

Revealing Puns Used In Spongebob Squarepants Animated Show

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Abstrak

Permainan kata bisa ditemui dimana saja baik itu acara TV ataupun media lainnya, terutama acara Spongebob Squarepants. Acaranya sendiri memiliki berbagai macam lelucon dan beberapa di antaranya melibatkan beberapa bentuk permainan kata atau bahkan permainan kata pada umumnya. Hal ini membuat lelucon di sana menarik untuk diteliti bagaimana mereka menggunakan ambiguitas kata sebagai hiburan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui jenis ambiguitas atau jenis permainan kata apa yang digunakan pertunjukan tersebut. Data penelitian ini berupa dialog-dialog yang mengandung permainan kata-kata yang terdapat dalam tayangan animasi Spongebob Squarepants, yang menjadikan penelitian ini deskriptif kualitatif karena tidak bersifat numerik. Pertama-tama materi yang akan digunakan sebagai sumber data penelitian ini akan diunduh melalui internet melalui berbagai website. Permainan kata-kata itu sendiri diambil dari transkrip pertunjukan yang juga dapat ditemukan di internet. Cara penelitian akan dilakukan adalah dengan menonton pertunjukan itu sendiri dan mengambil permainan kata-kata di sepanjang jalan dan juga memahami konteks permainan kata-kata tersebut. Hasil penelitian menemukan bahwa serial animasi Spongebob Squarepants hanya menggunakan permainan kata-kata homonim, homofonik, paronimik, dan polisemik, menyisakan homografi yang tidak digunakan.

Kata kunci: permainan kata, tipe permainan kata, ambiguitas, tayangan animasi

Abstract

Puns can be found anywhere whether it be TV shows or other media, especially the show Spongebob Squarepants. The show itself has various kinds of jokes and some of them involve some form of puns or even wordplays in general. This makes the jokes in there interesting to study to how they use the ambiguity of words as an entertainment. The study aims to find out what types of ambiguities or what types of puns that the show used. This research's data will be in the form of dialogues that contain puns that can be found in Spongebob Squarepants animated shows, which makes this research descriptive qualitative since it is not numerical. First of all, the material that would be used as this research's data source will be downloaded through the internet through various websites. The puns themselves are taken from the transcript of the show which also can be found on the internet. The way the research will be done is by watching the show itself and picking up the puns along the way and also understanding the context of those puns. The research found out that Spongebob Squarepants animated series only used homonymic, homophonic, paronymic, and polysemic puns, leaving out homography.

Keyword: puns, types of puns, ambiguity, animated show

INTRODUCTION

Puns are jokes that exploit the different possible meanings of a word or the fact that there are

words that sound alike but have different meanings. Puns nowadays can be found anywhere such as literary works, social media, TV shows, movies, etc. Due to

their nature of exploiting the sound and spelling of a word they can be interesting to study. There are many types of puns based on their ambiguity. Schroter (Cited in Auliah, 2017, p. 14) classifies pun into five different types. These include Homonymy, Homophony, Homograph, Paronymy, and Polysemy.

Like what was said before, some of these puns can be found in an animated series such as *Spongebob Squarepants*. *Spongebob Squarepants* itself is a long-running animated series from the year 1999 that is still airing until this day. It has been aired several different countries, making it one of the most well known animated shows. One of the reasons it is very well known globally is due to the humor in that show. Some of the jokes told in *Spongebob* cleverly bends certain aspect of that word, whether it be its meaning, sound, or spelling, which make those jokes interesting.

Some studies that concern a similar topic have been conducted before, one of them is by Sari (2016). Aside from that, a lot of theories will also be taken from Korhonen's (2008) and Auliah's (2017) research. Sari's journal is the main base of this research which discussed translation strategies of word plays in two Indonesian subtitled *Spongebob's* movies through their wordplay categories and the resulting equivalence. Through this, the research used Delabastita's theories to explain the wordplay categories and the translation strategies and Bell's theory to explain the translation equivalence. Korhonen's thesis also covered translation strategies for puns on the Finnish subtitle of *The Simpson* animated show through their wordplay categories. The research also uses Delabastita's theories of wordplay categories and wordplay translation strategies. Lastly, Auliah's discussed the translation strategies used when translating puns in the Indonesian subtitled version of *Hotel Transylvania* by using Schroter's theory of pun typology and Delabastita's translation strategy theory.

