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Oleg KHARCHENKO

Socio-professional advertising humor at the on-line English language lessons during the war

OLEG KHARCHENKO. **Socio-professional advertising humor at the on-line English language lessons during the war.** *This article addresses the question about the appropriateness of including humorous materials in the English-language courses within the educational programs of students specializing in journalism, advertising and editorial work. It presents a stylistic, cognitive and pragmatic analysis of a sample of English-language jokes about advertising and its variants. An analysis of the forms of 115 jokes sourced from four English-language websites shows that the most frequent forms of jokes about advertising are question/answer formats (60.8%), one-liner jokes (39.2%). A detailed study of 20 advertising-related jokes highlights the most frequent use of stylistic devices such as puns, fake enthusiasm, paraprosookian, pastiche, bathos and irony. Other techniques include personified and zoomorphic metaphors, nonstandard similes, false argumentation (enthymeme), antithesis, are involved. From a cognitive perspective, the jokes leverage mechanisms like the von Restorff pattern, distinct contrast and easel patterns. Pragmatically, these jokes serve multiple*

purposes: they help students to relieve psychological stress, encourage creative and critical thinking, entertain in spite of war realities, introduce students to English-speaking advertising practices and vocabulary, foster an appreciation of humor and irony. Besides, they motivate students to be successful and confident, while shaping stereotypical images of English-speaking advertising professionals. The integration of English-language humorous advertising texts in English language learning programs proves beneficial. Such practice improves the professional vocabulary of students, equips them with cognitive, stylistic and literary techniques for tailoring their own advertising products. Moreover, such jokes contribute to the development of intercultural and cultural competences, important for future advertising specialists.

Key words: humor, irony, educational process, socio-professional jokes, advertising.

1. Introduction

The contemporary English-language multimedia discourse includes a considerable amount of humorous, ironic, and satirical content that engages various socio-professional groups. Should Ukrainian students study this material during online English classes, especially amid the ongoing full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war? Is it reasonable to allocate time in courses such as 'Theory and Practice of Translation', 'English Professional Discourse', and 'Stylistics of the English Language' to explore humor in advertising from the United States and the United Kingdom? Through a stylistic-cognitive analysis of English-language advertising humor and based on the author's experience teaching publishing and journalism students, this article aims to provide a substantiated answer to this question.

The article's relevance lies in highlighting the benefits of using English-language advertising jokes in the educational process for students mastering disciplines such as Advertising, Journalism, International Journalism, and Publishing Business.

The object of study is contemporary English-language advertising jokes from multimedia sources in the United States and the United Kingdom.

The subject of study is identifying stylistic, literary, and cognitive techniques used to create humor in these socio-professional jokes.

The study aims to outline the positive impact of knowledge gained from analyzing socio-professional jokes on advertising and journalism students, considering cultural, cross-cultural, linguistic, and pragmatic

perspectives. To conduct a stylistic, cognitive, and pragmatic analysis of selected English-language advertising jokes and justify the inclusion of humorous materials in Ukrainian students' curricula.

2. Methodology and research approaches

The methodological toolkit for this study includes empirical methods of cognitive, discursive, and stylistic analysis; descriptive investigation of jokes; scientific generalization; and interpretation of humorous fragments for further comparison and conclusions.

Drawing upon the research of Ukrainian scholars such as V.P. Andrushenko [1], V.Y. Zdorovega [22], and V.I. Cheremys [3], who actively sought and studied new forms and methods of educating Ukrainian journalists and editors, particularly in light of Bologna system requirements, it seems reasonable to apply similar strategies in English classes.

In the learning process, especially in teaching English to advertising and journalism students, English-language humor—particularly jokes targeting these socio-professional groups—provides additional cultural and professional insights. These insights deepen students' understanding of their future work in a multimedia environment. Given that humorous discourse is constructed using numerous stylistic techniques and cognitive mechanisms, incorporating humorous texts and short jokes into the curriculum contributes to a deeper study of stylistics, cognitive science, and the expansion of students' English vocabulary.

E. Reddington and H.Z. Waring argue that "the ability to create and understand humor is increasingly recognized as a component of communicative competence in a second language" [16, p.3]. S.E. Davies [6] and D. Hann [8] assert that analyzing jokes in a foreign language classroom enhances cross-cultural competence. M.A. Heidari-Shahreza [9] suggests a teaching approach called HILL (*humor-integrated language learning*), which combines linguistic and humorous competencies.

