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Linguistic mechanisms as a source of humour as reflected in the use of cooperative and politeness principles

Abstract

The present study aims at confronting the theoretical knowledge of Grice's Cooperative Principle and Leech's Politeness Principles with the functioning of humour reflected in 25 randomly selected Polish jokes. Some basic assumptions and characteristics of the abovementioned theories and principles will be discussed and, in addition, the understanding and interpretation of the selected jokes will be dealt with. Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that in both The Cooperative and Politeness Principle, a number of conversational maxims is disobeyed, breached and flouted with a view to achieving a goal: the formation of a number of implicatures which convey additional meanings which contribute to the occurrence of humorous effects. Apart from the violation of the maxims, one can observe violation of certain social norms as reflected in the behaviour of the protagonists and the situations described in the jokes analyzed.

Keywords: humour, principle of politeness, Cooperative Principle (CP), Politeness Principle (PP), maxims, ambiguity, implicature, violation, flouting

1. Introduction

It is common knowledge that humour plays a significant role in human life. Regardless of our age, sex, status, culture and norms, each of us can find things funny or hilarious. The only difference is that whereas for some people some things will be very funny, for others they will not be so funny (Raskin, 1985: 2).

This paper deals with humour as reflected in selected jokes. Hence, various types of jokes as well as the structure of the jokes will be discussed. The linguistic analysis of the selected jokes will be done within the frameworks of pragmatic theories – the principle of politeness which include Grice's Cooperative Principle and conversational maxims (1975), and similarly Leech's Politeness Principle and politeness maxims (1983). The analysis will be based on the functioning of the maxims – their observation and violation and the way we obtain humorous effects.

1.1. The scope of study

The study focuses on the analysis of Grice's cooperative principles and maxims, politeness principle proposed by Leech.

1.2. Research questions

In the article, the following research questions are formulated:

- What cooperative principles are observed and flouted in the selected jokes?
- What politeness principles are observed and flouted in the selected jokes?
- In what way do the observation and flouting of both cooperative and politeness principles cause laughter?

1.3. Objectives of the study

- to analyze the incidence of observing and flouting of cooperative principles
- to analyze the incidence of observing and flouting of politeness principles
- to determine the functioning of cooperative and politeness principles in the creation of humorous effects

2. Literary review

The following chapter deals with the most significant theories of humour, a joke, types of jokes, connection and disjunction and finally selected theories on politeness which will serve the basis for the analysis of the jokes analyzed.

2.1. Research on humour

The most influential theories on humour are the following: *The Superiority Theory*, advocated by Aristotle and Hobbes and based on humour which reflects our sense of superiority towards others where we make fun of others defects, shortcomings and misfortune, *The Release Theory*, advocated by Freud and based on releasing tension and achieving relaxation and pleasant mood and finally *The Incongruity Theory*, which is one of the most influential, based on the occurrence of incongruent, inconsistent parts and deliberate ambiguity of the text of the joke, two or more interpretations and the unreal nature of one of the interpretations.

The linguistic research on humour is done both semantically and pragmatically. In the field of semantic study, *The Semantic Script Theory of Humour (SSTH)* developed by Raskin (1985) with the key notion of a “script” and the combination of scripts, that is the script oppositions with an alternative interpretation of the story (Raskin, 1985).

The General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH), which developed from SSTH, is a linguistic theory which gives more room for other linguistic areas, such as textual linguistics, the theory of narrativity and pragmatics – all of this is achieved by the addition of 5: Knowledge Resources: The script opposition (SO), the logical mecha-

nism (LM), the target (TA), the narrative strategy (NS), The language (LA), and the situation (SI) (Attardo, 1994: 222-223).

2.2. The notion of a joke

A *joke* constitutes a brief, amusing story which ends in a punch line. It consists of a *setup* and a *punch line*. Whereas the former is responsible for creating in the listener a specific set of expectations about the scenario, the latter involves a sudden, abrupt shift of the meaning unexpectedly and funnily: “The setup, which includes all but the last sentence, creates in the listener a particular set of expectations about how the situation should be interpreted. The punch line suddenly shifts the meaning in an unexpected and playful way, thus creating the perception of nonserious incongruity that is necessary for humour to occur” (Rod, 2007: 11).

Jokes are divided into: *verbal / linguistic* and *situational / referential* (Attardo, 1994: 95). Whereas the former are based on play with words, puns (humorous use of a word which evokes another meaning and interpretation) and ambiguity (lexical, structural, etc.) and the form of the structure, the latter are based on the arrangement of a particular scenario. If we substitute a word or phrase with another one and if the joke is still funny, it means that it is a referential joke. If we replace a word or phrase with another one and if the joke is not funny anymore, it is a linguistic joke as the funniness of the joke is based on a particular word or phrase which must not be replaced.

When analyzing jokes, it is necessary to distinguish between two terms – *disjunctors* and *connectors*. Whereas the former pertains to both verbal and referential jokes, the latter is reserved for only verbal / linguistic jokes but is not indispensable since there are some mechanisms in verbal jokes which are not based on ambiguity or polysemy (Matuszewska, 2007: 167). *Disjunctors* enables us to pass from one interpretation to another, which functions in both types of jokes: “The basic enabling condition for the disjunctors to operate is clearly the possibility to perform a passage from the first sense to the second one” (Attardo, 1994: 96). *Connectors* constitutes two or even more meanings of the same word or expression – it constitutes any segment of text that can be given two distinct readings (Raskin, 1985).

In order to demonstrate the difference between verbal and referential jokes and the disambiguation process based on the functioning of disjunction and connection, let us look at the examples given below:

Woman: “I know how to please a man.”

Man: “Then please leave me alone.”

Therefore, the example given above constitutes a typical verbal / linguistic joke in which the functioning is based on the lexical ambiguity of the word “please”, which functions here as a connector and which in turn contributes to the funniness of the joke.

Similarly, the joke below is based on the occurrence of the phraseological expression “to pay for something” which has two distinct meanings – literal and figurative and thus functions as both a connector and disjunctor:

“Daddy,” a little boy asked his father. “How much does it cost to get married?”
“I don’t know, son. I’m still paying for it!”

