

Chapter 2

Cultural Conceptualisations in Humorous Discourse in English and Serbian

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2.1 Introduction

The last decades of the twentieth century have seen a revived interest in the phenomenon of verbal humour, which has been explored from different perspectives. Of course, this growing interest in humour is not new—humour has been studied by philosophers and later, psychologists and sociologists since ancient times. Humour is part and parcel of everyday language use in any linguistic community, and certainly one of prime examples of imagery, in terms of Palmer (1996, p. 3). The way people use humour reflects not only their ability to play with language but it also mirrors the shared beliefs and culture common to the speakers of a language, their communicative practices and style.

The main idea behind this chapter was to deal with the under-researched interrelationship between verbal humour and culture in a selected corpus of scripted dialogues taken from several films and television series in English and Serbian. Within the linguistic approach to humour studies, little attention, if any, has been paid to extralinguistic aspects of verbal humour, which undoubtedly represent an inseparable part of production, recognition and appreciation of verbal humour in conversation. As Goddard (2006, p. 2) aptly remarked, “the field of pragmatics as a whole still suffers from a remarkable degree of culture blindness”. This blunt but clear statement can also be applied to pragmatic theories of verbal humour, which were constructed so as to be encompassing and systematic, yet culture is conspicuous by its absence from these theories, even in the broadest sense of this concept.

On the other hand, cognitive linguistic approaches to verbal humour integrate cultural categories in Lakoff’s (1987, p. 68) sense, but usually as a background to

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explain some more salient cognitive processes, such as cognitive metaphors (Kyratzis 2003) and metonymies (Barcelona 2003; Brône and Feyaerts 2003) and their interplay with different humorous forms. Brône et al. (2015, p. 6) plausibly argue that humorous language can avail to different cognitive mechanisms, as can be seen in studies that use cognitive linguistics as a theoretical framework for dynamic meaning construction (Brône 2010) or comprehension of verbal humour (Coulson 2001, 2003; Giora 2003; Wu 2005). The concept of a cultural model and cultural scripts is well defined and applied to a plethora of case studies within cognitive approaches, cognitive anthropology in particular (Holland and Quinn 1987; Strauss and Quinn 1997). Nevertheless, in reference to linguistic analyses, it seems that the concept of culture remains elusive and certainly restricted to the ground against which some other figures are highlighted, and in that respect, cognitive studies of humour are no exception. Despite Langacker's (1994, p. 31) often cited statement that "the advent of cognitive linguistics can also be heralded as a return to cultural linguistics", cognitive linguistics still struggles with the somehow elusive concept of culture. This can to some extent be attributed to the imprecise use of the very term, since most authors in the field of cognitive linguistics tend to use different terms, such as cultural model/cognitive model/script/scheme/frame/domain etc., sometimes interchangeably, (see Kövecses 2006, p. 64), more often than not to denote the same concept. Yet, regardless of the term that is used, it is beyond doubt that an adequate understanding of the language and culture relationship requires a dynamic, developmental perspective, as Langacker (1994, p. 32) claims.

In that sense, the theoretical framework of Cultural Linguistics proves to be quite useful for this study since it "explores conceptualisations that have a cultural basis and are encoded in and communicated through features of human language" (Sharifian 2015, p. 473). Since it studies language "in its social and cultural context" (Yu 2007, p. 65), it can offer an insight into the way cultural models shape language use or speech practice of one community. Another important issue pertinent to this study is the fact that cultural conceptualisations subsume both cultural schemas and cultural categories as Sharifian (2011, p. 5) argues, which leads to the fact they are shared collectively by members of a cultural group. This is highly relevant to this research because conversational humour does not exist without social interaction (see Chapman 1983; Hay 2000; Holmes and Marra 2002) and both the production, perception and appreciation of humour are closely related not only to the individual dynamic meaning construction in the cognitive linguistic sense, but cultural conceptualisations of a particular cultural group.

