

Irony and Humor. From pragmatics to discourse, Leonor Ruiz Gurillo and Maria Belén Alvarado Ortega (eds.). 2013.

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Irony and Humor: From pragmatics to discourse approaches irony and humor from a pragmatic perspective, providing insights into their role in mediated discourse and in conversation interaction. In their introduction ("The pragmatics of irony and humor"), the editors outline the main theoretical frameworks used to linguistically define and analyze irony and humor and make a short presentation of the content of the volume. The ten contributions are grouped together into three different parts, ranging from general, more theoretical approaches (in Part I), to particular, more applied ones (in Part II and Part III).

Part 1 ("Irony and humor: Pragmatic perspectives") comprises three contributions, two on irony and one on jokes. In the first paper in Part 1, "The power of inversion: Irony, from utterance to discourse", Susana Rodríguez Rosique approaches irony from a neo-Gricean perspective, arguing that Grice's definition of irony as the implicature resulted from an overt violation of the quality maxim in a communicative exchange may appear explanatory. After comparing Grice's (1975), Horn's (1984), and Levinson's (2000) theoretical models, Rodríguez Rosique affirms that a pragmatic approach to understanding irony from both the speaker and the hearer's perspective "sanction the inverted function of conversational principle and open the possibility to play with language" (Rodríguez Rosique 2013: 20). The explanatory understanding of irony results from a transgression of quality which may affect what is said or invert the systematic inferences that usually arise from an utterance (Rodríguez Rosique 2013). This explanation also "provides a natural transition between irony and humor" (Rodríguez Rosique 2013: 34), explaining many of the humorous mechanisms of puns or games which reflect contrast in the semantic frames. At a discursive level, irony may become "a highly productive inversion procedure, whose 'shock wave' can eventually affect different levels; more precisely, it may fall upon what is said, upon the inferences or upon the discourse" (Rodríguez Rosique 2013: 35) and the associated pragmatic strategies.

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Salvatore Attardo's contribution to the volume, "Intentionality and irony", makes two claims regarding irony: one regards irony as prototypical and exemplar category in which case, there is no need to be any set of features common to all instances of irony. The second claim supports with strong arguments Gibbs's (2012) idea that irony is mainly subconsciously processed and produced and that the meaning of an ironical comment is indeterminate and cannot be reduced to a single proposition. Attardo uses the term "idiomatic irony" to refer to both "conventionalized irony" and "phraseological irony", arguing that this type of irony demonstrates the existence of unconsciously processed irony (Attardo 2013: 54).

Next, Francisco Yus's article, "An inference-centered analysis of jokes: The intersecting circles model of humorous communication" begins with the classification of jokes into two broad types: those based on "the speaker's manipulation of the audience's interpretive steps leading to an interpretation of the joke, and those whose main source of humor lies in the reinforcement or invalidation of commonly assumed social and cultural stereotypes" (Yus 2013: 59), such as sex roles, ethnic origins, professions... and proposes a more comprehensive model of joke interpretation with consequences at the level of how the production of humorous effects can be manipulated. The Intersecting Cycles Model visually represents a new typology of jokes, based on utterance interpretation, make-sense frames and cultural frames, whose combined strategies result in seven types of jokes. Humorous effects are decoded by means of a mutual parallel adjustment implying an explicit interpretation, its implicature, and the accessibility to the interpretation of the context.

Part 2 ("Irony and humor in mediated discourse") is a collection of four articles focusing mainly on how humor is produced and interpreted in Spanish and international media. The section is opened by Elena Méndez-G^a de Paredes's article, "Discursive mechanisms of informative humor in Spanish media", which proposes a discursive analysis of media humor as a strategic means used by journalists for capturing the audience's interest. Highly intentional, humor is used to aid communicating media information reality. Media information humor is described as a parody genre (called infotainment or infoshow), having as target the real news which is treated humorously. The informative parody is based on intertextual discursive mechanisms and, depending on the purpose or objective of the discourse, falls into several parodic subcategories: ludic, critical, cynical, burlesque, etc. My mocking the media informative discourse, this type of humor relativizes the truth and builds a counterdiscourse which aims at unveiling the editing of the media discourse, the lack of transparency and truthfulness.

Leonor Ruiz Gurillo's contribution, "Narrative strategies in *Buenafuente's* humorous monologues", analyzes the narrative strategies used by a comedian in 203 monologues in Spanish (performed between 2007 and 2011 and published in several books between 2009 and 2011). The author presents the linguistic framework employed by GRIALE research group for analyzing irony and humour, originating from the General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH) and, more specifically, from the pragmatic mechanism of inferencing. The logical mechanisms based either on syntagmatic relationships or on reasoning were added to the ones in the initial model, and aspects related to genre, register, and text type also completed the description of the the narrative strategies in GTVH model. The analysis of Andreu Buenafuente's performance of his humorous monologues thoroughly demonstrates how humour, based on clear logical mechanisms, is achieved by the use of narrative strategies, as well as the use of certain gestual and discourse markers.

