

## **The Pragmatics of Humour across Discourse Domains: About a Book by Marta Dynel**

**Magdalena Biegajło**

*University of Warsaw, Warsaw, Poland*

### **Review essay**

Marta Dynel (ed.), *The Pragmatics of Humour across Discourse Domains*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2011, 382 pp. EUR 99.00 (hardback)  
ISBN 978 90 272 5614 0

**Keywords:** Pragmatics of humour.

### **1. Introduction**

Humour research is a multifaceted discipline of study which has been undertaken from manifold vantage points, i.e. psychological, sociological, linguistic, and so forth, resulting in an abundance of influential postulates and proposals. The volume entitled *The Pragmatics of Humour across Discourse Domains* contributes to a wealth of methodological and empirical research on humour. This book embraces, in the strictest sense, topics pertinent to humorous communication and those which are closely connected to the study of humour, e.g. irony.

The volume edited by Marta Dynel contains 17 contributions anchored in the pragmatics of humour. The book offers a broad theoretical and empirical panorama of humour research; however, it cannot be regarded as a basis for those beginning a "journey" through humour or pragmatics. Thoroughly investigating a vast array of topics germane to humorousness, funniness and laughter, the book provides a detailed account of various genres of humour, such as puns, parody, anti-proverbs or gender jokes.

The book opens with the editor's introduction, "Pragmatics and linguistic research into humour", in which Dynel briefly characterises the interdisciplinary area of pragmatics and humour studies and discusses the central aspects of the contributions.

The volume is organised in three parts: "Stylistic figures as forms of humour", "(Non)interactive forms of humour", and "Forms of humour in public discourse", which are further divided into subsections. In Dynel's edited volume, it appears that some articles may be fit for inclusion in more than one section. Strange as it may seem, Litovkina's article on anti-proverbs can be filed under "Jokes". Additionally, while being found within "Conversational humour", Chovanec's paper on online sports journalism can also be readily identified with "Forms of humour in public discourse". This however is an example of an unavoidable kind of dilemma, when preparing a paper collection for publication, and in no way detracts from the value of the volume, or from the performance of its editor.

Generally, the volume gives the readers an invaluable insight into the study of humour. For ease of exposition, I elucidate every article in separate paragraphs so as to expand on the specificity of these contributions.

## 2. Anticipating Irony

In her article, "Will anticipating irony facilitate it immediately?", Rachel Giora reports on eight experiments anchored in psycholinguistics which confirm the view that rich contextual information cannot induce ironic (context-based) interpretations without the necessity of extracting nonironic (salience-based) interpretations, irrespective of anticipation for irony.

The article opens with a survey of basic postulates: the graded salience hypothesis, the direct access view, the expectation hypothesis and the standard pragmatic model (Grice 1975), which Giora then employs in verifying her presumption concerning ironic/nonironic interpretations. Generally, these theories differ with regard to the recovery of a nonironic interpretation. As for the direct access view, as opposed to the standard pragmatic model and the graded salience hypothesis, a non-salient (ironic) interpretation is derived first in a highly predictive context of ironic interpretations.

Giora accurately describes the experiments which are illustrated with charts and examples. She highlights the fact that the results of eight experiments endorse the graded salience model and, to a certain extent, Grice's model but question the expectation hypothesis and the direct access view. Giora's contribution indicates that irony is a complex phenomenon contingent on a multistage comprehension process, irrespective of anticipation, additional information or extra processing time.

## 3. Irony Categories, Their production, and Their Reception

Paul Simpson, in the article entitled "'That's not ironic, that's just stupid': Towards an eclectic account of the discourse of irony", investigates various models of irony production and reception in social and cultural frameworks from the linguistic pragmatics standpoint. Studying data from numerous sources (e.g. stand-up comedies, or political wall murals) and determining a wider scope of irony for his study, Simpson draws up a list of five irony categories including oppositional, echoic, conferred, dramatic and ironic belief, which yields a remarkable insight into the culture-specific dynamic of irony.

Simpson, instead of rejecting any model, tries to find a common denominator of irony models so that he comes up with distinct irony categories, which still may be revised. In fact, the two categories are not new in irony/humour studies. An account of irony as an echoic mention was provided by Sperber and Wilson (1981) and oppositional irony was proposed by Grice (1975).

According to Simpson, conferred irony is used to denote "situations where a text, in spite of its manifestly non-ironic initial composition, may be perceived to deviate from what is normally expected, to the extent that it has irony conferred upon it" (p. 46). Also, ironic belief, in Simpson's terms, is premised on "a knowing interpretation of a fictional discourse *as if* it were true" (p. 47), for instance, there is a group of people who firmly believe that Sherlock Holmes and his colleague Watson really exist. To me, this irony category suffers from some rigidity, because Simpson does not explicate in what sense it is ironic. A belief that a fictional character exists in real life can also be labelled as naive, strange or contradictory.

