Book review

Knospe Sebastian, Onysko Alexander & Goth Maik (eds.) 2016 *Crossing Languages to Play with Words: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter.

The aim of *Crossing Languages to Play with Words: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, edited by Sebastian Knospe, Alexander Onysko, and Maik Goth, is to investigate multilingual wordplay and wordplay in the liminal space of translation "as a metapragmatic ability" in "different historical periods, discourse traditions, communicative situations and contexts" (p. 1). Its content is divided into three parts: the first one (Chapters 2-6) includes articles attempting to approach varieties of wordplay on the sublexical and lexical level within cognitive and discursive linguistic frameworks; the second one (Chapters 7-12) explores multilingual wordplay in different communicative settings, (e.g. amongst Facebook users, in conversations and linguistic landscapes); and the third one (Chapters 13-17) concerns the translation of wordplay in literary genres and mass culture texts. The introduction of the volume offers a brief theoretical discussion of previous studies on wordplay as well as an outline of the contents of the volume. Those interested in wordplay in general will definitely find useful the extensive list of references, since they cover a variety of approaches to the crossing of languages to play with words.

The first part of the volume begins with Esme Winter-Froemel's chapter on "Approaching wordplay", which is a point of reference for the contributions to the volume. Esme Winter-Froemel attempts to define and delimit wordplay (henceforth WP) both as a phenomenon and as an area of research. She underlines the multifaceted and diachronic nature of WP as a form of verbal humour (Attardo 1994, 2006) as well as its textual embeddedness. She sees it as a "historically determined phenomenon in which a speaker produces an utterance -and is aware of doing so- that juxtaposes or manipulates linguistic items from one or more languages in order to surprise the hearer(s) and produce a humorous effect on them" (p. 37). This definition summarises the directions presented in the article over the theoretical choices for an interdisciplinary analysis of WP (section 1), its pragmatic dimensions (section 2), its various forms and meanings (section 3), and its textual embeddedness over time (section 4). The aforementioned parameters are exemplified in several instances of WP in various European languages and genres. Examples highlight the various forms and contextual dimensions of WP and bring the discussion to the cognitive and social aspects of its production and recognition. The author is right in pointing out that WP occurs in concrete linguistic utterances in interaction within oral, written and multimodal texts. She calls for a usage-based interdisciplinary approach in its analysis (Coseriu 1958; Keller 1994; Barlow & Kemmer 2000; Winter-Frommel 2011). Figure 1 concisely presents subtypes of wordplay and verbal humour as these are discussed by the writer. However, the organisation of the article -which ultimately summarises the

gist of discussions within the Dynamics of Wordplay network[1]- is somewhat fragmentary, rendering its reading quite demanding.

The chapter by Verena Thaler, "Varieties of wordplay", summarises conceptualisations and definitions of WP discussed in Winter-Frommel's article (sections 1-2). She also presents a list of discursive contexts in which WP may appear and functions it may accomplish (section 3). In section 4, she presents various linguistic techniques according to which WP can be classified. She distinguishes among WP in the narrow, broader, and broadest sense, and discusses the phonetic, lexical, morphological, orthographic, and graphic techniques applied in its production for the first two categories, as for WP in the broadest sense "there is a nearly an unlimited range of possibilities to modify linguistic material in a creative and playful way" (p. 52). The author acknowledges the fact that taxonomies cannot capture the creative variation in combining linguistic items to play with words, WP in the broadest sense being a case in point. The author, however, is not right in seeing wordplay and verbal humour as distinct (p. 48), since they both make use of the same linguistic devices to produce analogous sociopragmatic results, i.e. "to express in-group solidarity, to attract attention and to show creativity in using the language" (p. 48) (among others). Extensive literature on verbal humour clearly demonstrates that playing with words and textual structures in various domains accomplishes various communicative goals and definitely goes beyond mere amusement and playfulness (Tsakona and Chovanec 2018).

Michelle Lecolle's aim in her short contribution "Some specific insights into wordplay form: Sublexical versus lexical level" is to examine WP from a formal point of view. She summarises Winter-Froemel's discussion on the definition and formal parameters of WP analysis. She makes a distinction between 'serious' and 'funny' WP and stresses out the role of the addressee(s)' perception of the playfulness of linguistic items within discourse. However, her discussion lacks an in-depth analysis of the examples discussed as well as of the contextual parameters that would justify the proposed distinctions.

