ULRR

Voicing the 'knacker' : analysing the comedy of the Rubberbandits.

Item Type	Book chapter
Authors	Vaughan, Elaine;Moriarty, Máiréad
Citation	Voice and Discourse in the Irish Context, Villanueva Romero, Diana, Amador-Moreno, Carolina P., Sánchez García, Manuel (Eds.);pp. 13-45
Publisher	Palgrave Macmillan Ltd.
Download date	2026-05-15 08:33:16
Item License	https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/1.0/
Link to Item	https://hdl.handle.net/10344/6808

To cite this chapter:
Vaughan, Elaine & Máiréad Moriarty, 2018. Voicing the "knacker": Analysing the Comedy of the Rubberbandits. In: Diana Villanueva Romero, Carolina P. Amador-Moreno & Manuel Sánchez García (Eds.), *Voice and Discourse in the Irish Context*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 13-45.

Voicing the "knacker": Analysing the Comedy of the Rubberbandits

Elaine Vaughan, University of Limerick
Máiréad Moriarty, University of Limerick

Abstract

This chapter discusses mediated representations of voice in the performances of the Rubberbandits, a comedy duo from Limerick in Ireland. Limerick is a city with a national reputation for social disadvantage and criminal gangs, and the Rubberbandits' particular brand of satirical and musical comedy is based on the inner-city urban identity of Limerick. They appropriate and localise rap and hip hop genres to the context of Limerick city in their original music, and a strong element of the absurd runs through their other comedy performances. A kind of sociocultural heteroglossia surrounds their performances: the real-life voices of the Rubberbandits are radically different to the alter-egos they inhabit as part of their performance. However, although their actual identities are known, the Rubberbandits always appear incognito, with plastic bags covering their faces, and when interviewed stay in the characters of their alter-egos, Mr Chrome and Blind Boy Boat Club.

Their comedy, we argue, is a site where engagement and management of social relations are evident, and where hegemonic discourses surrounding voices from the margins of Limerick city are challenged, particularly in their dismantling/challenging of the vaguely defined social construct, *knacker* – a construct which is very roughly analogous to *chav* in the UK. The humour of the Rubberbandits can be read in terms of ideologies of class distinction and their deliberate lampooning of aspects of working class Limerick has the potential to amend misinformed or misrepresented ideas of Limerick city. We examine the linguistic and semiotic resources the Rubberbandits draw on to voice the 'Limerick knacker' and use corpus tools combined with theoretical frameworks from contemporary sociolinguistics to deconstruct and interpret the performances.

Keywords: Performance; style, stylisation; mediated representations; Irish English; humour

DRAFT

To cite this chapter:
Vaughan, Elaine & Máiréad Moriarty, 2018. Voicing the "knacker": Analysing the Comedy of the Rubberbandits. In: Diana Villanueva Romero, Carolina P. Amador-Moreno & Manuel Sánchez García (Eds.), *Voice and Discourse in the Irish Context*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 13-45.

Introduction

The present chapter deals with mediated representations of voice, specifically a complex comic realisation of a particular urban voice, through an examination of the linguistic practices, amongst others, of the Rubberbandits, an Irish (musical) comedy duo.[1] The Rubberbandits are from Limerick, a city in the south-west of Ireland. Their particular brand of satirical and musical comedy is based on the inner-city urban identity of Limerick, a city with a national reputation for social disadvantage and criminal gangs. While their comedy is also based on their appropriation and adaptation of artefacts from other urban "communities of practice" (cf. Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1992; Wenger 1998) – most notably their localisation of rap and hip hop genres to the context of Limerick city and its putative voice in their music – the mainstay of the humour is in the simultaneous lampooning and glorification of the urban culture on which it is based. The Rubberbandits make an interesting study in the way they appeal to both the in-groups and out-groups implicit and explicit in their humour, and the way in which they perform an urban identity, arguably not directly their own. Although their actual identities are known, the Rubberbandits always appear incognito, with plastic bags covering their faces, and when interviewed stay in the characters of their alter-egos, Mr Chrome and Blind Boy Boat Club. The 'real-life' identities of the Rubberbandits are perceived as radically different to the alter-egos they inhabit as part of their performance. This perceived distance – in the mind of the public, in the commentary and responses of the audience that it is possible to access – is interesting. The larger study that the data reported on for this chapter forms a part is an on-going project in which we examine how media (and hence mediated) representations of specific voices and discourses might reflect contemporary Irish society from the margins to the centre, and hence serve to both reinforce and challenge local social orders. The social orders themselves are based on normative understandings of certain accents, registers and other behaviours indexing, for example, criminal behaviour or particular social groups.

As a means to fully exploring this, and, of course, exploring it within the scope of the importance of voice in discourse, its creation, what is entailed in its construction, and linguistic and other modalities invoked in this construction, we examine the linguistic resources the Rubberbandits draw on to voice the 'Limerick knacker'. Where relevant, other semiotic features that are involved in framing the performance will be addressed. Our close attention to this link between voicing and social meaning is guided by recent sociolinguistic theorisations of the concept of style. We ~~will~~ begin by contextualising the Rubberbandits and their home city of Limerick, Ireland. From here we provide a theoretical backdrop to our study where we focus on key concepts from the sociolinguistics of performance, and foreground how mediatised stylisation can be understood. In our data and methodology section, we

DRAFT

[1] We would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their astute and helpful feedback on the original version of this chapter. We have integrated this feedback, and that of the editors, whom we also thank. Naturally, any omissions or shortcomings are the responsibility of the authors.

describe firstly the types of language and other data we gathered; these are based on the performances themselves as well as how they are received and commented upon. In *Analysis and Discussion*, we outline our exploration of what the performances are like, their implications, and how they might be interpreted. We do this by disassembling and reassembling the linguistic evidence of the performances/responses using the tools and data views associated with corpus analysis, and by invoking theoretical concepts from sociolinguistics, particularly concepts and perspectives from the sociolinguistics of performance (e.g. Coupland 2007). The chapter provides an account of the theoretical, methodological and analytical tools that enable this principled exploration, with the intention of viewing the phenomenon under study – the performances, and responses to the performance – with an open mind, from a global and theoretical perspective, as well as from a more atomised, discrete-item and discourse analytic-type perspective. We present data in the context of the performance which attest to the *voice* being performed; in order to do so, some introduction to the Rubberbandits and their background is necessary.

Background: Limerick "Citaay" and the Rubberbandits

Limerick City

Limerick is third largest city in the Republic of Ireland. It has a long history of social and economic disadvantage, and has been the subject of what some perceive to be excessive negative media (especially news media) coverage. Mass media contributes to the stigmatising and social exclusion of people and places which are on the margins of society, and Limerick is no exception to this. As Devereux *et al.* (2011) argue, Limerick city has continually been framed in the media as a place of crime, poverty and social disorder. This type of media framing is of course commonplace and contributes to relations of social class that make "(…) working-class subjectivities pathological, so that class relations are not just economic relations but also relations of superiority/inferiority, normality/abnormality, judgement/shame" (Lawler 1999: 4). The media coverage of Limerick has contributed to the negative stereotyping of the city which in the past has contributed to the folk label 'Stab City'. This label refers to a period in the 1990s where feuding between rival gangs in Limerick led to an increase in violent, particularly knife, crime. It is untrue to say that the media account of a troubled period in Limerick's past is entirely inaccurate but there is a clear imbalance in terms of the negative and positive coverage of the city, or similar media framing of similar criminal activity in other towns and cities in the country (Devereux *et al.* 2011). As far as detailed description of the variety of English used in Limerick is concerned, there is (to our knowledge) nothing as extensive as Hickey's (2005) *Dublin English* available, though it is mentioned ~~in passing~~ in, for example, Hickey (2007). In the analysis that follows, we offer what might be glossed as refracted evidence of a type of (urban) Limerick (Irish) English – an amplified, performed variety (via the performances of the Rubberbandits) and the orthographically represented version of that variety picked up on and repeated, via catchphrases and responses, by their audience.

