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Puns in Japanese advertisements

A serious approach on Japanese humour

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Abstract

Everyone knows that English is big on puns. However, most speakers of Japanese know that this is very much true for this language as well. Being aware of the poor attention western linguists have given Japanese puns, this thesis is trying to present, describe and classify several examples of Japanese puns from a western humour-theoretic perspective. This is done by first explaining modern theories on humour while presenting and comparing puns from both English and Japanese as examples. This part will especially focus on script theories concerning humour. After reviewing some general information on the Japanese pun and its development, the scope is aimed towards puns contained in advertisements (especially on TV) on which a small analysing will be performed. Before the analysis of Japanese TV-advertisements some data and past research on puns inside advertisements is presented. When performing the analysis I try to apply the theories discussed, there among script theories which, to my knowledge, never have been performed on Japanese puns. In doing this it becomes clear that although in need of further development, these theories do indeed present some interesting features of the analysed pun.

Keywords: Script theory, General Theory of Verbal Humor, Semantic Script Theory of Humor, GTVH, SSTH, commercials, humor, joke

Contents

Conventions and abbreviations

Glossing

The glossing basically follows the Leipzig glossing rules.

Romanization

The Hepburn system for Romanisation is used in this paper, although slightly modified. Instead of macrons to indicate long vowels double letters are used, as in *hookoku* 'report'. Geminate consonants are transcribed as double consonants, e.g. *koppu* 'glass'. Prefixes are separated from the main word with a hyphen this means that e.g. *mizu* (みず) with the prefix *o* (お) would be written as *o-mizu*.

Typographical conventions

Transcribed Japanese words occurring in the text are marked with italics, this does not apply to place names. Personal names will be marked with italics if spelled with their Japanese pronunciation, e.g. *Sanshiroo* instead of the western form Sanshiro, this for the sake of preserving the utterance in some examples, mostly they will be written in their western form though. The connector of the pun, the ambiguous words or phrases, are usually underlined in the examples. Single quotes have been used to mark translation of Japanese words and sentences in the text and examples. If nothing else is stated, all translations of the Japanese example sentences are my own.

Abbreviations

COUNT	counter	INS	instrumental
COP.ADN	copula, adnoun	LOC	locative
COP.NPAST	copula, nonpast	NOM	nominative
FP	final particle	NPAST	nonpast
GEN	genitive	OBJ	object marker
HON	honorific	PAST	past
HON.PAST	honorific, past	QP	question particle
IMP	imperative	TOP	topic

1. Introduction

1.1 The topic

"Whoever said that the pun is the lowest form of humor obviously didn't speak Japanese".

(Pulvers, 2008)

In this thesis it will be demonstrated that Japanese and punning make a formidable combination. As in English, puns have deep roots in the Japanese language and can be seen in written form since the time of the 8th century poetry anthology *manyooshuu* (Nagashima et al., 1999: 55). Puns and other wordplays have till this day remained a commonly occurring element in the Japanese poetry, but is, of course, also popular among other fields. One of the largest being TV-advertisements, known for their very odd and substandard way of presenting their products.

It stood quite clear to me (thanks to Japanese anime-series) long before beginning my studies in Japanese, how popular puns are in this language. Needless to say I found this rather amusing, which is the main reason, together with a bad sense of humour, to why this topic was chosen for this thesis.

1.2 The purpose and review on past research

The Studies on Japanese humour has for far too long been neglected by western humour-researchers. When searching for literature for this thesis and a smaller one written prior to this, I had great troubles in finding literature on Japanese humour, especially on puns. This is quite odd, considering how widespread the research on humour has become in this part of the world[1] one would think that a language so filled with humour would gain more attention.

The literature in English on Japanese puns is, as mentioned, very poor (if I am simply a bad finder of literature, please enlighten me). It is true that I have found some

[1] For a qualitative introduction to the present and past humour research see Attardo's section (and the others's by all means) in The Primer of Humor Research (2008: 101-155).

relevant literature, such as Maynard (2007), Tanaka (2005) and Davis (2006) supplying a good overview of the linguistics and usages of the Japanese pun. These are the most relevant to me, but I should mention that there does exist some works on the phonology of Japanese puns such as Kawahara and Shinohara (2009). What I missed while going through the existing literature on this subject, however, was a proper analytic view on the puns. Maynard, Tanaka and Davis all bring up examples and analyse them, but Davis is hardly taking it past explaining to the non-Japanese reader what the pun is about. Tanaka goes a little deeper when analysing puns in Japanese advertisements, but she keeps herself almost solely to the relevance theory presented by Sperber and Wilson in their book "Relevance: communication and cognition" from 1986. This is an interesting point of view, but she does not bring up much on the taxonomies of puns (as she herself mentions on page 65) or apply any other established theory of humour. Maynard briefly explains and discusses the relevance theory and the script theories but she does not truly apply them in her analysis. I would like to try to walk the same path as Tanaka as far as analysing puns in Japanese advertisements. However, I will not keep myself to solely analysing using the relevance theoretic view on puns in advertisements which is explained by Tanaka and briefly reviewed in 4.1 below. Raskin's (1985) and Attardo's (1994) script theories will also be applied while taking the taxonomies into consideration for the purpose of presenting analytic data on the puns and the commercials they are featuring in.

In short, the purpose of this thesis is to introduce and define the Japanese pun to the western public while at the same time trying to apply the script theories, along with the other theories presented, to puns in Japanese advertisements.

1.3 Methodology, structure and data

In the second chapter I present Attardo's and Raskin's script theoretical approach on verbal humour while at the same time looking at some other authors thoughts and research on these theories, trying to get my own opinion on how to apply them in practise. I first try to explain what a script is and how it applies to puns, since scripts will be used in the definitions of the two main classes of puns and their respective subclasses. When

the definition of both scripts and puns have been explained I proceed with presenting the General Theory of Verbal Humor which will be used in the analysis.

The next chapter touches upon the history of the Japanese pun and the reason to why it is so easy to create puns in Japanese. I base this chapter on Davis (2006), which is one of the few works in English giving an overall picture of Japanese puns. I also refer to Nagashima et al (1994) where the authors present a brief review on the history of the Japanese pun.

The fourth chapter reviews the relevance theoretic approach on puns in advertisements as seen in Tanaka (2005). I show some data found in Mulken et al. (2005) on how puns is appreciated in advertisements overall, followed by some specific data on the pun in Japanese TV-advertisement taken from Davis (2006) and Jina (2006).

In the fifth chapter I present my analysis of eight Japanese TV-advertisements containing puns. Here I try to apply the theories explained in the previous chapters and relate back to the examples presented together with the theories.

Chapter six is the conclusion of this thesis. In it I will discuss the results I have achieved from my discussion and analysis.

In Chapter seven I bring up what could be done to improve this thesis. I also provide suggestions on subjects that could be interesting to see as topics in a future study.

The examples have been retrieved from various sources e.g. from commercials posted on the website Youtube and a book containing Japanese jokes. These sources, which have supplied examples only, will be listed separately. I have also taken examples from websites dedicated to listing puns. I do not, however, leave any reference to them since these sites did not present them originally and since the puns creators are unknown. Some examples have been cited directly from the literature in which case this is noted.

2. Theories on humour

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will touch upon some past humour research relevant to puns. We will present the two main classes of puns, paradigmatic puns, where similar sound sequences[2] (words or phrases) are represented by a single ambiguous sound sequence:

(1) They're selling sushi in the cafeteria? Sounds fishy…

(Constructed item)[3]

And syntagmatic puns where all of the similar sound sequences are presented separately:

(2) Titanic in panic

(Kawahara and Shinohara, 2009: 113)

Other groups to which the pun can qualify, depending on how similar the ambiguous sound sequences are, would be either exact puns as in (1) or near puns as in (2). These classifications, among others, are what this section will make an effort to present and explain as clearly as possible. Also, theories concerning scripts by authors such as Salvatore Attardo and Viktor Raskin, the theory upon which the author intends to base his analyses in the upcoming study, will be presented.

A lot of the theory presented below applies to both puns and other jokes alike, which is why, when convenient, a non-pun joke (sometimes not even a joke) might be used to exemplify the theory.

