From theory to practice and from history to terminology: “Translating” category distinctions within a humour studies framework

ISHS2017 – TRANSLATION AND TERMINOLOGY OF HUMOUR

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AIMS

• How can we make it easier for humour researchers (and other researchers interested in humour) to share terms and concepts:
  • between languages (translation, adaptation)?
  • between academic disciplines ("translation")?
• How can we best acknowledge/make use of the historical/cultural texture associated with many terms/concepts, while retaining sufficient flexibility in usage?
THE PROBLEM

- Humo[u]r studies as a maturing/mature field:
  - Established and growing body of academic literature, research communities
  - Recent publications as flagships for the field, e.g. *Primer of Humor Research* (2008), *Sage Encyclopedia of Humor Studies* (2014); book series (Mouton, Benjamins…), thematic collections on comedy/humour topics
- But (beyond “defining humour”) exchange among scholars can be problematic:
  - (Increasingly recognised?) lack of standardised terminology between fields
  - Difficulty negotiating between languages, and between scholarly traditions
  - General versus specific usage: does our broad use of “humo[u]r” erase potentially valuable cultural and historical specificities?
“In fact, there are so many terms, synonyms, partial synonyms, and overlapping definitions of humor and humor-related subjects [...] that a common understanding has been reached in the field of using the word humor as an umbrella term to cover all the synonyms. The word itself comes from the medieval theory of humors [...] but that is irrelevant in the technical sense just discussed.”

Attardo, introduction to Sage Encyclopedia of Humor Studies (2014)

“What in my view the encyclopedia lacks is a glossary of major terms giving pithy definitions, but since neither Raskin nor Attardo have so far attempted this, maybe it has not been feasible.”

A MULTILINGUAL FIELD: NATIONAL TRADITIONS VS. INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE

- Research groups working in languages other than English (e.g. Observatoire de l’humour), often with specific strengths/foci, or specific disciplines represented.

- “National” humour studies alive and well: RISU (Italy) and RIRH (France) founded 2017.

- Studies of lexical fields in different languages (Mullen and Goddard, Hempelmann et al.): scholarly vs. colloquial use of humor words?

- Category distinctions are traditionally narrower in these languages, cf. Mitchell (2014: 8): “The general tendency in French and Italian scholarship is to define each type of humour, to divide and subdivide. But the margins of each type are unclear, and one would think that, in some cases, several types of humour are so similar that they could fit into more than one category. British scholarship seems more pragmatic in its approach.”

- But not always: “humour” can have both a narrow, historicised (Escarpit 1960, Emelina 1996) and a broader (Vivero and Charaudeau 2013, Quéméner 2014) meaning in French; scholarly/technical vs. colloquial usage.
AN INTER- OR A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY FIELD?


• Typologies/glossaries can be helpful (e.g. Triezenberg 2008 on humour categories in literature; Juckel et al. 2017 on categories for sitcom analysis, following Berger 1993 on joke analysis; Mitchell 2014 on Greek vases) typically focused on specific purpose.

• “Risk” of fragmentation into sub-fields (e.g. psychologists vs non-psychologists; humour studies vs. comedy studies)?

• Reduced engagement from outside the field (e.g. Beard 2014; Mitchell 2014)?
BACK TO THE FUTURE: THE USES OF HISTORY?

- Appreciating the origins of the modern usage of “humour” is useful, *inter alia*, as a means to revisit its positive connotations, and place it in the context of other terms/concepts (cf. Billig 2005, Dickie 2011).

- But also to explore other connections, including the relationship to the medieval humours, or echoes of older usage in psychological “humour styles” (cf. Beermann and Ruch 2009).

- Recent interest in historical humour, including terms/concepts (HOP project, “history of humour/comedy” series)…

Schmidt-Hidding (1963)

IS A MULTILINGUAL TERMBASE THE SOLUTION?

Concept
  > concept info
Index (language)
  > index info
Term
  > term info (definition/s)
  > term info (usage/ex.)
  > term info (discipline/s)
  > (etc)
Index2 (language2)
  > index2 info
Term
  > term info
  > (etc)

Entry Structure
Create an entry structure for your termbase entries by specifying the level at which descriptive fields are used. Specify field settings if required.

Available descriptive fields:
- Category
- Context
- Definition
- Discipline
- Etymology
- Grammatical Gender
- Grammatical Number
- Part of Speech
- Category
- Usage Register
- Definition
- Note
- Subject
- Source
- Status

Field settings:
- Mandatory
- Multiple

Screenshot: SDL MultiTerm 2015
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Medical science</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>en</td>
<td><strong>Definition</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Term</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Reliability</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Date</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| fr     | **Definition** | liquide transparent contenu dans les chambres de l’œil, de part et d’autre de l’iris |
|        | **Definition Ref.** | Realllex Med |
|        | **Term** | humeur aqueuse |
|        | **Reliability** | 3 (Reliable) |
|        | **Term Ref.** | Realllex Med.DF.Bien-être et Santé, octobre 1997 |
|        | **Date** | 24/09/2003 |
humour

Domaine: publicité
Auteur: Dubuc, Robert, 1991

Définition
Biais comique introduit dans une annonce.

Terme
humour n.m.
Can something like the global product development cycle (cf. LISA 2003) be applied to humour studies, and particularly its terminology?

• Are some terms more “international” (humour [en]), others more “local” (humour [fr_FR]; humour [fr_CA])?

• How might the process work for different disciplines, languages, or historical periods?

• Role of English (and English terms) in international (and interdisciplinary) exchange?
PROPOSAL:
BUILD A MULTILINGUAL TERMINOLOGY RESOURCE

Need to determine:

• Aims and approach (compile terminology from HS publications, then analyse for relationships, particularities, inconsistencies)?

• Scope (disciplines, languages…?)?

• Methodology (corpus building > terminology extraction > termbase building)?

• Interface and modes of interaction for authors/contributors and end users

• Interested researchers

• (…)
PROPOSAL: BUILD A MULTILINGUAL TERMINOLOGY RESOURCE

One suggestion: apply for EU COST Action (www.cost.eu) funding for research networking

• 4 year networking funding, as prelude to research funding proper

• Minimum participation of 7 COST network states, other international partners possible

➢ A good opportunity to develop a multilingual, interdisciplinary framework for a future resource?

• Next call deadline: 7 September 2017

• Interested researchers please contact will.noonan@u-bourgogne.fr
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MERCI !
THANKS!