Specifically, the main aim of this study was to focus on linguistic and extralinguistic aspects that underpin verbal humour in telecinematic discourse, in two languages, English and Serbian. By extralinguistic aspects in this context, primarily global and culture-specific elements in multimodal verbal humour are implied. The contrastive analysis was needed in order to pinpoint the preferred types of verbal humour and cultural conceptualisations behind the speech practices of both the British and American variety of English on the one hand and Serbian on the other. Following Wierzbicka's (2006, p. 8) argument that different varieties of

Anglo English may have significantly different cultural scripts in certain respects, in particular when it comes to communicative styles, the corpus in English was taken from both British and American films and television series.

In this chapter, humorous telecinematic discourse was used for selecting the corpus due to several reasons. Drawing on Piazza et al. (2011, pp. 2–9) telecinematic discourse will be defined here as discourse that is part of a broadcast film or television series created for the viewers. Both are regulated by “a double plane of communication that characterises any screen discourse between the subjects in the story and the external viewers” (Piazza et al. 2011, p. 1). As much as telecinematic discourse is characterised by the interaction between the represented and external participants and the interface of linguistic and audio-visual features, it still represents a communicative event and a specific form of human communication that lends itself for linguistic analysis. Specifically, it can be used to offer better insight into real-life conversation (Dynel 2011; Janney 2012; Norrick 2003; Wardhaugh 1992), based on the underlying assumption that dialogues in such discourse resemble real-life dialogues to a great extent. Even more so given the fact that this type of discourse typically reflects contemporary communication practices and cultural values highlighted in the given culture. In addition to this, it seems that humorous telecinematic discourse can provide a deeper insight into shared experience, since, in general, laughter fosters sharing bonds and mediates various social networks (Hay 2000; Knight 2010; Meyer 2000). Bearing in mind that “cultural cognition draws on a multidisciplinary understanding of the collective cognition that characterises a cultural group”, as Sharifian (2015, p. 476) has it, it is exactly the shared cultural conceptualisation as reflected in this particular discourse that is needed to grasp the complex phenomenon of verbal humour.

In the sections that follow, a brief overview of the most relevant aspects of the theoretical background will be given and then the focus will be shifted towards the methodology of the research conducted, corpus and the results of the analysis that were obtained.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 *Humour Research Within Linguistics*

The linguistic studies of verbal humour owe a great deal to Raskin’s (1985) and Attardo’s attempts to explain the humorous mechanism from the semantic (Raskin 1985), and then later on the pragmatic perspective as well (Attardo and Raskin 1991; Attardo 1994, 2001). By formulating and developing the *General Theory of Verbal Humour* (GTVH) (Attardo 2001), based on the analysis of canned jokes, these scholars tried to create a metatheory of verbal humour that would account for all instances of it. Within GTVH, verbal humour is defined in the sense that it always implies a semantic-pragmatic process activated by a (fragment of a) text and

a violation of Grice's maxims of the principle of cooperation" (Attardo 2003 p. 1287). The text of a joke is always fully or in part compatible with two distinct scripts and the two scripts are opposed to each other in a special way" (Attardo and Raskin 1991, p. 308). Raskin (1985, pp. 80–85) used the term 'script' to denote a cognitive structure that included semantic information related to the structure, components and functions of the given lexeme, or the concept denoted by it, as well as to denote the speaker's encyclopaedic knowledge associated with the lexeme. According to Raskin (1985, p. 117) some words in the text may serve as triggers for the activation of a certain script in the process of meaning construction, and hence, a script is a part of lexical meaning, even though there may exist individual differences related to scripts. This reference to the speaker's encyclopaedic knowledge is the only reference to any kind of extralinguistic aspects within the GTVH, and neither Raskin (1985) nor Attardo (1994, 2001) delve into the concept of culture in relation to verbal humour.

Nevertheless, moving away from the concept of script and script opposition as the only mechanism on which verbal humour is based, Attardo and Raskin (1991, pp. 297–303) define a list of different parameters, called *Knowledge Resources* (see also Attardo 2001, p. 29) that affect the humorous effect. In order to analyse any instance of verbal humour, Attardo (2001, pp. 1–28) suggests that this hierarchical list of six parameters be used, each of which contributes to the humorous effect:

1. *Script opposition* (SO): the central requirement for humour production that accounts for the opposition between different and opposed scripts;
2. *Logical mechanism* (LM): accounts for the resolution of the incongruity caused by SO; it can be of different kinds (e.g. figure-ground reversal, juxtaposition, parallelism, etc. see Attardo et al. 2002, p. 18);
3. *Situation* (SI): includes characters, objects, places, etc. presented in the humorous text;
4. *Target* (TA): the aim of the humour; a person, people, institutions ridiculed by a particular instance of humour;
5. *Narrative structure* (NS): genre and/or text organisation;
6. *Language* (LA): the verbalisation of the given text (word choice, placement of functional elements, etc.