There will be a lot of discussion concerning the person hearing the joke. This person will from here on be referred to as the receiver (of the joke).

Ritchie (2004: 116) makes an important note when mentioning that one could either compare the similar sound sequences as a whole or one could isolate the

[2] I will be referring to sound sequences throughout this thesis, even in the case of the pun being in written form since a written pun usually is intended to be read as if read aloud. I am aware that there are puns based on similar spelling (homographs) but these will not be brought up in this thesis.
[3] Inspiration to this example has to be attributed to a classmate of mine.

comparison to the sound sequences replacing each other. In this thesis the former alternative will be adopted. That is, I refer to the similar sound sequences as a whole, not the part that makes them different, e.g. th/s in thick/sick.

2.2 Script theory

Scripts will be a frequently used term in the upcoming discussion which is why it seems necessary to properly explain what a script is, and how it has been applied to theories on humour in modern research. Scripts (originally used in psychology but applied to linguistics by many authors, Raskin and Attardo among others) are circumstances surrounding a specific situation, person or thing, circumstances such as actions, people, things, in short, everything that can be expected to be relevant to whatever the script concerns.

A script can vary enormously in complexity, it could be very simple; “At the simplest level, a script is equivalent to the lexical meaning of a word.” (Attardo, 2001: 3), but a script could also be describing every slightest detail in any story. One picks up more and more scripts as one’s experiences grows, that is, one establishes clear views on how a certain situation usually is constructed as one experiences it, the more repetition the more accurate the script (Partington, 2006: 29-33).

Take as an example a visit to the supermarket, a happening that most people quickly establishes a quite standardised script for. One might expect to enter the building, pick up a cart, walk around the store, take what one needs, pay the cashier, etc. Other situations with typical scripts might be eating at the restaurant or visiting the doctor. Note that there in every situation, for every person, every thing, and every action etc, exists a script. Usually things go according to the script, otherwise they would not be found in the script.

It is common that a script is made of other scripts, such as the mentioned script of a visit to the shopping mall where smaller scripts exists such as a script for picking up something and put in one’s basket or handing over money to the cashier. Scripts such as the shopping-mall script where the subscripts appear in chronological order is by Raskin (1985: passim) called a macro script. On the other hand, a script where the subscripts

appear rather randomly, as in the script of a war, would by Attardo be referred to as a complex script (1994: 200)

Raskin and Attardo argues that one could view the unexpected turns found in a pun as a sudden switch from one script to another (Attardo, 1994: 203). The pun is usually constructed so that the receiver will begin thinking of one script and expects the story to, as always, follow the script, but suddenly something happens in the narration that does not belong to the present script, something that forces the receiver to backtrack the story and try with another, more suitable script (Attardo, 1994: 140; Partington, 2006: 28-29). Let us try to explain this through the Doctor's wife joke.

(3) "Is the doctor at home?" the patient asked in his bronchial whisper. "No," the doctor's young and pretty wife whispered on reply. "Come right in."

(Raskin, 1985: 32)

Consider the script switch in the Doctor's wife joke where the receiver presumably starts out with the script of a visit to the doctor in mind, however, this thought is interrupted and proven wrong by the wife's unexpected reaction towards the patient. One would expect the patient to return home, but instead he is invited. Also very odd is the fact that the wife is whispering too. One will have to, at the same moment one realises the story's incompatibility with the "visit to the doctor" script, switch over to the "lover's visit" script (Partington, 2006: 39-40). Partington (about the same joke) puts it:

> On meeting the wife's words 'No, come in' we are forced to perform, as Schank and Abelson would have it, a loop, to replay the joke with remedial action, since the **$VISITING THE DOCTOR** (for treatment) no longer allows us an adequate interpretation of the sequence of events. The remedial action is the inferencing process which now kicks in and we "make guesses about the intention of an [actor] in an unfolding story and use these guesses to make sense of the story" (Shank and Abelson 1977: 70)
>
> (Partington, 2006: 39-40)[4]

[4] The $ and bold letters are used by Partington to signify a script.

There is endlessly more to bring up on the topic of scripts, but because of limited time and space, the current discussion will, regrettably, have to end here. The interested reader is directed towards Raskin (1985) and Attardo (2001) (and references therein) for further reading. In the next section I am trying to illustrate with some more examples how scripts work in different kinds of puns.

2.3 Puns

Now that we have had a look at scripts it is time to move on to puns. We will begin by explaining some things general to all puns and then proceed further into the details of the two kinds of puns that this thesis is concentrated on.

2.3.1 In general

All puns play with the interpretation of sentences, creating ambiguity[5], by making use of similarity (paronyms) or identity (homonyms) between sound sequences (Partington, 2006: 113-114; Attardo, 1994: 112). The pun needs to achieve at least two different (even opposed) interpretations based on the incongruity of the ambiguous sound sequence involved (Partington, 2006: 43-44).

The pun is constructed so that a sentence is based upon two (or several) sound sequences which are phonologically or graphically similar but holds opposed meanings (some dispute concerning this point is discussed in Partington (2006: 43-44)). In his book "The act of creation" from 1964 (quote taken from Partington (2006: 113)) Koestler expressed it:

> The pun is the bisociation of a single phonetic form with two meanings – two strings of thought tied together by an acoustic knot. [6]

[5] Although Ritchie (2004: 111-113) presents some critique towards Attardo's (1994: 112, 133) definition of ambiguity and its role in punning.

[6] Which is a quite acceptable definition, though still not covering all puns, considering that puns can be based on a graphic knot just as well as an acoustic one, this will not, as mentioned in the first footnote above, be covered in the present thesis however.

The main hypothesis in Raskin's Semantic Script Theory of Humor (SSTH) (which applies not only to puns but to all single-joke-carrying-texts), as cited by Attardo, gives us a similar, more detailed definition:

> A text can be characterized as a single-joke-carrying-text if both of the [following] conditions are satisfied:
> i) The text is compatible, fully or in part, with two different scripts
> ii) The two scripts with which the text is compatible are opposite (…).
> The two scripts with which some text is compatible are said to fully or in part in this text. (Raskin 1985:99)
>
> (1994: 197)

As was roughly mentioned before; in the case of a pun where the sound sequences are identical (homonymic), as in (4) and (5) below, it can be referred to as an "exact pun" (Partington, 2006: 115) or "perfect pun" (Kawahara and Shigeto, 2009: 114).

(4) Energizer Bunny Arrested! Charged with Battery.

(Tartakovsky, 2009)

(5) Rakuda wa raku da.
Camel TOP comfortable COP.NPAST
'Camels are comfortable.'

And when the sound sequences differ slightly in pronunciation or spelling (paronymic), as in (6) and (7), it can instead be referred to as a "near pun" (Partington, 2006: 114-115) or "imperfect pun"(Kawahara and Shigeto, 2009: 114).

(6) A bicycle can't stand on its own because it is two-tired.

(7) Kimujoniru, kinjo ni i-ru
Kim Jong-il neighbourhood LOC exist-NPAST
'Kim Jong-il is in the neighbourhood'

There exists several other names for these classifications, “exact pun” and “near pun” will be used consequently in this thesis however.

Attardo argues that one has to playfully adopt a so called cratalystic[7] attitude while reading a pun, i.e. pretending that the homonyms or paronyms featuring in the pun have the same, or similar, meaning(s) and will thus be, as intended, confused. That is, the receiver will first, consciously or unconsciously, read the ambiguous sound sequence with the wrong interpretation on the basis that there is only one possible interpretation, only to, hopefully quickly, discard this thought and insert the right interpretation (1994: 163-164). Take, as an example, (5) above. If any humour is to be extracted from the pun one has to, for a moment, think that the first and second *raku(-)da*, since they sound the same, must be the same word (in accordance to cratylistic theories).

It would seem that the pronunciation and structure of the language in the pun will be adjusted so that the sound sequences will be as similar as possible for the purpose of maximising the ambiguity. This is why the language in a pun might become quite unnatural, even ungrammatical at times. Kawahara and Shinohara (2009) and Cutler and Otake (2002) hints at this too.

