



## From Pictures to Words: A Linguistic Approach to Comic Strip Humor

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**Abstract** Research on comic strip humor in linguistic studies has yet to be done much by scientists. Comic features that convey messages in pictures and words cause linguists to examine humor more in its verbal elements only. This study's objectives were: 1) creating a transcription method that linguists can use to study comics, 2) analyzing how authors create humor, and 3) describing how to understand the purpose of humor in comic strips. The corpus was a comic strip book entitled *The Best of Sazae-san* (Hasegawa, 2015). The data were analyzed using linguistics, narrative, and humor theories. The study's results found that the transcription method proposed in this study can translate visual into verbal narratives through three elements: The character, setting, and perspective. This research can also show how comic humor is created with a twist in the form of a punch line that subverts readers' expectations, as well as that comic strips' humor, in addition to aiming to entertain, also criticizes.

**Keywords:** *Humor, Comic strip, Visual narrative, Comic transcription, Communication*

### 1. Introduction

So far, the study of comic strips is still a field of research that has little interest, especially in research in the field of linguistics. One contributing factor is that humor in comic strips is not always presented verbally. Comic strips are one type of comic that narrates a humorous story in three or four panels. Eisner (1985), one of the pioneering figures in the study of comics, stated that comics are "sequential art" as a form of reading presented in pictures and words to convey a story or dramatize an idea. That feature of pictures may have caused some linguistic researchers to try to study comic objects to separate pictures and words and then study the verbal language in comics (Beers Fägersten, 2020; Sosa-Abella & Reyes, 2015). Studies like this actually cannot describe the overall message of comics. The characteristic of comics in conveying a message is that pictures and words are one unit. Separating the two means ignoring that the object of study is comics. Comics cannot be separated from picture elements because, without pictures, comics cannot be called comics.

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In the reality of our daily lives, the presence of language as spoken language does not always occur alone. Language encompasses both verbal and nonverbal communication, including gestures, sign language, and visual and written language. In conversational communication, gestures are also present to determine meaning. When reading magazines, newspapers, and advertisements, we also find images or pictures that play a role in understanding the information conveyed. In such situations, communication is bimodal or multimodal and processed simultaneously to convey a unified message. Most verbal and nonverbal forms of communication are processed this way, so linguists need to analyze nonverbal forms in addition to verbal forms. According to Van Leeuwen (2004), linguists should analyze verbal and nonverbal communication as "a single, multilayered and diverse communicative act, whose linguistic expressiveness includes clothing, grooming, facial expressions, and gaze, resulting from the fusion of all modalities of semiotic components such as gestures" (p. 7). Comic strips are a multimodal communication medium in the sequence of pictures that compose a narrative story. As a medium of communication and narrative, comics are strongly associated with linguistics. It is just that because comic narrative is conveyed through pictures (visual or nonverbal communication), the treatment cannot be the same as verbal narration. Until now, no standard method has been agreed upon by linguistic researchers in studying comic strips, especially their humor.

What is interesting in comic strips is the humor. Humor, according to Palmer (1994), is everything that is actually or potentially funny. We use humor to show (1) a sensation of superiority over what is laughed at, (2) a sensation of psychological relief, and (3) a perception of incongruity in what is laughed at, where laughter is a fast comparison between our natural expectation and what really is (Jalilifar et al., 2021; Morreall, 2010). Several researchers have done studies on humor in comic strips. Among these is Beers Fägersten (2017), who studies English-language swearing as humor in Swedish comic strips. Focusing on specific strategies of language play and linguistic creativity, she says that incongruity is particularly essential to the humor of comic strips. Sosa-Abella and Reyes (2015) analyze how humor is utilized in comic strips by the cartoonists Quino from Argentina and Lat from Malaysia by addressing political issues. That humor not only serves the purpose of entertaining the reader but also serves as a literary tool meant to expose national and global issues for the reader to assess and address. None of the previous studies discussed how to read pictures to be used as a study from a linguistic perspective to examine humor in comic strips. Research in comics or other visual material requires a transcription technique that can account for the meaning of visual elements. Developing a transcription method that can be used to analyze comic strips is one of the goals of this study. In addition, this study also aims to examine how authors form humor in comic strips and what the purpose of humor is.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

This section outlines the overall theoretical frameworks used in this study's discussion.

### 2.1. Linguistics, Language of Comics, and Transcription of Comic Strip

Linguistics is the scientific study of language (Lyons, 1981), and language is a structured way or means humans create to communicate and express their thoughts or feelings. Human thoughts or feelings can be defined in various ways. As Cohn (2013) said, humans convey ideas in their cognition through three modalities, namely sound, gestures, and images. According to Saussure (1916), Lyons (1981), Hall (as cited in Lyons, 1981), and Bloch and Trager (as cited in Lyons, 1981), linguistics only discusses the first, namely verbal language, which is a sound expression in the form of spoken and written language.

