Delinquency-associated stereotypes in Gypsy jokes and their connection to social aspects

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Ethnic humour was scarcely addressed by Romanian studies. Therefore, I propose an analysis of Gypsy jokes, that considers a general linguistic perspective, but the broadest dimension is the pragmatic one. The study focuses on 100 ethnic jokes that portray the Gypsy as a main character. I categorised these jokes according to the main topic they present. From a methodological point of view, I use the Intersecting Circles Model (Yus 2013a, 2013b, 2016 etc.), as it operates with the three dimensions found in ethnicity-centred humour (make-sense frame, cultural frame, and utterance interpretation). The quantitative approach illustrates the number of jokes found in each category as a main theme or as a complementary one. The qualitative analysis copes with delinquency-associated stereotypes: theft, begging, lying, dishonesty, metal obsession, as well as their main cause considered by sociologist – poverty. The paper also introduces a terminological distinction – hypo-stereotype vs hyper-stereotype.

Keywords: *Gypsies, ethnic jokes, hyper-stereotype, hypo-stereotype, themes*

1. Preliminary considerations

Ethnic humour is a worldwide phenomenon. Research into it has also become popular since the 1970s and 1980s, in the 20th century, and the phenomenon has been investigated from different perspectives. In Europe, Christie Davies was the forerunner of ethnic humour research, but his work mainly focused on the Western world. Laineste (2009, 31) shows that "[n]ow is the perfect time to analyse post-socialist jokelore in Eastern and Central Europe and to compare the results to the jokes of the well-established democracies of Western Europe". Therefore, important contributions are further developed in Eastern Europe: Estonia and Belarus (Laineste and Fiadotava 2017; Laineste 2005), Poland (Brzozowska 2013; Brzozowska and Chłopicki 2019; Chłopicki and Brzozowska 2017), Bulgaria (Genova 2018), and North Macedonia (Takovski 2015; 2018).

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The study of ethnic humour in Romania is vaguely addressed by linguistic research, at least from a quantitative perspective. Popescu (2011) analysed Romanian ethnic jokes popularised on the Internet from the perspective of the targets (Hungarians and Roma) and the most common ethnic scripts associated with them. Rus (2022) approached ethnic humour from a psycho-sociolinguistic, dialectal, and ethnographic perspective, as reflected in elements that constitute the "cultural heritage of the people who live in villages" (Rus 2022, 13) such as shouts, lamentation songs, wedding poems, etc. The research I have undertaken so far refers to (1) the construction of ethnic identity in jokes that portray Hungarians and Romanians (Prosan and Tudor 2020a, Tudor 2020b), (2) interethnic jokes illustrated in humorous discourses that portray the Gypsies and the Romanians (Tudor 2022), and (3) ethnic humour in cartoons (Săftoiu and Tudor 2023).

The niche of the research mirrors the vision of Eastern European researchers on the need to collect and analyse jokes circulating in former communist countries. The specificity of humour in these areas renders a broad approach to ethnically themed humour. Although the European Union law prohibits discrimination of any kind, including ethnicity/minority group membership, ethnic jokes are still reflections of stereotypical information associated with these groups and of the interethnic relations that are being built at a social level.

Transylvania is a region of Romania, recognised for its heterogeneous cultural heritage due to the autochthonous substratum that contains influences brought by the ethnic minorities living in the area. In a broad sense, Transylvania is located in the central and north-western part of Romania, while in a narrow sense, it refers to the intra-Carpathian region. Transylvania is the ethnically richest region of Romania. Demographic data from the last census show that Hungarians and Roma are the most numerous ethnic groups in this region. Apart from this, the largest number of Hungarians and Roma live in this region, in relation to the total number of persons belonging to the two national minorities in Romania. With this argument in mind, I have chosen to analyse the jokes that portray the *Gypsy* character.

2. Theoretical background

Some ethnonyms commonly used to refer to the Roma are Eng. *Gypsy* and Esp. *gitani*. They are also referred to as Gr. *athinganos*, *tsiganos*, Germ. *Zigeuner*, It. *zingari*, Hu. *cigányok*, Ro. *țigani* (Sandu 2018). In Romanian, the exonym used is the Greek/Byzantine word *țigan*. Since 2010, when a polemic debate arose in the Romanian press on the official use of one of the ethnonyms - *rom* vs. *țigan* - due to

Silviu Prigoană's legislative proposal and the Romanian Academy's recommendation to accept the use of *Gypsy* instead of *Roma*. Numerous arguments were launched, especially by linguists who proved that the endonym *rom* is the correct one (see, for example, Zafiu 2009, but also Gheorghe Sarău and Delia Grigore in a letter to the Rector of the University of Bucharest, dated December 12, 2010).

The characters of the jokes are given ethnic names, often the process of naming is realised by using ethnonyms. Thus, the *Gypsy* (Ro. *țigan*, Hu. *cigány*), the *Hungarian* (Ro. *ungur*), and the *Romanian* (Ro. *roman*, Hu. *román*) (as periphery), but also the *Magyar* (Ro. *maghiar*, Hu. *magyar*), the *Szekler* (Ro. *secui*, Hu. *székely*), and the *Romanian* (as centre) are the most appreciated characters of Transylvanian and Romanian ethnic humour (see also Tudor 2020; Tudor 2022).

