The role of humorous elements in Cádiz chirigotas in creating/reinforcing a local identity: A relevance-theoretic approach

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This paper adopts a relevance-theoretic perspective to analyse how chirigotas –one of the types of bands in Cadiz carnival– exploit a series of verbal and visual comic elements in order to create or reinforce local identity: (i) the names of the bands, (ii) their attire, (iii) gestures and (iv) the lyrics of their comical songs, which satirise, mock, criticise, ridicule, praise, flatter or censure events or states of affairs. These elements will be argued to make manifest assumptions, activate (private) mental frames or express attitudes about those events or states of affairs, which the audience discover are already manifest to, and shared by, its members. Checking that other people entertain similar assumptions about and/or have similar attitudes towards those events or states of affairs –i.e. the joy of manifestness– will be shown to be essential for generating a feeling of in-group membership on which that of a local identity greatly depends.

**Keywords:** Humour, Cadiz carnival, relevance theory

1. **Introduction**

The carnival in Cádiz, one of the most popular celebrations of this type in Spain, has attracted the attention of researchers from various fields. Historians and anthropologists have
documented its origins, traced its evolution and analysed its most distinctive and idiosyncratic peculiarities, one of which are the comical, satirical and humorous folk songs (coplas) sung by a variety of groups (agrupaciones carnavalescas) (Ramos Santana 1985, 2002; Lomas Salmonte et al. 2005; Brisset Martín 2011; Moreno Tello 2015). Their composition, topics and transmission as a form of folk literature has been examined from a literary perspective (Osuna 2002; Páramo Sánchez 2016, 2017), cultural studies (Moreno Caballud 2014), film studies (Sacaluga Rodríguez and Pérez Garcia 2016) and even a journalistic angle (Sacaluga Rodríguez 2014, 2016; Fernández Jiménez 2016; Mariscal Sánchez 2017). Indeed, many of these songs frequently address current issues and voice opinions and viewpoints, so they are regarded as a form of folk journalism. Their impact is such that they are giving rise to a new cultural industry, as carnival groups do not limit their performances to the carnival season and to Cádiz, but travel to other towns and cities in order to enliven events like weddings, fairs, neighbourhood parties, etc., throughout the year, record their repertoire on CDs or sell their librettos (Sacaluga Rodríguez et al. 2017).

Cádiz carnival has received little attention from linguistics, however, and much less from pragmatics. Researchers have basically looked into the lexical features of the folk songs (González Martínez 1999; Payán Sotomayor 2000, 2004), the occurrence of taboos and euphemisms (González Martínez 1984) and irony (López Domínguez 2013). Quite surprisingly, even though such songs are remarkably characterised by their humorous tone, comicalness, funniness, wittiness, jokes and puns, no attention has been paid to humour and their humorous elements. This is precisely what justifies the need for this paper.

Humour serves a variety of functions (Hay 2000; Attardo 2002; Dynel 2007), which may be grouped into (1) strengthening of solidarity, (2) mitigating aggressive acts, (3) social bonding, and (4) exerting or resisting power (Yus Ramos 2016, 324-325). This paper focuses on the humorous elements exploited by a category of carnival groups in Cádiz with a view to
showing how they fulfil another crucial function that may be regarded as subservient to or yielding social bonding: creating or reinforcing a feeling of local identity. Although humour has been approached from theories as distinct as *superiority theory* or *relief theory*, such elements will be analysed from the cognitive-pragmatic framework of relevance theory (Sperber and Wilson 1986/1995; Wilson and Sperber 2002, 2004), which centres on comprehension and the achievement of various communicative effects.

As background information, this work begins by briefly presenting the carnival celebrations in Cádiz and the category of groups participating therein (Section 2). This is followed by a discussion of the major claims of the theoretical framework endorsed by this work and its approach to humour (Section 3), on which the intended analysis relies (Section 4). Finally, some conclusions and suggestions for further research are given (Section 5).

2. Cádiz carnival and its groups

Although carnival usually takes place during the weekend, Monday and Tuesday immediately preceding the Christian festivity of Ash Wednesday –and in some Spanish regions even from the previous Thursday (*jueves lardero*)– carnival celebrations in Cádiz extend over more than a month and finish in the second weekend of Lent with the so-called *carnaval de los jartibles* (“the carnival of the tiresome ones”). Right after Christmas, *erizada* and *ostionada*, two street folk parties where people are freely provided with sea urchins and a local variety of scallops (*ostiones*), signal the commencement of these celebrations, which consist of a street festival and a more ‘official’ event. The former is limited to the weekend, Monday and Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, and the two weekends following it, when people dress up in order to gather, party and watch performances.
The ‘official’ event is a rule-governed contest that begins a month before the Friday of the carnival weekend and ends on that day with the grand finale: *Concurso Oficial de Agrupaciones Carnavalescas* (COAC, Carnival Groups Official Contest). Four categories of groups, each of which is named after its tipo or disguise, bring their original repertoires to this contest and compete for one of the four places for each category in the grand finale, where they may be awarded a first, second or third prize. Their songs satirise, make fun of, mock, comment on, criticise, ridicule, praise or even flatter states of affairs, recent events, political measures, frequent attitudes or ways of thinking, or famous people from all social spheres and professions in a very subtle, witty and humorous style. These groups are:

