Maneuvering Strategically with Corkscrewing in Satirical News Programs

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Abstract: The study aims to build the infrastructure of corkscrewing on an extended pragma-dialectical[1] ground, represented the theory of strategic maneuvering launched in (2002) by Eemern and Houtlosser. The methodology followed involves defining corkscrewing as a strategic concept subsuming goal and audience int its structure, and showing how this concept appeals to each of the three aspects of strategic maneuvering in order to be considered as one of its modes. It has been discovered that the three aspects are not equally instantiated, rather they are represented in a gradient manner. So, those aspects cannot be strictly considered 'inseparable', as called by their advocators, because they have been proved to be separable in corkscrewing yet working successfully. The study recommends investigating this phenomenon in other cultures and compare the results because culture-specificity may lead to vary strategies in a scalar way, thus it could be useful to study it within another culture to investigate whether it undergoes the same path of 'thisness' or not. The genre intended to be investigated is satirical news programs as they are specifically representative of what such a phenomenon requires.

Keywords: audience demand, corkscrewing, culture, insinuation, strategic maneuvering, ventriloquistic meaning

1. Introduction

To start with, 'corkscrewing' is not a linguistic term per se. Instead, it is defined in the Meriam Webster Dictionary (n.d.) as a "move in a winding course". The word "winding", in turn, means "a curved or sinuous curse, line, or progress". Whatever the meaning might be, corkscrewing in the end entails strategicness in an interesting manner. As a result, the gap which this paper endeavors to bridge is the linguistic haecceity of this term as it has not been spotted as such, to the best of the researcher's knowledge. The paper selects this term for two reasons: first, because it connotes what the paper aspires to identify, build, and prove. Secondly, it distinguishes this concept from an interrelated one- insinuation. Accordingly, it aims to approach this topic pragma-dialectically under the umbrella of strategic maneuvering (henceforth, SM) developed by Eemeren and Houtlosser in (2002). Thus, the study starts with defining corkscrewing linguistically with relation to the interrelated concept of insinuation showing where they meet and from where they start to separate. After that, a bird's-eye-view on the theory of SM is set. Then, a bridge is built between the two concepts in order to show how corkscrewing is in

fact a reflection of SM. The paper, in the end, achieved all these aims in a clear and consistent way.

2. Defining corkscrewing

In its simplest form, communication, linguistically speaking, presupposes conversation to be cooperative in essence, an exchange of information for specific purposes – even if phatic. This is exactly the point from where corkscrewing departs. That is, corkscrewing is not to be considered cooperative at all as it pertains to what is meant far behind what is literally said. Focusing on what is implicitly meant is described by Camp (2018) as strategic communication. She elaborates on this aspect by the following:

1. Provided that in strategic communication there are at least two parties, so one of them adheres to minimal standards of cooperation (that is, minimal maxims). Worded differently, speakers could aim to provide only some reachable (understandable) interpretation of the utterances they issue which, in turn, breeds some relevance to the topics under question. (italics mine)
2. Hearers, the other party, would "recover some interpretation that some audience might reasonably take the speaker to have intended" (p. 41).

One issue to comment on in the two points above – the probability manifested in the frequent use of 'some', 'only', and 'modal auxiliaries.' This highlights an important feature of corkscrewing: deniability, whose discussion is given later in the paper.

So far, it seems appropriate to describe corkscrewing as a murky concept where the borders of communication are pushed over. It represents part of the continuum involving hinting and suggesting at one end and insinuating at the other. That is to say, corkscrewing intersects with insinuation in some areas whereas it differs a lot from the first two. However, all four concepts (hinting, suggesting, insinuating, and corkscrewing) share one thing in common – boundedness to the truth of the utterance. This has been clearly explained by Papi (1996: 196-7) as summarized in the following:

1. Parret (1993: 232) defines hinting as someone's overt intention to "let speaker B know that the proposition expressed contains information that will allow B to find an answer to the problem he is facing, assuming that B has access to additional information". In other words, both A (i.e. the first speaker) and B (the second speaker) assume something in common to be communicated with no shadow of denial in the horizon.
2. Parret (ibid: 233) further compares between hinting and suggesting: the former entails unconditioned boundedness to the truth of the utterance issued, whereas by suggesting the speaker is only bounded to the probable truth. Up to here, corkscrewing has nothing to offer.

It is in insinuation where corkscrewing starts to be crystallized. To start with, Parret (ibid) generally defines insinuation as an act which "occurs when A wants B to know P but does not want B to judge that A wanted to tell him P". The following example, as cited in Papi (2014: 6) quoted from Beckett's Waiting for Godot in the

first act where the two characters, Estragon (E) and Vladimir (V), are discussing the place they are waiting in:

(1)
E: Let's go
V: We can't
E: Why not?
V: We are waiting for Godot
E: Ah… You're sure it was here?
V: What?
E: That we were to wait
V: He said by the tree… Do you see any others?
E: What is it?
V: I don't know – a willow?
E: Where are the leaves?
V: It must be dead
E: No more weeping
V: Or perhaps it's not the season
E: Looks to me more like a bush
V: A shrub
E: A bush
V: A – What are you insinuating? That's we've come to the wrong place?
E: He should be here.

If viewed with Parret's definition of insinuation presented above, this example is analyzed as follows: Estragon wants Vladimir to know P which is:

a. Either they are in the wrong place, or
b. Whether Godot is coming at all!

