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Abstract

This thesis aims to investigate the phenomenon of “roasting” on an internet forum called r/RoastMe. The analysis is based on politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Grice, 1975), impoliteness theory (Culpeper, 1996), The General Theory of Verbal Humor (Attardo, 1994; Ruch, Attardo & Raskin, 1993), and computer-mediated communication (Thurlow, Lengel & Tomic, 2004; Newhagen & Rafaeli, 1996). This thesis contributes to the existing pools of studies that have investigated other aspects of the r/RoastMe subreddit (Dynel, 2021; Dynel & Poppi, 2019; Kasunic & Kaufman, 2018; Poppi & Dynel, 2020).

The aim of the study is to investigate how humour is created in the comments made on r/RoastMe by collecting 33 posts and 165 comments. This is done by adapting the General Theory of Verbal Humour to the format of the subreddit and applying it to an analysis of the comments on the page. Subcategories of the knowledge resources that belong to the General Theory of Verbal Humour are taken from the field of pragmatics, and from a pilot study.

The key findings include that there are many knowledge resources that users draw on to create humour. One of the resources that is commonly used is the communicative context in which a roast is made. Other linguistic features (like word play) are rarely used. The roasts rely on the given information of the post to supply the “setup”, while the roasts form the punchline. This “setup” and “punchline” interaction demonstrates the highly dialogic nature of the forum.

While “banter”, which involves teasing someone in a friendly manner, typically occurs between friends, the subreddit’s community seems to create a sense of closeness between users. Even though users may not know one another outside the forum, the fixed format of the subreddit and the shared practices among the users creates an arena where users are able to breach politeness conventions. It also appears that the roasts may be built in a certain order, similar to the hierarchy of Knowledge Resources (Ruch, Attardo & Raskin, 1993).

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	2
Table of Contents.....	3
List of Tables.....	5
List of Figures.....	6
1 Introduction.....	7
2 Theoretical framework.....	9
2.1 Politeness and impoliteness theory.....	9
2.2 General Theory of Verbal Humor.....	13
2.3 Computer-mediated communication.....	15
3 Previous studies.....	18
3.1 Roasting and reddit.....	18
3.2 Previous findings.....	19
4 Methods.....	21
4.1 Methodological approach.....	21
4.2 Data collection methods.....	22
4.3 Data analysis methods.....	23
4.3.1 Adaptation of the GTVH.....	23
4.3.2 Data organisation and analysis.....	29
4.4 Ethical considerations.....	30
4.5 Validity and Reliability.....	31
5 Results.....	33
5.1 Knowledge Resource frequencies and examples.....	33
5.1.1 Script opposition.....	33
5.1.2 Situation.....	39
5.1.3 Logical mechanism.....	39
5.1.4 Target.....	43
5.1.5 Narrative strategy.....	44
5.1.6 Language.....	47
5.2 Comment analysis.....	53
5.2.1 Analysis of comment 4,2.....	53
5.2.2 Analysis of comment 7,4.....	54

5.2.3 Analysis of comment 13,5	56
5.2.4 Analysis of comment 17,3	57
5.2.5 Analysis of comment 27,1	59
6 Discussion.....	62
6.1 How is humour created?.....	62
6.1.1 Script opposition.....	62
6.1.2 Situation.....	63
6.1.3 Logical mechanism.....	64
6.1.4 Target.....	64
6.1.5 Narrative strategy.....	65
6.1.6 Language.....	65
6.2 Broader implications.....	66
6.2.1 The FTAs and impoliteness superstrategies of r/RoastMe.....	66
6.2.3 Dialogism and CMC.....	68
6.3 Limitations.....	69
7 Conclusion.....	71
References.....	73
Appendix A: Posts and comments collected from r/RoastMe.....	76
Appendix B: Messages to participants.....	84

List of Tables

Table 1.	List of categories and subcategories.....	24
Table 2.	The script opposition category.....	25
Table 3.	The situation category.....	25
Table 4.	The narrative strategy category.....	27
Table 5.	The target category.....	27
Table 6.	The logical mechanism category.....	28
Table 7.	The language category.....	29
Table 8.	Results for the script opposition category.....	33
Table 9.	Results for the logical mechanism category.....	39
Table 10.	Results for the target category.....	43
Table 11.	Results for the narrative strategy category.....	44
Table 12.	Results for the language category.....	48

List of Figures

Figure 1.	The linear hierarchy, the “T” model, and the “Y” model of verbal humour... 15	15
Figure 2.	Image from post 18.....	34
Figure 3.	Image from post 9.....	35
Figure 4.	Image from post 14.....	36
Figure 5.	Image from post 10.....	37
Figure 6.	Image from post 16.....	38
Figure 7.	Image from post 8.....	40
Figure 8.	Image from post 5.....	41
Figure 9.	Image from post 11.....	48
Figure 10.	Image from post 23.....	49
Figure 11.	Image from post 1.....	50
Figure 12.	Image from post 21.....	51
Figure 13.	Image from post 4.....	53
Figure 14.	Image from post 7.....	55
Figure 15.	Image from post 8.....	56
Figure 16.	Image from post 17.....	58
Figure 17.	Image from post 27.....	60

1 Introduction

The topic of this thesis is roasting, and in particular how it is practised on the r/RoastMe page to create humour. In brief, roasting is when a person is the subject of insults for the purpose of entertainment. Roasting can trace its history through the 20th century and to The Friar's Club, according to Adams (1976, as cited in Kasunic & Kaufman, 2018). Roasting has become popular in more recent times due to its prominence on American television shows and YouTube videos (Dynel & Poppi, 2019). The forum r/RoastMe is a page where users can submit pictures of themselves and ask other users to roast them. The comments that other users upload make up the roasts on the page.

A considerable number of previous studies (e.g. Dynel, 2021; Dynel & Poppi, 2019; Kasunic & Kaufman, 2018; Poppi & Dynel, 2020) have investigated how roasting is practised on the r/RoastMe forum. However, these studies have tended to focus on the sociopragmatic features of roasts (Dynel & Poppi, 2019), or the norms and psychological aspects of the r/RoastMe forum (Kasunic & Kaufman, 2018). However, studies have not investigated the r/RoastMe forum from a linguistic perspective. This study aims to address this research gap and contribute to the field by offering a novel perspective on how computer-mediated communication has changed the way that people communicate.

While linguistic studies typically focus on, for example, grammatical structures, semantic fields and genre conventions, the primary purpose of the r/RoastMe thread is entertainment (Poppi & Dynel, 2019). Following this, this study aims to investigate how humour manifests between posters and their commenters on the page through analysing a corpus of 165 comments.

Attardo and Raskin's (1991) General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) operationalises the knowledge resources that are used when creating humour. The GTVH has been used in a host of previous studies that have investigated humour in various forms and for various uses (Archakis & Tsakona, 2005; Attardo, 2002; Danmanik & Mulyadi, 2020; Hempelmann & Ruch, 2005; Le, 2022). The GTVH consists of six knowledge resources; script opposition, logical mechanisms, targets, situation, narrative strategy, and language (Attardo, 2008). This study adapts these knowledge resources in order to account for how commenters create humour on r/RoastMe.

Additionally, this study makes use of perspective from politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Grice, 1975) and from impoliteness theory (Culpeper, 1996). These

perspectives are considered in the analysis of the r/RoastMe subreddit comments, and are part of guiding the discussion of the results.

The research question of this study is:

How are the GTVH knowledge resources used in roasts on the online forum r/RoastMe?

In order to address this question, a corpus of 33 posts and 165 comments was collected and analysed using an adapted version of the GTVH. The dataset consists of 33 posts and five comments from each of these posts. In order to delimit the selection, the posts and the comments were sorted with Reddit's own sorting tools for popularity. This was used to collect the most popular posts and the most popular comments made on those posts. The process of analysing this data was to consider each comment for the individual knowledge resources and mark them with any subcategories that were deemed applicable. This is the basis of the results of this study and the foundation of the discussion.

2 Theoretical framework

This chapter covers the relevant theoretical fields to the study and for the analysis of r/RoastMe. Section 2.1 concerns politeness and impoliteness theory. Section 2.2 outlines the General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH). Section 2.3 introduces some of the theories related to computer-mediated communication (CMC) and dialogism.

2.1 Politeness and impoliteness theory

In this section, pragmatics is briefly defined before discussing politeness theory and impoliteness theory. Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness framework is presented as well as Grice's Maxims (Grice, 1975). This section also introduces Culpeper's (1996) impoliteness theory.

Pragmatics can be said to deal with “meaning that the speakers’ needs to co-construct and negotiate along with the listener within a given cultural context and given the social constraints” (Ishihara & Cohen, 2014, p. 5). In other words, language usage is influenced by the given context and by the communicative wants and needs of the speakers and listeners within that context.

Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness framework has been highly influential within politeness theory. Two important terms within their framework are “face” and “face threatening acts” (FTAs). Brown and Levinson also describe the following politeness strategies: bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off record.

The term face relates to a person's public self-image, and is split into negative face and positive face. Negative face concerns the “freedom of action and freedom from imposition” (p. 61). Positive face relates to “the positive consistent self-image or ‘personality’ (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants” (p. 61). Both of these kinds of face can be “lost, maintained, or enhanced” (Goffman, 1967, as cited in Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 61). For example, threats towards these aspects of face will typically result in the “loss” of face. The actions that cause such loss of face, are therefore labelled as face threatening acts.

FTAs often result from speakers prioritising communicative efficiency over maintaining their interlocutor's face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). If the speaker commits to the FTA, this leaves them with two options: committing the act either on record, or off record.

If the speaker chooses to commit the FTA on record, they may then either commit the FTA with or without redressive action. Redressive action is an attempt at counteracting the potential face damage, which is achieved by indicating that no face threat is “intended or desired” (p. 69). This redressive action leads the comments to be considered as either positively or negatively polite. However, should a person choose to commit an FTA without redressive action, their comments are considered as a bald on record strategy.

Positive politeness includes a wide range of strategies, but are typically the result of communicating that those interacting want to preserve other participants’ faces, sometimes in an explicit manner (Brown & Levinson, 1987) to ensure the participant’s social acceptance. It is then a result of the participating parties being in agreement that their positive faces should be upheld and of making the necessary modifications to their statements to appease them. Strategies that exercise positive politeness are also typically employed to indicate an interest in becoming closer to the listener through establishing common ground, which makes these strategies capable of functioning as a “social accelerator” (p. 103). This also makes these strategies essential for amicable conversation.

There are also a wide range of strategies for negative politeness, which typically deal with redressive action aimed towards another participant’s negative face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). According to Brown and Levinson, this type of politeness is typical in Western cultures, stating that “In our culture, negative politeness is the most elaborate and the most conventionalized set of linguistic strategies for FTA redress” (p. 130). Unlike positive politeness, negative politeness typically maintains a distance between the participants, and it does not have the same accelerating effect on the socialisation of the participants.

Off record refers to a communicative act that is “done in such a way that it is not possible to attribute only one clear communicative intention to the act” (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 211). These are a part of indirect uses of language, and leaves the speaker with possible interpretations of their statement that do not necessarily cause a loss of face. In other words, the speaker may commit an FTA, but they do not necessarily have to commit to the responsibilities of having done so.

The bald on record strategy within Brown and Levinson’s framework can be considered to function within Grice’s Maxims (Grice, 1975). The four maxims are quality, quantity, manner, and relation. The quality maxim requires the speech to be true, either by not saying something that is fake or something where the speaker lacks evidence to support their statement. The quantity maxim relates to the amount of information provided by the speaker, requiring that no more or less information than necessary is provided. The manner maxim

concerns how something is said, and requires the speaker to be clear in their speech, avoiding obscure expressions, and that the speech is brief and orderly. The relation maxim concerns the relevance of what the speaker says. These maxims all relate to the bald on record strategy, as it is typically employed whenever the speaker prioritises communicative efficiency (which can be considered as the sum of the maxims) over the listener's face. However, it may also be that the face threat is irrelevant to the speaker, or that being explicitly forward causes less face threat by implication.

Regarding positive politeness and negative politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987), considerations are made towards the social familiarity between the participants, which in this context relates to a social and interpersonal understanding of "distance". Considerations are also made towards the power differences, which would be relations such as employees talking to their bosses, or students talking to their teachers. Brown and Levinson (1987) consider distance to range from distant (strangers), to close (know each other well). However, Spencer-Oatley (1996) found that there was little consensus among linguists about how close relationships may be distinguished from distant ones, or how power differences between participants are marked or practised. For power, it is a matter of the degree that which the speaker may impose on other participants without the need to redress.

A third factor that affects the politeness strategies that a speaker can choose is the degree of imposition (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This term relates to how much, for instance, a request may impact others. For example, borrowing another person's car is a higher degree of imposition than opening a window. In combination with power and distance, degree of imposition is part of deciding the amount of redressive action that is necessary to achieve polite speech.

One of the criticisms of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory is that it assumes that speakers strive to be polite. Impoliteness theory (Culpeper, 1996) was therefore proposed as a response to politeness theory. In Culpeper's impoliteness theory, inherent impoliteness and mock impoliteness are explored before some examples of impoliteness super-strategies are given. The super-strategies are: bald on record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, sarcasm/mock politeness, and withholding politeness.

Inherent impoliteness concerns acts that cannot be amended to become polite (Culpeper, 1996). In other words, by highlighting a topic or action in conversation, the damage has already been done to the positive face and cannot be reversed through redressive action. Mock impoliteness is also called banter (Culpeper, 1996), and is concerned with impoliteness that only remains on a surface level. It is understood by the participants to have

no real intent to cause offence. For mock impoliteness to occur, it is also necessary that the FTA is understood by the listener to be untrue.