a. *Cuartetos* (quartets), which comprise between three and five members singing to the rhythm of a wooden stick, a clave and güiros or pitos de caña, a peculiar type of whistle (see Picture 1). Their repertoire must include a parody, various cuplés and a final long song with a free topic (*tema libre*). Popular recent quartets are “Asociación Local de Comerciantes Asociados, Reunidos, Arrejuntados, Juntos y Organizados (A.L.C.A.R.A.J.O.)” (“Local Association of Associated, Reunited, Shacked up together and Organised Salesmen”), “Los pensionistas” (“The pensioners”) or “Los que esperando la Sentencia se tragaron la Penitencia” (“Those who, waiting for the Sentence, had to put up with the Penance”).

**Picture 1. A cuarteto**
b. *Comparsas* (troupes), which may have between twelve and fifteen members who sing in different voices –tenor, contralto, etc.– accompanied by guitars, drums, a bass drum and güiros (see Picture 2). Their repertoire tends to be poetical and socially and/or politically engaged (Sacaluga Rodríguez 2014, 2015), and encompasses an introduction (*presentación*), two pasodobles,¹ two cuplés with their respective chorus (*estribillo*), and a medley (*popurrí*). Recent well-known comparsas are “Los irracionales” (“The irrational ones”), “Los millonarios” (“The millionaires”) or “Los hombres de negro” (“Men in black”).

**Picture 2. A comparsa**

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¹ The pasodobles sung by comparsas have nothing to do with the Spanish traditional musical composition and dance emulating the movements in a bullfight.

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c. *Chirigotas*, which range from seven to twelve members and interpret comic and satirical songs, also often politically and/or socially engaged (Sacaluga Rodríguez 2014, 2015), with guitars, a drum, a bass drum and güiros (see Picture 3). They begin with an introduction that needs to be related to their disguise, after which follow two pasodobles and two cuplés, each of which must end with a chorus that also needs to allude to their disguise. Their last piece is, as in the case of the comparsas, a medley, but this must be structured in
quartets and must also refer to their disguise and the story behind it. Popular recent chirigotas are “Los del planeta rojo, pero rojo, rojo” (“Those coming from the red, red, red planet”), “Si me pongo pesao me lo dices” (“Tell me if I get boring/tiresome”) or “Las verdades del banquero” (“The banker’s truths”).

**Picture 3. A chirigota**

![A chirigota](image)

d. **Coros** (choirs), which are the largest category of groups, as they gather a minimum of twelve and a maximum of forty-five members (see Picture 4). They sing in various voices – tenor, contralto, etc.– to the rhythm of guitars, lutes and *bandurrias*. Their performance must also begin with an introduction that tells a story or is linked to their disguise and must continue with two tangos, two cuplés with their respective chorus and a medley. Popular recent choirs are “La vuelta a Cádiz en 80 mundos” (“Around Cádiz in 80 worlds”), “Los dictadores” (“The dictators”) or “El mejor coro del mundo” (“The best choir in the world”).

**Picture 4. A coro**
Once the grand finale is over and the winners are announced, these groups also join the street festival and perform on the streets. While choirs sing on top of a float or pageant, chirigotas, comparsas and cuartetos sing on the ground, on corners or in the middle of streets or squares. The city council and some districts also organise stage shows and for coros there are also various carruseles de coros (“choir carousels”), where one float is followed by another (see Picture 5).

**Picture 5.** Carrusel de coros

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2 In addition to these four categories of groups, there are chirigotas ilegales (illegal chirigotas), which are those that do not participate at the official contest and, therefore, do not have to abide by its rules, and romanceros, which are individual balladers or duos who tell a rhyming story assisted by a tableau showing strips connected with the story (Al-Jende et al. 2008).
The humorous elements that this paper addresses are those in the performances by chirigotas. Their contribution to building and/or strengthening a feeling of local identity will be discussed from the perspective of relevance theory (Sperber and Wilson 1986/1995; Wilson and Sperber 2002, 2004), so the following section summarises its view of comprehension and its approach to humorous texts.