Looking at the research studies above, it can be seen that all researches that are mentioned used Delabastita's theory of typology of puns, including this research since Schroter's typology derived from Delabastita's theory. The difference between this research and the ones mentioned is that this research uses a different object. The first research mentioned

and this one might use the same series, but the difference is that research uses the movie as the source of data while this research uses the first three seasons of the animated series.

Based on the preceding background, the study aims to determine the type of puns used in the show.

Puns

Auliah (Auliah, 2017, p. 11) cited Delabastita that pun is a form of wordplay usually defined as a "deliberate communicative strategy, or the result thereof, used with a specific semantic or pragmatic effect in mind". She also quoted Henri Bergson (2003, pp. 35–36) who defines a pun as a sentence or utterance in which "the same sentence appears to offer two independent meanings, but it is only an appearance; in reality, there are two different sentences made up of different words, but claiming to be the same because both have the same sound". To put it simply, a pun is rather a play on words depending upon a similarity of sound and a disparity of meanings.

Function of Puns

Korhonen (2008) stated that wordplay captures the reader's attention because it stands out from the surrounding textual environment. Often the function of wordplay in a text is to amuse the person(s) reading the text, namely by producing humor. Though it is not always the case, as Korhonen also quotes Delabastita that puns can also be adding to the thematic coherence, forcing the reader/listener into greater attention, adding persuasive force to the statement, deceiving our socially conditioned reflex against sexual and other taboo themes, and so on. Korhonen also points out Leppihalme's statement that said puns may also convey biting parody, irony, or subversiveness with a certain person or phenomenon becoming the laughing stock.

Types of Puns

Auliah (2017, p. 14) Cited Schroter's five types of Puns, those types are as 1) Homonymy, a pun that is based on completely unrelated items that happen to be identical due to mere coincidence. The term homonymy is used to refer to the relationship between two (or more) linguistic structures that are

formally identical, both in spelling and sound, but have divergent meanings 2) Homophony, a pun in which two expressions sound the same, as the label indicates, but are not spelled the same 3) Homography, a pun where the written forms of two expressions are identical, but not the pronunciation 4) Paronymy: A pun that is based on two expressions that are more or less similar, but not identical on either the graphemic or the phonetic level 4) Polysemy: A pun that results in a single item acquired, thanks to semantic processes, and perhaps most notably metaphor, meanings that go beyond its original, core meaning.

METHOD

The design of this research would be in the form of descriptive qualitative, this is due to the data is in the form of detailed text (Litosseliti, 2010, p. 52). The data taken for the study are not numerical but in a form of an utterance of the puns related to the research problem. The study concerns on what types of puns are used based on the ambiguity of said puns used. It can be seen that this study relates to what types of puns are used in the show.

The puns used as data are found in the original version of *Spongebob Squarepants*. The analysis will be done to determine what types of puns are used in the show.

The goal is to seek out what types of puns that are used in *Spongebob Squarepants* animated show. Thus, this research is mainly descriptive since it is mainly describing the puns used in the show. The analysis mainly revolves around what the types of puns used in the show.

The object of the study would be puns that can be found on an animated series *Spongebob Squarepants*. This is because the show contains some lines that are playing with words that fit the topic of the study.

The data would be utterances or phrases in form of text with puns that can be found on an animated show *Spongebob Squarepants*. The translated texts to be compared with the original puns will be taken from the Global TV Indonesian translation version of the show since this version is the one that is still airing until this day. The translated data, of course, would be in the form of utterance or phrase. These data will be taken from the transcript

that was taken from the show. The data is taken from a video downloaded from the internet. As for the puns, it can be taken from the transcript of the show which can found on the internet or can be made by listening to the video and taking notes, especially for the Indonesian translated version as it is hard to find the Indonesian transcript of the show.