Bald on record impoliteness indicates that “the FTA is performed in a direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way in circumstances where face is not irrelevant or minimised” (Culpeper, 1996, p. 356). This means that the FTA is intended to cause a loss of face, and that the speaker knows that face is a relevant factor. With this strategy, there are also no attempts made to redress face.

Positive impoliteness theory accounts for the strategies that are intended to damage another’s positive face (Culpeper, 1996). This can be done by failing to acknowledge someone’s presence, through exclusion, disassociation, by being disinterested, using inappropriate identity markers, or by being secretive in choice of words. It can also be done by knowingly choosing sensitive topics, by making others uncomfortable, through taboo words, or using derogatory terms. These are the examples that Culpeper (1996) lists, but there is potential for other strategies to exist.

For negative impoliteness, it is a matter of intentionally infringing on their freedom to act (Culpeper, 1996). This may be done by frightening others, by being condescending, scorning or ridiculing, or by invading the space of another. Typical for strategies in this super-strategy group is that they often concern the matter of relative power. Highlighting the power difference or acting upon it serves to restrict the freedom of action or threaten the freedom from imposition that Brown & Levinson (1987) mention regarding negative face.

Sarcasm or mock politeness is another one of Culpeper’s (1996) super-strategies. In this case, the FTA is “performed with the use of politeness strategies that are obviously insincere” (p. 356). In other words, the FTA masquerades as a polite statement, with the intention of being impolite.

The last of Culpeper’s (1996) super-strategies is withholding politeness. This strategy relies on not providing the expected politeness work in situations where it would be expected. Culpeper uses the example of not providing thanks when receiving a gift as a case of withholding politeness, since it may be considered deliberately impolite by the gift-giving party.

2.2 General Theory of Verbal Humor

This section explains the General Theory of Verbal Humor and each of the Knowledge Resources within it. Additionally, the hierarchy of these Knowledge Resources is elaborated upon.

Scholars have attempted to operationalise humour in several ways, one of which is Attardo and Raskin's (1991) General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH). This was developed as a revised version of Raskin's (1985) Semantic Script Theory of Humor (SSTH), to "emphasize the fact that it is supposed to account, in principle, for any type of humorous text" (Attardo, 1994, p. 222). By broadening the scope, the GTVH aimed to include other areas that the SSTH did not cover, such as pragmatics. The SSTH laid the foundation by introducing one of the six Knowledge Resources (KR), while the remaining five were presented in the GTVH (Attardo, 1994). The KR introduced by the SSTH is script opposition (SO), and the additions made by the GTVH are language (LA), narrative strategy (NS), target (TA), situation (SI), and logical mechanism (LM) (see chapter 4 for a full description of how these knowledge resources were operationalised for this study). These categories are used to analyse how humour manifests in language in particular.

The script opposition (SO) deals with the compatibility of the scripts as they interact to form a joke (Raskin, 1985). In the SSTH, this is further elaborated as the necessity of the scripts to be interpretable, with two different scripts, and that scripts must pose some kind of negation or opposition to each other, such as "real/unreal" (Ruch, Attardo & Raskin, 1993, p. 124). It is considered as the most abstract of the KRs (Attardo, 1994) along with LM.

Logical mechanism (LM) is the parameter responsible for how the scripts are combined (Attardo, 1994). This can also be described as the joke's internal logic, and it is often the case that the logic does not function outside of the joke. Examples within this parameter include juxtaposition and false analogies (or Garden-Path phenomena). Juxtaposition accounts for cases where opposing pieces of information are supplied. The specific example given by Attardo is "Gobi Desert Canoe Club" (p. 125), where the juxtaposition is created from it being impossible to canoe in the desert. For the false analogies it relates to priming the reader or listener to make the wrong conclusion before delivering the punchline. The example Attardo gives is "Madonna does not have one, the Pope has one but doesn't use it, Bush has a short one, and Gorbachev has a long one. What is it? Answer: a last name." (p. 125). The joke here prepares the reader to come to a different conclusion, making the joke depend on the subversion.

The situation (SI) parameter is concerned with what the topic of the joke is built upon (Attardo, 1994). This could be considered to be the “props” that the joke requires to function. These props may be the objects or participants required to tell the joke, but the reliance on this parameter varies. Some jokes require more props, while others will barely use them. However, at least one or more props are always needed for a joke.

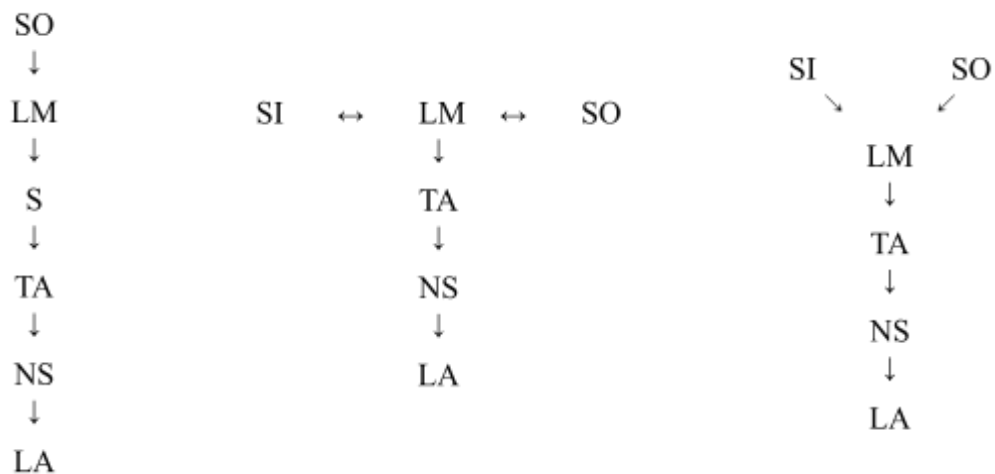
Target (TA) refers to the people or groups that the joke is targeting (Attardo, 1994). This parameter has the potential to be empty, as jokes do not necessarily target anyone. Within the GTVH, this parameter would then be filled by naming the groups or individuals the joke is using as part of its punchline, and often relies on stereotypical targets.

Narrative strategy (NS) is an abstract parameter within the GTVH, accounting for the joke’s narrative organisation (Attardo, 1994). Attardo states the following as examples: “either as a simple (framed) narrative, as a dialogue (question and answer), as a (pseudo-)riddle, as an aside in a conversation” (p. 124). It may be considered as a form of “genre” for the joke. The parameter may also be reduced to examples like dialogue or riddles.

The language (LA) parameter refers to the linguistic aspects of a text that create humour (Attardo, 1994). It is responsible for any linguistic components in the text at any level. This means that the parameter accounts for both phonological and morphological elements, as well as grammatical elements. Additionally, this parameter also covers elements within semantics and pragmatics. This parameter is also considered to be responsible for the placement of the punch line (Attardo, 1994) within the text, as this positioning impacts the joke as a whole.

The GTVH also introduces a hierarchy for these parameters, and orders them as: SO > LM > SI > TA > NS > LA (Attardo & Raskin, 1991), based on their relation to other KRs. Essentially, the choices made in a parameter further up the hierarchical ladder will affect the following parameters (Attardo, 1994). This hierarchy was also meant to predict the similarity of jokes, which gained partial support from Ruch, Attardo and Raskin (1993). However, they found the hierarchy to need some restructuring by placing SI on the same level as SO, even though the general trend was still observable in favour of the initial hierarchy. Figure 1 shows the possible hierarchies mentioned by Ruch, Attardo and Raskin (1993).

Figure 1. The linear hierarchy, the “T” model, and the “Y” model of verbal humour



2.3 Computer-mediated communication

December (1997, as cited in Thurlow, Lengel & Tomic, 2004) defined computer-mediated communication (CMC) as “a process of human communication via computers, involving people, situated in particular contexts, engaging in processes to shape media for a variety of purposes” (p. 15). Terms covered in this section include interpersonal dynamics, group dynamics, and dialogism. The section also elaborates on how CMC can be viewed as different from in-person communication.

According to Thurlow, Lengel and Tomic (2004), CMC is accused of being asocial and antisocial. CMC can be considered to be asocial because the quality of communication is reduced by the restrictions imposed by the medium, such as limited word counts. CMC can be considered to be antisocial because it reduces the quality of communication by negatively impacting offline communication and relationships. However, the opposing view to these accusations is that the internet can “lead to new, and even better, social relationships, with people communicating across geographical interests and concerns” (Thurlow, Lengel & Tomic, 2004 p. 63). This way of viewing the interpersonal dynamics of CMC likens it to physical, face-to-face communication, and considers these modes to be equal as people become accustomed to CMC and develop new ways of communicating through the available methods.

Thurlow, Lengel and Tomic (2004) also consider many of the factors that impact offline group dynamics to be at play in CMC. This concerns both the positive and negative aspects, and includes “anonymity, disinhibition, deindividuation, polarization, conformity,

cohesion, interactivity and identity” (p. 86). The form of anonymity present in CMC does not mean that the person is unidentifiable, because a person may be known by a pseudonym. This makes them identifiable within a group or forum, but it does not identify them outside of the group. However, it is exactly this anonymity that offers great freedom, both from constraints and from responsibility, often leading to less concern or embarrassment for themselves when people speak their mind online.

Newhagen and Rafaeli (1996) propose five major technical qualities of the internet, which they consider to set CMC apart from typical face-to-face communication. The first one of these is packet switching, which refers to CMC being an uncontrollable type of communication and the systems that enable the communication included within CMC. The second is that of sensory appeal, which refers to CMC having gradually become more multimodal. The third technical quality relates to interactivity, whereby CMC is a very responsive or reflexive form of communication. The fourth point concerns synchronicity, which refers to CMC being high-paced, but without necessarily being immediate. In other words, CMC enables communication to take place almost instantly, or it can take place minutes, hours or even days later while still functioning as if it were immediate. The final point concerns hypertextuality, which refers to CMC’s potential to be a non-linear form of communication. In practice, hypertextuality refers to links that are included as part of the text that can then refer readers to other sources of information. However, in response to Newhagen and Rafaeli (1996), Thurlow, Lengel and Tomic (2004) argue that CMC is relatively similar to face-to-face communication. In many cases, CMC is just as ordinary in people’s lives as face-to-face communication is. Thus, while Newhagen and Rafaeli’s distinctions are useful, many of the elements present in face-to-face communication are also present in CMC.

These terms relate to the notion of dialogism, as the communication enabled by CMC cannot be considered as monologic. Writing is sometimes mistakenly considered to be monologic, and the immediacy of written CMC underscores this misconception. Dialogism is the concept that “Everything means, is understood, as part of a greater whole - there is a constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others.” (Bahktin, 2010, p. 426). As dialogue unfolds, it is understood in its immediate context and has the potential to change in meaning between the users. To what degree the participants of the dialogue affect each other is decided in the given instance of speech.

Bahktin (2010), also explores the concept of dialogue, and states that “A word, discourse, language or culture undergoes ‘dialogization’ when it becomes relativized,

de-privileged, aware of competing definitions for the same things” (p. 427). Another way of describing this is; the awareness that the language constantly develops with its use. This is opposed to an underdialogized language, where the language is completely unchangeable based on authoritative choices for definitions.

3 Previous studies

This chapter introduces the Reddit platform and covers some of the previous studies about the subreddit relevant to this study.

3.1 Roasting and reddit

This section introduces the r/RoastMe forum on Reddit, and covers some of the preceding forms of roasting that came before r/RoastMe. Additionally, this section explains the process of roasting on the page

Poppi and Dynel (2020) describe Reddit as an international platform driven by user content. Within the page, users may find subreddits which function as forums with independent topics of discussion and with their own communicative practices. According to Metrics For Reddit (2022), there were over 3.3 million subreddits as of the 25th of February 2022. The RoastMe subreddit stands at 2.3 million users, and was created in April 2015 (Reddit, 2022).

Roasting, according to Dynel and Poppi (2019) was popularised by American television shows, and according to Kasunic and Kaufman (2018), it may trace its origins to the 20th century. These would typically take places in clubs and organisations, and target a particular guest of honour. These jokes were understood to be made without the intention to cause offence, and considered to be good-natured jokes. When the practice extended into televised broadcasts, the target often became celebrities.

On r/RoastMe however, the roast takes on a different format. Kasinuc and Kaufman (2018) describe the process in detail. First, the target (the roastee) posts a photo of themselves onto the subreddit, which other users can read and comment on. The comments made by other users are typically intended to roast the poster. The key to this interaction, which sets it apart from the preceding roasting formats, is that the users roasting the target are strangers. In the preceding formats like the televised roasts, the roasters would typically be friends or colleagues, someone that the target knows. On the subreddit, commenters may only be familiar with the poster's pseudonym and their image. Kasunic and Kaufman point out that the r/RoastMe format introduces an unusual and interesting set of behaviour and norms within the online sphere.

3.2 Previous findings

Previous studies have investigated the socio-pragmatics features of the roasts and the norms of the r/RoastMe forum. This section reviews studies of the r/RoastMe forum that are relevant to this study.

Kasunic and Kaufman (2018) aimed to “understand [users’] motivations for participating, their experiences in the subreddit, and their perceptions of their and other members' participation”. Amongst their findings was that the participants of the r/RoastMe community were norm-abiding, even though the forum’s norms may be considered, by non-members, to be subversive. Users do not seek to cause harm to their targets of humour, but instead “operate under non-traditional norms for photographic self-presentation and audience reception” (p. 169). Kasunic and Kaufman (2018) also consider their findings to be able to inform new investigations into similarly disparate communities.