Media representations of Limerick have contributed to a stigmatising of certain neighbourhoods of the city, and have largely focused on individuals, who might colloquially be labelled 'knackers'. This concept should be explained in terms

DRAFT

of its localised and broader cultural reference. It is roughly analogous to the term *chav* – a class defined by the way it seems, as Morley puts it, “to consume the wrong things in the wrong way” (2009: 498). The concept of the *chav*, a stereotype of the working class teenager in Britain, replete with associations relating to dress (leisure wear) and behaviour (“brash”, “loutish” according to the Oxford English Dictionary when it was recorded in the dictionary in 2006) and low social status, is explained by Snell (2006, 2010) in relation to Culpeper’s (2001, 2002) discussion of ‘social schemata’. Culpeper invokes research from social psychology, *inter alia*, to explain how and why certain social categories such as gender and class are activated when readers (or viewers, we could say) first encounter characters. Obviously, language has a key role to play in this regard, being, as Bennett (2012: 7) has it, a means by which the idea of *chav* and its connotations is given “semiotic articulation”. By extension, linguistic stylisation – and, we would argue, voices appropriated and reflected from the margins – evoke not just the language used, but “the kinds of things that *chavs* apparently think about and do […] the representation of a language is a means by which a supposed culture is represented” (ibid.: 20). The *knacker* is a closely related social stereotype in Ireland: in fact, it is a term of racial abuse when it refers to the Traveller Community, an indigenous minority in Ireland – as it is, it could be argued, when it is used to denigrate a ‘social class’. Conventional dictionary definitions are unhelpful where the term is concerned; even TP Dolan’s *Dictionary of Hiberno-English* (2012), which lists conventional and traditional definitions such as *horse trader*, or *shady dealer*, is somewhat coy when approaching the social contours of the definition, citing writer Paul Howard’s character Ross O’Carroll-Kelly’s reference to *Knackeragua*, a place dominated by ‘knackers’, but not providing a more precise definition. In order to illustrate the social schemata invoked by the term, we present here a selection of definitions from Urban Dictionary (<www.urbandictionary.com>), an internet slang resource that Smith (2011: 47) suggests as a locus for (re)evaluating ideologies; it is also used here given its potential as a site where enregistered varieties are codified vis-à-vis the fit for purpose of the given voice. The definitions in Image 1 give some access to perceptions of the term, *knacker*, which we believe are key to accessing the social contours of the meaning of *knacker*.

DRAFT

To cite this chapter:
Vaughan, Elaine & Máiréad Moriarty, 2018. Voicing the "knacker": Analysing the Comedy of the Rubberbandits. In: Diana Villanueva Romero, Carolina P. Amador-Moreno & Manuel Sánchez García (Eds.), *Voice and Discourse in the Irish Context*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 13-45.

Image 1. Definitions of knacker contributed to Urban Dictionary
(© 1999-2016 *Urban Dictionary* ®; http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=knacker)

DRAFT

To cite this chapter:
Vaughan, Elaine & Máiréad Moriarty, 2018. Voicing the "knacker": Analysing the Comedy of the Rubberbandits. In: Diana Villanueva Romero, Carolina P. Amador-Moreno & Manuel Sánchez García (Eds.), *Voice and Discourse in the Irish Context*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 13-45.

TOP DEFINITION

knacker

Incestuous, boxing, sovereign ring wearing, tracksuited shaven headed scumbags. Girls wear bellytops (Even if they're 15 stone), guys are small, jewelry and violence are rampant. Enjoy having children with sisters, looking at you with squinty eyes and scaring people. In many places refers to SCUMBAGS in general, and good travellers are not covered by the word - depening where you're from.

"C'mear yow, give oos a fooking Yaro boss or I'll fooking box ya" said the knacker.

by Mickey Joe Harte **September 20, 2003**

832 | 245

knacker

Irish term of affection for general scum (low lifes). Originally originating from a term of reference for travellers. But nowadays covering whole spectrum of degenerates. Inbreeding is commonplace and your mother can often be your sister.

He's my fightin partner
I'll make a fanny outta your forhEad sham!
Hey baoy, how's your hole baoy!

by ross canning **February 20, 2005**

461 | 168

knacker

A knacker is your general scumbag from Ireland. Males wear caps balanced at an upright angle on their head, at least 5 gold rings and sovereigns on each hand, large gold chains around their necks, matching tracksuits or shirt under Satellite Sports stripey jumper. Adidas, puma, nike or burberry clothing essential to fit crowd. Females wear: Maternity clothes, knacker hoops (large earings that reach from earlobe to shoulder) Prams, belly tops and tracksuits with their knackery fat hanging off the side.

All knackers enjoy "Bockin' da head o' ya, gear, yolks, dope. hub caps, robbing, thieving, lying, transit vans, horses, lifestyle sports, penneys clothes, supermacs, macdonalds, cinemas, crappy civics and puntos. Fighting, rolling up their sleeves.

God I hate knackers.

They also can't read or write, and try to rip you off by selling u a microwaved eight instead of a decent quarter.

They can't speak either.

"Box da nick off ya, lid bollox, bate tha hid off yer showldees. Tum'on, I fite ya. I fite ya! I knife ya! I stikk me daggy in the side ur nick and slit ur throat. I will! Tum'on give us a yaro, go on, I'll fite ya!

I fite ya fo a five-o, bate ya fo a tenno. Ivya have 15 I bewwy ya fo it. An if ya don wan fite me, meh bwodja bate ya fo not chin.

Half of Dublin is filled with knackers
SO IS ALL OF PORTLAOISE.

I was mindin' be business and this knacker stabbed me.

by Nakquada (Terri) **June 15, 2007**

148 | 35

So, the visual and behavioural elements from the definitions become clear, and chime very strongly with Morley's (2009) observations about how *chavs* are perceived to look and sound, and Snell's (2006) application of the idea of class-related schemata being triggered by these perceptions. Tracksuits, baseball caps worn at an angle, sovereign rings, obesity, criminal behaviour, certain types of clothes, the possession of 'lower prestige' accents and ways of speaking all combine to index the 'knacker'. It is this indexing, and, arguably, the biases triggered by these elements, using them to

negatively judge places and people that the Rubberbandits lampoon and play with as part of their performances.