These parameters are applied in an algorithmic fashion to an instance of humour that is to be analysed, as can be seen in many studies that deal with the application of GTVH to different kinds of humour (Attardo 2001; Paolillo 1998; Tsakona 2009). And indeed, if a given instance of humour is a canned joke, especially in the written form, this theory is quite coherent.

Yet, conversational humour, as the most prevalent type of verbal humour found in everyday use of language represents a significant challenge for both SSTH and GTVH as it involves both linguistic and extralinguistic aspects. Dynel (2011, p. 4) defines conversational humour as relevantly interwoven into conversation, both spoken and written, whether private, institutional or mediated. Hence, conversational humour can be regarded as an umbrella term that covers a whole range of

various specific humorous forms that can be found in a conversation, such as banters, witticisms, puns, wordplays, allusions, jokes, etc. Also, conversational humour often implies references and allusions not only to the previously mentioned utterances, but to referents beyond the very conversation, and very often, for example, to elements of culture that the participants of the conversation are familiar with. It is important to stress that conversational humour depends heavily not only on the meaning of the lexemes and the cooperation between the participants in the conversation, but on the context as well.

In his dynamic model of meaning, Kecskes (2008, p. 388) defines context as “a dynamic construct that captures both prior contexts of experience and the actual situational contexts”, which proves to be perfectly adequate in the analysis of conversational humour, most notably telecinematic discourse as well. In this way, the knowledge the speaker has in his/her mind (prior context) and the information he/she has about the actual situation related to the communicative event (actual situational context) are part of the context. In that way, context and language use are anchored in culture.

Cognitive approaches to dynamic meaning construction, such as Coulson’s (2001) frame-shifting process, or the process of conceptual blending (Fauconnier and Turner 2002), are rather general models of meaning construction and as such quite applicable to explaining humour production/comprehension as well, as Coulson and her colleagues (Coulson and Oakley 2000; Coulson 2001, 2003) have successfully shown. These models account for the on-line meaning construction which is the result of the activation of appropriate mental spaces triggered by the language use (see, for example, Fauconnier and Turner 2002, p. 25, or Coulson 2001, p. 32) in the given situation.

Nevertheless, as Kecskes (2008, p. 386) plausibly argues, lexical units encode the contexts of their prior use and this prior experience is another facet of the context. Thus, meaning construction certainly depends on the interplay of prior and current experience. Palmer (1996, p. 6) relates the concept of context to the concept of imagery, since “in the flux of context, it is the culturally constructed, conventional and mutually presupposed imagery of world view that provides the stable points of reference for the interpretation of discourse”. Hence, culturally constructed knowledge, or cultural knowledge provides the shared context for the speakers of a language, which is particularly relevant when it comes to verbal humour, especially when found in telecinematic discourse.

2.2.2 Cultural Conceptualisations and Verbal Humour

The advent of multidisciplinary language and culture studies in the form of Cultural Linguistics (Sharifian 2011, 2015, 2017) has shifted focus from the relationship of individual cognition and language as highlighted in the cognitive approaches to language, to the relationship between language, conceptualisation and culture (Sharifian 2011, p. 3). Cultural Linguistics maintains that “language is a cultural

form, and that conceptualisations underlying language and language use are largely formed by cultural systems” (Yu 2007, p. 65). Cultural conceptualisation as a key concept is used in this chapter to denote “patterns of distributed knowledge across the cultural group” (Sharifian 2011, p. 3), which covers both schematisation and cultural schemas as in Strauss and Quinn (1997), and cultural categories (Lakoff 1987). Culture will be defined here as “shared presuppositions about the world familiar to the given community” (Holland and Quinn 1987, p. vii). It is well known that humour is deeply embedded in culture and different types of cultural presuppositions are needed in understanding humorous discourse (Prodanović Stankić 2016), regardless of the fact that verbal humour is prototypically based on ambiguity and playing with different levels of language structure (Chiaro 1992).