The Roma ethnic group is reflected through the *Gypsy* character. Clarification on the use of ethnonyms is needed at the beginning of this paper. The *Gypsy* is the character of the joke, not the real/actual person/identity. Thus, all stereotypes associated with it are attributed to the character, not the social identity. Although sociological research shows that the ethnic group uses both the ethnonym *Roma* (endonym) and *Gypsy* (exonym), the present work is only related to the fictional character that exists in the fictional universe of the joke. The fictional nature of the character is given by the hyperbolism of the stereotypes that are associated with an ethnic/minority group in social reality. Therefore, the use of the term *Gypsy* does not attract a pejorative (i.e., negative) meaning, but enhances the humorous effect of the joke. Hence, the analysis does not draw any negative considerations on Roma's ethnicity. In this paper, the use of ethnonyms having the meaning of 'the character in the world of the joke' is marked by *italics*.

Researchers in the field note that ethnic jokes have culturally dependent elements. As I will illustrate, ethnic jokes do not only require sociocultural contextual information to be interpreted but are a reflection of the sociocultural life in which one lives and the interethnic relations are mirrored too. Therefore, the need to integrate social and cultural information, historical, ethnological, anthropological and/or political information has become essential for identifying, describing and analysing ethnic jokes in the Transylvanian space.

In Eastern Europe, Genova (2018) identifies the targets of jokes collected in Bulgaria. Bulgarian ethnic humour targets only two ethnic groups - Gypsies and Armenians. In Bulgaria, the Gypsy ethnic group is largely attributed negative stereotypes, the most widespread being the *thievishness* script, along with stereotypes such as unclean, lazy, lacking in confidence, lacking in education, and lacking in the desire to take care of their children. There are, however, also positive stereotypes: carefree, musical, and artistic. Grekova (1996, in Genova

2018) identifies the following character traits that are attributed to Roma by Bulgarians, Turks, and Pomaks: (1) Bulgarians consider them thieves (99%), lazy (93%), undisciplined (86%), musical (84%); (2) Turks consider them thieves (90%), musical (84%), lazy (83%), undisciplined (82%); (3) Pomaks consider them thieves (96%), lazy (88%), carefree (87%), undisciplined (79%). Regarding the Bulgarians' view of those Roma who build social relations with the majority population (e.g., colleagues, friends etc.), they are perceived as good and competent, generating a positive attitude, but considering these behaviours as individual ones, not specific for the entire group. Therefore, the marginalisation of this ethnic group takes place through scripts such as thieves, liars, and dirty.

In Romania, the first approach to ethnic humour about Gypsies (and Hungarians) belongs to Popescu (2011), who carried out a study in which she aimed to discover the ethnic scripts that appear in jokes, focusing on jokes that imply a distortion of language, that is, jokes about stupidity in Davies' terms. Her findings show that language jokes can be a mark of both stupidity and canniness. Popescu (2011) analyses ethnic jokes from seven Romanian websites. Proposing a quantitative analysis, the author identifies the frequency of jokes for each ethnic category. The results show that ethnic jokes account for 9.5% of all jokes. Of these jokes, more than 21% are about Scots, 18.7% about Jews, 18.3% about Gypsies, 11.6% about Hungarians etc. Ethnic jokes are therefore about distant foreigners, minorities or neighbours (Davies 1990). Popescu also draws attention to the fact that most jokes are based on the stupidity script and its opposite, canniness. These have corresponding subscripts (Popescu 2011, 180) such as pure stupidity, language distortion, technical stupidity, poverty, and dirtiness - for stupidity -, respectively stinginess (in jokes that target Scots), traditional concern with money (in those about Jews) and deception (in case of Hungarians and Roma) - for canniness. Thus, for Popescu, the stupidity and cleverness scripts are macro-scripts that support subdivisions such as the stereotypes mentioned above.

Săftoiu (2017), analysing expressions, proverbs and jokes, identifies the following stereotypes: (a) Gypsies are thieves, (b) Gypsies are violent, (c) Gypsies are beggars, (d) Gypsies have low social status, (e) Gypsies cannot overcome their social status. These stereotypes have been related to the opposition of Davies (1990), but Popescu (2011) and Săftoiu (2017) have shown that it is sometimes difficult to categorise a joke into one of the two categories because a Gypsy can be represented as stupid or canny even in the same humorous discourse. Therefore, I avoided subordinating the identified stereotypes to macro-scripts, such as stupidity vs. canniness, even though most ethnic humour scholars resort to this distinction. I have identified stereotypes at the micro-level (cf. Săftoiu 2017) and called them hypo-stereotypes, subordinating them to the only hyper-stereotype, the Gypsy.

Moreover, the identified ethnic scripts/stereotypes complete the picture of Romanian ethnic humour, adding new data to the conclusions of the aforementioned researchers.