3. **Relevance theory and humour**

3.1 *Relevance and comprehension*

As a cognitive-pragmatic framework, relevance theory (Sperber and Wilson 1986, 1995) is centred on comprehension and views it as a process of *mutual parallel adjustment* of the explicit and implicit content of utterances (Carston 2002; Wilson and Sperber 2002, 2004), in which a series of simultaneous, automatic, subconscious and incredibly fast mental tasks are performed upon recognition of the speaker’s *communicative intention* (Sperber and Wilson 1986; 1995, 61). This is the intention to *make manifest* –i.e., to cause another individual to notice and mentally represent– an *informative intention*, or the set of assumptions that the speaker intends the hearer to mentally represent (Sperber and Wilson 1986; 1995, 58). Mutual parallel adjustment mobilises the following cognitive mechanisms:

1. The linguistic or decoding module, which decodes and minimally analyses and parses the linguistically encoded input, and returns as output the *logical form* of an utterance –i.e., a structured set of conceptual representations.

2. The mindreading module, which attributes psychological states, beliefs and intentions, among which is the informative one. It contains an inferential mechanism which, at the
explicit level, assigns reference to a variety of expressions –i.e., deictics, pronouns, proper names, etc.– disambiguates word senses –i.e., of synonymous, homophonic, polysemous words, etc.– and opts for plausible readings of syntactic stretches; restricts concepts by *narrowing* or *broadening* their denotation, and recovers unarticulated material. The output of these tasks is the *lower-level explicature* of an utterance, which may be embedded under some sort of conceptual schema capturing the action that the speaker intends to perform when speaking or her feelings and attitudes towards something manifest in the physical environment or towards the propositional content of an utterance: the *higher-level explicature* of the utterance (Sperber and Wilson 1986; 1995, 182). At the implicit level, this module relates the informational load of utterances to perceptible or mentally stored information, which acts as *implicated premises*. These are *strongly* implicated when there is enough evidence that the speaker intends them to be accessed and used in inference, and *weakly* implicated if that evidence is lower and, therefore, they are accessed and used at the hearer’s sole responsibility. This inferential process yields *implicated conclusions*.

These modules are guided by *expectations of relevance*, or the presumption that the expenditure of *cognitive effort* required by those tasks will be compensated by some cognitive benefit in the form of *cognitive effects*. Accordingly, the mind follows the interpretative path demanding the least effort possible when performing the said tasks and stops once its expectations of relevance are satisfied (Wilson 1999; Wilson and Sperber 2002, 2004). The final output of those tasks is an interpretative hypothesis –i.e., a likely, plausible interpretation. It will be *optimally relevant* if its construction involves a reasonable amount of cognitive effort and yields a satisfactory amount of cognitive effects. Otherwise, it will merely be relevant or irrelevant (Sperber and Wilson 1986; 1995, 158). Optimally relevant interpretative hypotheses are likely to be considered the speaker’s meaning (Sperber and Wilson 2015).
The relevance-theoretic approach to humour

The content of many, if not all, manifestations of humour is in most cases of little or no relevance at all in informational terms, as long as the effort that their processing requires is not offset with cognitive effects that contribute to improving the audience’s worldview. Nevertheless, that effort is compensated with effects of a non-propositional nature: laughter, amusement, enjoyment, pleasure, etc., which render humorous texts optimally relevant (Yus Ramos 2016). A series of factors enable the generation of those effects:

a. Manifest information: Individuals represent information mentally and store the resulting representations in an organised way as encyclopaedic information (Sperber and Wilson 1986, 1995), cultural information (Sperber 1996), and/or make-sense frames (Yus Ramos 2003, 2008, 2013, 2016). However, they do not entertain representations of all the information amenable to being represented at a particular moment. The information that is actually manifest at a particular moment makes up their cognitive environment (Sperber and Wilson 1986; 1995, 39), so, when a series of mental representations is manifest to various individuals at the same time –i.e. when they are likely to entertain similar, not identical, representations in terms of content– those individuals share a mutual cognitive environment (Sperber and Wilson 1986; 1995, 42).

For humorous effects to arise, humorists and their audience must share a mutual cognitive environment; or the former, at least, must be able to cause the latter to create specific mental representations or to activate the information contained in certain frames (Cundall 2007).