Simpson's study based on real-life examples, as opposed to fabricated ones, is of great merit. He also includes information how different people define, comprehend, explicate and negotiate irony within various historical periods and situations. From the data he provides, it is also noticeable that a serious discourse may be changed into a typical satirical spoof due to social and cultural changes, e.g. *For God and Ulster* and its satirical equivalent *For Cod and Ulster* (a wall mural).

#### 4. A Strategy Which Accounts for Surrealist Irony

Eleni Kapogianni's article "Irony via surrealism" aims to combine conceptual tools from semantics, pragmatics and cognitivism to devise a strategy which accounts for surrealist irony. In order to do this, Kapogianni distinguishes five criteria, embracing the meaning deviation process, context dependence, cancellability, effectiveness and humorous effect.

The contribution opens with a short overview of irony definition, its conditions, and a list of problems it poses. It turns out that a lack of an exhaustive definition is due to the fact that varied theoretical frameworks adhered to one-dimensional over multidimensional view of irony and therefore a proper solution is to perceive irony as a larger conceptual entity.

*Surrealist irony* is the one in which the interlocutor "employs a strikingly unrealistic, unexpected, and inappropriate (and thus "surrealistic") question or assertion" (p. 51), so the speaker may ask a question "Are you going to school tomorrow?" and the hearer answers "No, I'm riding my unicorn to Alaska".

A thorough scrutiny of data selected from modern Greek and English demonstrates that surrealist irony, in comparison to meaning reversal irony, is less context-dependent, uncancellable and there is no close correspondence between the expressed proposition and the intended one but more importantly, surrealist irony proves to maximise humorous effects.

In general, Kapogianni's contribution provides a significant insight into a new category of irony and a detailed discussion about surrealist irony as a strategy for the interlocutor who intends to be ironic. She shows how this specific type of irony differs in crucial aspects in regard to meaning reversal irony. The author also stresses the importance of a further analysis in which a following question should be addressed: "Whether the difference between the two proposed irony types is also detected in the processing of utterances between the two irony types?".

#### 5. Syllables, Morphemes, and Humorous Pun Formation

In the article "The role of syllables and morphemes as mechanisms in humorous pun formation", Sarah Seewoester conflates semantics, morphology and phonology to investigate 6000 puns extracted from online sources. More specifically, the author offers syllabic and morphological levels in humorous pun formation which are alternative to the traditional account of ambiguity. She propounds a five-tier matrix which can be successfully exploited to categorise humorous ambiguities which are at work in pun formation.

When an individual wants to read Seewoester's article, s/he does not need any prior knowledge of ambiguity types and their role in pun formation as, at the beginning, the author demonstrates a comprehensive knowledge of the traditional approach to ambiguity creation. Special attention is paid to the hallmarks of ambiguity types (phonological, lexical, syntactic) on the basis of which Seewoester devises an alternative method in pun formation, i.e. syllabic and morphological levels hinging upon four mechanisms: syllabic, morphological, syllabic/morphological and morpheme inflation.

These two levels seem to stem from phonological and lexical ambiguities and their identification is feasible due to the study of syllables (instead of phonemes) and morphemes (instead of lexemes). Her survey discloses that syllabic and morphological mechanisms constitute 43% of all ambiguities which, I believe, achieves a significant milestone in the study of ambiguity.

She pays tribute to the contribution, and perceived shortcomings, of other researchers' studies in the way they approach phonological, lexical and syntactic categories, particularly she compares her research results with Attardo et al. (1994) and Bucaria (2004). Interestingly, Seewoester's article contains bar and pie charts which may help the readers better assess the

differences and similarities between their studies. The bar chart shows that phonological ambiguity is non-existent in Attardo et al. (1994) and Bucaria (2004) studies but the results of both those studies reveal that lexical ambiguity is the most prevalent one: 95% and 52%, respectively.

Also, syntactic ambiguity was common in their studies which in comparison to Seewoester's results constitute only 14%. Notably, an ambiguity categorisation matrix, anchored in the traditional account of ambiguity in which morphological and syllabic mechanisms might be distinguished, is supported with two examples analysed in depth which demonstrate how this matrix can be applied.

## 6. Shakespeare's Use of Puns

Magdalena Adamczyk's article "Context-sensitive aspects of Shakespeare's use of puns in comedies: An enquiry into clowns' and pages' punning practices", written from the standpoint of socio-pragmatics, presents the study of two Shakespearean comedies, namely *Love's Labour's Lost* and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. The qualitative scrutiny of public social roles indicates that there is a correlation between a pun-based conversation and social roles.

It is noteworthy that even though punning elements are preplanned by Shakespeare, Adamczyk regards them as spontaneous linguistic tools. The author takes into consideration the contextual strategies employed by clowns and pages in their wordplay, i.e. the topic and number of puns, their quality and intentionality, as well as the exclusion or inclusion of obscenity.