3. Social aspects

Sociological studies (see, for example, Marginean and Cace 2001) show that in the world, and in Romania, people have a negative perception of Roma, thus Roma being considered the most rejected ethnic group.

One UE study illustrates that 77% of Europeans think that it is a disadvantage to be a Roma in society[2]. It is considered that the affiliation of an ethnic category or ethnic origin is the main motif of discrimination.

One recent survey (in 2020) made by the Romanian Institute for Evaluation and Strategy[3] aims to measure the perception of Roma during the Covid-19 pandemic and shows that 7 out of 10 Romanians do not trust this minority. The cause is related to the perception and prejudices involved in the majority-minority interaction. Even if distrust represents 72%, only 40% of the Romanians have an explicit negative perception of Roma, a fact that may be explained by the effect of social desirability or political correctness.

The same survey identified which is the first word that comes into the mind of Romanians when thinking about Gypsies. The results show that the attitude is negative, as 7 out of 10 traits are negative, 1 is neutral and only 2 are positive: people/people as we are (15%), thieves/theft (12%), non-probity/non-seriousness/non-trust (7%), good people/reasonable people (5%), fraud/cunning/liar (5%), evil/people with unpleasant character (4%), uneducated/illiterate (4%), Gypsy (4%), laziness/people who do not like working (3%), soulful/loyal/united/honest (3%), other positive, negative or neutral (37%).

Marginean and Cace (2001) state that studies analysing the relationship between the majority and the Roma minority show that the perception of the Romanians is rather negative. Therefore, social distancing and the perception associated with this phenomenon, the rejection of the members of this particular ethnic group are obvious consequences. In addition, due to the negative perception, stereotypes associated with this ethnic minority are mostly negative

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[2] Raportul Eurobarometru 263 privind discriminarea în UE1 - http://ec.europa.eu/public_ opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_263_sum_en.pdf, accessed on 20.05.2022.

[3] Institutul Român pentru Evaluare și Strategie - https://ires.ro/uploads/articole/ires_agentia-impreuna_perceptia-romilor-in-timpul-pandemiei-covid-19_2020.pdf, accessed on 20.05.2022.

and they remain quite stable in cultural beliefs, even if they are different from one's private beliefs regarding Roma.

Stereotypes attributed to this ethnic group represent the outcome of a diachronic (i.e. historic) process of social relations between the central group (i.e. the majority – Romanians) and the peripheral group (i.e. the minority – Gypsies) (see Davies 1990).

A sociological investigation named Ethnobarometer – Interethnic relationships in Romania (2000), which was coordinated by the Research Center of Interethnic Relations and was funded by the United States Agency for International Development, analysed the perception Romanians have of Roma (see Table 1):

Positive		Negative	
good people (Ro. de treabă)	1,6	selfish (Ro. egoiști)	1,6
hospitable (Ro. ospitalieri)	1,5	hostile (Ro. dușmănoși)	2,9
intelligent (Ro. inteligenți)	0,8	stupid (Ro. proști)	3,7
diligent (Ro. sârguincioși)	1,4	**lazy (Ro. leneși)**	**16,1**
enterprising (Ro. întreprinzători)	2,4	stinking (Ro. puturoși)	3,6
confident (Ro. încrezători)	0,8	hypocritical (Ro. ipocriți)	2,0
modest (Ro. modești)	0,7	conceited (Ro. orgolioși)	1,2
honest (Ro. cinstiți)	0,8	**thief (Ro. hoți)**	**20,9**
united (Ro. uniți)	4,4	devided (Ro. dezbinați)	5,2
religious (Ro. religioși)	0,7	superstitious (Ro. superstițioși)	1,8
civilized (Ro. civilizați)	0,4	non-progressive (Ro. rămași în urmă)	8,6
clean (Ro. curați)	0,7	**dirty (murdari)**	**16,1**

Table 1. Stereotypes associated with Roma by Romanians, according to Ethnobarometer (2000, 10)

As an effect, the high number of negative stereotypes results in social distancing and marginalization (Ethnobatrometer 2000).

Fleck and Rughiniș (2008) relate social stigmatisation with the perception through negative stereotypes. Therefore, the researches prove that the "social distance between them and the non-Romani is significantly larger than in the case of other ethnic groups" (Fleck and Rughiniș 2008, 9). As a result, Roma tend to identify themselves as non-Romani, especially in public contexts, in order to avoid reactions of aversion. This attitude is called by the authors "defensive identification strategy".

Crimes are associated with subsistence, therefore begging (abroad), stealing iron, stealing stones and wood, or agricultural products, and whatever has

commercial value are also presented by Fleck and Rughiniș (2008). Gypsies are rarely associated with major crimes, but subsistence-related crimes are present because of their economic instability (i.e. poverty).