Comics are not a language; comics are stories written in visual language (Cohn, 2013). Visual language is a language that primarily uses images or pictures to convey meaning or story (Cohn, 2013). Linguistics cannot directly study visual language in comics because visual language differs from verbal language. In comics, there is indeed written language, which represents verbal language or text contained in speech bubbles or narration. However, this language is only part of visual language (McCloud (1994) calls it a phonogram). The translation of meaning between verbal language and visual language is different. However, as the concept of comics is recognized as a narrative (Pratt, 2009), logically, comics can be read or told through verbal language. This way is where linguistic analysis comes into play. So comics, or comic strips in this research, are translated as a narrative through visual language theory. We call this process verbalizing the visual elements of comic strips. Verbalizing is

possible, considering that visual language also meets the requirements as a language, namely having modality, grammar, and meaning (Jackendoff, 2002). Visual language uses systematic (grammar) images (modality) to convey meaning.

A transcription model of the visual language of comic strips needs to be created to facilitate analysis. Unfortunately, not many transcriptions deal with the nonverbal aspects of communication, such as images or pictures associated with the spoken or written language (Forceville, 2005; Norris, 2002). Linguistic research has so far focused more on the transcription of spoken language forms. This research was inspired by the work of Norris (2002), who developed a multimodal transcription model. A model he calls 'a transcription beyond language' can explain nonverbal elements, such as body movements and facial expressions, in multimodal communication.

## 2.2. Comic Strip and Humor

The term 'comic strip' is used to refer to one object within the medium of 'comics', which is defined as "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer" (McCloud, 1994, p. 9). Tatalovic (2009) defines comic strips as short sequences of images telling short stories. Historically, the very first comic strips appeared in periodicals, magazines, and newspapers (Gardner, 2020) and were, in fact, humorous, hence the emergence of the terms 'comic strips' or 'cartoon strips' (Beers Fägersten, 2020).

The comic strip narrative is presented through a sequence of four panels and the events experienced by the actors in each panel. Panels in comic strips are usually just rectangular boxes. The panel can contain images of objects, events, or activities. The narrative order of comic strips is not only based on panel order (Western comics are usually read in order from left to right panels, while Japanese comic strips are from top to bottom) but also comes from the images and text contained in one panel. More than one event can be represented in one panel whose chronology can be determined through perspective, which refers to the visual connection between the elements in a panel. Comic readers usually have no difficulty determining the sequence of events in one panel. In general, if there is more than one character, the sequence starts from left to right or from a higher character.

The narrative structure in comic strips can vary significantly depending on the creator's style and creative intent. Comic strips' brevity and visual nature require a careful balance in conveying a complete narrative within a limited space. Conventionally, the narrative structure of comic strips includes the introduction, development (conflict/progression), climax, and conclusion or resolution, each of which is represented in each panel in order. The introduction section serves to orient the reader by introducing the initial situation. This section aims to set the stage for the narrative and capture the reader's attention. In the development section, the development of the story or character is presented and introduces problems that require resolution. Increased points of tension or surprise are presented in the climax section. Finally, in the conclusion or resolution section, provide a conclusion to the story or a resolution to the conflict.

In general, comic strips are known as a medium that tells humor. With its short features, comic strips are indeed best suited for humorous stories. Stories about adventure, drama, or romance may be too short to be told through comic strips. According to Berger, humor is a short narrative with a punch line meant to evoke mirthful laughter (2015, p. 493). Humor is something funny that can cause laughter (Palmer, 1994; Raskin, 1985). In the study of humor, there are three leading theories about so-called "why" theories of humor (Dynel, 2013; Kitazume, 2017; Kowalewski, 2011; Olia & Ghorban Sabbagh, 2023; Raskin, 1985; Ritchie, 2000). The first theory is the theory of humor superiority, which states that humor occurs based on a sense of superiority. In this theory, humor arises from pleasure because of the act of humiliating or belittling others who are inferior. The next theory, relief, defines humor as the joy gained from being free from pressures or bonds that limit freedom. Finally, the theory of incongruity, better known as the theory of incongruity resolution (IR), focuses on humorous stimuli that occur due to incongruent factors. Incongruent means when there is a discrepancy between the subject's conceptual understanding of how an action should occur, an event must unfold, or an object must appear, obtained based on his knowledge and experience, it turns out that his reality is not the same as his understanding of the concept (Dynel, 2013; Kitazume, 2017; Kowalewski, 2011; Raskin, 1985; Ritchie, 2000).