Adamczyk's article opens with a concise recapitulation of literature on puns with a special emphasis being placed on its definition. She believes that a precise definition does not exist which can be attributed to the terminological inadequacies in topical literature, that is to say, various disciplines seem to contribute to different aspects of puns. Another factor which has an impact over the nomenclature is the fact that the scholars preoccupied with providing a satisfactory pun definition presented their studies in their own native language.

In Adamczyk's terms, a pun is defined as a "phenomenon which depends on the juxtaposition of identical/similar *forms* and dissimilar *meanings*" (p. 105). I must admit that Adamczyk offers a traditional account of puns with no special boundaries (cf. for example Dynel 2009). Then, the author provides a succinct overview of role theories which forms a basis for further analysis. The second part of her contribution is devoted to empirical considerations. It is praiseworthy that Adamczyk explains archaic words which refer to wordplay.

The author argues that clowns' puns are unintentional (uncooperative) and most frequently down-to-earth topics are dealt with in which the most common remains of a taboo. Taboo topics constitute 44,44% of all puns and can be divided into: venereal disease, coition, sex organs, prostitution, scatology and extramarital pregnancy.

The phenomenon of *ping-pong punning*, which according to Chiaro (1992, p. 114) is "used to describe what happens when the participants of a conversation begin punning on every possible item in each other's speech which may contain the slightest ambiguity", is not present in clowns' speech which portrays them as unresourceful individuals. On the other hand, pages' puns appear to be fully conscious (intentional), and their interlocutors are always of higher social status, and they address to them appropriate puns.

I think that Adamczyk's contribution presents an interesting study of puns extracted from Shakespeare's plays. I am curious about several issues, for example the possible consequences of clowns' and pages' social roles which implicates another inquiry as to whether pages and clowns were perceived by society as important and unique individuals.

Undoubtedly, Adamczyk provides the answer in what sense social roles have an impact over contextual strategies employed during a verbal exchange. It can only be speculated that pages were appreciated by the public, especially high-rank people who were in need of entertainment as their clever play on words was tailored specifically to a particular individual.

## 7. The juxtaposition of Registers and Incongruity

In their article, "Dimensions of incongruity in register humour", Chris Venour, Graeme Ritchie and Chris Mellish put forward innovative ideas regarding the juxtaposition of registers and incongruity. They argue that incongruity, being a prerequisite for humour emergence, appears when there is a large distance between a single word in various registers. Their pivotal aim is to devise a computational model which would test the space, and then they want to employ these calculations to show the divergences between the tones of words.

The contributors display to their readers with a profound knowledge of register-based humour which in turn is applied to the data analysis. At the outset, they introduce preliminary remarks concerning register, incongruity and lexical resources and then they proceed to begin the case study.

The data gathered from diversified corpora create several thorny problems: various genres of texts (e.g. online sources, or scientific contributions) together with cross-era differences (e.g. 17th century, or 20th century) make it difficult for the authors to obtain credible results. This article is replete with empirical observations but, as emphasized by the authors, the study of real-life data demonstrates a small number of instances which fall under register-based humour.

## 8. The juxtaposition of Registers and Incongruity

In her article "Displays of 'new' gender arrangements in Russian jokes", written from the perspective of sociopragmatics, Nadine Thielemann analyses Russian jokes displaying misogynistic trends. For the sake of her study, Thielemann adopts the General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH) proposed by Attardo and Raskin (1991). However, as she points out, this theory does not capture all the differences in gender-based jokes. Thielemann sheds light on new trends in Russian jokes and concludes that women are no longer the butt of jokes and there is a growing tendency toward role reversal, i.e. male stereotypes are being attributed to women and *vice versa*.

The two-fold aim of the paper is successfully achieved. Not only does Thielemann find modern gender tendencies in Russian jokes, but she also juxtaposes new gender norms with the traditional approach which endured throughout the Soviet era. A significant attribute included within her study are the results derived from a questionnaire. The respondents were asked whether a particular joke is considered either Russian or of Western origin and whether a given joke could be told in the natural course of a verbal exchange.

Another merit of Thielemann's research is the presentation of figures with a graphic description of script oppositions of chosen jokes. In my opinion, it is one of the most interesting contributions in the whole volume, because it is written in a reader-friendly and lucid style as well as it employs the GTVH which, as shown, may be used to account for gender differences.

Nevertheless, Thielemann shows that it is not attainable for the GTVH to explain why these differences occur. Since the GTVH was developed to reveal certain jokes (dis)similarities, Thielemann casts light on shortcomings she detects in the GTVH. She argues that this theory can be extended to account for "perspective or point of view" (p. 169). The



GTVH has an apparatus to denote a new trend in Russian jokes dealing with homosexuality, seen as stigmatisation, which can be described in terms of a script opposition (heterosexuality vs homosexuality).