In the present research, puns are usually separated into two common groups called paradigmatic puns and syntagmatic puns which will be further reviewed below. There does, however, exist a third quite established group which is referred to among some authors as chiastic puns. The chiastic pun consists of a sentence where the elements are arranged in a XYYX schema (Attardo, 1994: 116). An example of this would be (8) or the quite well known sentence seen in (9). I took the liberty of marking out the X- and the Y-elements for clarity.

(8) Girls who do not <u>repulse men’s</u> <u>advances</u> are often girls who <u>advance</u>
X Y Y
<u>men’s pulses</u>.
X

(Attardo, 1994: 116)

[7] Cratylism is the theory where one, contrary to Sassure, argues that the sound and the sense is connected, which would mean that each sound has a unique meaning and that there exists no homonyms and that all paronyms would be similar in meaning (see Attardo (1994:152-153, 163-164) and references therein).

(9) The house in the garden, the garden in the house.
X Y Y X

(Attardo, 1994: 117)

But it is, as Attardo (1994: 116) argues, sometimes quite hard to see the distinguishing line between syntagmatic and chiastic puns. Chiastic puns have been left out in this study since this author, so far, has not found any clear example of a chiastic pun in Japanese which could not just as easily fall into the group of syntagmatic puns. On another note it seems, that chiastic puns, at least the ones I have encountered, would be quite hard to fit into the definition of puns adopted in this paper. This because ambiguity, despite being such an important part of other puns, does not seem to be an essential element in this kind of wordplay.

2.3.2 Paradigmatic puns

Overlapping scripts

In a paradigmatic pun one tries to create confusion and ambiguity by, in a sentence, making use of one sound sequence, with several interpretations, in a way that makes it hard for the receiver to interpret what is actually said (Ritchie, 2004: 114-115). This kind of punning is syntactically about the same in Japanese and English, which is why not much is mentioned specifically on Japanese paradigmatic puns in this section.

(10) Flying planes can be dangerous. (Attardo, 1994:133)

Consider (10) above, which is, although not a pun, an ambiguous statement where at least two different scripts can be extracted. That is, the sentence could either refer to the scenario of being inside the plane flying it or being outside watching one's head for dangerously low flying planes. This only because the sound sequence "flying planes" could convey two different interpretations. This is often explained as the scripts overlapping each other and can be either partial or total (see (3) and (10) respectively) (Attardo, 1994: 203; Raskin, 1985: 46). The point in charge of the overlapping would

here be “flying planes”, without which, the sentence would loose this specific ambiguity. Consider replacing the sound sequence “flying planes” with “flying a plane” and thus disambiguating the sentence since one of the interpretations is suddenly completely incompatible with the sentence while the other one remains acceptable.

Making the ambiguity obvious

In a paradigmatic pun[8], however, it is not enough to be ambiguous for it to actually count as a pun (out of context every utterance is, after all, ambiguous, but not every utterance is a pun), it also needs to be, as Partington puts it “authored”, that is, “someone has to deliberately manufacture, or at least point out, the ambiguity” (2006: 114). Attridge (2004: 190) explains this neatly in the following quote (his italics):

> The context of a pun, instead of being designed to suppress latent ambiguity, is deliberately constructed to *enforce* ambiguity, to render impossible the choice between meanings, to leave the reader or hearer endlessly oscillating in semantic space.

The receiver of the pun needs to be aware of the two interpretations. Otherwise the ambiguity, and the pun with it, will be completely lost. Again, let us have a look at (10) from above which is indeed an ambiguous statement, but it is not a pun since the ambiguity is not obvious by just hearing this statement. The receiver of the pun needs to understand, not only the ambiguity of the utterance, but also that the speaker intended it to be that way. That is, the receiver needs to understand that the first interpretation that comes to mind has an alternative.

(11) A: John found a <u>shell</u> on the beach. (Shell being a “seashell”)
B: That’s a coincidence. Yesterday, I found a hand grenade.
(forcing shell to mean “artillery round”)

(Partington, 2006: 114)

[8] This does not seem to be a problem in syntagmatic puns, presented below, since both of the ambiguous sound sequences are presented beside each other, thus automatically implicating that something is odd with the sentence.

What happens in (11) is that the less thinkable interpretation of shell is chosen by B. Naturally, most people will think about a seashell when hearing that someone found a shell on the beach[9]. Thus, the second interpretation of shell will come as a surprise with B's utterance, and so the ambiguity in A's statement has been pointed out (Partington, 2006: 114).

Which interpretation survives? Four kinds of paradigmatic puns

How does the two interpretations relate to each other after being discovered? Attardo (1994: 135-138) explains this by describing four possible scenarios:

1) No relation at all between the interpretations, there is no transferred connotation or logic whatsoever behind the different interpretations as in "a wafer" and "away for" in (12) where "a wafer" fits very poorly into the sentence and "away for" is not very humorous. A pun belonging to this group would probably be rated as being very poor in quality. One can usually see a pattern that the more relevance to each other and to the context an interpretation carries, the better the joke will be rated. Read more on this in 4.1 below.

(12) Why did the cookie cry?
Its mother had been away for (/a wafer) so long.

(Attardo, 1994: 128)

2) The two interpretations are both relevant to the context and will coexist. The pun can be read with each separate interpretation on its own, or in some cases as one joint message. In (14) below, the conversation about the hat could either be about its coherency or its owner. Which interpretation it really is about would be impossible to judge if presented in its spoken form, as originally intended.

(13) Organ donors put their heart into it.

[9] Partington (2006: 114) describes this as lexical priming.

(14) Kono booshi, doitsu (na)n da? (/doitsu n(o) da?)
This hat German NOM COP.NPAST? (who GEN COP.NPAST?)
'This hat, is it German? (/whose is it?)'

Oranda! (ore n(o) da!)
Holland! (/me GEN COP.NPAST)!
'It's (from) Holland! (/It's mine!)'

(Nagashima et al., 1999: 57)

3) The second interpretation has to go since the first one is more relevant to the context. In this scenario the sentence is composed so that the hearer will be forced to discover the second interpretation but then finds it irrelevant and therefore ignores it, although still bringing connotation from the second interpretation back to the first. The phrase in (16) is a quite substandard phrase. Hearing this one would probably associate it with the more common *jitsugyouka*, which would be the intention of the speaker who probably is trying to be mean to someone being without a job.

(15) An illiterate fisherman was lost at c.

(16) Seinen shitsugyooka (/jitsugyooka)
Young.man unemployed.person (/businessman)
'young, unemployed man (/young businessman)'

(Yoshikawa, 2007: 60)

4) The first interpretation is discarded for the benefit of the second, that is, the opposite of the previous scenario. The first interpretation will definitely not be overlooked but still discarded because of its irrelevancy. Thus the hearer will be forced to look for another, more relevant interpretation. Here, as in the 3rd kind, the discarded interpretation gives some connotation to the surviving one. A good example would be (11) above where A has to discard the first interpretation of shell and start searching for a new one since it is

understood that B clearly is not referring to the same kind of shell. See also the examples below.

(17) Those who jump off a Paris bridge are in Seine.

(18) Kimi, jonii deppa da ne?
You Johnny buck.tooth (Depp) COP.NPAST FP
'You're Johnny Buck tooth[10] (Depp) aren't you?'

(Yoshikawa, 2007: 11)

It seems to me that the definitions of these groups still need some adjustments. From Attardo's explanations it is hard to, as an example, be sure what interpretation (or sense as he calls it) is supposed to be the first. Since, depending on the person, one could perceive the interpretations in different order. E.g. in the case of reading a word in a written sentence where one usually would expect to find a in pronunciation similar word but in interpretation opposed, it seems possible that one could perceive the sentence with the unwritten but expected word first and then the word that replaced it and actually was written. I take it however, that Attardo is referring to the interpretation of the word that is written as the first and the interpretation one would extract when replacing that word with the more expected word would then be the second. To summarise, the interpretation that is presented is the first one, no matter which one you first perceive. Take as an example (18) above where one could perceive *jonii deppa* either as Johnny Depp or Johnny bucktooth first, but the first interpretation is still Johnny bucktooth since this is the presented interpretation.