The incongruity theory has been the most influential in humorous studies compared to the first two theories (Hempelmann & Samson, 2008; Kitazume, 2006; Yus, 2017). This theory claims that humor is formed due to the presence of a punchline that creates a conflict between what is expected to happen and the actual reality that appears. This view was first alluded to by Aristotle, who stated that the contrast between expectations and actual results is often a source of humor (Forabosco, 1992; McGhee, 1979; Morreall, 2023; Ritchie, 2009; Ruch, 2001; Suls, 1972, 1983; Yus, 2017).

Suls (1972) states that most humor arises by following the same pattern: the audience processes the narrative, and suddenly a discrepancy is found. The audience must then find a solution to obtain the desired humorous effect. The incongruent factor triggered as a punchline is only enough with resolution or correspondence with the precursor narrative (set-up) to be understood as humor. When we open the bathroom door and find a dead body inside, it is undoubtedly not cuteness that arises, although there is an element of surprise. This is what underlies the IR theory. Beyond the audience's expectations, the punchline has a logical connection with the set-up narrative that the audience initially did not realize. In this process, Kitazume (2022) believes that pragmatic knowledge, especially cultural context, will be very influential in understanding humor. Readers' expectations are built based on context, both the context in the comic scene and the knowledge that already exists in their minds. Understanding context is essential in understanding humor and the meaning of comic strip humor (Saifudin et al., 2019).

### 3. Methodology

This research aims to develop a model for analyzing humor in comic strips from a linguistic perspective. The analysis should start with a transcription that can describe the comic narrative verbally. Then, from there, we analyze how the characteristics of humor are formed in comic strips and the purpose of the humor conveyed through comic strips.

#### 3.1. Corpus

This study used data sources from a collection of comic strips entitled *The Best of Sazae-san: The Olympic Years* (Hasegawa, 2015). Hasegawa (1920-1992) was a Japanese female comic artist who pioneered writing comic strips in Japan. Hasegawa wrote 6,477 Sazae-san stories from 1946 to 1972. Sazae-san tells the story of a young mother named Sazae and her family (the Isono family) living their daily lives in an innocent and funny style. According to Macwilliams (2008), Sazae-san is an excellent example of how comics occupy an essential place as entertainment in Japanese daily life. We argue that with its famous, enduring status and telling the story of everyday life, this comic can represent how messages are conveyed through humorous narratives.

#### 3.2. Procedure

We presented a new model for analyzing comic strip humor with a linguistic approach. The first step to analyzing the humorous message in comic strips is to create a transcription model that verbalizes and describes the message in each panel. This step was done by observing in-depth and identifying the elements involved, both visual elements and the narrative that builds it. We identified, in particular, the role of nonverbal elements such as body movements and facial expressions and transcribed them in verbal form. In this transcript, the narration was given in the regular form, the utterances in “quotation marks”, nonverbal actions in *italics*, and motion lines in underlined. Additionally, we used **bold** to indicate emotion and CAPITAL for onomatopoeia.

The second step was to identify the punch line that causes the humor and analyze how it was formed by connecting it to the previous narrative in the set-up. We identified how the author structures the narrative from the beginning through panel 1 and then introduces the conflict in the next panel, up to creating the punch line and resolution. This analysis stage aimed to describe how we can understand humor by tracing the connection between the set-up narrative and the punch line, even though the punch line seems unrelated to the previous narrative (different from the reader's expectations).

Lastly, we described the message conveyed through the humorous narrative of comic strips. We used a pragmatic approach in this analysis. In pragmatics, the meaning of speech is different from the speaker's intention. Context is essential in determining the speaker's intentions (Grice, 1975; Saifudin, 2018;

Searle, 1971). We identified the context based on the scenes presented in the panels, which included the setting, themes, and characters, and context outside the comic, which included the socio-cultural conditions. At the time the comic strip was created.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Transcription Method

Transcription modeling is used to understand the scenes in each panel in a standardized way and can be studied from a linguistic perspective. Comic strips are a visual language because they are conveyed through visual media through pictures and words. Visual transcription is the most important because it is the primary mode of conveying the narrative. Visual elements such as the character's actions, gestures (body movements and facial expressions), motion lines, settings, and words, both inside the balloon and outside, must be translatable in a language narrative that can describe the character's events or activities, including the character's tone or emotional mood. Picture translation must also pay attention to cultural context because the meaning of image codes, such as gestures and motion lines, is closely related to cultural conventions (Cohn, 2011). Gestures are movements of the body or body parts, such as hands, feet, arms, or the head, that characters use to convey information. Conveying emotions such as anger, surprise, or sadness through facial expressions is also included in gestures. Motion lines are lines or image symbols artists use to describe the intensity of movement or events. In comic strips, motion lines often exaggerate events to make the funny effect more pronounced.