In other words, in order to understand a particular joke, one needs to know both the language and the cultural context to which the particular joke refers. What is important, though, is the fact that this cultural context is shared among the members of one linguistic community and that within one community, there are preferred ways of saying things (Kecskes 2015, p. 114), or, taking humour into consideration, it is evident that the perception of humour depends heavily on its cultural specificity [in the sense of what is humorous inside a certain culture (Antonopoulou 2004, p. 224)]. The reasons for this are closely related to the fact that language is firmly grounded in a group-level cognition that emerges from the interactions between members of a cultural group (Sharifian 2011, p. 5). As language and culture are in a dialectical relationship, it is clear that language is one of the tools, yet not the only one, for maintaining and indicating cultural conceptualisations through time. Taking into account verbal humour, it should be stressed that cultural conceptualisations mark not only humorous discourse itself, in terms of different levels and units of language (e.g. speech acts, idioms, metaphors, grammar, etc.), but also language use and community practices (e.g. when it is (in)appropriate to joke and which form of humour to use in the given situation).

Considering verbal humour as exemplified by film and television dialogues, it should be mentioned that this type of humour is created to amuse different target groups, which do not necessarily belong to the same linguistic and/or cultural community, as, for example, in case of Hollywood films made for the global audience. Therefore, the creators of this kind of humour need to have in mind not just the perception of humour by individual viewers but by the audience as a group. And this collective conceptualisation is something that can be accounted for in Cultural Linguistics. As Sharifian (2011, p. 5) argues, even though the focal point of human conceptualisation is on the individual level, it is also to be found on the level of the culture group and cultural conceptualisations tend to emerge as cultural cognitions. This characteristic of conceptualisation is highly relevant for humour studies, and often neglected in cognitive approaches that tend to highlight just the individual level. Namely, in order to account for different types of humour—for example, ethnic humour or register humour—it is essential to take into account not only the individual level of conceptualisations, but also the level that is common to a cultural group.

Sharifian (2015, p. 475) defines cultural conceptualisations as conceptual structures, such as ‘schemas’, ‘categories’ and ‘conceptual metaphors’, which not only exist at the individual level of cognition but which are renegotiated through generations of speakers within a cultural group, across time and space. As such, they do not have to be uniformly distributed across members of a cultural group; rather they represent “networks of distributed representations across the minds in cultural groups” (Sharifian 2011, p. 6). In addition to this, Sharifian (2011, p. 4) notes that physical proximity of individuals is not the only precondition for establishing cultural groups. To that end, relative participation of individuals in each other’s conceptual world can also be another determinant of cultural groups. A case in point for this claim is verbal humour in telecinematic discourse in Serbian. Due to the fact that the process of globalisation in the modern world is characterised by limitless exchange of information, knowledge and consequently given cultural models, the English language and, most notably, Anglo-American cultural conceptualisations have easily found their way among the speakers of Serbian, as will be shown in the examples in Sect. 2.4. However, before proceeding to the results of this study, the methodology of the analysis and the structure of the corpus used for the analysis will be explained.

2.3 Methodology

2.3.1 *The Data*

The corpus of the study contains scripted dialogues taken from several comedies and sitcoms in English and Serbian. The following comedies and sitcoms¹ were used in the study:

- *Lock Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* (1998), written and directed by Guy Ritchie;
- *Only Fools and Horses*, Season 9: *If they could see us now* (2001), *Strangers on the shore* (2002), *Sleepless in Peckham* (2003), written by John Sullivan, directed by Tony Dow;
- *Hangover* (2009), written by John Lucas and Scott Moore, directed by Todd Phillips;
- *The Simpsons*, Season 8, episode 14, *Itchy & Scratchy & Poochie Show* (1997), directed by Steven Dean Moore, episode 23, *Homer’s Enemy* (1997), directed by Jim Reardon and Season 9, episode 14, *Das Bus* (1998), directed by Pete Michels, all three episodes were written by Matt Groening and James L. Brooks;
- *Mrtav ‘ladan* [*Frozen Stiff*] (2002), written and directed by Milorad Milinković;

¹More information on these films and television series can be found at <http://www.imdb.com>.