The Rubberbandits

The Rubberbandits consist of *Blind Boy Boat Club* (aka *Blind Boy*), *Mr Chrome* (aka *Bobby Chrome*), and *Willie O'DJ* (a play on the name of a local politician).[2] Blind Boy and Mr Chrome are the core of the act, and have been performing together as the Rubberbandits since the early 2000s, with Mr Chrome's alternately streetwise or drugged up persona the foil to Blind Boy's more verbose, though by no means 'straight' man. While still at secondary school in Limerick city, the pair began to make and record prank phone calls, nine of which are still available to listen to online.[3] These calls, initially recorded on cassette and later to CD, gained them “fame and notoriety around Limerick” (Duggan 2010), and they later branched out into recording songs and making them available online, initially through a MySpace site, and performing live, for example, at music festivals. In 2010 a user posted the question, *who are the rubberbandits* [sic], on a popular online discussion forum, <Boards.ie>; this was and is because when performing, the Rubberbandits always wear plastic shopping bags with eye and mouth holes cut out as masks. This conceals their identities, though their actual identities are known, are central to the performance and never removed during performances or interviews (see Image 2). The Rubberbandits generally stay in character in media interviews and other appearances, though they do occasionally give off their 'real' identities, or calibrate their performance of the Rubberbandits' identity according to the context in which the performance is occurring (see *Analysis and Discussion*).

DRAFT

[2] Willie O'Dea, T.D. (Teachta Dála, or member of the Irish parliament) is a member of Fianna Fáil, a centre to centre-right political party in Ireland. Despite the fluctuating fortunes of the party itself, O'Dea has maintained the support of his constituency, Limerick city. The Rubberbandits' O'DJ character wears a Willie O'Dea mask, they have recorded a track, *Song for Willie O'Dea*, and O'Dea himself has, with good humour it must be said, often voiced his support for the Rubberbandits publically.

[3] One to a bank in Limerick opens with the contention that a bank employee has, amongst other things, taken out a balloon and burst it in the ear of one of the boys as he was applying for a car loan. This is fairly typical of the element of the absurd that runs through their comedy.

To cite this chapter:
Vaughan, Elaine & Máiréad Moriarty, 2018. Voicing the “knacker”: Analysing the Comedy of the Rubberbandits. In: Diana Villanueva Romero, Carolina P. Amador-Moreno & Manuel Sánchez García (Eds.), *Voice and Discourse in the Irish Context*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 13-45.

Image 2. The Rubberbandits (reprinted by permission)

L: Blind Boy Boat Club; R: Mr Chrome

DRAFT

Responses to the 2010 <Boards.ie> question (exchange sequence reproduced in Table 1.1) include both the plausibly straight and obviously humorous, and are a useful starting point for discussing their performance more generally, as well as contextualising the evolution of their performances:

Table 1.1 <Boards.ie> discussion, 15-12-2010[4]
(http://www.boards.ie/vbulletin/showthread.php?t=2056120731)

User	Time	Response
<Zweton>	19:09	ul[5] students?
<BarryDoodles>	19:11	The rumour is that one of them is an english student in TCD.[6]
<cronin_j>	19:11	I thought all Limerick people knew who they were. I went to school with one of them. He now teaches art.
<cat melodeon>	19:12	I heard they were LIT[7] students and that their tears are made of pure mercury.
<Peyton Manning>	19:14	Willie O'Dea is clearly one of them.
<ronanc15>	19:17	"the grand pricks of prank phonecalls"...... how they've evolved Indeed, they're [their] identity would be relatively well known in limerick for years but that would spoil half the fun!!

[4] As with the other online data we present in this chapter, we do not tamper with it as primary data, though we do provide glosses if the meaning cannot be reasonably construed by the reader or the meaning is obscured, e.g in the case of **[they]** in Table 1.1. We provide footnotes to explain specialised references.
[5] University of Limerick (UL), Ireland.
[6] Trinity College Dublin (TCD), Ireland.
[7] Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT), Ireland.

To cite this chapter:
Vaughan, Elaine & Máiréad Moriarty, 2018. Voicing the “knacker”: Analysing the Comedy of the Rubberbandits. In: Diana Villanueva Romero, Carolina P. Amador-Moreno & Manuel Sánchez García (Eds.), *Voice and Discourse in the Irish Context*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 13-45.

		They've been boards members for 5 years <http://www.boards.ie/vbulletin/member.php?u=50082>
<An File>	19:21	I heard their faces appear on the national stamps of Lichtenstein...
<Amazotheamazing>	19:26	I heard they are the reason the river runs through Limerick.
<kev ps3>	19:37	I remember their prank phonecalls from years back
<Grumpypants>	19:41	I think there was one stage where everyone in school in limerick had a blank CD with the phone call on them. They should release them again off the back of the xmas no1, very funny better than the songs even though the songs are brilliant too.
<NoseyMike2010>	19:45	I really hope the [they] get Christmas No. 1 <link to YouTube, Horse Outside>
<concussion>	19:46	They fought for King Limerick in 1916 and were put in storage after we got our potatoes back from the British. Willie O'Dea used some of his moustache hairs to release them from their bronze exteriors in 2005 so they could show him the uh-oh end of a pistol from the non-uh-oh end.
<CiaranMT>	19:48	Insect, nominate this for thread of the week
<Cronin_j>	19:48	I would sincerely hope that if someone was stupid enough to post their names up here that the Mods would remove it. Part of the laugh of it all is the "who are they factor"
<NoseyMike2010>	19:51	The Bird in the blue in their video is a ride!!

This discussion of their actual identities took place in 2010, at a time when the Rubberbandits were becoming far better known, partially because of their online presence, but also because of a series of inserts they were commissioned to contribute to a popular satirical television programme, *Republic of Telly* (broadcast by RTÉ, the national broadcasting service in Ireland). These short inserts form one of the data sources for the present chapter, and are described in more detail in *Data and Methodology* below). At the same time that the Rubberbandits were involved in this programme, they released a video for their song, *Horse Outside*, which was first aired on *Republic of Telly*. It plays on a popular stereotype of Limerick ‘knackers’ owning and riding horses around Limerick city. *Horse Outside* was incredibly successful, and in Christmas 2010 almost beat the *X-Factor* single for that year (by Matt Cardle) to the number one spot in the Irish music sales charts. The phenomenal amount of views of the single on YouTube was reported on internationally, and at the time of writing the video had been viewed over 13.5 million times. The Rubberbandits have performed sell-out shows throughout Ireland, the UK and the US, and have performed at events such as the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Their success outside of Ireland would suggest that they tap in to something global, perhaps a shared image of gangland culture, as well as connecting with audiences due to their comedic talent and verbal dexterity. There is more to be said about the trajectory of the Rubberbandits’ career to date, from prank calls to YouTube celebrity, from a localised Limerick fan base to a fan base that is fascinatingly diverse – the Hollywood actor Chris Hemsworth and rock star Noel Gallagher have publicly endorsed the duo – though we will limit ourselves here to discussing those elements of their performances which connect to conceptualisations of voice and identity in discourse, and capturing samples of their performances to illustrate these conceptualisations. We contend that

DRAFT

through their harnessing of humour, the tongue-in-cheek nature of these performances constitute an ideal analytical site for addressing some of the concerns of the sociolinguistics of performance. This is because their comedy is a site of engagement and management of social relations, where hegemonic discourses surrounding voices from the margins of Limerick city are challenged. The humour of the Rubberbandits can be read in terms of ideologies of class distinction and their deliberate lampooning of aspects of working class Limerick has the potential to amend misinformed or misrepresented ideas of Limerick city.

Data and Methodology

To problematise and explore the complex link between language and social meaning, as well as the significance of this voicing as a local cultural practice, we articulated the following questions in relation to the performances:

(i) What are these performances like, from the point of view of linguistic construction? How might we capture these performances in some way?
(ii) What linguistic features are salient within the performances of the Rubberbandits?
(iii) To what extent might a constellation of these linguistic features give us a sense of *voice in discourse*?