Another essential element in transcribing comic strips is the setting and perspective. The setting in a comic panel refers to the background or environment in which the presented action or dialogue takes place. It contains visual elements like background illustrations, props, motion lines, and onomatopoeia that set the scene's context and contribute to the overall storytelling. Setting is an essential aspect of comics because it provides the reader with important information about when and where events occur and can even determine the dramatization of events. Dramatizations in comics are often depicted through motion lines and onomatopoeia. Onomatopoeia in comics refers to using words that imitate or resemble the sounds they describe, such as "BOOM" or "POW" (Dey & Bokil, 2021; Fabre et al., 2021; Pratha et al., 2016). These words often represent noises, actions, or events in a way that adds a dynamic and expressive quality to visual storytelling. Onomatopoeia in comic strips serves the story's character and setting (environment). The setting is a visual storytelling tool that complements characters and dialogue to create a rich, engaging narrative.

Then, the term perspective refers to the way or point of view artists use to convey dimension and depth in an image. Perspective has a profound influence on the way we perceive and interpret an image. The perspective element transcribes three aspects relevant to the viewer's perspective of a character: the placement of the characters in the panel, the focus on portraying a particular part, and the narrator's point of view in telling the story. The character can be positioned in the panel in the center, right, left, top, bottom, top left corner, and so on. The character's position within the panel is important because it allows the artist to direct the reader's attention. If a character is centered, it may signal its importance within the panel. A right or left character within the panel suggests that the reader should focus not only on the character but also on other items or characters within the panel. Artists also sometimes illustrate only certain parts, such as the eyes, face, or hands, so that the reader can better exploit the message or emotions of the characters. As for the narrator's point of view, comics usually use the reader's point of view as a third person.

From identifying essential elements that affect communication, we created a transcription model, as shown in Figure 1. The transcription model was created according to the features of comic strips present in the data source. The transcription structure was based on the three main components of comic strip narrative: *characters*, *setting*, and *perspective*. The subcomponents in the character were character actions, words, gestures, and motion lines, and the subcomponents contained in the setting were props, motion lines, and onomatopoeia.

**Figure 1**  
Model of Panel Transcription

Number of Panels:		
Panel image		
Element of Panel	Pictures' Transcription	Meaning (in words)
Character(s):		
- Action:		
- Words:		
- Gesture:		
- Motion lines:		
Setting:		
- Props:		
- Motion lines:		
- Onomatopoeia:		
Perspective:		

**4.2. Application of the Model**

In Figure 2, we present an example of the application of a transcription model that has succeeded in making transcriptions in a structured and comprehensive manner. We present the analysis by presenting one comic strip story with four panels. The story is taken from *The Best of Sazae-san – The Olympic Years* data source about fraud that occurred in Japan. Analysis was continued per panel using a transcription model, as in Figure 1.

4.2.1. The Data

**Figure 1**  
The Data

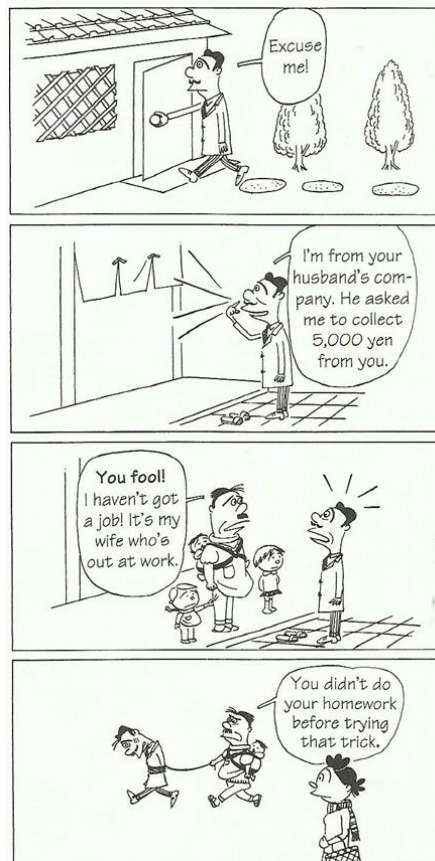
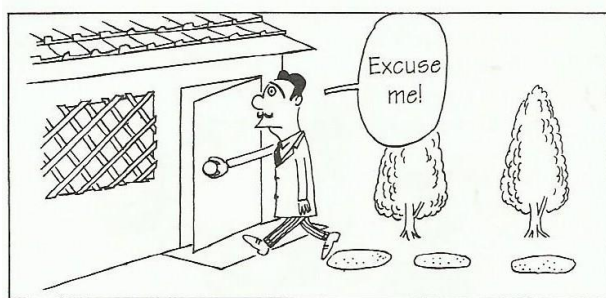


Figure 2 shows that the narrative in comic strips is formed through pictures and words. Verbal elements in the form of words contained in balloons can only represent the story with accompanying pictures. So, a transcription is needed to combine elements of pictures and words into a narrative of words.