- *Sedam i po* [*Seven and a Half*] (2006), written and directed by Miroslav Momčilović;
- *Bela lađa* [*A White Boat*] (2006–2012), directed by Mihailo Vukobratović and Ivan Stefanović, written by Siniša and Ljiljana Pavić;
- *Crni Gruja i kamen mudrosti* [*Black Gruja and the Stone of Wisdom*] (2007), directed by Marko Marinković, written by Aleksandar Lazić, Rade Marković and Jovan Popović.

The above-mentioned comedies and television series were selected based on several criteria. First of all, they were all made in the last 20 years, which enabled a synchronic insight into the language analysed. This was important for both the linguistic and cultural aspects of the analysis as the focus was on the contemporary conceptualisations. Furthermore, all of these films and sitcoms were made for different target viewers which ensured a variety of mechanisms used to create the humorous effect. Basically they were aimed at people from all walks of life, so none is too specific or complicated in terms of the plot, characterisation or techniques used. Moreover, all of them were very popular and widely watched after they were released, and some were awarded on various festivals.

2.3.2 *Method of Analysis*

The main assumption behind this study was that telecinematic discourse is to a large extent similar to authentic language use in real-life conversations (Piazza et al. 2011) and for that reason, it will display the typical features of conversational humour, only much more, due to genre characteristics (Dynel 2011; Norrick 2003; Wardhaugh 1992). The basic unit for analysis was a single conversational turn, as the smallest dialogical unit. Following Dynel (2011, p. 1633), a conversational turn will be defined as an analytical unit that can vary in size and that contains the flow of speech of one speaker, followed by a pause and the next speaker's turn. In this corpus, the conversational turn is equal to an utterance—however, not always, since in some cases it is not verbalised, but found in the form of a non-verbal sign, facial expression, etc. Using Attardo's KRs (2001, p. 29), as described above in Sect. 2.1, the total of 1230 units were selected, 652 in English and 578 in Serbian. Both UK and USA films and sitcoms were selected for the research, in order to get a better insight into any differences related to two varieties of Anglo English culture in terms of Wierzbicka (2006). The analysis was both quantitative and qualitative, yet the focus in this chapter is first and foremost on the findings obtained by a qualitative analysis—that is why only a brief overview of quantitative findings will be given at the beginning of the next section. The findings that will be presented in this chapter are obtained as a result of another research into verbal humour in English and Serbian (Prodanović Stankić 2016).

2.4 Findings and Discussion

2.4.1 An Overview of Quantitative Data

After calculating means of conversational turns that contained any form of humour that was created either by using linguistic or extralinguistic ways or the interplay of both, using a descriptive statistics method based on percentage share within the structures of the categories, it turned out that scriptwriters in Serbian and British films and television series resorted more to playing with language to create the intended humorous effect than the American ones, as can be seen in Fig. 2.1.

The analysis of conversational turns that contained exclusively playing with language indicated that in both languages language play used to create the humorous effect was based on all levels of language structure (lexicon, morphology, phonology, syntax and pragmatics). However, it is interesting that the British and Serbian discourses are quite similar in that respect, as opposed to the American. These findings are to some extent supported by some previous research into British humour (Alexander 1997; Brock 2006; Chiaro 1992) that indicated the overall tendency of British people to have a penchant for word play and puns. Conversely, the Americans valued slapstick and other forms of non-verbal humour more (Boskin 1997; Walker 1998). Specifically, in terms of playing with different levels of language structure, both the British and the American variant of English display similar characteristics: playing with the pragmatic level (e.g. violating the cooperative principle) was more frequent than playing with grammar, which was typical of Serbian humorous discourse. Resorting only to linguistic elements of verbal humour can be illustrated with Del's malapropism in example (01), taken from the British sitcom *Only Fools and Horses*:

- (01) Rodney: How do you know what I think?
Del: You know I've always been a bit telescopic!

