Decoding comics: essential elements for transcription

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A THESIS

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Master of Arts

in

The Interdepartmental Program in Linguistics

By

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Abstract

Comics (plural in form but used with a singular verb as defined by Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*, HarperPerennial) provides a fresh perspective on the interaction of culture and language and spans from simple one-frame comics to graphic novels. Speech in comics is fully interpretable only in relation to the other elements; therefore a transcription system that includes them all is necessary. I have developed a unique transcription method which incorporates all the salient aspects of comic art revealing the linguistic codes embedded within. I show that transcription techniques, while primarily focused on speech, can also be applied to other forms of communication. Gestures and their corresponding ingesticulary acts are communicative and therefore crucial to our understanding of language and culture interaction within comic art.

Charles Schultz’s *Peanuts* is a relatively simple form of comics which makes it easier to focus on the linguistic information within the comic strip. Establishing the communicative information necessary to decode this relatively stripped-down comic strip will provide the framework necessary for all other forms of comics. In order to transcribe any form of comic art, one must include six keys elements: 1) the Prose, 2) the Gesture, 3) the Ingesticulary Act, 4) the Action, 5) the Perspective, 6) and the Environment. The interaction of these six elements creates the scaffold which supports the communicative mechanisms used in comic arts. My work yields a new understanding of the importance of language and culture interaction expanding the definition of communication to include written and visual elements of comics. Using my innovative transcription technique allows for further systematic decoding of linguistic elements within all kinds of comics and visual art.
1. Introduction

Stories fascinate people. We like to watch them, listen to them, and participate in them. These same stories that fascinate most people also interest linguists. Linguists may analyze a story in order to understand the way language is used to express the actions, opinions, thoughts, and emotions of a society by looking for particular markers and the way in which the markers are used in storytelling to precipitate turn taking or sharing. Regardless of the research goal, most linguists agree that stories provide a plethora of valuable insight to language and communication.

My interest coincides with stories and storytelling; however, my main focus lies outside of what is considered the mainstream type of narrative. Traditionally, narratives appear in either spoken or written form. Over time, the term narrative has broadened to include films, animations, and videos. I want to broaden the definition of narrative even further to include a wide spectrum of comic art, from the single panel cartoon to the graphic novel. In order to do this, I will demonstrate the way in which comics are narratives by examining two narrative theories and by applying a modified version of J.L. Austin’s (1962) speech act theory to gestures. First, I will explain why linguists should be interested in visual communication, as proposed by Theo Van Leeuwen (2004) in Ten Reasons Why Linguists Should Pay Attention to Visual Communication. This will lay the foundation for my argument that comic art, which I refer to as “comics,” is of great value to linguistic research.

Research in comics requires a transcription technique which can account for the written text as well as the visual elements with a panel. I have developed a transcription method which is vital to the analysis of comics as narratives. My work yields a new understanding of the importance of language and culture interaction expanding the definition of communication to
include written and visual elements of comics. Using my innovative transcription technique allows for further systematic decoding of linguistic elements within all kinds of comics and visual art.

Linguistics is the scientific study of language. Therefore, linguistics is concerned with communication. As such, a portion of the current linguistic research focuses on the transcription of spoken or written forms of language. Transcriptions are developed to record spoken language on paper to facilitate analysis. Different transcription systems focus on particular aspects of spoken language. Unfortunately, there are not many transcriptions that deal with the nonverbal aspects of communication, such as images or pictures associated with the spoken or written language (Fein and Kasher 1996, Forceville 2005, Lefler 2011, Norris 2002, Haviland 1996).

In everyday situations, people are confronted with both verbal and nonverbal forms of communication. When in these situations, communication is simultaneously processed bimodally or multimodally, conveying a unified message. If this is the way that most verbal and nonverbal forms of communication are processed, it is important for linguists to analyze the nonverbal form along with the verbal form of communication. According to Van Leeuwen, linguists should analyze verbal and nonverbal communication together “as a single, multilayered, multimodal communicative act, whose illocutionary force comes about through the fusion of all the component semiotic modalities: dress, grooming, facial expression, gaze, gesture” (2004, 7). Van Leeuwen offers ten reasons why linguistics should pay attention to visual communication.

1. “Speech acts should be renamed communicative acts and understood as multimodal microevents in which all the signs present combine to determine its communicative intent” (2004, 8).
As previously mentioned, verbal and visual communication interact together to convey a unified message. Pragmatics has shown that nonverbal communication has a profound effect on the interpretation of the intent of the communication. According to H. G. Widdowson, “we identify a stretch of language as text when we recognize that it is intended to be related to a context. How we interpret a text is a matter of realizing that relationship” (2004, 36). Georgios Tseredanelis and Wai Yi Peggy Wong (2004) also declare a strong relationship between nonverbal communication in the form of context and the interpretation of the intent of the communication. They state that “many non-linguistic factors can affect the precise interpretation of meaning. Context, both linguistic and situational, can fill in the crucial details in sentences lacking explicitness” (240). The importance of nonverbal communication is also the key focus of studies in kinesics, the study of communication and body language (Birdwhistell 1970). Ray Birdwhistell mandates that “[If he][sic][the student of structural analysis of communication] is going to study the communicated shifts of behavior in groups, he [sic] must know the contexts of these occurrences” (121). Therefore, in order to effectively analyze verbal communication, linguists must account for those elements of the interaction between the interlocutors which are nonverbal. These elements could be gestures such as pointing or facial expressions, nonlinguistic verbalizations such as a grunt or a sigh, or pictures and images used during the exchange.

2. “Genres of speech and writing are in fact multimodal: speech genres combine language and action in an integrated whole, written genres combine language, image, and graphics in an integrated whole. Speech genres should therefore be renamed “performed” genres and written genres ‘inscribed’ genres. Various combinations of performance and inscription are of course possible” (2004, 10).
3. “The communicative acts that define the stages of ‘performed’ genres may or may not include speech, just as the communicative acts that define the stages of genres of ‘inscribed’ communication may or may not include writing” (2004, 10).

Van Leeuwen also argues that not all the role transitions between socially engaged interlocutors (e.g. from speaker to hearer) occur as spoken or written instances. Van Leeuwen labels the speech genres “performed” genres and the written genres “inscribed” genres; these genres are comprised of stages which are determined by communicative acts. Communicative stages are the components of an interaction that create a schema of an event. Communicative acts establish the boundaries between the communicative stages of an interaction. These communicative acts do not always fall within the realm of writing or speech. For example, a communicative act can be a change in posture which locates meaning in a gesture or the position or movement of the body. In a particular interaction, the communicative act where one of the interlocutors stands up before speaking could indicate a change in the mood or tone of the communication. The ability to interpret this type of information is important in understanding the full context of the communication and influence that the context may have on communication.

4. “The boundaries between the elements or stages of both performed and inscribed genres are often signaled visually” (2004, 11).

Roland Barthes (1977) identifies two types of relationships between words and images: “anchorage” and “relay.” In the past, the more frequent relationship was what Barthes’ refers to as an “anchorage” relationship in which “the text restated the message of the picture, but in a more precise way, distilling just one from the many possible meanings the image might have” (Van Leeuwen 2004, 11-12). In contrast to an “anchorage” relationship, a “relay” relationship is
one in which the text and images are used in a complementary manner. According to Van Leeuwen, Barthes says the “relay” relationship “occurs mostly in dialogue (e.g. comic strips), where speaker and context will be represented visually, and the dialogue itself verbally” (Van Leeuwen 2004, 12). We can also find the “relay” relationship in advertisements.

These two types of relationships visually signal the transitions between elements or stages of genres. For example, in a performed genre, a change in the position of the body of an interlocutor could signal the end of a communicative stage. Likewise, in an inscribed genre, “language is often reduced to lexis, whereas the visual provides the syntax” (Van Leeuwen 2004, 12). In inscribed genres such as poster for advertisement, boxes may signal participants, such as the agent and the recipient, while arrows may signal a process substituting a verb or verb phrase, for instance verbs like results in, leads or leads to, or causes.

5. “Even at the level of the single ‘proposition,’ the visual and the verbal can be integrated into a single syntagmatic unit” (2004, 14).

6. “Typography and handwriting are no longer just vehicles for linguistic meaning, but semiotic modes in their own right” (2004, 14).

Leeuwen’s fifth and sixth reasons refer to typography and its multimodal transmission of information. Researchers have analyzed typography for its features which allow us to connect and identify letterforms, and for the connotation of certain font types. For example, words in all capital letters conventionally indicate shouting, yelling, or a raised voice. Bold font is used to signify loud sounds like BOOM, BAM, or POW. Italic can be used to convey thought or an aside. However, there are other modes for transmitting information in typography such as color and texture. Both the meaning of the content and the form in which the content is presented are important. These stylistic choices are part of the intended message and, in this way, the visual
and verbal information is combined into a single syntagmatic unit. As Marshall McLuhan emphatically stated, “The medium is the message” (1964, 9).

7. “Critical discourse analysis needs to take account of nonverbal as well as verbally realized discourses and aspects of discourse, and of image as well as text, because these often realize quite different, sometimes even contrasting meanings” (2004, 15).

Critical discourse analysis is a methodological approach to the study of language and power in discourse.

The controlling theoretical idea behind CDA [Critical Discourse Analysis] is that texts, embedded in recurring ‘discursive practices’ for their production, circulation, and reception which are themselves embedded in ‘social practices,’ are among the principal ways in which ideology is circulated and reproduced. The goal of CDA is thus to uncover the ways in which discourse and ideology are intertwined. (Johnstone 2008, 53-54)

Van Leeuwen offers an example of what the CDA of nonverbal discourse would look like. He uses the notion of and the signifiers for “truth” and “reality” in reference to bread, stating that as there are many different ways in which to verbally express the idea of truth and reality, there are also many different ways in which to express these ideas in other semiotic modes. For example, bread that is packaged with a wheat symbol on the label may be read as “This is true bread” or “This is real bread” (16). Likewise, bread with seeds baked on the top or the word “organic” on the label are also considered truer or more real in comparison to those bread products that do not have these visual elements. Leeuwen acknowledges that the products may not be real or true, but that the intent of marketing is to convey a message that such products are true or real.

8. “Many of the concepts developed in the study of grammar and text are not specific to language. In some cases, for instance narrative, this has been known for a long time; in
others (e.g. transitivity, modality, cohesion) it is only just starting to be realized” (2004, 16).

Here Van Leeuwen discusses visual communication in terms usually associated with language. He argues that “any semiotic mode…can be conceived of as a loose collection of individual signs, a kind of lexicon, or a stratified system of rules that allow a limited number of elements to generate an infinite number of messages” (17). In other words, semiotic modes of communication have lexicons, grammars, and syntax similar to language.

In order to explain how these concepts, usually associated with language, are used in other modes of communication, Van Leeuwen adapts Erving Goffman’s (1981) theory of footing to accommodate visual communication. Goffman’s theory of footing explains how perspectives change during conversations. He says, “A change in footing implies a change in the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance. A change in our footing is another way of talking about a change in our frame for events” (1981, 128).

Van Leeuwen illustrates this concept by showing how, during the early twentieth century, the city of Amsterdam became concerned about the quality of its workers’ family lives, “which included great stress on the values of the family unit, on hygiene, on brightness and light, and much more” (Van Leeuwen 2004, 17). Van Leeuwen uses Amsterdam’s development as an analogy to discourse. He defines the terms “discourse”, “design” and “authors,” and “production” and “animator” as they would apply to a visual discourse of the home and family life for workers in Amsterdam. First, he says that a “discourse” is “a particular way of conceiving of some aspect of the world, say, family life” (17). Second, there is a “design” associated with achieving the discourse. The architects of the buildings and homes are the
“authors.” Lastly, there is the “production” in which the houses and apartments are built. The builders of the houses and apartments are the “animators.” Van Leeuwen reminds us that these roles may be found in one person or be divided amongst several individuals.

Amsterdam’s architecture is analogous to a discourse. The changes in the architecture change the way in which the workers interact with their families. This change in interaction within the families is due to a change in the footing of the discourse.

9. “The concepts that have been used to describe the structure of language as a resource and the ‘footing’ of talk can also be applied multimodally” (2004, 18).

10. “Students of visual communication should also pay attention to linguistics, as many linguistic concepts and methods are directly applicable to, and highly productive for, the study of visual communication” (2004, 18).

In his final points, Van Leeuwen maintains that linguists should also be interested in visual communication. The skills and experience of linguists are a perfect fit for the study of visual communication in order to understand how language and visual elements are integrated and used to convey messages. These two fields of study and research complement each other and add exciting valuable resources.

Van Leeuwen offers ten reasons why linguists should not only be interested in visual communication, as well as why students of visual communication need linguistics. Any one of these ten reasons is sufficient by itself. However, when united, these ten reasons provide overwhelming support for the idea that, in order to truly understand communication, researchers must examine the interaction of all modes of communication. The marriage of these two fields of study provides a rich environment in which researchers can understand communication in its totality.
2. Literature Review

Definition of Comic Art

Comic art refers to a vast and diverse range of art. We have to understand what all is included in comics to be able to fully explicate a definition. Therefore, we should examine each type of comic art that is included in the term comics. The simplest form of comics is the cartoon. Its simplicity lies in its use of a solitary panel which contains drawings and may include dialogue. Comic strips are a group of cartoons arranged into a narrative. Both cartoons and comic strips can be found in daily newspapers and the Sunday editions. Comic books are serial stories that can range from one comic to a series of comic books. The graphic novel can be comprised of a series of comic strips written over a period of time or a complete narrative written all at once. With the varying terminology used within the comic art world, we need a unified way of talking about this type of art. This unified terminology will help us glean the usefulness of analyzing comics as well as uncover the embedded linguistic elements that the reader must know in order to receive the artist’s message. Therefore, in order to simplify the comic arts discussion, I will use a definition of this art that is both inclusive and exclusive simultaneously. Scott McCloud offers such a definition in his book Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art (1993).

According to McCloud, comics, “plural in form and used with a singular verb, is juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer” (9). While McCloud’s definition of comics is generic enough to allow for the varying types of comics, upon examination his definition has a few issues that must be addressed. First, McCloud doesn’t specify the use of words in his definition. However, “other images” could be text whether in traditional balloons or
part of the panel’s illustrations. Secondly, McCloud states that these images are “in deliberate sequence.” He does not specify the nature of that “sequence;” therefore, comics that do not use a traditional linear sequence reflecting temporally sequential events do not present a problem for this definition. The third issue is the use or lack of gutters and panels. Conventionally, the pictorial and other images are arranged within panels that are separated by gutters. McCloud makes no reference to panels or gutters, which again leaves room for those comics that use an unconventional panel or gutter design, as well as those that do not use either.