Indeed, “[…] humorous discourse relies on implicit encyclopaedic knowledge that must be

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3 Make-sense frames is an umbrella term referring to encyclopaedic information connected with specific words (word-associated schemas), actions (sequence-associated scripts) and situations (situation-associated frames) (Yus Ramos 2013).
shared between addresser and addressee” (Chiaro 2011, 367). This is something that can often be done by means of certain textual fragments, which are aimed at establishing some sort of background or initial context against which to process what will follow, or through stereotypical types of characters, with which both humorists and audiences are well acquainted (Yus Ramos 2003, 2016). Activating or exchanging information that is already known or manifest to humorists and their audience fulfils a phatic function fundamental for creating or reinforcing bonds of union (Žegarac 1998; Žegarac and Clark 1999; Padilla Cruz 2004). Despite the scarce informativeness of such an information, access to it may make manifest further information and trigger the derivation of weakly implicated conclusions (Padilla Cruz 2004, 2007).

b. Mindreading abilities: Individuals can attribute mental states to other people, ‘read’, so to say, their emotions and feelings, and predict the information manifest to them. To put it differently, individuals can metarepresent other people’s beliefs, thoughts, desires, emotions or feelings (Wilson 1999; Noh 2000; Sperber 2000). These abilities are exploited by humorists in anticipating what the audience might or might not know about something, which enables the former to create a text that overcomes their knowledge lacunae by providing them with the necessary information to process the text. But that text may also bias the audience. In fact, the elements therein cause the audience to activate certain frames and to trust them to be suitable for interpreting it, even though they subsequently turn out unsuitable. Such a discovery is possible thanks to vigilance mechanisms, which detect an incongruity between the activated frame and something in the text (Padilla Cruz 2012, 2015, 2016).

Additionally, metarepresentational abilities are put to work in order to predict recurrent attitudes, ways of thinking and reactions in specific situations. This enables humorists to put in the mouth of the characters in their texts expressions that are identical to or resemble those that the audience will likely proffer when facing them. The resemblance between the
characters’ expressions and those that the audience might produce in terms of formal properties –e.g. lexicon, intonation, accent, etc.– renders such expressions metalinguistic metarepresentations. However, since such expressions match those that the audience might produce, or, in other words, since the humorists somehow attribute their likely production to the audience, they amount to attributive metarepresentations (Wilson 1999; Noh 2000).

c. Pragmatic ambivalence of the linguistically encoded form: Humorists are aware of likely ambiguities in certain linguistic chunks and of phenomena like polysemy, synonymy, homophony, etc., so they can prepare texts that take advantage of them. Just as humorists can predict availability or lack of information, they can also foresee the interpretative steps that their audience will take during mutual parallel adjustment, the interpretative hypotheses that they will consider in terms of effortlessness and salience (Giora 1997), and the potential outputs of that process. This enables them to play with the audience’s interpretative abilities by contriving a text that somehow leads the audience to believe that a relatively easy and straightforward interpretation appearing logical in the initial part of texts –the multiple-graded interpretation part (Yus Ramos 2003, 2016)– is the appropriate one for making sense of it. However, the audience, who have thus far behaved as naïve and optimistic hearers (Sperber 1994), and have therefore followed the interpretative path requiring the least effort and yielding a satisfactory number of cognitive effects, needs to abandon that interpretation upon finding an incongruous element –often in a textual fragment that works in a similar way to the punchline in jokes– and engage in sophisticated understanding (Sperber 1994). As a result, they backtrack, re-analyse the text and search for another possible interpretation that is actually the adequate one (Padilla Cruz 2012). Such backtracking is enacted by

4 This is the standpoint of incongruity-based theories of humour like Koestler’s (1964) bisociation theory, Suls’s (1972) two-stage model, which is endorsed by McGhee (1979), Attardo et al. (2002) or Dynel (2012a), or Ritchie’s (2005) forced interpretation model. Although these theories do not specifically address how an alternative interpretation is sought for, they describe that the audience of a humorous text sometimes need to backtrack and re-analyse the text as a necessary step to discover and consider an adequate interpretation.
hermeneutical vigilance (Padilla Cruz 2015, 2016) and occurs at the single-covert interpretation part of texts (Yus Ramos 2003, 2016). Even if it involves investment of additional cognitive effort, it comes with the tacit guarantee of humorous effects. Backtracking and re-analysis, however, do not necessarily involve solving all incongruities, as some actually remain unsolved and linger in the audience’s minds (Ritchie 2005; Forabosco 2008; Dynel 2012b).