There were a number of potential sources for linguistic data where the Rubberbandits are concerned, and we divided these into data relating to the performances themselves, meta-performances, and meta-commentary (commentary from their audience and media commentators) on the performances. Examples of the former are the previously mentioned prank calls (some of which are available via YouTube), their recorded music (for example, lyrics from the 2011 Rubberbandits album, *Serious about Men*) and inserts and sketches for the various television programmes they have been involved in. Included also are parts of the Rubberbandits' Twitter feed (@Rubberbandits), where they tweet regularly (cf. Zappavigna 2011, 2012); in addition, we include interviews with the Rubberbandits where they stay in character, what might be dubbed *meta-performances*. For meta-commentary, we collected articles written about the Rubberbandits in national newspapers, online articles and other miscellanea pertaining to the duo. In addition, we harvested samples of comments on their YouTube clips (cf. Chun and Walters 2011); and, as illustrated in this chapter, we looked at responses posted on their Facebook page. This is congruent with Mitra & Watts' (2002: 483) conceptualisation of *voice* as a "public occurrence" where a speaker – and, by extension, we argue, a performer – can be endowed with voice via a "public *hearing/reading*" (italics in original).

For the purpose of exploring in some sort of systematic way how their performances are constructed, and how we might trace how these invoke the image of the *knacker*, albeit in a playful way, a specific series of performances was identified. Between October 2010 and March 2011, on the previously mentioned satirical series, *Republic of Telly*, the Rubberbandits contributed ten inserts on various topics. They are described as the Rubberbandits' 'guides to' and range in length from two to almost four minutes; the comedy and the performances therein are resolutely absurd and anarchic. The 'guides to' are available on the Rubberbandits' Facebook page, as well as on YouTube, and so each short clip was orthographically transcribed and

DRAFT

stored as the *Rubberbandits' Guides to Corpus* (RGC).[8] The details of RGC can be seen in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2 Rubberbandits' Guides to Corpus (RGC)[9]

Topic	Time	Uploaded	Words
Guide to Limerick	3:07	21/10/2010	783
Guide to Temple Bar	3:15	04/11/2010	822
Guide to Madeira Cake	1:34	11/11/2010	241
Guide to Headshops	2:17	19/11/2010	533
Guide to Kilkenny	3:04	24/11/2010	527
Guide to London	2:56	27/12/2010	732
Guide to Farming	2:05	04/03/2011	446
Guide to Leprechaun Hunting	2:09	10/03/2011	409
Guide to Birds	3:51	18/04/2011	916
Guide to Fishing	3:40	09/05/2011	849
TOTAL			**6,258**

One of the first entry points into the analysis was to treat the 'guides to' as a small corpus, and to use concordancing software, WordSmith Tools 5 (Scott 2008), to gain an overall view of the RGC. One of the motivations behind this was to address research question (1) above, to gain primary access to the data to get an idea of how the performance was constructed linguistically, by comparing it to a larger corpus, in this case, the Limerick Corpus of Irish English (LCIE; Barker & O'Keeffe 1999; Farr *et al.* 2004), a one-million-word sample of naturally occurring spoken Southern Irish English. A frequency list was generated for RGC (Table 1.3). A frequency list is generally considered a good point of entry to a language corpus (Baker 2006), giving the analyst an idea of what particular items might be worth exploring further.

Table 1.3 Wordlist for RGC (generated using *WordSmith Tools*, Scott 2008)

Rank	Item	Freq.	Rank	Item	Freq.
1	*the*	254	11	*he*	66
2	*a*	205	12	*on*	62
3	*you*	197	13	*is*	59
4	*I*	153	14	*we*	58
5	*to*	143	15	*yeah*	51
6	*of*	138	16	*what*	49
7	*it*	125	17	*no*	48
8	*that*	108	18	*like*	45
9	*and*	93	19	*do*	40
10	*in*	89	20	*my*	37

[8] Thanks to Cormac McCarthy for the original version of this corpus, compiled as part of his Master's dissertation (2012). The RGC version used for this paper is based on the original but with some additional elements; vocalisations are inserted, and specific words which had been transcribed as pronounced for the purpose of the original project have been changed back to standard spelling to allow for comparison with larger, more generally representative corpora.
[9] These are presented in the order in which they were uploaded to YouTube by RTÉ.

DRAFT

As previously mentioned, corpus tools were used in the initial explorations of the data, and the perspectives offered by corpus tools are used as jumping off points for analysis and discussion below. Although the corpus-based method is often seen as primarily quantitative, and is generally associated with larger datasets, the more important characteristic of the corpus method for us is the fact it is inherently comparative. We would also note, as have many others (notably Biber *et al.* 1998), that the corpus method is not synonymous with 'quantitative'. Something flagged at automatic analysis stage (generation of raw frequencies or generation of keywords, for example) can direct analytical attention, certainly. A subsequent view of flagged phenomena in context may mean that these or other items are noticed and a cross-checking of quantitative information may become relevant. Language data of the type that we analyse becomes familiar as a whole text, but dismantling and disembodying the complete text via corpus methods means that it can be seen with fresh eyes, and reveal elements which inform qualitative analysis. We use therefore corpus tools in a spirit of enquiry, to see what the data is 'like', we generate frequency lists and keyword lists and use them to characterise aspects of the way the Rubberbandits use language in their performances. In short, we use corpus tools and a theoretical framework from sociolinguistics to deconstruct and interpret the performances. We frame our interpretations using extracts from the *Guides to…* corpus, and look at what a corpus view of the data yields in terms of linguistic items particular to the performance; we provide some examples of audience response to the performances, and then provide some interpretations and implications which underline why we present comedy, and the comedy of the Rubberbandits particularly, as an important locus of research on voice in discourse – and the discourses of the marginalised. First, we present an extended extract from the corpus to familiarise the reader with the performances more generally.

Analysis and Discussion

The 'guide to' with the highest number of YouTube views is, perhaps unsurprisingly, the guide to Limerick, with well over 1.1 million views. Extract (1) below is taken from the 'guide to Limerick', and we pick out a sample of the linguistic items that are characteristic of both the urban identity they voice, and the tenor of the humour that plays with and disrupts the social schemata (cf. Culpeper 2001, 2002) activated by this voice:

Extract (1) Rubberbandits' Guide to Limerick

Mr Chrome: Limerick City. Pig Town. The Cormorant's Nest. Call it what you want. It's still home to me and him [Blind Boy]. Founded in 1916 by none other than King Limerick who famously defeated the British with the wrong end of a sword [points to statue][10] but a lot has changed since then. We no longer wear crowns and leggings. We're not made of bronze and we definitely

[10] The statue is of the late actor Richard Harris who was from Limerick. The sculpture depicts him as as King Arthur in the film, *Camelot*, hence the crowns and leggings.

DRAFT

To cite this chapter:
Vaughan, Elaine & Máiréad Moriarty, 2018. Voicing the "knacker": Analysing the Comedy of the Rubberbandits. In: Diana Villanueva Romero, Carolina P. Amador-Moreno & Manuel Sánchez García (Eds.), *Voice and Discourse in the Irish Context*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 13-45.

know the pointy end of a sword from the not pointy end of a sword. So we're here in Limerick city to find out just what makes the people tick.