According to J. Rusinski and S. Pritchard, "Successful integration of humor into a language learning curriculum involves selecting the most appropriate approach for learners while carefully weighing potential risks (such as confusion or even offense)" [14, p.499].

Before planning a foreign language lesson, Rusinski and Pritchard recommend asking three questions:

Do students need this form of humor for communication in a foreign language?

Will a deeper understanding of this form of humor enhance cross-cultural communicative competence?

Is there a direct connection between this type of humor, the course content, and the skills being taught? [14, p.500].

D. Wulf suggests that teachers develop micro-skills for recognizing and decoding humor by creating specific tools and strategies that facilitate more effective classroom work and help students build humor-related competence in a foreign language [20, p.167]. At the same time, the researcher recommends simplifying humorous examples and related terminology to achieve more significant results.

3. Sample and analysis of jokes

For this study, we selected jokes focusing on such socio-professional groups as journalists and editors working in the fields of media and social networks.

The advertising-related jokes were sourced from websites including *jokeandpun.com* [12], *reddit.com* [14], *namesurfy.com* [2], and *pouted.com* [14]. The primary types of advertising jokes are short "question/answer" jokes and one-liner jokes. An analysis of a sample comprising 115 jokes from the mentioned websites shows that 60.9% are in the question/answer (Q/A) format, while 39.2% are one-liners.

In this study, we examine 20 jokes from these websites, which we believe belong to the most illustrative examples.

1. Why did the billboard go back to school?
It wanted to improve its "ad-dress" [12].
2. Why don't advertisers play poker?
They're too good at bluffing! [12].
3. What kind of commercials do chickens love?
Egg-vertisements [12].
4. Why did the print ad refuse to leave its job?
It loved having a solid "copy" [12].
5. Why is advertising like a bad magic trick?
Because the results often disappear right before your eyes! [12].
6. Why did the radio ad visit the farm?
To work on its pitchfork strategy [12].
7. What do you call a terrible marketing strategy for curtains?
Window dressing [12].
8. Local advertising. In New Mexico, on a septic tank truck in New Mexico, it was printed boldly on the side: "Your shit is our bread and butter!" (local advertising) reddit

9. Local advertising. Fire sprinkler company: "Water sprinklers save your grass, fire sprinklers save your ass!" [14].
10. Local advertising. Septic tank service with the name "Honey Wagon". The slogan on the trucks was "Satisfaction guaranteed or double your honey back." (local advertising) [14].
11. 'Think Small' – Volkswagen [2].
12. 'Think Outside the Bun' – Taco Bell [2].
13. 'Once You Pop, You Can't Stop' – Pringles [2].
14. 'We're Like a Gym for Your Finances' – FitWallet Financial Advisors [2].
15. 'Your Trash is Our Treasure' – GreenCycle Waste Management [2].
16. 'We Make Your Mother-in-law Jealous' – Sparkle Home Cleaning [2].
17. 'We're the Cat's Meow' – Purrfect Pets Pet Store [2].
18. 'We Make Your Computer Sit and Stay' – TechTrain [2]
19. People say nothing is impossible, but I do nothing every day [14].
20. My mind works like lightning; One brilliant flash, and it's gone [14].

Analysis of stylistic devices used to create comedic effect in the selected jokes. So, we consider the stylistic devices employed to generate comedic effects in the aforementioned sample of jokes.

Puns are utilized in the first joke (*ad-dress* – a word play on both "address" and "a dress for ads"), the third (*egg-vertisements* – a paronymy involving "advertisements" and "egg-vertisements," where *egg* refers to eggs, and *vertisement* references a small advertising company), the fourth (*copy* – interpreted both as "a duplicate" and "a spiteful person"), the sixth (*pitchfork strategy* – a pun on *pitch* as the main idea of a presentation and *pitchfork* as a farming tool), and the seventh (*window dressing* – a double meaning of "shop window decoration" and "deception").