These three factors are also essential in the humorous songs and performances of chirigotas in Cádiz Carnival. Although there are some asymmetries between these performances and stand-up comedies as regards the number of performers –i.e., a group in the former case but usually one humorist in the latter– and how laughter is triggered –i.e., through the chirigota’s disguises and songs in the former case and through the content and style of the humorist’s monologue in the latter– there are some analogies between them. Both types of show have genre-specific features known by the audience, which generate precise expectations concerning the content, structure, elements and ultimate purpose of the show (Yus Ramos 2002, 2016). As the next section will show, the lyrics of chirigota songs not only misguide the audience to unsuitable interpretations that must be rejected in favour of alternative ones, but also, together with the groups’ names, their attire and paralanguage, these lyrics make manifest information and metarepresent various elements, both of which are crucial for creating ties of union. As in stand-up comedies, such ties result from the audience’s communal realisation that they are misguided by and need to reinterpret fragments of the songs in the same way, as well as from their joint recognition that each member reacts similarly to the states of affairs addressed in the songs and holds similar attitudes towards them.
4. Creating/reinforcing a local identity through humorous elements

Performances by the various types of groups in Cádiz Carnival resemble, to some extent, stand-up comedies and share some of their characteristics (Yus Ramos 2002, 2016). During the official contest, these groups sing in front of an audience of locals and non-locals who are seated relatively close to the stage in the venue, the Gran Teatro Falla, and are already acquainted with the type of show that they will watch, its rules and structure. In contrast, during the street celebration, the venue obviously shifts to the city streets, corners and/or squares, where the groups sing on top of removable stages or simply on the ground, which increases physical proximity even more. In both cases, nevertheless, the audience know beforehand what they are likely to see and listen to, which is part of their cultural knowledge (Sperber 1996). This knowledge significantly determines their expectations about the feelings that they will experience or, what amount to the same, the (non-propositional) cognitive effects that they will obtain –amusement, pleasure, entertainment, humour, etc.

In the case of chirigotas, more specifically, the audience are previously aware that their folk songs will tell a story concerning the sort of persona with which their disguise is connected and will touch upon and express opinions about a variety of topics and issues in a very witty and comical style. These are very often known to the audience, whose members may have similar viewpoints. Attempts at making the audience laugh heavily depend on a number of strategies, which include layering, relating concepts, (mis)leading the audience to activate shared (cultural) frames that subsequently turn out inappropriate or incongruous; causing the audience to rely on information made manifest by previous textual fragments, which must also be later on discarded because of its unsuitability for making sense of the ensuing text, and fool the audience into assigning plausibility to a seemingly optimally

Chirigotas’ performances achieve their intended humorous effects because the audience identify what is being alluded to and cope with the Wittiness of their lyrics by solving their various incongruous elements. Moreover, as in other group humorous genres, the members of the audience also notice other members’ awareness of what is being alluded to, realise that they share similar viewpoints and attitudes towards it, and check that they experience the same interpretative problems and overcome them in a similar way, thus arriving at (a) similar interpretation(s). These feelings of sharedness and mutuality also generate feelings of community, in-group membership and similarity, upon which that of identity greatly depends. It is precisely when the members of the audience recognise that they share deeply-held beliefs and, maybe unvoiced, attitudes, and when they realise that they are puzzled to a similar extent by the same textual chunks and react to them in the same way, that all these experiences become mutually manifest and their manifestness spreads through the audience, thus achieving the status of a collective representation. This causes a feeling of joy of manifestation (Yus Ramos 2002, 2016) which greatly contributes to that of a local identity.

Four elements in chirigotas’ performances are essential to trigger such a joy of manifestation: their names, their disguise, the lyrics of their songs and paralanguage. What follows addresses each of them and discusses their contribution to a feeling of local identity from a relevance-theoretic perspective.

4.1 Chirigotas’ names

All groups in Cádiz carnival have a name, which facilitates the activation of mental frames and the manifestness of varied assumptions. The names for chirigotas may be descriptive and
refer to their disguise, often linked to a type of persona they impersonate. This is the case of “Los lacios” (“The limp ones”), “Ricas y maduras” (“Rich and mature women”), “Las marujas” (“The housewives”), “Los aguafiestas” (“The spoilsports”) or “Los juancojones” (“The lazy ones”), to name a few. Some of them, such as “Las marujas” or “Los juancojones”, even resort to local terms.

These names will very likely activate frames and assumptions about the type of people alluded to and their habits, which the audience will then confirm are spread throughout their members and have a similar content. For instance, “Las marujas” will not only grant access to assumptions regarding average housewives, but also to a stereotypical busybody, gossip, know-it-all women who express their ‘well-informed’ opinion about all sort of issues. Likewise, “Los juancojones” will activate a frame about men who are not just lazy, but also of henpecked, wimp husbands, who blindly obey their wives, lack freewill and show no initiative for anything.