Blind Boy: [Addressing a passer-by] Sir? D'you want to do an interview for RTÉ no? [Addressing a young couple] What's the highest score you've ever gotten on snake on your mobile phone? [Addressing two young men] Listen boys who'd win in a fight between the two of ye? [Addressing a young woman] Can I have a fag? [Addressing male teenager] When did you get your first holy communion and what did it taste like? [Addressing the same woman as earlier. She gives him a cigarette]. Talk to you bure *[girl]*. [Pointing to a red car] D'you see the shades *[police]* over there watch? They think that we don't know they're shades right?

Mr Chrome: We know they're shades.

Blind Boy: Number one there's a double aerial and number two a Dublin reg [registration] in Limerick City. That's how you know over there. Watch this. Stand there stand there [to Mr Chrome] Watch this [gives the finger to the car as it moves away in traffic but conceals the gesture from the 'guards'.] Fuck off. Fuck off. Fuck you guards.

DRAFT

While Limerick city is referred to locally as Pig Town, it was clearly not founded "in 1916 by King Limerick"; the faux-documentary style of the commentary sets up the comic realisation of a 'vox pop', where the Rubberbandits ask a series of passers-by random questions. Quite apart from the physical, multimodal aspects of their performance – they wear tracksuits with their tracksuit bottoms tucked into white socks, and wear white runners known locally as *tackies*, a sort of urban uniform – we can see oblique and obvious references to crime and criminality. More obliquely, this is present in the reference to Limerick people knowing the "pointy end of a sword from the not pointy end of a sword". This has an intriguing consonance with <concussion>'s comment the "uh-oh end of a pistol from the non-uh-oh end", as well as the faux-historical facts, in the <boards.ie> post presented earlier in the chapter (Table 1.2). What is interesting is their presentation of themselves as authentic Limerick citizens outwardly streetwise and belligerent (they can spot an undercover police vehicle) but in reality rather cowardly (they will gesture rudely but so they cannot be seen; they tell the guards to 'fuck off' but so they cannot be heard). This has the dual effect of being mocking, making fun of something intimidating to diminish its power to intimidate, and affectionate. We are also interested here in the presence of terms, such as *shades* (*police*) and *bure* (*woman/girl*, also *girlfriend*), which have their origins in Shelta, one term for the language of the Traveller Community in Ireland. Within the linguistic performance, there are pronouns characteristic of contemporary spoken Irish English, *ye* (*you* plural), and other colloquial terms, such as *fag* (*cigarette*).

From the point of view of getting at the performance, a wordlist view yields little beyond validating the small corpus itself as congruent with other samples of Irish English: comparing the RGC wordlist with the wordlist for LCIE, fifteen out of twenty of the items are the same (these items are shaded in Table 1.4).

Table 1.4 Wordlist for RGC and LCIE compared

(generated using *WordSmith Tools*, Scott 2008)

Rank	RGC	LCIE	Rank	RGC	LCIE
1	*the*	*the*	11	*he*	*in*
2	*a*	*I*	12	*on*	*was*
3	*you*	*and*	13	*is*	*is*
4	*I*	*you*	14	*we*	*like*
5	*to*	*to*	15	*yeah*	*know*
6	*of*	*it*	16	*what*	*he*
7	*it*	*a*	17	*no*	*on*
8	*that*	*that*	18	*like*	*they*
9	*and*	*of*	19	*do*	*have*
10	*in*	*yeah*	20	*my*	*there*

For the purpose of this chapter, with its particular focus on stylisation, performance and voice, a more nuanced list is necessary. Another way of picking up on what linguistic items might be particular to the language used by the Rubberbandits in their 'guides to' performances is the generation of a Keyword list. Again, using LCIE as a larger, reference corpus, it is possible to generate a wordlist which highlights items that occur with statistically significant frequency in the RGC (see, for example, Vaughan & O'Keeffe (2015) for a discussion of the perspectives afforded by drilling down into a corpus using concordancing software). The Keyword list can be seen in Table 1.5.

Table 1.5 Keyword list for RGC using LCIE as reference corpus (Generated using *WordSmith Tools*, Scott 2008)

Rank	Item	Rank	Item
1	*leprechaun*	11	*yokes*
2	*city*	12	*fish*
3	*Limerick*	13	*silly*
4	*jocks*	14	*snail*
5	*that*	15	*snakes*
6	*parrot*	16	*hash*
7	*bounty*	17	*fox*
8	*trout*	18	*catch*
9	*craic*	19	*fool*
10	*salmon*	20	*joint*

Now, the focus might be said to shift to those items that are characteristic of the performance more specifically, and that give a flavour of its construction. Of course, some of the items connect to the topics of the 'guides to' – *leprechauns*, *parrots*, *trout* and *fish* connected more obviously. Other aspects which connect in to the performed voice are items like *yokes*,[11] *hash* and *joint*, all of which index the drug culture connected with the stylisation of the 'knacker'. *Limerick* is also key, unsurprisingly, and the occurrence of *that* and *city* provides evidence of the Rubberbandits'

[11] *Yoke* is a term that can be used in place of *thing*, as a vague reference in general in Irish English. It can also be used, as it is here, to refer to ecstasy pills, or MDMA.

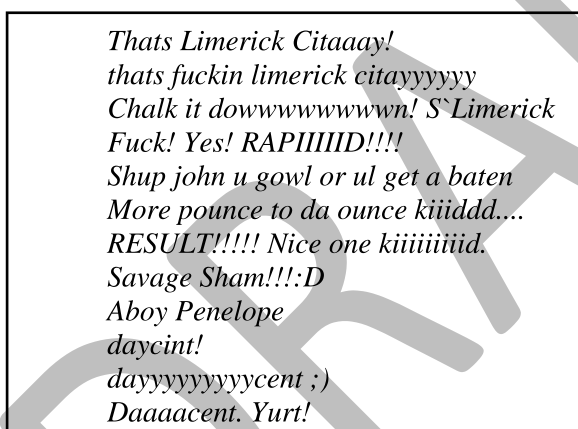
DRAFT

To cite this chapter:
Vaughan, Elaine & Máiréad Moriarty, 2018. Voicing the "knacker": Analysing the Comedy of the Rubberbandits. In: Diana Villanueva Romero, Carolina P. Amador-Moreno & Manuel Sánchez García (Eds.), *Voice and Discourse in the Irish Context*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 13-45.

catchphrase *That's Limerick city*. The tone of *That's Limerick city* is a rebellious appropriation of a label intended as a slur or criticism: in the words of the Rubberbandits "if you don't like it fuck off to Cork (Rubberbandits' Guide to Limerick). This catchphrase has been seized upon, and is echoed and reified orthographically to reflect the Rubberbandits' voicing of the Limerick accent in user comments on the Rubberbandits' Facebook page, as can be seen from the extracted comments in Figure 1:

DRAFT

Figure 1. Orthographic reification of 'Limerick/Rubberbandits' English'.
Extracted comments from Facebook page < www.facebook.com/TheRubberbandits>


Thats Limerick Citaaay!
thats fuckin limerick citayyyyyy
Chalk it dowwwwwwwwwn! S`Limerick
Fuck! Yes! RAPIIIIID!!!!
Shup john u gowl or ul get a baten
More pounce to da ounce kiiiddd....
RESULT!!!!! Nice one kiiiiiiiid.
Savage Sham!!!:D
Aboy Penelope
daycint!
dayyyyyyyyycent ;)
Daaaacent. Yurt!