McCloud’s definition can include all the forms of comic arts from cartoons to graphic novels, yet exclude photographs and other types of representational art. While one might argue that there are more similarities between comics and photographs than differences, the differences are extremely important. A photograph is a likeness obtained through the use of a camera, not pictorial or other images that are created by drawing. Also, photography does not require the deliberate arrangement of images. A photographer can capture a likeness with or without manipulation of the objects being represented. Most importantly, photography does not rely on the use of text. Photography can be accompanied by text, usually giving information about where the picture was taken or giving insight to the photographer’s viewpoint. However, photograph captions do not have the kind of interdependence with text as found with comics.

The two biggest exceptions to McCloud’s definition are the single panel cartoon and comics without text. The single panel cartoon seems to lack juxtaposed images in deliberate sequence. However, the single panel cartoon can fit within this definition and be as valuable for research as its counterparts for two reasons. First, the images within a single frame cartoon actually are also in deliberate sequential order. Within Western culture, single panel cartoons are read from left to right, top to bottom implying that the actions or events on the left occur before
the actions or events on the right; however, other factors can take precedence over this order, for example, question and answer sequences or illustrations and text that guide directionality. Second, the reader must use the same techniques and knowledge to receive the artist’s message as for other comics. Those comic panels that do not use text fall outside of the norm for comics, but they still convey information through the use of pictorial images. This visual literacy, knowing how to interpret, is as valid as reading text when it comes to understanding the artist’s message.

After careful examination, McCloud’s definition is both broad enough to include the wide spectrum presented by comics, yet narrow enough to exclude photographs and other such forms of art which recreate the world. The beauty of McCloud’s definition lies in its openness which creates an umbrella definition big enough to cover the wide diverse forms of art found within comics.

**Narrative**

The tradition of storytelling predates the written word. Narrative pervades and constructs the human experience. While different theorists (Hymes 1982, Hudson and Shapiro 1991, Le Guin 1989) have different interpretations of narratives and focus on different structures and functions of narrative, there is one common thread; narratives are events in sequential order. According to William Labov, “We define narrative as one method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which (it is inferred) actually occurred” (359-360).

A great deal of work in discourse analysis is focused on the structure of narrative as well as its content about society, culture, and the individual (Bauman and Briggs 1990, Erickson and Schultz 1982, Keating 1998, Tannen 1990). I assert that comics are narratives. Therefore, in
order to understand the structure and content of comics, I will present two approaches to narrative structures: a classic view of narrative by William Labov (1972), and a clarification of his structure provided by Elinor Ochs and Lisa Capps (2001). Labov understands narrative to be built out of six narrative structures: the abstract, the orientation, the complicating action, the evaluation, the result or resolution, and the coda, and how these structures function within four panel comics. Except for evaluation, all are listed in the order of sequence in which they appear.

1. Labov on Narrative

1.1 The Abstract

The abstract begins the narrative with a summary of the point of the story. It is at this stage of the narrative that it is important to establish that the story is worth telling. Not every narrative will have an abstract; however, the abstract informs the audience that this is a reportable story and offers something outside of the routine. The abstract answers the question of what the story is about and includes why the story is being told. It may be easier to see an abstract in the narration of graphic novels, animated movies, and comic book series than in a traditional narrative. However, abstracts are optional; the lack of an obvious abstract in comics is not an issue.

1.2 The Orientation

The orientation relates all the pertinent background information about the narrative to the listener. Most narratives start with an orientation; however, the narrator may choose to distribute this information throughout the narrative. This section orients the listener. The narrator identifies the timeframe in which the narrative took place, the location in which the narrative occurred, the people involved in the narrative, and any relevant information pertaining to actions that occurred at the time of the narrative.
Comics narratives also use an orientation section, which is usually within the first panel of the comics, to familiarize the audience with the same information: time, location, people, action. This information allows the audience to recognize the characters as the story unfolds. For longer comics, as new characters are introduced, the artist may insert mini-orientations appropriately to keep the audience informed and invested in the narration. For humorous effect, some aspects of the orientation could also appear in the final panel, changing the interpretation of the previous panels.

1.3 The Complicating Action

In order to identify a narrative, there must be a sequence of events temporally ordered. This temporally ordered sequence of events is the complicating action. The characters involved in the narrative are actors in the sense that they are doing something. The complicating action answers the question posed while moving to the subsequent panel: “What happened next?” Labov states that the minimal narrative consists of at least two independent clauses which are chronologically order.

Comics also has a complicating action. Within each panel the character or characters are doing something which creates tension or has a dramatic effect. Given the structure of comics, comics strips and comic books in general, the question of what the character is doing within the panel or page answers the above question in two ways. First, what is the character’s simple action? Second, what is the action that creates the tension in the panel? These actions are perceived by the reader to be in some type of chronological order so that the first action occurred before the next action. One must consider flashbacks and those comics that do not follow standard chronological story telling structure; however, for the most part, comics contains complicating actions.
1.4 The Evaluation

As indicated above, evaluation is not sequential; it occurs throughout the narrative. The evaluation points to the importance of telling the story, providing justification, and providing the answer to the question of “So what?” by making sure the point is clear. Meanwhile, throughout the narrative, the listener is continually reminded of the relevance of the narrative being told.

The same holds true for comics. If the artist is not able to make the point of the comics clear and relevant, the reader will ask himself “So what?” It must be clear to the reader that there is a point to the story being told.

1.5 The Result or Resolution

Labov calls the “termination of [the] series of events” the result or resolution. The result signals that the complicating action is over and there is no further sequence of events in the narrative. (Labov 1972).

Comics, likewise, contains a result or resolution. Even if the comics is a graphic novel or a series of comic books, there will be an end to the complicating action. In a comic strip, the result will be seen the last or last few panels. In a series of comic books, it could be the last comic book or the last few pages. In a graphic novel it will be at the end of the novel. Even an open-ended ending can still be considered the result or resolution as the narrator does not have any other events to add to the sequence.

1.6 The Coda

All narratives must eventually end. The coda is a just one way for the narrator to signal the end of the narrative. Not all narratives have a coda. However, those that do usually bring “the narrator and the listener back to the point at which they entered the narrative” (Labov 1972). The coda signals that the narrative is finished and it is now time to leave the narrative.
Like traditional narratives, comics also must end. Even those comics that span decades eventually end their sequence of events. This may be more easily identifiable in a graphic novel or a comic book series, which may span decades within the narrative and often many have a dramatic “final edition” coda, such as Superman vol. 2, # 75 The Death of Superman (Byrne, et al. 1993). With comic strips and comic books, which are continually written over longer time periods because each strip or book can be one portion of a much larger narrative, the coda, which returns both the narrator and reader to the present, may be harder to identify, not be present at all, or take the form of an orientation in the following segment. Since the coda is optional for traditional narratives, the absence of codas within comics does not create a problem. Those comics that do not have a coda still qualify as valid narratives.

2. Ochs and Capps on Narrative

While Labov’s narrative structure provides a solid foundation to begin research on narrative, his structure fails to clearly explain the role of the narrator, and some of his six structures are vague. Ochs and Capps (2001) have offered their own structure for narrative analysis. In their work, we see an attempt to clarify some of the vagueness of Labov’s structures and a clearly defined role for the narrator. According to Ochs and Capps (2001), narratives display the intrinsic dimensions of tellership, tellability, embeddedness, linearity, and moral stance to various degrees. Each of these dimensions can also be found in comics.

Table 1 Narrative dimensions and possibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Possibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tellership</td>
<td>One active teller → Multiple active co-tellers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tellability</td>
<td>High → Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embeddedness</td>
<td>Detached → Embedded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linearity</td>
<td>Closed temporal and causal order → Open temporal and causal order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral stance</td>
<td>Certain, constant → Uncertain, fluid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data from Ochs and Capps 2001, table 1.1
2.1 Tellership

Ochs and Capps give overt attention to the role of the narrator, which Labov’s model (1972) does not clearly define. Given that his focus was on monologue spoken narrative, he also fails to explain how multiple narrators function together to create the narrative. Ochs and Capps (2001) begin their narrative structure by examining the role of the narrator, which they define as a teller. They call this dimension Tellership and provide for the participation of one active teller or multiple active co-tellers.

In the case of comics, the author/artist is the most active teller of the narrative. However, this does not mean that the author/artist is the only teller. Comics demands reader participation in building a plausible narration. Between each frame of the comic strip, the reader is provided with the opportunity to engage the incremental steps necessary to reach the next frame. Without the reader’s participation and assumed shared knowledge, the comic artist would have to draw thousands of frames to capture a blink of an eye, a wave of a hand, or the turn of a head.

2.2 Tellability

Ochs and Capps take Labov’s idea of Evaluation and clarify how it works throughout a narrative. One incorporation of evaluation is in their category of tellability. Ranging from high to low, tellability measures the narrative’s level of interest or engagement and the level of importance to the interlocutors. Ideally, a highly tellable narrative will be interesting, engaging, and of importance to all parties. A narrative with low tellability will be uninteresting and fail to convey the importance of the narrative to both interlocutors. This dimension is also prevalent in comics.

Whereas oral narratives can range from high to low tellability, written narratives depend on high tellability in order to be successful. Comics must be interesting and engaging to the
reader otherwise it loses its readership becoming defunct. Likewise, the artist and the audience must value the particular comics as important. As a byproduct of their participation in creating a plausible narrative, the audience maintains a high level of interest or engagement with the comics. The dedication and fierceness of avid collectors is a testament of the importance of comics to the audience (Adler-Kassner 1995). The continual creation of new strips, magazines, and/or books shows the importance of the comic to the artist. The fact that comics’ themes, such as good versus evil, strong versus weak, and the search for truth and justice, are repeatedly narrated by different artists and continually read by fans lends credibility to the notion of the importance of tellability to narratives.

2.3 Embeddedness

Ochs and Capps use their category of Embeddedness to evaluate how closely associated the narrative is to the context in which it takes place. Embeddedness ranges from detached to embedded. Embedded narratives are closely associated with the context of an interaction, such as previous topics, narrative, or element in the environment. For example, if two interlocutors engage in a conversation about their shopping lists in a grocery store, one of the interlocutors may then start a narrative about a particularly difficult recipe. The new narrative is embedded because it is closely associated with the previous topic of food. Perhaps one of the food items reminds the interlocutor of the recipe because it is an ingredient. Conversely, detached narratives are not closely associated with the context of an interaction, narrative, or element in the environment. For instance, in the same grocery shopping scenario, one of the interlocutors begins a narrative about a trip to Bangladesh. In this case, the narrative is detached because it is not connected to the current topic, a previous narrative, or any of the elements in the environment. It is important to note that when a detached narrative occurs, the interlocutor will try to make it
relevant to the current topic, narrative, or an element in the environment. Because an interlocutor will try to make the narrative related to the current context, the dimension of Embeddedness can coincide with Tellability and can also correspond to Labov’s Evaluation structure.

Embeddedness in comics also evaluates how closely the narrative is to the context in which it takes place, but with notable differences. The context for comics refers to current social events and how closely related the narrative is to those events. For example, comics that comment on current events and global affairs are embedded within the temporal and socio-political context of their creation. Readers twenty years hence may find them difficult to interpret given the changed context. These comics might comment on social concerns like gay marriage or economic affairs like the fall of the stock market. Detached comics have no reference to social events, as an example, all of the Peanuts strips are detached. The narrative of the comic strip does not refer to any social event, current or otherwise. The narrative may mimic an event in the author or reader’s life but is not relevant to social issues or global affairs.

2.4 Linearity

Linearity is closely related to Labov’s Complicating Action. However, because Ochs and Capps offer a range of possibilities, Linearity is more flexible and can accommodate alternate forms of storytelling. It measures the degree to which a narration’s events occur “in a single, closed, temporal, and causal path or, alternatively, in diverse, open, uncertain paths” (41). The scope of linearity ranges from closed temporal and causal order (which is all that Labov’s Complicating Action allows) to open temporal and causal order. In linear narrations, the interlocutor understands how one event influences another, what causes what, and how each action affects another action. Nonlinear narrations may leave the interlocutor with more
questions than answers. In these narrations, causation is unclear. There may be many possible events affecting other events, or multiple causes for an action.

**Linear narration:** Event<sub>x</sub> → Event<sub>y</sub>

Figure 1. Linear Narration  

**Nonlinear narration:**

Figure 2. Nonlinear Narration  

The same measurement of linearity can be used for comics. The author will either use a closed temporal order or an open temporal order. If the comics is written in such a way that it is easy for the reader to co-construct the causes of an event and how an action influences another action, it uses a closed temporal order. On the other hand, in open temporal and causal ordered comics, there may be many possible causes for an event or compound actions may influence another action. Linearity is also represented within comics in the form of sequential order. Sequential order is the visual icon of linearity.

Sequential order is the arrangement of the panels in a predictable fashion so that the reader has relatively little trouble going from one panel to the next. Whereas linearity is closely correlated to cause and effect, sequential order is culturally biased. The adherence to a strict narrative sequence varies with cultural traditions (Sherzer 1982, 2003). For example, most Western languages read from left to right, up and down. This is not the same for most Eastern
languages such as the Chinese, Japanese, and Korean or for some Middle Eastern languages like Hebrew and Arabic. Chinese, Japanese, and Korean are written from top to bottom, left to right. Hebrew and Arabic are bidirectional languages. The words are written from right to left, up and down, but the numbers are written from left to right. Without culturally specific knowledge of the directionality of a language, it would be difficult to understand the information being conveyed. Below is an example of a comic strip that used both linearity and sequential order.

![Comic Strip Image]

Figure 3. Strip 2
*Source: Data from Schultz 2005.*

In Figure 3, a Peanuts comic strip, the reader must understand the sequential order of the panels and how linearity works in order to understand what is happening in the strip. Western readers know that the comic strip is read from left to right. Reading the comic from right to left would disorganize the events and lead to confusion. Through the environment, the reader also understands the linearity of the events. In the first panel, Snoopy sits on his dog house watching the snow fall. In the second panel, there are more snowflakes than in the first panel. The increase of snowflakes progresses in both panels three and four. Panel four also shows that Snoopy, the dog house, and the ground are now covered in snow. Through the verbal communicative acts, the reader understands that linearity of the events. In panel three, Snoopy tells us that snowflakes “float down gently from the sky, covering forest and hill…” From the order of the panels, the reader can deduce that the reason that Snoopy, the dog house, and the ground end up covered in
snow is that the snowfall increased and quickly covered everything within the panel. In this strip, linearity and sequential order work together to express the idea that snowfall will eventually cover everything in the environment. This idea is also supported by the dialog. If the panels were placed in a different sequential order, the reader may not be able to infer that this is a linear narration showing a cause and effect relationship. So, like narratives, comics uses linearity to show causality and also relies on sequential order to ensure that the panels are read correctly.

2.5 Moral Stance

In Labov’s structure, the Evaluation (section 1.4) occurs throughout the narrative and can be described as the answer to the ongoing question “So what?” Like the Evaluation, the Moral Stance dimension also occurs throughout the narrative. However, Ochs and Capps specify what Moral Stance encompasses. This makes their dimension easier to understand and discover in narratives than Labov’s Evaluation.