However, the example below, which is a situational / referential joke, depicts a typical everyday situation at home where a husband gets back home and talks to his wife. The conversation is ordinary until the punch line, which is undoubtedly unusual.

A man gets home, runs into his house, slams the door and shouts: “Honey, pack your bags. I won the lottery.” The wife says: “Wow! That’s great! Should I pack for the ocean, or should I pack for the mountains?”

He says: “I don’t care. Just get the fuck out.”

Similarly, the joke below is also situational / referential since “Two...or maybe three?”, which serves as a disjunctor as it allows us to obtain another interpretation, can be replaced with i.e. “four or five” and the joke will still be funny.

-My wife claims that I don’t take care of my children. I can’t stand it anymore!

-How many children have you got?

-Two...or maybe three?

In the next example, the last utterance, which is a disjunctor, provides us with another interpretation, which contrary to our expectations brings forth laughter:

W samolocie odzywa się żona do męża i mówi: Ci ludzie z powietrza wyglądają jak malutkie mrówki. Na to facet z tyłu się odzywa: Bo to są mrówki – my jeszcze nie lecimy.

On a plane a blond says to a guy:

-These people from the top look as if they were ants.

The guy responds: These are ants, we are not flying yet.

If we analyze the next joke, we will realize that it is also situational / referential. Nevertheless, the force of the swearword “spierdoliła” – “fucked up” makes the joke funnier albeit if we replaced it with another word, such as “spieprzyła”, “zniszczyła”, “spaprała” etc., the joke would still be funny. Rabbit’s last utterance serves as a disjunctor thanks to which we are provided with another, new and at the same time funny interpretation:

Przychodzi królik do apteki. – 200 prezerwatyw proszę! Pani magister wydaje towar i mówi: – E... przepraszam, ale mamy tylko 199 sztuk... Królik się zmarszczył. Spojrzał na panią magister z wyrzutem i mówi: - No dobra ... biorę ... ale oświadczam, że z lekka mi pani spierdoliła wieczór!

A rabbit comes to a pharmacy.

-200 condoms, please!

-The pharmacist gives them to him and says:

-I'm sorry, but we have only got 199 condoms.

The rabbit looked at the pharmacist with the frown and said with a remorse:

-OK, I'll take them, but I assure you that you fucked up my evening!

The joke below is also based on the incidence of a swearword which can be substituted by many other synonyms and the joke will still be equally funny. "Wszyscy czterej wypierdalać!" – "All the four get the fuck out of here!" functions as a disjunctive as it allows for a completely new interpretation:

Siedzi dziadek na bujanym fotelu, pali fajeczkę, nagle ktoś łomocze do drzwi.

- Kto tam?

- Jean Claude Van Damme.

- Nie znam! Wszyscy czterej wypierdalać!

An old man sits in an armchair, smokes a pipe and suddenly someone bangs at the door.

-Who's there?

-Jean Claud Van Damme.

-I don't know you and all the four – get the fuck out of here!

2.3. Cooperative and politeness theories and principles

It is necessary to define the term *politeness* as the analysis lies within the framework of politeness theories – more specifically Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975) and Leech's Politeness Principle (1983).

It is crude to stress that politeness depends on a context. A context determines a degree of formality on the part of the speakers from direct to indirect forms depending on who we talk to and in what circumstances. Moreover, the degree of formality is also determined by a culture – some cultures favour a more direct style, others an indirect style of communication. Finally, there are a number of other – extra-linguistic variables, such as the speaker's status, social role, age etc. Hence, when participating in a conversation, politeness becomes a question of appropriateness (Fraser, 1990). Regardless of the factors which influence the degree of formality, one cannot state that some cultures or languages are more polite than the other.

2.3.1. Grice's Cooperative Principle

The Cooperative Principle was introduced by Paul Grice who put forward 4 sub-principles referred to as maxims which guide conversation (Yule, 1996: 37):

1) *The Maxim of Quality*: make true contributions, tell the truth, be truthful:

(i) Do not say what you believe to be false

(ii) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence

For example, on the assumption that Robert's girlfriend is fed up with him and loves someone else, if Robert asked her "Do you love me" and if she answered "Yes, I do", it would definitely constitute a violation of a maxim of quality as the contribution on the part of the girlfriend would not be truthful whatsoever.

2) *The Maxim of Quantity*: be as informative as required and do not be more informative than required; give the right amount of information when talking, don't say too little or too much

(i) Make your contribution as informative as required for the current purposes of the exchange in which you are engaged

(ii) Do not make your contribution more informative than is required

The amount of information should be adapted to the question in a particular exchange (Aitchison, 1995: 94). For instance, if someone asked me "Who's the person in the corner?", "That's my neighbour" would be a cooperative reply, as opposed to an over-brief one "Some man" or an over-long reply "That's my neighbour who used to live in the suburbs of New York for a long time and whose favourite pastime was jogging late in the evening in Central Park" which both would be regarded as uncooperative responses.

3) *The Maxim of Relation / Relevance*: be relevant

For instance, a teacher asks his student "Why didn't you prepare yourself?" and his answer is "May I open the window? It's so stuffy in here". In this example, despite the fact that the student's answer is not relevant to the teacher's question, the student might be trying to avoid answering the uncomfortable question on the part of the teacher. As a result, one can make one or more interpretations out of the utterance thanks to making inferences.

4) *The Maxim of Manner*: be perspicuous, that is avoid obscurity, ambiguity, unnecessary prolixity, be brief, clear and orderly

(i) Avoid obscurity

(ii) Avoid ambiguity

(iii) Avoid unnecessary prolixity

(iv) Be orderly

For example, one person asks the other: A: "Did you enjoy the conversation with my new girlfriend in the pub?" and B responds: "There were so many people screaming their heads off and they were so noisy that ... and I couldn't concentrate on ...". B's response, which constitutes a lengthy, protracted description, is quite obscure, chaotic and does not satisfy interlocutor A.