Yet, neither probability has been stated explicitly, the onus is left on B (Vladimir) to deduce it which really happened in the penultimate turn. The trigger for making such insinuation is the explicit suggestion made at first (Let's go), yet it has been negatively reacted to (We can't), and that's why Estragon should follow a different path to make Vladimir comply with his suggestion. Moreover, A does not want B to judge that A wanted to tell him p. This is clearly shown in the last two turns:

V: A – What are you insinuating? That's we've come to the wrong place?
E: He should be here.

E neither denies nor avers what V has asked, rather he continued as never meant what he intended[2]. On this very point, Fricker (2012: 89) believes that "a speaker can never be incontrovertibly nailed with commitment to a mere conversational implication E of what she sated"[3]. Put another way, a speaker can only be committed, according to Fricker, to what they have hinted at or suggested but not insinuated. What can be inferred up to this point is the idea with which Camp (2018: 42) more specifically defines insinuation: "the communication of beliefs, requests, and other attitudes 'off-record', so that the speaker's main communicative point remains unstated". Since we have unstated premises or standpoints, then deniability is always plausible. This is because the hearer, as Camp (p. 46) justifies, lacks the resources to rebut the speaker's denial of having meant what he did. Lee and Pinker

(2010: 792) have previously argued that the following example offers a bribe by an obvious insinuation:

(2) I'm very sorry, officer. But I'm actually in the middle of something right now, sort of an emergency. So maybe the best thing would be to take care of this here… without going to court or ding any paperwork.

Taken at face value, the speaker's words can be interpreted as nothing but a bribe. Nevertheless, in accordance with what Fricker above claims, which agrees with what Pinker, Nowak and Lee (2008: 836) argued, there can be another plausible interpretation: let me give the fine here without further routine procedures. After all, I will pay the fine, so here it is in advance! This is what is referred to as plausible deniability which, as Pinker et al. (ibid) describe, "an all-too-familiar feature of strategic communicative contexts"[4].

The following features have been discussed so far which represent exactly where insinuation[5] and corkscrewing meet:

1. Unstated standpoint.
2. Deniability of commitment to that standpoint.

Surprisingly, none of the references above, which tackled insinuation from various perspectives at various levels, has pinpointed the role which culture[6] plays in arriving at the deeply hidden intended meaning which the paper calls 'ventriloquistic'[7] meaning, which the paper defines as meaning which is far beyond the Gricean conversational implicature. And it is precisely here, i.e., the point of culture, where both insinuation and corkscrewing start to separate. And it is here also where the identity of corkscrewing is crystallized. In other words, culture plays a vital role in interpreting the ventriloquistic meaning specifically in the kind of data dealt with in this paper – satirical news programs. This is due to the fact that all topics (whether beliefs, requests, or any attitudes) in such genre are taken and argued in accordance with specific macro contexts. By 'macro' is meant Firth's 'context of situation', discussed over many publications (1957a, 1957b), which encompasses all factors, whatsoever, that could facilitate the interpretation of any message. There is still another point which differentiates corkscrewing from insinuation – audience. All the references consulted stress and agree on involving the other interactant (whatever it is termed – speaker B, L (for listener), or H (for hearer)) as the target of insinuation, whereas in corkscrewing the case is not so at all. In the latter, the insinuated object (whether human or not) is not the major component of the phenomenon. Rather, the target is to make others (audience) understand and uncover what is ventriloquistically intended behind saying something. Worded differently, audience in corkscrewing plays a crucial role, that is, they are the trigger of the whole act (or macro act). The following figures could clarify better:

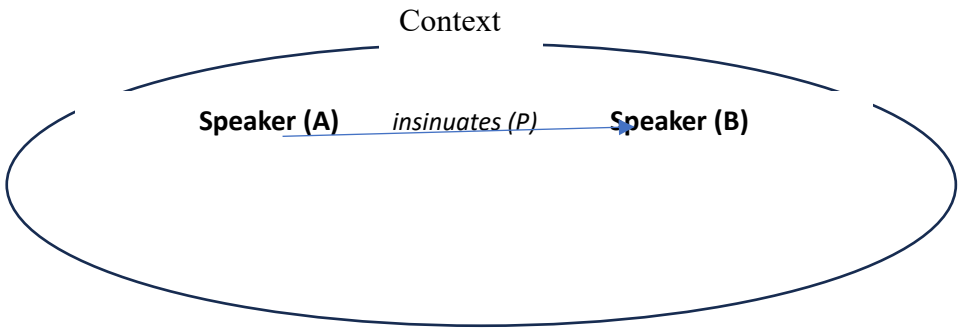


Figure1. Components of insinuation

According to the figure above, insinuation is bipartite between A and B (without regarding the insinuated object as a part since it represents the major act around which everything evolves). It is necessary to mention that the oval shape refers to context, in its simplest sense, which differs from situation to another as far as the topics insinuated are concerned (as in example (1) above). As for corkscrewing, the matter is quite different:

