



Available online at <http://jess.esrae.ru/>

# “Journal of Economics and Social Sciences”

## Review of recent issues on humor field

Tomsk Polytechnic University

Khustenko Anastasia<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> School of Core Engineering Education

---

### Abstract

The paper presents a brief review of some original issues in English, gained by the main argument-the theme of humor from the standpoint of different scientific approaches, and from the perspective of various aspects of the consideration of humor. Humor occupies a significant place in the spiritual life of social communities and all spheres of society are permeated by this phenomenon. The papers of both established scholars and novice ones from different countries are summarized. An attempt is made to differentiate the works according to the research areas and to present them in the light of general research lines and further perspectives in the study of humor.

*Keywords:* Humor research, humor theory, linguistics of humor, computational humor, wordplay, puns, multilingual humour, translation of humor, intertextual humor, conversational humor;

---

### 1. Introduction

The paper presents an overview of some researches of foreign scholars, focused on a common argument- humor. With a reference to an increasing number of books and papers related to various aspects of humor, this topic is actively developing and it is of interest to many scientists (cf. Attardo 2003; Dynel 2008b 2017; Dynel IDR. 2016; Dynel and Sinkeviciute 2017; Kotthoff 2006a; Lurie and Gurian 2015). Approaches and theoretical bases in the study of humor are heterogeneous. The paper offers a summary of spectrum of the topics such as: socio-cultural aspect of humor (Brzozowska), focused on cognitive processes and cognitive interpretation of humor (Howell, Hempelman and Samson, Mueller), cognitive mechanisms (Hamrick), computational humor (Taylor et al., J. M. Taylor and V. Raskin), literary analysis of humor (Tzakona, Ralph, Muller.), conversational humor (B.Priego-Valverde, K. Mullan C. Béal), intercultural studies of conversational humor (Béal and Mullan) separately presented a group of issues focused on specific aspects of humor research: humor in translation studies - problems related to translation of humor into other languages (Bucaria, Dore), the universal features of humorous wordplay (Attardo), intertextual references on the basis of creating humor, specifically, through the popular phenomenon of antiproverb (Öznur)[5, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14].

Humor is a pervasive phenomenon, widely represented in all spheres of human private and social life and activities, so extensive are the approaches to its study and the different theoretical background. Therefore, the idea of an interdisciplinary approach to humor is widely represented among a number of researchers. Raskin argues that "*Society has always been attracted to*

*interdisciplinary contributions*"; the attractive idea in this approach is that a scientist in one field tries to use the findings in another field to develop his own field. Lack of equality between the study areas, the study follows the methodology and often the format of one field (target field) and applies some elements of another (source field) to complement them. The target field is still unified and the asymmetry of interdisciplinarity persists. [15: Raskin, Taylor, 2012]. As the most successful and complete example of this interdisciplinary approach in humor research, Raskin cites Ruch et al. (Ruch et al., 1993), because - the author clarifies - target interdisciplinarity eliminates much of the asymmetry: transdisciplinary field theory is a true synthesis of theories of a number of (N) concomitant fields, including a specific theory of this first field. This erases the privileged position of the target field and replaces it with a set of N+1 source fields. [15: Raskin, Taylor, 2012]. A number of scientists studying the field of humor share this approach, believing that the study of humor can only benefit from interdisciplinarity. Popa and Attardo [12: Popa, Attardo, 2007], while sharing the need for an integrated approach of humor studies, emphasize the difficulties associated with an interdisciplinary approach. [7: cyte. by M. Dore, 2011].

## **2. Transdisciplinary Field of Humor Research**

Among the theories of humor research, the idea of a transdisciplinary approach and the application of humor theories in the field of computational humor and artificial intelligence, is increasingly firmly established. Research done in this way not only aims at pattern recognition and the production of humor by computers (Julia Taylor, Pavel Klinov and Lawrence Mazlak, 2007), but also reveals information about a person's sensitivity to various spheres of life, which in turn is aggregated, when necessary, by any number of people, can be used for targeted advertising, targeted marketing and possibly political campaigns, and certainly for cybersecurity [15: Taylor, Raskin, 2012].