Other names, in contrast, refer to common, recurrent expressions that locals usually employ when facing certain situations and needing to express specific feelings or attitudes. This is the case of “Si me pongo pesao me lo dices” (“Tell me if I get boring/tiresome”), “Ahora es cuando se está bien aquí” (“It is now that it feels great here”), “Lo que diga mi mujer” (“Whatever my wife says”) or “No somos nadie” (“We are nobody”). These names attribute those expressions to locals, so they are, on the one hand, attributive metarepresentations, and, on the other hand, metalinguistic metarepresentations, as they replicate their lexical components and meaning import (Wilson 1999; Noh 2000).

Names like these additionally contribute to a feeling of local identity because the audience verify that those are the expressions that they also usually proffer when they are in the same situation and want to express similar attitudes, or the expressions that they will hear when they perceive certain attitudes in other people. For example, “Si me pongo pesao me lo
“dices” will very likely activate information concerning a tiresome, annoying, cheeky friend or acquaintance –rather frequently a sponger– a character well-known to everyone, who does not often seem to be aware of their irksome non-stop chatting and meddling, as evidenced by their uttering the expression in question. Similarly, “Ahora es cuando se está bien aquí”, a saying often employed by gaditanos (Cádiz people) when it feels good on the beach because the outdoor and water temperatures, windless and calm atmosphere, scarce number of (sun)bathers, the sunset, etc., invite people to approach the shore or to sit unhurriedly on the sand and address a variety of subjects and make personal revelations, will evoke a similar situation to which the members of the audience will surely react by means of the same expression.

Still, other names play with words –i.e., they rely on punning – and may cause an oscillating effect (Attridge 1988). This is the case of “Los del planeta rojo, pero rojo, rojo”, which plays with the polysemy of Spanish ‘rojo’ as referring to a colour (‘red’) or to a political ideology or orientation (‘communist’); “Los puretas del Caribe”, which exploits the phonological similarity between ‘pirata’ (‘pirate’) and ‘pureta’ (‘old croak’), or “¡Viva la Pepi!”, which plays with the nickname for the 1812 Spanish constitution (‘La Pepa’) and the stereotypical nickname for a female cleaner. Just as the audience waver about one or another sense of the ambiguous element, each of which sparks distinct, maybe unrelated and/or conflicting frames, they also hesitate as to the suitability of each frame for understanding the chirigota’s performance. Realising that other individuals in the audience resolve that indeterminacy in the same manner and opt for a particular disambiguation and frame is essential for generating group identity feelings.

5 For pragmatic analyses of punning and its comprehension, see Dynel (2010) and Solska (2012a, 2012b).
6 The Spanish 1812 liberal constitution was thus nicknamed because it was enacted on St. Joseph’s day (19th March) and the Spanish nickname for ‘Joseph’ is ‘Pepe’, whose feminine counterparts are ‘Pepa’ and ‘Pepi’.
Finally, a further category of names combines punning with allusion to well-known social types or frequent expressions. Thus, “Una chirigota con clase” refers to a classy, stylish chirigota (“con clase” in Spanish—“to be classy”), but also introduces a pun, as ‘clase’ may be interpreted as either ‘classy’ or ‘class(room)’. Similarly, “Lo siento, Patxi, no todo el mundo puede ser de Euskadi” evokes a well-known text on a popular T-shirt—“Lo siento, pisha, pero no todo el mundo puede ser de Cai” (“I’m sorry, man, but not everybody is allowed to be from Cádiz”)—and simultaneously plays with the final part of ‘Euskadi’—the vasque name of the Spanish self-governed region of The Vasque Country—and ‘Cadi’, which resembles a local pronunciation of ‘Cádiz’. These names give rise to a similar oscillating effect and contribute to identity when it becomes manifest to the audience that they have made similar choices in terms of lexical senses and frames.

4.2 The disguise

Just as locals hold beliefs about a variety of personae, situations and expressions, their collective imaginary surely contains (stereotyped) portraits of those personae. Chirigotas’ disguises somehow seek to capture them as a characterization tool, thus helping people visualise them. However, they make those portraits visible in an exaggerated manner (Barceló Calatayud 2014).

For instance, the disguise of the chirigota “El crimen del mes de mayo” (“The May crime”) pictures a young boy—fringe, rosy cheeks, freckles, etc.—in a popular navy-style first-communion costume with all the typical accessories for this attire—hanging cross, rosary, breviary, etc.—but incredibly enlarged. In turn, the chirigota “Ahora es cuando se está bien aquí” portrays popular housewives from La Viña neighbourhood who enjoy spending

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7 ‘Pisha’ is a local endearment term and ‘Cai’ the local pronunciation of ‘Cádiz’.
endless hours lounging in the sun—often on La Caleta beach—\(^8\) with an ice-box full of all kinds of food—sandwiches, omelettes, cold meat, salad, etc.—and drinks, and do nothing but play bingo or cards, knit or sew, and chat. Exaggerated attributes are to be found in their huge double chins, enormous thighs, thick rolls of fat, the ridiculously tiny bikini or bathing costume they wear, which looks more appropriate for a teenager, and the ice-box or basket packed with all kind of food placed by their side (see Picture 6).