Moral standards are the societal values of what is good and important within the society in order to live well. Narratives often reflect the moral standards of the time and the narrator. However, the two need not be the same thing. The narration can highlight the things that the narrator finds fault with in the society or vice versa. Ochs and Capps state that “the narrators of personal experience evaluate protagonists as moral agents, whose actions, thoughts, and feelings are interpreted in light of local notions of goodness” (47). The same is true for comics.

In comics, the protagonists are also the moral agents whose actions are judged based on the artist, audience, and society’s moral standards. We often find themes of good versus evil in which the hero has a nemesis of equal but opposite powers: Superman and Lex Luther, Batman and the Joker, etc. In the case of Superman, we have a hero of tremendous strength and goodness. Lex Luther is the criminal mastermind but does not have the super human ability that
Superman possesses. In Batman comics, Batman is the antihero. His actions are questionable because they lie outside of the law even though he works in the name of justice against criminals. His nemesis, the Joker, is also a criminal mastermind who works outside of the law with the intention of creating chaos. Superman comics give us the perceived positive morals of American society at the time of its creation. Batman comics question those suppositions while still trying to maintain the notion that good defeats evil. In Figure 3 above, we see another example of moral stance. Snoopy makes a judgment about which type of the weather is best. His stance is that while winter may be wonderful, summer and not being covered in snow may be even better. In Figure 4 below, everyone forgot to feed Snoopy because they were focused on the arrival of Charlie Brown’s baby sister. The moral stance in this strip is that neglecting your pets is bad. Snoopy’s moral stance in Figure 3 and Figure 4 shows that Moral Stance can also be determined by the characters within the comics.

Figure 4. Strip 4
Source: Data from Schultz 2005.

Using Labov’s narrative schema shows that comics is a narrative. Comics can use all of the six structures found within Labov’s schema. However, using Ochs and Capps’ narrative structure clarifies exactly how the dimensions work within a traditional narrative and how they can be expanded to include comics. Application of the models of narrative helps to establish comics as a true form of narrative worthy of the research and analysis afforded traditional
narratives because of the information about individuals, culture and society, and communication that can be gleaned from studying comics.

Iconicity

In his important work on iconicity, Charles S. Peirce (1992) identifies three types of sign representations: the symbol, the index, and the icon. A symbol is a sign that is associated to an object due to habit. Symbols “are always abstract and general, because habits are general rules to which the organism has become subjected. They are, for the most part, conventional or arbitrary” (Peirce, 226). An index is a sign that points to the object. Peirce says that this type of sign “signifies its object solely by virtue of being really connected with it” (226). A road sign with a picture of a curve that is situated next to a curvy road is an index because it points to the object. An icon is a sign that represents an object because it resembles it or shares characteristics and qualities of the object. While the degree to which these signs are used may fluctuate according to context, all are important in symbolic communication systems. Jorge Johansen states that it is “in mastering all three aspects of semiosis man is able to switch between the three significational modes without any effort and without being conscious of doing so” (1996, 39). So how and where does iconicity function within comics? Is the use of iconicity as seamless and unconscious as Johansen suggests? How are icons and iconicity defined within comics and who defines them?

Iconicity is a pervasive element within comics because it is found within each level of analysis, most noticeably diagrammatical iconicity which is illustrated in the sequencing of the each frame within comics. Diagrammatical iconicity in literature is “the correspondence between the order of words and the order of the world” (Johansen 1996). Bruce Mannheim infers from Jakobson’s discussion of iconicity in “Quest for the Essence of Language” (1965) that “as a pragmatic principle of language, the default (or unmarked) setting is to treat the order of events
in narrative as a diagrammatic icon of their order ‘in the world’ [actually world]; any non-default interpretation requires special narrative devices” (Mannheim 2001, 104). So according to Mannheim, the order of events in a narrative reflects the order of events in the actual world. This idea has a counterpart in comics.

In comics, diagrammatical iconicity is closely associated with Ochs and Capps’ Linearity dimension. Of course, there is an important difference in reading word order, or order in a narrative, as event order, and panel order as event order. Diagrammatic iconicity in comics can be seen as the order of the events and the order of the panels being the same. However, Ochs and Capps’ (2001) definition of linearity (section 2.4) allows for both closed temporal and causal order, and open temporal and causal order. Closed temporal and causal order may be reflected in the order of the panels, which are the assumed order of events. This is not true for open temporal and causal order. For open temporal and causal order, causation is not easily established by the order of the panels because they do not indicate the order of events.

Archetypes are another more familiar way that comics uses symbolic iconicity. Archetypal characters are an integral part of the comic world and are, in effect, symbols. Like Peircean symbols, these archetypal characters represent abstract ideals. For example, in action fantasy comics, the hero represents goodness, truth, justice, beauty, and strength. Heroes like Superman, Wonder Woman, and the Fantastic Four have iconic names that suggest that they are enhanced beings and better than their opposites, supervillians. In other comics, there are dichotomies: smart and lazy versus dumb and active, Garfield versus Odie; the weak willed versus the strong willed, Beetle Bailey versus Sergeant Snorkle; and the perpetual loser versus everyone else, Charlie Brown versus the other Peanuts’ characters. These characters are so
strongly associated with the abstract ideals that they represent that their names evoke images of certain stereotypical behaviors and situations.

Iconicity is also evident at the dialog and word level of comic analysis. The dialog of a comics uses iconicity in the way in which it represents the speech, thoughts, or ideas of the character. The artist can choose between using an elliptical callout to illustrate symbolically the concreteness of a statement, or a bubble callout indicating a thought, which is less tangible. The choice of font size and style are also iconic and indexical. Some words are bolded and capitalized in order to visual their strength and assertiveness. Onomatopoeia is another device in which words are iconic of certain sounds: zoom, wham, bonk, argh, augh, smack, etc. Onomatopoeia represents non-arbitrary iconicity, though it is still inherently arbitrary because different languages represent onomatopoeic words differently. The artist may also choose to illustrate the length of the sound of a word by using extra vowels. For example, if an artist wanted to emphasize that something is in motion and is speeding past, he might write the word zoom as ZOOOOOM! In this example, the addition of more o’s extends the word representing the duration of the vowel sound and of the action. A frustrated scream could be illustrated as AUUGH! In this example, the use of all capital letters represents the intensity or loudness with which the word is spoken.

Iconicity has been researched in art and literature; however, there has been relatively little research in comics. Comics allows for new discoveries into the use of iconicity because it seamlessly bridges the connection between pictures and words. The study of iconicity in comics will reveal a more holistic view of natural iconic use.
Gestures

Gestures are “actions that have the features of manifest deliberate expressiveness” (Kendon 2004). Whether gestures are accompanied by speech or not, people use gestures to convey meaning. Some work focuses on the head and facial expressions (Ekman 2003). Other research only focuses on the hands and arm motions (J. B. Haviland 2000). Some research in kinesics observes gait and proximity of interlocutors along with hand, arm, and head motion, and facial expressions (Birdwhistell 1970). An inherent problem that lies within understanding gestures in comics is trying to understanding what gestures represent. The way in which we recognize and use gesture in everyday life will help to understand how gestures are recognized and used in comics.

While movements and motions that correspond to gestures are variable, there are some conventional types of gestures used to point, beckon, agree, deny, insult, appreciate, and greet (Macaulay 1994). The way in which we assign meanings to particular gestures requires not only recognizing the individual movements that create a gesture but also the context in which the gesture is performed. The same physical gesture could be interpreted as beckoning or insulting depending on the cultural definition of that gesture. Therefore, when discerning gestures, cultural, situational, and even personal context is an equally important part of the process.

David McNeill (1992) offers a hierarchy of movements that create a gesture: Gesture-Unit, Gesture-Phase, Preparation, Stroke, and Retraction. McNeill defines a Gesture-Unit as “the moment the limb begins to move and ends when it has reached a rest position again” (1992, 83). Within the Gesture-Unit there is a Gesture-Phase which consists of the Preparation, Stroke, and Retraction. The Preparation is the movement from the initial resting position of the limb to the starting position of the stroke. The Stroke begins after the Preparation and ends once the limb
beings to return to the initial resting position. The Stroke is the movement that expresses the meaning of the gesture. Retraction is the movement that returns the limb to its initial resting position.

When discerning one gesture from another, like when engaged in conversation, interlocutors rely on the context in which the gesture occurs along with the information presented in the Gesture-Phase. When recognizing a gesture, we first notice the preparation of the gesture. Like Labov’s Orientation, the Preparation relates background information which may have importance. Then we pay attention to all the strokes associated with the particular gesture. Finally, we know that the gesture is finished once the retraction occurs because, just as Labov’s Coda returns the narrative to the beginning, the retraction returns the limb to the initial resting position. Of course gestures are three dimensional, so the spatial aspects of the gesture are also recognized by the viewer. These components of gestures are important to recognizing representations of gestures in comics.

As previously stated, it would be nearly impossible for a comic artist to represent all the movements involved in blinking an eye. Yet, using linguistic and cultural knowledge of comics, the reader is able to recognize what the artist draws and supplement the necessary transitional movements to complete the action. Representations of gestures are drawn in such a way that the reader can recognize them from some basic aspects. The artist draws enough of the gesture so that the reader can supplement the necessary movements to complete the gesture. What is important is that the artist draws the strokes of the gesture and the retraction of the gesture. This allows the reader to recognize the gesture and the end of the gesture. While the Preparation is not a necessary aspect for gesture reorganization, the artist may choose to draw a representation of it or leave it out, in which case the reader will generate the Preparation as a part of their
participation in constructing the narrative of the comics along with any other incremental movements necessary to create a mental representation of the three dimensional gesture.

The strokes necessary for gesture recognition are the beginning stroke and the end stroke. An artist may choose to include as many middle strokes as he or she feels is necessary to represent the basic structure of the gesture. The Preparation and Retraction are not essential to the representation of gestures in comics because gesture in comics are a two-dimensional representation of a three dimensional event. The artist only needs to represent the most salient feature of a three dimensional gesture, the stroke, so that it is recognizable in its two dimensional form. The other forms of communication within the frame are the context in which the meaning of the gestural representation is understood.

As previously mentioned, one gesture consisting of the same motions or movements of the hands or other body parts can have different meanings depending on the context in which it is made. The context includes speech or lack of speech and facial expressions. The same gesture can be interpreted as insulting or beckoning depending on the context. Observing two people engaged in conversation, one can interpret a gesture whether or not the conversation can be heard. A speaker with elbows at his waist, forearms stretched outward from the body, with his fingers stretched out at a 20 degree angle could be insulting the other person or could be imploring the other person to see a certain point of view.

Facial expressions also provide information about the way in which to interpret a gesture (Birdwhistell 1970, Ekman 2003). The facial expression that accompanies a gesture is very telling. If the speaker’s brows are furrowed, eyes are squinting, and lips are pursed, one could view the aforementioned gesture as insulating. Vice versa, if the speaker’s brows are raised, eyes are opened wide, and lips are relaxed or slightly parted, one could view the same gesture as
beckoning. Therefore, facial expressions, which are a type of gesture, can be used alone or in conjunction with other gestures and speech to convey meaning.

Gesture and facial expression play an important role in understanding the intended message of an interlocutor. Likewise, gestures and facial expressions provide information which helps the reader interpret the intended message of characters in comics. Analyzing the role of gestures and the influence that other elements in a comics has on gestures will further expand the understanding of gestures in conversations.

Speech Community

With any form of oral communication, there is a group of users or participants which creates a speech community. Speech communities use a form of spoken communication with common features like grammar, pronunciation, etc. to engage in activities with one another (Duranti 1997). Trying to identify a comics speech community then becomes a problem if the definition requires that the form of communication be spoken. In order to do this, I will examine the presumptions of the artist and the basic requirements for a community.

The comic artist makes certain presumptions when creating comics. The artist presumes that the intended audience is literate and has the ability to decipher images, visual literacy. The artist also presumes the intended audience has the appropriate cultural knowledge to understand the comics. Cultural knowledge can include knowledge of sequential order and linearity, knowledge of events referenced by the comics, knowledge of the conventions of writing, i.e. font type, font size, etc. Unlike speech communities and communities of practice (Meyerhoof 2002), comics community members only receive messages from the artist via written and pictorial communication, and its members rarely engage directly with one another.
However, there has been research exploring the construction of internet based speech communities. Some of the findings of this research are applicable to establishing comics readers as a speech community. Don Tapscott (1998) explores the issues associated with online communities and how the participants interact and function similarly to traditional speech communities. Tapscott’s research and analysis broadens the definition of speech communities which benefits comics. What has emerged from other debates is the acknowledgement of internet based speech communities (Wilson and Peterson 2002, Darhower 2006, LeBlanc 2005). These speech communities are not only based on written communication and membership within a chat room, but also on the rules and regulations of the chat room created by the participants. It is the shared rules and regulations for chat room behavior or use along with communication between the participants that defines the community. These new types of speech communities make it easier to extend the definition of a speech community to comic readers. Comic readers create a community based on the shared rules and conventions associated with reading comics. These rules and conventions, in addition to the presumptions of the artist, make this group a speech community.

There are other similarities between traditional speech communities and comics speech communities. Most comics make use of both words and images which adheres to the sociolinguistic notion that there is always some form of “mixing.” Bakhtin (1981) refers to the mixing of two conflicting voices within a text as heteroglossia. Ivanov (2001) offers a definition of heteroglossia which is broad enough to embrace comics. Heteroglossia is “the simultaneous use of different kinds of speech or other signs...” (95). Comics use of words and images is akin to a multilingual or multidialectal speech community’s use of two languages, dialects, or sign language and verb communications. The participants of any speech community generally adhere
to the norms, beliefs, and values pertaining to the community, as well as the norms regarding when to adhere to them and when to ignore or purposely defy them. Those who are not part of the speech community may not understand the artist’s full message because they lack the appropriate knowledge to decipher the words and/or images presented. Non-participants would need to gain this knowledge along with developing their visual literacy skills in order to become a part of the speech community.

The creation of the comic speech community is a process in which the comic artist uses written language and images in a specified manner to convey meaning to comic readers. However, it is not only the written words and their inherent meanings that convey the message. The way in which a writer chooses to portray those words is as important to the concept of a speech community as is the choice of words themselves. When examining the written words, we have to take into account the font, the style of the letters themselves, the placement of the words, and any other features used such as color. All of these elements working together convey information to the speech community. For comics, the creation of a speech community and the notion of visual literacy are codependent. I will further explore visual literacy as it pertains to comics in the next section.

Visual Literacy

Understanding literacy is the first step to understanding visual literacy. Literacy, in general terms, is “communication through visually decoded inscriptions, rather than through auditory and gestural channels” (Besnier 2001). Therefore, a literate person is one who possesses the ability to decipher visual inscriptions. In recent years, scholars have been trying to expand the concept of literacy to include other forms of communicative arts such as drama, art, film, video, television and technology (Norman 1993, Messaris 1994, Flood, Lapp and Bayles-Martin
One of the other forms of communication which must be included in the scope of the definition of literacy is visual literacy (Flood, Lapp and Bayles-Martin 2000). The definition of literacy is wide enough to include this form of communication; however, the inclusion of visual literacy under the general definition of literacy raises the question of how to define visual literacy specifically. What are the components of visual literacy and what role does it play in comics?