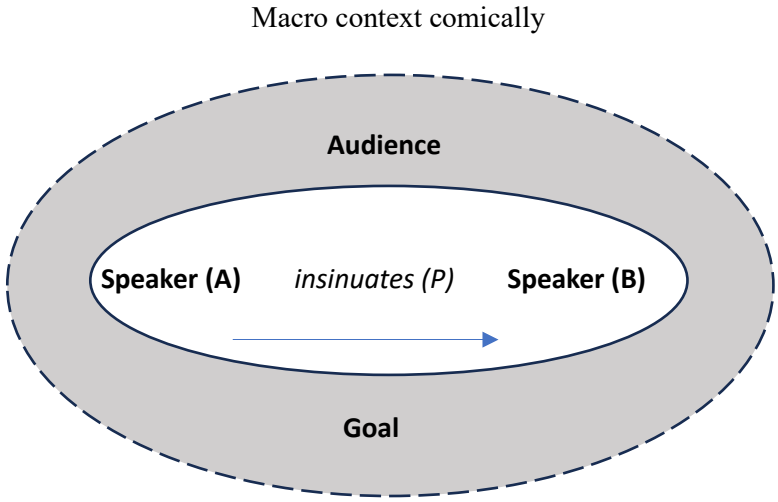


Figure 2. Components of corkscrewing

According to Figure 2. above, corkscrewing is quadripartite, where the audience along with a particular goal cover the whole process between A and B. That is, it is in this grey area where corkscrewing really lies and is realized. Unlike insinuation, the oval shape of the macro context is dotted for two reasons: because of the sense given above to context in this paper (which involves all elements whatsoever), and because the data are presented comically and that is why they mirror the image of having a kaleidoscopic framework (within a specific culture) where it starts with something but spreads out into many other various things just like a kaleidoscope.

To conclude, corkscrewing is operationally defined in this paper partly in agreement with Camp's (2018: 42) definition of insinuation with dragging 'culture', 'audience', and 'goal' into the concept:

The communication of beliefs, requests, and other attitudes off-record, so the speaker's ventriloquistic meaning(s) remain(s) unstated before the audience for a particular goal within a macro culture-specific context in a comic mode. Consequently, corkscrewing can be viewed as insinuation from a much broader perspective. The main feature of this communicative act is its plausible deniability supported by the unstated premise(s). Being a communicative act, corkscrewing entails the existence of two levels of analysis: production and perception, with the latter embracing recognition and interpretation. The main concern of this paper, however, is the production level, since the concept has just been delivered, so we should have an idea on how it is produced. It seems crucial to bring to the forefront that the production, i.e., the structure, of corkscrewing will be built under the umbrella of SM as both share the same ground of 'strategicness' which involves reaching communicative goals by clever and skillful planning.

3. Methodology

In order to build the structure of corkscrewing under the umbrella term of SM, the original theory of SM is rapidly reviewed first, secondly a connection between the two is made. This is going to be done through two steps:

1. Identifying the aspect(s) of SM which are made prominent by this innovative phenomenon; and
2. Presenting features that support the workability of this mode.

3.1 Data

The data selected are episodes, of a whole season, from Al-Basheer Show, an Iraqi satirical news program broadcast on DW, the German satellite channel, in 2023. They are all found on YouTube transcribed in English only. This means the Arabic text is not written because it is broadcast in the colloquial variety. So, the translations studied here are adopted as they are found in the episodes with no changes, whatsoever, made.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Strategic maneuvering (SM)

Simply put, SM involves maintaining a balance between being a reasonable and effective arguer at the same time by means of abiding by certain rules (viz. ten rules of reasonableness) with having an eye on three inseparable aspects of effectiveness (viz. topical potential (TP), audience demand (AD), and presentational devices (PDs) within the framework of a critical discussion. This concept was triggered by the idea that arguers would not only like to resolve a difference of opinion, which fired the argument, but also that difference should be resolved to one's own good. This theory is developed by Eemeren and Houtlosser (2002)[8] as the extended version of the original pragma-dialectical theory launched by Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984).

Therefore, after drawing the picture of corkscrewing clearly, and very rapidly and briefly reviewing SM, it is time to connect between the two as pinpointed in 3. above.

4. 1 The Prominent aspects

The inseparable aspects are well represented in the following figure:

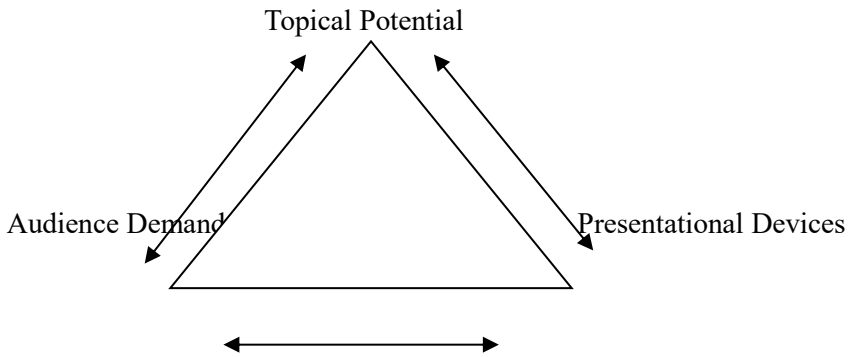


Figure 3. The strategic maneuvering triangle (Eemeren 2010: 95).

