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Types of Slips of the Ear in *The Hardware Shop* Episode of *The Two Ronnies* British Sketch Comedy

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the phenomenon of slips of the ear within The Hardware Shop episode of The Two Ronnies British sketch comedy, aiming to identify the types of slips present in the sketch. A qualitative research method was employed, utilizing observation, documentation, and transcription techniques to collect data from the spoken utterances in the chosen comedy sketch. The data analysis applied a descriptive qualitative approach, classifying slips of the ear based on Bond's (2005) speech perception error theory. The analysis revealed that humor rooted in slips of the ear was a significant comedic element in the sketch. Specifically, three types of speech perception errors were identified from Bond's (2005) classification: word boundary misperception, consonant misperception, and content and function word misperception. Consonant misperception and content word misperception emerged as the most prominent types, largely due to their role in creating verbal and phonological ambiguity. These errors were intentionally scripted, effectively generating comedic misunderstandings. This research demonstrated how psycholinguistic phenomenon, when deliberately integrated into scripted comedy, served as a powerful tool for humor creation.

Keywords: Slips of the ear, speech perception error, The Two Ronnies, British sketch comedy

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menginvestigasi fenomena slips of the ear dalam episode The Hardware Shop dari sketsa komedi Inggris The Two Ronnies, dengan tujuan mengidentifikasi jenis-jenis kesalahan persepsi ucapan yang ada pada sketsa tersebut. Metode penelitian kualitatif digunakan, memanfaatkan teknik observasi, dokumentasi, dan transkripsi untuk mengumpulkan data dari ujaran lisan dalam sketsa komedi yang dipilih. Analisis data menerapkan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif, mengklasifikasikan kesalahan pendengaran berdasarkan teori kesalahan persepsi ucapan Bond (2005). Analisis mengungkapkan bahwa humor yang berakar pada slips of the ear merupakan elemen komedi yang signifikan dalam sketsa tersebut. Secara spesifik, tiga jenis kesalahan persepsi ucapan teridentifikasi berdasarkan klasifikasi Bond (2005): salah persepsi batas kata (word boundary misperception), salah persepsi konsonan (consonant misperception), serta salah persepsi kata konten dan kata fungsi (content and function word misperception). Salah persepsi konsonan dan salah persepsi kata konten muncul sebagai jenis yang paling menonjol, sebagian besar karena perannya dalam menciptakan ambiguitas verbal dan fonologis. Kesalahan-kesalahan ini sengaja ditulis dalam naskah sketsa tersebut, secara efektif menghasilkan kesalahpahaman komedi. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bagaimana fenomena psikolinguistik, ketika sengaja diintegrasikan ke dalam komedi

sketsa dengan naskah tertulis, berfungsi sebagai alat yang ampuh untuk penciptaan humor.

Kata Kunci: Slips of the ear, kesalahan persepsi ucapan, The Two Ronnies, sketsa komedi Inggris

INTRODUCTION

Language, in its spoken form, is a cornerstone of human communication, yet it is also a common source of misunderstandings. One fascinating linguistic phenomenon that exemplifies psycholinguistics is *the slips of the ear*. According to Bond (2005), this phenomenon refers to misperceptions of an intended speech where the hearer fails to perceive messages, specifically regarding how the hearer recognizes words. This occurs when a listener misinterprets spoken words or phrases, often resulting in humorous or confusing situations. In the field of psycholinguistics, slips of the ear are considered a type of speech perception error, revealing how the human brain processes auditory information and the potential pitfalls in this process.