#### 4.2.2. Model Transcription

Transcription is the first step in understanding comic strip story narratives so that they can be recognized as linguistic data. The application of the transcription model from the data in Figure 2 can be presented in the following transcription model.

Number of Panels: 1



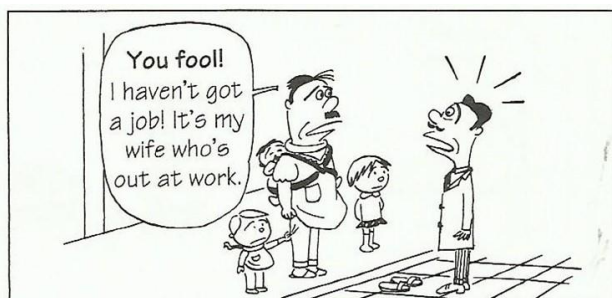
Element of Panel	Pictures' Transcription	Meaning (in words)
Character(s):	(A) A well-dressed man	A well-dressed man <i>stepped towards</i> the courtyard door of a house <i>and opened</i> the door with his right hand. <i>Gazing at</i> the house, <i>and said</i> , "Excuse me!" <i>to greet</i> the person inside the house.
- Action:	(A) <i>stepped towards</i> the courtyard door of a house <i>and opened</i> the door with his right hand. <i>Gazing at</i> the house and saying the words	
- Words:	"Excuse me!"	
- Gesture:	<i>Gazing forward to the house</i>	
- Motion lines:	-	
Setting:	In front of the house, noon	
- Props:	Front house, door, window, roof, tree, stepping stone walkway	
- Motion lines:	-	
- Onomatopoeia:	-	
Perspective:	Focus on activities (A) in the center position, entire body appearance, and third person.	

Number of Panels: 2



Element of Panel	Pictures' Transcription	Meaning (in words)
Character(s):	(A) A well-dressed man	A well-dressed man <i>stood on</i> the terrace
- Action:	(A) <i>stood on</i> the terrace of the house <i>and said</i> the words	<i>and looked towards</i> the door, <i>then said loudly</i> , "I'm from your husband's company. He asked me to collect 5,000 yen from you," explaining his intention while <i>pointing to</i> his nose to introduce himself.
- Words:	"I'm from your husband's company. He asked me to collect 5,000 yen from you."	
- Gesture:	<i>Face facing the door, index finger pointing to his nose</i>	
- Motion lines:	<u>Long stripes in front of the mouth</u>	
Setting:	Terrace of the house	
- Props:	Door curtains, floor, a pair of sandals	
- Motion lines:	-	
- Onomatopoeia:	-	
Perspective:	Focus on activities (1) in the center position, entire body appearance, and third person.	

Number of Panels: 3



Element of Panel	Pictures' Transcription	Meaning (in words)
Character(s):	(A) A well-dressed man, (B) A father carrying a small child, (C) a girl on the right side of (B), (D) a boy standing on the left of (B), (E) a child in a back baby sling.	<i>Standing shocked</i> , with his mouth agape and eyes wide, he gazed at a father who met him with his three children and <b>angrily</b> said to him, "You fool! I haven't got a job! It's my wife who's out at work."
- Action:	(B) meets (A) and <b>scolded</b> him (A) <i>Standing shocked</i> to see that the person who met him turned out to be (B) with his three children; (C) and (D) <i>stood by</i> his father (B) (E) in a back baby sling.	
- Words:	(B) " <b>You fool!</b> I haven't got a job! It's my wife who's out at work."	
- Gesture:	(A) facial expression: <i>eyes widened, mouth agape</i> . (B) facial expression: <i>wide eyes, mouth open</i> .	
- Motion lines:	<u>Overhead stripes (A)</u>	
Setting:	Terrace of the house	
- Props:	Floor, a pair of sandals	
- Motion lines:	-	
- Onomatopoeia:	-	
Perspective:	Focus on the appearance (B) that surprised (A), the entire body appearance, third person.	



Number of Panels: 4



Element of Panel	Pictures' Transcription	Meaning (in words)
Character(s):	(A), (B), (E), (F) Sazae-san	Sazae-san was <i>watching</i> the incident
- Action:	(B) <i>walked behind</i> (A), <i>holding</i> the rope used to tie (B) and <i>say</i> the words to (A); (A) <i>walking bowed down in a bound condition</i> ; (F) was <i>watching</i> the incident between (B) and (A)	when the father <i>brought to</i> the police a well-dressed man who was <i>tied up</i> and <i>walking with his head down</i> . The father said, "You didn't do your homework before trying that trick", to the conman.
- Words:	(A): "You didn't do your homework before trying that trick."	
- Gesture:	(A) <i>Head down, gazing downward</i> , facial expression: <i>cheeks wrinkled</i> . (B) facial expression: <i>wide eyes, lips clenched, cheeks folded down</i> ; (F) facial expression: <i>drooping eyebrows, pursed lips</i>	
- Motion lines:	-	
Setting:	Empty background	
- Props:	Handbags and scarves are worn (F), rope, and back baby sling.	
- Motion lines:	-	
- Onomatopoeia:	-	
Perspective:	See events from Sazae-san's perspective.	