In fact, the prominence intended to be identified for each aspect can only be highlighted after unfolding the characteristics of the data under investigation – Al-Basheer Show, an Iraqi satirical news program broadcast on DW, the German satellite channel. It is the Iraqi copy of the original American one The Daily Show. It has been selected owing to the culture-boundedness feature ascribed to corkscrewing as developed in this paper[9]. Generally speaking, Al-Basheer Show is a weekly program, aired every Friday, which fuels on what happens in Iraq during a whole week, to 'discuss' many issues crucial to the Iraqi's lives in a comic culture specific manner. It has been aired since 2014 up to 2023. Consequently, the last season in 2023 is going to be invoked. Systematically, each season consists of

twenty-five episodes, each with a particular title. Every time an episode is broadcast on TV, a disclosure, whose translation reads as follows, is presented:
This program is a satirical comedy inspired by fiction and has nothing to do with reality, it works in accordance with Article 38 of the Iraqi constitution, which guarantees freedom of expression and freedom of the media, an integral part of the basic right to freedom of expression recognized by resolution 59 of the UN General Assembly adopted in 1946, as well as Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of human rights 1948, which states that the basic right to freedom of expression includes freedom to get , receive and broadcast news and ideas by any means without restriction by geographical borders. The program is for adults only and is not suitable for children due to the content that the program may contain that may be inappropriate for some age groups younger than 15 years, so it was necessary to note.

This disclosure draws our attention to the following remarks:

1. The plausible deniability which supports stated premises has been clearly shown by the clause "*inspired by fiction and has nothing to do with reality*". The fact is each episode dwells heavily on real political figures and events which all Iraqis are familiar with, so no 'fiction' can be relied on.

2. The sentence "*it works in accordance with Article 38 of the Iraqi constitution… an integral part of the basic right to freedom of expression recognized by resolution 59 of the UN General Assembly adopted in 1946, as well as Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of human rights 1948*" is an 'argument from an established rule'[10]which introduces the legal ground on which the expressed opinions stand. It is the first argumentation scheme employed here. This, however, contradicts the opening sentence, specifically the part which reads "*has nothing to do with reality*". If it has nothing to do with reality, then why would they refer to the aforementioned articles, resolution, and declaration which have everything to do with reality? This means that the program moves in a sinuous way – corkscrews. They move towards and away from what they really mean in order not to commit to the burden of proving premises.

3. 'argument from verbal classification' is the second argumentation scheme[11] employed in the disclosure. It is instantiated by the sentence "*which states that the basic right to freedom of expression includes freedom to get, receive and broadcast news and ideas by <u>any</u> means without restriction by geographical borders*". The verbal classification here covers the way of getting and receiving news and ideas by "any" means (legal or not) and having the right to broadcast them anywhere in the world. And this is really what happened in the program, which is aired on DW in Germany, and presents some confidential pieces of information (voice notes, videos, documents) about known figures in Iraq.

4. The sentence '*The program is for adults only and is not suitable for children due to the content that the program may contain that may be inappropriate for some age groups younger than 15 years, so it was necessary to note*' explicitly supports the inappropriateness of some content which does not accord with audience demand (the detailed discussion of this point is presented later in the paper).

If we check the SM triangle in Figure 3. above, then TP appears to be the first aspect to be integrated with corkscrewing, as shown in detail below.

4.1.1 Topical Potential (TP)

According to Eemeren and Houtlosser (2002), TP refers to selecting topics out of the available stock for arguers in what best helps them achieve their goals. In another paper, Eemeren (2010: 93-6) sheds light on a salient characteristic of TP – context-boundedness. By this is meant, as he asserts, the changeability of the framework within which this aspect moves. And it is exactly here where the role of culture introduced in Figure 3. above shows clearly. Before giving some examples for clarification, it is necessary to draw the episode design to investigate how TP is meticulously employed in this genre. According to the data, the internal network of TP is built as follows:

Each episode is differently entitled (with reference to a specific issue). Then it (i.e., the episode) starts with surveying the most prominent news in the week, which belongs to no specific category (that is, social, political, sports, or even international); yet it is carefully selected on the basis of their relevance to a certain culture-specific issue not just for fun although they are presented in a comic manner always as mentioned before with plausible deniability always 'on-record'. Up to this point, the title of the episode has not been realized yet. Rather, it is presented in the middle of the episode. Metaphorically speaking, the presenter paves the way, through scanning the latest news at first in a comic way, for a more serious issue which is highlighted in the title. By so doing, he in fact loads the audience mind with pieces of information which ventriloquistically relate to the main issue implied in the title. In another metaphorical wording, the presenter gives all the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle, separately, and the rest is on the audience to link them and have the final picture. Generally speaking, each episode is tripartite:

Part 1: weekly report (or some news prominent in the past week).

Part 2: main topic of the episode (represented by the title).

Part 3: which is changeable (involves either presenting facts and documents about a certain organization, ministry, or any figure directly, so no corkscrewing is employed, or interviewing public figures in Iraq (actors or influencers and sometimes informationalists) with whom no corkscrewing is needed)[12].

It is necessary to mention that the closing of each episode directly addresses the audience with the second personal pronoun 'you' with all the statements issued. This spots the focus which the program puts on the audience, which in turn highlights the importance of the role allotted to audience even implicitly. To better inspect the infrastructure of TP in corkscrewing, each relevant part is analyzed separately.

Part 1: The weekly report

As introduced before, this embraces the presentation of some news or events that happened during a whole week. They are delivered comically (that is, satirically) for a particular goal: uncovering some unexpected interconnection. This is achieved

via employing one (or more) of the following schemes. For example, episode 2[13] starts with the following news:

(3) 95 cows are manipulating the public money[14].