According to Marginean and Cace (2001, 8-9), delinquency has brought different opinions among researchers: (1) the rate of delinquency is higher among Roma compared to the majority; (2) there is no difference with respect to the rate of delinquency in terms of the majority and the minority. Anyway, delinquency is mainly associated with 'difficult conditions of living'. This different perspective on how people relate non-probity to Roma and Romanians is also reflected in ethnic jokes. As will be seen in the analysis, many stereotypes are presented under the umbrella-term non-probity as stereotypes associated with Gypsies.

4. Corpus

The corpus was created in 2021 through a process of documentation as a source of knowledge of ethnic humour. I chose field[4]-based documentation mediated by twenty collaborators[5] who, in informal meetings, performed the ethnic jokes they knew. Afterwards, I was interested to find out whether these jokes are available online, in order to test whether the 100 Gypsy jokes collected are also circulating in the virtual world. The process of collecting jokes ended after 100 jokes had been performed.

The corpus of 100 jokes, organised according to the main theme, was presented in full in Appendix 1 (100 Gypsy jokes) of my PhD thesis[6] (Tudor, forthcoming).

Starting from the organisation of the corpus, each theme is dealt with in the order of the appearance of the first joke constituting a new theme. I identify the main themes as well as complementary ones. The thematic relationship found in certain humorous texts is also analysed in what follows.

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[4] This term should be understood as a cultural reality (see Știucă 2007), not just a spatial one, "defined by certain values, but also by certain social relations that the researcher must assume" (Știucă 2007, 18).

[5] Collaborators are source people who performed ethnic jokes in the two meetings, passing the humorous information through their knowledge filter. This term is frequently used in ethnological field research (Știucă 2007).

[6] This paper is based on the research I conducted during my doctoral studies.

5. Methodology and research questions

The analysis I have conducted and presented in this paper answers the following research questions:

1. What are the main themes in ethnic jokes portraying Gypsies?
2. Which stereotypes are ascribed to this ethnic group?
3. Are the stereotypes identified in ethnic jokes supported by sociological studies?

The present research combines the views of sociocultural pragmatics and cognitive pragmatics. The analysis will be made within a theoretical framework that also integrates the various theories of humour to satisfy the analytical needs.

For qualitative analysis, I will use relevance theory (henceforth, RT) through the importance given to context (*situation*, in GTVH terms – General Theory of verbal Humour) and through the process of interpreting utterances (i.e., deriving explicatures/implicatures and analysing implicit and explicit meaning). Thus, the analytic model that permits the analysis of all the dimensions existing in ethnic jokes is the Intersecting Circles Model (Yus 2013a, 2013b, 2016, 2023), originating from RT.

The analysis works with other linguistic and non-linguistic theories of humour, by identifying the scripts/frames envisioned by the text of the joke (including frame/script oppositions explained by incongruity), the frame/script switch triggers (SSTH – Script-based Semantic Theory of Humour), by identifying the target and the intended narrative strategy (GTVH), as well as linguistic aspects. Therefore, the qualitative analysis consists of an interdisciplinary linguistic analysis in which I will also follow aspects related to phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics, taking into account some dialectal aspects. It remains relevant to identify the strategies related to the way control and discrimination are manifested in the language (through discourse analysis), since, according to the superiority theory, the central group considers itself superior to the peripheral one (Davies 1990), and, at the discursive level, these aspects can be analysed by applying the ICM.

Relief theory explains how humour remains a way of releasing psychological tensions at the unconscious level. By applying this theory, we understand why ethnic jokes remain a phenomenon that is alive today. Although in many European countries, the telling of ethnic jokes is an increasingly rare phenomenon due to

political correctness, which is based on the desire not to offend, marginalise or even exclude others, in Romania, the performance of ethnic jokes is a living, current behaviour. Ethnic humour is present on specialised websites (e.g. raziculacrimi.ro, bancuri365.ro), on social networks (e.g. Facebook, TikTok), in the media, and especially in oral communication.

By applying the Intersecting Circles Model (Yus 2013a, 2013b, 2016, 2023), the fundamental elements of the jokes are uncovered: (1) *make-sense frame* (i.e., strategies targeting frame construction), (2) *cultural frame* (i.e., strategies focusing on sociocultural background information, very often stereotypes), and (3) *utterance interpretation* (language/discourse-centered strategies).

I will identify whether all the ethnic jokes under consideration are constructed based on the cultural frame. The existence of a stereotype that is inferred during the interpretation of the joke implies the association with a cultural frame. I will confront the identified stereotypes with the results of sociological studies to see if the stereotypes belong to the target ethnic group (i.e. if they are authentic ethnic scripts) and to demonstrate that the jokes are a representation of sociocultural behaviour. Besides identifying stereotypes, I will also consider possible combinations of stereotypes within a single joke.