These catchphrases also include items the audience appear to connect with Limerick slang, and the Limerick accent – *decent* pronounced as *daycent* (/eɪ/ replacing /iː/). Similarly, the vowel sound in *beating* pronounced as /eɪ/, and the /ɪ/ represented as lengthened in *kiiid*, a vocative used as a term of address. We see other terms of address (*Aboy*; *sham*) as well as drug references (*more pounce to da ounce*). And so this voice of Limerick can be said to be reflected and refracted by the audience showing what might constitute 'Limerick English' (or Limerick (Irish) English) – or what the Limerick 'voice' might sound/be like.

The Rubberbandits present items that index the local voice, which we would argue are then validated by the audience in the orthographic reifications presented in Figure 1, and the audience's uptake of catchphrases (*That's Limerick City*). The Rubberbandits also co-opt an existing linguistic item, seen in the comments above, *yurt*, and this is more particular to their performance. They have offered characteristically opaque, witty definitions on the term when questioned by their followers on Facebook "Technically it's a tibetan hut. But the Limerick phrase 'Yurt'

was born in the mouth of a girl from Thomondgate and no one knows who it's father is. Possibly an adjective from Garryowen but some say it may even have been fathered by an adverb from Tipp"[12] or on Twitter, where in answer to a tweet asking what yurt means "because yous always use it," the response is an evasive "the word 'Yurt' can only be defined by what it isn't."[13]

As can be seen from Image 1.3, it has even gained enough currency to be scrawled on a Limerick bus-stop, accompanied by the name of a well-known estate in Limerick city.

Image 1.3 (authors' own)

Of course, the Rubberbandits make strategic performative choices, which are based on language as well as other semiotic resources to perform the specific voice they are manipulating. The key concern of this chapter has been with the semiotic resource of voice and the extent to which the Rubberbandits play with a particular voice through the stylisation of the 'knacker'. Specifically, we are interested in how their voicing of an inner city accent and other linguistic resources of Limerick (Irish) English serves to parody the indexical linking of this particular voice with the label of *knacker*. The Rubberbandits make use of salient linguistic features so that the voicing practices they engage in serve to evoke a certain social image. In playing with aspects of the very voice they open up for ridicule the Rubberbandits "flirt with the boundaries of the socially, culturally and linguistically possible and appropriate" (Sherzer, 2002: 1). The instances of language play presented in Extract (1) demonstrate how their voicing

12 http://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=10150269626777200&id=45998897199
13 https://twitter.com/rubberbandits/status/177174042422423554

DRAFT

To cite this chapter:
Vaughan, Elaine & Máiréad Moriarty, 2018. Voicing the "knacker": Analysing the Comedy of the Rubberbandits. In: Diana Villanueva Romero, Carolina P. Amador-Moreno & Manuel Sánchez García (Eds.), *Voice and Discourse in the Irish Context*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 13-45.

involves verbal strategies where a stylised performance puts a particular identity on show, and a certain degree of linguistic reflexivity is evident in verbal practice.

While the Rubberbandits draw on these resources to parody the indexical linking of voice and the *knacker*, they also use their performed personae to disrupt social schemata. Here the performance pivots on disrupting the norms of how voice is connected to access to the symbolic capital of 'high art' (Hall 1997). We have termed these performances *meta-performances*, as although the Rubberbandits stay in character, there are occasional slippages in terms of what we might term *prima facie* voice – the voice that they are not consciously performing as the Rubberbandits. As background to Extract (2), a caller to a radio phone-in programme, *Liveline*, broadcast on RTÉ Radio 1, has been criticising the video for *Horse Outside* (see *The Rubberbandits* above), saying that Limerick is being portrayed in a negative light and that the video promoted drug use. The caller (Anthony) also objected to the fact that Willie O'Dea, TD (mentioned in Footnote 1) has supported the Rubberbandits on this occasion. Blind Boy (Boat Club) from the Rubberbandits has been contacted to comment on this criticism. In Extract (2), Joe Duffy is introducing Blind Boy, but gets his name wrong, whereupon Blind Boy corrects him, using the vocative, *kid*, primed for connection with their Limerick city identity (see *Figure 1*).

Extract (2) Blind Boy Boat Club on *Liveline*
***Liveline* with Joe Duffy, RTÉ Radio 1, 15.12.2010**

Joe Duffy: Anthony Anthony of the Rubberbandits is on the line. Anthony good afternoon.
Blind Boy: What's happening. My name isn't Anthony at all Joe.
Joe Duffy: Oh sorry that's Anthony that call= that's Blind Boy is it?
Blind Boy: Blind Boy Boat Club is my name kid.

In Extract (2), Blind Boy is introducing himself in character, and what ensues is a defence delivered in character, but delivered *seriously*. This deftly undermines detractors who suggest that their comedy is puerile, or pointless, and, we argue, sends up a taken-for-granted notion of an 'educated' voice being the only one with the power to critique performance art. It delegitimises and destabilises this notion whilst at the same time exposing its presence. In Extract (3), Blind Boy takes on the caller's criticisms, mentioning first Willie O'Dea's support. O'Dea had also called in to *Liveline* to defend the Rubberbandits, and to praise their use of comedy to subvert the media portrayal of Limerick:

Extract (3) Blind Boy Boat Club responds to criticisms of the Rubberbandits
***Liveline* with Joe Duffy, RTÉ Radio 1, 15.12.2010**[14]

Blind Boy: I think I think it's just onreal ['Limerick' accent *unreal*] fair play to you Willy and thanks for supporting it that's great like. Any support we get is onreal [*unreal*] and I think anyone who's got a complaint about the video or the song like your man Anthony there who's talking away what he needs to

[14] <$O> <\$O1> marks an overlapped utterance; + marks an interrupted utterance.

DRAFT

To cite this chapter:
Vaughan, Elaine & Máiréad Moriarty, 2018. Voicing the "knacker": Analysing the Comedy of the Rubberbandits. In: Diana Villanueva Romero, Carolina P. Amador-Moreno & Manuel Sánchez García (Eds.), *Voice and Discourse in the Irish Context*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 13-45.

do someone needs to give that man a dictionary and he needs to look up the word irony.

Joe Duffy: Anthony?

Anthony: Absolute joke <$O1> look as as the other <\$O1> as the other lady on the phone said I mean I'm all for humour et cetera but when you're bringing in about children and house parties and drugs and the whole lot it's a disgrace+

Blind Boy: <$O1> Exactly it's an absolute joke you put it well there yourself kid <\$O1>. All right hold on a second now right. Okay the line you're referring to about children and house parties and drugs right? Let me speak now a second right. You're looking at that from a very denotative perspective right you're looking at it literally as that line is the absolute truth. What's not being looked at is the subtext. What we're talking about here is a piece of art right. It's a piece of music and it's a video right. So first of all the line that's coming out of the man's mouth you need to look at that man. Look at the way he's talking the way he's dressed the way he's carrying on. Is he a reliable man? Do you think that+

There is no doubting that although it is voiced through Blind Boy this is an artist defining how his art should be interpreted, in a sort of socio-political code-switching of voices. This small example shows the potential for comedians to re-enregister the value attached to using an accent whose mediated representation has hitherto served to index a less powerful voice in society. It can be argued that the Rubberbandits provide an alternative source of legitimacy for working-class Limerick, using the inner city Limerick accent to index far more than the *knacker*, and in some ways destabilising this indexing. This destabilisation is shown in practice with Blind Boy's contribution to *Liveline* above.