The main goal of Alexander Onysko's "A note on the relation between cognitive linguistics and wordplay" is to discuss WP from a cognitive perspective. The principal question posed concerns the mental processes which guide the conceptualisation and the mappings of meaning onto linguistic forms in order to create the humorous effect, which (contrary to Thaler, see above) he considers to be the main function of WP. He juxtaposes pragmatic (Attardo & Raskin 1991) and cognitive-semantic (Fillmore 1977, 1982; Fouconnier 1985; Lakoff 1985; Fouconnier & Turner 2002) approaches to meaning, comparing the applicability of Fillmore's (1977, 1982) semantic frames to that of the conceptual blending theory (Fouconnier & Turner 2002). He concludes that the former explains humour produced by puns (i.e. WP in the narrow sense) more adequately than the latter (Coulson et al. 2006) and is more compatible with the concept of script of the *General Theory of Verbal Humour* (Attardo & Raskin 1991; Attardo 1994, 2001). He, nevertheless, acknowledges the fact that WP research has yet to make use of psycholinguistic and cognitive semantics tools in order to answer questions concerning the neuronal processing of diverse types of WP.

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[1] Scientific Network WI 3826/1-1: "The Dynamics of Wordplay: Language Contact, Linguistic Innovation, Speaker-Hearer-Interaction". The academic network has its main emphasis on Linguistics, with participation from Literary Studies, Cultural Studies, Media Studies, Comparative Literature, German Medieval Studies, Theater Studies, English, German and Romance Studies. Direction: Prof. Dr. Esme Winter-Froemel, Trier University.

Sebastian Knopse's aim in his article "Discursive dimensions of wordplay" is to offer exemplary insights at WP by looking at its effects in discourse. He claims that there can be no sharp distinction between wordplay and non-wordplay, a continuum of playfulness or ludicity being at work in discourse. He uses the example of *lapsus linguae* to underline the communicative parameters necessary for the language game to take effect. Acknowledging the prerequisite of cooperation, Knopse is right in concluding that a formalist approach to WP would fall short of its dynamics, as it would not sufficiently take into account the central role of the larger context, especially in disambiguating borderline cases of wordplay and humorous discourse.

Sender Dovchin' s study on "Multilingual wordplays amongst Facebook users in Mongolia" opens the second part of the volume and concentrates on the linguistic community of young FB users, in the context of post-socialist Mongolia. She examines how FB users cross the boundaries of multiple languages -even when they apparently know very little material associated with the involved languages- to produce playful hybrid formations, albeit with no immediate humorous relation. The chapter is based on a longitudinal netnographic study and applies qualitative research methodology. The author examines forms of multilingual wordplays and attempts to address the sociolinguistics of multilingual WP on FB. She is right in pointing out the complex relocalisation process of making new linguistic meanings via the creation of new multilingual terms and expressions (p. 110). She concludes that multilingual WP has become a means of socialisation across the broader sociolinguistic scene of contemporary Mongolia.

Hana-Ilona Härmävaara & Maria Frick's study entitled "Handling linguistic asymmetries via bilingual punning in conversations among speakers of cognate languages" aims at narrowing the gap created by the very few studies on bilingual punning in general (Knopse 2015) and especially as a conversational phenomenon (Jørgensen 2003) (p. 114). The authors analyse punning in bilingual conversations among Estonians and Finns who lack command in one of the languages examined, using "methods of conversation analysis" (p. 120). Their analysis reveals that the playful manipulation of cognate words (i.e. words which have a similar form but diverse meaning in the respective languages) in conversation, may serve as a resource for handling asymmetric language skills and as a means of repairing (in a conversation analytic sense) asymmetric access to the ongoing talk. They conclude that humorous bilingual punning may both contribute to the creation of common ground among conversationalists and enhance the linguistic skills in the cognate languages examined. However, they exclusively examine humour as an attempt to solidarity (Hay 2000) and a means for sharing positive affects (p. 131), a point of view that underestimates the potential of humour to serve both as a face enhancing and a face threatening activity.

