

## **Visual and Multimodal Irony in Political Cartoons about the COP26 Climate Conference**

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*Abstract:* Political cartoons are verbo-visual multimodal utterances with the common goal of exerting criticism to public states of affairs (Schilperoord & Maes, 2009, p. 216) or, more specifically, to politicians and public figures (Forceville, 2020, p. 168). This critical intent frequently leads cartoonists to employ irony as a rhetorical strategy. This paper investigates how multimodal irony is construed in political cartoons, building on established insights from verbal irony research. Specifically, this analysis follows the Revised Echoic Theory (Salvador-Grande, in press), which interprets verbal irony as an implicit form of criticism highlighting a discrepancy between an expectation echoed by an attributed source and a situation that clashes with that expectation. According to this theory, depending on the nature of this clash, an ironist may feel critical towards an individual or collective, either for raising a false or inappropriate expectation, or for failing to live up to the social expectation echoed. Building on this theoretical framework, the present study applies it to a corpus of visual and multimodal cartoons addressing the hypocrisy at the COP26 Climate Conference in 2021, to evaluate the similarities and differences between representations of irony in multimodal and verbal forms.

*Keywords:* *Echoic theory, Multimodal irony, Political Cartoons, Pragmatics, Visual irony*