In a natural setting, we often communicate a lot more than say and as a result contribute to the formation of implicatures. If the meaning of the utterance is understood linguistically and pragmatically, that is if all the extralexical information, such as implicatures, indirect speech acts, inference rules etc. are internalized (Raskin, 1985: 75), communication between the speakers is effective and unimped-

ed. It is common knowledge that communication is successful due to the cooperation which occurs amongst interlocutors. Moreover, even though a particular utterance is somewhat vague, each of us is able to make adequate interpretations and find a hidden meaning albeit it is not given on the surface. If a maxim is broken and we are still assuming that the cooperation is in progress, the violation can be taken as a sign that another message is being conveyed indirectly and forms the basis for inferences – this is referred to as an *implicature*. “In brief, listeners interpret what people say as conforming to the cooperative principle, even when this principle is overtly broken. They draw implications from the utterance which are not strictly there in the linguistic meanings” (Aitchison, 1995: 95).

A: Come over – we’ll have some beer and chat a little.

B: I’d love to, but I need to get it done as soon as possible.

On making appropriate interpretations, we obtain an expression of refusal albeit it is clear that in the utterance in which ‘no’ did not appear: “Something that isn’t said nevertheless gets communicated” (Yule, 1996: 81).

According to Grice’s assumptions, there are two circumstances under which implicatures appear. Firstly, in order to interpret implicatures, one must observe the cooperative principle: “Implicatures are primarily examples of more being communicated than said, but in order for them to be interpreted, some basic cooperative principle must first be assumed to be in operation” (Yule, 1996: 36). As a result, even though the speaker follows the Cooperative Principle (CP), the hearer might be confused. Secondly, an implicature might be caused by a purposeful, deliberate breaching or flouting of one (or more) of the maxims (Cruse, 2011:420). Admittedly, both the cooperative principle and the maxims should be observed to avoid confusion, misunderstandings and be successful in communication. If we violate any of them, communication might be hampered (Stilwell Peccei, 1999: 27). “These maxims can be flouted, that is, not obeyed. When they are, they typically entail or imply another meaning. Thus meaning is affected both by adherence to the maxims and by their being flouted” (Chaika, 1994: 159).

Breaking or violating one of the maxims might result in making a conversation unclear, fuzzy and muddled which cannot be successful. However, violation of the maxims might also cause humorous effects and laughter. One type of humour is a joke which is based on the violation of Grice’s co-operative principle in which case one or some of the maxims are not abided by. Due to the ambiguities and incongruities which impede communication, one contributes to the occurrence of humour – that is humour occurs through the violation of the maxims: «*Language, despite being rule-governed, is replete with ambiguities and incongruities, which operate at the different levels of linguistic organization – phonological, morphological, lexical, syntactical and semantic,...*» (McLoughlin, 1997). In other words, non-observances of the maxims gives rise to the creation of new, additional, hidden meanings which are not given on the surface.

Thus, Raskin (1985) put forward his own Cooperation Principle based on four maxims: *-maxim of quantity*: give exactly as much information as necessary for the joke
-maxim of quality: say only what is compatible with the world of the joke
-maxim of relation: say only what is relevant to the joke
-maxim of manner: tell a joke efficiently (Raskin, 1985: 103).

2.3.2. Leech's Politeness Principle

Politeness constitutes a very important aspect in obtaining, maintaining and enhancing the interpersonal relationship with other interlocutors. Leech's proposal of the Politeness Principle must not be ignored since it plays a very crucial role in communication amongst human beings. It is based on two main general assumptions:

- 1) Minimize the expression of impolite beliefs
- 2) Choose expressions which minimally belittle the hearer's status (Cruse, 2011: 426).

For Leech, politeness pertains to such forms of behaviour that facilitate personal and social interaction and enable interlocutors to maintain an atmosphere of harmony. It is also important to stress the distinction between positive politeness (attempt to avoid discord) and negative politeness (attempt to seek concord). Whereas the former is associated with making compliments and being gracious, the latter is based on mitigating an imposition via hedging, being pessimistic, demonstrating deference, expressing an apology or impersonalizing.

Similarly to Grice's maxims, Leech puts forward another set of maxims pertaining to the Politeness Principle:

- 1) *The Tact Maxim*:
 - (i) Minimize cost to the hearer
 - (ii) Maximize benefit to the hearer

There are a number of utterances which function as a request or a command. According to The Tact Maxim, the imposition which we order is associated with the cost and benefit of the hearer and depending on the speaker's politeness, the effect or force of the imposition might either be softened or strengthened. The softening of the imposition is based on facilitating the refusal on the part of the hearer, as in "Open the window", "Could you open the window?", "I was wondering if you could possibly open the window". Whereas it is more polite to soften cost to the hearer, it is more polite to strengthen benefit (beneficial impositives) to the hearer, as in "Have a whale of a time at the party" vs "I was wondering if you could possibly have a whale of a time at the party".

- 2) *The Generosity Maxim*:
 - (i) Minimize benefit to self
 - (ii) Maximize cost to self

According to politeness principles, in case of offers, benefit to the hearer and cost to the speaker are made and in case of requests, benefit to the speaker should be softened, as in the following utterances: “Let me carry the luggage for you”, “I was wondering if I could carry the luggage for you” (offer), “I want to smoke”, “Could I possibly smoke?” (request)

3) *The Approbation Maxim:*

- (i) Minimize dispraise of the hearer
- (ii) Maximize praise of the hearer

4) *The Modesty Maxim:*

- (i) Minimize praise of oneself
- (ii) Maximize dispraise of oneself

Both the Maxims of Approbation and Modesty pertain to expressing positive or negative opinions about the speaker or the hearer, as in:

A: Do you like my new shirt? B: No, I don't. vs. B: Well, yes, but it's not my favourite colour

A: I am so absent-minded at times! B: Yes, you are vs. B: Not at all – you are exaggerating!

A: You did an outstanding job! B: Yes, I did – there's no question about that, right?! vs. B: Well, it's not a big deal, is it?.

A: What a nice shirt you're wearing! B: It is nice, isn't it? vs. B: Well, it's quite old – I've had it for ages.

5) *The Agreement Maxim:*

- (i) Minimize disagreement with the hearer
- (ii) Maximize agreement with the hearer

Before expressing any kind of disagreement, it is advisable to begin with agreement partially (Cruse, 2011:430), as in the following utterance:

A: He should be punished – we cannot put up with such inappropriate behaviour.

B: I disagree with you, Sir. vs. B: Generally yes, but I'm afraid that in this particular case ...