In "Too matsch for you? Monolingual humorous slogans are recalled better than mixed-language ones", Kerstin Fuhrich & Hans-Jörg Schmid adopt a cognitive semantics framework. They examine a wide variety of monolingual and mixed-language humorous and non-humorous slogans and brands in order to determine which ones establish sustained associations in recipients' minds. Given that shifts in frame (Fillmore 1982; Coulson 2011), as in script opposition (Attardo & Raskin 1991; Attardo 2001), as well as frame violations in the switching of codes demand a higher amount of cognitive processing effort, the authors make the assumption that they should produce a stronger memory trace. Thus, mixed language humorous slogans should be retained in memory longer (p. 141). The results of the study, however, show that this is not the case. Using *Relevance Theory* (Sperber & Wilson 1992) and research on humour from a relevance-theoretical perspective (Yus 2016), the authors reach the conclusion

that whereas amusement and laughter compensate for the processing of a monolingual humorous slogan, mixed-language humorous slogans require more effort without yielding more benefits (p. 153), a conclusion that is in tandem with Sweller's (1988) cognitive overload theory. However, the pragmatic analysis of language preference systems in conversational code-switching and mixing, as in Auer (1995; 2010), especially preference for same language talk, could further consolidate the authors' line of argument. What is more, as the authors themselves point out, further research should focus on both the design of slogans used in the experimental context and the profiles of target groups according to age, education and language proficiency.

Esme Winter-Froemel's chapter on "The semiotics of multilingual wordplay in linguistic landscapes: Communicative settings, the hearer-origo, and contextual knowledge" tackles the parameters of multilingual wordplay (henceforth MWP) on linguistic landscapes (henceforth LL), in the context of advertising genres and mass communication. The author discusses the linguistic means used in MWP in terms of granularity, diffusion, and recognisability. She emphasises the contextual parameters of spatial and temporal boundedness as well as the speaker-addressee distance as this is constructed based on the communicative management of deictic centres. She analyses multiple instances of MWP in advertisements placed on urban landscapes, road signs, objects and moving vehicles, rightly addressing them as interconnected subgenres which move along a continuum of granularity, diffusion and recognisability as far as the choice of linguistic (and extra-linguistic) means are concerned. Her approach is usage based and qualitative and takes the discussion on LL one step further, by tackling MWP in advertisements as a dynamic phenomenon, subject to the constraints of processing, spatial, temporal and cultural contexts and the need to communicate with an anonymous mass of individuals.

In his chapter "Through the cognitive looking glass: Studying bilingual wordplay in public signage", Sebastian Knopse fruitfully explores how a combined cognitive and sociolinguistic and contact linguistics approach to bilingual wordplay (henceforth BWP) in the LL of urban areas offers a usage-based framework that captures the complexity of very condensed playful units such as bilingual puns. Concentrating on name signs of hairdressing salons, he conducts a case study of the LL in Berlin. He examines the meaning construction processes triggered by surface forms based on homography or paronymy relations between German and English. He also examines the sociolinguistic parameters of communicating commercial messages by means of bilingual puns to an anonymous audience. Analysis of data is twofold. Firstly, he uses Fauconnier & Turner's (2002) mental space framework to explore the cognitive procedures of producing new meaning via the blending of lexical and sublexical units pertaining to interlingual paradigmatic networks. Secondly, he explores the sociolinguistics of establishing bonds between business owners and potential customers. The analysis is in tandem with the overall theoretical and methodological framework adopted in the studies discussed in part two of the volume and it further calls for multidimensional socio-cognitive approaches to both MWP and the LL research. Further research could tackle WP involving unconnected languages, in different sociolinguistic environments.

In his article entitled "Cutting across linguistic borders? Interlingual hair salon names' in plurilingual Switzerland", Martin Paviour-Smith uses a metrolingual approach to multilingual repertoires and language usage (Otsuji & Pennycook 2013) to explore the construction of multilingual hair salon names all over Switzerland. Contrary to research on code-switching and mixing, the author claims that names go beyond the identification of languages used in their construction as local or professional. He

concludes that "hair salon names playfully combine elements of the namer's repertoire in a metrolingual fashion" (p. 254) to index a) the sheer pleasure of interlingual play and b) the "cutting across ideological boarders that artificially create the separate language systems and language regions of Switzerland" (p. 255). However, the lexical and sublexical components used in the punning and respelling strategies adopted in the data examined are limited in quantity, internationally recognisable linguistic structures. To support claims on the disavowal by speakers of mental boarders around languages and cultural systems, the analysis of a more extended variety of multilingual –or interlingual- genres and practices in a bottom-up ethnomethodological approach would be necessary.

The third part of the volume discusses aspects of the translation of wordplay. The first two articles are dedicated to literary genres. They discuss two well-known dramas by William Shakespeare. Firstly, Matthias Bauer's study on "Playing on translation in Shakespeare's *Henry V*: Act 5, Scene 2" concentrates on a particular bilingual scene played by three characters, the native English speaker Henry V, his bride to be Katherine of France, and her maid, who serves as an interpreter between the two. The author claims that the switching between English and French as well as translations by the characters of chunks of speech in the other speaker's language via wordplay transmute language from a medium of the dramatic action into its own subject. The discussion of the scene pertains to literary analysis frameworks and, despite the fact that it makes no reference to the cognitive and sociopragmatic approaches to WP adopted in the volume, it offers useful insights into the bilingual means employed in the writing of one of Shakespeare's well-known dramas.