## 9. Ethnic Humour in Romanian Jokes

Carmen Popescu's article entitled "Understanding ethnic humour in Romanian jokes" pushes forward original ideas concerning the linguistic scrutiny of stupidity jokes based on language distortions about the main two minorities in Romania: the Roma and the Hungarians. For the sake of her study, the author employs the Raskinian concept of script to present qualitative and quantitative studies of one/two-nation jokes. Additionally, she wants to find the correlation between ethnic Romanian jokes and the social reality in Romania, which can be reflected in these jokes.

Popescu first revisits theoretical research on canned jokes as well as aggressive humour theories (cf. Attardo 1994), and then proceeds to the recapitulation of Raskin's (1985) view on ethnic scripts, a view according to which ethnic humour constitutes a separate genre of humour with two distinct scripts, viz. *stupidity* and *canniness* or *craftiness*. These scripts are believed to be detectable almost in every language and country. Hence, Popescu argues that an ethnic joke does not have to present cultural issues but has to be hinged upon ethnic scripts. Stupidity jokes are comparable in any language with a different butt of a joke, for example, the Poles are ridiculed in the United States. For Popescu, *ethnic language jokes* "contain a strong linguistic pattern that points to the distortion of the language, grammar mistakes, semantic-pragmatic ambiguity and misinterpretation are exploited in order to make the character appear foolish" (p. 178).

A quantitative analysis demonstrates that approximately 9.5% of all jokes are of ethnic origin and there are several types of these jokes: one/two-nation jokes (jokes about one nation/ethnic group alone or with a Romanian character), jokes about Radio Erevan (these originated in the Soviet Union, and their butt is Armenia), and three-nation jokes (jokes in which a Romanian character is presented with two different nation/ethnic groups).

She shows that the Romans most frequently joke about Scots, Jews, Roma, Hungarians, Blacks, Somalis, British, Russians and Albanians, respectively. Accordingly, the study of the targets of jokes shows that there are three distinct categories of ethnic targets: *remote foreign targets* (e.g. Scots), *inhabitants of neighbouring countries* (e.g. Russians), and *minorities*.

Popescu also determines the subscripts for the *stupidity* script and *canniness* scripts. The former embraces *pure stupidity*, *language distortion*, *technical stupidity* and *poverty*, among others, whereas the latter comprises *stinginess*, *traditional concern with money* and *deception*. The stupidity script was more frequent than the canny one which can be subsumed under a fact of social change towards the "inter-ethnic relationships" (p. 188).

Popescu admits that her study can be further developed when one goes into a more elaborate discussion about jokes about minorities. The data extracted for a qualitative analysis are constituted by 51 ethnic jokes, and the results are presented in tables showing the frequency of Romanian jokes as well as one/two/three-nation jokes.

The study indicates that there are two universal ethnic scripts which hinge upon a canny-stupid dichotomy. As far as language distortion jokes are concerned, the pre-eminent reason why the leading minorities do not speak Romanian fluently is that it is not their mother tongue. A language misuse reveals also "errors in thought or action" (p. 185).

Popescu argues that the language distortion script divulges certain strategies of stereotyping and mimicry, for instance the majority group makes fun of Roms' inappropriate pronunciation or Hungarians' mistaken gender/number agreement and therefore they start to imitate their behaviour.

Generally, the Roma are presented as burglars, thieves or the accused in a criminal court or a police station. Being unable to have formal education, the Roma are illiterate individuals. This trend is not reflected in jokes about the Hungarians. They are rather presented in different and more peaceful settings: school, or holidays. They are polite hosts, students, customers and often they are friends with the Roma. However, it happens that in some jokes the Hungarians and the Roma are socially and economically acknowledged and it is hard to determine which group is ridiculed: the majority, or minority.

## 10. Gender in Anti-proverbs

Anna T. Litovkina's contribution, "Sexuality in Anglo-American anti-proverbs", presents a sociopragmatic and ethnographic analysis of anti-proverbs ("*Antispruchwort*" is the term originated by Mieder), i.e. proverbs based on distortions of the original text, which common denominator is sexuality with its various manifestations. The author deals extensively with the specificity of Anglo-American anti-proverbs which are regarded as intertextual jokes, viz. wordplay, puns, wisecracks, quips or canned jokes. Among a panoply of themes reverberating through anti-proverbs are woman, occupations, money, love, or marriage. However, sexuality is the most common theme including female-male body parts, STDs or pregnancy and birth control, among others.

Litovkina's contribution opens with a concise introduction including a discussion about terminology, and background information regarding anti-proverbs. The data, comprising 259 anti-proverbs culled from British and American written sources, embrace examples relating to three types of sexual orientation: heterosexuality, homosexuality and bisexuality. Her qualitative and quantitative studies reveal that there is a two-fold aim of sexual anti-proverbs: they may be used either as a social comment, viz. offend or reflect an aggressive attitude, or for the sake of laughter. Also, it has been shown that sexual themes are germane to public ridicule as there is no topic which cannot be laughed at.

