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## WORDPLAY AND ITS PHONOLOGICAL AND GRAPHOLOGICAL STRUCTURE

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### ABSTRACT

In this article we provide information about the phenomenon “wordplay”. Moreover, the phonological and graphological structure and analysis of it is presented. Wordplay can be employed among friends as well as in media. The aim of wordplay here is to capture the reader’s or viewer’s attention via the unusual formulations used in the titles of the newspaper articles or in the news on television.

### KEYWORDS

wordplay, pun, phonological structure, humour, paronymy, homonymy.

### INTRODUCTION

Wordplay is a frequent and common phenomenon and an inseparable part of communication. Delabastita (1997, 1-2) describes wordplay as “a deliberate communicative strategy, or the result thereof, used with a specific semantic or pragmatic effect in mind”.

Wordplay can be employed among friends as well as in media. The aim of wordplay here is to capture the reader’s or viewer’s attention via the unusual

formulations used in the titles of the newspaper articles or in the news on television.

Literature review. As mentioned above, wordplay is often related to humour. The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary provides the definition of wordplay in which the aspect of humour is already included: Wordplay - making jokes by using words in a clever or amusing way, especially by using a word that

has two meanings, or different words that sound the same. Nevertheless, the success of a joke is affected by various factors.

One of them is the environment in which it is uttered. The joke-teller must consider the cultural, political, social and other backgrounds of the environment in which he/she occurs. Chiaro (1992, 15) explains: [...] not everybody is amused by the same things, and what is more, over and above shared knowledge of whatever type, finding something funny relies on a number of subjective variables. What may appear amusing under the influence of a few drinks may not appear quite so funny in the cold light of the morning after. A homosexual is hardly going to enjoy being insulted by someone's idea of a witty remark at his or her expense, any more than the Irish are amused by the thousands of jokes which depict them as imbeciles. Some people are offended by sexual innuendo, while others by political references contained in a joke.

There are different ways to produce wordplay. Almost every linguistic phenomenon possible is used – not only lexical means such as idioms and polysemy, but also grammar or phonetics. Delabastita (1996, 130) suggests the following categorization, according to the linguistic means used to achieve wordplay:

- Phonological and graphological structure
- Lexical structure (polysemy)

- Lexical structure (idiom)
- Morphological structure
- Syntactic structure

Delabastita (1996, 131) also claims that “often two or more of the above features of language are harnessed simultaneously in order to obtain one single pun.” Sometimes it can be very hard to decide to which category the given wordplay should be classified.

Phonological and graphological structure. The number of phonemes and graphemes in a language is limited. Moreover, each language has its rules according to which they can be employed and so they can create only certain combinations. Delabastita (1996, 130) uses the term ‘sound-play’ which “ borders on alliteration, assonance and consonance”. He goes on to say that “ in sound-play sound provides the basis for the verbal association, whereas anagrammatic wordplay is based on spelling.” As an example of sound-play, Delabastita provides: ( 1 ) Love at first bite. The sentence in ( 1 ) is based on the expression love at first sight in which the noun sight was replaced by its paronym, i.e. a word whose pronunciation is very similar.

Paronymy. According to Attardo (1994, 110-111) “two words are paronyms when their phonemic representations are similar but not identical.” Nevertheless, this definition is not complete. Let me provide a more complex definition provided by Marcu

(2010, 202) who claims that “in linguistics, paronym may refer to: a word related to another word and derived from the same root - e.g. cognate words; this types of paronyms often lead to confusion” or “words almost homonyms but having slight differences in spelling or pronunciation – different prefixes or suffixes and added word syllables can change stress and elements of pronunciation - and having different meanings.” By way of illustration, Marcu (2010, 203) suggests the examples of law and low or breath and breathe.

Homonymy. Apart from ‘true homonymy’, i.e. words whose phonological and graphological structure match, there are two more types of homonymy to be distinguished: homophony and homography.

Homophony is a type of homonymy in which two words are identical in pronunciation, but different in spelling. Meyer et al. (2005, 149) provides the example of [θru:] signifying either through or threw.

Homography. While homophones are words with an identical pronunciation and a different spelling, homographs are the opposite. Peprník (2001, 33) offers the word lead as an illustrative example. It can be understood either as a verb meaning “to go with or in front of a person or an animal to show the way or to make them go in the right direction” (OALD) or “a chemical element. Lead is a heavy soft grey metal, used especially in the past for water pipes or to cover roofs”

(OALD). The pronunciation in the first meaning is [li:d] whereas in the second meaning it is pronounced as [led].

Homonymy vs. polysemy While senses of a homonymous word are not related, in case of polysemy, arguably, they are. Peprník (2001, 26) inserts the distinction between polysemy and homonymy into his definition of polysemy: Polysemy, i.e. having two or more meanings, that is referring to two or more items of extralinguistic reality, but at the same time sharing at least one element of meaning – without this link, the shared meaning, it would be a case of homonymy The difference is illustrated in the following example provided by Atkins et al. (2008, 280):

- a) She gave him a punch in the stomach. (a hard blow with the fist)
- b) It lacks the emotional punch of French cinema. (a forceful, memorable quality)
- c) Glasses of punch were passed around. (an alcoholic drink mixed from several ingredients)

Atkins et al. (2008, 280) point out that meanings of the noun punch in ( 2a ) and ( 2b ) are more related than the meaning expressed in ( 2c ). In ( 2b ) it can be considered to be “a metaphorical extension of the physical punch” expressed in (2a), while ( 2c ) is semantically different – it occupies a “different semantic area”, despite the fact that it shares the

orthographic quality. The meaning of punch in ( 2c ) has the origin in the Sanskrit word panch meaning five – the punch drink was originally mixed from five ingredients. To conclude, punch in ( 2a ) and ( 2b ) are polysemous words (or ‘polysemes’) whereas punch in ( 2c ) is their homonym

### CONCLUSION

According to the analysis, wordplays is mostly created by using morphological means, especially conversion and blending. Puns based on syntactic structure were not recognized. As far as the translation is considered, the most problematic cases of wordplay were based on polysemy. In the translation, one of the meanings of a polysemous word is often omitted. A different language typology can be one of the reasons of problems with the translation. On the other hand, idiomatic expressions were, surprisingly, easier to translate because of the existence of a equivalent. The translation is not always identical, however the formal and functional aspects are mostly maintained.

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