

Humor & Cross-Cultural Communication

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**2023 Okayama University Teaching Award
Ceremony**

Presentation Outline

- I. Introduction: **Why a course on humor?**
- II. Course background
- III. Cross-cultural humor misunderstanding
case study example
- IV. Student reactions & topics

Humor: A Double-Edged Sword?

Konrad Lorenz:

“Laughter **forms a bond**, but it simultaneously **draws a line.**”

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Features of the Course

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I. Diversity

Students from 10+ countries:

Australia, Bulgaria, China, England, France, Germany, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Poland,, USA....

II. Student-centered learning

Focus on active learning and real-world experiences

Humor: A Double-Edged Sword?

Konrad Lorenz:

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Features of the Course

III. Unique Subject & Themes

a. Stereotypes in humor

b. Crossing borders with humor

c. Verbal irony & sarcasm

d. Satirical news

e. Humor and social issues

f. Cross-cultural humor misunderstanding case studies

**Misunderstanding Case
Study Example:
Sarcasm & Verbal Irony**

A Real World Incident

(Hanshin Tigers Baseball Team)

Matt Murton, American, batter

Atsushi Nohmi, Japanese,



Matt Murton in Japan

2010: Broke single-season hits record

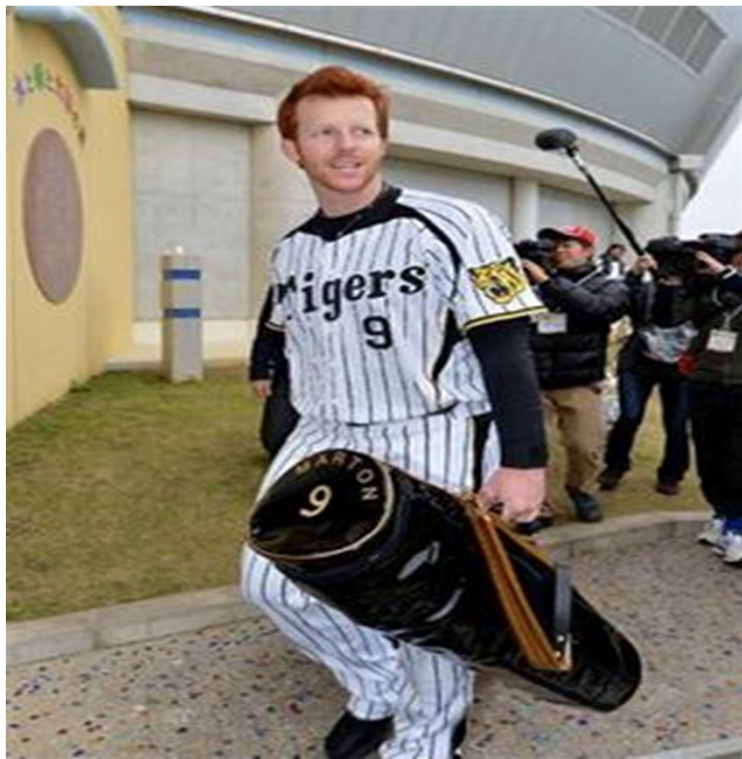
2011: Led the team in hits

2012: Was struggling; humor misunderstanding



Humor Misunderstanding: 2012 Season

Murton made a bad defensive play during the game (while Nohmi was pitching)



Japanese Reporter: Did you try your hardest when you made that throw?

Murton: No. I don't like Nohmi, so I let the other team score a run...

Next Day Sports Newspaper Headlines?

お粗末守備問われ...

ツインターで脱退...
「ツインターで脱退...」

相手は

サンスポ

五橋事件阪神激震

日本野球セバ

点能見嫌いだ

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の質問に逆ギレ失言

衝撃暴言

点能見嫌いだ

だから...

I don't like ハウサン

点差が開いていた

野球は何が起るか分からない。そういう気持ちで打席に入っていました。

四回2死では前進守備だったか、二塁走者を本塁で刺す気だったか?

相手は点差を

「続けて反省も」

「あれは自分のミス。ボールに行くのが遅かった。しりっかりつけていればアウトだった。」

「日本語も交えて」

「三塁、ドゥツ、アイドント、ライク、ノウミサシ」

報道陣に向かって「ワカリマスカ」

「冗談です」

「日本語も交えて」

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もっと前へ!

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Case Study Discussion

1. What is the best solution to this incident?
2. What action(s) would you take as the manager or general manager?
3. What action(s) would you take as Matt Murton?
4. Who is most to blame for the misunderstanding?

Possible perspectives / feelings to consider:

- Matt Murton
- Murton's interpreter
- Atsushi Nohmi
- The reporter / reporters
- Fans

Written Reaction Prompts

1. What is your general reaction to the Matt Murton sarcasm incident? For example, do you feel Murton should have been punished in some way? Do you think he should have been made to apologize to Nohmi (his teammate) or others?
2. Do you think sarcasm should be included as part of English language education? If so, what aspects (e.g., detection, reaction, production) should be focused on?

Student Reactions

Prompt 1 Student Reaction

“I don’t think he should be punished for it, but they have to teach him **what caused this problem** and how he can handle it better in the future...

Preventing incidents like this from happening should be the job of managers and recruiters of teams that hire people from other countries and cultures. They need to give them briefings on differences in culture...” (**Germany**)

Prompt 1 Student Reaction

“The main problem I believe was the **Japanese sports media ultimately looking for a headline**, in order to sell their product...

...Murton should have probably done some more research into how the Japanese perceive things like sarcasm, but the sports media should have just asked for a foreign opinion on Murton’s comments.” **(England)**

Prompt 2 Student Reaction

“I had a unique experience studying English as my family moved to a predominantly English speaking country when I was younger...

However, me having had that experience which helped me understand, detect, and use sarcasm properly I believe it greatly elevated my language proficiency as well as **helped me get along better with Native-English speaking people.**”

(Bulgaria)

Final Presentations: Independent Research

Independent Research Topics

- How Kimie Oshima spread *rakugo* overseas
- コンビニ・コンフェッションズ –Fast-paced mockumentary style comedy from Japan gaining traction overseas
- Language as a weapon: a look into French equivalents of humour such as “esprit”, “humeur” and “farce” + other specific characteristics that sets it apart from other countries
- Examining “*manzai*” and why it is difficult for non-Japanese to get (enjoy) this type of humor
- To find out how the famous comedian, Trevor Noah, with an accent from various countries managed to win the hearts of audiences around the world
- Examining the reception of pointed topics (politics, naming specific people, social issues) in Japanese comedy, specifically through the career of Daisuke Muramoto
- The comedy scape in Apartheid South Africa
- Examining ‘funny politicians’- how political actors use humor on Twitter
- The usage of satire in politics; and a look into how the French satirical magazine, Charlie Hebdo, went wrong
- The similarity of sarcastic words between England and Kyoto
- The impact of the use of humor in international relations: Can humor transcend international/cultural barriers?
- Kazari Eigo “Decoration English” and mistranslations, humor and danger of
- “Oh, So You Want to Learn About Sarcasm?” - What is sarcasm, and why is it so popular in the UK?
- Exploring American stand-up comedy and Asian stand-up comedy: Are there any similarities or differences?
- Filipino Humor within America via comedians and social media comedians

Happy Ending: “I love Nohmi!”



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