Litovkina adduces evidence that Anglo-American anti-proverbs, in which sexuality is most frequently touched upon, incorporate positive elements such as funniness but also negative ones: offensiveness, hostility or aggression. Anti-proverbs also present human behaviour which can be viewed as loathsome and shameless (e.g. masturbation).

In my opinion, Litovkina only offers the division of sexual anti-proverbs with regard to a single criterion: a category to which a certain example can be assigned. I have the impression that the prime objective of Litovkina's article is to present the data with no lengthy discussion of the examples. I am curious whether British and American anti-proverbs differ in reference to a strong bias towards one sexual orientation.

## 11. Humorous Framing in Conversations

In her article, "Joker in the pack. Towards determining the status of humorous framing in conversations", Marta Dynel takes a pragmatic stance towards the dichotomy between humorous and non-humorous modes and argues that these two may be distinguished, at least in theory. She pays special heed to the interdependence between the two frames and conceptualises three terms (frame, keying and carnival).

The contribution starts with the conceptualisation of three notions, viz. *frame*, *keying* and *carnival*. Dynel points out that the term *frame* was first used by Bateson to denote a dichotomous nature of communication, as either serious or non-serious, which was later developed by Goffman and Minsky.

The notion of *humorous keying* or a *humorous key*, as alternative terms for a *humorous frame*, was proposed by Hymes and Goffman who understood this phenomenon differently. For Hymes, a key comprises "a tone, manner or spirit in which an act is done" (Dynel, p. 221, after Hymes). Goffman regards a key as a "form of transformation (together with *fabrication*) of the frame or framework for evaluating social reality" (p. 221).

The last term, *carnival*, has its roots in literary studies, and was originated by Bakhtin to describe a mode in which ongoing assumptions of the prevalent style or atmosphere are undermined when humour or chaos are created.

It is praiseworthy that Dynel presents the whole gamut of references pertinent to her study. The data consist of dyadic e-mail communication between a couple at the beginning of their romantic relationship. Their conversations are characterised by *asynchronicity* which means that people have time to think and make ingenious answers. This is the main reason why their exchanges are full of humorous and witty elements.

A pragmatic approach to dyadic exchanges shows that it is possible to discriminate between the two frames via deciding which one is subordinate/dominant. In order to successfully distinguish between the frames, it is necessary for the hearer to know within which frame the speaker's contribution should be analysed so that he can ascribe appropriate intentions. In the case when a non-humorous frame is dominant, the speaker intends to convey serious content with humour using *colourful language* or *humorous irony*, that is, the interlocutor wants to amuse his hearer. When a humorous frame appears to be dominant, the speaker employs humour to communicate serious informative content.

However, it is a separate issue to maintain the balance between the two aims of information conveyance. Dynel argues that it is essential to separate "non-humorous utterances imbued with humour" from "purely humorous utterances" (p. 228) in order to draw the boundary line between two functions of humorous forms, viz. amusement or message relaying. The treatment of humour as a rhetorical figure makes for the researcher possible to distinguish various communicative goals, for instance a mitigation of aggressive acts. Dynel's article is crucial to those who are interested in the study of humour, and especially in the knotty problem with the humorous/non-humorous modes of communication.

## 12. Humour in Online Sports Journalism's Quasi-Conversations

Jan Chovanec's contribution, entitled "Humour in quasi-conversations: Constructing fun in online sports journalism", carries out the analysis of quasi-conversations exemplified by live text commentaries that emerge from online sports journalism. The author of that chapter shows that commentaries abound with gossip containing humorous remarks. The focal point of his study is to determine social functions performed in computer-mediated communication. Chovanec argues that it is feasible to employ mechanisms underlying conversational humour to study "written mass media texts" (p. 243). However, humour derived from written texts emerges as a consequence of cooperation between journalists and readers.

Live text commentary is a novel genre of journalism used to delineate pre-scheduled events (e.g. political, sports), appearing in real time and observed by individuals who make their voice heard through their postings. First, the author provides the readers with extensive background knowledge about conversational humour, fictional (scripted) conversations and the written/quasi-conversation bifurcation.

Chovanec sympathises with Dynel's (2008), Holmes's (2006) or Kotthoff's (2006) views that conversational humour can be "co-constructed", i.e. turn-taking is the sine qua non for humour which enables conversationalists to provide constant verbal remarks. Also, he tries to draw the boundary between real and fictional conversations but it turns out to be an insurmountable task. The data, taken from the online version of *The Guardian* covering



football matches from 2006 to 2010, demonstrate that humorous quasi-conversations belong to the secondary layer of narration exemplified by banter, teasing or retorts. Chovanec shows that these interactive mechanisms appear in the form of a response to the previous speaker's statement. Additionally, the author believes that commentaries are filled with the instances of self-directed humour, i.e. a journalist laughs at himself, hence, has a feeling of belonging to an online community.