When it comes to the combination of linguistic and extralinguistic aspects that is used to create a specific perlocutionary effect, it seems to be the dominant feature of the British telecinematic discourse, as can be seen in Fig. 2.1. It is interesting though, that the most prevalent way of combining these aspects is by the means of conceptual metaphors and metonymies and conceptual blending. This can be illustrated with the following witticism, taken from the film *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*:

- (02) Dog: Golf—the best way to spoil a good walk. Winston Churchill said that. I say it's a dog-eat-dog world. And I got bigger teeth than you two.

Dog is the nickname of one of the characters in the film who skilfully uses the idiomatic expression *dog-eat-dog*, which is based on the conceptual metaphor PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS to introduce this face-threatening act. This reference to extralinguistic aspects of knowledge, activated by the means of a metaphor, complements the verbal instance of humour in the form of a funny definition. This

In %	British (UK)	American (USA)	Serbian
Linguistic	38	24	39
Extralinguistic	15	45	32
The interplay of both linguistic and extralinguistic	47	31	29

Fig. 2.1 Linguistic and extralinguistic elements of humour in the data

combination usually serves either as a source of humour in dialogues or to enhance the intended humorous effect. By activating specific elements in the conceptual domains involved in metaphoric/metonymic mapping during the on-line dynamic meaning construction the effect is heightened. Namely, in humorous discourse, less salient elements are more highlighted than the salient ones, and they contribute to the unexpected resolution of the given incongruity involved in the specific humorous form. It is important to mention that TV viewers use metaphors and metonymies to construct the meaning and arrive at the interpretation that leads them to humour (Prodanović Stankić 2015).

Considering the creation of verbal humour that was based only on activating specific extralinguistic elements, and by that, reference to different elements of encyclopaedic knowledge and culture in general is meant, it is interesting that the range of the percentage share is from 15 in the British telecinematic discourse, 32 in the Serbian, and 45% in the American. It should be also stressed that the common and most highlighted feature of all three types of conceptualisations is the tendency to laugh at the expense of the other, which is supported by the Superiority Theories of Humour (see Attardo 1994, p. 50; Bergson 2002). That is the reason why this particular cultural scheme will be discussed further. Nevertheless, there are some differences in the ways “the other” is perceived and laughed at in the selected corpus of this study.

2.4.2 Cultural Conceptualisations in English

The analysis of cultural conceptualisations in humorous telecinematic discourse in English, specifically in films and television series made in the UK and USA, reveals that there are some differences regarding the prominence of the most salient cultural schemas that can be delineated in this type of discourse. First of all, in films and television series made in the UK, judging by the selected corpus of this study, different social classes and immigrants are more frequently found as the target of

humour. Also, what is interesting, as opposed to the conceptualisations in the American and Serbian films, rarely do the British make jokes at their own expense; rather, it is always the others that the ridicule is aimed at.

An interesting example of this can be found in the conversation between Del and Rodney, the main characters of the sitcom *Only Fools and Horses*, in the episode *Strangers on the Shore*, at the moment when they are going to France to represent the late Uncle Albert at a reunion in Normandy:

- (03) (1) Del: One of my most favourite meals is Duck à l'Orange, but I don't know how to say that in French.
 (2) Rodney: It's canard.
 (3) Del: You can say that again, bruv!
 (4) Rodney: No, the French word for duck is canard.
 (5) Del: Is it? I thought that was something to do with the QE2?
 (6) Rodney: No that's Canard. They're the ones with the boats and what have you. The French for duck is canard.
 (7) Del: Right, lovely jubbly! Right, so how do the French say à l'Orange then?
 (8) Rodney: À l'Orange!
 (9) Del: What, the same as we do?
 (10) Rodney: Yes.
 (11) Del: Oh dear, it's a pity they don't use more of our words innit, eh?

This example is a case in point in terms of indicating how both encyclopaedic knowledge and knowledge about a language are at work to activate the salient conceptualisation that is shared among the speakers of British English, and which is the result of the interactions of the British and the French as members of two different cultural groups across time and space. This in fact illustrates Sharifian's (2011, p. 21) concept of emergent cultural cognition, which is negotiated in different kinds of contexts.

