

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PUN AND DOUBLE ENTENDRE

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Annotation

This paper aims of investigating the main distinctions of prime wordplays – pun and double entendre.

Key words and expressions: wordplay, pun, double entendre

Wordplay and its categories are changeable together with the development of language. Because of having very interesting linguistic nature, they are all the time in the central interest for all scholars who are studying context based texts or pragmatic way of text analysing.

It should be mentioned that, high expressive possibilities of multiple-meaning lexical items lead to be used them to cause ambiguity as play of words. Ambiguity, as a linguistic feature, occurs when a word has more than one meanings and understandings in an expression. The term “wordplay” itself includes different textual strategies in which writer allows two similar forms with similar meanings by exploiting the structure of a language [1, 2]. Along with multiple-meaning lexemes, homonyms are very often involved in word games. In this case, as there are no meaning associations with sound or graphic (or both of them) identity, the clash of homonyms is always unexpected, which causes great stylistic phenomenon. Below discussion is about distinguishing certain similarities and disparate features of the main wordplays, such as pun and double entendre.

What is a pun?

A pun (also called “paronomasia”, comes from Greek morpheme and donates to make a change in a name) is defined as simply as “the humorous use of a word in a way that suggests two interpretations” in *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* [2]. To put it in more detail, the pun is a figure of speech which is produced by using a deliberate confusion and interruption of similar lexemes for rhetorical effect, whether humorous or sometimes serious. Homonymy is a basis of punning. However, the approaches of classifying puns are different, they fill each other out. The common types of them are easily found in movies, TV shows, sitcoms and other comedy shows and even in everyday conversations. Now we are going to introduce classification, that generally summarizes the different perceptions.

1. Homophonic pun uses sound alike word pairs. For example,

– Why do we still have troops in Germany?

– To keep the Russians in *Czech*

Here aural similarity between “check” and “Czech” forms the pun.

2. Homographic pun – based on words that are spelled the same, but have different meanings and sounds. Look at the Douglas Adam’s line below:

“You *can* tune a guitar, but you can’t *tuna* fish unless of course you play *bass*”.

There are obviously two types of pun: first, a homophonic pun in the words tune and tuna; second, a homographic pun that is reached through the identical spelling of ‘bass’, an instrument and ‘bass’, a kind of fish.

3. Homonymic pun: involves homographic and/or homophonic puns. For instance,

“War does not determine who is *right* – only who is left.”

In this phrase, the word “right” is both homographic and homophonic.

What is a double entendre?

According to the Oxford English Dictionary: “A double meaning; a word or phrase having a double sense, esp. as used to convey an indelicate meaning” [4]. Thus, double entendre refers to a phrase with two meanings; an obvious meaning that could match the context and another meaning which may require some special intelligence. The clearly obvious meaning is articulated, while the meaning, which is socially awkward, sexually suggestive or offensive to state directly is normally hidden as a second one. They use on multiple meanings of words, exploit ambiguity, and offers manifold possibilities for the comic playwright. So, double entendres have thematic relevance for the plays in which they appear, because it also occurs even when characters discuss other subjects, like death, money and have been used by many playwrights of different cultures to make a character witty and intelligent. For example, Damon Knight begins his famous short story with a group of aliens coming to Earth with a book called “*To Serve Man*”. Everybody might be excited that the aliens want to serve people, thinking “to serve” signifies to perform services. But not everyone would expect that the aliens’ plan is to serve man for dinner [6]. So, the double entendre – any use of a word’s multiple meanings; it remained a token of wit and hence a part of comic writing, because its two meanings are closely related [3, 101].

Difference between pun and double entendre

Conundrum is, pun and double entendre often get confused with each other. Here, it is going to be listed some clear distinctions between them.

1. The prime difference between them is that pun is a type of wordplay whereas double entendre is used with stylistic meaning in a text.

2. Punning usually draws on homophones and homonyms, like

“The wedding was so emotional that even the cake was in *tears*”.

This pun interchanges the homophonic words ‘tears’ and ‘tiers’.

Double entendre based on polysemantic lexemes, which means it draws on a single word with many possible meanings. That connected meanings do not consist in the phonetic identity [3, 99-101].

“Marriage is a fine institution, but I’m not ready for an institution” (Mae West).

The word “institution”, connected with marriage, has two meanings here. One, it refers to marriage as an important tradition of a society. Two, marriage will probably cause an individual to go to a mental institution [5].

3. Pun is almost every time (not all the time, but they like to play in each other’s

territory) supposed to be a funny joke. We might come across puns every day, that created in order to entertain and make the reader laugh. When someone drops a pun, they are going out of their way to exploit the meanings, or even the sounds a word makes. For some, this exploitation has no limits.

“Where do you find *giant snails*? On the ends of *giants*’ fingers”

This one is a compound pun, including two puns at once to emphasis the wit and glory. *Giant* indicates the adjective ‘huge’ in the question and the mythical creature in the answer, while *snails* sound like *nails* in

the overall context. In addition, only on rare occasions do puns demand the intelligence. What makes them so satisfying is how the given expression take on new meaning when it is seen in a different side.

Mostly when people use double entendre they use it in stylistic way in order to avoid everyday speech with pragmatic meaning for joking, irony and so on. As the earliest examples of double entendres in literature dates back thousands of years, let’s look at the from “Odyssey” by Homer. He uses double entendre to make a fool of the one-eyed giant – Cyclops Polyphemus. When the Cyclops asks Odysseus’s name, he tells the beast that his name is “*Outis*”, which means “*Nobody*” or “*Noman*”, planning to blind him. After the attack of Odysseus, the Cyclops cries out screaming: “Nobody has hurt me. Nobody is trying to kill me!”. It is a way of tricky attitude that the other giants do not come to help, referring that “No man” is doing anything to the Cyclops. [5].

In this given example, a double entendre appears with “*Nobody*” as on the one hand, it means that “*nobody*” that is Odysseus has blinded him, on the other hand it means that nobody has done this to the Cyclops.

Conclusion

Taking all above mentioned statements into consideration, we can conclude that although there is some overlap between pun and double entendre, they basically refer to a different kind of linguistic and literary terms respectively, used by writers to create humour. The homonymy and polysemy are bases of the plays of words. Nonetheless, instead of just joking double entendre can be used in different contexts with different pragmatic meaning for instance irony or just showing deliberate misunderstanding. One rule that applies to both figures of speech is that, they are parts of a playfulness in language, since people always like playing with language, and they are usually based on various semantic and sound coincidences. Using word play does not mean that it a way of making the speech confusing, they help to make the meaning of words more clear and the speech will be colourful. Anyway, they are truly verbal golds. It is loved how a simple phrase may contain layers of positive meaning. It is like a sudden gift for readers to unwrap.

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