### **13. Humour and the Integration of New Staff in the Workplace**

In her article entitled "Humour and the integration of new staff in the workplace: An interactional study", Patricia Pullin employs a social constructionist model of communication in order to present a qualitative study of audio recorded exchanges. She unravels the way in which humour is employed by a new member of staff while becoming familiar with a senior one, and how a boss uses humour to keep an equilibrium between solidarity and power.

Pullin's contribution is a novelty in the study of humour in the workplace. The theoretical framework to which the author makes references is politeness (Brown and Levinson 1987) with a special emphasis on solidarity, relational work or practice, and face. The data are culled from three workplace settings in the United Kingdom and continental Europe, and in her chapter, Pullin presents the results from two workplace settings: a public relations company, and a public service organisation specialised in transport.

A careful analysis indicates that humour is a powerful tool which promotes cohesion between co-workers and helps to avoid face threats, for instance the participants during an exchange may draw attention to the things they have in common and this strategy helps to maintain solidarity, hence, positive face. The use of humour by those in power enables to set the boundaries concerning tasks and responsibilities, helps to achieve a balance between power and solidarity as well as build rapport, for example if a boss wants to take care of member's face he may use humour while implementing directives and criticism. Humour, as elicited by the managerial subordinates, may be an indicator of implicit criticism or represent a challenge to bosses.

There are numerous assets in Pullin's article: state-of-the-art ideas, results important for the further development of humour as a integrational tool in the workplace, comprehensively analysed examples illustrating her theses, and an engaging style which holds one's attention to the very last word.

### **14. Pragma-Cognitive Processes Occurring in Parodies**

Maciej Kaczorowski's article, "Parody in the light of the incongruity-resolution model: the case of political sketches by Monty Python's Flying Circus", aims to determine pragma-cognitive processes occurring in parodies. The author resorts to Suls' (1972) model of incongruity resolution which was originally used for canned jokes and captioned cartoons, and shows that it can be used in the analysis of parody. The central claim is that incongruity resolution takes place on the conceptual level between the original script and another script which is its humorous equivalent.

Kaczorowski opens the article with the explanation of concepts of parody and script as well as a summary of the incongruity-resolution model. The author compiles a list of five types of incongruity manifested verbally: incongruity with feasibility of actions presented in political discourse, incongruity with the public character of political discourse, incongruity with the (ostensible) meaningfulness of political discourse, incongruity with the social correctness of political discourse and finally, incongruity with the abstractness of

terminology. His contribution establishes a new perspective on the IR model. Kaczorowski's thesis that incongruity can be manifested either verbally or non-verbally is convincingly supported.

## 15. Pragma-Cognitive Processes Occurring in Parodies

Marta Dynel's contribution entitled "'I'll be there for you!': On the participation-based sitcom humour" seeks to present humorous mechanisms relevant to sitcoms which are based on participation strategies. She analyses examples from *Friends* to broaden the dyadic model of communication in the light of fictional media discourse. Dynel's article has two merits: an advanced typology of hearers categories, and seven participation-based strategies helping humorous effects arise.

In the introduction, Dynel summarises numerous pieces of research pertinent to fictional comedy discourse, and then she conceptualises the role of participants in film discourse. The author speaks of two levels of communication on which film discourse is contingent: *inter-character/characters' level* and the *recipient's level*. The former level comprises actors' monologues, dialogues and polylogues which are analysed by the viewers on the latter level.

Dynel also believes that there is a two-fold structure of film discourse, that is, the *fictional layer* which is dependent upon the second layer: the *collective sender's*. More specifically, films or series are tailored by the film crew; members of the crew write a film script, or direct or edit the scenes, for them to be suitable for a particular audience and to evoke certain emotions.

Dynel conceptualises the participation-based framework as follows: the *participant* (either the *speaker* or the *hearer/listener*) is a person engaged in a given turn, but not necessarily in the whole exchange between other participants. The *nonparticipant* is an individual who is unable to listen to the turns between participants and therefore he is not able to arrive at the intended meaning conveyed both verbally and non-verbally.

In the participation framework, there are *ratified participants* (also called *interlocutors*, *conversationalists*, or *interactants*) including the speaker; *ratified hearers* who are addressees; and an unaddressed ratified hearer (*third party*). The addressee is an individual to whom a speaker directly addresses his or her turn. Even though the third party is a ratified listener, so that he or she may ascribe appropriate intentions to the speaker's turn, a speaker does not directly address the third party.

There are two types of *unratified hearers* (i.e. *overhearers*), namely: *bystanders*, and *eavesdroppers*. Dynel also suggests a distinctive type of a recipient: a *metarecipient*, who "watches a film/series/serial from a privileged position, analysing film discourse consciously and, frequently, making more insightful observations about meanings conveyed and methods employed to achieve this end" (p. 315).