In the field of psycholinguistics, slips of the ear are considered a type of speech perception error, revealing how the human brain processes auditory information. These errors often occur even when the speaker delivers words accurately, making it challenging to attribute them solely to factors like accents, dialects, or background noise (Field, 2004). It is something that frequently happens on a daily basis. For instance, a person might hear "I scream" when someone says "ice cream," or mishear a waiter offering "soup or salad" as "super salad." In music, fans often misinterpret song lyrics, turning "Hold me closer, tiny dancer" into "Hold me closer, Tony Danza." Famous mondegreens include mishearing “the ants are my friends” for “the answer, my friend” (Dylan, 1963) and “excuse me, while I kiss this guy” instead of “excuse me, while I kiss the sky” (Hendrix, 1967). These examples illustrate how easily the brain can misinterpret auditory input, often in amusing ways. This phenomenon can also be known as *Mondegreen* (Pisoni and Remez, 2005). The term was named by an American author, Sylvia Wright in 1954 after she misheard the line “They have slain Earl O’Murray and laid him on the green" as "They have slain Earl O'Murray and Lady Mondegreen" during her mother's reading aloud of Thomas Percy's Reliques of Ancient English, which included the Scottish ballad, The Bonny Earl of Murray (Wines, 2012).

While slips of the ear can be frustrating in everyday communication, they have found a special place in the realm of comedy. Humorists and comedians have long recognized the potential of these linguistic misinterpretations as a source of laughter. Nilsen and Nilsen (2018) stated, “After people noticed how surprising and funny many *mondegreens* were, they began creating their own as jokes.”

Additionally, according to Alexander (1984), comedians have gained a prominent role in British mass entertainment, significantly influencing both the English language and other components of British culture. Many jokes in British humor relies heavily on ambiguity and word play including features such as different voices and accents, the usage of catch phrases, and impact of funny sounds which are considered foundational to verbal humor in English.

Besides, Marx (2019) defined sketch comedy as a flexible television genre characterized by short, stand-alone comedic scenes or sketches that typically include a setting, one or more characters, and a central premise. Each sketch usually involves a specific setting, characters, and a defined time frame, with the humor emerging from a unique premise or exaggerated interactions. Different from conventional narratives, sketches are often disconnected, requiring minimal continuity or prior knowledge from the audience. The adaptability makes sketch comedy particularly suited to satirical and absurd elements, allowing comedians to experiment with form and cultural reference of comedic norms (Marx, 2019).

A prime example of this comedic utilization is *The Hardware Shop* episode, also known as the *Four Candles* episode, from *The Two Ronnies* British sketch comedy. According to Corbett (2006), *The Two Ronnies*, starring Ronnie Barker and Ronnie Corbett, was a British sketch comedy series that ran from 1971 to 1987. Known for their wordplay and clever scripting, the duo became icons of British humor. *The Hardware Shop* episode, which aired on September 4, 1976, masterfully portrayed the slip of the ear phenomenon to create a hilarious scenario. The enduring popularity of this sketch underscores the comedic power of linguistic ambiguity. This study focuses on examining the slips of the ear phenomenon in the context of scripted comedy, specifically within *The Hardware Shop* episode of *The Two Ronnies* British sketch comedy. The discussion

centers on identifying and categorizing the different types of slips of the ear present in the sketch, using Bond's (2005) speech perception error theory as the primary analytical framework.

Several studies have explored the slips of the ear phenomenon in various contexts. Ramadhani & Kusumarasdyati's (2018) study focused on the types of slips of the ear performed by non-native speakers in Indonesia to make sense of utterances in English by using Bond's (2005) theory. The study found that the listeners' slips of the ear occurred at various language domains. They misperceived sounds at the phonetic level, such as consonants, vowels, and segment orders. At the lexical level with incorrect morpheme recognition, the creation of non-words, and difficulties in identifying word boundaries. Additionally, the syntactic level was affected, as evidenced by the ill-formed sentences that listeners believed they had heard.

In contrast, Felty et al.'s (2013) study examined slips of the ear through a large-scale spoken word recognition experiment involving 1428 English words presented in background babble noise to 192 native English-speaking listeners. The findings revealed that the errors commonly involved syllable substitutions, while phoneme-level errors more often included deletions and substitutions rather than additions.