Where resistance could be said to be the implication in Extract (3), solidarity is the intention in Extract (4). Just before the landmark Marriage Equality Referendum in Ireland, Blind Boy (the putative spokesman for the Rubberbandits) was asked to comment as part of a rather eclectic vox pop for *BBC Newsnight*.[15] Again, in character, Blind Boy voices his support for the 'Yes' campaign:

Extract (4) *BBC Newsnight* 20.5.15

Blind Boy: It's part of a package. It's basic humanity and equality for our gay citizens. But also it's a powerful and deliberate turning our backs on a system that really kept us mentally oppressed for about fifty years. Am a Catholic system that it's still actually in part of our law.

DRAFT

Comedy is well recognised as a domain of art in which the unsayable can be said. It has a long history as a playful art form in which dominant ideologies are resisted and challenged, a space in which performers utilise a variety of resources to attempt to change, or least disrupt the taken-for-granted norms of the social world in which they reside. We suggest that the comedy of the Rubberbandits serves to challenge the hegemonic order which has disadvantaged voices from the margins of Limerick city.

[15] This also included the current Bishop of Limerick, Rt Rev Brendan Leahy, as well as Senator David Norris.

To cite this chapter:
Vaughan, Elaine & Máiréad Moriarty, 2018. Voicing the "knacker": Analysing the Comedy of the Rubberbandits. In: Diana Villanueva Romero, Carolina P. Amador-Moreno & Manuel Sánchez García (Eds.), *Voice and Discourse in the Irish Context*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 13-45.

Their comedic style can be characterised as comedy *verité* in that it moves past the straightforward provocation of laughter, re-energising comedy's potential for social and cultural critique (Chun 2004; Mills 2004). The Rubberbandits engage in a process of heightened reflexivity, where a discursive social stereotype is put on display and is offered up and opened up to a critical reflection of self and society – and the social schemata activated by the performed voice is disrupted. The comedy the duo produce is akin to Lockyer's (2010) characterisation of television comedy as "…a significant vehicle through which serious concerns, anxieties, and questions about social class and class identities are discursively constructed and contested" (Lockyer 2010: 121). The snippets of their humour presented in this chapter, and indeed the audience reaction to this humour, shows that it is a parody that is both reflexive and ironic in nature that speaks to both out-group and in-group members – you do not have to be from Limerick city to access the comedy of the Rubberbandits. Equally, there is something uniquely 'Limerick' about their comedy.

So, the Rubberbandits have adopted the inner city Limerick voice as well as other semiotic resources in order to perform an identity that stands outside their real identity, as previously mentioned, and this is a complex process of voicing: *stylisation* (Bakhtin 1981; Rampton 1995; Coupland 2001, 2007, 2009). The comedic play they engage in 'guides to' and the meta-performances presented here serves to "… move the use of heterogeneous stylistic resources, context-sensitive meanings and conflicting ideologies in to a reflexive arena where they can be examined critically" (Bauman and Briggs, 1990: 6). In this way they also engage in a process of (re)engregisterment (Agha 2003, 2006; Johnstone 2011). A specific voice associated with Limerick (Irish) English has been enregistered to index *knacker*. Yet, through their lampooning of this indexical link the one-to-one association of the voice with the label of knacker is undermined, challenged, diluted and destabilised (see Extracts (4) and (5)). They engage in what can also be interpreted in Bucholtz's (2015: 52) terms as *resignification*, a process whereby "semiotic forms acquire new meanings through the purposeful recontextualising acts of stylistic agents". Cumulatively, their humorous stylisation functions as an important discursive device and enables a process of escribes as "cultural reassessment" (Coupland 2007).

Conclusion

Mass culture plays a significant role in shaping the sociolinguistic reality of all speech communities. One of the most significant of these effects is the role of media in reproducing normalised language ideologies. As much of the recent work in what can be described as the sociolinguistics of performance has demonstrated, media privileges certain types of talk. Research in this field has focused on how particular linguistic features accrue social meaning giving rise to an interest in how language varieties index particular social meaning. Much of the existing literature on the role of television in the (re)production of hegemonic discourse and ideologies focuses on how particular characters who represent given linguistic varieties serve to further ferment indexical social meanings associated with speakers of such varieties. Much of the work on media representation of AAVE, for example, looks at how performances of this linguistic vernacular often serve to further enhance stereotypes and leads to a furthering of social racism (cf. Hill, 1999; Bucholtz 2003, 2009, 2011; Bucholtz & Lopez 2012; Coupland 2007)

DRAFT

However, bearing this work in mind, and the hitherto assumed negative consequences of mediatised stylisation, the current study shows that, in the context of the Rubberbandits, while their linguistic practices do allow for negative stereotyping, they also serve to challenge dominant ideologies. The humorous framing allows for dominant discourses and ideologies that surround Limerick city to be challenged, and so normative language ideologies are reproduced, but simultaneously reorganised, such that:

> the social meaning of linguistic form is most fundamentally a matter not of social categories such as gender, ethnicity, age or region but rather of subtler and more fleeting interactional moves through which speakers take stances, create alignments, and construct personas.
>
> (Bucholtz, 2009: 146)

Arguably, stylisation is a resource for challenging dominant discourses by deliberately manipulating the fluidity of social norms, ideas and practices. Through their active manipulation of voice they engage simultaneously in process of ordering and disordering of normative discourses (cf. Bucholtz 2009: 146). King refers to this as a "double-edged potential" (2002: 145), which permits comedy to "both question and reconfirm prevailing definitions […], giving it a potent but also ambiguous ideological potential" (2002: 129). In this way, stylisation "subverts hegemonic modes of imagination by exposing their constructed-ness" (Androutsopolous, 2013: 152). As our data would suggest, the idea of *knacker*, and indeed the notion of the Limerick knacker, does not exist as person but rather as a concept and much like similar labels from other cultures such as the Australian *bogan*, the American *white trash*, the British *chav*.

The designation *knacker* has been used in Irish society to distance the middle class from the working class along lines of distinction and taste. As Tyler (2008) argues with respect to Britain, class making is an important tool in the accumulation of social capital of white upper and middle classes. Our examination of how the Rubberbandits play with the notion of knacker through their creative vernacular play with the voice and image of the perceived knacker foregrounds how comedic voicing can interrupt dominant discourses and help to readdress the irrationality of the taken-for-granted associations of a particular voice, in this case the inner city accent of Limerick (Irish) English, and the imagined concept of *knacker*. The 'voices' the Rubberbandits draw on and embody in order to index the values and ideologies associated with the image knacker are deliberately absurd and overplayed. The humour of the Rubberbandits provides a unique locus for meaning making and therein a unique for the investigation of the relationship between voice and discourse. Their stylised humour depicts the view that Limerick has been ideologically and discursively constructed as poor, deviant and criminal by the Irish media. For their stylisation to be successful it has to be grounded in shared language ideologies in order for it to succeed at the interactional level. This is evident in our data from audience engagement with the humour of the Rubberbandits. The trajectory of linguistic resources associated with voicing the knacker are taken up by the audience is such that it is used across different spaces of social media, graffiti etc. They frequently reorder and transform the voices from the margins of Limerick city. The voice moves from being enregistered as

DRAFT

knacker to a broadened capacity in terms of the accents fit for purpose and as a result they can be identified as taking an active role in tackling the ideological constraints such voices are subjected to.