On another note, from what I have seen yet, there seems to be no exact puns belonging in group 3 or 4. This seems quite reasonable considering that if one sound sequence with one relevant and one irrelevant interpretation were used in a sentence, one would normally ignore the irrelevant one, meaning that there can be no irrelevant interpretations in an exact pun. Consider for example that instead of "organ donors" in (13) above, we would put in "gardeners". This new sentence, unlike the original, would

[10] Buck teeth is when the two front teeth are unusually visible, creating a rabbit teeth-like effect

force us to discard or ignore the literal interpretation of the expression “put one’s heart into it”.

2.3.3 Syntagmatic puns

When it comes to syntagmatic puns they differ from the previous category in that they present both (more than two is also fine, as in (21)) of the sound sequences in the same sentence, instead of letting one sound sequence function as some kind of overlapping point.

(19) It is better to be looked over than to be overlooked.

(Attributed to the actress Mae West)

(20) Iruka wa i-ru ka.
Dolphin TOP exist-NPAST QP
’Are there any dolphins?’

(21) Niwa ni wa niwa ni ni wa no niwatori ga i-ru.
Niwa LOC TOP garden LOC two COUNT GEN chicken NOM is-NPAST
‘In a garden in Niwa there are two chickens.’

The pattern that can be observed in (20) is probably the most common layout of a kind of Japanese puns often referred to as *oyaji gyagu* ‘old man gags’.

The definition of syntagmatic puns seems to many authors even more complex than the one of paradigmatic puns. Ritchie struggles with this form of punning trying to put it in a frame by stating the two following conditions:

- the utterance is linguistically appropriate to the context;
- there are two or more (non-overlapping) substrings of the utterance which are phonetically similar and which *either* are not identical *or* have different meanings (or both).

(Ritchie, 2004: 129, his italics and brackets)

But notes at the same time that "this formulation constitutes a *necessary* set of conditions, but not a *sufficient* condition for a syntagmatic pun" (Ritchie, 2004: 129, his italics). That is, a syntagmatic pun will fulfil these conditions but anything fulfilling these conditions is not necessarily a syntagmatic pun.

I would like to attract attention towards two points that ought to be noted on the subject of syntagmatic puns in Japanese. 1) Japanese seems to have a heavier arsenal of exact syntagmatic puns than English. This would most likely be because of the very few phonemes existing in Japanese (see chapter 3). 2) In the Japanese near puns there seems to be a quite common pattern of one sound sequence followed by a paronymic longer one where the first sound sequence is contained inside of the second one[11] as in the examples below.

(22) Neko ga neko-mu
Cat NOM sleep-NPAST
'The cat is sleeping'

(23) Futon[12] ga futto-nda
Futon NOM blow.of-PAST
'The futon blew away'

In (23) above the second sound sequence *futton(da)* has been made into past tense instead of the usual non-past tense *futtobu*. As can be seen, this pattern seems to have its roots in the Japanese predicate conjugations. In Japanese, conjugations is slightly more varied than the English equivalent which could be the reason as to why this pattern is not seen as often in English puns.

[11] A pattern observed by Shigeto Kawahara on his web-page in the section where he gives suggestions on topics for future research; http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~kawahara/pun.html
[12] futon = Japanese sleeping mattress

2.4 General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH)

This section will be concentrating on presenting the revised version of Raskin's above mentioned Semantic Script Theory of Humor (SSTH) called the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH). This revised version has, according to Attardo, a much wider scope than the SSTH when it comes to analysable kinds of humour. It covers both the semantic and pragmatic view on humour and, is in fact, supposed to analyse all kinds of humour and not only single-joke-carrying texts, to which the SSTH was limited. The GTVH does this by breaking down the humorous text into six different parts called Knowledge Resources (KR) and from the values of those parts it can tell several things about the humorous content, e.g. how similar one joke is to another (Attardo, 1994: 222-223). The knowledge resources will each be briefly presented here below.

2.4.1 The Knowledge Resources (KR:s)

Language (LA)

The LA is what controls what words is to be used and in what position they are going to be used. Any joke can be paraphrased in a multitude of ways. The only element in the joke that cannot be altered is the punch line (e.g. the ambiguous sound sequences in a pun), since the point upon which the humour lies would be destroyed (Attardo, 1994: 223).

Narrative Strategy (NS)

This is the format of a joke. "Any joke has to be cast in some form of narrative organization, either as a simple (framed) narrative, as a dialogue (question and answer), as a (pseudo-) riddle, as an aside in conversation, etc." (Attardo, 1994: 224). In short, the NS is the classifier of jokes. Attardo mentions that the NS could possibly be rephrased as genre, but puts no greater weight in this assumption. Note that the Narrative Strategy does not affect the humorous content of the joke whatsoever, a single joke might be presented in several NS:s and still be the same joke as long as the humorous core remains the same (Attardo, 1994: 224).

Target (TA)

The target is the group or person (or maybe thing) on whose expense the joke is told, i.e. the "butt" of the joke. This is not an obligate part of a joke considering that there are jokes without anyone (or anything) being ridiculed. Considering ethnic humour which always contain a TA Attardo points out that there is a difference to be made "between true and false ethnic humor (true ethnic humor cannot change it's target; Raskin (1985))" (Attardo, 1994: 224-225)

Situation (SI)

The SI is the "props", the "set-up" of the joke. A joke has to be featured in some kind of context, e.g. as seen below, a whole scene, like a party, or just a conversation between two people. How big a role the SI plays depends, of course, on how heavily the point of the joke relies on the situation. That is, to properly extract the ambiguity out of a word in a pun, the situation has to be right[13]. Attardo explains using the French "toilettes" joke, here in its translated version from Attardo (1994: 388).

(24) At a sophisticated party two guests are talking outside. "Ah, says the first, in a satisfied tone, nice evening, isn't it? Magnificent meal, and beautiful toilettes (lavatories/dresses), aren't they?" "I wouldn't know," answers the second. "What do you mean?" "I did not have to go."

In the "toilettes" joke the SI is indisputably important to the joke since the ambiguity of the word "toilettes" would not have been presented, had it not been for the SI (the fancy party, the conversation between the guests). In comparison to the "toilettes" joke which relies heavily on the SI Attardo also presents the "stenographer" joke where the SI merely can be said to consist of a dialogue between two stenographers (Attardo, 1994: 225)

(25) "Can you write shorthand?"
"Yes, but it takes me longer."

(Attardo, 1994: 225)

[13] Relate this to the point made in "Making the ambiguity obvious" in 2.3.2 above.

Logical Mechanism (LM)

The LM is what brings the two scripts together. It is the presupposed, often playful, logic that the receiver will come up with and use to reach a conclusion when hearing a joke, but which will later be disproved by or associated with another conclusion. Take as an example (26) where the receiver will logically associate "it" with the wrong object, but is at the same time aware that he is using false logic and that his presupposed conclusion of what "it" could be is wrong (Attardo, 1994: 225-226).

(26) Madonna does not have it, the Pope has it but doesn't use it, Bush has it short, and Gorbachev long. What is it?
Answer: a last name.

(Attardo, 1994: 225)

Script Opposition (SO)

The SO is the only KR accounted for in the SSTH. When it comes to puns, the SO is the before mentioned (see 2.3.1) opposition between the interpretations of the similar sound sequences. The SO is present in all humour (Attardo, 1994: 226).

2.4.2 Hierarchical organisation of the KR:s

The six parts of a joke, the Knowledge Resources, are not necessarily independent. The value of one KR usually has an effect of varying strength on the others. Attardo presents a table (table 1) of hierarchical order in which "parameters determine the parameters below themselves and are determined by those above themselves" (Attardo, 1994: 227). Determine means that the conditions of the determining parameter (KR) decides how limited the determined parameter is.