Taking a more sociological approach, Dynel and Poppi (2019) aimed to “give a socio-pragmatic account of RoastMe against the backdrop of scholarship on humour and impoliteness” (Dynel & Poppi, 2019) They found that the participants of the subreddit engage in ritual insults, and practise mock impoliteness and offence. They consider the comments to practise an overt pretence in regards to insults, aggression, and face-threat. In other words, these acts are feigned on the subreddit, and should not be considered as intended to cause offence to the target of the roast.

In a separate study, Poppi and Dynel (2020) aimed to investigate sexist humour on the r/RoastMe page. Poppi and Dynel (2020) found that roasters were more concerned about making their comments creative or funny, rather than focusing on sexual features. They found that comments could “echo dominant sexist ideologies about women” (p. 448). Despite this, they do not believe the roasts should necessarily be considered as sexist or misogynistic. Even if comments can be interpreted as being sexist, this should not be assumed to be indicative of the roasters’ intentions.

Dynel (2021) investigated the possibility of a distinction between two types of discursive aggression. Dynel aimed to outline “a clear theoretical distinction between genuine (discursive) aggression and what is here dubbed mock/overtly pretended (discursive) aggression” (2021, p. 18). Additionally, Dynel (2021) proposed the need for a distinction between cyberbullying and roasting. This distinction is that cyberbullying is a form of genuine aggression, while roasting is a form of mock aggression. These two practices are not easily distinguished at face value, as they may both be the cause of humour for observers.

Nevertheless, unlike cyberbullying, it is never the intent of the roast to cause harm. Due to the norms of the r/Roastme forum, users can safely assume that they are the subject of roasts, not of cyberbullying.

4 Methods

This chapter describes the methodology used for this study. Section 4.1 describes the methodological approach. This is followed by section 4.2, which deals with describing the sample in section 4.2.1 and describing the data collection methods in 4.2.2. Section 4.3 elaborates on how the analysis was carried out using a modified version of the GTVH and is followed by section 4.4 dealing with the ethical considerations that were made for the study. Finally, section 4.5 discusses validity and reliability.

4.1 Methodological approach

There are two paradigms to which most methodological approaches belong: qualitative and quantitative. One definition for quantitative methods is “Quantitative measures and statistical analysis provide evidence that can be expressed in numbers over time” (McKinley & Rose, 2020, p. 111). These methods are useful when dealing with quantifiable phenomena, which often involves statistical analyses. However, these methods tend to be reductive and are limited when a study’s aim is to investigate the multi-faceted nature of the phenomenon in question. Qualitative methods, on the other hand, “provide evidence that cannot be measured in terms of numbers alone and instead provide a comprehensive narrative” (McKinley & Rose, 2020, p. 111). These methods are useful when the aim is to provide in-depth data which may enable further analysis.

For the purpose of investigating how humour manifests in insults on r/RoastMe, a qualitative approach was adopted. The aim of this study is to offer a detailed analysis of how the knowledge resources of the GTVH are used in comments on the r/RoastMe thread. Although this involves counting the number of knowledge resource subcategories in the dataset, this is done to guide the qualitative analysis. In other words, since the study only uses descriptive statistics, and not inferential statistics, the approach is not considered to be quantitative. It is of interest to investigate the different approaches employed by the commenters, and while these may be categorised, they are not so easily quantifiable. It would be possible to run a quantitative study along the same lines of how humour manifests, but it would require a greater sample size than what was realistic for this study with its limitations and time constraints. Furthermore, it would need independent and dependent variables, which

are difficult to establish before exploring the present phenomena, as is done in the present study.

4.2 Data collection methods

This section describes the sample and gives a description of the data collection methods used in this study. For the study, posts and comments were collected from the r/Roastme Reddit page. The process of collecting this data is described in this section.

The sample consists of posts and comments made on the r/RoastMe subreddit during the month of November 2021. The posts were sorted using Reddit's voting system. The Reddit voting system allows users to either "upvote" or "downvote" a post. The users who had created the 100 posts with the most upvotes as of the 30th of November were contacted to seek their consent (see section 4.4.). Of these, 33 users agreed to have their post included in the present data set. After obtaining consent, the title of the post, the image, and the top five comments were collected. Except for the image, no other person identifiable data was collected. Because the purpose of the present study is primarily to investigate the linguistic features that create humour, collecting the participants' background information was not necessary.

The background of the posters is largely unknown, with the only clues to their characteristics being their visible features from the pictures in their post. However, some posters included their age, or their occupation, as part of their title. The only shared features of the sample is that they are all users of reddit and that they use English for communication for the titles on the posts and for the majority of comments. The sample included three exceptions for the comments, as they did not include any text. Instead, these three relied on images or gifs for the delivery of their roasts.

Similarly to the procedure for sorting the posts, the five comments with the most upvotes from each post were collected. In total, the sample consisted of 33 pictures, 33 titles, and 165 comments. as the data set can be described as a convenience sample (Given, 2008). The posts were not randomly sampled, and data were collected from the relatively small number of users who gave their consent.

For this study, the choice was made to only collect the text and images as is from the subreddit. The posters consented to have their images included in the study before they were collected, but after the posts were made. The comments were collected anonymously. As such, no consent was necessary for the comments. The 33 posts, 33 images and 165

comments would represent the subreddit accurately, and without interference. A note was made of the post's traction on the forum and this sorting became the basis of the posts' given number for organisatory purposes.

The data was organised in spreadsheets using Microsoft Excel, with the exception of the pictures. These were saved separately on password protected hardware without internet connection. The comments were paired with their corresponding titles from the original posts, and put into forms for analysis with pre-determined categories. These categories are described in section 4.3.1. Some of the comments employed fairly unconventional formatting choices. It was not possible to import these directly into the spreadsheets, and they were instead made note of for the analysis stage. This included paragraph breaks and other spacing choices made in the comment. In the case where the comments were not textual, and instead images or other non-text based modes of communications, they were saved alongside the pictures. Additionally, descriptions of the non-text based comments were compiled, though they were not necessary for the analysis stage.

4.3 Data analysis methods

The analysis was conducted using a modified version of Attardo and Raskin's (1991) General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH). This included adding subcategories to the framework's existing knowledge resources, or adapting the function of some of them. This section provides a full description of the subcategories that were used in the analysis and a table with a brief description and an example.

4.3.1 Adaptation of the GTVH

The General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) is a framework that aims to account for the textual resources that are used to create humour (see section 2). For the purposes of this analysis, the GTVH was modified. This involved adding several subcategories in order to account for the expected differences between the initial framework and the roasting format of the subreddit. Additions were made according to results from a pilot study. Additionally, the hierarchy of the KRs is adopted as a potential order that the roasts are created in. This study adopts the "Y" model (see Figure 1). This point is discussed in section 6.

A pilot study was conducted before the full analysis in order to test the data analysis methods. This involved analysing 3 comments from 14 posts, amounting to a total of 42

comments. This pilot study was also part of deciding the size of the sample that the study would aim to attain, as well as deciding the amount of comments to take from each post and the decision to not include comment threads.

Table 1 shows the categories and subcategories that were used for the present analysis.

Table 1. List of categories and subcategories

Category	Subcategories
Script opposition	Picture, both, title
Situation	x
Logical mechanism	Truth value, reference, juxtaposition, garden-path
Target	Poster, other
Narrative strategy	Statement, comparison, question, implicature, answer, compliment, command
Language	Pragmatics, semantics, lexical, syntax, morphology, phonology

The script opposition (SO) category refers to the setup of the roast. For the purpose of this analysis, the opposing parts of the script are deemed to be the interaction between the comment and the material provided by the poster. In other words, the opposition is what the comment interacts with. A comment can either interact with the picture or the title of the post, or it could interact with both, relying on the information from the picture and the title together. Therefore, this knowledge resource was divided into the subcategories of picture, title, and both, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The script opposition category

Subcategory	Description	Example comment
Picture	Relies on the picture	<i>Fair to say, you've aged like milk on a radiator.</i>
Title	Relies on the title	<i>They probably celebrated when you quit.</i>
Both	Relies on the picture and the title	<i>First "horse girl" to actually have a hoof.</i>

The knowledge resource situation (SI) refers to the information or props supplied by the post or the comment. This is the only category that could not be split into subcategories, as each post-comment interaction relies on a different situation. While a more traditional joke would usually be told using only words, objects in the images were often referred to in the comments. As roasts rely on the setup being delivered by the poster and the punchline (the roast itself) being delivered by the commenter, the category was split into the situation of the post and the situation of the comment. The situation of the comment was further split into given and assumed information, as shown in Table 3.

The given information describes whether the post or comment functioned on information that was being provided. Assumed information is when the commenter makes assumptions of the reader's preexisting knowledge. The situation of the post includes the information being supplied by the title and the picture that the comment then is making use of. Meanwhile, the situation of the comment typically relies on the reader being aware of additional information the comment refers to. It may also give additional information that the post did not include, or information from the post itself that the reader may have missed, or that the comment wishes to underline further for comedic effect.

Table 3. The situation category

	Subcategory	Description
Post	Given	Information given by the post
	Assumed	Information assumed by the post
Comment	Given	Information given by the comment
	Assumed	Information assumed by the comment

The narrative strategy (NS) category refers to how the roast is expressed. This category saw some additions, but retained some subcategories as listed in Ruch, Attardo and Raskin (1993), such as question and answer. However, the answer subcategory was adapted to fit the format of the roasts. A comment was categorised as answer when it is structured to respond directly to the post. Several additions were also made to this category, as the roasts exhibited a different setup form than of a more typical joke with a setup and a punchline. The new categories are: statement, comparison, compliment, command, and implicature. The statement subcategory concerns comments where the roast is expressed in a forthright manner. The comparison subcategory accounts for comments where the target is compared to a specific person, a fictional character, a type of person, or a group of people. The compliment subcategory accounts for cases where the commenter is seemingly offering praise to the poster. However, compliments made in the comments are typically considered as mock politeness, as the compliment is usually intended to be sarcastic. The command subcategory accounts for comments where the poster is instructed to carry out an action. The implicature subcategory concerns comments that state one idea, but seem to imply something else. An overview of the subcategories is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. The narrative strategy category

Subcategory	Description	Example
Statement	The comment is forthright	<i>It's not an internship, it's an education center for slow adults but they don't want to tell you</i>
Comparison	The target is compared	<i>You look like an infant wearing a fake beard and wig</i>
Question	A question is posed	<i>Do you keep ordering from Amazon just so the delivery person will talk to you?</i>
Compliment	A sarcastic compliment	<i>I am impressed with how the weight of your breasts have managed to stretch out all of the wrinkles in your face!</i>
Answer	The structure is prompted by the post	<i>And the tentacle dildo in your drawer.</i>
Command	The comment directs the poster	<i>Bro, shave that forehead mustache.</i>
Implicature	The comment is not forthright	<i>I'm betting that condom you got in high school is still in your wallet.</i>

The target (TA) category refers to the KR that covers who the roast is targeting. In much the same way that a joke would have a person or a group be the target, roasts require a target to function. The primary target is always the poster. However, roasts may also target another person or group. The other subcategory was added to account for these instances. This would not mean that it is only other targets than the poster being attacked, but rather that there are other targets as well. The other subcategory are cases where another person or group is targeted by the roast. The two subcategories are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. The target category

Subcategory	Description	Example
Poster	The poster is targeted	<i>They probably celebrated when you quit.</i>
Other	Someone else is targeted	<i>No Plan B? Your mom had the same problem, unfortunately.*</i>

*Example of other is also targeting the poster

The logical mechanism (LM) category refers to the type of reasoning that the roast relies on. For the analysis, it retained two categories from Ruch, Attardo & Raskin's (1993) taxonomy. These were garden-path and juxtaposition (see section 2). Two other categories were added: reference and truth value. The reference subcategory accounts for comments that deal with referential material for the roast. The truth value subcategory concerns comments that rely on the truthfulness of the comment for their humour. The truth value subcategory can be said to relate to Grice's Maxim of Quality (Grice, 1975) as the subcategory concerns the truthfulness of the comments, even though the framing of the roasts are far from polite. Both of the additions were also included to have the possibility of being "full" or "partial", in the cases where a text based reference is delivered in its entirety, or in the case where truth value could be deemed entirely true. However, no occurrence of "full" occurred for reference in the sample, and no justification could be made for a "full" truth value, leaving the additional categorisation redundant. An overview of the logical mechanism category is shown in Table 6.

Table 6. The logical mechanism category

Subcategory	Description	Example
Reference (full)	Word by word reference	<i>It puts the lotion on it's skin or else it gets the hose again*</i>
Reference (partial)	Referential text	<i>Why the long tits?</i>
Garden-path	The comment has a twist	<i>Put down that piece of paper, and then pick it up again. Do this about 50 times a day and in no time you will get some mosquito bumps on those bacon strips you call biceps.</i>
Truth value (full)	The comment is undeniably true	<i>x</i>
Truth value (partial)	The comment is partly true	<i>Your nose is a skaters dream.</i>
Juxtaposition	Relies on opposing elements	<i>Really cute that your parents told you it was an internship so the other kids don't bully you at juice time</i>

*An example from the pilot study, not from the sample

The language resource (LA) category refers to the linguistic choices that the commenter makes in formulating the roast. The language resource (LA) remained fairly broad, relying on Attardo & Raskin's (1991, as cited in Krikmann, 2006) description of including "all the choices at the phonetic, phonologic, morphophonemic, morphologic, lexic, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic levels of language structure that the speaker is still free to make, given that everything else in the joke is already given and cannot be tinkered with" (p. 298). These groupings were simplified slightly, and became; phonology, morphology, lexical, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. The phonology subcategory concerns comments that rely on sound elements. The morphology subcategory relies on suffixes and prefixes. The lexical subcategory relies on word choices, and the syntax subcategory relies on grammatical elements. The semantics subcategory is dependent upon word meaning, and the pragmatics subcategory relies on the context. Table 7 shows the subcategories in the language category.