Visual literacy is the ability to decipher images. In order to decipher these images, I propose that one must be able to perform four processes: access, analyze, interpret and evaluate images. These four processes are derived from the six process components for literacy, “the ability to access, analyze, synthesize, interpret, evaluate, and communicate messages,” proposed by Flood et al. (2000, 67). The ultimate goal of visual literacy is for the reader to understand what is being conveyed within the image.

The four step process of deciphering images starts with accessing information. Of course, a reader must have access to the image itself; however, the reader must also be able to access his or her long-term memory to retrieve stored information that will help decode the image. It would be impossible to analyze the image without access to store information. Next the reader must analyze the image. What are the components of the image? What is important to understanding the message which is whatever is being conveyed via the image. Based on the analysis, the reader interprets the image’s meaning. The last step in the visual literacy process is to evaluate the effectiveness of the image.

Visual literacy is important to comics because comics undermines the rigid division of words and images by offering a blending of these two modes of communication. These modes of communication, using words and images, are both fundamental to reading comics and
complementary to each other. While some comics do not use any prose within their panels or strips, it is more commonplace to see both forms of communication. Comics, however, is not the only place where images and words coexist as a multifaceted mode of communication. This fusion is all around us in advertisements, movies, websites, poetry, and photographs (Van Leeuwen 2004). To the extent we are visually literate, when we see these various types of media, we have little difficulty in understanding what is put before us. Visual literacy allows us to process the information as a whole unit of communication deciphering the different modes of media without hesitation most of the time.

Even with all of the examples of how images and words are used simultaneously, words and images may still be thought of by educators as separate and distinctly different realms of the communication process. Children begin reading books that utilize a plethora of images with very few words. As they develop and master reading, the use of images becomes almost nonexistent. This notion that literature using images is somehow inferior or easier to understand is false. Whether one is reading a book or novel, a comic strip or graphic novel, one still has to use one’s grammatical, social and cultural knowledge to truly understand the medium. The use of all of our grammatical, social and cultural knowledge simultaneously is the semiotic approach. Since comics uses both types of communication, it requires the reader to use this semiotic approach to truly decipher the content and receive the intended message.

Visual literacy presents another problem for researchers: transcription. Those interested in the word-image relationship have tried to categorize it and show how both must be taken into account when transcribing. For example, A. Kibédi Varga (1989) analyzes the relationship between words and images and offers criteria for describing the word-image relationship. Villy Tsakona (2009) researches the interaction of words and images in cartoons with a focus on a
multimodal theory of humor. Charles Forceville (2005) explores the representation of anger via words and images. Martin Heusser (1993) also discusses the relationship between word and image, and the fact that “the two are, despite their apparent disparity, at heart one and the same thing”. Ofer Fein and Asha Kasher (1996) also attempt to explore the relationship between words and images by focusing on the text and gestures within comics. These authors focus on words and images and their apparent interconnectedness. However, this research does not take into account all the other elements that may influence the interpretation of text and images, for example, the environment within the panel, the action of character, the perspective of the character from the reader’s point of view, etc. They do not offer a complete transcription technique.

Sigrid Norris (2002) calls for a different way of transcribing images and words. In “The implication of Visual Research for Discourse Analysis: Transcription beyond Language,” Norris explores various ways to transcribe visual elements so that the transcription reflects more accurately what is happening. Her research is based on observing five young boys during their play date. These boys watch TV and play on the computer. As a result of her observations and attempts to transcribe the interactions, Norris argues that “current transcription conventions resulting from the use of audio recorders inadequately capture discursive interactions involving technologies like the TV or the computer” (98). This argument can be directly applied to transcription techniques for comics as well because comics also uses visual communication that cannot be adequately captured by current transcription conventions.

What current transcription conventions for comics (Fein and Kasher 1996, Forceville 2005, Lefler 2011, Norris 2002, Haviland 1996) fail to capture is the full dynamic interplay of various elements within the comics’ panel. “Most scholars, who have been working with visual
data, are using conventional transcription methods, adding gestures, gaze or long descriptions to portions of a transcript” (Norris, 105). In order to capture the dynamic nature of comics, I have created a semiotic transcription technique that takes into account all the essential elements which interact within the panel. Without such a transcription method, any research runs the risk of ignoring the effect of other aspects within the comics’ panel that influence the reader’s interpretation of the image and text.
3. Transcription Method

No transcription is a completely objective representation of a discourse (Bucholtz 2000, Green, Franquiz and Dixon 1997, Roberts 1997). The issue of objectivity also affects the transcription of comics. As with traditional transcriptions, an area of concern is what to include in the transcript. Comics represents a mixture of words and images. Since the images with in a comics include all the items with in the panel as well as those used to establish the setting of the comics, it is imperative that the transcription method include a way to transcribe props in a comics and the setting of a comics. Another transcription concern unique to comics is how to treat written words especially when they appear on props. All transcriptions try to find a balance between the effect of the transcriber’s point of view and the agency of the original speaker. Transcriptions of comics must correspondingly address how to represent the artist’s distinctiveness while minimizing the transcriber’s effect on the material.

The first step in creating a transcription method applicable to both words and images is to understand that language does something. In the 1960’s, J. L. Austin introduced the idea of “doing” things with words. According to Austin, language can be used to perform three different types of acts: “locutionary,” “illocutionary,” and “perlocutionary” (Austin 1962). The locutionary act is the actual use of words. If one says “look out,” then what one is actually doing is telling someone look out. The illocutionary act is what one does by using words. So, if one says “look out,” then one may be using words to warn or threaten. The perlocutionary act is the effect of the speaker’s words on the hearer. So, if one says “look out,” then the hearer may be alerted to danger, feel threatened, etc.

Fein and Kasher apply Austin’s idea of acts to gestures in their article How to do things with words and gestures in comics (1996). They suggest three acts associated with gestures:
“gesticulary,” “ingesticulary,” and “pergesticulary.” A gesticulary act is the combination of movements used to create a gesture. An ingesticulary act is “what we do in gesticulating” (794). A pergesticulary act is the effect of gesturing. Utilizing Austin’s notion of acts, Fein and Kasher are able to analyze gestures in much the same way that one would analyze speech acts. First, the gesture is identified and defined. Then the purpose of the gesture is ascertained. Finally, the overall effect of the gesture is established.

However, Fein and Kasher’s transcription technique neglects crucial elements that are necessary in order to fully transcribe a comics. Their work only focuses on the gestures themselves without regard to the environment of the gesture, or the corresponding dialog in the frame. Limiting their treatment to gestures neglects the fact that comics is an interactive format. A gesture can be read in multiple ways depending upon the environment and the dialog within the frame.

I take a perspective in which comics are analogous to theatre. The comic frame is a two dimensional representation of a theatre stage. Therefore, comics is like a script of a play. It deals with the spoken word, written direction, and place of props and characters. The placement of props and characters within a setting, known as blocking, helps create the scene. This two dimensional stage representation in theater is also found within the film industry. Movie directors often like to have the scenes of a film story boarded before they begin actually filming. Story boarding involves illustrating the placement of characters, props, and the setting prior to shooting. Theater blocking and film story boarding are pre-transcriptions because they occur before the finished product. However, the notion of separating the placement of characters, props, setting and prose from one another is the way that comic transcriptions should also be approached.
Since gestures convey meaning, any transcription of comics must analyze the gesture and the ingesticulary act as proposed by Fein and Kasher. However, for the purpose of comics transcription, the pergesticulary act is not as necessary. The pergesticulary act cannot be determined since the “hearer” is in fact the comics reader and no immediate effect can be confirmed at the time of the comics reading. Therefore, the pergesticulary act is not a prerequisite to comic transcription. There are four other required elements for comic transcription: the prose, the action, the perspective, and the environment. Using these six elements allow for the individual and interactive analysis of both the words and the images within any comics.

The Prose

Within a narrative, all forms of written communication are an important aspect to the understanding of comics as a whole, although some comics do not employ writing to tell their story. Therefore, a comics’ transcription needs a category in which to analyze this communication. All written forms of communication fall within the scope of The Prose element.

Within The Prose element the author can use several different types of communication. The author can communicate directly to the audience circumventing the use of a character. I will refer to this type of communication as The Information. This is the way in which the artist is able to narrate important information to the audience using his own voice. Onomatopoeic words are also part of the Information for precisely the same reason. They are another way for the author to relay information directly to the audience bypassing the use of the character and dialog.

Comic panels may contain writing that is not the representation of the character’s speech or thoughts, or information that the artist gives the audience directly. There may be words
written on signs, doors, walls or other items within the frame. This type of writing is informative to the audience thus should be analyzed as such under The Information.

Comics also employs written text as a representation of oral speech between characters or characters and the audience. I will refer to this as The Dialog. The Dialog is a representation of the character’s speech. Most but not all character dialog is contained within call outs or bubbles. The type of call out or bubble may vary depending on the artist; however, it is usually shown in solid calls out or bubbles with lines or tails that indicate the speaker. While it is important to analyze what the characters says, it is also important to observe how the character says the dialog. The Dialog includes the use of techniques designed to convey meaning such as writing style, word choice, and conventions of font use including the use of bold, italic, and capital letters.

Sometimes text is used to express a character’s thoughts or desires. I refer to this type of prose as The Reflection. The Reflection typically represents the character’s thoughts using dotted or semisolid call outs or bubbles which also have lines or tails that indicate the speaker. There is also variation in the way in which an author chooses to represent the Reflection. It can also be represented with a solid call out or bubble using a semisolid line or bubble tail. The Reflection can also be used to express nonhuman characters’ thoughts and desires. Like the Dialog, The Reflection also incorporates the techniques used to convey meaning such as writing style, font and word choice.

The Gesture and Ingesticulary Act

The Gesture element is what Fein and Kasher (1996) labled as the gesticulary act; a combination of movements that one uses to create a gesture. However, the gesticulary act within comics is slightly different. The gesticulary act is not only the gesture used but can also be the
facial expression used to convey information to the reader. Gestures can use various parts of the body such as hands, feet, arms, or the head. They can also use combinations of facial movement to convey emotions such as fear, anger, contemplation, sadness, etc. The way in which the reader is able to determine the appropriate gesture is based on his or her cultural knowledge, the prose, the environment, the perspective, and membership within the community. Therefore, most comics’ readers have no difficulty in distinguishing fear from anger, contemplation from sadness. However, a novice reader without the culture background information may have some difficulty with this type of discrimination and may have to rely more heavily on the other elements to interpret the artist’s intended message.

The notion of the ingesticulary act also originates from Fein and Kasher’s work. Much like Austin’s illocutionary act, the ingesticulary act is what one does with the gesture or the information that is conveyed to the reader by the gesture. Being able to determine the ingesticulary act is a function of community membership, cultural background knowledge, and the interaction of the other elements. Its interpretation may be more difficult for the novice reader.

In Strip 17 below, we can analyze both the Gesticulary and Ingesticulary Acts. I will refer to The Gesticualry Act in the transcription as the The Gesture. In Panel 1 Linus is gazing downward with an expression on his face writing a letter; we know it is a letter because of the envelope in the foreground. The Gesture is gazing downward and with a facial expression. Combined with The Information and the other elements within the panel, we can determine The Ingesticulary Act is Concentration or Determination. The Gesture and The Ingesticulary Act are italicized in Strip 17.
There are two important things about the Gesture and Ingesticulary Act that must be addressed. First, determining the Gesture and Ingesticulary Act is mostly based on the cultural norms of expressing certain information without speech. It would be beneficial to have a key of gestures and facial expressions in order to standardize the description. In its absence, I am relying solely on the reader’s ability to identify correctly the Gesture and Ingesticulary Act using his or her own knowledge base. Therefore, there may be variations in the description of these two elements; however, the descriptions should be similar enough so that it is clear what is being described. For example, one transcriber may use the word contemplation. Another may use thinking. As long as the terms used are close to synonymous, I do not see a need to develop such a key at this time. Secondly, the Gesture is different from the Action. In other words, the Gesture conveys information about what the character is feeling, thinking or is aware of in his or her environment. It is not the same as what the character is doing.

The Perspective

The Perspective element transcribes three aspects related to the viewer’s perspective of the character: the placement of the character within the panel, the visibility of the character’s body and face, and the proximity of the character to the reader.

The character’s location within the panel can be centered, right, left, upper, lower, cornered upper left, etc. The character’s location within the panel is important because it allows the artist to focus the reader’s attention. If a character is centered, it may signal the character’s importance within the panel. A character that is right or left within the panel suggests that the reader should focus not only the character but other items or characters within the panel or within an anticipated panel. Of course, the placement of the dialog can also have an effect on where the character is located within the panel.
After transcribing the character’s position, the parts of the body and face that are visible within the panel need to be addressed. The depictions of character’s body and face can be transcribed using the descriptions full, profile or partial. A full body or face description assumes that the reader can see all the parts of the body or face that would be visible in a face to face encounter with the character. A profile body or face assumes that the reader can see half of the parts of the body or face that would be visible if the character was turned to the left or right in a face to face encounter. A partial body or face description is used when more or less of the body or face is visible than either previous description covers. When using the partial body or face description, the transcriber should specific exactly which parts of the body and face are visible.

The third aspect of The Perspective element is an intrapanel proximity scale which compares the character’s proximity across the panels within the strip. In the case of Peanuts, each comic strip has four panels. The closeness of the character to the reader is determined by comparing the relative foregrounding of the character in relationship to the reader in the other panels of the strip using a Likert scale with a range of 1 to 4 in which 1 is the closest proximity to the reader and 4 is the furthest proximity from the reader. A transcription of The Perspective element is below in Strip 17.

The Environment

If one were to think in terms of theatrical performance, the Environment element seeks to make obvious where the action is taking place as well as what props the character has at his disposal. The Environment element is the existence and location of the props within the panel, including not only the setting within the frame but also any props or materials within that location. The items within the panel should be listed, including the character. When describing the location within the panel, I will use one of the following: inside, outside, and empty
background. The terms inside and outside are used when there is enough contextual information to determine the location as indoors or outside. For example, if there are trees, grass, clouds, rain, one can assume the location is outside. Likewise, if there are chairs, walls, furniture normally found inside of a building or house, one can assume the location is inside. However, if there are no items to indicate either inside or outside, then I will apply the term empty background. While the exact location of the action within the panel may not be known, action does not take place in a vacuum. Using empty background recognizes this fact without committing to an exact location.

The Action: Simple versus Complicating

Comics are a form of narrative as previously established; therefore, comics will have a complicating action similar to Labov’s structure for narratives (Section 1.3). Labov’s work analyzes oral narratives and the Complicating Action in oral narratives refers to clauses within the narrative which are used to create tension. The Complicating Action in comics functions similarly.