Along the aforementioned lines, Angelika Zirker offers an analysis of the translation of English 16th century drama in German. In her chapter "Language play in translation: Character and idiom in Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*", she juxtaposes different choices for rendering WP in German that have been made by the most-well known German translators of Shakespeare's work. She further elaborates on Bauer's conclusion that it is hard to translate complex linguistic strategies such as dialectal varieties, idiolects, and "verbal tics" without the language play being lost to the audience. The author concludes that while translatability of WP in general is certainly not an impossibility, it may become one when character idiom is involved. This may have serious consequences to both the appreciation of witty dialogues and to the understanding of the characters and the plot. However, the choice of the author not to include glosses for the translated German excerpts makes it quasi impossible for readers who are not speakers of German to follow the analysis.

Silvia Cacchiani's study "On Italian lexical blends: Borrowings, hybridity, adaptations, and native word formations" concentrates on the morphological parameters of lexical blending in Italian in the context of language contact and change induced by the widespread "englishisation". Following Dresser's (1999) *Natural Morphology framework* and Ronnenberg-Sibold's (2015) analysis of morphotactic transparency, she sees international lexical blends as formed in extragrammatical, non-rule-based morphology (p. 307). She claims that blends are set apart from grammatical word formations and are grounded in phonological and semantic motivation. However, morphotactic transparency works towards regularity and is seen as a continuum of +/- transparency, +/- wordplayfulness based on blending techniques. The author concludes that polysyllabic/syntagmatic blends, or else *telescopes*, retain maximum morphophonetic information of the source words and can be less ludic as they opt for identification. Contour blends, on the other hand, retain the metrical structure and the stress syllable of one of the source words and are partially transparent, whereas semi-

complete blends juxtapose a splinter from the first source word and the matrix second source word, which results in less transparency but maximum ludicity. Based on the analysis of variable English-Italian blends as well as on Italian translations of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and its sequel *Though the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There*, she is right in highlighting how genre conventions and discourse modes interact with the selection of word formation technique and the type of WP at work. The study can be seen as a descriptive contribution to the literature on lexical blending as wordplay in Italian (p. 331).

Paulo Jeferson, Pilar Araújo & Thaisy Bendes contribute to the discussion of WP in different language settings from variable perspectives with the presentation of literary pun translations in the Brazilian Sign Language. In their chapter "(Un)punslatable *Alice* in Signland: Wordplays in Brazilian Sign Language (Língua Brasileira de Sinais-LIBRAS)", they present evidence from punning strategies in the US American and the Brazilian sign languages and they discuss the translatability (Delabatista 2004) of Lewis Carroll's wordplay in Brazilian Portuguese and LIBRA. They report strategies for the playful compression of meaning and form such as producing signs simultaneously, substituting, merging or blending signs, which bear structural similarities to the ones employed by non-deaf interlocutors. The authors conclude that oral-auditory WP can be translated in visual-spatial languages such as LIBRA, provided that deaf community cultures and distinct world views are taken into account in the selection and interpretation of the combinations of signs that perform the signplay. Having conducted a preliminary study which focused on the translation of literary puns but has not monitored their perception by recipients, they acknowledge the need for further research on humorous WP and its translation in different sign languages and communities.

Finally, in her chapter entitled "*Sie haben feuchte Nüsse* – The translation of verbal humour in verbal subtitles of US American sitcoms", Sylvia Jaki explores the German subtitles of three US American situation comedies, namely *Big Bang Theory*, *New Girl*, and *Grace and Frankie*. Focusing on language play, the aim of the study is to discuss the translatability of humorous puns and to address the specificities of subtitling. The author discusses the audio-visual challenges in translating humour in sitcoms in a comprehensible and concise way. However, the quite ambitious aims of the study are not served by the highly simplified summary of verbal humour analytic concepts (the section on verbal humour fails to appear in the chapter, p. 358) and the insufficient documentation of the humorous instances in the sitcoms examined, both in the original versions and in their German translations. Nor is it clear what the size of the minicorpus is and what the total number of the humorous instances are. Therefore, quantitative information on the number of occurrences of different types of language play in the database does not make much sense. Qualitative analysis of the examples is quite superficial and the lack of glosses for the German translations renders the argument incomprehensible for readers who are not fluent German speakers. What is more, the clear-cut distinction between translations of humour in dabbing and subtitling is problematic as both techniques have similar aims and restrictions. Last but not least, the ethnography of subtitling processes could shed light to the translating procedures followed by mass entertainment agencies and serve as a direction for further research.