Table 7. The language category

Subcategory	Description	Example
Pragmatics	Relies on the context	<i>You look like a private detective who blew his entire surveillance budget installing hidden toilet cameras at all the local gas stations.</i>
Semantics	Relies on word meaning	<i>You are a genuine snipers dream</i>
Lexical	Relies on word choices	<i>Go-Go-Gadget female repellent</i>
Syntax	Relies on grammatical elements	<i>Take me down to Paradise City where the grass is green and the girls look nothing like Axl Rose.</i>
Morphology	Relies on suffixes or prefixes	<i>Johnny Bravon t*</i>
Phonology	Relies on sound elements	<i>Jethro Bieber</i>

*An example from the pilot study, not from the sample

4.3.2 Data organisation and analysis

In order to analyse the data using the adapted GTVH framework, the data were entered into an Excel file. The data were organised according to the post that the comments belonged to. The images were stored separately from the posts and comments on password-protected hardware without access to the internet. The information was compiled into a spreadsheet,

and ordered in accordance to the number they were collected in from the posters that were contacted. To prepare the comments for illustration and further analysis based on their categories, the comments had their five categorisable knowledge resources (LA, NS, TA, LM, and SO) exported into new spreadsheets for the analysis. This was done as the original formats they were processed in proved impossible for the spreadsheet to read the data when attempting to make illustrations and tables.

The comments were considered in combination with the title and picture of the post that the comment originated from. Each comment was categorised for all of the six knowledge resources, and some of the posts were considered more than once if there was any reason for uncertainty. Following this, analysis was made based on the frequency with which the various subcategories occurred from the whole dataset. This was done both in regard to how the subcategories occurred independently of the other subcategories for a given comment, as well as considering the combination of the knowledge resources together. Analysis was primarily done on the dataset as a whole, but some occurrences unique to specific posts were also made note of. Further note was also made of comments that proved to be unique in some way, either from individual subcategories or from a combination of subcategories.

4.4 Ethical considerations

As the study involved collected images in which participants are identifiable, it was registered with the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD, 2022). In order to collect the data, participants needed to give their consent. This was obtained through Reddit's direct messaging system using the researcher's personal account. In the consent message the purpose of the study is explained to the participants. The message also described how the data would be used and stored, and they were informed about how to withdraw from the study. These messages are included in Appendix B. Additionally, any personal information was stored on password-protected hardware without access to the internet to ensure the personal information would not be accessed by other parties.

The forum does not allow people under the age of 18 to post images to submit for roasting, so all participants were old enough to give their consent. Only the posters were the people represented in most of the pictures. Where the exceptions occurred of multiple people appearing in a picture, consent was granted from all parties that appeared in the picture through Reddit's direct messaging system. While all the participants agreed to let their image

be included in the data set, only some users agreed to have their images published in the thesis.

The messages sent out to the participants include an initial contact message before the full consent message was sent. To ensure that consent would be as easy for the participants to retract as it was to give, the account used to reach out to the participants remains active, and participants were informed that they could use that account to contact the researcher. Additional contact details were also given in the full consent message, in case the participants wished to make contact via e-mail. The email of the University of Stavanger's Data Protection Officer was also included.

4.5 Validity and Reliability

Validity can be defined as involving “close scrutiny of logical arguments and the empirical evidence to determine whether they support theoretical claims.” (Taylor, 2013, p. 2). This is typically split into two types of validity: internal and external. Internal validity refers to that “Researchers must support their claims that the results of their investigations are attributable to the expected relationships among the identified variables in their investigations” (Taylor, 2013, p. 11). The data collected for this study were created on a popular internet forum, not under research conditions, and can therefore be considered to have a high level of internal validity.

External validity refers to “the degree to which results of investigations can be generalised beyond a specific investigations” (Taylor, 2013, p. 14). Although the data set is relatively small, the data are considered to be relatively representative of the forum's typical user base. While some posts and comments may be removed because of content moderation made by the platform and the forum itself, this occurs on all forums on the platform and is not considered to be a detriment to the external validity of the study. Any study that would work with data collected from Reddit would be subject to this restriction. The sample size should be sufficient to provide a certain level of external validity, but considering the forum has over 3 million posts, this is limited. Some trends on the page may change with time and distributions of the subcategories may change, but that is not to this study's detriment. This study only concerns itself with understanding how humour is achieved on the page at the moment the data was collected, as the shifting nature of internet trends may sway future samples in different directions.

Reliability concerns the “consistency of human ratings” (Robinson, 2012, p. 342). In order to achieve reliability, the adapted version of the GTVH was utilised. The GTVH is a well-established theory of humour and has been applied for analysis purposes in a number of other previous studies (Archakis & Tsakona, 2005; Attardo, 2002; Danmanik & Mulyadi, 2020; Hempelmann & Ruch, 2005; Le, 2022). In order to ensure that the present adaptation of the GTVH was reliable, a randomised set of 24 comments from the sample was analysed by the researcher and this study’s supervisor in order to achieve inter-rater reliability (Robinson, 2012). Although standard measures like Cohen’s Kappa (Robinson, 2012) are typically used to calculate inter-rater reliability, the non-binary nature of the GTVH categories precluded the use of such a measure. Instead, the number of items on which the raters agreed was calculated. To do this, 24 comments were randomly selected. From these comments, 120 subcategories were considered. The situation KR was not included in this analysis, as it cannot be categorised in the same manner as the other KRs. From these, there was agreement on 98 subcategories (59,4%) before discussion, and 111 subcategories (67,3%) after discussion. The disagreements in the SO category were 10 before discussion and four after. In the LM category there were five disagreements before the discussion and three after the discussion. For the TA category, there was only one disagreement before discussion, which was resolved in the discussion. In the NS category there were six disagreements before the discussion and two after. The language category had no disagreements. The disagreements that were resolved were a consequence of presenting how the analysis of the comment was done, and concluding if the agreement skewed towards one analysis over the other. Additionally, the resolved disagreements consisted mostly of differences in interpretation of the post or comment. The cases where no resolution could be met were also considered as differences in interpretation.

5 Results

This chapter presents the results of the analysis in two parts. The first part presents the trends that were found related to each of the individual categories of the adapted GTVH. The second part presents a full analysis of five posts to represent the full process of analysis.

5.1 Knowledge Resource frequencies and examples

This part presents the results from each of the knowledge resources (KRs). Each subsection presents the relevant frequencies of each of the knowledge resource subcategories. The frequencies often illustrate the main trends with examples and explanations. Not all of these tables will total to 165, since some of the comments are considered to belong to more than one subcategory per KR. Additionally, the posts are numbered from 1-33, and the comments are numbered from 1-5 for the examples in this chapter and chapter 6. For example, post 18 is referred to as P18 and the fifth comment of this post is referred to as C18,5 (post 18, comment 5).

5.1.1 Script opposition

The script opposition (SO) category covers the subcategories that detail what part of the post the comments interact with. There were 164 comments that were considered to belong to one of the subcategories, but one post could not be considered part of any of them and was noted as NA in the analysis. Table 8 presents the overview of the subcategories.

Table 8. Results for the script opposition category

Subcategory	Quantity	Percentage
Picture	102	61.8
Both	51	6.7
Title	11	30.9
NA	1	0.6
Total	165	100.0

The picture subcategory included 102 comments. These comments relied exclusively on information shown in the post's picture:

Figure 2. Image from post 18



P18: I'm 24 and this is my loungewear, roast me

C18,5: So this is what happened to Sylar when Heroes series got canceled.

Figure 3. Image from post 9



P9: I think I'm ready for this. Give it to me.

C9,4: You look like you'd suck dick for a pack of Newports and suboxone

In these comments the post's text is not referred to, and the roast is made with information from the picture alone.

The both subcategory accounts for 51 of the comments, relied on the picture and the title to function:

Figure 4. Image from post 14



P14: (19M) Dorky virgin. Annihilate my existence!

C14,1: Your face is so shiny. Now I understand where extra virgin oil comes from.

C14,5: Fair to say, you've aged like milk on a radiator.

In comment 14,1 the important aspect of the picture from the roast is highlighted in the comment as well as citing words from the title. The reference to the title in comment 14,5 is more subtle, as it contrasts the poster's age from the title with their visual appearance.

In the title subcategory there were 11 comments. These all relied exclusively on the title in some way, as can be seen in comment 10,2. This comment as it is not observed to make use of any information from the picture and relies entirely on the title to create the roast:

Figure 5. Image from post 10

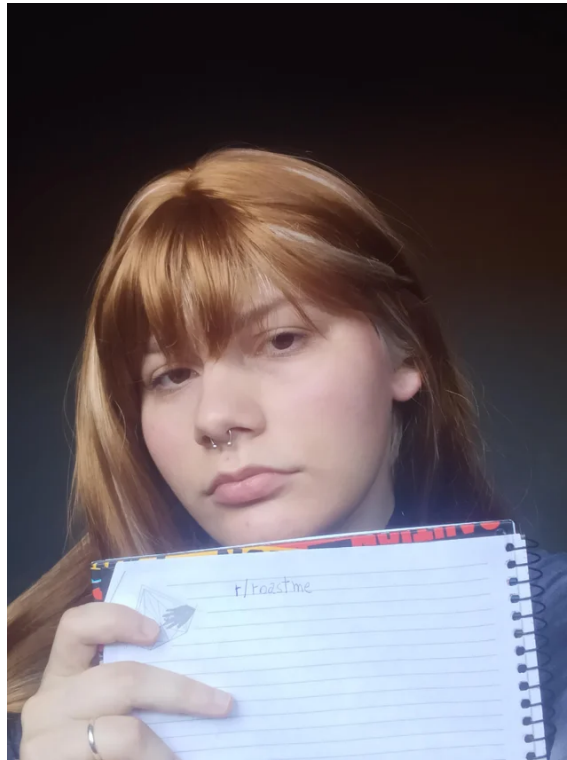


P10: Quit a job that I hated and am feeling too good about it. Bring me down to earth you peasants.

C10,2: They probably celebrated when you quit.

Comment 16,5 is also part of the answer subcategory from NS, but the comment is observed to take a more direct approach to using the information from the title. This comment is additionally observed as answer:

Figure 6. Image from post 16



P16: 18f| the only thing bigger than the dark circles under my eyes is the disappointment i am

C16,5: And the tentacle dildo in your drawer.

Neither of these comments rely on the picture for the roast to function. Instead, they only utilise information from the title.

One comment relied on information that was not given in the title or the image, relying instead on the post's traction on the subreddit:

C18,4: Seems like 70 comments is a bit low for being posted 6 hours ago. You can't even get people to give you negative attention.

This post was therefore categorised as NA in the analysis, as it was not observed to make use of any of the other subcategories. This occurrence of NA can also be considered an occurrence of metadata.

5.1.2 Situation

This category is not quantifiable in the same way that the other KRs are, and does not include any subcategories for this analysis. However, in the majority of comments, the roast relies on information given by the post, as illustrated in the following comments:

C23,3: Jesus dude, could you please get Adam out of your throat?

C24,1: Stunt double for weird AI?

These comments rely on the given information by the post, in these cases the appearance of the poster. However, the post supplies more information than is typically used for the roast, so only the information that is used by the comment is considered props here (as mentioned in section 4.3.1). The comments also typically make some assumptions for their roasts, such as comment 23,3 assuming the reader knows what an Adam's apple is and comment 24,1 assuming the reader knows what Weird AI looks like.

5.1.3 Logical mechanism

Table 9 presents the frequencies of comments belonging to each logical mechanism subcategory. The truth value subcategory was observed in the comments more than the other LM subcategories.

Table 9. Results for the logical mechanism category

Subcategory	Quantity	Percentage
Truth value	143	77.3
Reference	25	13.5
Juxtaposition	10	5.4
Garden-path	7	3.8
Total	185	100.0

The truth value subcategory was seen in 143 of the comments in the sample and relies on the comment holding some degree of truth when drawing on the information from the post, as shown in the following examples:

Figure 7. Image from post 8



C8,1: Look at those finger toes. Do you walk or do you slap the ground?

Figure 8. Image from post 5



C5,3: You look like the embodiment of an ashtray at a dive bar in Tallahassee

In other words, this means that the humour can be created from the truth in the information the roast draws on. This does not mean that the information has to be entirely true, but that the information has to be rooted in a truth given in the poster's text or image. For comment 8,1 it can be said that the poster has long toes, hence the "finger toes" remark, and the poster in comment 5,3 could be said to share the appearance of people who frequent dive bars.

Reference was observed for 25 of the comments in the LM category. References were found to take a few different forms. The comments may refer to relevant events, characters, creatures or people from popular media. Comment 24,5 was made when koalas dying from chlamydia in Australia was relevant news:

C24,5: The reason all the Koalas are dying from chlamydia.

Comments 26,4 and 27,1 are examples of roasts that referred to popular characters:

C26,4: Its becker from the muppets.

C27,1: Vegan hound from GOT

Comments can also reference real people, as in comment 27,3:

C27,3: You look like a Charles Manson nobody would take seriously.

The juxtaposition subcategory was identified in 10 comments. Commenters can juxtapose information, either between the comment and the post, or exclusively within the comment. In comment 17,1, the juxtaposition comes from the interaction between the title of the post and the comment, as it juxtaposes the title asking what else the poster may be deficient in, to being told that they are “Not deficient in chromosomes”:

P17: I’m terrible at fantasy football. Tell me what else I’m deficient in

C17,1: Not deficient in chromosomes, that’s for sure.

