

# Chapter 8

## Designing Funny Way: The Role of Humor in Human–AI Interaction

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Localised humour helps bridge cultural gaps and fosters a sense of connection between users and AI systems. It has the potential to enrich the user experience by making interactions with AI systems more enjoyable and memorable. When localising AI for a specific region like Turkey, understanding what constitutes humour in that culture is crucial. AI that can recognise and respond to humour appropriately in the local language demonstrates a deeper understanding of the target audience and strengthens user trust. This chapter explores how generative AI systems can be designed to understand and respond to humour appropriately in the context of Turkish culture and language by analyzing the role of humour in human-AI Interaction and potential benefits for user experience and trust-building. Qualitative data will be gathered through interviews and expert opinions to understand the role of humour in human-AI interactions from the perspective of Turkish users through semi-structured interviews with experts.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

There are various meanings and definitions of the word “humor.” Critchley (2002) writes that "humor is produced by a disjunction between the way things are and the way they are represented in the joke, between expectation and actuality. Humor defeats our expectations by producing a novel actuality, by changing the situation in which we find ourselves" (p. 1). While humor remains a complex phenomenon,

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several critical theories attempt to explain its mechanics. Morreall (2009) writes that scholars like Arthur Schopenhauer and Immanuel Kant posit that humor arises from violating our expectations regarding incongruity theory.

The theory, in essence, is based on Kant's position of incongruity, where perception of the concept and its perception collapse and create an opposition. Schopenhauer (1983) argues that the cause of laughter in every case emerges from simply the sudden perception of the incongruity between a concept and the real objects that have been thought through it in some relation, and the reason for the laugh is based on just an expression of this incongruity. According to this approach, when a situation or punchline deviates from what people anticipate, the surprise creates amusement.

Along similar lines, Thomas Hobbes suggests that laughter emerges from a sense of feeling superior to others, which is also known as the superiority theory (Martin, 2007). In this sense, humor arises from a surprising mismatch between reality and expectation. Suppose the humor is not fixed by how it is presented in a joke. In that case, it creates a surprising, unusual moment by deviating from our expectations and introducing a new, unexpected perspective, "a novel actuality." In other words, humor is like the confusing situation when expressed expectations do not match reality.

Henry Bergson (2005) focused on the concept of rigidity and automatism rather than the mismatch between reality and expectation. According to him, humor emerges when something resembles a machine or when people behave mechanically. For instance, imagine a classy person in a suit pretending to be a robot in an important meeting; this resemblance contains humor. In other words, For Bergson (2005), humor indicates that humans are not purely mechanical and reminds people to avoid becoming overly rigid or self-important.

Another approach to humor is embodied in superiority theory. According to Critchley, the assumption of the superiority theory is that we laugh about the misfortunes of others; it reflects our own superiority (2002, 3). The roots of this approach can be found in the work of Plato, Aristotle, and Hobbes. Hobbes further explains that humans constantly compete with each other, looking for the shortcomings of other persons. He considers laughter an expression of a sudden realization that we are better than others, an expression of 'sudden glory' (ibid). In other words, humor contains power relations and master-slave relations. In fact, every humor has a winner and loser situation. Nevertheless, this situation requires an element of surprise. According to superiority theory, power dynamics in humor emerge from superiority. The "winner" is the one that successfully makes fun of the "loser" (ibid). In other words, the winner becomes the master of the loser; the loser is, on the other hand, a slave.

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