

A CROSS-CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF HUMOR IN STAND-UP COMEDY IN THE UNITED STATES AND JAPAN

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Abstract:

Using Goffman's (1981) participation framework and Brown & Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, this study examines stand-up comedy in the U.S. and Japan and demonstrates pervasive patterns of communication in comedy performance. In the U.S., stand-up acts are comprised of solo comedian's narrative performance, while stand-up comic narrative in Japan is performed in the form of dialogue between two comedians. The study conducts a micro-level discourse analysis of live performances by two U.S. comedians and two Japanese comedy duos. Humor in U.S. stand-up emerges through common ground between the comedian and the audience, whereas the Japanese comedians communicate humor on the basis of the boundary between their performance sphere and the audience's spectator sphere. The boundary markings are further analyzed based on indexical inclusion and exclusion (Strauss, & Eun 2005).

Keywords: *Stand-up comedy; Manzai; Discourse analysis.*