6) *The Sympathy Maxim:*

- (i) Maximize sympathy (expression of positive feelings) towards the hearer
- (ii) Minimize antipathy (expression of negative feelings) towards the hearer

This maxim can be observed when expressing congratulations, condolences, etc.

7) *The Consideration Maxim* (as a separate principle – the Pollyanna Principle):

- (i) Minimize the hearer's discomfort / displeasure
- (ii) Maximize the hearer's comfort / pleasure

The Consideration Maxim refers to weakening or softening the force of an utterance by means of various devices, such as indirectness, using euphemisms etc, as in the following instances:

“What you are saying is a load of crap!” vs. “What you are saying is nonsense!”
 “Your uncle kicked the bucket! vs. “Your uncle passed away!”

Apart from the 7 maxims discussed above, there are two more principles proposed by Leech:

-*The Irony Principle*, i.e. “Thank you so much” (said to someone who spilled beer on you)

-*The Banter Principle*, i.e. “You lucky bastard” (said to someone close who got through the exam although he did not study much).

“There are two basic possibilities here; one can be superficially polite, but patently insincere, leading to rudeness by implicature, or one can be superficially rude, but patently insincere, leading to politeness by implicature” (Cruse, 2011: 431).

3. Data analysis and discussion

We intend to analyze 25 selected Polish jokes taken from the Internet. The jokes – both verbal and situational, have been selected randomly and vary thematically as they are about men, women, students, secretaries, bosses, teachers, friends, lovers, and describe various forms of behaviour in a number of situations. The analysis pertains to the conversational maxims and politeness principles discussed above.

1) Siedzi kilku informatyków i cały czas rozmawiają o komputerach. W końcu jeden mówi:

-Słuchajcie, pogadajmy o czymś innym, np. o dupach...

Nastąpiła chwila ciszy i konsternacja. Po czym jeden się odzywa:

-Moja karta graficzna jest do dupy.

There are some computer scientists talking about computers. One of them says:

-Listen, let's talk about something else, for example about cunts.

After a moment of silence and consternation, one of them says:

-My graphic card sucks.

This verbal joke provokes laughter due to the ambiguous meaning of the word „dupy” – “cunts / sucks”. Thus “dupy” constitutes a connector which provides us with two distinct interpretations. Whereas the first meaning refers to girls used in an offensive way (“cunt”), the second interpretation pertains to a bad quality of something (“sucks”). The last response is not relevant to what has been said above (and thus the maxim of relevance is violated) and gives way to the formation of an implicature and a new meaning. Similarly, on the assumption that the utterance “pogadajmy o dupach” – “let's talk about cunts” is ambiguous, one can state that the maxim of quantity

is violated since the interlocutor did not provide sufficient information as to what in fact he is referring to. Undoubtedly, the communication is not effective due to the misunderstanding. Taking into account Leech's maxims, one can state that the consideration maxim is flouted due to the use of the offensive word "dupy".

2) Do firmy przyszedł hydraulik naprawić WC. Wszedł do kancelarii i pyta sekretarkę:

-No to gdzie jest ten sracz?

Sekretarka nieśmiało odpowiada:

-Pan dyrektor jest właśnie na obiedzie.

-Ale pani mnie źle zrozumiała – mam na myśli te dwa zera.

-Zastępcy dyrektora mają naradę.

-Ale pani złota, ja się pytam, gdzie tu się gówno robi?

-Aha... rachunkowość jest piętro niżej...

A plumber comes to a plant to fix the toilet. He enters the office and asks the secretary:

-Where is this shit?

-The boss is currently having dinner.

-You misunderstood me – I mean these two zeros.

-The executives are at a meeting.

-Darling, I am asking you where you take a crap here.

-Aaahhh ... accounting is upstairs.

This is another linguistic joke which is based on ambiguity. The plumbers offensive words "sracz" – "shit", and "dwa zera" – "two zeros" refer to the toilet for ladies. The secretary is apparently confused and the communication is a total failure. The secretary did probably not see plumbers in the workers and was convinced that they were referring to her managers and colleagues in a derogatory, disrespectful, offensive way. In terms of Leech's politeness principle – based on the plumbers' way of referring to the toilet, the consideration maxim is violated as it causes displeasure and might make the secretary feel uncomfortable if not disgusted by the plumber's language – both the directness and the choice of words.

3) Przychodzi chłopak do szkoły i mówi do swoich kolegów:

-Byłem u dziewczyny...

-I co, i co???

-Waliłem caaaaaałą noc!!

-Łooo!!!!!!

-...i nikt nie otworzył!

A boy comes to school and says to his friends, bragging:

-I was at my girlfriend's place.

-And what, and what?

-I was banging all night long!

-Wwwwoowww!!!

-And nobody opened the door!

„Waliłem” – “I banged” is ambiguous since in this context it has two different meanings – “to knock at the door” and in slang “to have sex”. The expectations which we form before make us think that the protagonist had a great time making love to his girlfriend. However, the last utterance – “...i nikt nie otworzył!” – “and nobody opened the door!” provides us with another interpretation – that he was unable to enter. This provokes laughter as the action of making love is definitely much more pleasant than knocking at the door all night. Similarly, the violation of the consideration maxim can be observed by the use of the verb “waliłem” – “I banged” with reference to a sexual activity, as opposed to more polite synonymous expressions “uprawiałem miłość / seks” or “kochałem się” – “I made love” or “I had sex”. However, the use of the word is also justified taking into consideration the protagonist's interlocutors who are his friends. Moreover, linguistically, this word is obligatory for the joke to be funny. Thanks to the disjunctive “i nikt nie otworzył” – “And nobody opened the door” we obtain the other meaning of the connector “waliłem” – “I banged” – that is “to have sex”.

4) Sekretarka odbiera telefon:

- Niestety szef jest na naradzie, ale jeśli ma pan bardzo pilną sprawę, to go obudzę...

A secretary answers the phone:

-Unfortunately boss is at a meeting, but if it's urgent, I will wake him up...

Thanks to the secretary's utterance, we infer that she is not telling the truth. Thus she violates the maxim of quality by making a false contribution. This makes the communication uncooperative as “to go obudzę” – “I will wake him up”, which is a disjunctive in this respect, does not fit to what has been said before.