Pastiche, referring to mixing lexicons from different genres and registers, is used in the second joke (*advertisers, poker*), the third (*commercial, chicken*), the fifth (*advertising, magic trick*), the eighth (*advertising, shit*), the ninth (*advertising, ass*), the fourteenth (*gym, finances*), the fifteenth (*trash, treasure*), and the eighteenth (*computer, sit and stay*). Additionally, the stylistic device of bathos, characterized by the abrupt use of low-register vocabulary, is seen in jokes eight, nine, and fifteen.

Paraprospodokian (unexpected joke endings) is used in the twelfth joke, where instead of the idiomatic phrase "*Think outside the box*" (meaning

"think creatively"), the advertising version suggests thinking outside "the bun." In the seventeenth joke, product producers call themselves "the cat's meow," which serves as a zoomorphic metaphor. This stylistic device is also combined in other jokes with surprising endings, such as jokes 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, and 18.

Faulty logic or enthymeme is involved in the second joke. Advertisers are said not to play poker because they are good at bluffing – an innuendo suggesting they are akin to fraudsters. The fifth joke compares advertising to a bad magic trick, implying that advertising results quickly disappear, again hinting at deceit. The nineteenth joke plays on the word "*nothing*" by suggesting that "nothing" can also be done.

Irony is utilized in the eighth joke, where "shit" is called the company's "bread and butter" (its main income source). Similarly, in the tenth joke, "shit" is referred to as "honey," with an innuendo tied to libido, implying that "satisfaction is guaranteed." In the fifteenth joke, "trash" is described as "treasure," hinting at the idea that one person's trash is another person's wealth.

Antithesis is seen in the twentieth joke, where the brain's activity is humorously described as: "My mind works like lightning. One brilliant flash – and it's gone." An implicit antithesis is also present in the eleventh joke, where the traditional phrase "*Think big*" or "*Think globally*" is replaced with "*Think small*."

Personified metaphors are noticed in the first joke, where a billboard "goes to school"; in the third joke, where chickens "enjoy commercials"; in the fourth joke, where printed ads "refuse to quit their jobs"; in the sixth joke, where radio ads "visit a farm"; in the thirteenth joke, where chips "pop up" like living creatures; and in the eighteenth joke, where a computer obeys commands like a dog.

Nonstandard similes appear in the fifth joke, where advertising is likened to a bad magic trick; in the fourteenth joke, where advertisers are compared to a "gym for finances"; and in the twentieth joke, where the mind is correlated to lightning.

Situational humor, drawn from everyday life, evokes laughter in the sixteenth joke, where a cleaning company provokes envy in a mother-in-law due to the high quality of cleaning services.

Almost all jokes employ the stylistic device of fake enthusiasm, as most jokes are filled with cheerful optimism.

The comedic effect is further enhanced by: rhyme in the ninth joke (*grass, ass*) and the thirteenth joke (*pop, stop*); alliteration in jokes eight

(*bread, butter*), fifteen (*trash, treasure*), and eighteen (*sit, stay*); diacope (repetition of a word) in jokes nine (*sprinklers save, sprinklers save*) and nineteen (*nothing, nothing*); isocolon (parallel structure) in jokes nine, thirteen, and nineteen.

The stylistic analysis reveals that most jokes utilize, often in combination, the following devices:

- Puns (5 jokes – 20%)
- Paraprosdokian (13 – 65%)
- Personified and zoomorphic metaphors (7 – 35%)
- Pastiche (8 – 40%)
- Antithesis (2 – 10%)
- Unconventional comparisons (3 – 15%)
- Irony (3 – 15%)
- Bathos (3 – 15%)
- Faulty logic (3 – 15%)
- Fake enthusiasm (16 – 80%).

From the cognitive point of view, where we identify cognitive patterns as main mechanisms for creating humor, there is a set of jokes – namely, in samples 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 13, and 14 (7–35%), jokes demonstrate the activation of the cognitive patterns of the “Von Restorff effect” [19, p. 299]. This effect involves the audience's tendency to pay greater attention to individual, isolated, fantastical, and supernatural objects and the “extraordinariness bias” [11, pp. 52–55], which includes a provocative element. The latter refers to a tendency to remember objects with additional unusual qualities.

