

HOMONYMY IN ITS STYLISTIC USE: ANALYSIS OF PUNS

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Annotation

This article aims to have a better understanding within the stylistic use of homonymy and directs attention to the analysis of pun, its categorization in English.

Key words and phrases: stylistic, homonymy, ambiguity, wordplay, pun.

The harmony of form and meaning, the difference and connection between them have been the subject of discussion among linguists for many years. For instance semantic features of homonymy and polysemy are always debatable issues among linguists in terms of theory. However, despite the fundamental difference between them, there is often the same stylistic result, as polysemy and homonymy may rarely cause problems in communication, because the context helps us how to select the appropriate meaning. In fact, most of English words have more than one meaning, but our minds are trained to sift out the meaning that is most contextually appropriate. Moreover, if a lexical item has several meanings, its expressive possibilities increase and commonly they are used to cause ambiguity, in other words double meaning, as play of words. As a linguistic characteristics, ambiguity can happen when a word or phrase has various meaning and accordingly there are more than one comprehension in one word. The ambiguity is an inexhaustible source of vocabulary that constantly updates the meaning of words. Along with multiple-meaning words, homonyms are very often involved in word games. In this case, only sound or graphic (or both of them) identity is established, and there are no meaning associations, so the clash of homonyms is always unexpected, which causes great stylistic phenomenon. In addition, the use of homonyms in one phrase, emphasizing the values of consonant words, gives speech expression. Below, it is observed the main play of word – paronomasia, or to put it simply – pun, mainly based on homonyms, and its categories.

Description of pun

According to Walter Redfern using pun means attitude towards homonyms as synonyms[7]. To understand better functions of punning, first let’s observe its definition due to various point of views.

According to the *Pr. Dirk Delabatista* the term “wordplay” includes different textual strategies in which authors allow two similar forms with similar meanings by using in a special language structure [3, 2], while a pun is a “deliberate communicative strategy, or the result thereof, used with a specific semantic or pragmatic effect in mind” [2]. As for *Alan Partington*, the professor of Bologna University, he defines pun in a more phonetic way as the bisociativeness happen between two or more sound sequences and claims that this kind relationship among utterances and as well the different meanings of the two or more phrases can be successful in terms of quality or can cause to be failing in usage or understanding [6]. Meanwhile, *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* describes a pun (also called “paronomasia”, that comes from Greek morpheme and means to make a change in a name) as simply as the factor of humor plays the important role of punning [5].

Taking into account mentioned statements, we feel that the pun is a figure of speech which consists of a deliberate confusion and interruption of lexemes with similar forms or phrases for rhetorical effect, mostly humorous and sometimes serious.

Classification of pun

It seems that this type of wordplay is difficult to classify because many linguists have various perceptions in terms of how it should be classified. The classification below, that we are going to introduce summarizes the different approaches by different scholars.

The classification of pun by *Delabastita* were cited by *Giorgadze* [4]. Thus, pun is divided into four categories, due to his point of view:

1) Homonymic (identical sounds and spelling). It includes exploitation of words that are both homophones and homographs. For instance,

“The tallest building in town is the library — it has thousands of *stories!*”.

A pun appears on the difference between stories in books and stories (floors) in a building. This word is both homographic and homophonic, they are spelled and pronounced the same way, while having two different meanings.

“If you have to pay to go to the river, we’d better stop at the *bank*”.

The word ‘bank’ carries two meanings ‘the place where money is stored’ and ‘land along the side of a river’.

2) Homophonic (identical sounds but different spellings) and uses paired homophones – sound alike words. A good example would be *George Calin’s* statement:

“Atheism is a *non-prophet* institution”.

This pun interchanges the words ‘prophet’ and ‘profit’.

“Why is it so wet in England? Because many kings and queens have *reigned* there.”

The word ‘reigned’ here is used instead of the word ‘rained’.