I will refer to the action which the character performs within a panel as The Action; however, there are two different types of action. The first type of action in comics answers the question of what the character is doing. The character may be running, sitting, or looking. I will transcribe this sub-element of action as Simple. The second type of action in comics is Complicating. Action that is Complicating functions the same way in which Labov’s Complicating Action in oral narratives functions; it creates tension within the comic narrative (See Appendix C: Analysis of Humor). The Complicating Action may be a similar action to that of The Simple Action; however, it will occur in the panel with most tension (Appendix C: Analysis of Humor) and create a dramatic effect. The influence of the other elements in the panel determines whether or
not the action in the panel is Complicating. The influence on the The Action may come from one element or a combination of the elements in the panel.

When transcribing The Action sub-elements, Simple and Complicating, I will use the present particle of verbs to describe the perceived action. In Figure 5, Strip 17 below, Linus is writing a letter to the Great Pumpkin. In Strip 17 from the Peanuts Transcription, The Action in Panels 1, 2, and 4 is transcribed as Simple. In Panel 3, The Action is Complicating because a moment of tension is created as Linus stares ahead. I determined the Complicating Action in this panel by taking into account the effect of The Gesture and its Ingesticulary Act on The Action. When the reader sees this panel, he or she wonders what will happen next. This contemplation creates both tension and expectation in the reader. So, with all six elements in play, a transcribed comic strip should look like Strip 17 below.

Figure 5. Strip 17
Source: Data from Schultz 2005.

I have presented my comics transcription method and illustrated the application of each of its dimensions to Strip 17 (below). The elements of my transcription method successfully convey the need for a semiotic transcription system to decode the information being conveyed with a comic panel. Transcription systems that do not account for the interactive nature of these key elements may neglect valuable information key to deciphering the artist’s intended message.
Panel 1: Linus
The Prose:

The Information: Dear Great Pumpkin, how have you been?

The Gesture: Gazing downward; facial expression: wide eyes, raise brow, tongue on upper lip.

Ingesticulary Act: Concentration, Determination.

The Action:

Simple: Sitting at a table, writing a letter.

Perspective: Centered; partial body: upper torso, both arms; full face; proximity 1.

Environment: Linus, table, envelope, pencil, paper, empty background.

Panel 2: Linus
The Prose:

The Information: We are looking forward to your coming on Halloween night with your bag full of presents. I have tried to be a good boy all year.

The Gesture: Gazing downward; facial expression: wide eyes, raise brow, tongue on upper lip.

Ingesticulary Act: Concentration, Determination.

The Action:

Simple: Sitting at a table, writing a letter.

Perspective: Centered; partial body: upper torso, both arms; full face; proximity 1.

Environment: Linus, table, envelope, pencil, paper, empty background.
Panel 3: Linus
The Prose:
The Gesture: Gazing forward, pencil in mouth; facial expression: wide eyes.
Ingesticulary Act: Contemplation, Thinking.
The Action:
Complicating: Sitting at a table with pencil in mouth staring ahead.
Perspective: Centered; partial body: upper torso, both arms; full face; proximity 1.
Environment: Linus, table, envelope, pencil, paper, empty background.

Panel 4: Linus
The Prose:
The Information: Have you noticed?
The Gesture: Gazing downward; facial expression: wide eyes, raise brow, tongue on upper lip.
Ingesticulary Act: Concentration, Determination.
The Action:
Simple: Sitting at a table, writing a letter.
Perspective: Centered; partial body: upper torso, both arms; full face; proximity 1.
Environment: Linus, table, envelope, pencil, paper, empty background.
4. Analysis

My main objective for this thesis is to design a transcription technique capable of handling all the essential elements in comics. My premise is that it is vital to be able to transcribe all of these elements because of the semiotic nature of comics: each element interacts with the others to create the complete message within the panel. In order to test this premise, I have transcribed 20 four-panel Peanut’s comic strips containing one drawn character. My intention was to start with a base level of characters that being 1, and using Grounded theory, to see what the data revealed.

Grounded theory, developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967), takes the opposite approach from traditional scientific research methods that require proposing a hypothesis to be tested and then designing experiments to test that hypothesis. Using Grounded Theory, the researchers collects and then codes data looking for patterns that may emerge. Since I had no particular hypothesis in mind, I decided to use Grounded Theory and see what patterns emerged from my transcriptions.

The Ingesticulary Act

The Ingesticulary Act is what one does with the gesture or the information that is conveyed to the reader by the gesture. My initial analysis revealed a pattern in which the Ingesticulary Act conveyed information in conjunction with the Prose. However, the further analysis challenged this definition. Coding for the Ingesticulary Act, I went through each panel and correlated the Ingesticulary Act with the other elements that corresponded to the information being expressed. In 33 of the 80 panels, I found that the Ingesticulary Act is a combination of not only the Prose and Gesture but also includes the Complicating Action. For example, Figure 6 shows the character, Linus, standing, holding a blanket to his face with both hands. The Gesture is a facial
expression, smiling, with his eyes closed. The Prose is a dialog in which Linus says “My blanket! I got it back! I can’t believe it! My good ol’ blanket!” The Ingesticulary Act expresses happiness and comfort. The reader can assume happiness from the smile on Linus’ face; however, comfort can only be understood by taking into account the Complicating Action along with the Dialog. Linus holding the blanket to his face with his eyes closed expresses physical comfort while smiling and the Dialog express happiness. I have coded the elements in Figure 6 below to illustrate how the Prose, Gesture, and Complicating Action work in conjunction to produce the Ingesticulary Act. The bold face Gesture corresponds to the bold face Ingesticulary Act, whereas the italicized Complicating Action corresponds to the italicized Ingesticulary Act.

Panel 1: Linus
The Prose:
   The Dialog: My blanket! I got it back! I can’t believe it! My good ol’ blanket!
The Gesture: **Facial expression: closed eyes, smiling.**
Ingesticulary Act: **Happiness, Comfort.**
The Action:
   Complicating: Standing, holding a blanket to his face with both hands.
   Perspective: Centered; full body, partial face: eyes, nose, one ear, partial mouth; proximity 1.
   Environment: Linus, blanket, ground, empty background.

Figure 6. Strip 10
*Source: Data from Schultz 2005.*

While the Ingesticulary Act can represent the information expressed by only the Gesture, the fact that 33 of 80 panels require the reader to take into account another element validates the need for an all-encompassing transcription technique. Transcription techniques that only consider the text and gesture are ignoring vital information that influences the reader’s understanding of the gesture. It is the minute and subtle influences that allow for varied interpretations of gestures.
These influences must be made apparent in order to research the way in which gestures are recognized not only in the comic world, but also in the real world.

The Gesture

The Gesture is the movements and the facial expression used to convey to the reader information about what the character is feeling, thinking, or aware of in his or her environment. The reader uses his or her cultural knowledge along with the other four elements, the Prose, the Action, the Perspective, and the Environment, as well as membership within the community to determine the Ingesticulary Act associated with the gesture. Part of the impetus to create a semiotic transcription technique was the need to be able to transcribe the other elements and see how they affect each other’s interpretation.

Of the 80 panels, I found 3 with the same gesture but with different Ingesticulary Acts. In strips 3, 11, and 19, the character has his arms outstretched. In Strip 3 Panel 1, Snoopy is dancing around with a smile on his face. The Gesture is facial expression: closed eyes, smiling; arms outstretched. In Strip 11 Panel 1, Charlie Brown is giving an inspirational speech to his teammates. The Gesture is facial expression: smiling; arms outstretched. However, in Strip 19 Panel 3, Charlie Brown is upset. The Gesture is gazing forward, arms outstretched; facial expression: flat clenched mouth. All three panels share a similar aspect of the gesture: arms outstretched. It is important to note that Strip 3 Panel 1 and Strip 11 Panel 1 also share another aspect of The Gesture being facial expression: smiling. However, my focus here is not on the similarities of the gestures within each of the panels but the difference in the Ingesticulary Act of the same or similar gesture.

As previously mentioned, Strip 3 and Strip 11 both have a smiling facial expression with arm outstretched. They also have the same Ingesticulary Act of happiness or joy. In Strip 19, the
gesture of arms outstretched is the same but the Ingesticulary Act is different. In Strip 19 Panel 3, the Ingesticulary Act is dismay, disgust. The analysis shows that the same gesture of arms outstretched has two extremely opposite Ingesticulary Acts. What this finding tells us is that gestures are not interpreted without the influence of other information or context. Any conclusions about a gesture or any attempt to attribute a particular meaning to a gesture becomes invalid if the context, or in this case the other elements included in my transcription technique, are not taken into account. Gestures without context are impossible to define. Like with the Ingesticulary Act, any transcription technique that neglects the influence of the context on the meaning of a gesture is incomplete. Analyzing comics to determine that the same gesture may have more than one Ingesticulary Act helps researchers get a clear picture of the way that gestures are interpreted in the real world.

Characters

The corpus of the transcription contains 4 panel comic strips in which one single character is drawn. Further analysis revealed that although only one character was drawn, the implication of other characters is frequent throughout Peanuts. In some cases, the other characters are mentioned directly in The Dialog or The Reflection. In 4 of the 80 panels (see A: Peanuts Transcription Strip 7, 11, 12, and 13), the other character is implied by one of the other elements within the transcriptions. In one case (see Appendix A: Peanuts Transcription Strip 10), the character is transformed from an inanimate object to an animate object within the comic strip.

The implication of the existence of other characters not specifically drawn within the panel alludes to the existence of a world beyond the panel borders. Both the artist and the reader must co-construct this world. Similar to a traditional narrative, the artist and the reader take turns building this world. Because no two readers are alike, including the artist, each reader may
construct a slightly different notion of the world beyond the panels. Nevertheless, without this co-construction, the implication of characters would be irrelevant.

The reader also plays another important part in the narrative by using his or her cultural knowledge of the society or the world in general. While the artist implies that there are other characters and by default a world beyond the panels, it is the reader who must decide to which characters the artists is implying as in the example below.

In Figure 7, the reader must consider all of elements in order to conclude there is a pitcher. The Information tells us that this is the third strike which means that there were two previous missed pitches. The Dialog reinforces the fact that Charlie Brown does not hit the ball, but, in fact, misses it. The motion lines across the middle of the panel suggest the baseball’s trajectory past Charlie Brown. The baseball is not visible in the panel and neither is the person who threw the ball, the pitcher. The reader uses his or her cultural knowledge of a baseball game and its players to deduce that there is a pitcher beyond the panel borders. In Figure 7 below, the portions of the elements which pertain to the pitcher are in bold italics.

Motion Lines

As previously mentioned above, motion lines suggest that there is a pitcher and a baseball beyond the borders of Figure 7. Motion lines not only suggest other characters and items beyond the borders, they also convey motion or movement as the name suggests. These motion lines are a visual manifestation of physical or emotional motion or movement by characters, explicitly drawn or implied, and items within the panel. These motion lines are applied to all six elements within the transcription.
Analysis of the Peanuts comic strips reveals that motion lines are not used for normal physical movement such as walking or smiling. Instead, motion lines are used to express degrees of movement faster, larger, or more intense than the normal expression of the action. For example, in Figure 8, Snoopy’s ears and feet are moving very rapidly above the ground. The reader recognizes this movement as rapid based on the fact that there are multiple motion lines around Snoopy’s ears and feet. The motion lines around the ears indicate that the ears are not only moving rapidly but also the directionality of the movement, circular. Likewise, the motion lines around the feet indicate that Snoopy’s feet are moving rapidly back and forth and up and down. The motion lines fall under the Simple Action element because they elaborate on the action of Snoopy’s ears and feet. In the Figure 8 below, I have italicized The Simple Action and highlighted the motion lines in order to emphasize transcription of the location of the motion lines under different elements.
Motion lines not only express physical movement, but also express degrees of emotionality. As with physical movement, motion lines are not used for the normal expression of emotion such as joy or happiness which is recognized via a combination of other elements, such as The Gesture, The Action and The Prose. Instead these lines are used to express abundance or an outpouring of emotion beyond what is the norm. The reader recognizes that the more motion lines there are, the stronger the emotion or emotional outpouring. In Figure 9 below, the motion lines correspond to The Gesture which is the facial expression smiling. These motions lines indicate that the happiness or joy is beyond the norm range of the emotion. It radiates outward from the character as if it has the physicality of movement. The Gesture is in italics while the motion lines are highlighted.

![Figure 8. Strip 3](source: Data from Schultz 2005)

Panel 1: Snoopy  
The Prose:  
Ingesticulary Act: Happiness, Enjoyment.  
The Action:  
Simple: Moving ears: motion lines, moving feet above the ground: motion lines, arms outstretched (dancing).  
Perspective: Centered; profile body, partial face: mouth, one eye, ears, nose; proximity 1.  
Environment: Snoopy, ground, empty background.

Motions lines appear in three of the six elements: The Gesture, The Action, and the Environment. The degree of movement or emotional outpouring ranges from one line to four lines in 17 of 80 panels. The reader recognizes that these lines indicate above normal movement or emotion and the more lines, the more movement or emotion. Motion lines also indicate the presence of other characters beyond the panel borders as mentioned in the previous section.
Motion lines play an important role in the creation of the comic world within the borders and beyond the borders.

![Image of Panel 3: Charlie Brown]

The Complicating Action and the Punch Line

The Action refers to any action which the character performs within the panel. There are two different types of action within comics which serve two different purposes (Chapter 3).

There is a direct correlation between the panel in which the Complicating Action, the source of tension within the comic narrative, occurs and the panel in which the punch line occurs. The tension of the Complicating Action creates an air of expectation from the reader. The punch line informs the reader of the reality of the given situation. The punch line is in the Prose in 95% of the 20 comic strips I analyzed. I found one strip in which the punch line is in The Action. There is also one strip in which there is no Complicating Action. Since the juxtaposition of the Complicating Action and the Prose creates a humorous effect, it is no surprise that in 65% of the strips, the Complicating Action is immediately followed by the punch line; however, 35% of the strips yield a different result. The complete results of my analysis of the 20 Peanuts comic strips are Appendix C. Below is a summary of my findings in Table 2.
Table 2. Analysis of Complicating Action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Strips out of 20</th>
<th>Panel in which Complicating Action occurs</th>
<th>Percentage for Complicating Action</th>
<th>Panel in which the Punch Line occurs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>3, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,2,3</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Strips 2 and 4, the Complicating Action and the punch line occur in the same panel. In Strips 11 and 13, the Complicating Action occurs in the second panel, while the punch line occurs in the fourth. In Strip 3, there is no Complicating Action, but the punch line still occurs in the fourth panel. In Strip 12, the Complicating Action occurs in the second panel and is immediately followed by the punch line in the third panel. Since in Strip 12 the Complicating Action is immediately followed by the punch line, the fact that this two occurs in earlier panels instead of three and four does not challenge my previous findings. However, if humor is created by the juxtaposition of the Complicating Action and the Prose, then Strips 2, 3, 4, 11, and 13 should not have a humorous effect on the reader. This is not the case.