6. Analysis

In the following sections, I am going to present the main issues Romanians joke about Gypsies nowadays, focusing mostly on delinquency related topics, taking into account several scripts that frequently occur in Romanian ethnic humour which target this particular ethnic minority. The corpus was organised thematically. The topic order was occurrence oriented, thus when a joke evoked a new theme, a new category was created (see Figure 1).
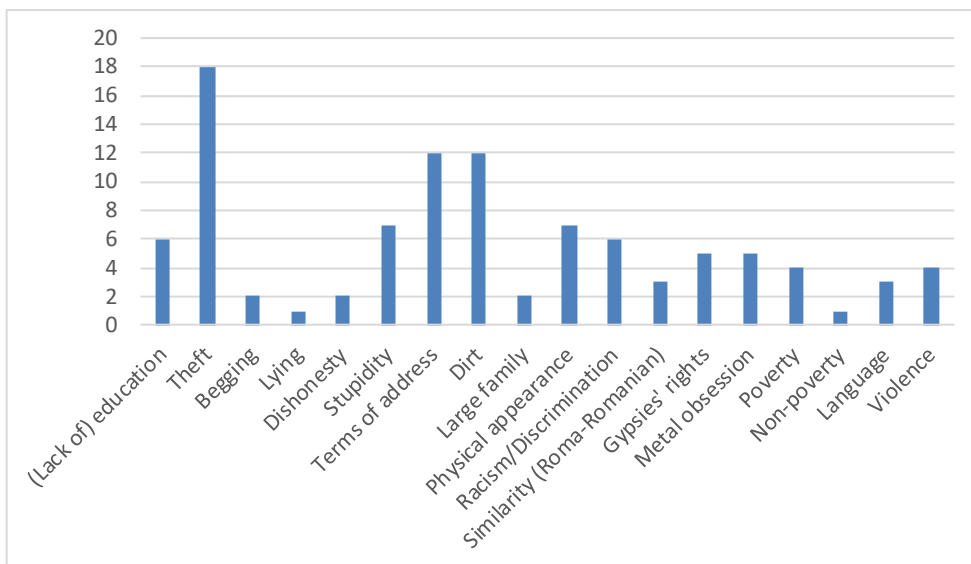
Figure 1. Main topics in Gypsy jokes

Therefore, *theft* (18%) represents the most important category, followed by *terms of address* (12%), *dirt* (12%), *stupidity* (7%), *physical appearance* (7%), *(lack of) education* (6%), *racism/discrimination* (6%), *Gypsies' rights* (5%), *metal obsession* (5%), *poverty* (4%), *violence* (4%), *similarities between Romanians and Gypsies* (3%), *language* (3%), *large family* (2%), *begging* (2%), *general dishonesty* (2%), *lying* (1%), *non-poverty* (1%).

Interestingly, in the case of Gypsy jokes, each theme is a representation of the targeted stereotype. Hence, the thematic area these jokes fit may be named after the stereotypical behaviour associated with Gypsies.

Therefore, I suggest introducing and contrasting two concepts: (1) *hyper-stereotype* vs (2) *hypo-stereotype*. I choose to make this distinction to illustrate that, by simply invoking the Gypsy character, the activation of all other stereotypes becomes possible. Thus, the Gypsy is the only hyper-stereotype that encompasses the hypo-stereotypes presented in this section: thief, beggar, liar, dishonest, stupid, black, uneducated/illiterate, victim, profiteer, poor, rich, ignorant of Romanian/Roma language, unwanted child/the one who abandons his/her child. How the presence of the Gypsy (as a character of the joke) is evoked in the humorous discourses was presented in Tudor (2022). Similarly, sociological researches show that the Roma beggar and the Roma thief "are part of the core of the *țigan* **stereotype**" (Fleck and Rughiniş 2008, 92).

Non-probity is an umbrella term that covers four thematic areas: theft, begging, lying, and general dishonesty. These four topics are going to be discussed in what follows.[7] Metal obsession is going to be presented, as it is strongly related to the *theft* script. In addition, as sociological studies prove that the most important reason for delinquency is the lack of money, I also analyse jokes related to *poverty.*

6.1. Theft

The first subcategory includes jokes coping with interrelated stereotypes: the thief, the burglar, the robber. An illustrative example for this category is given in joke (1):

(1)

A Gypsy was driving his Mercedes and suddenly he had a flat tyre. He gets out of the car to change the wheel. Another Gypsy appears and asks him:
" What are you doing here, [mânca-ți-aș][8]?"
"Well, I am taking out the wheel."
Then the second Gypsy breaks the windshield and says with satisfaction:
"Done, brother, I am taking the cassette player."

This joke presents a combination of the three frames in the Intersecting Circles Model. Firstly, the make-sense frame of [fixing a problem with the car] is activated. This frame makes [taking out the wheel] have a unique meaning [remove the wheel]. The incongruity appears when the other person grabs the cassette player, which forces a change of the initial make-sense frame [i.e. stealing items from the car], and also inferential backtracking to re-interpret [taking out the wheel] as [stealing the wheel] (utterance interpretation frame) and simultaneously the activation of the cultural frame regarding stereotypes about Gypsies being mostly thieves.

Robbery, as an interrelated script, is presented in the following joke:

(2)

Q: When do you go carolling? a Gypsy is asked.
A: We, [mânca-ți-aș], go carolling just "when the landowners are not at home!"

