A proof-of-concept pilot study into laughter in online text-based chat.
Using the incremental DiET chat tool, we insert spoof contributions into on-going chats which appear to come from one’s dialogue partner.

spoof contributions:
  • laughter clarification requests (CRs), e.g. ‘lol?’
  • additional laughs

the balloon task:
who would you throw out?
Tom, the balloon pilot.
Susie, Tom’s 7 months pregnant wife.
Nick, a cancer research scientist on the brink of a cure.
Heather, a 9 year old musical child prodigy.

Research questions
• How can laughter and laughter clarification requests (CRs) influence dialogue?
• Which features of laughter and laughables are addressed by CRs?
• How do dialogue participants align their laughs?

(Preliminary) results
• As in face-to-face dialogue: (i) laughter occurs both after and before the laughable, (ii) laughter can be due to pleasant, social or pragmatic incongruities.
• Participants did not notice any interventions, even in the ‘additional laughs’ pair, with 32 interventions.

participants: 4 pairs of fluent English speakers
  • 1 pair saw laughter CRs
  • 1 pair saw additional laughs
  • 2 pairs saw no spoof turns

Laughter CRs triggered by ‘haha’, ‘LOL’, ‘;D’...
• ‘what’s funny?’
• reprise with question mark (‘lol?’)
• reprise with a question (‘lol what?’)

Additional spoof laughs triggered by an exclamation mark.