In Strip 2 (Figure 10 below), the fourth panel is still humorous because of the contrast between the two seasons, winter and summer. The Environment shows the reader that it is winter and Snoopy as well as everything within the panel is covered in snow. The Reflection informs the reader that Snoopy longs for warmer days in which he would presumably not be covered in snow. It is the contrast in the type of weather associated with each seasons as represented in the Environment and the Reflection which creates a humorous effect.
In Strip 3 (Figure 11 below), Snoopy dances in all four panels. The Action for each panel is Simple and only the fourth panel has text. In the fourth panel, Snoopy reflects “Who else do you know who can do the ‘beagle’?” Since there is no Complicating Action in contrast to The Prose, this strip should not be humorous. However, the last panel creates a humorous effect by contrasting definitions of the word beagle. Snoopy is a beagle dog. He is performing a dance known as The Beagle, which he created. In the strip below, a pun creates the humor.

In Strip 4 (Figure 12 below), Snoopy is reflecting on the events of the previous night when Charlie Brown’s sister was born. Panels 1, 2, 3 are an example of an extended orientation. Snoopy reflects on the events which orients the reader to pertinent background information. In Panel 4, the humorous effect is created by Snoopy’s insight into the way in which the baby’s birth has affected him found in The Reflection and the Complicating Action of looking at an empty bowl. Even though Strip 4 does not adhere to the pattern found in the majority of the
comic strips, it still relies on juxtaposition of the Complicating Action and The Prose to create humor.

Figure 12. Strip 4  
*Source*: Data from Schultz 2005.

In my analysis of Strip 7 (Figure 13 below), I found that the Complicating Action occurs within Panels 1, 2, and 3, and the punch line is in Panel 4. Strip 7 is an example of building up tension and expectation by extending the Complicating Action through several panels. With each successive panel, the tension and expectation that Charlie Brown might actually hit a homerun increases. In Panel 4, the reader sees that Charlie Brown is unable to obtain his goal yet again. The tension and expectation of the first three panels is in contrast to the reality of the fourth panel. At first glance, this strip did not seem to adhere to the pattern found in most of the comic strips analyzed; however, upon further analysis, I determined that this strip does in fact adhere to the typical pattern in which the Complicating Action precedes the punch line thus creating a humorous effect.

Strip 12 (Figure 14 below) is constructed very similarly to Strip 7 because the Complicating Action is extended through two panels, Panel 2 and 3. The first panel orients the reader. Panels 2 and 3 extend the Complicating Action into two parts: preparing to swing a baseball bat, and completing the swing and missing the ball. The punch line appears in Panel 4 but is not in The Prose. Instead, the function of the punch line is carried out by The Action of the
team, a character beyond the panel borders. Again, the Complicating Action in Panels 2 and 3 set up tension and expectation in the reader. The punch line is the reality of Charlie Brown once again failing to obtain his goal.

Figure 13. Strip 7
Source: Data from Schultz 2005.

Figure 14. Strip 12
Source: Data from Schultz 2005.

Like Strip 7 and 12, Strip 13 (Figure 15 below) also has an extended Complicating Action, but it also contains an extended resolution or result. Panels 1 and 2 build up the tension and expectation in the reader by dividing the Complicating Action into two parts: the start of the pitch and the completion of the pitch. The reader uses the motion lines and Information to construct the batter who is beyond the panel borders. In Panels 3 and 4, the resolution or result of the batter hitting the baseball is seen. First, the ball flies past Charlie Brown spinning him in the air and causing him to lose his clothing. Then, Charlie Brown falls onto the ground knocked senseless. The punch line is in Panel 4 in the Prose where Charlie Brown confirms that like
previous seasons, he has failed yet again. After further analysis, Strip 13 also adheres to the pattern of the Complicating Action preceding the punch line.

Figure 15. Strip 13
Source: Data from Schultz 2005.

I have determined a pattern for the humorous effect of comic strips. In most cases, the Complicating Action precedes the punch line, which is usually found in text form in The Prose. The 2 cases in which the Complicating Action and the punch line appear in the same panel, Panel 4, both involved the Snoopy character. In Strips 2 and 4, a different technique, such as irony and the use of a pun, is used to create a humorous effect.

My findings are just the beginning of much needed research into how humor in comics is interpreted. There is some research on humor in comics (Tsakona 2009); however, Tsakona’s research focuses on single panel comics, cartoons, and his transcription method does not account for the The Gesture and The Ingesticulary Act. From my initial analysis, I have shown how an all-encompassing transcription method can be used to discourse analysis in comics. All the elements that I have outlined can have an effect on the interpretation of the other elements and on the interpretation of the comics’ intended message.
5. Conclusion

Van Leeuwen (2004) elegantly illustrates ten reasons that linguists should be interested in the visual arts. His ten reasons are fully applicable to why linguists should also be interested in comics. Comics are narratives; they contain all of the structures and dimensions of traditional oral narratives. Comics also has many other areas of interest to linguists who want to research culture and language, such as the use of iconicity, the interpretation of gestures, the creation of speech communities, and the use of visual literacy.

I like to design things, which makes me an architect of sorts. As such, my main objective has been to design a semiotic transcription method for the transcription of comics. Any transcription method for comics must be able to account for all the salient aspects within comics. I have identified six essential elements, The Prose, The Gesture, the Ingesticulary Act, The Action, the Perspective, and the Environment. These elements work in a semiotic manner to convey meaning within comics. Transcription techniques that do not account for the influences of these elements neglect pertinent information that may affect the interpretations of the comics’ message. Using my unique transcription allows researchers to analyze the full effects of all the pertinent information contained within a comics’ panel.

I have also demonstrated how my six essential elements work simultaneously to convey a single message. In my analysis, I found that the Ingesticulary Act and The Gesture can only be fully understood by examining all the information within the comic panel. I illustrate via my transcription method that it is possible for the same gesture to have more than one Ingesticulary Act, and that determining The Ingesticulary Act requires analysis of the other four essential elements. Further research on gestures, ingesticulary acts and facial expression
could lead to the development of a key to establish the terminology used for gestures and facial expression with ingesticulary acts.

In addition, my analysis demonstrates that motions lines are a necessary tool for the construction of the world and characters beyond the panel’s borders. Motion lines also relay information about the speed of movement and degrees of emotion. Further studies in this area may reveal more information on the way in which the reader constructs the world beyond the panel’s borders and probability of more than one reader constructing that world in the same manner.

In the final section of my analysis, I tackle the difficult subject of humor. I barely scratched the surface of this subject, but using my transcription technique, I offer valuable insight into how the Complicating Action plays a role in creating humorous effect. Future research using my transcription technique, my findings, along with previous research on humor in comics (Tsakona 2009) may lead to a better understanding of the ways in which comic humor is established by the artist and interpreted by the reader.
References Cited


Darhower, Mark. 2006. Where's the Community?: Bilingual Internet Chat and the "Fifth C" of the National Standards. Hispania 89, no. 1 (March): 84-98.


Appendix A: Peanuts Transcription

Strip 1

Panel 1: Linus
The Prose:
   The Dialog: My blanket! I got it back! I can’t believe it! My good ol’ blanket!
Ingesticulary Act: Happiness, Comfort.
The Action:
   Simple: Standing, holding a blanket to his face with both hands.
Perspective: Centered; full body, partial face: eyes, nose, one ear, partial mouth; proximity 1.
Environment: Linus, blanket, ground, empty background.

Panel 2: Linus
The Prose:
   The Dialog: For TWO WEEKS it’s been buried beneath the ground.
The Gesture: Gazing at the blanket; facial expression: wide eyes.
Ingesticulary Act: Inspection, Retrospection
The Action:
   Simple: Standing, holding a blanket away from his body with both hands.
Perspective: Centered; profile body, profile face; proximity 4.
Environment: Linus, blanket, table, flowers in a flowerpot, wall, outlet, inside environment.
Panel 3: Linus
The Prose:
   The Dialog: It’s dirty. It’s ragged. It’s torn . . . It’s even a little moldy. . .
The Gesture: Gazing at blanket; facial expression: wide eyes.
Ingesticulary Act: Inspection
The Action:
   Complicating: Kneeling, holding blanket up away from body.
Perspective: Centered; profile body, full face; proximity 3.
Environment: Linus, blanket, ground, empty background.

Source: Data from Schultz 2005.

Panel 4: Linus
The Prose:
   The Dialog: But it’s MY blanket! *sigh*
Ingesticulary Act: Happiness
The Action:
   Simple: Holding blanket to his face with both hands, sitting.
Perspective: Centered; full body; partial face: eyes, nose, one ear, partial mouth; proximity 2.
Environment: Linus, blanket, empty background.

Source: Data from Schultz 2005.
Panel 1: Snoopy
The Prose:
   The Reflection: I love winter!
The Gesture: Gazing at snow, facial expression: smiling.
Ingesticulary Act: Contemplation, Enjoyment, Happiness
The Action:
   Simple: Sitting on the roof of the dog house watching the snow falling.
Perspective: Centered, profile body, profile face; proximity 1.
Environment: Snoopy, dog house, grass, snowflakes, outside.

Panel 2: Snoopy
The Prose:
   The Reflection: I especially love the beautiful snowflakes.
The Gesture: Gazing at snowflakes, facial expression: smiling.
Ingesticulary Act: Contemplation, Enjoyment, Happiness
The Action:
   Simple: Lying on the roof of the dog house watching the snow fall.
Perspective: Centered, profile body, profile face; proximity 1.
Environment: Snoopy, dog house, grass, more snowflakes than panel 1, outside.
Panel 3: Snoopy
The Prose:

The Reflection: They float down gently from the sky, covering forest and hill. . .
The Gesture: Gazing upward.
Ingesticulary Act: Contemplation
The Action:

Simple: Lying on the roof of the dog house watching the snow fall.
Perspective: Centered; profile body, profile face; proximity 1.
Environment: Snoopy, dog house, grass, more snowflakes than panel 2, outside.

Panel 4: Snoopy
The Prose:

The Reflection: Still, there’s a lot to be said for summer!
The Gesture:
Ingesticulary Act:
The Action:

Simple: Lying on the roof of the dog house.
Complicating: Being covered in snow.
Perspective: Centered; profile view of the outline of Snoopy’s body and head; proximity 1.
Environment: Outline of Snoopy and the dog house, snow, more snowflakes than panel 3, outside.
Panel 1: Snoopy
The Prose:
Ingesticulary Act: Happiness, Enjoyment.
The Action:
   Simple: Moving ears: motion lines, moving feet above the ground: motion lines, arms outstretched (dancing).
Perspective: Centered; profile body, partial face: mouth, one eye, ears, nose; proximity 1.
Environment: Snoopy, ground, empty background.

Panel 2: Snoopy
The Prose:
Ingesticulary Act: Happiness, Enjoyment.
The Action:
   Simple: Moving feet above the ground: motion lines, arms behind back (dancing).
Perspective: Centered; profile body, profile face; proximity 1.
Environment: Snoopy, ground, empty background.
Panel 3: Snoopy
The Prose:
Ingesticulary Act: Happiness, Enjoyment
The Action:
  Simple: Moving ears: motion lines, moving feet above the ground: motion lines, arms outstretched (dancing).
Perspective: Centered; full body, partial face: mouth, nose, ears; proximity 1.
Environment: Snoopy, ground, empty background.

Panel 4: Snoopy
The Prose:
  The Reflection: Who else do you know who can do the “beagle”?
Ingesticulary Act: Happiness, Enjoyment.
The Action:
  Simple: Moving ears: motion lines, moving feet above the ground: motion lines (dancing).
Perspective: Right; profile body, full face; proximity 1.
Environment: Snoopy, ground, empty background.
Strip 4

Panel 1: Snoopy
The Prose:

The Reflection: So Charlie Brown had a baby sister last night!
The Gesture: Gazing forward right.
Ingesticulary Act: Contemplation, Thinking.
The Action:

Simple: Sitting on the ground.
Perspective: Left; profile body, profile face; proximity 2.
Environment: Snoopy, grass, outside.

Panel 2: Snoopy
The Prose:

The Reflection: Boy, there sure was a lot of excitement around here about midnight . . . People running in all directions . . .
The Gesture: Gazing forward right.
Ingesticulary Act: Contemplation, Thinking.
The Action:

Simple: Lying on the ground on his belly.
Perspective: Centered; profile body, partial face: eyes, nose, one ear; proximity 1.
Environment: Snoopy, grass, outside.
Panel 3: Snoopy
The Prose:

The Reflection: . . Cars coming and going . .
Telephones ringing . . Things still haven’t calmed down . .
The Gesture: Gazing downward left.
Ingesticulary Act: Contemplation, Thinking.
The Action:

Simple: Walking.
Perspective: Centered; profile body, profile face; proximity 3.
Environment: Snoopy, grass, outside.

Source: Data from Schultz 2005.

Panel 4: Snoopy
The Prose:

The Reflection: And in all the excitement, nobody has remembered to feed the dog!
The Gesture: Gazing downward at his bowl.
Ingesticulary Act: Contemplation, Thinking.
The Action:

Complicating: Looking at an empty dog bowl.
Perspective: Centered, profile body, profile face; proximity 2.
Environment: Snoopy, dog bowl, ground, empty background.

Source: Data from Schultz 2005.
Panel 1: Charlie Brown
The Prose:
   The Dialog: It’s eerie that’s what it is!
The Gesture: Facial Expression: very wide eyes, open mouth.
Ingesticulary Act: Worry, Anxiety, Fear.
The Action:
   Simple: Lying in bed under the covers.
Perspective: Centered; profile face; proximity 1.
Environment: Charlie Brown, a bed, a pillow, a blanket, dark, inside.

Source: Data from Schultz 2005.

Panel 2: Charlie Brown
The Prose:
   The Dialog: It’s eerie knowing that somewhere out in that darkness the “mad punter” is lurking...
Ingesticulary Act: Worry, Anxiety, Fear.
The Action:
   Simple: Sitting up in bed.
Perspective: Left; profile upper body, profile face; proximity 3.
Environment: Charlie Brown, a pillow, a blanket, dark, inside.

Source: Data from Schultz 2005.
Panel 3: Charlie Brown
The Prose:
The Gesture: Back to reader.
Ingesticulary Act: Waiting, Searching.
The Action:
    Complicating: Standing in front of a window staring out into the dark.
Perspective: Centered; back of torso and head; proximity 4.
Environment: Charlie Brown, a bed, a blanket, a window, curtains, dark, inside.

Panel 4: Charlie Brown
The Prose:
    The Dialog: Anyone who owns a football will not sleep well tonight!
The Gesture: Gazing forward; facial expression: wide eyes, flat stretched mouth.
Ingesticulary Act: Worry, Anxiety, Fear.
The Action:
    Simple: Lying in bed under the blanket again.
Perspective: Centered; full face; proximity 2.
Environment: Charlie Brown, a bed, a pillow, a blanket, dark, inside.
Panel 1: Snoopy

The Prose:

The Reflection: I wonder if I look pathetic?
The Gesture: Gazing forward left.

