Book review

Dynel, Marta (2013). *Developments in Linguistic Humour Theory.*
Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 425 pp.

What draws a reader towards the volume edited by Marta Dynel is undoubtedly the multimodal analysis of humour that brings together traditional and novel theories of humour-related phenomena. The main purpose of the volume is to emphasise the multifarious characteristics of humour by applying new theoretical models, thus contributing to the development of humour research. The collection of 15 articles critically examines the traditional interpretative models and postulates some other new theoretical approaches which are considered to be very important to humour studies.

The interdisciplinary approach represents an original way of interpreting humour specifically because it puts forward new types of analysis that encompass different viewpoints. The volume bears upon various branches of linguistics, such as semantics, pragmatics, language philosophy, cognitive linguistics and stylistics, but also on non-linguistic approaches that stem from other fields such as sociology, anthropology or psychology. The researchers focus on both verbal and non-verbal genres such as jokes, multi-media humour (e.g., internet, films and advertisements), literary and musical humour.

As it assembles a selection of theoretical frameworks that focus on various phenomena, the volume is divided into three major sections, according to their theoretical goals*: New Humour Frameworks and Extensions, New Theoretical Issues in Humour Studies* and *New Theoretical Approaches to Established Forms of Humour.*

The introduction outlines the structure of the book and establishes a framework for the multimodal analysis of humorous phenomena. The editor starts by defining different types of approaches: superiority, incongruity and relief (see among others Keith-Spiegel 1972; Raskin 1985; Attardo 1994; Martin 2007), then continues with Suls' (1983) conception regarding the incongruity-resolution model and finally moves on to *Semantic Script Theory of Humour* (SSTH; Raskin 1985) and the *General Theory of Verbal Humour* (GTVH; Attardo & Raskin 1991; Attardo 1994).

The first section of the volume presents general models and notions that explore all types of humour. The articles written by Canestrari & Bianchi and Tsakona expand on two traditional theoretical models: the incongruity model and the *General Theory of Verbal Humour*. Carla Canestrari & Ivana Bianchi's article brings about a new perspective on humour, focusing on the importance of three types of contrarieties and their scope: global, intermediate and additive. Villy Tsakona's article surveys the GTVH model by highlighting the importance of the contextual knowledge component which has a great impact both on the production and on the reception of humour. Thomas J. Flamson & Gregory A. Bryant postulate that the "encryption theory", which seems to be dependent on the speaker's and hearer's implication, offers a new perspective on the functions and structures of humour, an outlook that departs from traditional linguistic theories. Moreover, Dalbir Sehmby offers an

interdisciplinary perspective that brings together linguistic, literary, media and film approaches to humour.

The second part of the volume entitled *New Theoretical Issues in Humour Studies* consists of five articles that address specific phenomena of humour, such as impoliteness and forms of audience response in a humorous performance that highlight humour. Marta Dynel and Sarah Seewoester Cain investigate humour in mass-media discourse, specifically in television shows and drama series respectively. Marta Dynel uses the incongruity model and the theory of disposition in order to fathom the impoliteness humour found in media discourse, in particular in the fictional interaction presented in *House M.D.* She examines the humorous structures by relying on a series of postulates pertaining to the pragmatics of impoliteness and to both sociological and cognitive theories of humour. Sarah Seewoester Cain focuses her attention on televised comedy programmes, notably on inherent elements of a comedy show (Conan O'Brien's television show) such as dynamic participation, limitation and sanctions regarding place, space, technology and history. In her view, the flexibility of the studio audience is extremely important not only for the appreciation and interpretation of humour, but also for its creation: "with regard to studio audience, they could be considered as part of the interaction 'on stage' due to their physical and temporal co-presence" (169).