5) Przychodzi szczęśliwy mąż do domu i mówi do żony:

-Kochanie wygrałem w totka, pakuj się.

-Och to wspaniale – gdzie wyjeżdżamy?

-Nie, wypierdalaj!!!

A happy husband comes back home and says to his wife:

-Honey, I won the lottery – pack yourself!

-Oh, that's great! Where are we going anywhere?

-No, just get the fuck out of here!

The swearword used at the end of the joke (in a punch line) functions as a disjunctive – a segment which gives us a new interpretation and at the same time provides us with a humorous effect. It seems that the utterance “nie, wypierdaj” – “just get the fuck out of here!” violates the maxim of relation as it is not relevant to the wife's question “gdzie wyjeżdżamy?” – “Where are we going?”. It gives rise to an implicature that the husband is tired of his wife and due to the money which he won in a lottery, he does not need her any more. It also shows that he was financially dependent on her. Through the imperative form, which is a command, the husband violates the maxim of tact by maximizing benefit to himself. By the use of the swearword “wypierdaj” – “get the fuck out of here”, he violates the maxim of consideration maximizing his wife's discomfort – offending her and referring to her very rudely and thus making her feel uncomfortable.

6) Na egzamin w sesji letniej spóźniła się studentka. Wpada zdyszana i od progu błagalnym głosem woła:

-Panie profesorze, przepraszam za spóźnienie, ale zapomniałam wyłączyć żelazko.

-A czy przypadkiem nie zapomniała pani bielizny?

-Nie, w lecie nie noszę, panie profesorze...

A student shows up late for the exam. She runs into the classroom, panting and begs the professor:

-Professor, I'm sorry for being late, but I forgot to turn off the iron.

-And did you happen to forget your underwear too?

-No, professor, I don't wear underwear in the summer.

This is a conversation between a professor and his student. The questions which he asks her seem to violate the maxim of relation – especially taking into consideration the situation. However, in this context it is sarcastic and humorous and this is the professor's intention. The response given by the student lets us think that she understood the professor's question literally and thus came up with such a response. Nevertheless, the response is not relevant in this respect and is caused by the fact that the student did not understand the real intention in the question asked by the professor jokingly. With the student's misinterpretation, the sexual innuendo in the punch line, the confusion and embarrassment on the part of the professor, we obtain a humorous effect.

7) Ona do niego:

- Kochanie, koledzy z biura powiedzieli, że mam bardzo zgrabne nogi.
- Naprawdę? A nie wspomnieli nic o wielkiej dupie?
- Nie, o tobie nie rozmawialiśmy.

Two married people are talking:

- Honey, your colleagues from the office said that I had well-shaped legs.
- Really? Didn't they say anything about your big ass?
- No, we didn't talk about you.

In this joke, a wife is talking to her husband. The husband's question is misunderstood by her as according to his wife's interpretation – the word “dupa” – “ass” refers to him. It can be stated that the husband violates the maxim of quantity and manner by not providing enough information and thus being unclear (he did not specify which ass he was referring to). Additionally, the consideration maxim is also violated due to the use of “dupa” – “ass” instead of many other, more polite synonyms. The husband also flouts the approbation maxim since by the use of “wielka dupa” – “big ass” he does not minimize dispraise of his wife – in fact he expresses his opinion about her appearance negatively and scornfully.

8) W klasie pierwszej, prowadzonej przez bardzo seksowną i młodziutką nauczycielkę, w ostatniej ławce, tuż za Jasiem, zasiadł jaśnie pan dyrektor szkoły. Postanowił przeprowadzić wizytację na lekcji “najświeższej” w szkole nauczycielki. Pani, bardzo przejęta, odwróciła do klasy swe apetyczne, opięte krótką spódniczką pośladki, pisząc na tablicy: ”Ala ma kota.” Nawrót i pytanie do klasy: - Co ja napisałam? Martwota i przerażenie... Jedyne Jaś wrywa się jak szalony. No..., no..., Jasiu? Pani, z ogromnym wahaniem, dobrze już znając wyskoki tego łobuziaka, wezwała go do odpowiedzi.

- Ale ma dupę! – mówi Jaś.
- Pała! – wybuchła pani, czerwona na twarzy z oburzenia.
- Jasio też wściekły, siadając zwrócił się do tyłu, do dyrektora:
- Jak nie umiesz czytać, to nie podpowiadaj!

A new, young and sexy teacher is observed in class by the principal who sits in the back, just behind John – one of the pupils. The teacher, concerned about the whole situation turns her back to her pupils and writes on the blackboard:

-”Ala has a cat”. She asks her pupils what she has just written on the blackboard – What have I just written? No one responds – silence and consternation. John starts talking.

- She says: Yes, Johnny?
- What an ass!

-You fail! – said the teacher, red on her face and furious.

Also furious, John turns back to the principal and says to him: If you can't read, don't help me!

This is a situational joke which shows inappropriate behaviour on the part of the student and the principal who admired the teacher's aspects concerning her beauty. The disjunctive, which is reflected in the last utterance reveals us the fact that the offensive "Ale ma dupę!" – "What an ass!" has been uttered by the principal, not by the student.

9) W pierwszej klasie szkoły podstawowej, podczas lekcji biologii, pani pyta dzieci:

-Jakie dźwięki wydaje krowa?

Małgosia podnosi rękę:

-Muuuu, proszę pani.

-Bardzo dobrze, Gosiu. A jaki odgłos wydają koty?

Grześ podnosi rękę:

-Miauuu, proszę pani.

-Bardzo dobrze, Grzesiu, bardzo dobrze. A jaki dźwięk wydają psy?

Jasio podnosi rękę.

-No, Jasiu, powiedz - zachęca pani.

-Na ziemię skurwysynu, ręce na głowę i szeroko nogi.

A biology lesson, first form, a teacher asks her pupils:

-What sounds does a cow make?

Margaret raises her hand:

-Moo, teacher.

-Very good, Maggie. What sounds do cats make?

Greg raises his hand:

-Meow, teacher.

Very good, Greg, very good. And what sound do dogs (in English: pigs) make?

John raises his hand.