An important role is played by the study of Julia Taylor, Pavel Klinov and Lawrence Mazlak, based on the description of the approach to computational humor. These authors work in the field of artificial intelligence and focus on computational humor, which aims to recognize and produce humor through computers. Taylor *et al.* first, introduce two relevant concepts: logic of description (DL) and ontology (General and definite concepts) based on vocabulary for children. Their computerized approach is based on loading ontologies onto a computer. They, then, test the empirical application of DL expressed ontologies to see if the computer can recognize humor in the text. The authors not only show how computers can recognize humor in a joke, but also demonstrate that computers can create new jokes based on the same structure [7: cyte. by M. Dore, 2011].

The idea of an approach to computational humor is shared and developed by Raskin and Taylor [15: Taylor, Raskin, 2012] in their studies. The authors rely on formal humor theories and computational semantic technologies and aim not only to analyze the information and meaning of text (computers can be programmed to detect and generate humor), but also develop a theoretical framework and methodological approach to computing human relationships and opinions by analyzing the humor they use and/or comment on: "*All analyzed jokes used or commented on by a particular person, can be processed to identify his humor preferences and related social opinions, attitudes, and positions.*" [15: Taylor, Raskin, 2012]. The authors use ontological semantic technology (OST), Taylor (2010) to represent the meaning of text in jokes. Based on OST (Raskin *et al.*, 2009) humor is a repository of world and linguistic knowledge, obtained semi-automatically in the framework of the approach and used to eliminate the ambiguity of different meanings of words and sentences and their comprehensive presentation. These repositories, also known as static knowledge resources, consist of an ontology containing language-independent concepts and relationships between them. [15: Taylor, Raskin, 2012]. Important in the question being developed are "*Lexicon and ONTOLOGY, which are used by the*

*semantic analyzer, a software that produces representations of text values (TMRs) from the text it reads. The TMRs format corresponds to the ontology format and interpretation. Processed TMR are entered into information storage-a dynamic resource of knowledge OST, from which information is used for further processing and reflection. Jokes are recognized according to ontological knowledge of the world."* [15: Taylor, Raskin, 2012].

Fundamental in the development of issues related to the study of humor continue to be the authoritative Raskin's theory of semantic script humor (1985) and its further revision.

It is important to note that all of these papers are not limited to the application and reinforcement of the General theory of verbal humor (hereinafter referred to as [2: Raskin and Attardo, 1991] and [1: Attardo, 1994] the choice depends on the objectives of the study and the individual aspects considered.

### **3. Conversational humor**

The authors review works on various aspects of conversational humor, but state that there is currently insufficient research on how different cultures affect the forms and functions of conversational humor, although work is underway in this direction and the situation is changing.

The authors point out that there are important differences in the forms, functions, and practices of humor across languages and cultures, but as mentioned earlier, there have been fewer studies to date specifically addressing the intersection of culture and conversational humor and refer to a study by Sinkeviciute and Dynel (2017). The reason for the lack of development of the topic is that there are significant theoretical gaps that prevent a productive systematic contrastive study of conversational humor in different languages and its varieties [cf. 4: Béal and Mullan, 2013)]. Mullan and Béal, compare the preferred linguistic techniques and discursive strategies used by French and Australian friends in conversation, specifically the mechanisms that make a particular utterance or exchange humorous – or not. They use the second dimension of the four-dimensional model of [4: Béal and Mullan, 2013)].) to analyze a number of examples illustrating their findings and show how these mechanisms of humor (e.g., wordplay, personification of animals, plants or inanimate objects, implicit references, borrowings of words from other languages) work in practice.

Priego-Valverde explains that the notion of self-deprecating humor (hence SDH) is not clearly defined in the literature because it is seen as self-evident. In contrast, Priego-Valverde convincingly shows that this type of humor can be used to promote the image of the speaker, to target the receivers of the speaker's utterance, or the audience as a whole, and suggests classifying SDH instances according to their purpose: speaker only; speaker extension (i.e. wife, husband, friend, child); or third absent party. Her analysis of the data shows that laughter is usually the result of both an awkward and difficult situation. Laughter becomes an almost neutral response between a positive reaction to SDH (meaning they agree with the disparaging comment) or a negative reaction (meaning they failed to understand humor) [7: cyte. by M. Dore, 2011].