**Picture 6.** Chirigota “Ahora es cuando se está bien aquí”

These visual elements are essential to cause laughter and to unite people. Laughter arises from the unexpected and surprising exaggeration of those elements. Social bonding, in turn, is a consequence of noticing mutual identification of those elements and similar attitude(s) to their exaggeration.

4.3 *The lyrics*

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\(^8\) This beach is located in the vicinity of *La Viña* neighbourhood, probably one of the most typical, popular, low-/working-class districts in Cádiz.
Chirigotas’ lyrics range from compliments (*piropos*) and praises to the city, its traditions, history or inhabitants, to critiques or comments on current political, social or cultural issues; politicians and celebrities, or funny situations, to name but some. Owing to the audience’s previous acquaintance with what is addressed, their topics tend to fulfil a phatic function (Žegarac 1998; Žegarac and Clark 1999; Padilla Cruz 2004). Despite their uninformativeness, they make people roll over with laughter as a result of the wittiness, irony, satire and comicalness, and the tactics deployed by songwriters. Moreover, three features foster a feeling of common identity:

a. A familiar situation or context. Many scenarios turn out to be familiar to the audience, so its members obviously possess mental frames that store information about their physical elements, social components and expected behaviours. Humour arises when the audience realise that something odd or undesirable that they might be afraid of actually happens, and when they check that their worst fears are shared by other members of the audience. Indeed, people often laugh at “[…] failure and wickedness […]” and “[…] matters that they might well find disturbing outside the context of […] joke[s]” (Davies 2011, 6).⁹

A case in point is the medley of the chirigota “El crimen del mes de mayo”. The lyrics describe a moment when one of the boy’s neighbours arrives at the banquet, gives him a present—a set of pens and a keyring— but fourteen other people, who had not been invited to the celebration, admit themselves unexpectedly and rush towards the cake and the other food. As a result, nothing is left of the cake and the cured ham, and the poor boy realises—as other people would if they were in the same situation—that he was wrong to think that people would come to his first communion in order to be with him and kiss him:

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⁹ The idea originally comes from Brottman (2004, 44).
¡Oju, llegó la Lola,
mi vecina del tercero.
Me trajo Lola
ese regalo puntero;
era un estuche
de un bolígrafo y llavero.
¡Qué sana es Lola!

Y se coló
con catorce invitaos
y se lanzaron
*pa* la tarta *enmallaos*
batiendo un récord.
¡De la tarta no quedó
ni el muñeco!

Yo pensaba que venían a verme y me equivoqué,
a mirarme y me equivoqué,
a besarme y me equivoqué.

Yo pensaba que venían a verme y me equivoqué,
*po* venían *pa* comer.

Se acabó el jamón,
no hay más que comer;
el que quiera más
que vaya a *Samué*.10

10 A corner shop.
Something similar happens in one of the cuplés by the chirigota “Ahora es cuando se está bien aquí”. It depicts a scene where a housewife from La Viña goes to the beach with her mother-in-law, who decides to go to the sea. There are four-metre high waves and the housewife acts as if she is worried that something bad could happen to her mother-in-law, even if she does not really care. Eventually, the mother-in-law is engulfed by a wave, so the housewife considers moving her under the sun and spraying some oil on her skin. Instead of suntan oil, she mentions leftover oil from fried fish. At that point, the housewife even expresses her concern that what happened in a previous unfortunate episode –namely, that the mother-in-law got sunburnt and smelled as if she was a medium-grilled sirloin steak– will not happen again:

(2) Es que a mi suegra yo la he dejao
sola en el agua y hay unas olas de cuatro metros
y a lo mejor no le pasa ná,
pero yo no acabo de estar tranquila.
¡Ay, mira, mira! Ahora la ha tirao una ola
y esa mujer no puede levantarse sola
y nadie le ayuda.
¡Que me entran ganas levantarme
y yo misma ayudarla en persona
y dejá en evidencia a to esos desprecupaos!
Ella sola siempre se ha sabio defender.
Ahora a lo mejor tengo que ponerla al sol un ratito.
Bueno,
y ponerle aceite que ma sobrao del pescao frito.
Bueno,
espero que no me pase como la otra vez
que estaba yo oliendo a solomillo, a solomillo,
y era mi suegra que estaba ya en su punto.