-John, come on, say it – encourages him the teacher.

-Get down on the ground, you fucking asshole and put your hands behind your back and put your legs together.

The use of the connector „psy” – “dogs / policemen”, which has two different meanings, provokes laughter in the joke. Although the lesson is based on the animals and the sounds which they produce, Jaś interprets the word “psy” as policemen. The teacher's question is not ambiguous due to the context given – the classroom, the topic of animals etc. However, out of context, it would not necessarily be so clear

if it refers to animals – just like cows and cats. For the sake of the joke, the double meaning of the word “psy” is justified and purposeful. The last utterance ”Na ziemię skurwysynu, ręce na głowę i szeroko nogi” – “Get down on the ground, you fucking asshole and put your hands behind your back and put your legs together” constitutes a disjunctive which opens new, unpredictable meanings and interpretations.

10) Mąż zastaje żonę z kochankiem w łóżku:

-Co ten facet robi w moim łóżku?!

-Cuda, cuda

A husband sees his wife with her lover in their bed:

-What is this guy doing in my bed?!

-Great things, great things!

In the situation shown above, we observe a betrayal on the part of a woman who is not preoccupied with the consequences of her action whatsoever. The answer which she gives to her husband is not relevant taking into account her husband's feelings. It is not normal to give such an answer to such a question in such circumstances (being caught red-handed). Thus, we observe the violation of the maxim of relevance, which gives us room for a number of implicatures, such as i.e. the fact that contrary to her lover, the husband is not so good at making love or that the wife is not satisfied with her sexual life with her husband, etc. Moreover, the wife violates Leech's consideration maxim by making him embarrassed about what he sees. Similarly, she flouts the sympathy maxim by being so honest and not feeling ashamed about what she is doing.

11) W dyskotecie dziewczyna pyta chłopaka stojącego przy ścianie:

-Masz wolny następny taniec?

On odpowiada: -Tak!!! Tak!!!

Ona na to z uśmiechem: -To potrzyмай mi colę.

At a disco a girl asks a boy standing by the wall:

-Do you happen to have a free dance?

He responds: -Yes!!! Yes!!!

She responds with a smile: -So hold my coke.

In this referential joke, we observe a conversation of two young people at the disco. The question asked by the girl is ambiguous since it makes the boy confused. Therefore, we observe the violation of the maxim of manner in which the girl does not avoid ambiguity. The confusion is caused by the fact that he was convinced that

the girl wanted to dance with him. The request she makes in the punch line leaves us no doubt that she is not interested in dancing with him. The disjunctive “To potrzy-maj mi colę” – “So hold my coke” is a request in the form of an imperative, which is not very polite. In this way, one observes the flouting of the tact maxim in which she maximized cost to the hearer instead, not to herself. Looking at the form of the utterance, she strengthens the effect of the request. Moreover, consideration maxim is also flouted as the request she makes is far from indirect, she makes no effort to weaken or soften the force of the utterance and in this way the discomfort on the part of the boy is maximized.

12) Córeczka pyta mamę:

-Dlaczego wyszłaś za tatusia?

-Ty, dziecko, też zaczynasz się dziwić?

A daughter asks her mother:

-Why did you marry daddy?

-Honey, you are also surprised by that, right?

Mother's question is not relevant to her daughter's query. Thus, the maxim of relation is flouted. The daughter expects to receive a response from her mother and instead she obtains a question. The mother's question is very informative – it encompasses a number of implicatures as to her husband's character and behaviour. The daughter's question "Dlaczego wyszłaś za tatusia?" – “Why did you marry daddy?” is ambiguous – it can be interpreted in two distinct ways: as a literal meaning it is a question for the real reason of the marriage on the part of the daughter and the second interpretation implies the husband's alleged bad character or inappropriate behaviour (or both). The hilarity of the joke is based on the implicatures about the husband, but also on the fact that the mother expresses overt criticism of her husband to her daughter, which in fact she should not be doing in this way.

13) Córeczka budzi się o trzeciej w nocy i prosi:

-Mamo, opowiedz mi bajkę.

-Zaraz wróci tatuś i opowie nam obu...

A daughter wakes up at 3 a.m. and asks her mother:

-Mummy, tell me a fairy-tale.

-Daddy will get back soon and he will tell both of us a fairy tale...

The word „bajka” – “fairy-tale” has two distinct readings here – literal and figurative. The daughter asks for the real fairy-tale whereas her mother, who is appar-

ently upset about the fact that her husband is not home with them, talks about a story made up by her husband. Thanks to mother's words, a number of implicatures are formed and we are provided with the information that her husband is not truthful, unreliable and even unfaithful (whatever he is doing and wherever he is at night – he is definitely not at home where he should be).

- 14) -Cześć stary, kopę lat, co u ciebie?
 -Ożeniłem się.
 -I co, lepiej?
 -Lepiej to chyba nie, ale na pewno częściej...

- Hello, what's up, dude. It's been a long time. How have you been?
 -I got married.
 -So what, is it better?
 -Maybe not, but more often.

This is another example of the exchange where communication is not successful. The protagonists are not cooperative at all since both of them violate the maxims. The first one violates the maxims of quantity and manner as he does not provide enough information to be understood well. As a result, the second protagonist does not give him a relevant answer due to the misunderstanding. Whereas the first one asks if it is better to be single or married, the second one thinks that he is being asked for sex. Thanks to the punch line, we reinterpret the whole situation and understand the humour. The word "stary" - "dude" is used in a friendly way to his friend (someone close) and functions as a polite implicature which means that politeness is not so necessary in this conversation. Hence, one observes the functioning of Leech's Banter Maxim where the word "stary" - "dude" confirms the men's strong and solid relationship.

- 15) -Słuchaj, czy patrzysz swojemu mężowi w oczy podczas stosunku?
 -Hmm... Raz spojrzałam... Stał w drzwiach.

- Listen, do you look into your husband's eyes while you are having sex?
 -Well, I looked once – he was standing in the doorway.

The protagonist's utterance „Stał w drzwiach” – “He was standing in the doorway” is very informative since thanks to that we learn that the woman makes love to someone else instead of her husband. This creates some other implicatures, pertaining to her infidelity etc. Undoubtedly, the protagonist's repulsive behaviour and disrespectful attitude towards her husband provokes laughter in us.