The third article in Part 2 represents a pragmatic analysis of the cartoons in Spanish press. Xose A. Padilla-García pays special attention to the dialogue between the artist and the audience, who collaborate in order to ensure a successful communicative process. The corpus used for the research comprises 200 cartoons targeted at political or economical events, occurring in mainstream Spanish newspapers, between 2007 and 2011. After defining the genre as a marked and special form of communication and setting up the theoretical framework of the study, Padilla-García approaches the cartoons with specific analytical tools – the compliance or lack of compliance with the maxim of quality (Grice 1975), and therefore with the principle of cooperation, materialized at a textual level, and the use of both internal and external contextualization indexes (text format, content scripts) for the correct interpretation of the cartoon, materialized at both textual and drawing levels. The readers may gradually add levels of interpretation of a cartoon, ranging from the first/superficial reading level, involving merely the recognition of the cartoon, to the second/intermediate reading level, involving the activation of content scripts and the mechanism of presupposition, and to the third/deep reading level, involving the correct incongruity resolution and understanding of the criticism expressed by the artist.

In their contribution ("Phonological humor as perception and representation of foreignness"), Javier Muñoz-Basols, Pawel Adrjan and Marianne David approach 'phonological jokes' used to express foreignness, from a variety of perspectives (cultural, social, individual, and comparative), in an attempt to demonstrate that they differ from ethnic jokes. Imitating or parodying the sounds of foreign languages as a source for humour has been found in more than 30 languages, being one of the most vivid linguistic strategy of representing foreignness. The corpus used for the article consists of more than 1000 phonological jokes, each considered in its unique

(inter)cultural context. A contrastive linguistic analysis was conducted to account for the dynamics of joking in different contexts (socio-cultural, individual, comparative). One of the most interesting findings of the article is linked to the language relationships, especially about the languages most frequently imitated, while the section dedicated to conclusions propose valuable insights into how further research can enrich the evidence on the origin of specific jokes or on the relationship between phonological jokes and other categories of humour.

The third part of the volume ("Irony and humor in conversational interaction") comprises articles focusing on conversational humour. M. Belén Alvarado Ortega's contribution, "Failed humor in conversational utterances in Spanish" is analysing instances of humour in which one of the participants decide not to participate, although they understood it correctly. The author accounts for the apparent impoliteness of such communicative behaviour, determined both by the need to defend either the speaker's or the listener's positive face, and to impose respect. An interesting point is made towards the implication of both the speaker and the listener in the communicative exchange in the form of either production or interpretation of the humorous utterance. Hence, the assumption of the author that "humor includes two stages, namely: *humor competence* and *humor performance*", the second stage involving listener's desire to appreciate humour in conversation. Though recognised and understood, humour may or may not be appreciated or followed by the other participants. The failure of humour is possible in the case of the speaker, but also in the case of the listener, with their associated conversational strategies. The findings of the study shed better light on the relationship between failed humour and politeness, in various circumstances: self-humour, humour directed towards the listener, towards a situation, and towards an absent other.

The second article in Part 3, "Humor and argumentation in everyday talk", by Amadeu Viana, explores theoretically, methodologically and empirically the relationship between humour and argumentation in a corpus of Spanish conversations, comprising both anecdotes and situational humour. The analysis proceeds from less developed argumentative moves (mere comments structured in form of a comparison, an analogy or a comical inversion, with a view to integrating them in an argument structure) to more developed ones (large argumentative moves involving replying, storytelling, arguing and decision making). Pragmatically, humour serves to soften particular situations. In relation with argumentation, conversational humour proved to be effective, also demonstrating its face preserving value.

The volume concludes with Kurt Feytaerts's contribution, "Tackling the complexity of spontaneous humorous interaction: An integrated classroom-modeled corpus approach", based on the new corpus of spontaneous humour in Flemish (Dutch) - Corpus Interactional Humour (Corinth). The author describes the

technical design and the methodological aspects (collecting, transcribing, and analysing naturally occurring humour in interaction) of the Corinth corpus, depicting relevant socio-cognitive aspects of meaning, such as: common ground, intersubjectivity, and the layered meaning as it appears in irony, for instance. The contribution also describes discursive and humour-related theoretical parameters of the Corinth corpus, in an attempt to identify the relevant linguistic features of humorous utterances. Kurt Feytaerts also demonstrates the complexity of the meaning structure in humorous encounters, by applying the parametric annotation grid to two examples.

One structural shortcoming of the book would be the lack of ballance between the number of contributions dedicated to irony and those dedicated to humour. Despite the titles of both the second and the third part, the contributions refer only to humour, irony being treated only as an aside.

The merits of the book rely most certainly in the valuable and diverse approaches it comprises. *Irony and Humor: From pragmatics to discourse* is the most recent panorama of linguistic research on irony and humor, based on multiple perspectives (intercultural, pragmatic, discursive, linguistic, semantic), corpora and theories (Relevance Theory, Cognitive Linguistics, General Theory of Verbal Humor, Neo-Gricean Pragmatics or Argumentation). The book addresses mainly to specialists in linguistics, but also to scholars from the field of social sciences, due to both its general approach and the in-depth analysis of various humorous genres.

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About the reviewer

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