b. Well-known personae. Chirigotas’ lyrics are often about local people whom the audience can easily identify and with whom they may empathise as a result of what is narrated. For example, the lyrics of “Lo que diga mi mujer” portrays a henpecked husband who details the errands his wife told him to do, a situation that members of the audience might be familiar with or even have experienced themselves:

(3) ¡Qué contento estoy
porque ha hecho mu bien to los mandaos!
Una Casera blanca,\(^{11}\)
\textit{manolete, manolete}.\(^{12}\)
¡Qué bonito, que bonito!\(^{13}\)
¡Esto sí que es una chirimoya!
Un choríquito me quea,
otro pá la cocinera
y éste que me queda aquí pá mi mujer.
Dos acelgas para ti,
con ellas quiero decir…

c. Allusion to common attitudes, emotions or feelings. Songwriters can predict the audience’s likely reactions to certain states of affairs, attribute emotions or feelings to them, and/or metarepresent frequent expressions unveiling common feelings. Commonality arises

\(^{11}\) Casera used to be a popular brand of soda.
\(^{12}\) In Cádiz, a \textit{manolete} is a type of bread roll.
\(^{13}\) Here there is a pun, as ‘bonito’ may mean ‘beautiful’ and ‘tuna’.
upon discovering that what characters say and feel matches what the members of the audience would probably say and feel in that situation. The lyrics of the chirigota “El que la lleva la entiende”, which represents a gang of drunkards, illustrates this perfectly. As they were walking down the street along the harbour –Paseo de Canalejas– they were thinking of the official poster announcing the Carnival, which had then been painted by the famous Spanish poet Rafael Alberti in a rather peculiar style. Their dislike for it is verbalised through expressions that locals would utter:

(4) Iba por Canalejas
    por la acera del muelle
    con una risa que me llegaba de oreja a oreja.
    Estaba pensando ¡Ay, Alberti
    qué hermosura de cartel!
    ¿Qué carajo es eso, Dios mío de mi alma?

Moreover, drunkenness made the drunkards dizzy, so they tried to lean against the harbour railings. Surprisingly, the railings had been moved ten metres back, so another popular expression voices their shock:

(5) Y con el morazo14
    me dio un mareillo
    y a la reja del muelle yo me fui a dejar caer.
    ¡Me parti el careto!
    ¡Qué pellejazo pegué!
    ¡Ojú! ¡Ojú!
    ¡’Cago en los muertos
    del que ha echao la reja patrás diez metros!

14 In Cádiz speech, ‘morazo’ means drunkenness.
4.4 *Paralanguage*

Surely, the collective imagery also includes representations of people’s typical gestures, poses and facial expressions in specific situations, as well as of their accent and frequent intonational patterns. In addition to assisting the audience in the construction of descriptions about the characters’ emotional states (Wharton 2009), paralinguistic elements accompanying chirigotas’ songs also imitate –metarepresent– those people’s paralanguage. In-group membership arises when the audience recognise them and match them to the representations associated with those characters. This is the case, for instance, of the chirigota “Las marujas”, whose singers widely opened their eyes and ostensibly raised the forefinger and little finger while singing/narrating (see Picture 7). The audience would recognise such hand gestures as typical of that group of people.

**Picture 7.** Chirigota “Las marujas”
4. Conclusion

From a relevance-theoretic standpoint, this paper has shown that Cádiz chirigotas’ names and disguises, the lyrics of their songs and the paralanguage accompanying them make manifest assumptions likely to be already entertained by their audience and metarepresent the content and formal properties of expressions verbalising feelings and attitudes, which are perceived to be (highly) similar to those of the members of the audience in specific contexts. Additionally, this paper has argued that a feeling of local identity arises as a consequence of the joy of manifestness of a variety of information and emotional states which, though initially thought to be private, are subsequently discovered to be shared by other members of the audience. As a first attempt to approach the humorous performances in Cádiz carnival from a pragmatic perspective, this paper also unveils that there is a significant number of issues to explore: the linguistic strategies which, as in the case of monologues in stand-up comedies, songwriters deploy with a view to creating humour, the topics more amenable to making people crack up, potential differences between the various carnival groups and their songs, variation across time, etc. New avenues for research, therefore, open up in a field that has thus far received little attention from linguistics and, more specifically, from pragmatics. It would be interesting if researchers addressed them in order to better understand the intricacies of a humorous genre that enjoys great popularity and has such a significant impact on the media, at least in the south of Spain.

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