16) -Weź mnie - namiętnie mruczy żona.
-Oszalałaś? Przecież ja nigdzie nie wychodzę!

-Take me ! whispers the wife passionately.
-Are you out of your mind? I'm not going anywhere!

In this verbal joke, one observes play with words – double meaning of „weź” – “take”. The utterance “weź mnie” – “take me” is ambiguous – the first interpretation refers to “taking someone to a place” and the second one means “to have sex with someone”. Thus, “weź mnie” – “take me” serves as a connector in this respect. The disjunctive – which is reflected in the husband’s utterance “Oszalałaś? Przecież ja nigdzie nie wychodzę!” – “Are you out of your mind? I’m not going anywhere!” confirms that he completely misinterpreted his wife’s sexual offer. The wife flouted maxims of the cooperative principle – maxim of manner and quantity. Although she is brief, she is not clear enough in the way she offers sex to her husband. The maxim of quantity is flouted in the sense that she is not as informative as necessary in order to be understood. As far as Leech’s tact maxim is concerned, the request which she makes has the form of an imperative and in this way she does not soften the imposition and does not facilitate the possible refusal on the part of the husband. However, due to the first meaning of “weź mnie” – “take me” in the sense of having sex, close relationship of the interlocutors (husband and wife), the utterance does not strengthen the imposition.

17) Wraca mężczyzna całkowicie nawalony do domu, staje przed lustrem i bekając pyta:

-Lustreczko, lustreczko powiedz przecie – kto ma największego ch**a w świecie?
-Ja! - odzywa się kwaśno małżonka.

A stoned man comes back home, stands in front of the mirror and burping asks himself:

-Mirror, mirror, tell me, please, who has the biggest dick in the world?
-I have!, responds his wife bitterly.

The swearword used in this joke has two meanings – here it refers to a penis or colloquially to a man. It functions as a connector with its two distinct interpretations. The man’s question is ambiguous and violates the maxims of manner and quantity even though the context is given.

18) Świeżo poślubiona żona mówi do męża, który właśnie wrócił z pracy:
-Mam wspaniałą wiadomość. Niedługo będziemy mieszkać we trójkę!
Mąż nie posiadał się z radości. Ucałował żonę i powiedział:

-Och, kochanie, jestem najszczęśliwszym mężczyzną na świecie!
 -Cieszę się, że tak czujesz, bo jutro rano wprowadza się do nas moja mamusia.

A newly married wife says to her husband who has just returned from work.
 -I have great news for you. There will be three of us here soon.
 The husband responds with joy. He kisses his wife and says to her:
 -I'm the happiest man in the world!
 -I'm happy to hear that because my mother is moving in tomorrow.

The utterance “Niedługo będziemy mieszkać we trójkę!” – “There will be three of us here soon” is ambiguous and hence violates the maxims of manner and quantity. The husband's excitement is caused by the fact that he thinks that his wife is pregnant and that they are going to have a baby. She made herself unclear and did not provide sufficient information as to who the third person is. Admittedly, no one is so excited to live with a mother-in-law and thus the news about that cannot be “great”.

19) Młody nauczyciel i stary idą razem na lekcję. Młody – mnóstwo kserówek, pełno podręczników, dziennik pod pachą. Stary idzie na luzaka, niesie tylko klucz od klasy.

Młody mówi z zachwytem:

-Bardzo ładnie, podziwiam pana., po tylu latach pracy, to pan ma to wszystko w głowie?

-Nie synu, w dupie...

A young and an old teacher are going to class together. One of them – the young one, carries a lot of course books and materials under his armpit. The other one carries only a classroom key. The young one says with admiration:

-I really admire you – after so many years of work – you have all the knowledge in your head!

-No, son - in my ass ...

We observe a nice play with words thanks to which the joke is hilarious. Taking into account the question “to pan ma to wszystko w głowie?” – “you have all the knowledge in your head?”, the answer „Nie synu, w dupie” – “No, son – in my ass...” is not relevant and thus pens new interpretations – in this case the fact that the teacher does not care any more. Thus, the literal meaning is eliminated as the figurative interpretation appears. In terms of Leech's maxims, the more experienced teacher flouts the consideration maxim – his colleague might feel discomfort having heard the utterance.

20) Stoi pijaczek pod murem i sobie leje. Podchodzi policjant i pyta:

-A można to tak lać na ten mur?

-A co pan się pytasz – lej pan!

A drunkard stands near the wall and takes a piss. A policeman comes up to him and asks him:

-Is taking a piss allowed here?

-What are you asking for – just take a piss!

The question which the policeman makes is ambiguous since the maxim of manner is violated and as a result obtain the response “A co pan się pytasz - lej pan!” – “What are you asking for – just take a piss!” The policeman’s question functions as criticism – it is not asking permission. The disjunctive reflected in the last utterance provokes laughter because of the misinterpretation and the way the drunk man talks to the policeman. The use of the word “lać”, which is not polite, contributes to the hilarity of the joke. It is a violation of consideration maxim where the force of the word is strengthened, which in turn might evoke embarrassment or discomfort in the interlocutors – both the policeman and the drunk man, especially that they are strangers to each other.

21) Przychodzi facet do lekarza, twierdząc, że jest ogólnie w złej kondycji fizycznej. Lekarz poddał go całej serii badań, po czym mówi:

- Wie pan co? W tej chwili nie mogę dokładnie stwierdzić, co panu dolega, ale myślę, że to wszystko przez alkohol.

- A jest tu jakiś trzeźwy lekarz? - zapytał z ciekawości facet.

A man comes to the doctor and complains that he is not fit. The doctor examines him and says:

-You know what? I cannot determine exactly right now what your problem is, but I think that this is due to alcohol.

-And is there a sober doctor here? – asks the man curiously.