Haugh and Weinglass undertake a contrastive analysis of conversational humor in initial interactions between previously unfamiliar American and Australian English speakers, using combined approaches of interactive pragmatics (Haugh 2012, 2014) and contrastive pragmatics [4: Béal and Mullan, 2013)]. They study “jocular quips and their responses”, showing that the latter are more associative when speakers come from the same English-speaking background, and vice versa. The contributions of Priego-Valverde, Bigi, Attardo, Pickering, and Gironzetti employ the Smiling Intensity Scale and the General Theory of Verbal Humor [2: Attardo and Raskin 1991]; [1: Attardo, 1994] in cross-cultural analysis of smiling behavior in conversational humor and canned joke sequences in American English and French, examining how the cultural stereotypes on which jokes are based and the smiling behavior of the speaker while telling a joke often lead to While all contributions analyze specific authentic examples of conversational humor

and compare and contrast humor in two different cultures, they don't all approach it the same way. However, all of them are somehow connected with the intersection of culture and forms, functions and practices of conversational humor. They collectively show that culture plays an important role in conversational humor in many different ways, some quite obvious (such as the need for shared knowledge and shared references), but others more subtle or indirect: for example, the importance a given culture attaches to language consciousness may elicit a preference for wit and linguistic play; communicative values mean that conversational humor can offer intimacy through various forms of teasing, or alternatively, through teamwork. [6: cf. Béal and Mullan, 2018].

#### **4. Some features of humorous wordplay**

Considerable attention is paid to certain linguistic phenomena that take an active part in the creation of the linguistic wordplay. These are puns: both verbal and visual (Andrea Samson, Christian Hempelmann), Hempelmann and Miller (2017), [3: Attardo, 2018]. Attardo [3: Attardo, 2018]. point out that with the advent of semantic theories of humor, the perspective of learning puns has changed. The author distinguishes the concepts of verbal humor as a synonym of language play and referential humor, and correlates the concept of a pun with the first term [1: Attardo, 1994] the Aim of his research is to provide arguments for the universality of language mechanisms used in puns (humorous wordplay). The author defines the area of study, pointing to the problems associated with the terminology related to the concept of "language game", and also correctly notes that word play can be completely unrelated to humor and gives an example of language games "Scrabble" or crossword puzzles. Various types of language play are considered and analysed; the author excludes from the field of research some phenomena that are graphemic, i.e. based on the spelling of words, as well as others based on differences between graphic and phonetic representations of the language. A pun is defined as a textual phenomenon in which a sequence of sounds must be interpreted in close relation to a second sequence of sounds, which may, but need not, be identical to the first sequence, in order to understand the full meaning of the text. Language alliteration varieties of puns do not differ. (Primas' based on precedent phenomena). Puns have a built-in inconsistency: a word activates two unrelated meanings (scripts); thus, ambiguity between two activated meanings generates inconsistency (i.e., the presence of two unrelated meanings in the same lexical unit). The author clarifies that the main condition for the allocation of a pun is the presence of (minimum) two meanings, but do not necessarily include two "words", there are puns on the phonological, morphological and even syntactic level. 1) Puns largely refer to the surface structure (signifier) of language, but this statement extends to nonverbal language forms (such as sign languages) and in General to semiotic systems (such as graphic signs). 2) Puns are not random (Hymes 1958; Attardo 1994: 110) speech forms; 3) Not every ambiguous construction is a pun. Ambiguity is usually eliminated by semantic and pragmatic removal of ambiguity. Puns retain (at least) two meanings or interpretations. Hence, puns exist only in the context of removing ambiguity and therefore only in the context. 4) Once the two senses have been combined, the two senses can either coexist or one of them can win 5) the Unit (usually lexical) that allows the two senses to coexist is called the (ligament) connector, while the unit that causes the presence of the second meaning is called the disjunctive. 6) the Connector and the disjunctive may be different (i.e. appear in the text as two separate entities) or they may be indistinguishable (i.e. appear as one entity). Citing Guidi's extensive research on a number of languages, ), [3: Attardo, 2018] argues that the linguistic mechanisms that make puns work are universal. The author explains the existence of puns by the cratylism of naive native speakers, which is the source of the resolution of puns based on the identity or similarity of phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical forms.

Since this tendency to Cratylism is universal, the Cratylistic resolution of incongruity in puns is also universal-Attardo emphasizes [3: Attardo, 2018].