In this news, it was declared that the same 95-cow herd was used several times as trade for loans by different people. The interconnection intended to be unfolded is the corruption which underlies such a trade. So, instead of directly stating (P) (that there is a corruption), the program presents the news titled as such, supported by some explanation about the news, leaving the audience to hyperlink facts together meanwhile remaining intact of proving that standpoint which has already been unstated. Corkscrewing here has early been schemed in the title per se.

In episode 3, another case is identified:

(4) In an interview with a previous prime minister, the interviewer asked him about something in sports with the latter (i.e., the prime minister) requesting the interviewer not to ask him about sports as he does not know a lot about it, and never engaged in it. Yet, he (the prime minister) claimed supporting the Iraqi national team by granting them properties, several tributes, and a lot of money on winning the Asia Championship Cup.

The underlined phrases have been respectively commented on, for a particular goal, by the presenter (Al Basheer) as follows:

I like a man who doesn't interfere with what doesn't concern him. He never engaged in sports thus he doesn't interfere. God knows why he's interfering with politics.

Abu Israa', we are used to know how accurate your words are always. Can we check from the players themselves whether you actually had given them properties and a lot of money? (stressing the 'a lot of money' with a rising tone). Then, the program showed a video about one of the players in the Iraqi national team asked about the tributes granted to the team. One of them replied by being given only 10, 000 $ (by the same prime minister above), whereas the UAE government had given them 200,000$!

Unlike example (3), (4) does not corkscrew in the title of news; it does so in the comments on them. Hence, the scheme here is comment-built. The goal intended to be achieved here is just to demonstrate how unreliable that prime minister is. In the first comment, the P ventriloquistically intended is that the previous prime minister has nothing to do with politics. In the second comment, which probatively supports the first, the P is that prime minister is inaccurate in stating issues.

In episode 4, the latest news was about the final match of the World Cup. He first mentioned the players, then discursively gave his P as follows:

(5) What really did move my emotions is watching all the Iraqi people inside the Lusail International Stadium were joined, heart to heart, which gives a view on the Iraqi government, and its deep and firm faith in quota system and fair play. How nice! Leaders from all ethnic groups from Kurds, Sunnis, and Shiites, all there.

In this example, differently from the previous two, the scheme followed here, which passes unnoticed through commenting on a picture shown on the screen, is

instantiated by the whole-part metonymy made between the Iraqi people and government bringing to notice the concept of quota (for having governmental positions) and fair play (for getting those positions) as far as the controlling ethnic groups in Iraq are concerned. The goal is to corner that the idea of quota is invading even in the most public affairs.

In episode 5, the case is still quite different from what has been previously identified. The scheme can be best described as follows: some news is announced (on the tongues of their speakers via videos) giving certain pieces of information. Then, a comment is made on one specific piece of information conjuring up others' comments on that very information, and later the presenter comments again to deliver P:

(6) The logistic preparations of the stadium in Basra are very significant. Under the emergency support law, three trillion were allocated to Basra. Some of it, approximately 600 billion, were authorized for the mayor to spend on direct encounters. [This is the original news]

Enjoy the championship for they will spend the amount of 600 IQDs on infrastructure. Qatar has spent 220 billion dollars for the infrastructure of the World Cup. What did we spend this 600 billion IQDs on? [Al Basheer comments]

The parts concerned are planning to construct an advertising wall to separate the nearly random housing from Al Mina Olympic Stadium. The existing sights aren't pretty, and we are running out of time, which made Mr. Mayor decide on this project to be here and now. [A video displayed by the program for someone working on the project, that is, the wall]

It's a good solution. You have a problem but since you are in rush to go to the championship and can't solve it, so it's best not to see it. And that's it, case solved! If you have some random housing units around the stadium, just place a large green-screen, fill it with building and trees, with happy kids playing and running. A homeland of graphics, pixelized too. But guys, we really want to be happy even if we have some defects around here and there. Let's go. [Al Basheer comments]

By such a scheme, the presenter is moving towards, and at the same time, away from stating P – corkscrew. One last remark to close the discussion on this part. The function of the weekly report is to supply audience minds with 'implicitly ready-made' frames of hyperlinks (via the schemes above) in order to make later associations between the title and the major issue represented by the title, the investigation of which is next to come.

Part 2: The main topic

This is presented in three steps: introduction, warrant, and closing. Each is discussed in some detail below.

1. Introduction: This involves employing various strategies as initiating moves, such as: raising a question (as in spisode6), making a general statement (as in episode 7), making a specific statement which is related to the title in one aspect or another (as in episode 8), directly indulging into the topic (episode 9), or invoking a proverb (as in episode 10). All these strategies prepare the audience for

all the details planned to be revealed in the next step which the paper calls 'warrant'. It is named as such since it provides the facts required to support what has been claimed in the first step.

2. Warrant: This hinges upon constructing the solid ground on which the main topic of the episode is built. It involves reviewing the specific event (subject) highlighted by the title uncovering various details through presenting documents or videos on that specific topic as well as commenting on it by:

1. Referring to:

- Information mentioned previously in earlier episodes or even earlier seasons (as in episodes 11, 12, 13, 15).

- Instances mentioned earlier in the episode itself (which is usually the case in the program).

- Details which are yet to come, that is, aired in the forthcoming episodes (as episode 13).