Henri de Jongste compares some theoretical approaches in linguistics, namely Van Djik's (1983) mental model, the pragmatic debate on intention and the expectancy violation theory (Burgoon & Hale 1988). He states that the negotiation of the humorous intention entails cognitive, emotional and social issues: "people evaluate behaviour in context, using their cognitive, social and theory of mind or 'mind-reading' skills" (179). The author is also concerned with "failed humour" (see also Bell 2009; Priego-Valverde 2009) and considers that "a joke must be recognised and understood; it must also be accepted as appropriate in a given situational context" (179); otherwise, in his opinion, it cannot be construed as humour. On the other hand, Bastian Mayerhofer offers a new perspective on the discrepancy phenomenon that seems to manifest itself in different forms, both in humour and in irony. The author examines prominent elements of humorous narratives, namely misunderstanding, mistaken identities, or a character's lack of information in a story. He introduces the concept of "perspective clashing" (214), which seems to be a crucial element both for humorous and ironic discourse. It is perceived as a gap between cognitive evaluation and emotional reaction to humour and irony.

In the last article of the second section, Maria Goeth delves into the applicability of linguistic theories to musical humour, notably she compares the mechanisms of humour construction in music and language in an interdisciplinary manner. The author studies the similarities and differences between the two domains and considers that humour is not only generated through the dislocation of phraseme patterns, as in the case of humour through parody, but also through sound qualities of music whose humorous potential cannot be paralleled by language.

The third part of the volume entitled *New Theoretical Approaches to Established Forms of Humour* deals with notable and sensible subjects such as teasing, irony, canned jokes, satire in literary and media texts as well as humour in fictional stories. Valeria Sinkeviciute emphasises the pragmatic features of teasing in the context of impoliteness theories and evaluates the combination of the four teasing forms: impoliteness, mock politeness, mock impoliteness and politeness. Taking teasing structures collected from the British National Corpus as a reference point, the author suggests that there are different forms of teasing, such as *jocular mockery* and *jocular abuse* (265). The author also considers the different interpretations of teasing: "while the communicators of the tease claim benign intention, the targets can perceive it in more negative terms" (263). Marta Dynel examines the phenomenon of humorous irony following neo-Gricean approaches, and she establishes two characteristics

of irony: untruthfulness and evaluative implicature. She argues that an ironic utterance flouts the Gricean *Maxim of Quality*, and that irony expresses the speaker's attitude, hence for an ironic structure to exist, it is necessary that the speaker should show his/her intention. Additionally, four types of irony are described and analysed in this paper: *propositional negation irony* (297), *ideational negation irony* (298), *verosimilar irony* (299) and *surrealistic irony* (300).

A different perspective on irony is offered by Tony Veale. He starts from the assumption that, in understanding humour, a computational approach that automatically generates a set of subversion patterns is required. He establishes a distinction between two very similar irony reception systems: *strategies*, a system that does not resort to specific lexemes, and *tactics* "which instantiate higher-level strategies using words with specific proprieties" (336). The comprehension of an ambiguous joke is also studied from a computational linguistic perspective. Bastian Mayerhofer and Annekathrin Schacht postulate two types of interpretation: a dominant and a hidden one, the latter requiring inferential steps. The major interest of this article is to develop a hypothetical system for the cognitive processes required in the understanding of a garden path joke. Therefore, the authors are interested in three aspects: "(i) the salience of the first interpretation, (ii) the accessibility of the hidden interpretation and (iii) the humorous potential of the whole joke" (341).

Diana Popa defines satire from a pragmatic and semantic viewpoint, extending its place beyond literature. The author postulates an analytical model that encompasses two forms of interpretation for satire, namely at micro and macro levels. The micro model deals with the interpretation of satire structures with the help of the methodological tools furnished by pragmatics and semiotics, whereas at the macro level satire is perceived as an institutionalised genre of discourse. Finally, in her article, Agnes Marszalek suggests a new interpretation of the context-dependent humour in fictional narratives. She describes a few mechanisms that are used by writers to create humour, focusing on their elements and the modality in which those are combined. Moreover, she suggests a schema disruption in humorous worlds and argues that humorous narratives are more effective in "a playful state of mind which encourages a non-serious manner of interpretation" (408).

All things considered, the volume presents innovative perspectives of the humour phenomenon that signal new directions for the theory of humour — or perhaps for humour theories. The interdisciplinary approaches shed light on diverse humorous phenomena such as teasing, humorous irony, ironic similes, ambiguous jokes, satire, and encompass different linguistic or non-linguistic fields: semantics, pragmatics, cognitive linguistics, anthropology and psychology. Thus, all the papers contribute to the extension of traditional linguistic theories or to the development of new ones.

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