Our transcription model shows that comic strips are a form of unidirectional communication between the author and the reader through a narrative story. The narrative can be written in four sentences that narrate the story in the comic strip as follows:

- (1) A well-dressed man *stepped towards* the courtyard door of a house *and opened* the door *with his right hand*. *Gazing at* the house, *and said*, "Excuse me!" *to greet* the person inside the house.
- (2) (Then), he *stood on* the terrace, *looked towards the door*, *and said loudly*, "I'm from your husband's company. He asked me to collect 5,000 yen from you", explaining his intention while *pointing to* his nose to introduce himself.
- (3) (However), he was then shocked. A father with three children *met* and **scolded** him, "You fool! I haven't got a job! It's my wife who's out at work".
- (4) (Meanwhile), Sazae-san was *watching* the incident when the father *brought to* the police a well-dressed man who was *tied up* and *walking with his head down* and said, "You didn't do your homework before trying that trick".

In the narratives we create, we add conjugations in brackets so that the connection between one sentence and the following sentence can be understood well, with cohesion and coherence. "Then" is used as a conjugation to express the following action or logical consequence that occurs based on what has been explained previously, "however" indicates a contrasting or opposite relationship, and "meanwhile" is a

conjugation that connects two events that occur together. Through narratives like this, we can understand the story the author tells comprehensively, including the psychological elements (mood) contained in the story.

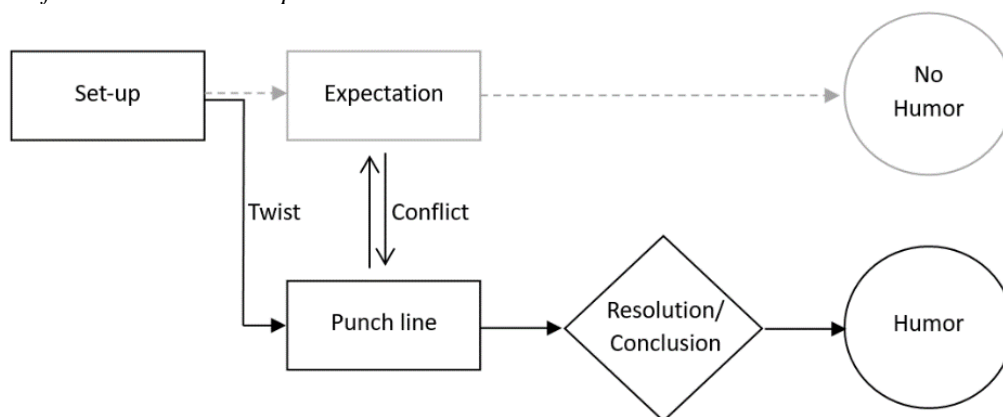
### 4.3. Humor Identification in Comic Strips

To identify humor in comic strips, we used incongruity theory, which focuses on the element of surprise formed through punch lines which create a conflict between what is expected to happen and the actual reality that appears (Dyrel, 2011; Forabosco, 1992; McGhee, 1979; Ritchie, 2009; Suls, 1972, 1983; Yus, 2017). The punch line is identified by finding a surprising narrative that occurs beyond the reader's expectations. This narrative is found in panel (3), which is marked by the conjugation "however", which indicates a conflict with the previous narrative. The author presents the punch line in the form of a picture. The author brings up the scene of the father with his three children, who appear to meet the well-dressed man. This panel has shattered the well-dressed man's and also the reader's expectations because everyone would expect that most people at home are wives while their husbands work outside. This panel becomes punch lines that deflect the guesswork of all of us with something incongruent. A father being at home and caring for his children was not expected in Japanese society at the time (these comic strips were created in the 1960s). Moreover, Japanese society is known as a society with a strong, patriarchal culture.

The humor mechanism is formed by presenting narratives in the set-up (introduction and development panel) section of stories familiar to readers. It can lead readers to expectations by these standard conditions. The punch line is created by deflecting (twisting) the plot beyond the reader's expectations with an incongruent narrative, making the reader laugh when they realize it is funny (Figure 3).

**Figure 2**

*Formation of Humor in Comic Strips*



### 4.4. Analyzing the Meaning of Humorous Narrative

In analyzing the message conveyed through comic strips, it is necessary to describe the context and purpose of communication. The context in communication is the background of socio-cultural conditions that can be obtained through the conditions when the media is written and the knowledge gained through the stories depicted in the panel. The purpose of communication can be known through the story's content and context, as explained earlier.

