



THAT'S PUNNY!

A STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF PROCESSING FLUENCY ON HUMOUR

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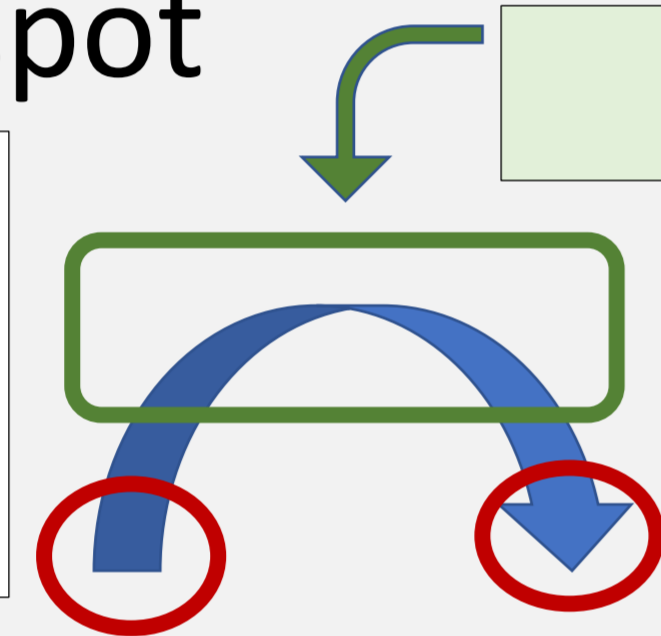
Question of Interest: Can we affect the humour of a written pun?

INTRODUCTION

Processing fluency: "the experience of ease or difficulty associated with a mental task" (Oppenheimer, 2008; Berlyne, 1960)

Q: Is a pun funnier if it is processed fluently? i.e., the sweet spot

Info processing too easy = unenjoyable



Sweet spot
Info processing too hard = unenjoyable

Link between fluency & humour
The "Aha!" experience is a burst of processing fluency (Reber et al., 1998)

The secret to humor is surprise.
Aristotle

Hypothesis: DV = humour level
High Fluency Pun > Low Fluency Pun

Power: 128 participants to observe a small effect ($d = .25$; $\alpha = .05$; $[1 - \beta] = .8$)

N = 151; $M_{age} = 48$ yrs, $SD = 13.30$
Gender: 66% female/ 33% male/ 1% other

Contribution to the project
Both: design, coding puns, interpretation; C. Good: research idea; material development; Qualtrics programming; C. MacLean: literature search, analysis

METHOD DESIGN

Within-subjects: Fluency (HF or LF)

Between-subjects: Fluency/pun pairing

| | Group A Puns: 15 puns | Group B Puns: 15 puns |
|-------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Condition 1 | HF | LF |
| Condition 2 | LF | HF |

PROCEDURE

30 puns: Randomly allocated

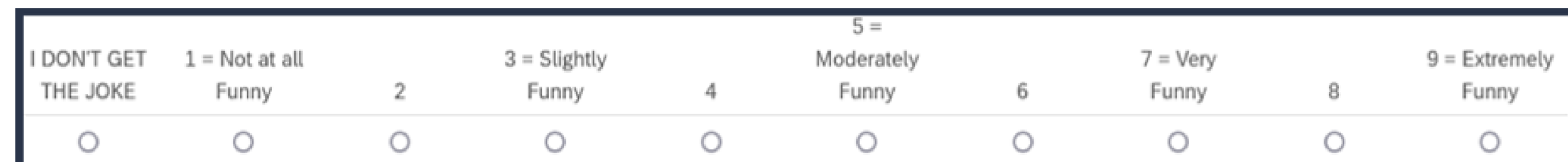
15 High Fluency

15 Low Fluency

Light travels faster than sound.
That's why some people appear bright until you hear them speak

What washes up on tiny beaches?