Table 1: Hierarchical Organization of the KR:s

SO
↓
LM
↓
SI
↓
TA
↓
NS
↓
LA

(Attardo, 1994: 227)

This hierarchy must be taken into consideration while comparing jokes, using the GTVH, looking for similarities. The method is quite simple; the more KR:s that has the same values the more similar the jokes are. Note though, that it makes difference in jokes differing in only one KR whether the difference lies in a high- or low-ranked KR, the higher the rank, the bigger the difference (Attardo, 1994: 226). I ought to mention though, on the subject of this ranking, that Ritchie (2004: 86) implies that, on the basis of a study actually executed by Attardo et al., the ranking of the three most influential KR:s, the SO, LM and SI, is not necessarily absolute. I will continue with this order in mind for now though, on the ground that there does not seem to exist any absolute order of the KR:s to this day.

2.4.3 Summary

Attardo finally notes that although the GTVH does meet up to the expectation that it should be capable of, unlike the SSTH, being applied to any form of jokes, it is still in need of further adjustments (Attardo, 1994: 228-229).

Ritchie (2004: 72-80) reviews the GTVH and criticise it on several points, one, which I agree upon, is on the LM which he finds quite vague since it is hard to give a general definition for all jokes of what the LM really is. He expresses confusion concerning the fact that the LM seems to be switching between the roles of "classifying what is odd or absurd about the situation described in a joke, and (…) classifying the method of conveying this information to the audience." (Ritchie, 2004: 76) and also questions whether the LM actually contributes to the humorous effect in the joke and if it is even a necessary part of a joke. He sums it up by stating that "(o)verall, the LM seems to be a very versatile category in which almost any aspect of a joke can be placed" (Ritchie, 2004: 76). He also questions whether the GTVH truly is a theory which solely concerns jokes since, it seems, that at least four of the KR:s (LA, NS, TA and SI) can just as well be applied to any text which makes it unclear how "they can be a central part of a theory of humour" (Ritchie, 2004: 80). An important conclusion which he reaches is that the KR:s will not be sufficient for their intended purpose as long as they do not have "some central framework to which they can act as parameters" (Ritchie, 2004: 80). These, especially the last one, are all points which will have to be taken into consideration in the upcoming study.

Although there do exist flaws, it seems that the GTVH still remains the furthest evolved and thus the most fitting theory available to, if applied cautiously together with the other theories presented above, analyse the puns in this study.

3. Why is Japanese so puny?

The most probable reason to why Japanese discourse is so packed with puns would be its remarkable abundance of homonyms and paronyms, which, as declared above, is one of the most basic conditions for creating a pun. However, in most situations the speaker is saved by the context (Japanese certainly is a very context-relying language, but a context can easily be made ambiguous) and the writer who uses *kanji*[14] to differ between homophones usually makes himself perfectly understood. Yet, misunderstandings do frequently occur, and if one intended to create ambiguity when writing or speaking, doing so would not demand much effort.

The reason to why Japanese contains so many homonyms and paronyms would be the very small amount of phonemes it possesses (Davis, 2006: 75). That is, the number of possible combinations of sounds when constructing words and phrases is drastically smaller compared to our western languages meaning that the words will be more alike. It is interesting, however, that Davis (2006: 75-76) mentions that she, despite the fact that it contains even less phonemes, did not find any evidence of puns occurring in the Hawaiian language. This would suggest that the large amount of homonyms and paronyms would not be the only reason to why Japanese is so puny. Davis (2006: 76-77) suggests that the phenomenon may have its grounds in the Japanese historical cratalystic belief in the magical power of the word. This belief could have influenced poetry-forms such as *tanka* in which puns are a common phenomenon and where one tries to convey as much as possible while explicitly saying or writing as little as possible.

It seems, in short, that both the Japanese language and culture has been encouraging the use of clever ambiguity and play on words for a considerable period of time. Nagashima et al. (1999) briefly reviews the history of puns in Japanese poetry as it moves forward through time, first seen in written form in the time of the *manyooshuu*, as mentioned in the introduction, an anthology of poetry cohering from the 8th century. Among other things, one interesting linguistic change that greatly affected the creation of puns is the introduction of the syllabaries[15] during the Heian-period (794-1185) which

[14] *Kanji* is the Chinese logographic writing symbols where each sign represents a certain meaning, a *kanji* can hold several pronunciations.
[15] *Hiragana* and *katakana*, or under the common name *kana*.

certainly made it far easier to create puns, considering that written puns up till now had only been created using kanji. “When it comes to modern Japanese,”, Nagashima et al. claims, “the syllabic structure has become even simpler. Because of that, homonyms exist in abundance, and producing *share* is easy” (1999: 56, my translation and italics)[16].

[16] *Share* is the name of one of the many kinds of puns that exists in Japanese. It is rather uncertain as to what name represents what kind of pun though, which is why they are not brought up in this thesis. However, the kinds of puns presented here can either be classified as *share* or *dajare*.

4. Advertising

4.1 Punning in advertisements

Puns are a favourite tool among advertisers, although they often deny this when confronted directly (probarly since the pun is held in such low esteem compared to other forms of humour) (Tanaka, 2005: 59-60).

The effectiveness of puns in commercials has been widely discussed. One could argue that the commercials objective should be to clearly convey a positive message about the advertising company and the specific product while demanding as little cognitive effort as possible from the receiver. Considering this, the pun would not be a good choice of weapon here. The pun which on first sight would be completely contra productive towards these goals, by e.g. actually making the message less clear, would only hinder the advertisement in reaching its objective. This has shown not to be true though. Puns can be very benefiting for the advertising of a product just on the count of the fact that they do make the message more complicated since people will put out more cognitive energy when presented with a pun than with an unambiguous message. It seems that by making the receivers of the advertisements put out more cognitive energy when trying to understand the conveyed message, the advertisers not only makes the advertisement stand out more from the crowd of other advertisements, but also makes it more memorable and harder to ignore once one has started reading it. This because one feels the need of understanding what the ambiguous message is trying to convey. The receiver also seems to evolve a higher degree of liking towards the advertisement, maybe because they receive a “cognitive reward” when succeeding in solving the pun (Tanaka, 2005: 64-65; Mulken et al., 2005: 708-710)

In a study by Mulken et al. (2005) when testing whether people prefer advertising slogans containing either no pun, a pun with one relevant interpretation or a pun with two relevant interpretations with respect to pleasantness and well-chosenness an interesting result emerged. The study shows that people, as expected, prefer commercials with any pun more than no pun. However, it also hints at that commercials with puns containing one relevant interpretation is less appreciated than puns with two relevant interpretations,

but only when it comes to well-chosenness, as to pleasantness there emerged no noteworthy difference (715-716).

Tanaka also talks of the fact that advertisers like to convey sublime messages through puns, messages whose interpretations touch topics which usually would not be accepted, such as sex. On this point her reasoning feels a little odd though, as she seems to mean that the intention with the advertisement is to actually convey the tabooed interpretation and not the product that is for sale. Have a look at the pun in (27) which could either refer to places on the body or places in the world.

(27) After you get married, kiss your wife in places she's never been kissed before.

(Tanaka, 2005: 78)

On this pun Tanaka comments; "The pun here turns an otherwise vulgar statement into humour", which would imply that the advertiser is hiding the sexual message inside of a pun not to be accused of being vulgar. This would mean that if the taboo of sex did not exist, the message would be conveyed explicitly. The point is, why would the advertiser want to convey the sexual message unless it was a taboo and thus gave the original interpretation a lot of attention by being hided?

4.2 Punning in Japanese advertisements

As in our western culture[17], puns are extremely common in advertisements in Japan. In a study executed during July 2002 where 781 randomly chosen TV-commercials from the period were collected and searched for humorous content, it was found that around 12% (95 commercials) contained puns (Jina, 2006: 24-25). This is consistent with another study, done by Davis between January and March 1999, where she finds that around 10% of the commercials that aired on Japanese television during this period contained puns (2006: 75).

[17] Mulken et al. (2005: 708) implies that according to a study on (presumably American) advertisements 10-40% contained puns depending on how one defines puns.

