"I want to tell you a joke...
Are you ready?"

An introduction to the STANDUP Project

Graeme Ritchie
University of Aberdeen

Annalu Waller
Rolf Black
Dave O’Mara

University of Dundee

Helen Pain
Ruli Manurung

University of Edinburgh
Outline

1. Background
2. Aim of Project
3. Functional requirements
4. User requirements
5. The Development of the Lexicon
6. Designing the Interface
7. STANDUP demonstration
1.1 Background

- Conversational narratives (story)
  - Different types of story, e.g. jokes
  - Punning riddles have question-answer format

- Role of jokes in language development
  - pragmatics ⇒ turn taking, initiation etc.
    ⇒ early development
  - vocabulary acquisition
    ⇒ word play (ambiguity)
    ⇒ phonetic and semantic awareness
1.2 Background

- Humour research
  - laughability vrs understanding
  - comprehension studies begin at 5 years

- Computational humour
  - JAPE
  - STANDUP
1.3 Background

- Humour and Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)
  - prestored jokes
  - pragmatics
  - little opportunity for independent vocabulary acquisition and word play
  - research mainly into enjoyment and fun
2 Aim of the project

System To Augment Non-speaker’s Dialogue Using Puns

– to provide a language playground through the generation of novel puns!
– could we develop an interface to a joke generator for children with complex communication needs (CCN)?
3 Functional requirements

- Based on JAPE developed by artificial intelligence researchers
- System creates new jokes (not pre-stored)
- Jokes can be saved by user
4 User requirements - General

• Accessible to wide range of users
  – Scanning & direct access
  – Reduced selections
  – Recovery – e.g. “go back”, “go home”

• Different levels of access to manage language skills and possible progressions:
  – Task difficulty (keyboard input harder than simple selection of words)
  – Joke type (partial word matching harder than homophone substitution)
  – Vocabulary (measured by word frequency)
4 User requirements - Vocabulary

- Appropriate for Young Children
  - No Unsuitable Words
- Appropriate for Children with Emerging Literacy
  - Preference for Familiar Words
  - Speech output
  - Symbol support using Rebus and PCS symbol libraries e.g.:

  “time”  
  ![Clock]

  “thyme”  
  ![Thyme]

- Access to jokes using subjects – lexicon grouped into subject-areas (topics) and clustered into a hierarchy
5 The Lexicon: Requirements

**Lexicon Information**

- Part-of-speech (POS) tags
- Phonetic spelling, for computing:
  - homophones: time, thyme
  - rhyme: pub, tub
  - spoonerism: bare/spank, spare/bank
- Compound nouns and their components
e.g. long time, traffic jam
- Distinct senses of a word/phrase,
e.g. match=sporting event, match=ignition stick
- Semantic relations:
  - synonyms: strange, bizarre
  - hypernyms: thyme, herb
  - meronyms: traffic, car
5.1 The Lexicon: Resources

Word collections / Lexica

- **WordNet**: 200k word senses, synonyms *(synsets)*, hypernym hierarchy, meronyms.
- **Unisyn**: pronunciation dictionary, assigning phonetic strings to >115k word forms. Edinburgh accent used.
- **SemCor**: subset of Brown corpus with >230k WordNet sense-tagged words. >35k WordNet entries have SemCor frequency>0.

Problems:
- Unsuitable
- Unfamiliar
- Americanisms (e.g. baseball information)
5.2 The Lexicon: Additional Resources

- **MRC Psycholinguistic Database**: various ratings relevant to familiarity.

- **BNC Spoken Corpus**: frequency ratings for compound nouns.

- **Widgit conceptcodes**: >11k concepts linked to >6k Widgit Rebus symbols, >4k Mayer-Johnson PCS symbols.

- **Schonell spelling lists**: spelling list of >3k words for children aged 7-12. Used as preferred source of “familiar” words.
5.3 The Lexicon: Data Preparation

• Database
  Lexical resources

• WordNet+Unisyn
  Disambiguation

• Phonetic relations
  Similarity, rhymes, spoonerisms

• Familiarity scoring
  Word-sense: “F-score”

Prioritising and combining sources
(MRC>Schonell>Widgit>Semcor)
5.4 Data Preparation (2)

Auto disambiguation:
- **Widgit & Schonell**
- **MRC database**

Manual disambiguation:
- **Widgit** conceptcodes
- **Schonell** spelling list

Custom authoring tools were used.
### 5.5 The Lexical Knowledge Base (1)

#### Core lexicon:
- 130k lexemes
  - Sense (synset)
  - Part of speech
  - F-score (in [0,1])
- 79k wordforms
  - Orthography
  - Phonetic spelling
- 32k compound nouns
  - Head
  - Modifier
- 85k concepts
  - WordNet gloss
- 65k hypernym pairs, 7.5k meronym pairs
- 10k Widgit-to-WordNet matches
  (>8k POS matched)
- >500k phonetic similarity ratings (in [0.75,1])

#### Lexical relations stored in additional cache tables:
- **Syntactic:**
  - noun, verb, adj, mod, compound
- **Semantic:**
  - synonym, hypernym, meronymy, alternate meaning
- **Phonetic:**
  - homophone, rhyme, spoonerism, prefix, suffix
6.1 Designing the Interface

- User Centred Design
- Clinicians and adults who use AAC
  - Focus groups with clinicians
  - One to one sessions with adults
- Requirements gathering
  - Paper prototypes
- Design
  - Paper prototypes
  - Low fidelity mock ups
Highly literate prototype

Type in your joke keyword...

Your system selected these words please choose one:

Your system has suggested three puns-choose your favourite and try it out on friends

**Pun 1**
Q. Why do bees have sticky hair?
A. Because they use honey combs.

**Pun 2**
Q. Why do bees eat sticky cookies?
A. Because they use honey jars.

**Pun 3**
Q. Why are bees sweet talkers?
A. Because they are full of honey.
J evaluating paper Prototype
Results Paper prototypes

• suggested too much reliance on text
• needed picture language interface
• suggested various ways of use
Pictorial Journey Metaphor

Let's build a new joke

Should Dr Joke use your special word?

Yes  No

Finding joke stop  Joke building stop  Joke expert stop  Joke telling factory

Dr Jokes house

Back
Pictorial Journey Metaphor

What do you get if you cross a sheep and a kangaroo?

A wooly jumper!

Finding joke stop
Joke building stop
Joke expert factory
Dr Jokes house

Back More
K evaluating metaphor design
6.2 Using STANDUP – Screen layout

- Back
- Forward
- Home
- Help
- Exit
- Animals
- People
- Bodies
- Countries
- Environment
- Places

Get a joke about anything

Choose subject or get a joke about anything

More
6.3 Using STANDUP - “Are you ready?”

What do you call a washing machine with a September? An Autumn-atic washer.
6.3 Using STANDUP - “Are you ready?”

What do you call a washing machine with a september?
6.3 Using STANDUP - “Are you ready?”

An autumn - atic washer.
6.4 Using STANDUP - Scanning