Dynel's proposal of a new classification of hearer types specific to film discourse is the main merit of her chapter we are presently considering. It is noteworthy that Dynel also distinguishes several strategies operating in sitcom humour, for instance characters' self-talk and inner monologues, recipients' awareness of distinct interactions (consecutive or simultaneous), recipients' recognition of overhearers (bystanders or eavesdroppers), attitudes of concealment and disguise towards recipients, and speaker's peculiar assigning of hearer roles.

Interestingly, Dynel bases her case study into different strategies inherent in film discourse on a corpus in which she has found 500 cases of participation-based humour. Dynel's "'I'll be there for you!': On the participation-based sitcom humour" corroborates that a recipient is a privileged and ratified individual whose status is ensured by the film crew (a collective sender).

## 16. Human Failure and Unhappiness Themes, and Humorous Effects

In her article, "Losers, poltroons and nudniks' in Woody Allen's *Mere Anarchy*: A linguistic approach to comic failure", Isabel Ermida adopts a pragmatic viewpoint in order to scrutinise Allen's collection of short stories *Mere Anarchy*. The focal area of investigation covers human failure and unhappiness themes as good thematic devices employed to create humorous effects. Ermida's aim is to study such stylistic devices which enhance comic incongruity in short stories.

Ermida's article shows that Allen's stories are filled with situational and linguistic humour. More specifically, she capitalises on figures of speech, i.e. simile, understatement and irony, and Raskin's Semantic Script Theory of Humour (SSTH), and particularly, script oppositions and overlaps which create and reinforce comic incongruity. In Allen's idiosyncratic style, similes are coupled with antithesis or hyperbole; understatements which enhance overlapping script oppositions require "pro-code" (cf. Nash 1985) which in turn makes a claim understated. And finally, irony employs a "counter-code" which, in Allen's writings, can be perceived as Grice's conversational implicature and a trope which leads to comic incongruity. Ermida draws attention to script oppositions within chosen excerpts from Allen's *Mere Anarchy* and explains the situations which are taking place in short stories.

## 17. Humour and Persuasion in Advertising and Legal Discourse

In his short article, "Notes of humour and persuasion in advertising and legal discourse", Giovannantonio Forabosco sheds new light on the correlation between humour and persuasion in advertising and legal discourse. Premised on rhetorical and socio-psychological assumptions, the author concerns himself with the use of humour as a persuasive tool in the courtroom. Unfortunately, empirical data do not yield conclusive results upon the way in which humour is employed in advertising discourse. At any rate, the courtroom context is interesting enough for that chapter to deserve notice. On top of this, Forabosco is making interesting reflections about advertising.

Forabosco remarks that humour and advertisement are not compatible concepts; nevertheless, there are four parameters which connect them, namely: *similarity* in language (in both phenomena, we may find a similar use of rhetorical devices, for example metaphors), *contiguity* (even though we can discriminate which utterance is an advertisement or rather humour, Forabosco claims that these are adjacent), *continuity* (the entire text should be regarded as humorous), and *integration* (Forabosco states that this criterion is the most crucial one, as humour is perceived to be an integral part of an advertising text without which the same text loses its significance).

The fourth criterion sometimes implicates *full integration*, which is used to denote a problem when people do not pay attention to a product, but rather to humour itself. As for courtroom discourse, the main emphasis is put on humour in forensic argumentation. Inappropriate as it may seem, resorting to humour on the part of lawyers is found to maintain a relaxed atmosphere, relieves tension and points to high professional abilities of lawyers.

Forabosco claims that humour and courtroom discourse are related areas of scholarly investigation. There is a set of examples about lawyers which have been studied from different angles. As a form of the data, Forabosco presents the cases from a courtroom in which humour has been used, for instance a lawyer makes a humorous remark directed at his client with the intention of ridiculing him.

An overall impression I drew from this contribution is that Forabosco presents his thoughts and ideas regarding the interdependence of humour and advertising or courtroom discourse, with only few data presented in his contribution. In his section on advertisement,

he mentions only two examples which are claimed to suit other researchers' studies. The most crucial finding for the scrutiny of humour in advertising discourse is the proposal of four parameters. Forabosco states that one may extend his analysis when the fourth parameter is defined, and how it works is delineated.

## 18. Humour in Translation

The last contribution of this volume is entitled "Comic takeover or makeover? Notes on humour-translating, translation and (un)transibility". It is by Delia Chiaro, who takes a pragmatic stance on problems in humour translation. She analyses linguistic and cultural barriers occurring in the translation process, and suggests the phenomenon of different "sense of humour" reflected in the lexis of different languages.

The article opens with a thumbnail sketch of postulates relevant to the translation of humorous discourse. It shows that humour translation is a thorny issue being, constrained by the lingua-cultural issues. Then, Chiaro identifies a set of problems regarding the translation of humour, be it jokes and humour from books, films, or the Internet.