There are several procedure for collecting data: 1) Downloading the video of the English version of the *Spongebob Squarepants* Animated Show on the internet. 2) Watching the videos. 3) Finding the transcript of the English version of the show on the internet. 4) Double-checking the transcript to make sure that they match with the show. 5) Listing down some puns that can be found in the show and in what episode they are from. 6) Determining the type of those puns.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section is showing the result of the research and also the discussion about those results.

Types of pun used in *Spongebob Squarepants*

The research below shows what types of puns are used in the show. The text typed in bold will show the pun and texts marked with two asterisks explain what certain character is doing or what is currently happening on the screen. Images are also included to explain the context of the English pun which will be read from left to right. There will be two data for each type that are presented in this research.

Homonymy

Homonymy is a pun which two expressions that sound the same, and spelled the same, as the label indicates, but have different meanings. These can be seen in examples below:

1. Patrick: What's going to happen to us?
Spongebob: We'll probably get 40 **lashes**!
Patrick: Oh no!
*Patrick imagines himself having 40 **eyelashes***

The context of datum 1 above is that *Spongebob* and *Patrick* were about to be punished by *Mr. Krabs* due to them saying bad words. *Patrick* asks

what kind of punishment by Mr. Krabs two of them are going to experience. Spongebob answers his question by telling Patrick that they might get 40 lashes. Since he is talking about punishment, the word “lashes” here means sharp blow or stroke with a whip or rope. However, Patrick took the word “lashes” the other way by thinking that the word “lashes” is taken from “eyelashes” (figure 2) which means each of the short curved hairs growing on the edges of the eyelids.



Figure 1: “We’ll probably get 40 lashes!”



Figures 2: “Oh no!”

Taken Schroter’s (Schröter, 2005, p. 164) theory into account that said homonymy happens when two expressions that have an entirely different meaning that is not related with each other coincidentally have a similar way of spelling and pronunciation, it can be concluded that the two cases above fulfill the requirements of how homonymy could happen. From the first case, it shows an ambiguity between the two “lashes”, the first lashes means stroke from a whip, and the second one is taken from “eyelashes” that refers to the hair. Both

expressions spelled the same and pronounced in the same way (/ˈlæʃɪz/), but the meaning of both “lashes” is entirely different and not related whatsoever.

Homophony

Homophony is a pun that happens where two expressions sound the same, as the label indicates, but are not spelled the same. The examples are as follow:

2. *Spongebob looks at his calendar*
Spongebob: Wow! It’s **Sunday** Gary! Guess what’s for breakfast?
Gary: Meow?
Spongebob and Gary go into the kitchen
Spongebob: That’s right!
Spongebob takes a bowl
Spongebob: A **sundae**!

The dialogue on datum 2 happens when Spongebob looks at his calendar and sees the date 20 on Sunday. This led Spongebob to ask his snail what is the breakfast of the day. After that, he answers his question by stating that they are going to have a sundae at breakfast. The word “Sunday” and “sundae” have a different meaning (one being a name of a day and the other is food) and spelling, but their way of pronunciation are the same.

Based on Schroter’s (2005, p. 165) explanation of homophony which requires two expressions that are pronounced the same way, it can be concluded that the two cases above fit the mentioned requirement. The data shows the similarity of sound of the words “Sunday” and “sundae” which are pronounced “/ˈsʌndeɪ/”.

Paronymy

Paronymy is a pun that is based on two expressions that are more or less similar, but not identical on either the graphemic or the phonetic level. The following are the examples of Paronymy:

3. Mr. Krabs: Say hello to me **Pearl**!
*Mr. Krabs shows his off-screen daughter which is behind the **pole***
Spongebob: Hello “**Pole**”!
scene zooms out to reveal Pearl

In datum 3, Mr. Krabs introduces his daughter, Pearl, to two of his employees. This scene initially shows Mr. Krabs, Spongebob, Squidward, and a pole on the screen. During this scene, Mr. Krabs “supposedly” introduces Mr. Krabs by moving his claws towards Pearl (figure 3), who is standing at the other side of the pole off the screen at the time, to show her to his two employees. Since the scene initially only shows Mr. Krabs, Spongebob, Squidward, and a pole, this makes it as if Mr. Krabs is introducing the pole instead, which leads to Spongebob attempting to have a handshake and hug the pole (figure 4).