Andrea Samson, Christian Hempelman propose a classification of visual puns based on the mechanisms underlying them. The authors conduct a sequential analysis and identify similarities and differences between verbal and visual puns. This leads the authors to propose a semityypical classification of visual puns based on the various elements characterizing them (similarity, contextual dependence, semantic and functional overlap). This structure is subsequently tested on 72 samples collected from several sources (cartoon collections, Internet, etc.). Obviously, the concept of overlapping scenarios is shared by both verbal and visual puns, but the semantic mechanisms they entail are different. Hempelmann and Samson was unable to obtain permission to reproduce their examples, and this, somewhat, influenced the course of the discussion. Continuing the theme of visual pun is Alexander Mitchell's ancient Greek visual pun: a case study of visual humor. Sources of visual puns under analysis are paintings on ancient Greek vases. The purpose of the analysis is: set possible patterns in creating funny visual puns. Mitchell finds that images can be grouped into three main types: "*damaged decoration*" "*misuse of objects*" and "*use of lettering and space*" [7: Dore, 2011].

## **5. Humor in Intertextuality studies**

The Study [16: Tuzcu, 2018] aims to explore intertextual references in the creation of humor; in particular, focusing on the phenomenon of anti-Proverbs, widely represented in the Turkish language. The author analyzes the anti-Proverbs from the point of view of the theories of humor-superiority, inconsistency, etc. The aim of the study was to try to discover how intertextual links function in the creation of humorous content in the new text-anti-proverbs. The study presents a review of theoretical background on intertextuality and provides theoretical grounds for the analysis of humor. Intertextuality manifests itself in a number of ways, such as direct quotation, citation, allusion, mention, reference, imitation, collage, parody, literature, conventions. The author considers anti-proverbs as one of the most striking examples of intertextuality, and attempts to consider anti-proverbs as an intertextual practice, and humor and anti-proverbs as interrelated concepts.

By analyzing examples from the Turkish language, it was revealed that anti-proverbs are created in various ways, such as substituting, substituting, referring and so on, the original wording of proverbs to better fit the new context in a humorous way. In addition, the anti-proverbs in this study include allusions from various sources such as movies, TV shows, technology and so on, but most of the references were allusions to proverbs. Depending on the functions performed by the humorous component, three main categories are distinguished among intertextual references: inconsistency, superiority, or theories of relief. The study is limited to the linguistic approach, but the phenomenon of intertextuality, humor and anti-proverbs is new to study from different perspectives, such as pragmatic, linguistic, sociological, psychological.

## **6. Humor translation problem**

Problems associated with the translation of humor in a variety of sources, still remain in the field of view of many scientists working on multilingual corpus. The question of translation is ambiguously solved and a number of scientists raise the question of the possibility of translating humor (cf. Chiaro 1992, 2000 and Zabalbascoa 1996 Grutman 2006 O'sullivan 2007, 2011; Bleichenbacher 2008; Chiaro 2010; Corrius and Zabalbeascoa 2011; Minutella 2012; Heiss 2014; Chiaro 2018 and others). Chiara Bucaria's paper deals with one of the issues related to humor and its translation, namely the analysis of subtitles in Italian. The author clarifies that only verbally

expressed Humor (VEH) is taken into account in the work. The author explores the problem of the audio-visual material and sets out the reasons why the focus is on the translation of humour from English into Italian. In his data, Bucaria identifies examples (VEH) that are classified as: purely referential (references to the original culture), purely linguistic (word games and puns), or relict (adding a literal or specific meaning to an idiomatic or referential). Thus, Bucaria's work can be seen as an additional contribution to the understanding of audiovisual translation (AVT) of humor in General and subtitles in particular. Bucaria concludes that there is a general tendency to follow the foreign (a.k. a. culture-oriented-source) model of verbal humor, i.e., the translator tried to preserve the original examples of humor as much as possible. Bucaria rightly suggests that this likely depends on both the original text and the audience's reaction being heard by the target audience. [7: Dore, 2011].