However, none of the previous studies have specifically examined the slips of the ear phenomenon that happens intentionally, especially within scripted contexts, such as comedy sketches or episodes. This gap is particularly significant given that language play has a crucial role in creating humor. Unlike spontaneous misinterpretations in everyday life or misheard song lyrics, this sketch comedy creates slips of the ear moments on purpose. Therefore, this investigation aims to contribute to the understanding of how specific types of slips of the ear were employed intentionally in a scripted sketch comedy.

RESEARCH METHOD

Creswell and Poth (2018) once stated that qualitative research uses interpretive or theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems to address the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. Hence, this study used a qualitative research method, employing specific theoretical frameworks to systematically analyze a social phenomenon.

The data consisted of spoken utterances extracted from *The Hardware Shop* episode of *The Two Ronnies* British sketch comedy video as the data source, which is publicly accessible through the BBC archives. In the episode, Ronnie Corbett played a hardware store shopkeeper and Ronnie Barker played a customer who entered the shop with a shopping list. The humor started from a series of misunderstandings between the customer and the shopkeeper, primarily due to words that sound similar but have different meanings.

This particular data source was chosen because it mainly employs the use of slips of the ear for comedic effect, making it an ideal source for analyzing this psycholinguistics phenomenon within the context of scripted comedy. Moreover, the *Four Candles* sketch was voted as the funniest comedy moment of the 70s on UKTV and finished fifth in Channel 4's Fifty Greatest Comedy Sketches in 2005 (BBC News, 2007).

The data collection process involved observation and documentation methods to record relevant information. Additionally, a transcription technique was used where spoken words were carefully written down for further detailed analysis.

For analyzing the types of slips of the ear, the study applied a descriptive qualitative method. The analysis involved systematically categorizing each identified instance of a slip of the ear according to Bond's (2005) theory, which encompasses 14 distinct types of speech perception errors. This process involved presenting each identified slip of the ear instance as part of dialogue excerpts, with the customer's intended utterance and the shopkeeper's misheard interpretation clearly highlighted. Each instance was then classified and discussed in relation to Bond's (2005) theoretical framework. The method allowed for a detailed examination of the linguistic nuances involved in each misperception, providing insights into how these errors contribute to the comedic narrative.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data found in this study were taken from the conversation between the main characters of *The Hardware Shop* episode of *The Two Ronnies* British sketch comedy. In this secttion, the data were analyzed based on the theory of speech perception errors proposed by Bond (2005). The analysis in this sub-chapter was focused on the types of slips of the ear exemplified in the episode. Below is the analysis for the types of slips of the ear exemplified in *The Hardware Shop episode* of *The Two Ronnies* British sketch comedy.

Word Boundary Misperception

The first type of slips of the ear phenomenon found in *The Hardware Shop* episode of *The Two Ronnies* British sketch comedy was word boundary misperception. This type of misperception happens when a listener mishears the boundaries between words, often due to the continuous flow of spoken language and reduced or unclear pronunciation. In casual conversation, especially in accents or dialects where sounds are dropped or merged, it becomes easier for the brain to mistakenly segment speech into incorrect lexical units. One clear instance of this phenomenon was found in the early part of the sketch where the customer's utterance was misunderstood by the shopkeeper. The data and analysis of this misperception are presented follows.

[Data 1] (0:15 - 1:02) Four Candles/Fork Handles

Barker : **Fork 'andles!**
Corbett : **Four candles?**
Barker : **Fork 'andles.** (Ronnie Corbett makes for a box and gets out four candles. He places them on the counter)
Barker : No, **fork 'andles!**
Corbett : Well there you are, **four candles!** (confused)
Barker : No, **fork 'andles!** 'Andles for forks (Ronnie Corbett puts the candles away and goes to get a fork handle. He places it onto the counter)
Corbett : **Fork handles**. Thought you said **'four candles!'** Next?