Figure 3: “Say hello to me Pearl!”



Figure 4: “Hello, *Pole!*”



Figures 5: Then the real Pearl shows up

According to Schroter’s (2005, p. 167) explanation about paronymy, the two cases above fulfill the requirements of how paronymy can happen. In the first case Mr. Krabs his daughter, Pearl, which Spongebob mistook as pole due to the near similarity of spelling on both words. In addition to that, the way both words are pronounced is nearly similar with both

words starting and ending with /p/ and /l/ (Pearl was pronounced /pərl/ and pole was pronounced /pōl/).

Polysemy

Polysemy is a pun that results in a single item acquired, thanks to semantic processes, and perhaps most notably metaphor, meanings that go beyond its original, core meaning. The examples of polysemy can be seen in the dialogues below:

4. Spongebob: As long as these pants are square, and this sponge is bob, I will not **let you down!**

Mr. Krabs: Uh... Spongebob...

*scene zooms out to show Spongebob lifting Mr. Krabs *

Mr. Krabs: Could you **let me down?**

Datum 4 shows a dialogue which tells about Spongebob who swears himself to Mr. Krabs, in his quote, "will not let you down." What he meant by that is Spongebob will not disappoint Mr. Krabs. However, due to how the scene is shown where Spongebob is later shown lifting Mr. Krabs up (figure 7), this leads the expression "will not let you down" to means never letting one down from a higher point. Therefore, making Mr. Krabs later asks Spongebob to let him down.



Figure 6: "I will not let you down!"

To quote Schroter's (Schröter, 2005, p. 164) explanation on Polysemy, "A pun that resulting in a single item acquires, thanks to semantic processes, and perhaps most notably metaphor, meanings that go

beyond its original, core meaning." Thus, it can be concluded that the two cases above fit the explanation. Looking at the data, the expression "will not let you down" uttered by Spongebob is a metaphorical way of saying that he will not disappoint his boss. However, Mr. Krabs took it a literal way since he was lifted by Spongebob, so it can be said that the meaning changes from what Spongebob means.



Figure 7: "Uh... Spongebob. Could you let me down?"

From all those data above, it can be concluded that out of five typologies of puns. Those types include homonymy, homophony, paronymy, and polysemy. Thus, leaving homography not used. In comparison to Sari's research which covered the same series but different source material (movie), there is a homographic pun in there. Other research on a similar subject also shows that the homographic puns only exist in the movie version and not in the first three seasons of the show.

Shifting focus away from Spongebob Squarepants and looking at other shows a bit, it is not uncommon for an animated TV show or movie to not have a homographic pun. Mar'atun's (2016) research shows that there are also animations, be it a TV show or movie, that does not show all types of puns. In that research, she discussed wordplay translation in the movie *Despicable Me*. Looking through the thesis, the research shows that the movie only has examples of homonymy, polysemy, homophony, and paronymic puns, just like this research. Another case can be seen in Winarti's research (2011) which discussed pun translation in the animated movie *Madagascar II*. In fact, that research shows that there are only three types

of puns, missing not only homography but also homophony. So this case is normal since it can be found quite often in another show.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that there are four types of pun used in the show, namely Homonymy, Homophony, Paronymy, and Polysemy. Homonymy happens when there are two or more expressions that have similarities in pronunciation and spelling, but the meaning does not have a relation or similarity whatsoever. Homophony occurs when two or expressions have different meanings and spelling, but their pronunciation is the same. Paronymy is a pun that involves two or more expressions that have different meanings, but the pronunciation and spelling are near similar. Polysemy is an expression or phrase that has multiple related meanings that can change depending on the usage.

SUGGESTION

There are a few suggestions that can be taken from this research. For researchers, it can be used as a reference to do further researchs on puns or wordplay in general. This can also be for writers who are looking for some examples of wordplay humor. It can also be useful for entertainers who are looking for more humor variations.

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