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Guidelines for the classification of Dad Jokes

1. **Introduction**

Dad jokes are simple, short, one- or two-line jokes that are commonly associated with cheesiness. Annotating dad jokes can give further insight as to what makes a joke a good dad joke. Practical applications of such an endeavor may include script writing, social media engagement, and humor detection.

1. **Annotator Requirements**

To effectively annotate these dad jokes, annotators must be fluent in English. Fluency is required in order to understand phonetic puns, multiple meanings, and/or nuanced knowledge of the sentiments of particular words.

Annotators must also have a basic familiarity with popular culture, make connections between entities that are commonly associated with each other (i.e. scarecrows and fields), and know elementary concepts in a variety of academic subjects ranging from topics such as history to chemistry. If an annotator understands most of the jokes in sitcoms or comedy acts, they are in a good position to annotate dad jokes.

1. **Text to Annotate**

Dad jokes will be annotated via their text form, but it is important to consider that many of these jokes rely on media beyond text, evidenced by the timing and delivery of the punchline, the similar pronunciations of key words, and/or onomatopoeias. On the other hand, some of these jokes may not land if delivered verbally. When annotating dad jokes in their text form, annotators should consider the intended medium of delivery.

1. **Classifying Dad Jokes**

The purpose of this set of guidelines is to provide a framework through which we try to standardize (as much as possible) the categorizing of jokes with one of the following labels: funny, witty, and lame.

It is important to keep in mind that the categories (funny, witty, lame) assigned to the jokes are based on the personal humor of the annotator/adjudicator. Since sense of humor is a trait that is very personal and can vary a lot between people, it is impossible to establish a set of perfectly and fully consistent guidelines that will cause any two different annotators to assign a given joke the same label. As a result, the inter-annotator agreement may be slightly lower than for other tasks such as sentiment analysis in which assigning labels is arguably more intuitive/logical or can more easily be agreed upon by different people. Taking this into account, we tried to come up with guidelines that somewhat standardize the classification of jokes.

***Funny Jokes***

If a dad joke makes the annotator laugh or smile, it is automatically categorized as a funny joke. However, there are still several instances in which a dad joke should be categorized as funny, even without a smile or laugh.

If a joke is clever, it should be categorized as funny as well. Meta jokes (jokes about the joke itself) are considered clever, as well as jokes with unexpected twists or punchlines that don't fall flat.

Jokes that make annotators appreciate their delivery or the joke itself are also classified as funny. Rule of thumb: a smile or laugh is an automatically funny joke, but if the joke is phrased cleverly or demonstrates refreshing creativity, it is also considered funny.

***Witty Jokes***

Witty jokes are what one typically expects from a “dad joke”. These jokes are not clever in a surprising/unexpected way, but involve some amount of creativity in the wording and/or the subject matter. These will often involve wordplay (“puns”), general knowledge, and pop-culture references. These jokes are generally very easy to understand and don’t require an explanation.

***Lame Jokes***

The remainder of the jokes fall into the category of ‘lame’. These include jokes that are overly complicated and require and explanation or multiple read-throughs, jokes that are not understandable even after multiple reads, jokes that are incomplete, jokes that are offensive, jokes that are too simple, jokes that contain no pun or punchline (meaning they are not even jokes), jokes that are too long and require too much context/backstory, and jokes that are very overused or commonly heard.

***Points of Ambiguity***

Funny vs. witty: Sometimes a joke that involves wordplay which would normally make it be classified as ‘witty’, does so very creatively and as a result elicits a smile or a laugh from the annotator. In this case, the joke will be classified as ‘funny,’ but since different annotators may have different reactions to the same joke, one may classify it as ‘funny’ while the other classifies it as ‘witty’. In addition, even if two annotators agree that a joke elicits a more positive response than other witty jokes, their judgment on whether or not this response is enough to classify it as ‘funny’ may differ.

Funny vs. lame: just because a joke doesn’t have much of a pun, or is on the more crude or "dark humor" side does not necessarily mean it is a lame joke. For example, some jokes that are very simple (which could be called ‘anti-jokes’) can make the annotator laugh just from the simplicity/silliness of the punchline. The rules regarding the classification of funny jokes (especially about smiling or laughing) still hold. However, jokes that an annotator considers to be too vulgar, rude, offensive, or the like should be labeled as lame.

Witty vs. lame: some jokes may use puns or wordplay, but many of these jokes tend to be overused, or the punchline may seem forced. In this case, the joke should be labeled lame. In the case of an overused joke, the annotator’s knowledge of general culture or popular culture is important, as jokes may be overused in a variety of different ways or settings.

In the event that an annotator does not understand the joke—despite multiple readings or the fact that the annotator understands that the joke makes use of devices such as wordplay, puns, or allusions to popular culture—the joke should be classified as lame.

Everyone has a unique sense of humor, so no two people will annotate a dataset the exact same way. However, there are fairly clear winners and losers in the realm of dad jokes, and these guidelines should provide enough structure to pinpoint such jokes.