Based on the situation above, the data showed a spoken interaction between two male characters in the *The Hardware Shop* episode of *The Two Ronnies British* sketch comedy. The scene took place inside a traditional hardware shop, where the customer, played by Ronnie Barker, entered the shop and made a request to the shopkeeper, played by Ronnie Corbett, who was standing behind the counter. The customer wore a dirty top and a beanie hat, illustrating how he might be a working-class man coming in from a physical job, while the shopkeeper was dressed in a warehouse coat, portraying his role in the store. Based on their roles, the customer spoke in a more relaxed and casual tone, and the shopkeeper tried to interpret his requests with polite service, although increasingly confused by the customer's unclear speech. Their conversation was built around a series ofmisunderstandings, beginning with the customer asking for "fork handles/"

The utterance led the shopkeeper to bring out four individual candles, which he placed on the counter. However, the customer repeated, "No, fork 'andles!" emphasizing his request, which caused further confusion. Eventually, the misunderstanding was clarified when the customer exclaimed, "No, fork 'andles! 'Andles for forks!" revealing that he actually intended to ask for a replacement which is handles for forks, not four pieces

of candles. The shopkeeper then muttered in realization, "Fork handles. Thought you said 'four candles!'" and gave the customer what he actually needed.

The above context and conversation illustrated a clear example of word boundary misperception type of speech perception error, where the shopkeeper misheard "fork 'andles" as "four candles." This type of misperception arises because spoken language is naturally continuous, and listeners must mentally segment the sound stream to match it with familiar word forms. When that segmentation fails, as in this case, listeners may incorrectly divide the utterance into unintended lexical units. Here, the phrase "fork 'andles" was misperceived by the shopkeeper as "four candles" not only due to the phonological reduction of the /h/ in *'andles* as a common feature in casual British english, but also because of a segmentation error during speech perception. The shopkeeper incorrectly segmented the continuous speech stream *fork 'andles (*/fɔːk ˈændəlz/) into *for kandles (*/fɔː ˈkændəlz/, which closely resembled the phrase *four candles* both phonetically and semantically. This ambiguity increases in spoken language when the segmentation between the two words becomes unclear due to rapid or reduced speech.

Consonant Misperception

The second type of slips of the ear found in *The Hardware Shop* episode of *The Two Ronnies* British sketch comedy was consonant misperception. This type of slip of the ear occurs when a listener incorrectly perceives one consonant sound for another, especially when the pronunciation is quick, unclear, or delivered in a certain accent or even an unusual tone. Moreover, consonants can be lost or added within this type of error. This is common because consonants carry crucial information for distinguishing words, and even a small difference can lead to confusing or humorous misunderstandings. It also often occurs when voiced and voiceless consonants share similar places or manners of articulation. In comedic contexts, these kinds of slips of the ear become a rich source of verbal humor. The following data illustrated such cases of consonant misperception and the analysis.

[Data 2] (2:00 - 2:24) Sore Tips/Saw Tips

Barker : **Saw tips**!
Corbett : **Sore tips?** What d'you want? Ointment, or something like that?
Barker : No, **saw tips** for covering saws.
Corbett : Oh, haven't got any, haven't got any. (He mutters) Comin' in, but we haven' got any. Next?

In this segment, the misunderstanding centered around Barker's request, "saw tips," which Corbett heard as "sore tips." The shopkeeper, Corbett, reacted with visible confusion. His tone shifted slightly to concern, assuming the phrase referred to a physical illness. His response, "Ointment, or something like that?" indicated he interpreted the word "sore" as referring to a kind of fingertip pain or irritation, revealing that he believed Barker was asking for some kind of medical treatment product.