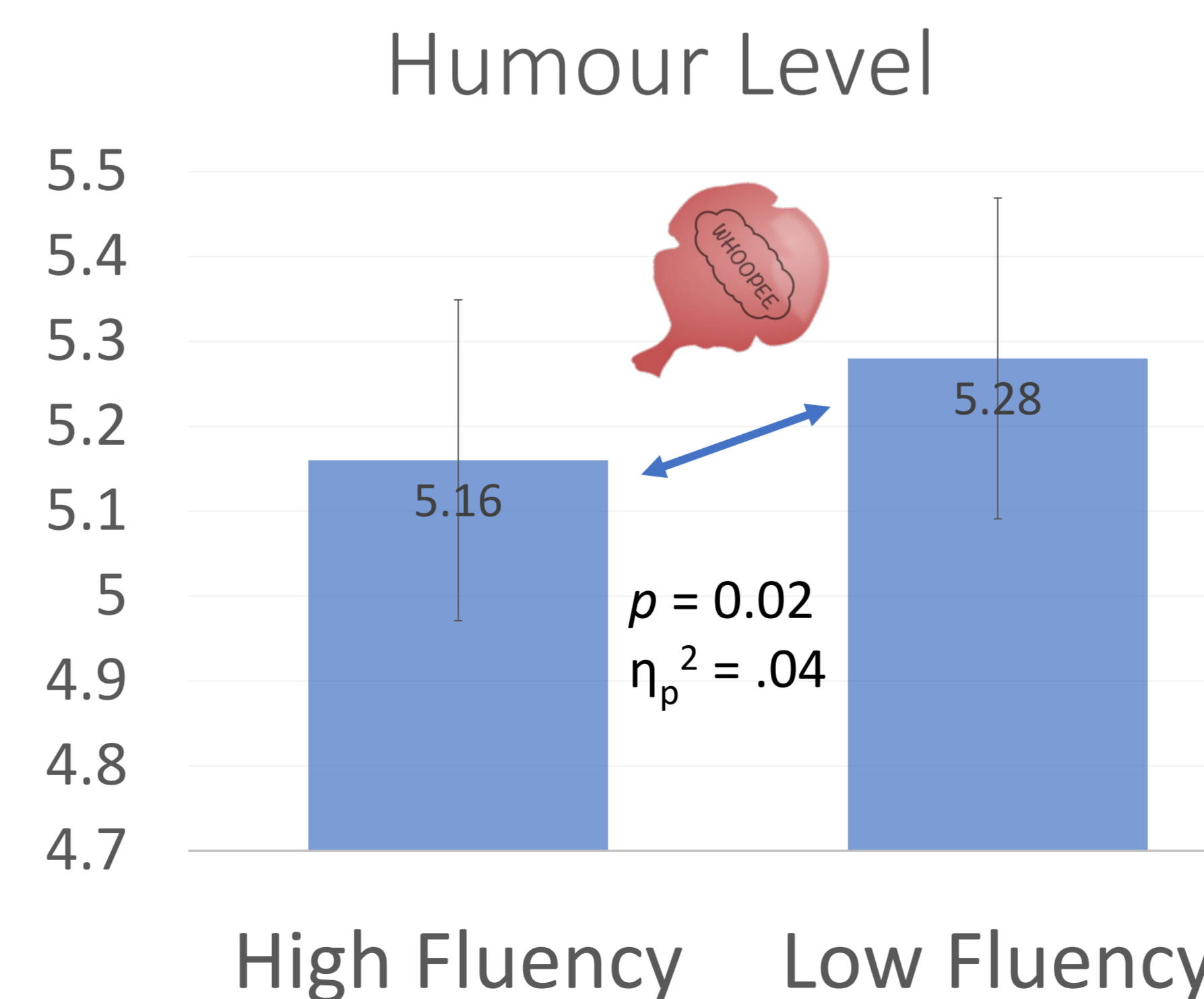
Microwaves.