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[7] *Violence* was not included, because jokes often illustrate interethnic violence, when the Gypsy is either the victim or the initiator of the act of aggressiveness.
[8] typical interjection used in spoken language by Gypsies

The joke activates the make-sense frame of [going carolling as a Christmas tradition in Romania, which aims to entertain people and share cultural behaviour with others, apart from getting financial support from the people visited by the carol singers]. The incongruity is revealed when the title of a well-known traditional, Romanian carol is interpreted by means of contextual culture-based knowledge about Gypsies. Hence, going carolling is reinterpreted through stereotypes attributed to Gypsies as [going to rob houses]. Therefore, the three circles are involved in the joke construction and interpretation: the make-sense frame, the cultural frame and the utterance interpretation. A weak implicature can be also interpreted from the text, like contrasting what tradition means for two different ethnicities. For Romanians, going carolling represents a traditional behaviour, while for Gypsies it is only a pretext for their traditions (i.e., theft, robbery, burglary, etc.), information that can be accessed via mutual knowledge.

6.2. Begging

Begging script constitutes the main topic in 2% of the jokes, and another 2% are presenting this script in a complementary way. Jokes illustrate two types of begging – in-country begging and begging abroad.

(3)
    A Gypsy is sitting on the bench with a Romanian man and the Romanian asks him:
    "Hey you, Gypsy, how did you do when you were begging?"
    "Well, when I wanted to ask for 10 euros, I said ten, and, when I was begging for 100, I said ten ten ten ten ten ten…"

The spatial reference is inferred from the name of the money used in Western European countries. The joke is built on a cultural frame – the migration of Roma in Europe, especially in Italy, Spain, Germany and France, to make money either by working or by begging. Studies do not illustrate the real number of Gypsies who left Romania, but emigration is analysed from a larger perspective, as a specific component of a huge migration wave from Eastern Europe. Three migration stages are identified by Matras (2007): (1) at the beginning of the '70s, when Roma benefited from legal stay when they got a job; (2) between the '70s and the beginning of the '90s, when they left the country mostly using illegal escape or by requesting political asylum; (3) after 1992-1993 until 2007 when they entered in Western European countries illegally or employing tourist visa. Nowadays, after Romania became part of the European Union in 2007, the situation has changed, as

tracking when, where, how and why Roma migrate to the West and how they get paid is almost impossible. It is considered that the number of Roma is overestimated because of the visibility beggars and singers have on Western European streets (Tarnovski 2012), a fact that is also promoted by mass media.

Utterance interpretation plays an important role in the correct interpretation of the punchline, since from the joke it is implicated that the Gypsy is not able to speak English, as lingua franca, therefore, by repeating "ten" many times, he can ask for the amount he needs.

(4)

A Gypsy woman at a traffic light, carrying her child around her neck:
"Give me 10 lei for this little one!"
The man opens the window, gives her 10 lei and wants to leave.
The Gypsy woman knocks at the window again.
The man answers angrily:
"Yes, now what else do you want?"
"Well, what are you doing, aren't you taking him?"

Joke (4) is an example of another humorous discourse that activates all three circles of the Intersecting Circles Model. First, the make-sense frame is highlighted by placing the Gypsy woman at a crossroads, begging for money. As expected, the man opens the window and gives the woman money. The receiver expects the woman to move to another car to repeat the action but does not anticipate the action of knocking again, which clashes with the just constructed frame. The resolution is discourse-based via utterance interpretation. The receiver is forced to backtrack and reinterpret the Gypsy woman's words. The initial, most relevant interpretation was [give money to help feed the little boy], while the actual interpretation is [give money to buy the little boy]. The cultural frame accessed refers to the large number of children Gypsies have, the violent behaviour parents manifest towards their children, and the wish to make money by any means. Therefore, this joke suggests the combination of several topics: non-probity (begging) – big family – violence.

6.3. Lying

Lying is mostly associated with theft script, as will be presented in example (6). The only joke that directly plays with the liar stereotype is joke (5), even though other types of unlawfulness can be inferred:

(5)

> A Gypsy in the Courtroom:
> "Where were you on the 12th, at 10 p.m.?"
> "I was playing poker with four liars, [mânca-ți-aș]."
> "What do you mean by four liars?"
> "I mean… if you ask them if they were playing poker with me, they will answer they didn't, Your Honour!"

Certainly, the joke mainly plays with *the liar* stereotype attributed to Gypsies. However, by setting the place in a courtroom, it is interpreted through common sense that the Gypsy has done something that has to be punished. The make-sense frame is created by the typical activities and roles associated with courtroom interaction: the judge asks questions and the defendant has to answer. The incongruity and the resolution are discourse-based. The audience has to make some logical inferences to interpret the Gypsy's canny utterance. If the four liars are not liars and they tell the truth, then the defendant is guilty. But, if he states from the very beginning that the four people are liars, he gains the perfect alibi.