The cognitive pattern of the “easel” is observed in jokes 8, 10, 12, 15, 17, 18, and 20 (7–35%). This pattern shapes the cognitive bias of the “importance of visuals.” According to A. Paivio, people remember visual images and representations formed by words much faster than any logically connected information [9].

The cognitive pattern of “distinct contrast” is applied to create a comic effect in jokes 8, 11, 19, and 15 (4–20%). This pattern is part of the “contrast effect” bias, identified by D. Kahneman and A. Tversky [21]. It is based on the assertion that contrasting referents presented together attract more attention and are more memorable.

The cognitive pattern of “negative thinking,” characterized by problem-solving through negative experience and part of the eponymous cognitive bias [5, 7], is used in jokes 2, 5, 8, 9, and 15 (5–25%).

What stereotypical images of English-speaking advertisers do these jokes create?

English-speaking advertising professionals are portrayed as creative, multifunctional, somewhat cynical, and highly skilled specialists in stylistics.

According to the analysis of sample jokes, the main pragmatic functions of English-language jokes about advertising include: entertainment through creating a positive emotional mood and stimulating laughter; familiarization with the peculiarities of the English-speaking advertising industry; psychological stress relief by eliminating negative emotions; encouraging critical thinking; motivating success and career growth; strengthening professional confidence; stimulating creativity; highlighting humor and irony.

So, now we can pose the following question: "Is it appropriate to provide such lexical material to students who major in advertising and journalism during their English studies?"

In our opinion, jokes of this type are appropriate for use in the curriculum, especially during the full-scale war, to relieve stress and entertain Ukrainian students, possibly avoiding jokes like 8 and 9.

In terms of vocabulary, such jokes expand the active informal and professional vocabulary of future Ukrainian advertisers.

In terms of style, students improve their literary-stylistic competence and skills in crafting quality advertising in English.

From a cognitive perspective, translating such jokes enhances students' psycholinguistic and pragmatic competencies, enabling them to better and more quickly grasp the humorous intentions of advertising content. Additionally, such material strengthens the cultural and intercultural competencies of future advertisers.

The author's personal experience indicates a direct connection between English-language jokes, their translation, and improved linguistic creativity among students when creating their own content (including humorous and satirical) in English.

4. Conclusion

English-language jokes about advertising are nationally marked and serve as an effective pragmatic tool for familiarizing oneself with the techniques of creating effective advertisements within the English-speaking professional and cultural environment.

An analysis of the joke formats revealed that, out of 115 units sampled from four humor websites, 60.2% were in the form of question/answer, while 39.2% were one-liners.

The analysis of a subset of 20 jokes about English-language advertising indicates that jokes are created through a combination of various stylistic

devices, including: fake enthusiasm (80%), puns (20%), paraproverbs (65%), personified and zoomorphic metaphors (35%), pastiche (40%), antithesis (10%), unconventional comparisons (15%), irony (15%), bathos (15%), and faulty logic (15%). Rhyme, alliteration, diacope, isocolon, or parallel structures act as humor intensifiers.

In the cognitive aspect, humor is created using patterns such as the Von Restorff effect, extraordinariness, easel pattern, distinct contrast, and negative thinking.

All the analyzed jokes fulfill pragmatic functions such as: activating critical thinking, entertainment, familiarization with advertising techniques and vocabulary, revealing humor and irony, alleviating psychological stress, creating positive motivation for success, fostering professional confidence, and enhancing creativity.

The appropriateness of studying advertising humor in English by Ukrainian advertising students lies in the fact that these jokes: improve students' knowledge of the entire lexicon associated with English-language advertising; teach effective use of various stylistic techniques to create English-language humor; enhance skills in writing English-language advertisements; help recognize English-language humor and irony; strengthen students' cultural and intercultural competencies.

The research findings presented in this article demand further studies with a larger database.