At the time these comic strips were written, Japan was undergoing a period of transformation from the period after the end of World War 2 to a developed country both politically and economically. At that time, Japan built many lighthouse projects, such as the Shinkansen project (Japanese bullet train) and the 1964 Olympics (Hernon, 2023). Although, in the international view, the economy strengthened, Japan also experienced a high population problem at that time, which caused the Japanese population to have difficulty finding work, so many women in Japan also began to work outside to meet family

needs (Senda, 2015). This condition is evident in panel 3, which depicts the presence of three children in one family, representing Japan's high population. From panel 3, we can also see the picture of the difficulty of getting a job for a husband, who is the head of the family, so the wife works outside while her husband takes care of the children at home. The difficulty of getting a job also triggers the rise of crime in Japan, as depicted in this comic strip story. These social, cultural, political, and economic conditions are the context of this comic strip narrative. A condition obtained through the text depicted in the comics and knowledge of the setting at the time the comic strips were written, namely the condition of Japanese society in the 1960s.

Comic strips were created with the aim of entertaining readers by presenting humor. However, behind this goal, there is another implied purpose. This can be likened to the pragmatic study of speech acts (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969) or conversational implicature (Grice, 1975). In speech acts, locutions or utterances can contain direct and indirect illocutions and conversational implicature that distinguish between what the speaker says (meaning of speech) and what the speaker means by the words spoken (conversational implicature). The features of comic strips that convey humor can be likened to direct illocutions or speech meanings, while the meaning behind humor can be analogous to indirect illocutions or conversational implicature. The same is true of narratives in literary works such as poems, novels, and short stories. The arrangement of words, phrases, and sentences in literary works always has other meanings because, in literary works, the author's message is always presented in an indirect form (Noviana & Saifudin, 2020; Riffaterre, 1978).

In the comic strip Figure 2, we find that the narrative is a critique of the Japanese government that was unable to overcome the social problems faced by Japan in the 1960s. A husband who cares for his three children at home indicates the difficulty of finding work and the high population. The image of a fraudster reflects the rampant crime that arises from the previous two social problems. Nuances of criticism about gender are also felt in this story, which depicts male weaknesses: a man who fails to commit fraud and another an unemployed man whose job to earn a living is replaced by his wife. In Japan, the 1960s was known as an era that marked the increase in the number of women working in offices (Senda, 2015).

## 5. Discussion

This study aimed to create a transcription model that linguists can use to analyze comic strip visual narratives and transform them into verbal narratives. The next objective was to analyze how humor is formed and reveal what the intention of humor is behind the pleasure generated by humor in comic strips. Making comic transcriptions is very important in linguistics as material for analysis, as evidence that can be justified that linguistics has access to the study of comics as a whole, not just the text contained in speech bubbles or narratives. Bramlett (2016) said that linguistics could study comics in various approaches, as done by Cohn (2019, 2020), through a cognitive approach (psycholinguistics and cognitive linguistics) and stated that comics are actually verbal expressions from the author, which are realized through images. Potsch and Williams (2012) use cognitive linguistics to analyze the graphic, i.e., non-verbal representations of speed and direction lines in action comics; Forceville (2005) explains pictorial runes found in comics that have similarities to metaphors so they can be studied through cognitive linguistics. Then, one of the studies that inspired the current research was Tzankova and Schiphorst (2012), who explained the context in political cartoons through verbal narratives based on semiotic codes. These various research results prove that linguistics can study comics through various approaches. The approach we took was based on the view of comics as a form of visual language (Cohn, 2013, 2019, 2020) that tells a narrative (Lefèvre, 2000; Pratt, 2009) so that it can be transcribed into the verbal narrative as linguistic data (Forceville, 2005; Norris, 2002; Tzankova & Schiphorst, 2012).

From the findings of this research, we saw three essential determinants of comic strip narratives: character, setting, and perspective. The character element is the most important factor, considering that in the narrative, comic strips always tell the events experienced or activities carried out by the character (Bramlett, 2016; Lefèvre, 2000; Pratt, 2009). Action refers to the movement that the character performs within a panel. The existence of actions is often equipped with illustrations of gestures and motion lines