2. Offering some things, inviting the addressees to do some things, or even challenging the addressees, who could be the audience and/or any other figure (as in episode 13).

3. Urging the audience to do something, for example, make a hashtag, inform via platforms (as in episode 14).

It is necessary to re-state, at this point, that all the details above are presented in a culture-specific frame. Culture-specificity, in this genre, has been identified to be constructed at two levels: micro and macro. The former pertains to word level, and sentence level. The latter, in turn, embraces topical level, attitudinal level, and temporal level. Each is exemplified and commented on below:

a. Word level: This involves the use of culture-specific single words, as in the word 'eidiyah', which refers to the sum of money, given mainly to children, in Eid Al-Fitr (when Ramadan, i.e. the month of fastening, had finished) as a gesture of happiness and rewarding for newly fasting children. This was used in episode 19.

b. Sentence level: The use of a whole sentence to indicate some issue. For example, in episode 14, Al-Basheer uses the sentence 'We are counting on you' which is the communicative translation of the Iraqi proverb that literally reads as 'We are in your moustache'. In the Iraqi culture, the moustache is a symbol of manhood and masculinity, so when somebody says, 'we are in your moustache', it means 'we all rely on your manhood, and we count on you'.

c. Topical level: This relates, as found in episode 15 for instance, to a general topic or issue which is part of the Iraqi culture. So, in the episode above, Al-Basheer tackles a topic that is part and parcel of the Iraqi family's social life and organization – the problems which the newly married son in the family faces with reference to the relationship between his mother and his wife and the frequently occurring mother-and-daughter-in-law clashes. This can be justified by the point that it is usual in the Iraqi family that their son, after getting married, lives with them in the same house where numerous problems start to float.

d. Attitudinal level: This pertains to dealing with various attitudes whether different or similar. For example, in episode 18, Al-Basheer tackles different

attitudes on two different political regimes, viz. before and after 2003. Another example can be given on similar attitudes shared among most people. In episode 16, Al-Basheer declares monitoring his language as being free of any obscenity (see below for more details on this point) because of the holy month of Ramadan. Later, in episode, 20, he declares that Ramadan had finished so he can come back to what he was on before. In the Iraqi culture, and the Islamic culture in general, Ramadan is the month of worshiping the Almighty God through fasting and praying, so no inappropriate acts are tolerated at all.

e. Temporal level: This involves dealing with time-related topics. For instance, in episode 20 Al-Basheer starts with talking about summer which is extremely hot in Iraq, with a degree exceeding 50 C^O, especially in July and August. So, talking about certain topics becomes valid only in specific times.

Interestingly, it has been found out all the details are discussed in relation to this level in one way or another. The reason is that each episode is built on what happened during the past week, so they are tied to a specific time. Yet, the way they are presented moves along a word-and-time continuum.

3. Closing: This is optional as it can occur in two formats:

- Either in the way discussed above within warrant, viz. points 2 and 3, or
- It can involve addressing the audience directly as found in episodes 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, for example.

4.1.2 Audience Demand (AD)

According to the original theory of SM, AD means tuning the argumentative moves in the optimally acceptable way to the other arguers with reference to their preference (Eemeren and Houtlosser 2002: 136). However, AD as presented now is in fact opaque as no clear account has been set to what is 'optimally acceptable', or what are the borderlines of 'preferences? Hence, two comments on this issue seem necessary here:

1. Fairclough's (2009: 135) which pointedly adds the element of publicity. This is because, logically speaking, something can be judged as 'optimally' acceptable or not with reference to the public.

2. Tindale's (2009: 43) which spots the role that context plays in AD. According to Tindale, AD relies "on the issue and the nature of the audience involved". And it is at this point, exactly, where AD, in the genre under investigation, as an aspect of SM is never met. It is as such because the audience of such programs encompasses all ages, whatsoever, and the explicitly or implicitly issued obscenity runs against the public acceptance of the audience. This is clearly demonstrated in the disclosure mentioned earlier on p. 8 above. Worded another way, AD is not fulfilled (i.e., not made prominent) in this genre for two reasons:

a. The disclosure above explicitly states that the program has inappropriate content for those under 15, hinting it has some obscene expressions (which is literally the case). Such indecent (in fact shameless) expressions make so many people, especially families, criticize the program for such a style. So, the publicity and the type of audience, as tokens of AD, have not been kept to.

b. In the Iraqi culture, sexual suggestibility is forbidden in public (and criminalized by the Iraqi penal code 111, in 1969, article 433), yet the program employs them very frequently. This makes AD at stake.

4.1.3 Presentational devices (PD)

This refers to, as pinpointed by Eemeren and Houtlosser (2002: 136), the style which arguers employ to attain their goals. Nevertheless, there are other opinions which meaningfully elaborated on this another opaque definition. They are presented, here, on scale from the most specific to the most general as follows:

1. Rocci (2009: 258) subsumes the concept of linguistic choices under the title of presentational devices (henceforth, PDs).

2. Eemern (2010: 121) stratifies PDs at three levels: syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic; therefore, covers all the linguistic choices available and employed including the stylistic means.

3. Rees and Rigotti (2011: 209) add the semiotic element to this aspect; and finally

4. Fahnestock and Tonnard (2011: 104) widely broaden the horizon of PDs by considering "any language element from the choice of a subject-verb pair to the rhythm imposed on a sequence of sentences" as PDs.