Corbett's misinterpretation was reasonable because the initial consonant /s/ and final consonants /r/ and /w/ in "sore" and "saw" are phonetically close, especially when pronounced with a British accent. The word "tips" added to the ambiguity, as it was a valid collocation in both phrases "sore tips" (as in fingertips) and "saw tips" (tool accessories). However, Corbett related it to the more familiar and likely interpretation based on health-related complaints rather than hardware terminology. Once Barker clarified while showing gestures to provide clarity regarding the item he was actually looking for, "No, saw tips for covering saws," the miscommunication was finally resolved, and Corbett's attitude shifted to being nonchalant. He muttered that the item was out of stock and moved on with, "Next?" This sudden transition underscored Corbett's attempt to regain professional self-control after realizing his mistake.

This example highlighted a clear case of consonant misperception. The confusion between the voiced /r/ in "sore" (/sɔːr/) and the voiceless /w/ in "saw" (/sɔː/) demonstrated a phonetic misperception that interrupted the understanding. According to Pisoni & Remez (2005, p. 294), "final consonants are lost much more frequently than initial consonants, undoubtedly because they tend to receive weak and indistinct articulation." This supported the idea that Corbett's mishearing of the final consonant in "saw" was not only probable but linguistically credible. Therefore, this instance effectively demonstrated how consonant misperception, especially involving weakly articulated final consonants, contributed to the slip of the ear phenomenon exemplified in the episode.

[Data 3] (5:29 - 6:13) And Pumps/Hand Pumps

Barker : **And pumps?**
Corbett : **Hand pumps?**
Barker : Foot pumps! (Surprised)
Corbett` : Foot pumps. (Muttering as he goes down the shop) See? a foot pump.

(He sees one and picks it up) Tidy up in 'ere. (He puts the pump down on the counter)

Barker : No, pumps fer ya feet! Brown pump, size nine!

Corbett : You are 'avin' me on, you are definitely 'avin' me on! (Almost at breaking point)

Barker : I'm not! (Not taking much notice of Corbett's mood)

Corbett : You are 'avin' me on! (He takes back the pump and gets a pair of brown foot pumps out of a drawer, then places them on the counter) Next?

In this segment, the misunderstanding began when Barker asks, "And pumps?" wanting to continue his list of requested items. Corbett misperceived it as "Hand pumps," immediately jumping to a specific hardware item. His assumption reflected a consonant misperception, in which the listener inserted the /h/ consonant sound. It aligned with Bond's (2005) explanation that consonants may be lost or added, or one consonant may be substituted for another during speech perception, particularly in rapid or unclear speech. This slight slip of the ear altered the meaning entirely, transforming a neutral connector "and" into a specific compound noun "hand pumps"

Additionally, the miscommunication intensified when Barker, surprised, responded with, "Foot pumps!". Corbett's growing impatience was reflected in his tone as he tried to fulfill what he believed to be another unreasonable customer demand. Still thinking of a hardware-related item of reference, Corbett grabbed a mechanical foot pump from the shelf. However, Barker said, "No, pumps fer ya feet! Brown pump, size nine!", which referred to a pair of brown shoes. Corbett's misinterpretation at this point was no longer a result of slips of the ear but rather a semantic barrier because the correct words were heard but were understood in the wrong context. According to Shwom and Synder (2013), "semantic barriers of communication occur when individuals assign different meanings to words, phrases, or symbols used in a message. These barriers can impede understanding and lead to miscommunication or incomplete comprehension." This type of barrier arises due to differences in interpretation, context, or cultural background and can affect effective communication.

Here, the phrase "foot pump" was ambiguous enough to refer to either a mechanical tool or a type of footwear, and Corbett correlated it to the more literal, hardware-related interpretation, which aligned with his role as a shopkeeper in a hardware shop. Barker's clarification, "Brown pump, size nine!", made the intended meaning obvious. It is that he was referring to brown shoes, not an inflation device. Once Barker clarified his request, Corbett finally recognized the intended meaning and gave him a pair of brown shoes, thus resolving the confusion. This sequence exemplified how slips of the ear can evolve beyond simple auditory misperceptions to influence broader layers of interpretation, including semantic barrier misunderstanding.