5. Analysis of Japanese puns in advertisements

5.1 Introduction

In this section we will have an amount of Japanese TV-commercials containing puns presented and analysed to us. The analysis is to be carried out by making use of the theory presented above. I wish to demonstrate how these theories (especially the GTVH) works on Japanese puns, to highlight as many interesting characteristics in these puns as I can and to heighten the understanding of Japanese puns (and puns in general) by analysing the puns more deeply. I try not only to classify and analyse the isolated pun but also the context. That is, I try to find an answer to why the pun is the preferred tool to promote the product in this specific case, to clarify what effect the pun has on the receiver. This is where I support the analysis with the theory reviewed in chapter 4 above.

The analysing is performed by first lining up some data concerned with **1)** the jokes status as a paradigmatic or syntagmatic pun, **2)** how the interpretations relate to each other in accordance with the four groups described in 2.3.2 and **3)** the different elements of the joke in the form of the Knowledge Resources (KR:s). This is followed by a discussion based on this data. Note that **2)** is disabled in the case of a syntagmatic pun. The language-parameter (LA) will not be included in this listing. This because I could not give any relevant fact on the LA since it consists of the words used in the pun. That is, the LA practically is the words, there is no way to produce a more concrete frame than the wording that can be seen in the examples. If there is anything especially interesting about the LA this is covered in the analysis right below the listing. The advertisements are grouped together with other advertisements to which they have some relation, in some case they share some characteristic which I want to highlight, but mostly it is just because they are parts of the same advertising campaign.

5.2 Analysis

5.2.1 Grated apples

We are going to have a look at two commercials featuring an alcoholic juice containing grated apples called *suri oroshi ringo* 'grated apples (lit. rubbed apples)'. The commercials are both making a pun out of *sutta*, the past form of the Japanese word *suru* 'to rub' (it will be translated in the examples as 'to grate'), which, as the advertisers seems to have discovered, can easily be punned with in the right context. The first commercial brought up below starts with showing a group of Japanese schoolgirls drinking the mentioned juice.

(28) Schoolgirls (after drinking the juice containing grated apples):

Aa, ringo su-tta!

Aah, apple rub-PAST

'Aah, Grated apple!'

Ringo Starr (while turning around, revealing his to this point unseen face):

Ringo Starr!

Schoolgirls:

No! Ringo su-tta!

No! Apple rub-PAST

'No! Grated apple!'[18]

Ringo Starr (with the juice in his hand):

Ringo su-tta!

Apple/Ringo rub-PAST/Starr

'Grated apple!/Ringo Starr!'

(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ko888qUIiYs)

[18] An important point to be aware of here in order to perceive the ambiguity of "*ringo sutta*" is that the utterance sound very similar to the Japanese pronunciation of Ringo Starr.

1) Paradigmatic

2) Group 3

3) SO: Name/Juice

LM: 1) Mislead to see only one interpretation of *ringo sutta*

2) Unclear which meaning Ringo Starr wants to convey

SI: 1) In a park, Ringo Starr standing with the back towards the camera

2) Ringo Starr looking into the camera

TA: N/A

NS: Quick exchange of sentences in the form of enthusiastic exclamations.

I find, in this example, two major parts containing ambiguity which could both be qualified as the same paradigmatic pun on account of all the KR:s (the LA included) with the exception of the LM and the SI. The first being the opening line uttered by the schoolgirls which is presented in a way that would make it hard to judge whether they were excited over seeing Ringo Starr or the juice, if it had not been for Ringo Starr's late appearance, which is when the ambiguity arises. The second ambiguous part would be Ringo Starr's last line where he could either be referring to himself or the juice.

The first ambiguous statement seems to qualify into group 3 presented in 2.3.2 above. It could be argued that group 2 is a better fit in this case since the Ringo Starr interpretation could be relevant to the context (considering that he is present). But, since the ambiguous sentence was uttered by the schoolgirls who apparently did not have the second interpretation in mind (in contrast to (11) above (shell on the beach) where we can not be sure which interpretation A truly intended) Ringo Starr will have to be discarded at least from this sentence. Concerning the next ambiguous statement (the last line), I would put it too in group 3 considering that we by now know that *ringo sutta* originally referred to the juice and not the name. Ringo Starr is, however, in accordance with what was said concerning group 3, associating his own name with the juice, thus forcing connotation onto the phrase *ringo sutta* meaning that receivers of this commercial will immediately think of the name Ringo Starr when being confronted with this phrase. He is, simply, lending his fame and good image to the juice. Note that the association does not work

both ways since one probably would not associate Ringo Starr very strongly with this juice even after watching this commercial. I leave it up to each reader, however, to judge on his own which group he thinks is the best fit.

The first LM is much like (11) and (26) (it = a last name), where there seems to be no doubt concerning the interpretation of the first statement since the element pointing out the ambiguity does not appear until after the ambiguous statement. The receiver is also being encouraged by the context (for the sake of being surprised later on) to not consider that the sentence might have two interpretations, that is, in this example it seems obvious that the schoolgirls in the advertisement are talking about grated apples and not Ringo Starr when uttering the ambiguous statement since they just a moment ago where drinking a juice containing just that. Thus the advertisers intentionally puts the receiver on the wrong script to begin with, just as in making the beach the scene to find the shell on for the purpose of forcing an interpretation of shell onto the receiver.

The pronunciation and structure of the sentences have been slightly adjusted in this commercial to make the pun possible (this would be the phenomenon mentioned in 2.3.1). That is, Ringo Starr seems to apply a Japanese intonation when pronouncing his own name to make it sound more like *ringo sutta*. *Ringo sutta* could also have been replaced by *sutta ringo* and still, practically, have the same interpretation. This demonstrates the common tendency to, in a pun, conveniently adjust the properties of the language to increase the ambiguity of the sentence as much as possible.

The next commercial in the *sutta*-series we are going to look at is the one featuring Rie Miyazawa, a famous Japanese actress, singer and model who went through a rough patch after the breaking up of her engagement to sumo wrestler Takanohana. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rie_Miyazawa). In the commercial she refers to her messy relationship in a pun based upon the idiom *suttamonda* ‘great fuss’ while at the same time promoting the alcoholic juice.

(29) Suttamonda ga ari-mashita. su-tta
Great.fuss NOM exist-HON.PAST rub-PAST

mo-nda wo nomi-mashita
rub-PAST OBJ drink-HON.PAST

'There has been a great fuss (lots of trouble). (So) I drank a lot of "grated and rubbed" (the alcoholic juice)'

(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kkKcCDoRPIk)

1) Syntagmatic
2) N/A
3) SO: Figuratively/literally = great fuss/alcoholic juice (*suttamonda*)
LM: Continuing on the "figuratively" script
SI: The problems concerning Rie Miyazawa's former relationship
TA: N/A
NS: Monologue, statement

Here, in contrast to the Ringo Starr example above, the advertisers have used *sutta* to form a syntagmatic pun. One might not realise immediately that she in the second sentence is referring to alcohol at first because of its usual interpretation with which it is used in the first sentence. However, the presence of *nomimashita* 'drank' together with her utterance in the end of the advertisement "*atarashii o-sake da yo*" 'a new kind of liquor!' will soon make one realise the full width of what Rie Miyazawa is saying in the commercial. This is where both of the scripts of "*suttamonda*" is realised and the ambiguity is completely resolved.

The SI is a very important KR here since without the knowledge it contains, one still would not grasp the whole picture when Rie Miazawa is talking of this great fuss, which would make the pun lose some of its nuance. Also important is the SO. Which script we apply to which of the two sound sequences makes a great difference in this pun. One tends, after all, to choose the more common one, that is the great fuss interpretation

which prepares for some confusion when she utters the phrase a second time bearing another interpretation

5.2.2 Paronyms

Puns where one word has been replaced by a similar sounding word, a paronym (resulting in a near pun), is a quite common sight. I present here two variations of this kind. In (30) the adjective which one would usually expect to find has been replaced by a noun shaped into an adjective to sound as similar to the original as possible. In (31) a verb has been adjusted in a similar way, creating a till now unexisting word. The common point in these examples is that there in both exists a word that has been replaced by a paronym, thus connecting their usually unassociated interpretations.

(30) Suteeki na sekai
Steak COP.ADN world
'It's a steaky (/wonderful) world.'