* Appearance of the puns to participants

Familiarity

qualtricsSM



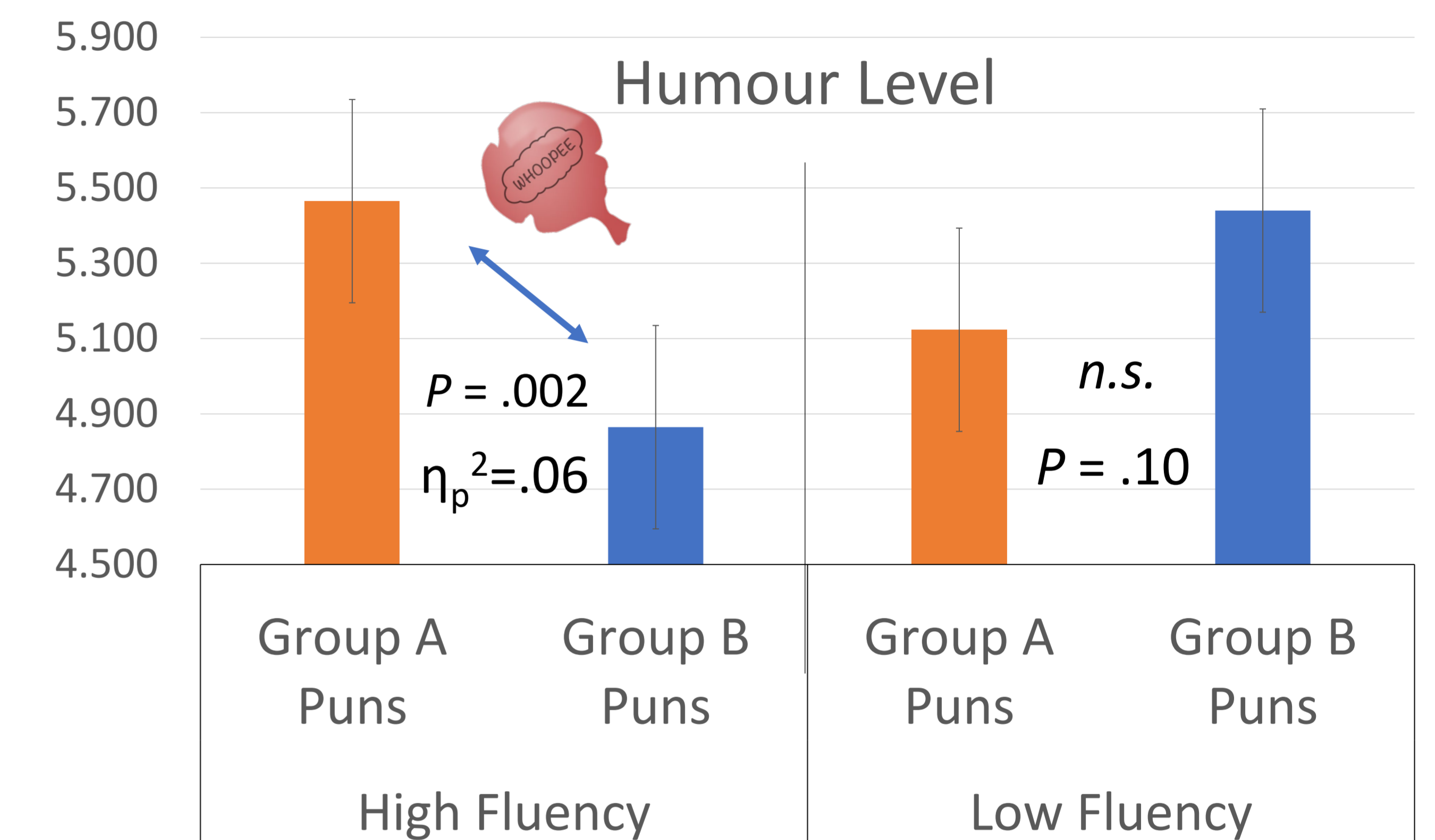
Low fluency puns = funnier... but that isn't the entire story.

*Error bars: 95% within-subjects confidence intervals based on the standard error of the mean

HUMOUR IS ABOUT SURPRISE!

60% complex puns

33% complex puns



SURPRISE: Fluency X Pairing Interaction

$F(1, 149) = 89.676$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = .38$

Why did our fluency manipulation affect puns differently?

Finding: Groups A & B varied in the proportion of simple & complex puns

Take Home Message

- Humour is a **burst of insight**
- Moderate complexity = most positive subjective experience.
- HF increases ease of processing and reduces mental challenge.
- With HF, funniness suffered for the easiest puns, but not complex puns.