In comments 20,3 and 5,4, the juxtaposition is arguably self-contained within the comment, but they still rely on the title to build their juxtaposition.

P20: M23, I know my beard is way overgrown, try me

C20,3: Beard? I thought you posted a pic of your hairy asshole...

P5: 18, let’s see how long it takes for someone to call me emo !

C5,4: Call you emo? It's been 18 years and you're still waiting for someone to call you at all.

However, these juxtapositions can also be completely self contained, such as in comment 7,5, where there is no direct connection between the title and the comment:

P7: 28f. roast me.

C7,5: I am impressed with how the weight of your breasts have managed to stretch out all of the wrinkles in your face!

Seven of the comments were categorised in the garden-path subcategory. These comments begin in such a way that readers’ initial interpretations are likely to be incorrect.

C31,5: Band kid turned substitute teacher turned convicted sex offender.

C16,3: Hey chin up. If you'd like I've got some contacts at the museum, they might be able to get you into a job speaking with the guests. The cave woman clothing gets a little itchy but I hear it's a great gig.

These comments tend to be longer, as with comment 16,3. However, these comments can also be as short as in comment 31,5. The length of these comments do not factor in for observing it as garden-path, in spite of the twist being necessary.

5.1.4 Target

Regarding the target (TA) knowledge resource (see Table 10), all of the comments were found to target the poster. For the comments to function as roasts they need to target the poster, which all of the comments in the sample did.

Table 10. Results for the target category

Subcategory	Quantity	Percentage
Poster	165	95.9
Other	7	4.1
Total	172	100

Some comments also target other people or groups. In order to be categorised as other, the target had to be a specific person or group. This means that in cases where the poster is compared to an object, the object is not considered a target of the roast. For example, in comment 2,3 the fictitious “teacher” is not a specific person. This is why it was not included in the “other” subcategory:

C2,3: You look like the teacher that gets the ugliest freshman girl pregnant.

In the same way, comment 14,5 cannot be said to target milk or radiators, as they are objects:

C14,5: Fair to say, you’ve aged like milk on a radiator.

There were seven posts that were categories as belonging to the “other” subcategory. In comment 5,2, a specific celebrity is, as well as the poster, the target of the roast:

C5,2: You look like slash somehow figured out how to do even more heroin

Comment 10,4 targets one of the poster’s family members in addition to the poster:

C10,4: No Plan B? Your mom had the same problem, unfortunately.

Groups can also be targeted in the comments. Comment 9,5 targets people who believe that shape-shifting lizards exist (see Rayborn, 2022):

C9,5: After seeing your picture I'm going to spend the rest of tonight apologizing to all the lizard people believers I called nuts.

5.1.5 Narrative strategy

The frequencies of each of the narrative strategy (NS) subcategories are shown in Table 11. Some of the comments were found as belonging to more than one of the subcategories. In these cases it was typically two subcategories, but there was also one occurrence where three subcategories were applicable.

Table 11. Results for the narrative strategy category

Subcategory	Quantity	Percentage
Statement	68	36.0
Comparison	41	21.7
Question	27	14.3
Implicature	25	13.2
Answer	14	7.4
Compliment	9	4.8
Command	5	2.6
Total	189	100.0

The statement subcategory accounted for 68 of the comments in the sample. These comments were often reminiscent of bald on record impoliteness (Culpeper, 1996). Comment 3,3 and 10,2 here highlight that comments in this subcategory tend not to require that readers have specialist vocabulary:

C3,3: Your max lift is a spoon of heroin and a needle

C10,2: They probably celebrated when you quit.

However, a handful of comments used esoteric terms. For example, in 31,1 the “L’s” are losses, referring to the poster’s receding hairline revealing a mole:

C31,1: I bet you didn't even know you had that big mole on your head until your hairline started receding. God really said take these two L's at once

The comparison subcategory was found to occur in 41 comments. Typically, the comments compared the poster to a type of person, a specific person, or an object. In comment 27,4, the commenter compares the poster to a type of person:

C27,4: You look like the guy who marries the town whore and is the only one in town who doesn't know it.

In comment 27,5, the comparison is made to a specific person:

C27,5: When someone makes a wish to Jesus but they get a Jesus from Wish instead.

Comment 30,1 compares the poster with an object:

C30,1: You look like a perverted soft boiled egg

The question subcategory accounted for 27 of the comments. Comments within this subcategory sometimes respond directly to the post's title, but may also point to something within the title or picture. Comment 21,2 and 25,5 are pointing to information in the picture:

C21,2: I think the fact you wrote that on the back a Mousse label tells me all I need to know. Can you even afford paper?

C25,5: Is that "wedding ring" supposed to throw us off the fact that you love pipe despite being in welding or fabrication?

Comment 25,4 is the only comment in this subcategory that did not include a question mark, using emojis instead, represented here as "[tree]":

C25,4: Are you a lumberjack [tree][tree][tree]

Comment 28,5 is interacting directly to the title of the post it is responding to:

P28: 37M / Recently Divorced--Tell Me Why She Left

C28,5: Did she leave you, or is she in the freezer?"

The third subcategory was implicature with 25 comments. Comments in this subcategory rely on the reader to interpret the meaning of the roast. Although comment 6,2 may seem to belong to the comparison subcategory, the comparison is not explicitly stated, so

it is considered to be implicature. It is also not a proper comparison, as it is not comparing the poster to the appearance of Ronald McDonald directly, but rather implying they would be involved with Ronald McDonald:

C6,2: Ronald McDonald's bitch.

In cases like comment 11,5, implicature is observed as a way for the comment to be inappropriate through innuendo:

C11,5: Your hand would be pixilated in a Japanese porno

The answer subcategory accounted for 14 of the comments. Here the comment is often interacting directly with the title of the post. Sometimes posters prompt the commenters to respond directly. In comment 30,2 the response was not prompted by the post:

P30: Roast me! I wanna be feeling the burn tenfold ;)

C30,2: Just not when the burn is at the gym

In post 28, the title asks a question, which prompts the commenters to offer their answers. The commenters responded to this prompt in four of the five comments collected from this post:

P28: 37M / Recently Divorced--Tell Me Why She Left

C28,1: Having your sex slave escape your basement doesn't count as "divorce", OP

C28,2: She fell in love with a guy with hair

C28,3: Your wife saw the fuzz on your chin and figured she didn't have to be your beard anymore

C28,5: Did she leave you, or is she in the freezer?

Some posters stated that they expected certain answers from the commenters. Post 5, for example, predicted that commenters will consider their appearance to be "emo". However, commenters perhaps found the setup to be too obvious. Only comment 5,4 responded to this prediction. Instead of fulfilling the poster's prediction, their response played on the wording of the post:

P5: 18, let's see how long it takes for someone to call me emo !

C5,4: Call you emo? It's been 18 years and you're still waiting for someone to call you at all.

Nine of the comments were categorised as belonging to the “compliment” subcategory. All of these comments relied on sarcasm to create humour, as the reader can safely assume the comment is not meant to convey a genuine compliment. In comment 7,5, the commenter expressed a positive emotional reaction (being “impressed”) to the poster’s appearance:

C7,5: I am impressed with how the weight of your breasts have managed to stretch out all of the wrinkles in your face!

In comment 33,3, the commenter describes the poster’s appearance in a positive manner (“original”):

C33,3: Using the upper lip to cover the moustache. It's original, ill give you that.

The command subcategory was only used in five comments from the sample. Comments in this subcategory instruct the poster to perform certain actions. These comments vary in length. Comment 3,5 is an example of a longer sequence of instructions:

C3,5: Put down that piece of paper, and then pick it up again. Do this about 50 times a day and in no time you will get some mosquito bumps on those bacon strips you call biceps.

The other comments in this subcategory are more concise, such as comment 15,2:

C15,2: Bro, shave that forehead mustache.

5.1.6 Language

The Language (LA) category included six subcategories, but only five of these were used in the sample. There were also three cases that could not be categorised as they were visual (two pictures and one gif). As these did not contain text, they were labelled as not applicable (NA). Table 12 presents the overview of the subcategories.

Table 12. Results for the language category

Subcategory	Quantity	Percentage
Pragmatics	107	61.1
Semantics	36	20.6
Lexical	21	12.0
Syntax	6	3.4
NA	3	1.7
Phonology	2	1.1
Morphology	0	0.0
Total	175	100.0

The pragmatics subcategory was the most frequent subcategory, occurring 107 times. The following examples show how humour stems from the given context:

Figure 9. Image from post 11



C11,3: Proof that cutting your own hair requires two hands

Figure 10. Image from post 23



C23,5: You somehow look like both a Predator and his potential victim.

This subcategory accounts for the majority of comments, which tended to rely on contextual cues in order to create humour. The pragmatics subcategory was often present alongside other subcategories:

Figure 11. Image from post 1



C1,2: Hey detective- I think "The Case of the Missing Flashlight" was an inside job.

Comment 1,2 occurs with both pragmatics and semantics, as it relies on the context of the post (in this case the picture and the poster's outfit being similar to a detective) for the pragmatics and the double entendre of "inside job" for the semantics.

Regarding semantics, 36 comments created humour by relying on the meaning of the words. Comment 21,5 is in response to the poster's image, which shows a pimple on their forehead. In this comment, "snipers dream" implies that the pimple on the poster's forehead is similar to a red dot sight from a sniper's weapon:

Figure 12. Image from post 21



C21,5: You are a genuine snipers dream.

Comment 23,3 relies on the more literal approach with the name “Adam” being part of “Adam’s apple”. In spite of the use of “Jesus”, the comment does not necessarily rely on any biblical implications in combination with “Adam”:

C23,3: Jesus dude, could you please get Adam out of your throat?

Both of these cases demonstrate how the semantics subcategory depends on the reader’s semantic knowledge.

The lexical subcategory was observed in 21 comments. One post contained a typo and four of the five comments utilised the typo as part of their roast:

P19: At my internship in the elemantary school. Roast me

C19,1: Kiddy fiddler found unable to spell elementary in Elementary School.

C19,3: It’s not an internship, it’s an education center for slow adults but they don’t want to tell you

C19,4: Really cute that your parents told you it was an internship so the other kids don't bully you at juice time

C19,5: "Elemantary" Written by someone who's never finished elementary school

All of these comments rely on the typo to make an ironic remark about the poster's intellect, contrasting with their statement that they are training to be a teacher.

Another example from the lexical subcategory is seen in comment 1,4, which makes changes to a catchphrase from Inspector Gadget, a children's cartoon show:

C1,4: Go-Go-Gadget female repellent

Comment 32,1 relies on treating the artist name "Ludacris" as the word "ludicrous", in order to play on the word "preposterous":

C32,1: Because no one wants to date Ludacris' cousin Preposterous.

The syntax subcategory occurred six times, and was either a consequence of being reliant on the title to function as a sentence, or by breaking with grammatical rules entirely. Comment 16,5 offers a continuation of the poster's sentence:

P16: 18f| the only thing bigger than the dark circles under my eyes is the disappointment i am

C16,5: And the tentacle dildo in your drawer.

Comment 17,3 follows the grammatical structure of a character description, as would be found in a character customisation screen in a video game:

C17,3: Race: Breton, Height: Minimum, Weight: Maximum, Face symmetry: No

The phonology subcategory was observed in two comments. Both of these comments depend on the sounds of words for their roast to function. Comment 10,3 relies on a rhyme:

C10,3: Instead of The Rock, you look what was left in the sock

Comment 20,1 relies on combining the names "Jethro Tull" and "Justin Bieber". This functions because of the similarity between the names "Jethro" and "Justin":

C20,1: Jethro Bieber.

Although there was one instance of the "morphology" subcategory in the pilot study data ("Johnny Bravon't", which unconventionally adds the "n't" suffix to a cartoon character's name), the morphology subcategory was not applicable to any of the comments in the main sample.

5.2 Comment analysis

This section shows the detailed analysis of five different comments. The comments have been selected in order to highlight the range of subcategories as well as to show different ways a subcategory can occur.

5.2.1 Analysis of comment 4,2

The first comment selected is the following:

Figure 13. Image from post 4



P4: 18 yr old linguistics student - roast me :D!

C4,2: Knows 10 languages, but nobody wants to talk to her(?) in any of them...

This comment was determined as both in the SO category as it was observed to make use of both the title and the picture in the creation of the roast. It makes use of the word “linguistics” in the title by connecting it to the possibility that the target speaks multiple languages. The comment refers to the picture by purposefully confusing the poster’s gender identity.

Regarding the situation, the poster's appearance was used as a prop. In addition to this prop, the commenter suggests that the poster "Knows 10 languages". This assumption is based on the poster's status as a "linguistics student".

For the LM, this comment was considered to belong to the juxtaposition subcategory. The commenter did not juxtapose their comment with information given in the post. Instead, they established the juxtaposition within the comment by juxtaposing the information that the poster (from the commenter's assumption) speaks several languages, yet has no one to talk to.

The comment cannot be said to target anyone else than the poster as there were no other persons or groups mentioned in this comment. The comment was therefore marked only as poster for the TA category.

For the NS, the comment was categorised as a statement. It is assumed that the comment elided the subject ("she") at the beginning of the sentence. The usage of the question mark in parenthesis does not necessarily qualify this comment for the implicature subcategory, as the suggestion that the roast is observed to make with its usage is fairly clear.

Finally, the comment was categorised as the pragmatics subcategory for the LA category, as the comment is reliant on the context of the post. No other language subcategories were observed to be used in this comment.

5.2.2 Analysis of comment 7,4

The second comment chosen for this section is:

Figure 14. Image from post 7



P7: 28f. roast me.