(Nagashima et al., 1999:64)

1) Paradigmatic
2) Group 3
3) SO: Fictitious steaky world/misspelling of "a wonderful world".
LM: Automatic switch from " wrong but natural" to "right but odd" script
SI: Steak advertisement
TA: N/A
NS: Simple statement

(30) is from a steak commercial for the convenient store franchise Lawson. In it, they have taken advantage of the close paronyms *suteki* 'wonderful, lovely' and *suteeki* 'steak' which sounds exactly the same when pronounced, apart from the prolonged vocal in *suteeki*. This makes for a good near pun as it is very easy to understand that the first interpretation, 'steaky world' despite being odd, is in fact the most relevant for the

context (since it is a commercial for steaks) and that the second interpretation, although the more natural one, ‘wonderful world’, must be wrong. This does not happen without a little associational detour though. We find an excellent script switch in this sentence since the receiver of the pun will, when reading “steaky” together with “world”, most likely automatically backtrack and rethink the sentence with the *suteki*-script in mind. However, since the *suteki*-script is irrelevant to steaks the receiver will have to discard the *suteki*-script and switch over to the more unorthodox *suteeki*-script. Still, in accordance with the 3rd kind of paradigmatic pun described in 2.3.2 above, the *suteki*-script will leave some connotation for the *suteeki*-script to adopt, giving it a somewhat positive nuance, thus making the final interpretation of the sentence into something similar to “a wonderful steaky world”. Which is exactly the association the advertisers want their customers to have towards steaks.

(31) たのしメール

Tanoshimeeru

‘To enjoy (one’s mail)’

(Nagashima et al., 1999: 64)

1) Paradigmatic

2) Group 4

3) SO: Unintended misspelling/intended misspelling (imaginary word)

LM: Strong similarity to common word

SI: Mobile-phone advertisement

TA: N/A

NS: Simple statement

The structure of (31) is basically the same as the one in (30) but instead of replacing one word with a similar word, a part of a word has been so replaced. The latter half of *tanoshimeru* which means ‘to enjoy’ have been replaced with *meeru* ‘mail’. Note that in the original, the first half (*tanoshi)* is written in the unmarked style *hiragana* while *meeru* is written in the marked style *katakana*. This is admittedly a quite verbose case,

but after having read this odd compilation of a word which is quite incomprehensible one will probably discard this reading and adopt the tanoshimeru reading instead but not without bringing some connotation over to this second reading resulting in the translation above.

5.2.3 Play Sega Saturn!

In the next example I will present a pun from an extremely successful advertisement campaign created by Sega for the purpose of saving the Sega Saturn sales in Japan from disaster. The campaign were all based on the heroic "man man" Segata Sanshiro, a fictive character who has sworn to make people play Sega Saturn and is even prepared to resort to violence if they do not obey (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Segata_Sanshiro). His name in itself is the pun and is used in his slogan where he expresses his resoluteness in making people use the console.

(32) Segata Sanshiroo, Segata Sanshiroo, Sega Sataan shi-ro!
Segata Sanshiro, Segata Sanshiro, Sega Saturn do-IMP!
'Segata Sanshiro, Segata Sanshiro, PLAY SEGA SATURN!'
(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N7N70nQaZP4)

1) Syntagmatic
2) N/A
3) SO: *Segata Sanshiroo*/Sega Saturn *shiro*
LM: Assuming that he will continue repeating his own name
SI: Chanting slogan towards the camera, as if speaking to viewer
TA: N/A
NS: Monologue, slogan

Of course, "*Segata Sanshiroo*" and "*Sega Sataan shiro*" (I write this translation in capitals to denote how strong this imperative form is) sounds similar enough to give this a rather humorous effect.

What makes this pun so well suited for the purpose of advertisements is that it is so hard to forget what the message was about and what brand it was promoting. As mentioned in 4.1 above people appreciate and remember the advertisements containing puns better than usual since they put down more cognitive effort on processing the pun in a commercial. This does not necessarily mean that people remember who created the commercial though. This is solved in this pun by including the name of the brand (Sega) in the pun. Which means that every time someone repeats this pun they will associate it with Sega. Put this in contrast to e.g. (30) above, a commercial pun whose creators name might become unknown in time although the pun still is repeated, meaning that the brand it originally promoted no longer gets any profit out of its creation. In the Segata Sanshiro advertisement's case, the brand will be remembered every time the pun is repeated no matter how much time passes or in what context it appears.

Apart from the pun presented above, two other puns in this slogan have come to my attention. One being that the name Segata Sanshiro is also a pun on the name of the main character, Sugata Sanshiro, in Akira Kurosawas Oscar-winning film with the same name. I would define this pun, which is imbued in the main pun, in the following way:

1) Paradigmatic
2) Group 3
3) SO: Famous name/infamous but similar name
LM: Association with famous name
SI: Chanting slogan towards the camera as if speaking to viewer
TA: Sugata Sanshiro
NS: Monologue, slogan

It is interesting that this paradigmatic pun is housed inside, and yet independent of, a syntagmatic pun. A phenomenon which might deserve a closer look at in a more rigorous analysis. Concerning the group, the choice seems quite obvious when looking at how the other group 3 examples got their label; the receiver will hear/read the first interpretation (Segata Sanshiro) but will (if having any knowledge of the original name) immediately come to think of Sugata Sanshiro, the second interpretation. It is obvious

though, as long as it is not a case of poor pronunciation/spelling, that the second interpretation is wrong and that the oddly similar first interpretation is right. Segata Sanshiro is, however, from now on associated with Sugata Sanshiro, thus taking profit from his famous image.

The other pun may or may not be intentional, but it is undeniably an interesting addition. I did not myself notice this until I had it pointed out to me, but it is true that the last word in the slogan, *shiro!* 'DO!', has the same spelling and very similar pronunciation as the word for 'white'. My analysis would be as follows:

1) Paradigmatic

2) Group 2

3) SO: (*shiro* =) Noun/verb

LM: Both interpretations being supported by what is seen in the commercials.

SI: Chanting slogan towards the camera, as if speaking to viewer, has been seen with a white Sega Saturn

TA: N/A

NS: Monologue, slogan

The truth is that in the commercials (not in the one stated as reference here above though) one can occasionally see Segata Sanshiro together with a white Sega Saturn. It seems plausible that *shiro!* in *Sega Sataan shiro!* could be referring to the colour of the white console, but this interpretation is far from as apparent as the 'DO!' interpretation. It can not be neglected though, that this adds up to a good exact pun belonging in group 2 since both of the interpretations are not only relevant to the context but also, semantically, equally fitting.

In the end, this results in quite an impressive sentence containing three separate puns, or two if you count (32) above as having three interpretations, those of, 'Segata Sanshiro', 'PLAY SEGA SATURN!' and 'Sega Saturn white!'

5.2.4 Pretz

Pretz is a well known brand whose product is thin, flavoured bread sticks. In Japan, the brand has launched several advertisements featuring Aya Matsuura (a famous J-Pop artist) some of them containing interesting puns, although maybe, a little poor in quality considering the weak relation between the puns interpretations.

All three of the advertisements presented here below follows the same pattern of Aya Matsuura accompanied by one assistant at each side walking back and forth in a room with a sparklingly colourful background fit for the theme. In the first one, she and two sumo-wrestlers are walking back and forth in the typical wide-legged sumo-stance thrusting their palms towards the camera each step they take. While doing this Aya Matsuura is repeatedly chanting the word *tsuppari* (which is the name of the attack they are performing with their hands) very rapidly which makes it sound a lot like *purittsu*, the Japanese pronunciation of Pretz.

(33) Tsuppari tsuppari tsuppari! Tsuppari tsuppari tsuppari!
(Tsupuri-ttsupuri-ttsupari! Tsupuri-ttsupuri-ttsupari!)
'Thrust thrust thrust! Thrust thrust thrust!'
(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDnOlcBZxH4)

1) Paradigmatic
2) Group 2
3) SO: Thrusts/Pretz
LM: Odd way of speaking
SI: Performing *tsuppari*:s while doing an advertisement for pretz
TA: Sumo-wrestlers
NA: Monologue

I would say that this is a paradigmatic pun since it is the exact same sound sequence, with the same ambiguity, presented in the exact same way through the whole commercial. Usually, in a syntagmatic pun, there is some context- or pronunciation-based

method to differ between the similar sound sequences, as in the Segata Sanshiro-advertisement above.