Humorous multilingual practices is a parameter of bilingual discourse that has not been discussed extensively in the relevant literature so far. Despite the fact that research on the pragmatics of bilingual conversation and the pragmatics of humour and wordplay is quite abundant, a combination of both, as well as of research on multilingual discourse practices in other genres that either host international discourse modes -such

as mass entertainment and advertising- or translation, have yet to be examined. In this line of research, the present volume, part of the *Dynamics of Wordplay* series, explores the sociocognitive and pragmatic perspectives of wordplay in general and multilingual wordplay in particular. Contributions to the volume aim to investigate wordplay in different oral, written/literary, and mass-media genres as well as the translatability of humorous puns in different historical periods, discourse traditions, communicative situations and contexts (p. 1).

As far as oral genres are concerned, humorous switches in bi/multilingual conversations contextualise the boundaries of sequences, the construction of the voice of others in narratives, the exploitation of vocabulary discrepancies as well as the construction of identities of "otherness", the management of face-threat, dis/affiliation and bonding (Georgalidou & Kaili 2018). In this context, wordplay that crosses language boundaries proves an important aspect of communication which does not necessarily presuppose advanced bilingual competence. What is more, multilingual wordplay in oral, written and the new multimodal genres as well as in linguistic landscapes exploits internationalised vocabularies, cognate language structures, and the ludic combination of items from different linguistic codes to addresses multiple audiences in an attempt to establish solidarity and enhance the memorability of the advertised message.

It is in these contexts that research on bi/multilingual wordplay (MWP) has attracted the interest of an increasing number of scholars. The emphasis has so far been placed mostly on the semantic and cognitive aspects of MWP and the competence underlying the coding and decoding processes. The present volume is an attempt to take the discussion one step further towards the sociolinguistic parameters of punning via different languages and codes and the transferring of humour from one language to another. In this sense, the volume is a most welcome addition to the relevant research. Not only does it acknowledge the significance of usage-based interactional approaches, but it also enriches the literature and expands its scope by exploring MWP in multiple linguistic landscapes, literary genres and visual-spatial languages.

Given the above, one would expect that the introduction to the volume would provide an overview of existing studies on bi/multilingualism and humour and would explore the relationship between the chapters and previous research questions and findings. However, despite the fact that the first part of the volume is devoted to different paradigms of research on the topic, the theoretical discussion is quite fragmentary and may leave readers wondering how the various approaches presented in the volume form a coherent theoretical proposal for the study of bi/multiligual competence *and* performance. What is more, the usage-based approach advocated as the overall framework for the multidimentional approaches to the phenomena and the texts examined is not systematically supported with evidence based on the actual production and negotiation of wordplay in real-time situations. Contributions mostly focus on written genres, mass communication, and linguistic landscapes and the semantic and cognitive parameters of ludic language mixing practices, whereas the sociolinguistics of multilingual wordplay are marginally examined. Thus, a more elaborate proposal for the study of MWP playful performances is still pending. Last but not least, the point of view of the reader of the volume is not always taken into account as translations and glosses for examples in languages other than English are conspicuously absent in a number of contributions.

Undoubtedly, the volume offers insightful ideas and perspectives to those interested in MWP. Future research could concentrate more on fieldwork on specific domains, genres, and WP strategies which demonstrate producers' and recipients'

processing and perception of humorous WP and will not merely infer what interlocutors' pragmatic intentions are. Important questions are thus raised: for example, what kind of data and what methodological and analytical tools are suitable for investigating the parameters of ludic multilingual performance? Answering such questions will help us delve into both multilingual competences and performance as well as the humorous aspect of language mixing practices. In my view, the focus should be also placed on humour not just as an attempt to solidarity and a means for sharing positive affects (Hay 2000), but also on its potential to serve both as a face enhancing and a face threatening activity.

Despite the above reservations, the volume is recommended not only to those interested in WP but also to those interested in multilingual competences and performance in general. It also sheds light on the sociolinguistic of crossing languages to play with words in different text-types and situations highlighting different aspects of humorous punning, and, hopefully, paves the way for more relevant research to come.

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