In his joke we witness another example of how communication fails due to non-observance of the maxims and leading to the formation of implicatures and misunderstandings. The doctor’s utterance “w tej chwili nie mogę dokładnie stwierdzić co panu dolega, ale myślę, że to wszystko przez alkohol” – “I cannot determine exactly right now what your problem is, but I think that this is due to alcohol” is ambiguous in the sense that the alcohol might refer to two protagonists – the patient or the doctor himself. Thus, according to Grice’s maxims, the doctor was not clear enough in his utterance and thus contributed to the misinterpretation on the part of the patient,

which brought forth a humorous effect. The patient's question "A jest tu jakiś trzeźwy lekarz?" – "And is there a sober doctor here?" – constitutes a disjunctive thanks to which the second interpretation which we obtain undeniably provokes laughter.

22) -Chodźmy pogratulować Mietkowi... Dziecko mu się urodziło.

-A co ma?

-Żytnią...

-Let's congratulate Mietek. His child has just been born.

-A what does he have?

-Żytnia.

The colloquial utterance in the form of a question "A co ma?" – "And what does he have?" is ambiguous in this context as it refers to two entities: the born child and the vodka. Hence, we can observe the flouting of the maxims of manner and quantity according to Grice's cooperative principle. The question is not clear enough and thus leads to confusion and misunderstanding. In terms of the maxim of manner – the utterance is obscure and ambiguous. In terms of the maxim of quantity – the utterance is not clear as it does not contain sufficient information in order to disambiguate the connector "A co ma?" – "And what does he have?"

23) Spotyka się dwóch kumpli:

-Cześć stary, słyszałem, że się ożeniłeś.

-Ożeniłem się...

-To musisz być szczęśliwy?

-Muszę...

Two friends meet:

-What's up, dude, I've heard that you got married.

-Yes, I did.

-So you must be happy!

-Yes, I must.

In the short exchange above, the modal verb "musieć" – "must" is used in two different functions – the first one as an assumption and the second one as an obligation. Thanks to the response, we infer that he is not very happy as a married man. The word "muszę" – "I must" forms an implicature – the information about his misfortune in a marriage. Taking into consideration the function of "musisz" – "you must" in the question, one can state that the response "muszę" – "I must" is not relevant and thus exemplifies the violation of the maxim of relation. It also constitutes

a disjunctive which gives us a new interpretation – our previous expectations about the man's alleged happiness are changed. The word "stary" – "dude" is used in order to stress solidarity between the men – this is an example of a polite implicature where Leech's Banter Principle is observed.

24) Rozmowa telefoniczna:

- Kochanie, co wolisz – banany czy truskawki?
- Na bazarze jesteś, skarbie?
- Nie, w aptece.

A telephone conversation:

- Honey, which do you prefer – bananas or strawberries?
- Are you in the market?
- No, in a pharmacy.

The protagonist in his joke violates the maxi of relevance as he does not specify what in fact he is referring to. The disjunctive "Nie, w aptece" – "No, in a pharmacy" forces us to reinterpret the meaning of the words and thanks to that we learn that he is talking about condoms and not fruit which undoubtedly cannot be purchased at the pharmacy. In other words, the adjunct of place "w aptece" – "in a pharmacy" provides us with a completely different meaning of the two words "banany" – "bananas" or "truskawki" – "strawberries" – that is "banana condoms" or "strawberry condoms".

25) Młode małżeństwo w hotelu:

- Pokój na dobę – mówi młody mąż.
- Ma pani szczęście – mruga portier do żony, zwykle bierze pokój na godzinę.

A young married couple in a hotel:

- A room for one night, please.
- You are lucky – winks the porter to his wife – he usually takes a room for an hour.

Thanks to the receptionist's excessive sincerity, the wife finds out about her husband's betrayals. Thanks to the disjunctive "zwykle bierze pokój na godzinę" – "he usually takes the rooms for an hour", one learns that the husband is not faithful to his wife and at the same time reveals the husband's true character and as a result causes an embarrassing situation.

5. Observations

The jokes were analyzed in terms of the politeness theories – that is Grice's Cooperative Principle and the conversational maxims and Leech's Politeness Principle and the maxims. Pragmatically, one can observe a high incidence of violation or flouting of maxims – both Grice's and Leech's. As far as the former is concerned, the highest incidence of violation pertains to the maxim of manner, relevance and quantity. The latter primarily concerns the maxim of consideration, but also maxims of tact and approbation.

The violations of the maxims serve for the creation of a number of implicatures, which is necessary to bring forth laughter and hilarity. The more maxims one violates, the more implicatures one obtains and at the same time other interpretations are in operation. The hidden meanings and the other interpretations which we obtain in the punch line cause us to laugh as we obtain them abruptly and unexpectedly and they are different to the set of expectations which we have beforehand. The violation of politeness maxims also contributes to the formation or strengthening of humorous effects.

It should also be stressed that the violation of one maxim means the violation of another one, i.e. flouting the maxim of quantity involves flouting the maxim of manner. Thus, one can state that in order to achieve humorous effects, more than one maxim is violated and as a result the force of the effect is strengthened.

One can also identify the violation of the social and cultural norms and conventions by the protagonists of the jokes, which also contributes to the funniness. The jokes presented in the article reflect a lot of information about the protagonists – their features, behaviour, way of talking, attitude towards others. Whatever is inappropriate, anti-social, against the established rules and norms – social, cultural etc. causes laughter. The protagonists are portrayed in a very negative way - as rude, offensive, insensitive, incompetent, lazy, unreliable, selfish, disrespectful, irresponsible, immature, stupid, frustrated, disappointed etc. However, apart from the pragmatic mechanisms, this is also indispensable in order to achieve humorous effects.

6. Conclusion

In this article, the humour in the form of jokes is analyzed within the framework of Grice's cooperative principle and Leech's politeness principle. The jokes analyzed are based on the violation of both conversational maxims and politeness maxims. In other words, the violation of these maxims contributed to the funniness of the given jokes.

It can be concluded that both cooperative and politeness principle are observable in the functioning of humour, but they often work together and as a result the force of the humorous effect is stronger. The nonobservance of the maxims is very

important, useful and efficient in explaining or facilitating to understand the functioning and the creation of humorous effects in the material analyzed.

Based on the linguistic mechanisms of the jokes analyzed, i.e. taking into consideration the occurrence and nonobservance of the maxims and as a result creation of a number of implicatures and thus other interpretations, one cannot deny the communicative impact of the jokes – such short texts and so rich and exhaustive in the content.

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