It is a close call whether one should put this one in group 2 or 3 considering that "tsuppari tsuppari" is a quite weak paronym to "*purittsu*" and that there should not really be any doubt on what Aya Matsuura is saying. However, because of the context supporting both of the interpretations I judge it as being fit for group 2.

The next Pretz-advertisement follows the same theme, but with geishas instead of Sumo-wrestlers and an elegant way of walking back and forth instead of the "sumo-stomps". This time the pun is contained in the following:

(34) Aya Matsuura:

Purittsu an an!
Pretz yum yum!
'Pretz, yum yum!'

Geishas:

Heian (/hei an) an!
'Heian (/hey yum) yum!'

Aya Matsuura:

Ooki na o-kuchi de
Big COP.ADN HON-mouth INS
'With a wide-open mouth'

Geishas:

Heian (/hei an) an!
'Heian (/hey yum) yum!'

(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e2XJimKYN2I)

1) Paradigmatic

2) Group 2

3) SO: Eating Pretz/Heian-period

LM: The shared phonology between "*an*" and "*heian*"

SI: Geishas in a Pretz-advertisement

TA: The Heian-period, Geishas

NA: Verse

An important addition to the humorous content in this pun is the SI. To the situation belongs that Aya Matsuura and the Geishas are moving a pair of Pretz towards their mouth each time they say their lines which clarifies their usage of "*an an*" which can be roughly translated to 'yum yum' or 'nom nom'. Secondly, the presence of the Geishas is quite puzzling at first, but is justified by the second script appearing as soon as they utter their line, where the ambiguous sound sequence is contained. The line of the Geishas is interesting in that one will hear "*heian*" at first, an interpretation which is supported by the their presence, but at the same time the association between the "*an an*"-sounds in this line and the previous one will be unavoidable. Resulting in that the ambiguity will prevail since one can not be sure what really is meant about the "*hei*" or the first "*an*" uttered by the geishas. It is a quite weak link though, since putting "*hei*" before "*an an*" to make it sound like "*heian*" is, in the end, quite far fetched.

In the third commercial we are going to have a look at Aya Matsuura who is dressed completely in pink wearing a pleat skirt, supported by two girls in the same clothes. Aya Matsuura is over and over again singing the same words.

(35) Puriitsu no sukaato de purittsu no CM (shiiemu)!
Pleat GEN skirt INS Pretz GEN commercial!
'(Doing) a Pretz commercial with pleat skirts.'
(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lVF34KflGfg)

1) Syntagmatic

2) N/A

3) SO: Pleats/Pretz

LM: Phonological similarity making it hard to perceive the interpretation of the sound sequences at first

SI: Dancing around in pleat skirts in a Pretz advertisement

TA: N/A

NA: Song

I would classify this as a very bad pun. The ambiguity is almost non existent, which, as we know by now, never is good for the quality of a pun. The only ambiguity I find whatsoever is the one caused by how hard it is to make out exactly what Aya Matsuura is singing. However, it does get stuck in one's head and is rather hard to forget, thus seen from the attention-seeking aspect, it serves this advertisements purposes quite well. The SO and SI is probably the heaviest KR:s here since those are everything the pun needs to function (accept from the LA of course). That is, they are wearing pleat skirts, are in a Pretz advertisement and, in Japanese, pleat sounds like Pretz.

5.3 Summary

The analysis seems to work quite well on some points. We can clearly see, as an example, that the GTVH's method of splitting up the puns in the KR:s indeed is quite handy when comparing puns (assumed that the data is correct), collecting statistical data and trying to put the puns in certain groups. We also see how some puns rely heavier on some KR:s than others. However, the TA and NA were surprisingly unvaried and unimportant in comparison to other KR:s. Concerning the NA, it seems like a lot of the puns present in advertisements are mostly ambiguous statements by a single person or in written form considering that while searching for examples I, so far, have not found a single riddle and only a few dialogues, but it might be a little too early to determine this as a fact as of yet. Puns containing a TA were very scarce in the analysis, possibly to avoid offending anyone.

Sometimes it is rather hard to know which of the four groups concerning relevance between interpretations that is the best fit for a specific pun. But the process of analysing puns depends all too much on human intuition since there still is a lot on puns and other kinds of humour that remains uncharted. It seems in short, that these classifications still need some clearer definitions. Moreover when confronting a joke such as (31) (*tanoshimeeru*) it becomes very hard to actually find any concrete interpretation and thus almost impossible to point out which one that is the first interpretation and which is the second. Also, the categorisation of puns such as (28) (*ringo sutta*) that presents almost the same pun twice becomes odd when trying to apply the GTVH since it is not clear whether one really should count this as one pun and how this is supposed to be summarised into the KR:s.

The result showing that there is no pun belonging to group 1 from 2.3.2 above among the examples was hardly a surprise since it would seem quite odd and contra productive for an advertiser to broadcast a pun conveying as little meaning as possible.

6. Conclusion

Throughout this thesis I have been trying to explain different aspects of puns with the assistance of several authorities on the subject aiming to provide a sufficient base of knowledge. Script theories and the taxonomies of puns as presented by Attardo and Raskin, among others have been presented, the same goes for Tanaka's thoughts on puns in advertisements from which I have taken a lot of inspiration for the analysis. The aim to apply these theories on Japanese puns for the, presumably, first time has been somewhat fulfilled.

It is regrettable that there exists no definite confirmation that this analysis is correct. If I had had more time at my hands, I would have analysed a greater amount of advertisements using the GTVH to see how similar they are and what the distinguishing characteristics of each commercial might be. I would then proceed with putting this theory to the test by letting native Japanese speakers watch the commercials themselves and then see whether their evaluations is any similar to the ones I got from the GTVH.

All data presented in this analysis is highly based on my own judgement since a vast amount of the classifications of the jokes had to be made while balancing on a very thin, unclear line. Especially when applying the GTVH on jokes I had to improvise a lot since I have been unable to find a sufficient amount of detailed examples illustrating how to apply the GTVH in practice. Some readers might disagree with me on some (or many) points, but know that I will gladly receive any critique.

The data on advertisements from this study is far from sufficient of course, since it is rather small. But it is my hope that the theory and method applied in this thesis will be further developed and that the initiative taken here might be another step towards western humour-researchers giving the Japanese puns some well deserved attention.

7. Further studies

First and foremost, it ought to be noted that the scope of this analysis could, or rather should, have been widened by a greater amount of relevant literature especially concerned with Japanese puns. This will have to be postponed to a later point though, since such literature proved to be rather hard to find in this part of the world as most existing relevant literature is in Japanese.

As we have looked at and characterised puns in TV-advertisements it seems natural that the next step would be to start looking at other areas of Japanese where the pun is a common occurrence and see if any differences worth mentioning occurs. It also seems obligatory that we take a look at the differences and similarities between Japanese puns and puns of other languages to maybe discover up till now neglected characteristics. Before doing this though, one ought to expand the study and confirm the methods with the help of Japanese native speakers, as described in the conclusion above.

The puns history inside of Japanese poetry (the puns history in Japanese overall, actually) also ought to be further looked into for a comparison between the puns development and usages in different languages through time.

An aspect which can already be judged as clearly differing from English is the structure of syntagmatic puns in Japanese. These deserve a better look at by western humour researchers for the purpose of obtaining a better understanding of syntagmatic puns in English.

One comparative study between languages could be to look at Japanese literature rich on puns and its English translation for the purpose of finding out how the translator deals with the translation of Japanese puns (in addition to other kinds of humour). That is, if there exists a noteworthy difference in the kinds of puns used and how this affects the contents and nuance of the story. This could be compared to studies concerning translation to and from the Japanese *yakuwarigo* ‘role language’. It would also be interesting to go the other way around and study English literature and its Japanese translation.

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