As far as this paper is concerned, it adopts all of the four opinions just mentioned. Accordingly, PDs are stipulatively approached as indicating all linguistic, paralinguistic, and semiotic choices which the presenter utilizes in delivering the topics selected. This is so because the program makes use of all the devices available explicitly and implicitly to present the materials in the way it does, which in turn enhances the salience of corkscrewing as a linguistic concept.

After constructing the haecceity of corkscrewing as a mode of SM, there remains one last remark to bring to notice. The prominence given to the two aspects discussed above is unequal, with TP taking 1 (that is, grabs the first degree of prominence), and PDs taking 2 (i.e., take the second degree), as such it is gradient. That is, TP is made more prominent than the way it is presented through (PDs) because the program does not employ a highly standard or rhetorical variety at presenting the meticulously selected topics. Rather, what is really peculiar is the way topics are interconnected with each other by the frames and schemes illustrated earlier. This makes sense in this genre since the audience is heterogeneous and the topics tackled are complex enough, not in their content, but in their impact on the audience in what they arouse in them. So, the safest way to attain the goal is to use a very simplified language in order not to further perplex things. This is achieved via issuing familiar utterances including, but not limited to, certain speech acts as accusation, warning, criticism, and request, and other rhetorical devices such as rhetorical questions, metaphor, simile, irony, sarcasm, understatement, etc.

4.2 Features of corkscrewing as a mode of SM

After identifying corkscrewing as a mode of SM, it is time to focus on the features which support the workability of this mode. According to what the paper has been stressing and, finally, showed how culture plays a pivotal role in this phenomenon,

it becomes necessary to mention that all the following features, deduced by the research per se, rest on that culture-specificity:

1. *Repeatedness of certain pieces of information*: This plays the role of 'reminder', that is, reminding the audience, whosoever, of certain pieces of information which support some claim made. For example, in talking about political parties, reference is repeatedly (all over the seasons) is made to their past relations, standpoints, statements, etc. This reminding aspect could have the illocutionary force of warning the audience, urging them to (not to) do some act (e.g. participating in the elections).

2. *Open-endedness of presentation*: This is mainly achieved via employing the direct speech act of question. In other words, when presenting facts about major issues (such as corruption), the turn chiefly ends with asking a direct question in one of the following forms:

a. **A Wh-question**

(7) What is the aim behind doing X?

b. **A yes-no question**

(8) Did you go out and check what happened with X?

c. **A Rhetorical question**

(9) Is it possible that X does not have an idea, has not been informed about Y?

Such a strategy (i.e., question) has its rhetorical effect on the audience in which it works as a stimulant as each question requires an answer which, if not available, makes some change in interaction (at least arouses suspicion, for instance). As a matter of fact, it is this 'open-endedness' which fuels the engine of corkscrewing excluding the plausible boredom with such programs. All in all, it is quite expected that the audience might get bored when employing the same technique for over 25 episodes extending over more than nearly six months.

3. *Simplicity of the language used*: In spite of the fact that corkscrewing does not fulfill AD, yet it cannot be denied that the language used is simple (and spoken in the colloquial and/or sometimes slang varieties) and can be easily understood by all the audience of whatever age. This simplicity flows from two sources:

a. The events tackled: These are culture-bound, viz. Iraqi, then the easiest way to comment on them is to use a simple language.

b. Explaining terms: This relates to explaining some technical terms of whatever type (political, economic, social, etc.), whenever used, in a general and simplified language in order to ensure wider access.

c. Comic framework: The most important factor is the comic framework within which corkscrewing moves. Comedy cannot be attained by a standard or technical variety which addresses a certain type of audience. And it is exactly this matter that such programs get away from.

4. *The analogy-based presentation*: This feature plays a crucial role in corkscrewing because it is a characteristic of the human mind to taxonomize things on some common ground which several entities share so that links could be found between them, hence they can be categorized accordingly. By 'categorize' here is meant uncovering the internal network of hyperlinks between the events mentioned so as to arrive at the ventriloquist meaning which this paper runs after. Interestingly,

this feature in fact supports the simplicity counterpart discussed above, because you can make your ideas clearer by associating (resembling) them with something known to your heterogeneous interlocutors.

5. *Other-sidedness*: This is depicted by certain structures which the paper identifies as:

- **The use of questions (of whatever type)**

(10) In doing X, have you considered Y?

(11) Don't you know that by doing X, Y will … (show, disappear, etc.)?

(12) Do you know how many people could have benefited from X if Y?

- **Expressing expectation**

(13) Before doing X, you should have thought about Y.

- **Stating**:

(14) Y attracted my attention the most after doing X.

- **Expressing wish**

(15) I wish Y would do something after knowing X.

There is still one last thing to mention. It has been claimed above (page 7) that SM revolves around how arguers tune their argumentative moves to their own good. Being a mode of SM, corkscrewing is no difference in this regard. But what is the 'personal' good of satirical news programs presenters? It is not the personal benefit of the presenter per se, rather the position (with its authority) that the presenter occupies is what is served. That is, such programs serve the aim which the media aspire to – uncovering the truth.