The lie script, as a main topic, does not occur in combination with other scripts. But in 2% of the jokes, it is a subsidiary script associated with theft as in:

(6)

> The Gypsy goes into the forest to take some wood.
> Once, the forester sees him and asks the Gypsy:
> "What are you doing with those pieces of wood, Gypsy?"
> The Gypsy:
> "I'm taking them to feed the cow…"
> The forester:
> "But since when does the cow eat wood?"
> The Gypsy:
> "If it eats them, it eats them. If not, I put them on the fire."

Mostly, lying is used as a mechanism of protecting self-image. The make-sense frame [finding the Gypsy who steals wood from the forest] is combined with the cultural frame – stereotype-based information about this ethnic group: [Gypsies are thieves], [Gypsies are liars], and [Gypsies steal wood]. The last stereotype is very prolific. Two more jokes within other categories are built on the frame of stealing wood.

6.4. Dishonesty

The last sub-category of non-probity refers to general non-probity (i.e., dishonesty). 2% of the corpus focuses mainly on this stereotype. There are no jokes where dishonesty combines with other categories or topics. Only one joke presents dishonesty as a subsidiary topic.

(7)
> Q: Thug[9], what's your father gonna say when he sees that you are in jail?
> A: Welcome, son!

The make-sense frame refers to [being put in prison] and it helps the audience to identify through common sense that there has to be a clear-cut reason for it, which usually is blameable. If someone is sent to prison, (s)he has done something unlawful. The cultural frame is built on stereotypes associated with Gypsies - they do not act in legal ways. Therefore, they represent dishonest people. Dishonesty has a very strong and negative meaning in the given context. The audience expects an answer from the perspective of an ashamed father, but this expectation is contradicted by the answer. Therefore, the audience engages in searching for other relevant interpretations, by means of entertaining. This is the result of the use of the polysemous verb 'say', which has two interpretations: [what someone thinks about something] vs. [what someone tells you when you are in direct contact with him/her]. Therefore, the implicated meaning of the punchline is that also the father is in jail. A weaker implicature is created: all Gypsies act in the same way.

6.5. Metal obsession

In the corpus I have collected, 5% of the jokes present as a main topic of metal obsession. Other 3% deal with this script as a complementary one. Jokes presented in this category, combine with other scripts.

Mostly, jokes coping with metal obsession may fall into one of the following categories:
1. precious, as in (8)
2. non-precious (base metal), as in (9)

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[9] In Romanian, the meaning of *golane* is not that strong. It refers to people who do not have a job, who do not want to work, who look poor and do not have things to wear.

(8)

> Dentist: Why did you come to see me? said the dentist to a Gypsy, who had
>   all his teeth clad in gold.
> Gypsy: (h)I[10] came so that you install an (h)alarm!

(9)

> Once, Lucifer (the fallen angel, the prince of darkness) came to visit Romania.
> Being tired, he landed in a Gypsy tent and fell asleep there. When he woke
> up, no wallet, no phone, the Gypsies were also gone and he was only called
> Luci...

Joke (8), presenting the obsession for gold, implicates, in the setup, that there are
Gypsies who are wealthy, somehow also contradicting the stereotype related to
[lack of hygiene] by going to the dentist. The implicated conclusion inferred from
the punchline relates the joke to the thief stereotype, because, if someone needs
an alarm to protect something, the reason is that there are people who may try to
steal the item. Therefore, the fear of theft committed by other Gypsies is also
implicated. One can also notice the h-prefix/h-prothesis used in words that begin
with the /a/ sound.

On the other hand, joke (9) mirrors the obsession towards iron, the
corresponding Romanian word being *fier*. Typically, Gypsies reduce the diphthong,
the resulting pronunciation being /fer/. The joke is constructed on a discourse-
based incongruity, through phonetic similarity existing in /fer/ and the end of
/Lucifer/. The same stereotypical information is covered by the cultural frame
[Gypsies are thieves]. Therefore, they have even stolen a part of Lucifer's name, the
result (i.e. Luci) being a nickname held by Romanians who are called Lucian. Living
in tents strengthens another stereotype associated with Gypsies – the poor.

These two jokes relate the preference for precious/non-precious metals to
the distinction existing between wealthy and poor Gypsies.

6.6. Poverty

Fleck and Rughiniș (2008) report that, in their research, 62% of the respondents
declared that, in the last month, in their household, someone has gone to bed
hungry (in opposition to 12% of people of non-Romani origin). In addition:

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[10] The use of prosthetic /h/ at the beginning of Romanian words beginning with /a/ is a widely spread
   phenomenon in the language variety spoken by Roma.

- The number of people per heated room (during winter) is double in Roma households compared to non-Roma households.
- If we look at all children aged 1 to 14 years, we can see that 53% of Roma children live in households that cannot afford a pair of winter shoes for all of them, compared to 15% of non-Roma children.
- 53% of Roma children live in households that cannot afford a warm winter coat for all of them, compared to 13% for non-Roma children.
- Roma households must accommodate on average 1.9 persons per bed, compared to 1.4 persons in the comparative sample.