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The Author

Oleg V. KHARCHENKO
 Candidate of Philological Sciences,
 Associate Professor at the Department of
 Media Production and Publishing Studies,
 Faculty of Journalism,
 Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University
 Kyiv, Ukraine
 ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6263-4573>
 E-mail: ov.kharchenko@kubg.edu.ua

Abstracts

ОЛЕГ ХАРЧЕНКО. Соціо-професійний рекламний гумор на он-лайн заняттях англійської мови під час війни. Ця стаття дає відповідь на запитання про доцільність включення гумористичних матеріалів у англомовні дисципліни навчальних програм студентів, що спеціалізуються на журналістиці, рекламі та редакторській справі. Запропоновано стилістичний, когнітивний та прагматичний аналіз вибірки англомовних жартів про рекламу та її різновиди. Аналіз форм 115 жартів, взятих з чотирьох англомовних сайтів, свідчить про те, що найбільш частотними формами жартів про рекламу є запитання/відповідь (60.8%), однорядкові жарти (39.2%). Розгляд 20 жартів про рекламу, досліджених у статті, розкрив, що у стилістичному плані, вони містять каламбури, пас-тиш, паранпросодіан, удаваний ентузіазм, бафос та іронію. Додатково залучаються такі прийоми, як персоніфіковані та зооморфічні метафори, нестандартні порівняння, антитеза, хибна аргументація (ентимема). У когнітивному аспекті гумор ґрунтується на механізмах когнітивних патернів фон Ресторфа, мольберту, чіткого контрасту, негативного мислення. Прагматично, жарти ведуть до зняття психологічного стресу, критичного мислення, креативності, створюють розважальний елемент навіть в умовах війни. Жарти знайомлять студентів з англомовним рекламним бізнесом, професійною та неформальною лексикою, допомагають виявити гумор та іронію, мотивують до професійного успіху, формують стереотипні образи рекламістів, підвищують упевненість у своїх знаннях. Залучення англомовних рекламних жартів у програми вивчення англійської мови є доречним, оскільки такий матеріал покращує професійний словник студентів, навчає ефективно використовувати когнітивні, стилістичні та літературні прийоми для власної рекламної продукції, розвиває міжкультурну й культурологічну компетенції майбутніх рекламістів.

Ключові слова: гумор, іронія, навчальний процес, соціо-професійні жарти, реклама.

OLEG CHARTCZENKO. Społeczno-zawodowy humor reklamowy na lekcjach online z języka angielskiego podczas wojny. Niniejszy artykuł odpowiada na pytanie o celowość włączenia materiałów humorystycznych do anglojęzycznych przedmiotów w programach

nauczania studentów specjalizujących się w dziennikarstwie, reklamie i edytorstwie. Zaproponowano stylistyczną, poznawczą i pragmatyczną analizę próby anglojęzycznych dowcipów o reklamie i jej odmianach. Analiza form 115 dowcipów, zebranych z czterech anglojęzycznych stron internetowych, wskazuje, że najczęściej występującymi formami żartów o reklamie są pytania/odpowiedzi (60.8%) oraz jednowierszowe dowcipy (39.2%). Analiza 20 dowcipów o reklamie, zbadanych w artykule, ujawniła, że w płaszczyźnie stylistycznej zawierają one kalambury, pastisz, paraprozdokian, udawany entuzjazm, antypatos oraz ironię. Dodatkowo wykorzystane są takie środki wyrazu jak personifikowane i zoomorficzne metafory, niestandardowe porównania, antyteza, fałszywa argumentacja (entymemat). W aspekcie poznawczym humor oparty jest na mechanizmach poznawczych wzorców fon Restorffa, sztalugi, wyraźnego kontrastu, negatywnego myślenia. Pragmatycznie, dowcipy prowadzą do zmniejszenia stresu psychicznego, rozwoju myślenia krytycznego, kreatywności, tworzą element rozrywki nawet w warunkach wojny. Żarty te zapoznają studentów z anglojęzycznym rynkiem reklamowym, profesjonalnym i nieformalnym słownictwem, pomagają dostrzegać humor i ironię, motywują do zawodowego sukcesu, kształtują stereotypowe wizerunki specjalistów ds. reklam oraz podnoszą pewność własnej wiedzy. Włączenie anglojęzycznych dowcipów reklamowych do programów nauczania języka angielskiego jest uzasadnione, ponieważ taki materiał poszerza profesjonalny zasób leksykalny studentów, uczy skutecznego wykorzystywania środków poznawczych, stylistycznych i literackich w produkcji reklamowej, rozwija kompetencje międzykulturowe i kulturowe przyszłych specjalistów ds. reklam.

Słowa kluczowe: humor, ironia, proces edukacyjny, dowcipy społeczno-zawodowe, reklama.