Ingesticulary Act: Contemplation, Thinking.
The Action:

Simple: Sitting in the rain.

Perspective: Centered; profile of body, partial face: two eyes, nose, one ear; proximity 2.

Environment: Snoopy, heavy rain, ground, puddles, outside.

Panel 2: Snoopy

The Prose:

The Reflection: Sometimes when little dogs sit in the rain looking pathetic, rich ladies come along in big cars, and take them to their beautiful homes . . .
The Gesture: Gazing over shoulder right.

Ingesticulary Act: Contemplation, Waiting, Searching.
The Action:

Simple: Sitting in the rain.

Perspective: Centered, profile of body, partial face: nose, two eyes, one ear; proximity 1.

Environment: Snoopy, heavy rain, ground, puddles, outside.
Panel 3: Snoopy
The Prose:
The Gesture: Gazing forward left.
Ingesticulary Act: Waiting, Searching.
The Action: Complicating: Sitting in the rain.
Perspective: Centered; profile body, partial face: two eyes, nose, one ear; proximity 2.
Environment: Snoopy, heavy rain, ground, puddles, outside.

Panel 4: Snoopy
The Prose:
    The Reflection: But not very often..
The Gesture: Gazing downward right.
Ingesticulary Act: Contemplation, Thinking.
The Action: Simple: Walking in the rain.
Perspective: Centered; profile body, profile face; proximity 2.
Environment: Snoopy, heavy rain, ground, puddles, outside.
Panel 1: Charlie Brown
The Prose:

The Dialog: It only takes one to hit . . . It only takes one to hit it.
The Gesture: Facial Expression: open eyes, flat stretched mouth.
Ingesticulary Act: Concentration, Determination.
The Action:

Complicating: Standing, holding a baseball bat ready to swing.
Perspective: Left; full body, full face; proximity 1.
Environment: Charlie Brown, baseball bat, ground, empty background.

Panel 2: Charlie Brown
The Prose:

The Dialog: The game is never over until the last man is out! I can still be a hero…
Ingesticulary Act: Concentration, Determination.
The Action:

Complicating: Standing, holding a baseball bat ready to swing.
Perspective: Left; full body, full face; proximity 1.
Environment: Charlie Brown, baseball bat, ground, empty background.
### Panel 3: Charlie Brown

**The Prose:**

**The Dialog:** It only takes one to hit it. . .

**The Gesture:** Facial Expression: eyes open, raised eyebrows, flat clenched mouth.

**Ingesticulary Act:** Concentration, Determination.

**The Action:**

- **Complicating:** Standing, holding a baseball bat ready to swing.
- **Perspective:** Left; full body, full face; proximity 1.
- **Environment:** Charlie Brown, baseball bat, ground, empty background.

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### Panel 4: Charlie Brown

**The Prose:**

**The Information:** STRIKE THREE!

**The Dialog:** That wasn’t the one!

**The Gesture:** Facial Expression: very wide eyes, flat clenched mouth.

**Ingesticulary Act:** Anxiety, Distress.

**The Action:**

- **Simple:** Completing the swing of the baseball bat and missing the ball: motion lines.
- **Perspective:** Centered; profile body, profile face; proximity 2.
- **Environment:** Charlie Brown, baseball bat, ground, empty background, outside.

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**Panel 4: Pitcher**

**Environment:** baseball: motion lines
Panel 1: Charlie Brown
The Prose:

The Dialog: This is the worst yet . . . I’ve really hit bottom.
The Gesture: Gazing at the ground; facial expression: wide eyes.
Ingesticulary Act: Sad, Contemplation.
The Action:

Simple: Leaning against a rock.
Perspective: Left; profile body, profile face; proximity 2.
Environment: Charlie Brown, a rock, ground, outside.

Panel 2: Charlie Brown
The Prose:

The Dialog: My mother is mad at me for running out on my job of pushing my baby sister around in her stroller . . .
The Gesture: Gazing forward, leaning on hands, facial expression: wide eyes, raised eyebrows, flat stretched mouth.
Ingesticulary Act: Upset, Contemplation.
The Action:

Simple: Sitting on a log.
Perspective: Centered; partial body: arms, torso, feet; full face; proximity 3.
Environment: Charlie Brown, two logs, a tree stump, outside.

Source: Data from Schultz 2005.
Panel 3: Charlie Brown
The Prose:

The Dialog: And now all the kids are mad at me for striking out and losing biggest game of the season!
The Gesture: Gazing forward, leaning on hands; facial expression: wide eyes, raised eyebrows, flat stretched mouth.
Ingesticulary Act: Anxiety, Worried, Dejection.
The Action:

Complicating: Leaning forward on hands against a tree log.
Perspective: Centered; partial body: arms; full face; proximity 1.
Environment: Charlie Brown, two leaves: motion lines, a tree log, outside.

Panel 4: Charlie Brown
The Prose:

The Dialog: Suddenly I feel very old . . .
The Gesture: Gazing downward, shoulders down; facial expression: wide eyes.
Ingesticulary Act: Sad, Dejected.
The Action:

Simple: Leaning with head against a tree trunk.
Perspective: Centered; profile body, profile face; proximity 4.
Environment: Charlie Brown, a tree, leaves, ground, outside.
Panel 1: Sally
The Prose:
The Gesture: Gazing forward, facial expression: flat mouth.
Ingesticulary Act: Waiting.
The Action:
    Simple: Standing, holding a balloon in left hand.
Perspective: Left; full body, full face; proximity 1.
Environment: Sally, a balloon, ground, outside.

Panel 2: Sally
The Prose:
The Gesture: Gazing at the balloon.
Ingesticulary Act: Waiting.
The Action:
    Simple: Standing, looking at the balloon held in the left hand.
Perspective: Left; profile body, profile face; proximity 1.
Environment: Sally, a balloon, ground, outside.

Source: Data from Schultz 2005.
Panel 3: Sally
The Prose:
The Gesture: Gazing forward, facial expression; flat mouth.
Ingesticulary Act: Waiting.
The Action:
  Complicating: Standing, holding a balloon in left hand.
Perspective: Left; full body, full face; proximity 1.
Environment: Sally, a balloon: motion line, ground, outside.

Panel 4: Sally
The Prose:
  The Dialog: So what’s so much fun about a balloon?
The Gesture: Facial expression: raised eyebrows, flat clenched mouth.
Ingesticulary Act: Annoyance, Exasperation.
The Action:
  Simple: Standing, holding a balloon in left hand.
Perspective: Centered; full body, full face; proximity 1.
Environment: Sally, a balloon, ground, outside.

Source: Data from Schultz 2005.
Panel 1: Linus
The Prose:

The Dialog: People are beginning to say nasty things about me. I’m sorry blanket . . . I’m going to have to leave you here by the side of the road!
The Gesture: Gazing at the blanket; facial expression: wide eyes, open mouth.
Ingesticulary Act: Examination, Inspection.
The Action:

Simple: Standing, holding the blanket with one hand.
Perspective: Centered; profile body, profile face; proximity 3.
Environment: Linus, the blanket, grass, ground, outside.

Panel 2: Linus
The Prose:

The Gesture: Facial expression; wide eye.
Ingesticulary Act: Distress.
The Action:

Simple: Walking away from the blanket.
Perspective: Centered; profile body, profile face; proximity 2.
Environment: Linus, the blanket, grass, ground, outside.

Panel 2: Blanket
The Gesture: Turned toward Linus.
The Ingesticulary Act: Waiting.
The Action:

Simple: Standing.
Panel 3: Linus
The Prose:
The Gesture: Gazing forward; facial expression: wide eyes, flat mouth.
Ingesticulary Act: Waiting, Tension.
The Action:
    Complicating: Standing still.
Perspective: Left; partial body: torso, one arm, both legs; full face; proximity 4.
Environment: Linus, grass, ground, outside.

Panel 4: Linus
The Prose:
    The Dialog: It was whimpering!
Ingesticulary Act: Happiness, Joy.
The Action:
    Simple: Kneeling on the ground, hugging the blanket to his face.
Perspective: Centered; profile body, full face; proximity 1.
Environment: Linus, the blanket, grass, ground, outside.
### Panel 1: Charlie Brown

**The Prose:**

The Dialog: All right team, this is the beginning of a new season! If we all work together, this can be our greatest year.

**The Gesture:** Facial expression: smiling; arms outstretched.

**Ingesticulary Act:** Happiness, Joy.

**The Action:**

*Simple*: Standing with arms outstretched.

**Perspective:** Centered; full body, full face; proximity 3.

**Environment:** Charlie Brown, a bench, ground, outside.

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### Panel 2: Charlie Brown

**The Prose:**

The Dialog: Now, the first thing we have to do is start a program of vigorous calisthenics…

**The Gesture:** Facial expression: open eyes, raised eyebrows, open mouth grimace.

**Ingesticulary Act:** Determination.

**The Action:**

*Complicating*: Talking, striking fist into hand: motion lines.

**Perspective:** Centered; partial body: torso, both arms; full face; proximity 1.

**Environment:** Charlie Brown, empty background.

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*Source: Data from Schultz 2005.*

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Panel 3: Charlie Brown

The Prose:

The Gesture:

Ingesticulary Act:

The Action:

Simple: Falling down.

Perspective: Centered; partial body: both elbows, behind, both feet; proximity 2.

Environment: Charlie Brown, baseball hats, baseball gloves, ground, outside.

Panel 3: The team

The Action:

Simple: Throwing baseball hats and gloves at Charlie Brown: motion lines.

The Ingesticulary Act: Disapproval, Defiance

Panel 4: Charlie Brown

The Prose:

The Dialog: How about one push-up?


Ingesticulary Act: Dismay, Exasperation.

The Action:

Simple: Sitting on the ground, covered in a pile of baseball hats and gloves.

Perspective: Centered; partial body: upper torso, full face; proximity 2.

Environment: Charlie Brown, sweat beads around Charlie Brown’s head, baseball hats, baseball gloves, ground, outside.
Strip 12

Panel 1: Charlie Brown
The Prose:

The Dialog: All right! Everybody out for a little infield practice!

The Gesture:

Ingesticulary Act:

The Action:

Simple: Talking, standing, holding a baseball bat.

Perspective: Centered; full body, full face; proximity 4.

Environment: Charlie Brown, a fence, a bench, a baseball bat, a baseball cap, ground, outside.

Panel 2: Charlie Brown
The Prose:

The Dialog: I’ll hit the ball to third base. . . you throw it to first . . . first throws it home, the catcher whips it back to third and we throw it around the horn! Let’s get it right the first time! Okay, here we go!!

The Gesture:

Ingesticulary Act: Determination

The Action:

Simple: Yelling, holding a baseball and preparing to swing a baseball bat: motion lines.

Perspective: Centered; partial body: upper torso, one arm; profile face; proximity 1.

Environment: Empty background.
Panel 3: Charlie Brown
The Prose:
   The Information: Clip.
The Gesture: Facial expression: closed eyes, grimace.
   Ingesticulary Act: Dismay.
The Action:
   Complicating: Completing the swing of the bat and
   clipping (missing) the baseball: motion dashes.
Perspective: Centered; profile body, profile face; proximity 2.
Environment: Charlie Brown, a baseball bat, a baseball,
ground, outside.

Source: Data from Schultz 2005.

Panel 4: Charlie Brown
The Prose:
The Gesture:
   Ingesticulary Act:
The Action:
   Simple: Falling down.
Perspective: Centered; partial body: both elbows, behind, both
feet; proximity 3.
Environment: Charlie Brown, baseball hats, baseball gloves,
ground, outside.

Panel 4: The team
The Action:
   Simple: Throwing baseball hats and gloves: motion
   lines.
   The Ingesticulary Act: Disapproval.
Panel 1: Charlie Brown

The Prose:

The Dialog: Here we go. . . the first pitch of the new season…


Ingesticulary Act: Determination.

The Action:

Simple: Starting to pitch the baseball: motion lines.

Perspective: Centered; profile body, profile face; proximity 3.

Environment: Charlie Brown, baseball cap, baseball glove, baseball, pitcher’s mound, outside.

Panel 2: Charlie Brown

The Prose:


Ingesticulary Act: Determination, Concentration.

The Action:

Complicating: Finishing the pitch: motion line.

Perspective: Centered; profile body, profile face; proximity 3.

Environment: Charlie Brown, baseball hat, baseball glove, pitcher’s mound, ground, outside.

Source: Data from Schultz 2005.
Panel 3: Charlie Brown
The Prose:

The Information: **Pow!**

The Gesture: Facial expression: wide eyes, grimace.

Ingesticulary Act: Dismay.

The Action:

Simple: Spinning threw the air after being hit with a baseball: motion lines.

Perspective: Centered; full body, full face; proximity 2.

Environment: Charlie Brown, baseball hat, baseball glove, 2 shoes, 2 socks, a shirt, pitcher’s mound, ground, outside.

Panel 3: The batter
The Action:

Simple: Hitting the baseball: motion lines.

Panel 4: Charlie Brown
The Prose:

The Dialog: Sometimes I have difficulty telling one season from another…


Ingesticulary Act: Dismay, Confusion.

The Action:

Simple: Lying on the ground.

Perspective: Centered; partial body: torso, one arm, both feet, full face; proximity 1.

Environment: Charlie Brown, baseball glove, one sock, one shoe, pitcher’s mound, ground, outside.
Panel 1: Snoopy
The Prose:
   The Reflection: Cows fascinate me…
   The Gesture: Gazing to the right; facial expression: smiling.
   Ingesticulary Act: Happiness, Joy, Contemplating, Thinking.
   The Action:
      Simple: Sitting on the ground.
   Perspective: Centered; full body, full face; proximity 2.
   Environment: Snoopy, grass, ground, outside.

Panel 2: Snoopy
The Prose:
   The Reflection: They’re so dumb…they’re always standing around like this staring into space.
   The Gesture: Facial expression: droopy eyes.
   Ingesticulary Act: Mockery, Derision.
   The Action:
      Simple: Standing, gazing to the left, mimicking a cow.
   Perspective: Centered; profile body, full face; proximity 1.
   Environment: Snoopy, grass, ground, outside.
Panel 3: Snoopy
The Prose:
   The Reflection: No matter what the weather is like, they just stand there.
The Gesture: Gazing forward.
Ingesticulary Act: Contemplation, Thinking.
The Action:
   Simple: Walking through the rain.
   Complicating: Starting to rain.
Perspective: Centered; profile body, profile face; proximity 3.
Environment: Snoopy, rain, ground, outside.

Panel 4: Snoopy
The Prose:
   The Reflection: I can’t think of anything more stupid than standing out in a pasture while it’s raining!
The Gesture: Gazing upward into the rain.
Ingesticulary Act: Thinking, Contemplation.
The Action:
   Simple: Lying on the roof of the dog house in the rain.
Perspective: Centered; profile body, profile face; proximity 4.
Environment: Snoopy, the dog house, more rain than panel 3, outside.
Panel 1: Linus
The Prose:
Ingesticulary Act: Relaxation
The Action:
    Simple: Sitting down, hugging his blanket while sucking his thumb.
Perspective: Centered; full body, full face; proximity 1.
Environment: Linus, the blanket, ground, empty background.