Through their appropriation of the voice of the marginalised and demonised, the Rubberbandits' comedy reimagines the ideological social order so the indexical valence of the voice they perform can move beyond media stereotyping of Limerick, and they provide an alternative to the folk-held description of Limerick as Stab City. The Rubberbandits are social actors who use various voicing techniques through which the ideological constraints of being a speaker of Limerick (Irish) English can be renegotiated. Through their exaggerated and caricatured portrayal of the *knacker* they invoke the humorous trope of absurdity to challenge existing stereotypes. Their linguistic dexterity enables a complex performance of voice, where it becomes a tool with which resistance to dominant discourses of disgust can be mounted. The humour of the Rubberbandits means that voices, albeit *represented* voices, from the margins can be heard and seen on the Irish mediascape. This work contributes to the growing body of work which critically examines high performance genres, and attempts to address an analytical exigency identified by Coupland (2007: 3): "We need to understand how people *use* or *enact* or *perform* social styles for a range of symbolic purposes." The potential of comedy to reframe notions of class and place, and the role of playful voice in challenging dominant ideologies, makes for a fascinating, if complex and layered, study.

DRAFT

References

Agha, A. (2003) The social life of a cultural value. *Language and Communication* 23 (3-4): 231-273.

Agha, A. (2006) *Language and Social Relations*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Androutsoplolous, J. (2013) Participatory culture and metalinguistic discourse: Performing and negotiating German dialects on YouTube. In Tannen, D. & Trester, A.M. (eds.) *Discourse 2.0: Language and New Media*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 47-71.

Baker, P. (2006). *Using Corpora in Discourse Analysis*. London, UK: Continuum.

Bakhtin, M. (1981) *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Ed. M. Holmquist; trans. M. Holmquist & C. Emerson). Austin: University of Texas Press.

Barker, G. & O'Keeffe, A. (1999) A corpus of Irish English – past, present, future. *Teanga*, 18: 1-11.

Bauman, R. & Briggs, C. L. (1990) Poetics and performance as critical perspectives on language and social life. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 19: 59-88.

Bennett, J. (2012) 'And what comes out may be a kind of screeching': The stylisation of chavspeak in contemporary Britain. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 16 (1): 5-27.

Bucholtz, M. (2003) Sociolinguistic nostalgia and the authentication of identity. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 7 (3): 398-416.

Bucholtz, M. (2009) From stance to style: Gender, interaction, and indexicality in Mexican immigrant youth Slang. In Jaffe, A. (ed.) *Stance: Sociolinguistic perspectives*. New York: Oxford University Press, 146-170.

Bucholtz, M. (2011) Race and the re-embodied voice in Hollywood film. *Language and Communication* 31 (3): 255-265.

Bucholtz, M. (2015) The elements of style. In Djenar, D.N., Mahboob, M. & Cruickshank, A. (eds.) *Language and Identity across Modes of Communication*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Bucholtz, M. & Lopez, Q. (2011) Performing blackness, forming whiteness: Linguistic minstrelsy in Hollywood film. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 15 (5): 680-706.

Chun, E. (2004) Ideologies of legitimate mockery: Margaret Cho's revoicing of mock Asian. *Pragmatics* 14 (2/3): 263-289.

Chun, E. & Walters, K. (2011) Orienting to Arab orientalisms: Language, race, and humor in a YouTube video. In Thurlow, C. & Mroczek, K. (eds.) *Digital Discourse. Language in the New Media*. New York: Oxford University Press, 251-273.
Coupland, N. (2001) Dialect stylization in radio talk. *Language in Society* 30 (3): 345-375.

Coupland, N. (2007) *Style. Language Variation and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Coupland, N. (2009). The mediated performance of vernaculars. *Journal of English Linguistics* 37 (3): 284-300.

Culpeper, J. (2001) Language and Characterisation. Harlow: Pearson.

Culpeper, J. (2002) A cognitive stylistic approach to characterisation. In Semino, E. & Culpeper, J. (eds.) *Cognitive Stylistics: Language and Cognition in Text Analysis*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 251-277.

DRAFT

Devereux E., Haynes, A. & Power, M.J. (2011) At the edge: media constructions of a stigmatised Irish housing estate. *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 26 (2): 123-142.

Dolan, T.P. (2012) *A Dictionary of Hiberno-English (Third Edition)*. Dublin: Gill & Macmillan.

Duggan, B. (2010, December 17) Jokers unmasked as middle-class lads. *The Irish Independent*. Retrieved from http://www.independent.ie/entertainment/music/jokers-unmasked-as-middleclass-lads-26607316.html [31.7.15]

Eckert, P. & McConnell-Ginet, S. (1992) Communities of practice: Where language, gender and power all live. Reprinted in Coates, J. & Pichler, P. (2011) *Language and Gender. A Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell, 573-582.

Farr, F., Murphy, B., & O'Keeffe, A. (2004). The Limerick corpus of Irish English: Design, description and application. *Teanga*, 21: 25-29.

Hall, M. (1997) (ed.) *Reworking Class*. Ithaca & New York: Cornell University Press.

Hickey, R. (2005) *Dublin English: Evolution and Change*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Hickey, R. (2007) *Irish English: History and Present-Day Forms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hill, J. (1999) Styling Locally, Styling Globally: What Does it Mean? *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 3 (4): 542-556.

Johnstone, B. (2011) Dialect enregisterment in performance. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 15 (5): 657-679.

King, G. (2002) *Film Comedy*. London: Wallflower Press.

Lawler, S. (1999) Getting out and getting away: Women's narratives of class mobility. *Feminist Review* 63 (1):3-24.

Lockyer, S. (2010) Dynamics of social class contempt in contemporary British television comedy. *Social Semiotics* 20 (2): 121-138.

Mills, B. (2004) Comedy verité: contemporary sitcom form. *Screen* 45 (1): 63-78.

Mitra, A. & Watts, E. (2002) Theorizing cyberspace: the idea of voice applied to the internet discourse. *New Media & Society* 4 (4): 479-498.

Morley, D. (2009) Mediated class-ifications: Representations of class and culture in contemporary British television. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 12 (4): 487-508.

DRAFT

Rampton, B. (1995) *Crossing: Language and Ethnicity among Adolescents*. London: Longman.

Scott, M. (2008). *WordSmith Tools 5*. Liverpool, UK: Lexical Analysis Software.

Sherzer, J. (2002) *Speech Play and Verbal Art*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Snell, J. (2006) Schema theory and the humour of *Little Britain*. *English Today* 22 (1): 59-64.

Snell, J. (2010) From sociolinguistic variation to socially strategic stylisation. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 14 (5): 618-644.

Smith, R. E. (2011) Urban dictionary: youth slanguage and the redefining of definition. *English Today* 27 (4): 43-48.

Tyler, I. (2008) 'Chav mum, chav scum': class disgust in contemporary Britain. *Feminist Media Studies* 8 (1): 17-34.

Vaughan, E. & O'Keeffe, A. (2015) Corpus analysis. *The International Encyclopedia of Language and Social Interaction*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 1-17.

Wenger, E. (1998) *Communities of Practice: Language, Meaning and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Zappavigna, M. (2011) Ambient affiliation: A linguistic perspective on Twitter. *New Media and Society* 13 (5): 788-806.

Zappavigna, M. (2012) *The Discourse of Twitter and Social Media*. London: Continuum.

DRAFT