C7,4: That's the best "4 kids by 22, I'm dead" look I've ever seen

The SO part of this comment was observed to be picture, as the comment was not observed to make use of the title in any way. Although both the post and the comment contain an age, this comment was not categorised in the both subcategory, as the ages given are different.

In the SI category, this post was mainly reliant on the appearance of the poster for the given SI of the post. However, the comment could be argued to supply additional situational information that the poster has had “4 kids”, even though there is no proof of this.

The LM of the comment was classified as “truth value”, even though parts of the information supplied by the roaster were an assumption (as there is no proof that the poster has 4 kids). The effect of the “I'm dead” part of the roast can still function for the truth value subcategory as the sentiment of the roast is still correct. The poster does not look particularly joyful in the picture, so their lack of expression can account for the “I'm dead” part that the commenter mentions.

Like the previous comment, there was no mention of another person or group that could be said to be targeted by the comment. The only other mentioned parties are the

fictitious “4 kids”, and they were not observed to be an additional target of the roast. The comment is therefore marked as poster for the TA category.

The NS of the comment was observed as compliment. While the comment is not directly sarcastic, the compliment delivered by the roast was observed to be about something that the poster would not necessarily be happy about having achieved.

For the LA category, the comment was noted as pragmatics. It is reliant on context and can be observed to not make use of any other subcategories in this category.

5.2.3 Analysis of comment 13,5

The third comment is:

Figure 15. Image from post 8



P13: 30F. Perfect 10. Enough Said.

C13,5: Put some loose clothing on and you're a 6 at best.

The comment was observed for both in the SO category. This was because the post makes use of the picture in reference to the poster's choice of clothing, and a 1-10 scale that is used to denote a person's attractiveness.

For the SI, the post supplies the props of the poster's appearance, their clothing and instigates the usage of the 1-10 scale for the post's given SI. The comment then makes use of all of these props to construct the roast, but reiterates on the point of the 1-10 scale. The comment here is not introducing any new elements, so the 1-10 scale, the poster's appearance and their clothing choice are part of the given SI of the comment.

The LM of the comment was noted as truth value. The part of the roast that suggests the poster "put some loose clothing on" works as a consequence of the poster's clothing being formfitting.

The comment cannot be said to have any additional targets, and in this case there are no mentions of other people or groups in the post at all. The comment is then noted as poster for the TA category.

For the NS, this comment was categorised as both an answer and a statement. This is because the comment is both stating the information outright as is typical in the statement subcategory, and it replies in a very direct manner to the title of the post. It challenges the poster's assertion of their own appearance and is directly interacting with elements of the post as if it were a conversation.

The comment is entirely context dependent and was therefore observed as pragmatics for the LA category. No other subcategories were noted for this comment.

5.2.4 Analysis of comment 17,3

The fourth comment chosen for this section is:

Figure 16. Image from post 17



P17: I'm terrible at fantasy football. Tell me what else I'm deficient in
 C17,3: Race: Breton, Height: Minimum, Weight: Maximum, Face symmetry: No

The comment was categorised as picture for the SO category. This can be seen as the comment makes no use of the information in the title, and refers only to the poster's image to create the roast.

For the SI category, the roast is only making use of the poster's appearance for the post's given SI. However, readers are required to be familiar with the format for listing physical characteristics, as is often seen in video games or sports for the roast to function. It is therefore noted as requiring this knowledge for the assumed SI of the comment.

The LM of the comment was found to make use of three subcategories: reference, garden-path, and truth value. It is the only comment observed to make use of more than two subcategories in the LM category in the sample. The reference part was a consequence of the comment relying on the reader's awareness of character customisation options. This is because it is a direct reference to this form of customisation in video games. For the garden-path subcategory, it came from the internal twist in the comment. Here, it narrates the

character customisation in a conventional manner, before introducing an unusual physical trait: “Face symmetry: No”. The truth value subcategory was observed because the information conveyed by the comment was a description of the target of the roast.

For the TA category, there was no mention of another person, and the group of “Breton” (which was considered to be the playable race from the game series “The Elder Scrolls”) cannot be said to be a target of the roast. In this comment, it is only used as a signifier for the person’s appearance.

The NS of the comment was categorised as statement. Although it’s not formulated as a sentence using the indicative mood, the information is conveyed as if it is factual information.

For the LA category, the comment was classified as both the syntax subcategory and the lexical subcategory. The syntax part of the comment is a consequence of the roast relying on the usage of grammatical elements. In this case, instead of following a subject-object-verb structure, the comment lists traits. The comment is categorised as lexical because it uses typical physical traits such as height and weight , but then lists an unconventional trait. Furthermore, the comment draws on opposites that seem physically impossible (“Height: Minimum, Weight: Maximum”).

5.2.5 Analysis of comment 27,1

The last comment selected here is:

Figure 17. Image from post 27



P27: Writing a skit where my self-portrayed character is insulted. Got any suggestions for me?

C27,1: Vegan hound from GOT

For the SO of the comment, it was observed as the picture subcategory. This can be seen as it makes no use of the prompting of the title, and instead focuses entirely on the appearance of the poster in the picture. While “self-portrayed character” is part of the title, the comment was not considered to make use of this in spite of naming a character from a show. Instead, “self-portrayed” was understood as “self-insertion”, which cannot be another character.

The SI category was observed to make use of appearances, but in two parts. The given SI of the post supplies the appearance of the poster to the roast, but the roast then requires the knowledge of the appearance of the character “The Hound” (portrayed by Rory McCann) in the “Game of Thrones” series. This requirement for the roast is then the assumed SI of the comment.

For the TA category, the comment was observed to target the character “The Hound” in addition to the poster, since it could be linked to the appearance of the actor. “The Hound” is in this case an additional target because it is implied that the poster is similar in appearance to the character. This character is not typically considered to be attractive. Additionally, while

“Vegan” is part of the roast, this is not necessarily considered as another target, but rather a descriptor to supply a fictitious iteration of the character from the show.

Comparison was observed as the subcategory for the NS of the comment. This was because the comment makes a comparison between the poster and “The Hound”.

The LA of the post was noted as pragmatics. It required the context of the post to function.

6 Discussion

The discussion chapter consists of three parts. The first discusses how the knowledge resources (KRs) are used in the r/RoastMe comments and considers them in light of the GTVH hierarchy (Ruch, Attardo & Raskin, 1993). The second part considers the broader implications of the study related to pragmatics, politeness and impoliteness theory, and CMC. The final part acknowledges the limitations of this study and offers avenues for future studies.

6.1 How is humour created?

This part discusses how the individual KRs create humour. To do this, each knowledge resource is ordered based on the hierarchy of KRs in the General Theory of Verbal Humour (Ruch, Attardo & Raskin, 1993). The resources are considered in light of this hierarchy and the format of the r/RoastMe subreddit. Section 6.1.1 explores the connection between the post and the comment through script opposition. Section 6.1.2 considers the choice of information that the comments draw on to create the situation. Section 6.1.3 discusses results related to the logical mechanism category, particularly regarding truth-value. Section 6.1.4 covers the options that commenters have when choosing a target. Section 6.1.5 discusses how the narrative strategy relies on the format of the roast. Finally, section 6.1.6 discusses the language category and some of its observed use from the analysis.

6.1.1 Script opposition

From the adaptations made to the GTVH in section 4.3.1, script opposition (SO) encompasses the subcategories of title, picture, and both. Similar to a typical joke, the parts of the post that the roast utilises is the setup of the roast, while the comment is the punchline. These subcategories account for the setups that the commenter can draw on when constructing their roast. In other words, this category accounts for the sources of information that the commenter has available and may choose from. Choosing which part of the post to respond to is thus the first step in creating a roast. It seems that this choice is made before choosing the remaining KRs.

Another idiosyncratic feature of the roasting format on the subreddit is that it requires the participation of more than one party. Unlike a scripted joke, which can usually be told by one person, the commenter cannot make a roast if there is no post, and the poster will not be roasted if there is no comment. Had there not been a dialogue between posters and commenters, the format would simply not work. The commenter is interacting directly with the information from the SO subcategories, and the roast can then even take the form of a dialogue or make additions to the SO.

In the dataset, the commenters mostly used the picture or both the picture and the title to create script opposition. It seems that commenters find it more compelling to create humour using the image. This also highlights another key feature of the forum: multimodality (Newhagen & Rafaeli, 1996). The ability to both read and interpret images (sometimes even GIFs) and text is, in other words, an integral part of participating in the r/RoastMe forum. In other words, users are required to be literate in terms of both written and visual literacy (Serafini, 2012). This is also a feature that distinguishes the humour on r/RoastMe from traditional jokes, which are more likely to be only linguistic.

6.1.2 Situation

Situation (SI), unlike the other categories, was not given any preset subcategories to analyse the posts. This was because it was not considered to be possible to account for all the possible props the roasts could make use of before the sample was analysed. However, the analysis accounted for the objects (props) from the poster's image that were used by the commenters. Although previous studies have not accounted for how images provide situational information, the present study considered this information to be integral to the post-roast format. These props are considered to provide situational information that is used to create the roast. From the analysis of the roasts, it seems that the choice of props occurs after commenters have chosen to respond to the image (SO).

However, there is one aspect of the SI knowledge resource that is not accounted for by the post itself. In some cases, the commenters draw on extratextual information that is not supplied by the post. For example, commenters were found to rely on current affairs, the appearance of celebrities, or other pieces of popular media. In these cases, the commenters assume that other users of the subreddit are familiar with the references. In other cases, the roast is observed to deliberately point out props in the post to further emphasise their punchline.

6.1.3 Logical mechanism

The logical mechanism (LM) category concerns the type of reasoning that the roast relies on. The results indicate that comments mostly fall under the truth value subcategory. This subcategory is based on whether the commenter accurately draws on textual or visual information given by the poster. This subcategory was added for the purposes of this study as the commenters did not seem to often rely on the subcategories used in previous GTVH studies. Instead, their roasts were typically humorous because of their apparent truthfulness (e.g. P10: Quit a job that I hated and am feeling too good about it. Bring me down to earth you peasants. P10,2: They probably celebrated when you quit.).

The other logical mechanism subcategories occurred comparatively infrequently. Furthermore, these subcategories often occurred together with the truth-value subcategory. For example, the reference subcategory required that the props were relevant to the reference. The garden-path and juxtaposition subcategories, which also require the comment to make use of relevant information from the post (e.g. P5: 18, let's see how long it takes for someone to call me emo ! C5,4: Call you emo? It's been 18 years and you're still waiting for someone to call you at all.). This further supports the hierarchical structure of the GTVH, as the choice of LM depends on the props or the source of the props.

However, it is also worth noting that the reason this category was skewed towards the truth value subcategory is not clear. While the cause of this cannot be stated with certainty, it is possible that this part (category) of the roast is simply not as important to the commenters. However, it is also possible that the accuracy part of the truth value subcategory is important enough that the other subcategories are simply difficult to put into practice.

6.1.4 Target

The target (TA) category is related to the person or group that is targeted by the roast. Unsurprisingly, the poster was the target of every roast in the dataset, but there were also some cases that contained additional targets, such as parental figures (e.g. C10,4: No Plan B? Your mom had the same problem, unfortunately) and celebrities (e.g. C5,2: You look like slash somehow figured out how to do even more heroin). Although a comment is analysed as belonging to the “other” subcategory, it does not necessarily reflect the intent of the commenter, as their wording does not clearly intend to roast a third party. Furthermore, cases where another person or group is simply mentioned in the roast were discounted from

the analysis. Often, these other persons or groups are simply props, and their mention is more belonging to the SI of the comment, rather than the TA (e.g. C5,1: What do you do when you're not driving the bus on the Simpsons?).

Unlike the other KRs, the target resource does not seem to follow the hierarchy of the GTVH on the Reddit forum. This is because the target is predetermined before the comment is made, as the purpose of the subreddit is to roast the posters. However, the choice to include another target can still be said to occur at this step in the hierarchy, as this choice is likely to be informed by the SO, SI and LM knowledge resources. It is thus at this step that commenters choose whether or not to roast someone else in addition to roasting the poster.

6.1.5 Narrative strategy

The narrative strategy category accounts for how the roast is expressed. In the present dataset, the statement subcategory occurred the most frequently. The results are similar to general language usage, where statements occur most frequently (Swan, 2017). However, this category was observed to have fairly even usage of the subcategories. The comparison subcategory seemed to be a common strategy, as it is both simple and effective in relaying its message. Additionally, the implicature subcategory was also fairly common, which accounts for comments that require the readers to do some interpretive work.

In the hierarchy, the narrative resource cannot be decided before the other categories are accounted for. If there is no source for the props, no choice of delivery and no choice of target, it is not possible to decide which narrative strategy to use for the roast. The subcategories are still fairly flexible and may allow for different iterations of roasts within the same subcategory, but the category as a whole concerns the format of the comment and requires the other preceding categories.

6.1.6 Language

The final category is the language (LA) category, which covers the linguistic choices that the commenter makes in formulating the roast. Of the LA subcategories the pragmatics subcategory was the most prevalent. This means that the roasts in the analysis largely rely on context instead of, for example, double entendres (semantics) or morphological play (of which none occurred in the sample). This perhaps reflects a certain level of sophistication in

the roasts, which require readers to interpret the inferred connections between the post and the comment.

One of the parameters that affects communication is the distance between interlocutors (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Typically, people are more likely to be tentative when addressing someone at a greater distance. In terms of r/RoastMe, it may be that users find humour in breaching this unspoken communicative rule. Additionally, in the same way that the NS category is dependent on the preceding categories to decide on the format of the roast, the LA category depends on all the other categories to be set before formulating the roast.