M. Dore is actively involved in the development of the translation issue. The main interest of Dore's character review work is how this phenomenon of multilingualism is used for purposes of humor and how it can be applied in translation. Within translation studies, multilingualism has indeed attracted the attention of many scholars who have posed a problem and explored the possibility of conveying humor through translation. Numerous publications in the special issue of *Linguistica Antverpiensia* (2005b) Delabastita & Grutman" Fictionalizing Translation and Multilingualism testify to the widespread use of heterolinguism in literary texts and how they have been or can be addressed in translation. Within the framework of audiovisual translation, several scholars have paid great attention to how translation is performed depending on the method of translation (e.g. dubbing, subtitling), the type of strategies, procedures and manipulative processes used, and the possible reasons behind this choice. The focus remains on the comic clash of two or more languages, as well as how they can be associated with a high degree of cultural confusion. Many articles in this volume focus on translating multilingual humor into fiction texts, and how puns are created using different languages or loanwords. There are a number of ways of translation-direct transmission, adaptation to the target language or preserving it with intertextual or paratextual elements. Nevertheless, the analysis of many texts and different approaches used in them proves that creativity can often open alternative ways for interesting solutions. The author emphasizes the importance of the role of the translator in each individual case, and hopes that the inductive research presented in this issue on multilingual humor and / or translation has helped to shed light on the procedure that can be implemented to preserve this important feature of literary and audiovisual works [9: Dore, 2019].

## **7. Conclusion**

The issues review makes it clear that humor research is a vibrant scientific field that has recently become self-sufficient, and what goals it sets for the future. Recent studies shed light on a number of topical issues in the study of humor, as well as reveal significant prospects for further research of humor, and are not limited only to certain areas-literary humor; humor in everyday communication, but also goes beyond the natural language in the field of computer technology and the Internet communication field. In General, the review of the presented works showed that humor remains the focus of attention of scientists acting in their research on the basis of different approaches and theories and opens up further prospects for interdisciplinary research.

## **References**

1. Attardo, Salvatore. (1994). *Linguistic theories of humor*. Berlin: Mouton De Gruyter.
2. Attardo, Salvatore & Victor Raskin. (1991). Script theory revis(it)ed: Joke similarity and joke representation model. *Humor. International Journal of Humor Research* . № 4. pp. 293–347.

3. Attardo, Salvatore. (2018). *Universals in puns and humorous wordplay*. Berlin: Mouton De Gruyter.
4. Béal, Christine & Kerry Mullan. (2013). Issues in conversational humor from a cross-cultural perspective: Comparing French and Australian corpora. In Bert Peeters,
5. Béal Christine & Kerry Mullan. (2013). *Cross-culturally speaking, speaking cross-culturally*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
6. Béal Christine & Kerry Mullan. (2018). Introduction: Conversational humor: Forms, functions and practices across culture. *Intercultural Pragmatics* . 15(4). pp. 451–456.
7. Dore, M. (2011). *New Approaches to the Linguistics of Humour*. Galati, Romania: Dunarea de Jos University Press.
8. Dore, M. (2018). Laughing at you or laughing with you? Humour negotiation and intercultural stand-up comedy. *Creating and Negotiating Humor in Everyday Interactions*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, pp. 105– 126.
9. Dore, M. (2019) Editorial: Multilingual Humour in Translation. *European Journal of Humour Research* [Available at [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333268142\\_Editorial\\_Multilingual\\_Humour\\_in\\_Translation](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333268142_Editorial_Multilingual_Humour_in_Translation)] [Viewed on 23.11.2019]
10. Dynel, Marta. (2009). Beyond a joke: Types of conversational humor. *Language and Linguistics Compass*. 3(5). pp. 1284–1299.
11. Dynel, Marta. (2014) Linguistic approaches to (non)humorous irony. *Humor 2014*. 27(4). pp. 537–550
12. Popa, Diana and Salvatore Attardo (eds.). (2007). *New approaches to the linguistics of humour*. Galati, Romania: Dunarea de Jos University Press.
13. Priego-Valverde, Béatrice. (2003). *l'humour dans la conversation familière: Description et analyse linguistique*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
14. Priego-Valverde, Béatrice. (2006). How funny it is when everybody gets going! A case of coconstruction of humor in conversation. *CIRCULO de Lingüística Aplicada a la Comunicación* . 27. pp. 72–100.
15. Taylor, Julia M. and Raskin, Victor (2012). On the Transdisciplinary Field of Humor Research. *Journal of Integrated Design and Process Science*. 16 (3). pp. 133-148
16. Tuzcu, Ö. (2018). Anti-proverb as a kind of Intertextual joke. *Humanitas*. 6(12). pp. 34-48