Christopher Robin can be grouped with similar episodes to discuss literacy as a process that requires mistakes, that is not representative of cognition or limited ability, and that contains emotional residue for the individual and community.

Arriving at Pooh Corner

Children would have to grow up quick to get all of the jokes running through *Winnie-the-Pooh*. Despite this article's claim that sarcasm is "meta-commentary," sarcasm can also be offensive, rude, and hurtful. Yet Eeyore proves that sarcasm can communicate pathos, not rudeness and hurt. Thus, sarcasm can develop two avenues of heuristics for readers on their journey toward an advanced social literacy. The first avenue pertains to a (meta-)communicational awareness of social situation, language event, and social and linguistic expectations. Investigating episodes of sarcasm can lead to the second heuristical avenue, a class discussion of sympathy and sincerity in communication practices. Discussing the various social incongruities with students can test their social knowledge and advance the knowledge required for reading as well as their social awareness. Heuristics developed from these forms of comedy also go beyond the reading process to potentially found a discussion of the social and emotional expectations surrounding speech acts of etiquette and technical literacy as a social practice and public event.

Generally speaking, because all forms of comedy are based upon incongruence, the traits of social, communicational, and emotional literacy will exist in all comic texts, from the simplest children's book to challenging satire. Thus, readers of all ages and levels are potentially challenged by the social literacies and knowledge required to understand comedy, and instructors teaching any level can have students explain incongruence and the dual frames of comedy as a starting point in a discussion of social representation and social or communicational values and expectations.

Of equal importance is a focus on the funny, comedic episodes of the *Pooh* stories. Discussing these episodes will enliven the classroom for young readers and education majors that will soon have young readers of their own. Remembering that comedy is simultaneously fun and serious business is important. The authors of this article recommend connecting the types of comedy and episodes unpacked in this article as a good starting point to create daily exercises and begin discussion. Doing so will help students understand the content of the text. It will also

provide a reading strategy that provides for contextual difficulties present in not only sarcasm, but all forms of indirect messages. A pedagogy of comedy will also foster students' social development and help an instructor understand the interior, exterior, and limits of a class and an individual's social literacies.

Thus, this article is a useful starting point to categorize comedy for practical pedagogy in general. It is our hope that sarcasm, print literacy, and other comedy categories will be utilized not only in *Winnie-the-Pooh*, but in other texts as well, adding to a pedagogical theory of comedy. Identifying the incongruence and the two frames of comedy--expectation and the actual, provides a reading strategy identifying both the visible and the invisible in the text. Comedy as an action is predictable in its two frames. Instructors should begin constructing their lesson plans around these two frames and the values and knowledge required to understand the visible and the invisible. In closing, we suggest that a discussion of comedy can benefit from framework based in *social literacies* to provide goals in which instructors can embed their classroom practices.

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