Panel 2: Linus
The Prose:
The Gesture: Gazing at his thumb; facial expression: wide eyes.
Ingesticulary Act: Examination, Inspection.
The Action:
    Simple: Sitting down, hugging his blanket, looking at his thumb.
Perspective: Centered; full body, full face; proximity 1.
Environment: Linus, the blanket, ground, empty background.

Source: Data from Schultz 2005.
Panel 3: Linus
The Prose:
Ingesticulary Act: Waiting.
The Action:
   Complicating: Sitting down, hugging his blanket while sucking his thumb.
Perspective: Centered; full body, full face; proximity 1.
Environment: Linus, the blanket, ground, empty background.

Panel 4: Linus
The Prose:
   The Dialog: It’s a good thumb, but not a great thumb!
   The Gesture: Gazing at his thumb; facial expression: wide eyes, raised brow, tongue on lower lip.
   Ingesticulary Act: Dismay, Dissatisfaction.
   The Action:
      Simple: Sitting down, holding his blanket, looking at his thumb with tongue stuck out.
Perspective: Centered, full body, full face; proximity 1.
Environment: Linus, the blanket, ground, empty background.
Panel 1: Snoopy
The Prose:
   The Reflection: I had really looked forward to that family reunion…
The Gesture: Gazing forward to the left, facial expression: raised brow.
Ingesticulary Act: Contemplation, Thinking.
The Action:
   Simple: Sitting on the ground.
Perspective: Centered-left; profile body, full face; proximity 1.
Environment: Snoopy, grass, ground, outside.

Panel 2: Snoopy
The Prose:
   The Reflection: What a disappointment! None of us spoke the same language! We were all strangers.
The Gesture: Facial expression: grimace, raised brow.
Ingesticulary Act: Dismay, Disgust.
The Action:
   Simple: Walking.
Perspective: Centered; profile body, profile face; proximity 2.
Environment: Snoopy, grass, ground, outside.
Panel 3: Snoopy
The Prose:
    The Reflection: I never should have started that whole business... It was a big mistake... I should have known...
The Gesture: Gazing forward to the left, facial expression: raised brow.
Ingesticulary Act: Contemplation, Thinking.
The Action:
    Complicating: Sitting on the ground by his doghouse.
Perspective: Centered; profile body, full face; proximity 4.
Environment: Snoopy, the dog house, grass, outside.

Panel 4: Snoopy
The Prose:
    The Reflection: “You can’t go home again.”
The Gesture: Gazing downward; facial expression: wide eyes, raised brow.
Ingesticulary Act: Contemplation, Thinking.
The Action:
    Simple: Lying on his belly on the roof of his dog house.
Perspective: Centered; profile body, profile face; proximity 2.
Environment: Snoopy, the dog house, outside.
Panel 1: Linus
The Prose:
   The Information: Dear Great Pumpkin, how have you been?
The Gesture: Gazing downward; facial expression: wide eyes, raise brow, tongue on upper lip.
Ingesticulary Act: Concentration, Determination.
The Action:
   Simple: Sitting at a table, writing a letter.
Perspective: Centered; partial body: upper torso, both arms; full face; proximity 1.
Environment: Linus, table, envelope, pencil, paper, empty background.

Panel 2: Linus
The Prose:
   The Information: We are looking forward to your coming on Halloween night with your bag full of presents. I have tried to be a good boy all year.
The Gesture: Gazing downward; facial expression: wide eyes, raise brow, tongue on upper lip.
Ingesticulary Act: Concentration, Determination.
The Action:
   Simple: Sitting at a table, writing a letter.
Perspective: Centered; partial body: upper torso, both arms; full face; proximity 1.
Environment: Linus, table, envelope, pencil, paper, empty background.
Panel 3: Linus

The Prose:
The Gesture: Gazing forward, pencil in mouth; facial expression: wide eyes.
Ingesticulary Act: Contemplation, Thinking.
The Action:
   Complicating: Sitting at a table with pencil in mouth staring ahead.
Perspective: Centered; partial body: upper torso, both arms; full face; proximity 1.
Environment: Linus, table, envelope, pencil, paper, empty background.

Panel 4: Linus

The Prose:
   The Information: Have you noticed?
The Gesture: Gazing downward; facial expression: wide eyes, raise brow, tongue on upper lip.
Ingesticulary Act: Concentration, Determination.
The Action:
   Simple: Sitting at a table, writing a letter.
Perspective: Centered; partial body: upper torso, both arms; full face; proximity 1.
Environment: Linus, table, envelope, pencil, paper, empty background.
Panel 1: Charlie Brown
The Prose:

The Dialog: It’s stupid to just sit here and admire that little red-haired girl from a distance.
The Gesture: Facial expression: open eyes, heavy eyebrows, flat clenched mouth.
Ingesticulary Act: Dismay, Disgust.
The Action:

Simple: Sitting down on a bench, eating a sandwich.

Perspective: Centered; full body, full face; proximity 2.
Environment: Charlie Brown, a bench, a lunch bag, a sandwich, ground, empty background.

Panel 2: Charlie Brown
The Prose:

The Dialog: It’s stupid not to get up and go over and talk to her…It’s really stupid…It’s just plain stupid…
The Gesture: Facial expression: open eyes, heavy eyebrows, grimace.
Ingesticulary Act: Dismay, Disgust.
The Action:

Simple: Gazing to the left, standing.

Perspective: Centered; full body, full face; proximity 1.
Environment: Charlie Brown, a bench, a lunch bag, a sandwich, ground, empty background.
Panel 3: Charlie Brown

The Prose:

The Dialog: So why don’t I go over and talk to her?
The Gesture: Facial expression: open eyes, raised eyebrows, grimace.
Ingesticulary Act: Dismay, Disgust.
The Action:

Complicating: Gazing forward, standing.
Perspective: Centered; full body, full face; proximity 1.
Environment: Charlie Brown, a bench, a lunch bag, a sandwich, ground, empty background.

Panel 4: Charlie Brown

The Prose:

The Dialog: Because I’m stupid!
The Gesture: Facial expression: wide eyes, grimace.
Ingesticulary Act: Dismay, Sadness.
The Action:

Simple: Sitting on a bench, eating a sandwich.
Perspective: Centered; full body, full face; proximity 1.
Environment: Charlie Brown, a bench, a lunch bag, a sandwich, ground, empty background.
Panel 1: Charlie Brown
The Prose:

The Dialog: I’d give anything to be able to talk with that red-haired girl…

Ingesticulary Act: Dismay, Disgust.

The Action:

Simple: Sitting down on a bench.

Perspective: Centered; full body, full face; proximity 4.

Environment: Charlie Brown, a bench, a lunch bag, ground, outside.

Panel 2: Charlie Brown
The Prose:

The Dialog: The amazing thing is that I know I’m the sort of person she’d like! I mean I’m not rough or crude or anything.

The Gesture:

Ingesticulary Act:

The Action:

Simple: Standing, throwing trash into the waste basket: motion lines.

Perspective: Centered; profile body, profile face; proximity 1.

Environment: Charlie Brown, a tether ball, waste basket, trash, outside.
Panel 3: Charlie Brown
The Prose:

The Dialog: I’m not the greatest person who ever lived, of course. But after all, who is? I’m just a nice sort of guy who…

The Gesture: Gazing forward, arms outstretched; facial expression: flat clenched mouth.

Ingesticulary Act: Dismay, Disgust.

The Action:

Complicating: Standing; arms outstretched.

Perspective: Centered; partial body: torso, both arms, legs; full face; proximity 2.

Environment: Charlie Brown, water fountain, stairs, rail, outside.

Panel 4: Charlie Brown
The Prose:

The Dialog: …Who never gets to meet little red-haired girls!

The Gesture: Facial expression: grimace.

Ingesticulary Act: Dismay, Disgust.

The Action:

Simple: Walking.

Perspective: Centered; profile body, profile face; proximity 3.

Environment: Charlie Brown, wall, a partial poster or notice, inside.

Source: Data from Schultz 2005.
Panel 1: Charlie Brown
The Prose:

The Dialog: What’s this? That little red-haired girl dropped her pencil…
The Gesture: Gazing at the pencil.
Ingesticulary Act: Inspection, Contemplation.
The Action:

Simple: Bending down to pick up the pencil.
Perspective: Left; profile body, profile face; proximity 2.
Environment: Charlie Brown, pencil, wall, inside.

Panel 2: Charlie Brown
The Prose:

The Dialog: Gee…It’s got teeth marks all over it…
The Gesture: Gazing at the pencil; facial expression: open mouth.
Ingesticulary Act: Inspection, Contemplation.
The Action:

Simple: Standing still, holding the pencil up to his face.
Perspective: Centered; profile body, profile face; proximity 2.
Environment: Charlie Brown, a pencil, ground, wall, inside.
Panel 3: Charlie Brown
The Prose:

The Dialog: She nibbles on her pencil…
The Gesture: Hand to chin, gazing forward; facial expression: flat mouth.
Ingesticulary Act: Contemplation, Thinking.
The Action:

Complicating: Standing still, looking forward, holding the pencil.
Perspective: Centered; full body, full face; proximity 1.
Environment: Charlie Brown, pencil, ground, wall, inside.

Panel 3: Charlie Brown
The Prose:

The Dialog: SHE’S HUMAN!
The Gesture: Facial expression: smiling; motion lines.
Ingesticulary Act: Overjoyed, Ecstasy.
The Action:

Simple: Standing, hugging the pencil to his chest.
Perspective: Centered; full body, partial face: ears, nose, mouth; proximity 1.
Environment: Charlie Brown, pencil, ground, empty background.

Source: Data from Schultz 2005.
Appendix B: Précis

Strip 1

Linus accepts his love of his blanket although it had been buried and is torn.

Source: Data from Schultz 2005.

Strip 2

Snoopy gets covered by snow while lying on his dog house roof thinking about how much he loves snow and misses summer.

Source: Data from Schultz 2005.
A beagle dog does a dance called the Beagle.

Snoopy goes hungry because new babies take precedence over feeding the dog.
Charlie Brown has an irrational fear that someone will steal his football while he is sleeping.

Snoopy waits in the rain as his dreams of being adopted by a rich lady are dashed.
Despite initial hopes, Charlie Brown strikes out yet again.

Charlie Brown is saddened by growing older.
Strip 9

Lucy finds balloons boring.

Source: Data from Schultz 2005.

Strip 10

Linus tries to leave his blanket but can’t because he loves it like a pet.

Source: Data from Schultz 2005.
Charlie Brown’s attempt to motivate his baseball team to exercise and practice is rejected and his team throws their gloves and hats at him.

Charlie Brown attempts to work his baseball team, demonstrates his incompetence, and his team throws their gloves and hats at him.
Strip 13

Charlie Brown attempts to pitch a strike, the ball is hit, and Charlie Brown is hit, loses his clothes, and falls on the pitcher mound.

Source: Data from Schultz 2005.

Strip 14

Snoopy acts like a dumb cow as he lies on top of his dog house in the rain.

Source: Data from Schultz 2005.
Strip 15

While sucking his thumb, Linus becomes dissatisfied with the taste of it.

Source: Data from Schultz 2005.

Strip 16

Snoopy is portrayed in different locations while he thinks about how nothing stays the same and everything changes.

Source: Data from Schultz 2005.
Linus is writing a letter to the Great Pumpkin who is his Santa Clause.

Charlie Brown is upset because he doesn’t know how to talk to the red-haired girl.
Strip 19

Charlie Brown analyzes his life and realizes because he is a nice guy, he will never get the red-haired girl.

*Source*: Data from Schultz 2005.

Strip 20

Charlie Brown is happy because he’s found a way to relate to the red-haired girl.

*Source*: Data from Schultz 2005.
## Appendix C: Analysis of Humor

Table 1. Analysis of The Complicating Action and the Punch Line

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strip</th>
<th>Panel</th>
<th>Complicating Action</th>
<th>Factors Contributing to Complicating Action</th>
<th>Panel</th>
<th>Punch Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kneeling, holding blanket up away from body</td>
<td>Tension-Ingest. Act: Inspection</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Prose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Being covered in snow</td>
<td>Juxtaposition of the environment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Prose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Prose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Looking at an empty dog bowl</td>
<td>Insight-The Prose (Reflection)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Prose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Standing in front of a window staring out into the dark</td>
<td>Tension-Ingest. Act: Waiting, Searching</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Prose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sitting in the rain, staring toward the left</td>
<td>Tension-Ingest. Act: Waiting, Searching</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Prose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1,2,3</td>
<td>Standing, holding a baseball bat ready to swing</td>
<td>Tension-Ingest. Act: Concentration, Determination</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Prose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Leaning forward on hands against a tree log</td>
<td>Tension-Ingest. Act: Anxiety, Worried, Dejection; Insight-The Prose (Dialog)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Prose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Standing, holding a balloon in left hand</td>
<td>Tension-Ingest. Act: Waiting; static The Action and Environment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Prose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Standing still</td>
<td>Tension-Ingest. Act: Waiting, Tension</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Prose, The Ingest. Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Talking, striking fist into hand</td>
<td>Tension-Ingest. Act: Determination</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Prose, Ingest. Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yelling, holding baseball and preparing to swing a baseball bat</td>
<td>Tension-Ingest. Act: Determination</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>The Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Finishing the pitch</td>
<td>Tension-Ingest. Act: Determination, Concentration</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Prose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Starting to rain</td>
<td>Dramatic effect, Irony</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Prose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sitting down, hugging his blanket while sucking his thumb again</td>
<td>Tension-Ingest. Act: Waiting</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Prose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sitting on the ground by his doghouse</td>
<td>Insight-The Prose (Reflection)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Prose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sitting at a table with pencil in mouth staring ahead slightly left</td>
<td>Insight-Ingest. Act: Contemplation, Thinking</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Prose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Standing, gazing forward</td>
<td>Tension-Ingest. Act: Dismay, Disgust</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Prose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Standing; arms outstretched</td>
<td>Tension-Ingest. Act: Dismay, Disgust</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Prose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Standing still, looking forward, holding the pencil</td>
<td>Insight-Ingest. Act: Contemplation, Thinking</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Prose, Ingest. Act</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Vita

A child of the twentieth century, Ni Tyjah Thigpen was born to a hardworking mother and a military father. She spent the first half of her life as an army brat traveling and experiencing life here in the United States and abroad. Having had many insightful experiences, she developed a love of language and a curiosity for human behavior. Her time in the great state of Louisiana has afforded her many more adventures and self-growth. Only the loss of Louisiana State University’s linguistics program has marred an otherwise delightful chapter in her life. A lover of books, writing, music, and various forms of art, she strives to continually learn and improve her standing as a human being, an aunt, a daughter, a sister, and a friend.