Content and Function Word Misperception

The third type of slips of the ear found in *The Hardware Shop* episode of *The Two Ronnies* British sketch comedy was the content and function word misperception. This type of speech perception error occurs when a listener replaces an unclear or misheard word with another content word that seems more familiar, expected, or plausible within the context, even if it does not match with what was originally said.

In this kind of error, the listener overlooks specific phonetic details and substitutes the utterance with another content word, such as a noun or verb, that shares a similar sound structure or rhythm. The substitution tends to preserve grammatical structure but results in confusion related to the meaning of the words, especially when the interpreted word belongs to the same syntactic category as the intended one. The following data findings illustrate how this kind of misperception unfolds and contributes to the slips of the ear in the sketch.

[Data 3-4] (2.24 - 4:10) Hoes, Hose, Pantyhose/O's

Corbett : Next?
Barker : **'O's!**
Corbett : **O's?**
Corbett : **Hoes**. (He goes to get a hoe, and places it on the counter)
Barker : No, **'O's!**
Corbett : **Hose!** I thought you said **Hoes!** (He takes the hoe back and gets a hose whilst muttering) When you said **Hose**, I thought you said **Hoe, Hoes!** (He places the hose onto the counter)
Barker : No, **'O's!**
Corbett : **O's**? (confused for a moment) Oh, you mean **pantyhose**, **pantyhose!** (He picks up a pair of tights from beside him)
Barker : No, no, **'O's! 'O's** for the gate. Mon repose! **'O's!** Letter O's!

Corbett : **Letter O's!** (finally realizing) You had me going there! (He climbs up a stepladder, gets a box down, puts the ladder away and takes the box to the counter, then searches through it for letter O's)
Corbett : How many d'you want?
Barker : Two.(Ronnie Corbett leaves two letter O's on the counter and takes the box back, then gets the ladder out again, puts the box away, climbs down the ladder, and puts the ladder away, then returns it to the counter)
Corbett : Yes, next?

In this scene, the shopkeeper, Corbett, stood behind the counter, visibly annoyed by a series of confusing requests from the customer. When Barker, the customer, casually called out, “O’s!” , Corbett leaned forward and repeated, “O’s?” in a puzzled, slightly annoyed tone. Without further clarification, Corbett assumed the request referred to a garden tool and took out a hoe, placing it on the counter. His tone remained professional, but there was a subtle hint of hesitation, suggesting he was unsure but still trying to appear helpful. Barker immediately corrected him, “No, 'O's!” with greater emphasis, but still no added context. Corbett, still unsure, muttered, “Hose! I thought you said hoes!” and replaced the hoe with a hose, interpreting the sound as a possible reference to garden equipment.

The misunderstanding continued as Barker repeated, “No, 'O's!” now sounding more insistent, while Corbett became visibly more confused and began thinking of alternatives. He picked up a pair of pantyhose, muttering, “Panty ‘o’s!” with a rising intonation, almost as if asking a question. This moment signaled a shift in tone from confusion to near disbelief, revealing how he was trying to make sense of what seemed like an increasingly absurd request. Finally, Barker provided more context, “’O’s for the gate. Mon repose! Letter O’s!”, indicating that he was requesting the alphabet letter O, likely for gate signage. Upon hearing this, Corbett muttered, “You had me going there,” clearly tired but relieved to finally understand the request. Barker, on the other hand, showed no further frustration, indicating that he was satisfied that Corbett had finally understood him. This satisfaction was visible in how he accepted the two letter O's without further correction or clarification. His calm response and smooth continuation suggested that the item had met his expectation, bringing an end to this particular misunderstanding and allowing the conversation to move forward.