3) Homographic (different sounds but identical spelling), also referred to as a heteronymic pun, plays on lexemes that are spelled the same but have a double meaning and different 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*” This line includes two types of pun: first, a homophonic pun that is fairly obvious in the words tune and tuna; second, a homographic pun in the word bass, that is reached through the identical spelling of ‘bass’, an instrument and ‘bass’, a kind of fish.

As we can see, this type of pun relies on spelling, and here is another example, that transposes the word “flies”:

“Time *flies* like an arrow; fruit *flies* like a banana”.

4) Paronymic (there are slight differences in both spelling and sound). This type of pun is based on the similarity, but not identity on either phonetic and orthographic level. Paronymic puns can be seen below:

“Come in for a *faith lift*”.

The punning in this sentence appears when the collocation ‘face [feis] lift’ is changed into ‘faith [feiθ] lift’, playing on religious theme.

“He was a great and very popular *artist*”.

A pun is realized in the word ‘artist’, meaning an expert in fine arts, that can replace ‘artiste’ – an actor by profession. Thus, paronymic pun donates, similarity in form of derivation, but different in meaning, spelling and pronunciation.

To complete this classification, linguist Bader added some other types of pun in which he summarized from other authors’ approaches [1]:

1) Compound pun, which contains two or more puns. Example is from *Richard Whately* makes it more clear:

“Why can't a man starve in the Great Desert? Because he can eat the *sand which is* there, but what brought *sandwiches* there? Noah sent *Ham* and his descendants *mustered* and *bred*”.

There are several puns here, including homophonic puns: sand which is with sandwiches, mustered (mustard) and bred (bread); homonymic words Ham (Noah’s son) and ham (meat).

2) Recursive pun or two-part pun. It is required to recognize or understand an element in the first, in order for the second part to make sense.

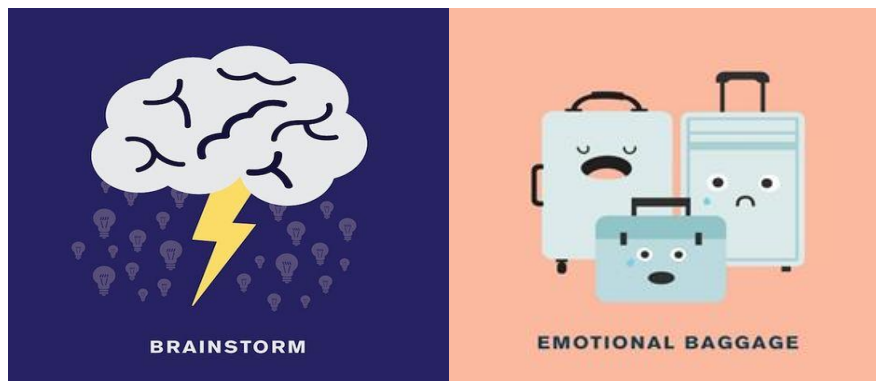
“May the *Fourth* be with you”

The pun above requires understanding the phrase “May the *force* be with you”, as well as knowledge that 4th of May is International Star Wars Day.

“*Infinity* is not *in finity*”.

It means that infinity is not in the finite range, it has no limit.

3) Visual pun, sometimes referred as a graphological pun, applies non-phonetic language and can be made up with imagery, logos or symbols. This is very common in cartoons, caricatures and comics. Look at the visual puns given below.



Picture 1 [9]

Picture 2 [9]

The first picture replaces the word ‘brainstorm’ – a sudden clever idea, and the second ‘emotional baggage’ – the feelings you have about your past, which often have a negative effect on your attitude.

Conclusion

Summarizing everything said and also practical examples observed, we can conclude that homonymy is a basis of the plays of words, especially puns are used more frequently. Punning is a part of a playfulness in language, since people like playing with language, and they are usually based on various sound coincidences. However, the perceptions of classifying puns are different, they fill each other out. The common types of them can be found in everyday English conversations. In puns, the direct and portable

meanings of a word are combined, its semantic result is unexpected and the expressed thought looks brighter and sharper.

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