

I came to Aotearoa New Zealand in 2019 to join the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies after completing my PhD in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. My primary research agenda is driven by a desire to understand how and why language users do not always mean what they say. From a utilitarian point of view, using humour, irony, satire, and other forms of figurative language makes little sense, because these forms run the risk of miscommunication and misunderstanding. From a pragmatic point of view, it makes perfect sense to speak this way, because humorous and figurative language communicate a great deal of affective, attitudinal, and indirect meaning which cannot be approximated through alternative language forms. My research is driven by a desire to highlight the ways such creativity and poetry in language is the norm, rather than the exception.

What does this look like in real terms? Right now, I explore the production and comprehension of ironic, satirical, and humorous discourse. Through my corpus, computational, and psycholinguistic studies, I have provided empirical support for theoretical models of satirical discourse, highlighted points of similarity between verbal irony and satire, and attested to the difficulty of measuring satire comprehension. Secondly, the study of humorous and figurative language is highly interdisciplinary, and I have strived to forge such links through collaboration with researchers in mass communications, theoretical linguistics, and psychology. The results of these collaborations are rewarding and help break down silos which separate likeminded researchers interested in the same phenomena.