5. Conclusion

Corkscrewing, as a linguistic concept instantiating SM, encompasses an amalgam of linguistic, paralinguistic, semiotic, and cognitive strategies distributed over the prominent aspects of TP and PDs. Besides, its culture-specificity may lead to vary those strategies in a scalar way, so it is recommended to study it within another culture to investigate whether it undergoes the same path of 'thisness' or not. All in all, whatever related to SM, in one way or another, is in fact a token of skill. That is, corkscrewing is individually variant from one person to another, it wholly depends on the 'artful' manner through which some issue is delivered to convince the audience without, at the same time, stating it directly so that the holder of issued standpoints remains intact (as far as the burden of proof is concerned). As regards insinuation, it interjects with corkscrewing in its (i.e., insinuation) main features: directness, deception, and manipulation. Yet, the relationship between them is never reciprocal: corkscrewing entails insinuation; the reverse does not hold. This is mainly because of the 'culture' and 'goal' elements subsumed within the definition of corkscrewing. Consequently, corkscrewing can be viewed as insinuation from a much broader perspective. However, the most important finding of the paper is that the three 'inseparable' aspects of SM have been shown to be separable in some manner, in that the aspect of 'audience demand' has not been appealed to, yet the mode worked successfully. So, instead of viewing them as 'inseparable', they might be presented as gradient or even gradable.

Endnotes

[1] The original standard theory was launched in (1984) by Eemern and Grootendorst as the Pragma-Dialectical Theory.
[2] Armas and Ruiz (2021) accommodate insinuation as conversational eliciture, a type of inference drawn on the basis of specific predicate.
3 See Marsili (2021) for a detailed discussion on the concept of committedness.
[4] See Mazzarella (2023) for degrees of plausible deniability.
[5] See Oswa'd (2022) for a relevance-theoretic account of insinuation.
[6] They thought it would suffice to mention context in its plainest sense in describing insinuation as a context-specific act.
[7] The name is adopted from Nunberg (2018: 266).
[8] See Mirza and Al-Hindawi (2016) for a succinct of SM.
[9] There are other Iraqi satirical news programs, namely Mugas (the scissors), or Ma'a Qahtan (with Qahtan) both post on YouTube, but they have not been selected depending on the number of views which are far more for the selected one than these two.
[10] One of the most common argumentation schemes defined by Walton (2002: 39) as some agreement reached, typically within an institutional framework, on putting some rule into place. Argumentation schemes are surveyed and illustratively exemplified by Walton (2002, 2005, and 2006). For the exhaustive list of schemes, see Walton (2008). For a brief tackling of the schemes, see Walton (2013).
[11] This is another scheme set by Walton as cited in 11 above. It is defined by Walton (2006: 128) as the scheme which "concludes that a particular thing has a certain property on the grounds that this thing can be classified under a general category of things that have this property".
[12] That is why this part is not studied in the article.
[13] Episode 1 of this season was not analyzed because it was introductory in that it did not follow the design drawn above.
[14] All the episodes are translated and transcribed by the program itself. All is documented on YouTube links in the references.

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Reverse these; 1957a should be the one with the title whose initial precedes that of the b one in the alphabet.

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Episodes links from 2-25 respectively

#البشير شو ستار اكس | الحلقة الثانية 02 | احنة_يخدمتكم - YouTube

البشير شو ستار اكس | الحلقة الثالثة 03 | التلوث النووي - YouTube

البشير شو ستار اكس | الحلقة الرابعة 04 | الحوت القانت - YouTube

YouTube - خل يجي الخليجي | الحلقة الخامسة 05 | البشير شو ستار اكس

YouTube - لك عواد | الحلقة السادسة 06 | البشير شو ستار اكس

YouTube - عام الارنب | الحلقة السابعة 07 | البشير شو ستار اكس

YouTube - كن مليونيراً | الحلقة الثامنة 08 | البشير شو ستار اكس

YouTube - فلوس الموازنة | الحلقة التاسعة | البشير شو ستار اكس

YouTube - البشير شو 2023 الحلقة10

YouTube - هبوط اضطراري | الحادية عشر 11 | البشير شو ستار اكس

YouTube - عركة الحب | الحلقة الثانية عشر 12 | البشير شو ستار اكس

YouTube - بصحة الحكومة | الحلقة الثالثة عشر 13 | البشير شو ستار اكس

YouTube - احنا بشاربك دعفس | الحلقة الرابعة عشر 14 | البشير شو ستار اكس

YouTube - البشير شو 2023 الحلقة 15

YouTube - البرامج الرمضانية 2 | الحلقة السادسة عشر 16 | البشير شو ستار اكس

YouTube - وضع التسنيح | الحلقة السابعة عشر 17 | البشير شو ستار اكس

YouTube - قصة 7.7.7 | الحلقة الثامنة عشر 18 | البشير شو ستار اكس

YouTube - العيديات | الحلقة التاسعة عشر 19 | البشير شو ستار اكس

YouTube - علاوي الاوكراني | الحلقة العشرون كاملة 20 | البشير شو ستار اكس

YouTube - ميتكالا العراق | الحلقة الواحدة والعشرون 21 | البشير شو ستار اكس

YouTube - المراقد الوهمية | الحلقة الثانية والعشرون 22 | البشير شو ستار اكس

YouTube - السحر الفضائي | الحلقة الثالثة والعشرون 23 | البشير شو ستار اكس

YouTube - يا وجعي| الحلقة الرابعة والعشرون 24 | البشير شو ستار اكس

YouTube - براءة ذمة | الحلقة الخامسة والعشرون والاخيرة 25 | البشير شو ستار اكس