

HON2120 (2025-2026)

Assignment 2

Please use this file to provide your answers. The test comprises 2 problem and is out of 10 marks.

You may not discuss this assignment with others (apart from the lecturer) before the final submission. You may now work with others in preparing this assignment. The answers should be elaborated by you alone and be in your own words, except for permitted material from sources that are clearly indicated and acknowledged by appropriate references. The use of Artificial Intelligence in connection with this assignment is strictly forbidden. This includes systems such as ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, and GPT UiO. You should prioritize the use of concepts and methods covered in the course.

Once completed, your assignment should be uploaded to Canvas. Before uploading, you should add your student ID number to the filename, which will then have this format at the point of submission: HON2120_Assignment_2_2025-2026_000000.docx. Please do not add any identifying information other than your student ID number.

PROBLEM 1(4 marks)

Read the text below and answer questions (1) and (2). Your text for should not be longer than 400 words.

Most people value humor, but what we find funny is both subjective and dependent on the context. There are many factors affecting what one might find amusing, such as age, gender, social circles, past experiences, beliefs, and so on. What can be considered humor has been a topic of debate, and something one person thinks is funny can be considered offensive by others. The reception of a joke can be affected by how it is delivered, for instance by timing, tone of voice, and gestures, or by how other people react in a social setting.

Is it possible to predict what people will find funny, and can our sense of humor say something about us as individuals?

(1) Create 2-3 research questions you find suitable to explore this topic, and that will help guide the research. Explain the choices and considerations you have made when formulating the research questions, and how this has affected the final result.

(2) Formulate two hypotheses to the topic and your research questions. Explain your choice of words and describe the predictions your hypotheses make.

ANSWER

- 1)
1.1)

For my first question I began with the broad question “Do people know their own sense of humor?”, which I found interesting.

When narrowing this question down, I wanted to remove the term “sense of humor”, since it covers a lot of things, and to focus on a specific part of the comedy. I ended up with “How accurately can people predict which components of a joke they find amusing?”. This question focuses more on the formal aspects of the joke, delivery, timing, etc., and replaces “sense of humor” with “joke they find amusing”, which while still very subjective, is less broad.

1.2)

My second question began as “How does social standing effect a person's sense of humor?”. When narrowing the question, I noted that “social standing” is a very broad, and again, that “sense of humor” can mean too many different things. I ended up with the question “How does economic standing affect what topics a person finds amusing within a joke?” This specifies a part of the social standing, namely the economical, and specifies which part of the “sense of humor” we want to research, namely what topics a person finds amusing.

2)

2.1)

For the research question detailed in 1.1), I chose the hypothesis “People will be able to predict what components they find amusing, but not how important each component is in relation to each other.”.

This hypothesis predicts that individuals will be able to predict which components of jokes are important to them. At the same time, it predicts that individuals will not know how much each component contributes to making a joke funny. The phrasing “in relation to each other” is important here, because individuals will not be able to tell you the absolute importance of a component, but they should be able to tell you if a component is more important than another.

2.2)

For the question detailed in 1.2), I chose “Individuals will prefer topics that are relatable to people of their own economic standing”.

This hypothesis predicts that individuals will respond better to jokes that are centered around topics that they can relate to, specifically topics that are relatable because of economic reasons (for example, a person that struggles economically would respond well to a joke about said struggle). The word “prefer” also specifies that individuals will like relatable jokes *better* than others, not that they won’t like others at all.

PROBLEM 2(6 marks)

Choose two methods you find suitable to research the topic described in Problem 1. Argue for your choice and discuss advantages and limitations for each of the methods you have chosen. Your text should not be longer than 600 words.

ANSWER

I have chosen to describe one method related to each research question described in Problem 1 1). Both methods are centered around first gaining information about the individuals, then having them listen to a series of jokes, and then collecting information about how they respond.

1)

For the research question “How accurately can people predict which components of a joke they find amusing?”, I would first begin with a survey. This would be the “prediction” part of the research, where individuals would try to predict how important different components of jokes are to them. This survey could be structured around a scale, for example between 1 and 5, ranging from “not important” to “extremely important” (a scale like this is usually referred to as a Likert scale).

Once this data is collected, the individuals would all have to listen to a series of jokes, where the different jokes are structured differently to highlight different components. The individuals would then have to take a second survey, with the goal of finding out which of the jokes they found most amusing.

With an approach like this, we can do quantitative analysis of the data received. If an individual answers that subversion is “extremely important” in the first survey, but then consistently answers that they did not think that jokes highlighting subversion were funny, that is evidence towards that individual not knowing how important that component is to them. This discrepancy between prediction and outcome is also unique for each component, so if individuals struggle to predict the importance of certain components, but not others, the study might reveal it.

At the same time, this method hinges on the individuals understanding the different components of the jokes, so that they can answer the first survey truthfully. This way of doing analysis of each component separately will also erase all the nuances of how the components work together, as such a question cannot be answered through a quantitative survey (at least not with our setup).

2)

For the research question “How does economic standing affect what topics a person finds amusing within a joke?”, I would also begin with a survey, but this time a very short one. The goal of the survey is to determine each individual’s economic standing. Again, once this information has been gathered, the individuals would listen to a series of jokes, with multiple different topics, and ideally many different types of jokes, to make sure the individuals react to the topics of the jokes, and not their construction or execution.

After the jokes have been told, each individual will be interviewed. Everyone will be asked the same questions for each topic, namely if they found the jokes amusing, and why/why not.

This method allows us to do a qualitative analysis of the data. On top of finding out if an individual liked the jokes with a specific topic (which is a qualitative finding), we would also get information about why/why not. This is the reason an interview was picked instead of, for example, a survey. The interviewer can ask follow-up questions to get more detailed explanations from the interviewee. Once we have this information, we can check if individuals with a certain economic standing prefer certain topics, and if that is the case, use the answers to the interview to try to explain why.

This method is however quite time and resource intensive. Ideally, we want to test against many different topics, meaning we require many different jokes. This means we have to spend resources on obtaining the jokes, and the individuals must spend more time listening to them. Interviews are also both time and resource intensive, requiring a person to conduct the interview, and often taking up more time than a survey would.