6.2 Broader implications

This part discusses broader implications of the findings. Regarding pragmatics, section 6.2.1 concerns impoliteness by discussing super-strategies in light of the results from the analysis. Section 6.2.2 concerns FTAs in regards to impoliteness theory and the analysis. Section 6.2.3 discusses the dialogic nature of CMC as observed in the analysis of the roasts.

6.2.1 The FTAs and impoliteness superstrategies of r/RoastMe

The context of the subreddit impacts how the truthfulness of the FTAs may be interpreted on the page, as part of the humour is dependent on the roasts being correct to some extent. This is not the same as the roasts needing the truth-value subcategory, but rather that whatever content the roast delivers has to be relevant to the post. For the roast to adequately target the roaster it needs to make use of the SI of the post. In doing so it relates to the information in the post and utilises it to create the roast.

However, FTAs are typically understood to be untrue in cases of banter or mock impoliteness (Culpeper, 1996). There is no reason to assume that the information in the comments are insincere when their basis is information that can be found within the post. Additionally, the accuracy of the comment contributes to the roast's humour. This can be seen directly in the truth-value subcategory of the LM, but it is still present in other LM subcategories, such as reference. The roasts are also often more than superficial, and they may target genuine insecurities of the poster as part of the humour.

In spite of this, the roasts may still be considered as banter or mock impoliteness. There is not necessarily any real intent in the roasts to attack the poster's face, in the same

way that there is no real intent to cause offence to the poster (Kasunic & Kaufman, 2018). This does not mean that the FTA does not occur, but rather that it does not have to be interpreted seriously even if the information is true. While this may be contrary to Culpeper's (1996) description of mock impoliteness, this does not have to mean that the FTA is intended to attack the poster's face. Similarly to how the super-strategies are mitigated by the context of the subreddit, the truthfulness of the FTAs does not have to be received as a real attack, and may instead be understood as pretence.

The truthfulness of the comments are also impacted by the use of sarcasm, which was mostly observed in the "compliment" subcategory. The comments that make use of sarcasm are still observed to make use of the SI of the post, but because of the context of the subreddit the compliment is not necessarily considered as genuine. The comment itself does not have to make any considerable effort to prove itself to be insincere, as the context of the subreddit already gives the users that assumption.

According to Culpeper (1996), there are five impoliteness superstrategies. All five of these were present in the present dataset. Comments belonging to the statement subcategory can be considered to express bald on record impoliteness. These comments are typically cases where the information is forthright, and the comment is then making no effort to minimise face damage.

This also occurs for the positive impoliteness super-strategy (Culpeper, 1996). For positive, these are mostly the use of inappropriate identity markers. By rejecting the poster's identity, the commenters seem to undermine the poster's need to be socially valued. For example, one comment seemed to intentionally use the wrong gender pronoun: "Knows 10 languages, but nobody wants to talk to her(?) in any of them..." (C4,2). A more frequent bald on record FTA was to reject the poster's appearance (e.g. C16,3: Hey chin up. If you'd like I've got some contacts at the museum, they might be able to get you into a job speaking with the guests. The cave woman clothing gets a little itchy but I hear it's a great gig.). There were also instances of the sarcasm superstrategy in the dataset, which were analysed as belonging to the implicature subcategory of the language KR. (e.g. C16,4: Nice septum piercing. Now all you need is a cowbell necklace and they'll give you a job at the local dairy farm.).

While banter typically requires that interlocutors are socially close to one another (Culpeper, 1996), the use of these superstrategies with people who are socially distant implies that users of the r/RoastMe thread frequently breach these social norms. This is because the context of the subreddit seems to supply the necessary social proximity for the comments to be interpreted by posters as roasts, and not as insults. The observation of the super-strategies

does not necessarily take away from the comment's status as banter, as the roastme community has their own conventions for communication, and the comments mostly follow roughly the same form. The users of the subreddit are also likely to know that the comments are not intended as insults, which enables the users to engage in roasts with the understanding that all the participants understand the purpose of the subreddit. Additionally, knowing the other participants' "offline" identity is not strictly necessary to create a closer bond in online communities, as they may still be identifiable by their pseudonym (Thurlow, Lengel & Tomic, 2004). The posters on r/RoastMe also reveal their faces, and they may even be recognised by their commenters from previous posts.

However, while it can be assumed that many people subscribe to the r/RoastMe thread for entertainment purposes, some people may subscribe for other reasons. This may cause the target of the roast to still be offended by the content of the roast. Thus, distinguishing between roasts and insults on the r/RoastMe forum can be problematic. Nevertheless, the context of posting on the subreddit mitigates much of the possibility to cause offence, as the posters should be aware of what they are about to be subject to. As Dynel and Poppi (2019) found, the users are overtly pretending and the insults should not be perceived as intending to cause offence. Furthermore, the primary function is entertainment and roasts could therefore be considered as positive politeness, as they acknowledge the poster's positive face.

6.2.3 Dialogism and CMC

One of the features of the roastme forum is that the format requires a dialogue between the posters and their commenters. The dialogue of the commenter and the poster aligns with the definition by Bahktin (2010) by being understood in its context and influencing the interaction between the participants. Although this study only focused on the posts and the comments, it is also common for the poster (as well as other users) to reply to a commenter. Another feature of the ongoing dialogue on r/RoastMe is its multimodality (Newhagen & Rafaeli, 1996). For example, some comments contained only a picture or gif to communicate the roast. This requires that users are not only textually literate, but also visually literate (Serafini, 2012). The subreddit is thus dependent on the affordances of digital communication. Users relay their messages in ways that are neither possible in face-to-face interactions, nor in printed textual interactions, and are only possible through computer-mediated communication.

There is also a time aspect that is particular to CMC that is present on the r/RoastMe forum. While commenters typically respond shortly after the post is made, comments can be posted anytime after a post is made on the subreddit. Thus, the dialogue may be considered to be ongoing indefinitely. Commenting on posts from several years ago is not uncommon, particularly regarding the top-rated posts on the thread.

Furthermore, every post has multiple dialogues occurring simultaneously, another possibility only enabled by CMC. For the present sample, five comments were collected from each post, but some posts receive hundreds of comments. Every one of these may be considered as part of the larger ongoing dialogue related to the post, as they all work with the same foundations to create their roast. However, most dialogues seem to be contained to a single comment thread, even if they have the potential to link to other posts and comments through hypertext.

6.3 Limitations

While this study offers novel insight into the workings of the r/RoastMe subreddit and holds important implications for the fields of pragmatics and CMC, certain limitations ought to be acknowledged. These concern the sample size, the limitations of operationalising humour, and the limitations of focusing only on humour.

The sample collected for this study is relatively small. Although the sample is considered appropriate for the scope of the present study, its external validity is limited. Furthermore, only the most popular comments were collected, meaning that the less popular comments were overlooked. This means that the trends shown in the results may not apply to other comments, and some subcategories of the knowledge resources may have been overlooked. For example, while the multimodal quality of CMC (Newhagen & Rafaeli, 1996) was observed in the analysis of the comments, there were three cases where no subcategory could be set for the LA resource. One of these was a gif, and the other two were images. This form of communication is only enabled by CMC, but it was not considered as language in the analysis. The subcategories were based on previous studies and on the pilot study, which did not account for images. Future studies of the page should consider a broader analysis that accounts for the nuances in interaction in the comment threads that were observed in the present study, but with additional subcategories. They could also make use of a larger data set to account for the various subcategories that were seen in the analysis of the present study and more accurately represent the frequency that the subcategories occur in. Furthermore,

considering the importance of multimodality in CMC, future studies could consider, in particular, the communicative value of images by drawing on the term “visual literacy” (Serafini, 2012).

Additionally, the analysis only focuses only on exploring how humour manifests and does not systematically account for how, for example, social and psychological factors intertwine with this humour (Kasunic & Kaufman, 2018). Considering that previous studies have investigated these aspects separately, future research could investigate how these factors interplay.

Additionally, the study primarily focuses on the comments on the r/RoastMe subreddit, but the possibility of interactions on the page are broader than the narrow scope of post and comment interaction. This relates to another quality of CMC (Newhagen & Rafaeli, 1996) which accounts for non-linear forms of communication: hypertextuality. This possibility of interaction was not accounted for in the analysis, but could be an addition that future analysis would benefit from. There could also be a subcategory for “metadata”, which had examples in the sample that could not be analysed with the present study’s subcategories. One comment made use of the poster’s username, and another included that the post had made use of Reddit’s “not suitable for work” (NSFW) flagging system as part of the SO. It was not possible to account for these instances using the present taxonomy, but it could be done by including a “metadata” subcategory in the SO category in future studies. Another addition that could be made would be subcategories that account for the multimodal potential of CMC. This would be able to analyse the gifs and images that occur in the comments, which the present study was not able to do.

Roasting has become a popular culture phenomenon and is practised in different ways, in different media, and on different platforms. These developments are difficult to account for in a single study, but they may impact part of the expectations that communities have of roasts. Over time, it is possible that the distribution of subcategories could shift, and the most applicable subcategories might change over time. Future studies could account for the varied ways in which roasting occurs across platforms, as the norms of the subreddit are not guaranteed to be applicable in other contexts where roasting is practised. Alternatively, a diachronic study of roasting could investigate whether the norms of the r/RoastMe community have changed over time.

7 Conclusion

The present study has investigated how the GTVH knowledge resources are used in roasts on the online forum r/RoastMe through an analysis with an adapted version of the GTVH. It has analysed the individual KRs used in comments to identify how the various subcategories contribute to the creation of humour.

The comments made use of various combinations of the knowledge resource subcategories. The subcategories belonging to the NS category were evenly distributed when compared to the other KRs. Although the post-roast format is highly conventionalised, the wide range of NS subcategories that users can draw on demonstrates the opportunities users have for being creative on the forum. The subcategories belonging to the LA category were also varied in their usage. Nevertheless, the pragmatics subcategory was the most prevalent, suggesting that the roasters tended to rely on the broader communicative context, rather than on more specific linguistic features. The SI category displayed the need for props within the subreddit and showed that the posters provide the commenters with possible props to make use of in the roast.

However, because of the restrictions of the post-comment format that characterises r/RoastMe, one subcategory of some KRs tended to be favoured. The SO category showed that the majority of posts make use of the picture, either in isolation (the picture subcategory) or in combination with the title (the both subcategory). The category also highlighted the dialogic nature of the forum through the interaction between the poster's content (the picture and title) and the comment. This further underlined the cooperation between poster and commenter to create the content of the subreddit. The LM category proved to be skewed towards the truth value subcategory. This may be an indication that the users of the subreddit do not weigh this part of the creation of the joke as heavily as the other KRs, but it could also indicate that the truth value subcategory is simply considered to be essential to the roast by the commenters. In other words, although the roasts are not necessarily true statements, the commenters typically played on one of the truths that were presented by the poster. The TA category showed that the roasters consistently target the poster, and that there are sometimes additional targets. However, simply being mentioned in the roast is not enough to be considered as an additional target of the roast.

Additionally, the analysis was considered in light of the hierarchy of the KRs, finding that they still mostly function within the hierarchical structure for the roasts. The only

deviation from this came from the target category, which is typically subordinate to the SO, SO, and LM categories. However, due to the purpose of r/RoastMe, the target of the roast is typically predetermined. While a larger sample might be necessary to confirm this, none of the comments in this sample failed to target the poster. The decision to roast the poster is probably a prerequisite for the comment to be a roast in the first place.

It would also appear that the subreddit behaves and interacts as a community. The post-roast format on the forum seems to be highly conventionalised, which suggests that the users have an understanding of the shared practices that are required to participate on the forum. The roasts did not deviate considerably from the “standard” comment format, which is why they were possible to analyse using the GTVH hierarchy. The subreddit also has its own norms for communication, some of which are dictated by the rules of the page that are subject to moderation (Reddit, 2022). These rules may also be part of how the subreddit can operate as a community, as well as explaining how the roasts so consistently target the poster. Additionally, these rules could be part of explaining why anything else would be deviating from the norms of communication on the subreddit.

Future research could draw on a larger sample in order to investigate the trends of the page further. Since previous studies of r/RoastMe have typically been delimited to a single research field, further research could benefit from cooperating across multiple fields, which could then account for other factors at play within the subreddit that a singular field may overlook.