Fleck and Rughiniş (2008, 94)

Sociological studies, especially socio-economic approaches prove that poverty is a vicious circle, as poverty is also the reason and the result of many sociocultural problems regarding Roma. Consequently, education, health, job-related issues, conditions of living, income, dwelling conditions, etc. are correlated concerns when talking about this ethnic minority. As there are almost no possibilities to face poverty, stereotypes related to Gypsies were generated. Marginean and Cace (2001) relate the high risk of poverty to social exclusion, important for interethnic relations presented in jokes.

Information about poverty is accessed from many jokes, being implicated through the manner in which Gypsies act in a given context. In 4% of the jokes, the punchline is built on the inference of this stereotypical information about Romani. In addition, these jokes do not combine with other scripts, as they rely on the implicated meaning of *the poor*. See, for example, joke (10):

(10)

The old Gypsy dies and his son goes to buy a coffin.
"I want a coffin for my father, the most beautiful you have!"
"We have one made of walnut wood that costs 5000 lei."
"Don't you have a cheaper one?"
"We have beech wood for 3000 lei."
"But how much is the cheapest?"
"We have fir wood for 1000."
"Listen, let me take my father here, to put on him four handles!"

In most of cases, jokes about poverty are directly related to the lack of money, as seen in the example above. Even if the Gypsy wants to create a proper funeral for his father, his lack of money does not allow him to buy "the most beautiful" coffin,

as the reader expects while reading the setup of the joke. The punchline strengthens the poor stereotype, contradicting the audience's relevance-oriented expectations – [the purchase of a coffin]. The stereotype is inferred from the last utterance, while the humorous effect is mostly obtained by the visual image created in the receiver's mind by it – [a man carried by four handles].

In addition, other 5% of the jokes analysed have as a complementary topic - *poverty*.

7. Conclusions

The quantitative analysis undertaken identifies the most important stereotypes associated with Gypsies, gathered in topic-oriented categories. The study focuses on stereotypes related to delinquency (*theft*, *lying*, *begging*, *general dishonesty*, *metal obsession*) and the main cause reported by sociologists – i.e., *poverty*. As I have mentioned, each thematic area directly relates to a stereotype. These stereotypes constitute low-level stereotypes that are subordinated to the high-level stereotype – *the Gypsy* – stereotype illustrated by the category of *terms of address*, as in 100 jokes there are 163 occurrences of *Gypsy* (including, derived forms, and phrases).

All the other stereotypes are derived from the high-level stereotype:

• Theft – the thief;	• Gypsies' rights – the profiteer;
• Begging – the beggar;	• Metal obsession – the poor/the wealthy;
• Lie – the liar;	• Poverty – the poor;
• Dishonesty – the dishonest;	• Violence – the violent;
• Dirt – the filthy;	• Similarities – the dishonest, the thief etc.;
• Stupidity – the stupid;	• Language – misuser of the dominant language;
• Physical appearance – the black;	
• Education – the uneducated/the illiterate;	• Big family – the unwanted child;
• Racism/discrimination – the victim	• Non-poverty – the wealthy;

Regarding the main topic on which the jokes are constructed, I identified a tendency to juxtapose more topics (and the related ethnic scripts/stereotypes) by one joke:

• Non-probity (theft) – metal obsession – poverty	• Non-probity (theft) – metal obsession
• Non-probity (theft) – non-poverty	• Non-probity (theft) – big family
• Non-probity (theft) – terms of address	• Non-probity (begging) – big family – violence
• Non-probity (theft) – poverty	• Metal obsession – dirt
• Non-probity (theft) – non-probity (begging)	• Metal obsession – non-poverty
• Non-probity (theft) – non-probity (lie (x2))	• Metal obsession – non-probity (theft)
• Non-probity (theft/robbery) – violence	• Metal obsession – non-probity (lie)

Therefore, each main theme may become a subsidiary theme (see Table 2):

Theme	Main theme	Secondary/ Complementary theme	Total
Education	6	2	8
Theft	18	6	24
Begging	2	2	4
Lying	1	3	4
General dishonesty	2	1	3
Stupidity	7	7	14
Dirt	12	3	15
Large family	2	2	4
Physical appearance	7	1	8
Gypsies' rights	5	1	6
Metal obsession	5	3	8
Poverty	4	5	9
Non-poverty	1	3	4
Violence	4	6	10
Terms of address	12	2	14
Racism/discrimination	6	6	12
Similarities	3	1	4
Language	3	1	4

Table 2. Subsidiary themes in *Gypsy* jokes

The thematic diversity and the ability of the performers to present such diverse sociocultural aspects within the 100 jokes in the corpus are remarkable. The variety of stereotypes and the creative way they are combined, through the thematic areas in which they are part of, proves that the stereotypes attributed to the peripheral group are stable and easily accessible to both the joke tellers and

their receivers. This fact is also reinforced by the relatively short form of humorous texts, which often, by simply confirming a stereotype/stereotypes, generates the humorous effect.

The identified stereotypes/ethnic scripts complete the picture of Romanian ethnic humour, adding some new data to the findings of the above-mentioned scholars.

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