The situation above reflected a clear example of content and function word misperception. Corbett heard the ambiguous sound "'O’s" and substituted it with phonetically similar content nouns such as “hoe”, “hose”, and “pantyhose,” each of which is a reasonable item in the hardware shop context. These were not function words or random guesses. They were all content words with meaning and purpose in theme with the setting. According to Bond (2005), this type of slip happens when a listener mentally fills in unclear input with another content word that matches the sound pattern but not necessarily the intended meaning. In this sketch, Corbett’s reliance on typical hardware vocabulary and visual context led him to make incorrect substitutions. This was due to Barker’s speech that was ambiguously pronounced. Thus, this slip effectively demonstrated how content word substitution, driven by contextual expectation and sound similarity, created both misperception and comedic effect of the scene.

[Data 5] (4:25 - 5:28) P’s/Peas

Barker : Got any **Peas?**
Corbett : For Gawd' sake, why didn' you bleedin' tell me that while I was up there then? I'm up and down the shop already, it's up and down the bleedin' shop all the time. (He gets the ladder out, climbs up and gets the box of letters down, then puts the ladder away.) Honestly, I've got all this shop. I ain't got any help. It's worth it we plan things. (He puts the box on the counter, and gets out some letter P's) How many d'you want?
Barker : No! Tins of **peas**. Three tins of **peas**!
Corbett : You're 'avin' me on, ain't ya, yer 'avin' me on?
Barker : I'm not! (Ronnie Corbett dumps the box under the counter, and gets three tins of peas)
Corbett : Next? (placing the tins on the counter)

In this data, Barker's request for "P's" was once again ambiguous and led to a comedic misunderstanding. Corbett, already exhausted by the previous confusions, interpreted "P's" as the letter P, a specific gate signage that Barker requested earlier. He started to sigh in frustration, "For Gawd' sake, why didn't you bleedin' tell me that while I was up there then?," his tone showed annoyance as he had repeatedly climbed the ladder to retrieve the letter box and had to face yet another repetitive task. The tone was frustrated, heavy with exhaustion, and clearly meant to heighten the comedic effect of the repetitive misunderstandings.

After he reached for the box of letters from the top shelf and looked for the letter P's, Corbett asked, "How many d'you want?" expecting a quantity of the alphabet item. However, Barker clarified, "No! Tins of peas. Three tins of peas!" This sudden transition completely changed the entire meaning of the utterance. The misinterpretation happened because Corbett was focusing on the letter "P's" and associated it to a familiar task in the context of previous requests, letters for gate signage, rather than interpreting it as another content word, "peas," the vegetable.

This slip illustrated how content word misperception contributed to another comedic scene of the episode. From a letter P to a food item (noun), both being valid content words but represented entirely different domains, are phonetically similar in natural speech, but Corbett chose the word that made more sense based on the context of the conversation. Corbett's response, "You're 'avin' me on, ain't ya?" showed his disbelief and emotional exhaustion, adding to the sketch's ongoing humor. Eventually, after Barker assured him that he was not joking, Corbett gave in and brought the correct item, three tins of peas.

CONCLUSION

From the analysis, it can be concluded that humor based on the slip of the ear phenomenon was a significant comedic premise in *The Hardware Shop* sketch. This type of humor occurs when the listener mishears a word or phrase, resulting in a humorous situation. The misunderstanding between the two characters in the sketch was enhanced by a deliberate use of ambiguous pronunciation and contextual incongruity, which created an unexpected and humorous situation.

Additionally, this study identified three distinct types of slips of the ear phenomenon in *The Hardware Shop* episode of *The Two Ronnies* British sketch comedy, categorized according to Bond's (2005) speech perception error theory. These types include word boundary misperception, consonant misperception, and content and function word misperception. The analysis revealed that consonant misperception and content word misperception were the most prominent types, contributing significantly to the verbal and phonological ambiguity that drives the humor in the sketch. The deliberate scripting of these slips within the comedy sketch demonstrates slips of the ear as a comedic tool, highlighting how linguistic misinterpretations can be intentionally crafted to create engaging and memorable humorous situations. This research underscores the

importance of psycholinguistic in understanding the mechanics of verbal comedy and how specific speech perception errors can be strategically employed for comedic impact.

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