to add tension and dramatization effects. Gestures are not the same as actions (Kendon, 2004). The function of the gesture is to convey information about what the character is feeling, thinking, or aware of when performing actions. Walking is an action, but walking with your head down is a gesture that represents insecurity or shame. Gestures can be represented by limb movements such as head, hands, or shoulders and facial movements such as eyebrow, eye, forehead, and mouth movements (McNeill, 1992). From the results of observations of Figure 2 comic strips and in all the stories in the data source, there are only a few variations in gestures, especially in facial movements. The style of presenting images in the panel always uses a distant perspective that shows the entire body of the characters, resulting in gestures on specific body parts, especially the face, being difficult to identify. The presentation of the form of motion lines also has little variation. Motion lines are used to express degrees of movement faster, more significantly, or more intensely than the normal expression. It is not used to describe normal movements or conditions (Forceville, 2005). The comic strips in Figure 2 only use straight lines, as found in panels 2 and 3. In panel 2, the lines in front of the mouth represent words spoken aloud, while the shorter lines above the character's head in panel 3 represent shock. The motion lines found in data sources other than straight line shapes are water droplet shapes and cloud shapes. The large number of water droplets depicts the character's negative emotions, such as confusion, fear, pain, fatigue, and other stressful emotional situations. The shape of the clouds found is usually accompanied by straight lines that represent dust flying due to rapid movements such as running. The following picture or image element that supports the understanding of comic strip narratives is the setting. The setting in comic strips refers to the environment or context in which the events of the comic take place. Despite the limited space and simplicity inherent in comic strips, the setting plays a crucial role in establishing the tone, atmosphere, and overall context of the narrative. The setting in comic strips represents the conditions and situations at the time the comic strips were created, including social, cultural, economic, and political conditions. The setting in the comic strips Figure 2 tells the story of the incident in the yard of the house during the day when people generally go to work in the office. The setting in Figure 2 shows the social conditions of Japanese society that are not good. People find it challenging to find jobs, the population is high, and crime is rampant. Then, from the perspective of presenting the image inside the panel, it appears that the author took a distant point of view (McCloud, 2006). The author seems to want to bring the reader into the third person, who can see the entire event. The absence of a detailed perspective focusing on certain parts can mean the author prioritizes the storyline. By applying the model we presented in the previous section, the translation of these three factors (character, setting, and perspective) can produce a verbal narrative that meets the criteria of a narrative (Lefèvre, 2000; Pratt, 2009).

Regarding the formation of humor in comic strips, we argue that comic strips play with frame expectations, given that the events in one panel become the origin of succeeding events. By setting up a familiar situation and then subverting it, humor arises. Readers' expectations are framed, and the punchline often involves a shift in this frame (see Figure 3). This is a character from a narrative with a forward plot. Each event in one panel will raise the reader's expectations about the events that will happen later (Suls, 1972, 1983). Readers' expectations are based on stereotypical judgments based on experience and knowledge ingrained in their minds (Kitazume, 2022). This is what comic strip humor creators then use by framing the reader's mind to expect based on his theoretical knowledge so as not to realize that other possibilities can happen, which are considered laughable though logical. When the reader later finds the punch line, he realizes that the author has framed it to make a stereotypical conclusion. This is what causes humor in comic strips. The author creates humor through changes in the form of punch lines, which change the ideal view in the previous narrative (set-up) to ridiculous. In verbal narratives, punch lines can be represented in conjunctions such as "however", which indicates conflict or contradiction between what is expected and what happens (Dyner, 2011; Forabosco, 1992; Ritchie, 2009; Samson & Hempelmann, 2011; Suls, 1972; Yus, 2017).

Humor in comic strips, then, is actually not only intended for amusement. Generating fun is indeed the primary goal of humor. However, in comic strips, we see that humor is also a communication strategy for conveying criticism or dissatisfaction with a situation felt by the author. Aside from being amusing, conveying criticism through humor can also be used to escape from social pressures (ideal norms and morality) without feeling guilty. Criticism in comic strip humor is conveyed to certain parties (people

or organizations) through derogatory or mocking expressions in images and words. One thing that must not be ruled out is that to achieve pleasure through humor, we must use a punch line in the form of a 'twist' that creates a contradiction between the reader's expectations based on stereotyped conditions and the 'ridiculous' reality that occurs. A description like this bridges the relation between three theories that have been valid so far, namely humor relief, superiority, and incongruity (Dynel, 2013; Ritchie, 2009).

Through this research, linguistics, as a scientific discipline that studies language to express thoughts, feelings, and communication, cannot always only focus on verbal language issues, both spoken and written. Thoughts and feelings are not always expressed using language (verbal). It can be expressed through gestures, facial expressions, images, or a combination of two or even all of these means. Likewise, communication always presents multimodal forms, namely verbal and nonverbal communication. Although this article only presents one example of comic strip analysis, the results can be used generally as a basis for analyzing all types of multimodal communication. This research can provide theoretical and methodological contributions that can be used for further research, especially toward new forms of communication that emerge with technological developments, such as gadget-based communication, which uses a lot of visual symbols. The transcription model, one of this research's findings, will benefit other researchers who study cartoons, emoticons, caricatures, or memes, which have recently become very popular.

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