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Appendix A: Posts and comments collected from r/RoastMe

Title and comment number key

Title / Comment	Number
On my way to work with 0 will to live. M'lady.	1
You look like a private detective who blew his entire surveillance budget installing hidden toilet cameras at all the local gas stations.	1,1
Hey detective- I think "The Case of the Missing Flashlight" was an inside job.	1,2
This is probably the first time you put on clothes under that jacket	1,3
Go-Go-Gadget female repellent	1,4
You look like you own a steam punk flashlight	1,5
I'm 26 years old and I quit my job at Walmart to go back to college and become a teacher	2
So you quit one minimum wage job to pursue another minimum wage paying job? Genius.	2,1
"I'm 26 and wish I was still in high school, so I'm going to teach them and hope they bring me to parties"	2,2
You look like the teacher that gets the ugliest freshman girl pregnant.	2,3
"[username]" says we will see you in the news soon after getting your first teaching job.	2,4
Special Ed teacher? It does make it easier when you're already on the kids level.	2,5
20, med school, never touched a girl, bench max 150 kilos	3
Those shoulders would buckle under the weight of a Hello Kitty purse.	3,1
Damn, you look like a bag full of ankles. Good on you, though, you'll be the first walking stick bug to graduate med school if you don't get eaten by a bird first	3,2
Your max lift is a spoon of heroin and a needle	3,3
Your nose is a skaters dream.	3,4
Put down that piece of paper, and then pick it up again. Do this about 50 times a day and in no time you will get some mosquito bumps on those bacon strips you call biceps.	3,5
18 yr old linguistics student - roast me :D!	4
Linguistics? You look like "bruh" and "lit" are the most used words in your vocabulary.	4,1

Knows 10 languages, but nobody wants to talk to her(?) in any of them...	4,2
You look like you smell like weed, BO, or a combination of the two	4,3
"No!" pretty much sounds the same in every language	4,4
Linguist? Let's hope someone you know is majoring in dermatology.	4,5
18, let's see how long it takes for someone to call me emo !	5
What do you do when you're not driving the bus on the Simpsons?	5,1
You look like slash somehow figured out how to do even more heroin	5,2
You look like the embodiment of an ashtray at a dive bar in Tallahassee	5,3
Call you emo? It's been 18 years and you're still waiting for someone to call you at all.	5,4
Way to pull off the "Uma Thurman who just overdosed in Pulp Fiction" look. IF YOU'RE OKAY, SAY SOMETHING!	5,5
18F film student. You can't hurt me	6
Mascot for Wendy's drive-thru gloryhole. Millions served.	6,1
Ronald McDonald's bitch.	6,2
Leeloo looks like shit now.	6,3
If you zoom in on the paper you can see the indents from her suicide note.	6,4
You are a cheat code for NoNut November	6,5
28f. roast me.	7
28 what? Stone?	7,1
I feel like I can already hear that throaty smokers laugh brewing.	7,2
Why the long tits?	7,3
That's the best "4 kids by 22, I'm dead" look I've ever seen	7,4
I am impressed with how the weight of your breasts have managed to stretch out all of the wrinkles in your face!	7,5
34 years old never had a girlfriend	8
Look at those finger toes. Do you walk or do you slap the ground?	8,1
With those titties, you are the girlfriend.	8,2
This being marked as NSFW is the best roast in itself	8,3
Do you keep ordering from Amazon just so the delivery person will talk to you?	8,4
Kinda pointless to get a girlfriend now with those titties	8,5
I think I'm ready for this. Give it to me.	9

Hand tats. 100% will let you do butt stuff. For free	9,1
Still searching for eye brows [detective emoji]	9,2
Nice try CGI artists. Her eyes still look fake. Uncanny valley.	9,3
You look like you'd suck dick for a pack of Newports and suboxone	9,4
After seeing your picture I'm going to spend the rest of tonight apologizing to all the lizard people believers I called nuts.	9,5
Quit a job that I hated and am feeling too good about it. Bring me down to earth you peasants.	10
You look like you give blowjobs to bikers for breadcrumbs	10,1
They probably celebrated when you quit.	10,2
Instead of The Rock, you look what was left in the sock	10,3
No Plan B? Your mom had the same problem, unfortunately.	10,4
I'm sure 7-11 will really miss you behind the counter.	10,5
21 f, no hand, horse girl, enjoys tuna, do what you must	11
Your stub needs a circumcision	11,1
First "horse girl" to actually have a hoof.	11,2
Proof that cutting your own hair requires two hands	11,3
Need a good roasting, you say? Well... let me give you a hand.	11,4
Your hand would be pixilated in a Japanese porno	11,5
4th times a charm I guess. Do your worst	12
Nothing scream classy like aluminum foil over a five dollar bottle of wine.	12,1
[The Simpsons character "Comic Book Guy"]	12,2
I'm betting that condom you got in high school is still in your wallet.	12,3
It is going to take a lot more alcohol than what is on the table behind you for people to like you.	12,4
You look like a boiled potato that was dropped on the floor of a barber shop.	12,5
30F. Perfect 10. Enough Said.	13
Thought Asians were good with numbers?	13,1
You look like your massages come with a sad ending	13,2
-how much a bj? -10 chicken nuggets	13,3
Menu item #10... "Overstuffed Sour Duck"	13,4
Put some loose clothing on and you're a 6 at best.	13,5
(19M) Dorky virgin. Annihilate my existence!	14

Your face is so shiny. Now I understand where extra virgin oil comes from.	14,1
You ain't a virgin bud, life's already fucked you plenty by just making you yourself.	14,2
When a racist dorky white kid swears he isn't racist and that his best friend is black he is referring to you (and he only knows you from online gaming)	14,3
You look like the kind of guy who stalks women but luckily, by the size of those arms, you won't be strong to hold one down	14,4
Fair to say, you've aged like milk on a radiator.	14,5
20, medical, easy to roast cus chest hair is flammable, likes bobs and vagene	15
Calling people's houses and trying to sell them "medication" is not a real medical job.	15,1
Bro, shave that forehead mustache.	15,2
Your nose has a full head of hair.	15,3
Eyebrows giving me a fallen angel rising up from the ground type vibes	15,4
That dude 100% fucked a coconut	15,5
18f] the only thing bigger than the dark circles under my eyes is the disappointment i am	16
Take me down to Paradise City where the grass is green and the girls look nothing like Axl Rose.	16,1
How much were you going to pay him?	16,2
Hey chin up. If you'd like I've got some contacts at the museum, they might be able to get you into a job speaking with the guests. The cave woman clothing gets a little itchy but I hear it's a great gig.	16,3
Nice septum piercing. Now all you need is a cowbell necklace and they'll give you a job at the local dairy farm.	16,4
And the tentacle dildo in your drawer.	16,5
I'm terrible at fantasy football. Tell me what else I'm deficient in	17
Not deficient in chromosomes, that's for sure.	17,1
You look like someone who will harass a girl at a renaissance fair.	17,2
Race: Breton, Height: Minimum, Weight: Maximum, Face symmetry: No	17,3
Visual appeal.	17,4
Aaah, a wild sighting of the rare contraceptive hoodie.	17,5
I'm 24 and this is my loungewear, roast me	18

You're wearing a dress poncho gym shorts and moccasins. What's left to say.	18,1
Your room screams "my Parents divorced when I was little, and neither of them wanted custody of me"	18,2
I'm no expert but the black fingernails might be why the "bad ass babes" aren't there.	18,3
Seems like 70 comments is a bit low for being posted 6 hours ago. You can't even get people to give you negative attention..	18,4
So this is what happened to Sylar when Heroes series got canceled.	18,5
At my internship in the elementary school. Roast me	19
Kiddy fiddler found unable to spell elementary in Elementary School.	19,1
Judging by the look on your face, pretty soon you won't be allowed within 500 feet of that school	19,2
It's not an internship, it's an education center for slow adults but they don't want to tell you	19,3
Really cute that your parents told you it was an internship so the other kids don't bully you at juice time	19,4
"Elementary" Written by someone who's never finished elementary school	19,5
M23, I know my beard is way overgrown, try me	20
Jethro Bieber	20,1
You look like an infant wearing a fake beard and wig	20,2
Beard? I thought you posted a pic of your hairy asshole...	20,3
Doesn't Dwight keep you away from people Mose?	20,4
23 year old neckbeard drop out who lives with his parents.. Dude leave some tail for the rest of us.	20,5
25 , got rejected for a promotion and then told I'm going to lose my job early next year and failed my driving test again make my week	21
Look at the bright side: can't hear bad news if you don't have ears...	21,1
I think the fact you wrote that on the back a Mousse label tells me all I need to know. Can you even afford paper?	21,2
Failed your drivers test. The world is safer today	21,3
Looks like even your facial hair is trying to get away from you.	21,4
You are a genuine snipers dream	21,5
First day back in the office after WFH and forgot how to talk to people irl	22
If you're eyes get any wider, NASAs gonna crash a probe into them	22,1

I can feel the “stalker ex gf” vibes from here. How many ex bf’s have had to move because of you ?	22,2
Just ramble on about your cats and how crystals are helping your love life.	22,3
I assume WFH means “Wonky Forehead”?	22,4
I can bet you work for the HR. You have the look that can be mistaken for friendly at first but only to get the information out of people to use against them.	22,5
20 years old. 6’, 123 lbs. Just graduated from a coding bootcamp. Can I get a celebratory roast?	23
If coding doesn’t work out, you can get a job looking around corners.	23,1
When god coded you: <head></head> neck-height: 14in; <body></body>	23,2
Jesus dude, could you please get Adam out of your throat?	23,3
You look like you can do a movie double for someone who is dying of aids.	23,4
You somehow look like both a Predator and his potential victim	23,5
21/F Actress from Australia. Here to see what you can come up with so go crazy with this one.	24
Stunt double for weird AI?	24,1
Being an extra doesn’t make you an actress.	24,2
With a face like that, I would consider a career in radio instead.	24,3
Faking an orgasm doesn't make you an actress	24,4
The reason all the Koalas are dying from chlamydia.	24,5
Hard day at work, make it even worse for me!	25
If you were a scratch and sniff, the scent would be wet dog and depression	25,1
You decided to wear a cap since your last roast. Wise choice	25,2
This guy brews beer from the vaginal yeast of dead prostitutes	25,3
Are you a lumberjack [tree][tree][tree]	25,4
Is that “wedding ring” supposed to throw us off the fact that you love pipe despite being in welding or fabrication?	25,5
Tell me something I don't already tell myself	26
There is about 80% goat in your DNA.	26,1
[Where's waldo image]	26,2
Stuart Little Dick	26,3
Its beeker from the muppets.	26,4

He's the bitchass who tried kidnapp lucy and snitch to ice queen about it	26,5
Writing a skit where my self-portrayed character is insulted. Got any suggestions for me?	27
Vegan hound from GOT	27,1
The 14th apostle, Dave of Cincinnati.	27,2
You look like a Charles Manson nobody would take seriously.	27,3
You look like the guy who marries the town whore and is the only one in town who doesn't know it.	27,4
When someone makes a wish to Jesus but they get a Jesus from Wish instead.	27,5
37M / Recently Divorced--Tell Me Why She Left	28
Having your sex slave escape your basement doesn't count as "divorce", OP	28,1
She fell in love with a guy with hair	28,2
Your wife saw the fuzz on your chin and figured she didn't have to be your beard anymore	28,3
You look like the kind of guy to jerk off to pictures of your mother in law	28,4
Did she leave you, or is she in the freezer?	28,5
Just two best friends newly medicated and feeling too good about ourselves	29
Both look like drunk elementary school teachers	29,1
The lesbian couple we don't want to watch.	29,2
Best friends? Is that what you tell your overly Christian parents?	29,3
I can literally smell the cat piss from this picture.	29,4
50s librarians on quaaludes and government food benefits	29,5
Roast me! I wanna be feeling the burn tenfold ;)	30
You look like a perverted soft boiled egg	30,1
Just not when the burn is at the gym	30,2
Looks like it smells like welfare and vaseline in there, with a side of no muscle structure...	30,3
Tenfold? Is that how many you have to undo to find your pecker?	30,4
You should try "feeling the burn" in a gym rather than here.	30,5
Yes, I wrote backwards for a mirror photo, it was easier than finding a friend to take a picture. So if you got something mean to say? Flamin-GO for it!	31

I bet you didn't even know you had that big mole on your head until your hairline started receding. God really said take these two L's at once	31,1
Why would you write backwards like a dork when you can flip the photo? Your grasp of technology is as lame as your fashion sense.	31,2
The way you hang your toilet paper tells me everything I need to know about you...	31,3
Moves boxes all day at work, never touched one off the clock.	31,4
Band kid turned substitute teacher turned convicted sex offender.	31,5
Been dying to do this! Tell me why I'm still single!	32
Because no one wants to date Ludacris' cousin Preposterous.	32,1
[Gif of Eddie Murphy on Saturday Night Live]	32,2
You're still single because you tease your hair better than you tease that pussy.	32,3
You'll meet the right guy one day.	32,4
Hey crab man	32,5
(18F) Ruin my cake day.	33
DO...NOT...ZOOM...IN...	33,1
Hopefully as a gift, they let you loose from the stables and run free for the day	33,2
Using the upper lip to cover the moustache. It's original, ill give you that.	33,3
What are you..?	33,4
I didn't know Mia Khalifa went Trans.	33,5

Appendix B: Messages to participants

This appendix includes the introduction message sent out to the possible participants and the full message for them to give their consent:

Introduction message:

Hi, I'm writing a thesis about the humour of r/RoastMe at the University of Stavanger in Norway, and I'd like to ask if you'd allow me to include your picture on the subreddit from November in my dataset? Your picture will not be published in any capacity unless you agree to that as well. If you're interested in contributing, let me know and I will send you the rest of the public project details and your rights so you may give informed consent.

Full Message

Hello,

I'm writing a Master's thesis about r/RoastMe. The aim is to find out how the post, the picture and the comments work together to create humour. I'm writing my thesis at the University of Stavanger in Norway. The rules for collecting data here require that I ask permission before using personal photos for research purposes. I would therefore like to ask if I may include your post as part of my dataset? I plan to collect 50 posts alongside their top 5 comments from November for the analysis. Some of the photos will also be published in the final thesis. Besides the photo, no other personal details will be collected. Outside of information published in the final thesis, the remaining data will be disposed of when the project ends in August 2022.

I'd really appreciate it if you could let me know whether or not you are willing to consent. I completely understand if not. If you do consent, you can always withdraw at a later stage by e-mailing: m.ryen@stud.uis.no, or message me on this account. You can also contact me if you have any questions about the project before you agree.

If you consent, the following applies:

As you would be identifiable from your picture in the collected data, you have the right to

access the personal data, request that it is deleted, request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected, receive a copy of your personal data, and send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data. Your personal data will only be processed based on your consent. You can also contact the University of Stavanger at personvernombud@uis.no to exercise your rights regarding your data.