Hardly any pair language has linguistic equivalence (cf. Popovič's (1976) "invariant core") leading to humorous effects and shares similar degree of encyclopaedic knowledge. It does not come as a surprise that a person oblivious to socio-cultural differences will not be able to understand a joke, not to mention translating it.

In a bilingual environment, the use of humour might be understood as a mistake given the fact that not only the translation but also the pragmatic side are of paramount importance. In the last part of her contribution, Chiaro discusses translation as a source of humour, in which the most frequent is mistranslation. She also provides two examples of bilingual puns which exploit homophones. However, there are translation-based puns, for instance in film discourse, which are funny only in one language.

## 19. Concluding Remarks

The volume edited by Dynel underscores humour's features as an interdisciplinary field of research, and also as a remarkable phenomenon to study. It demonstrates that research into humour is an area of mind-boggling intricacy. Last but not least, it bears witness to amenability to a multiplicity of theoretical treatments: so many theories or proposals can be advanced, challenged, and possibly refuted. A perfect example of theory advancement is when authors resort to either the models of Raskin (1985) and Attardo and Raskin (1991) in order to study Russian gender jokes and Romanian ethnic jokes, or the incongruity-resolution model in the investigation of political sketches of Monty Python's Flying Circus. These two models still provoke controversy and contribute to a heated debate.

The contributors present complex, albeit essential results capitalising on humour studies (of course) and the latter's adjacent disciplines. The book encompasses topics anchored in the pragmatics of humour ranging from casual conversations taking place on the Internet, to quasi-conversations in online sports journalism, from canned jokes to sitcom humour, and so forth. Also, Dynel's edited volume contains articles with different levels of expertise. It has to be said that some articles are less easily comprehensible (i.e. reader-friendly) than others, and such is the case for instance of the chapter by Chris Venour, Graeme Ritchie and Chris Mellish. The volume exemplifies humour as a phenomenon which can be manifested in miscellaneous forms (jokes, anti-proverbs, etc.) and settings (workplace, courtroom, etc.)

Summing up, this volume can be recommended to anyone who is eager to know more about the state of the art of pragmatic studies of humour, and of course it should be on the

shelf of scholars engaged in such studies. This volume certainly meets the challenge of contributing to the advancement of research in the domain aptly described by its title: *The Pragmatics of Humour across Discourse Domains*.

## References

- Attardo, Salvatore. 1994. *Linguistic Theories of Humor*. Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- and Victor Raskin. 1991. "Script theory of revis(it)ed: Joke similarity and joke representation model". *Humor*, 4(3-4), pp. 293–348.
- , Donnalee Hughes Attardo, Paul Baltes, and Marnie Jo Petray. 1994. "The linear organization of jokes: Analysis of two thousand texts". *Humor*, 7(1), pp. 27–54.
- Brown, Penelope and Stephen Levinson. 1987. *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bucaria, Chiara. 2004. "Lexical and syntactic ambiguity as a source of humor: The case of newspaper headlines". *Humor*, 17(3), pp. 279–309.
- Chiaro, Delia. 1992. *The Language of Jokes: Analysing Verbal Play*. London: Routledge.
- Dynel, Marta. 2008. "No aggression, only teasing: The pragmatics of teasing and banter". *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics*, 4(2), pp. 241–261.
- . 2009. "Beyond a joke: Types of conversational humour". *Language and Linguistics Compass: Semantics and Pragmatics*, 3: 1284–1299.
- Grice, Herbert Paul. 1975. "Logic and conversation". In: Peter Cole and Jerry Morgan (eds.), *Speech Acts. Syntax and Semantics*. New York: Academic Press, pp. 41–58.
- Holmes, Janet. 2006. "Sharing a laugh: Pragmatic aspects of humour and gender in the workplace". *Journal of Pragmatics*, 38(1), pp. 26–50.
- Kotthoff, Helga. 2006. "Pragmatics of performance and the analysis of conversational humor". *Humor*, 19(3), pp. 271–304.
- Nash, Walter. 1985. *The Language of Humour*. London and New York: Longman.
- Popovič, Anton. 1976. *Dictionary for the Analysis of Literary Translation*. Edmonton, Alberta, Canada: Department of Comparative Literature.
- Raskin, Victor. 1985. *Semantic Semantic Mechanisms of Humor*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: D. Reidel Publishing Company.
- Sperber, Dan and Deirdre Wilson. 1981. "Irony and the use-mention distinction". In: Peter Cole (ed.), *Radical Pragmatics*. New York: Academic Press, pp. 295–318.
- Suls, Jerry. 1972. "A two-stage model for the appreciation of jokes and cartoons: An information-processing analysis". In: Jeffrey Goldstein and Paul McGhee (eds.), *The Psychology of Humor*. New York: Academic Press, pp. 81–100.

Address correspondence to Magdalena Biegajło, at [magdalena.biegajlo@gmail.com](mailto:magdalena.biegajlo@gmail.com)