In some examples, reference to ethnic groups that are the targets is quite explicit, as in the following example taken from the film *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*:

- (04) (1) Rory Breaker: Your stupidity may be your one saving grace.
 (2) Nick the Greek: Uuugh?
 (3) Rory Breaker: Don't uuugh me, Greek boy!

In the above-mentioned example, it can be argued to what extent this cultural script would be endorsed by all the members of the given cultural group. However, As Goddard (2006, p. 5) states, even if all the members of a cultural group do not identify themselves with a cultural script or a part of it, it still indicates certain aspects of thinking, acting and behaving in the given society. This can also be related to Kecskes's (2013, p. 74) argument that individual prior knowledge also plays an important role in the interplay of social and cultural models in the dynamic process of communication in which "individuals are not only constrained by societal conditions but they also shape them at the same time".

It is worth mentioning that in the films and series produced in the USA which were selected for this study, ethnic humour is most of the time created by activating

conceptualisations based on referential metonymy, (e.g. Joe Camel, Arthur Fonzarelli):

- (05) (1) Scratchy: What's that name again? I forgot.
 (2) Poochie: (rapping)

The name's Poochie D, and I rock
 the telly I'm half Joe Camel,
 and a third Fonzarelli.
 I'm the kung fu hippie, from gangsta city.
 I'm a rappin' surfer, you the fool I pity.

The scriptwriters of this particular episode of *The Simpsons* obviously resorted to the elements of popular culture that is known to the average USA viewer, though not necessarily known to those outside the USA. While creating a new character in the cartoon, they try to make Poochie a proper representative of the heterogeneous national identity which is based on the melting pot metaphor. However, in situations when humour is created by the means of an ironic statement that highlights the perception of USA foreign policy by the rest of the world, the conceptualisation of the heterogeneous national identity is discarded:

- (06) Marge: Have a great weekend kids. Be nice to the underprivileged countries.

In the episode *Das Bus* (*The Simpsons*), the children are playing the model of the UN as part of a school project, and each child is given a role of one country to play. They are going on a school trip, and Marge, the mother, knows that her children, Bart and Lisa, do not get on well with some of the children, most of whom got to represent the underdeveloped countries. In the same episode, while practising the presentations of the countries they represent, Ralph starts singing the Canadian national anthem while all the other children are messing around. At that moment, Principal Skinner utters the following:

- (07) (1) Ralph (singing): *Oh, Canada!*
 (2) Principal Skinner (hitting the desk with his shoe): Order, order!
 Do you kids wanna be like the real UN, or do you just wanna squabble and waste time?

Even though his question is addressed to the children, obviously the irony is addressed at the target that is outside the conversation going on the screen. It seems that the scriptwriters, especially those who write for globally popular and widely watched programmes, are well aware of the fact that the potential viewers, even when they belong to the same cultural group, activate both their common collective knowledge as members of a given group, as well as the instances of individual extralinguistic knowledge they possess, while dynamically constructing the appropriate meaning of the utterance they hear. In that sense, on the one hand, some or all of the viewers will recognise the allusion to the assumed rivalry between the USA and Canada, which is activated by the other children ignoring Ralph's singing. On the other hand, Principal Skinner's non-verbal act of hitting the desk with his

shoe can by analogy be compared to the same iconic symbol of the Russian President Khrushchev during the Cold War (Taubman 2003), which is an element of encyclopaedic knowledge that is widely known to the members of different cultural groups all over the world. It is clear that the interplay of non-verbal and extralinguistic aspects of an utterance increases the intended humorous effect. This is in line with Manteli's (2011) study on humour in theatre performances, who (Manteli 2011, p. 257) claims that humorous mechanism in the performance is activated due to the co-occurrence of opposed codes, both linguistic and paralinguistic ones.

To sum up, it can be said that there are different elements of encyclopaedic knowledge that are used to create or enhance the humorous effect in Anglophone cultures. In the British variant of the English language, judging by the data obtained in this study, the most prominent is activating cultural schemas related to the social classes and ethnic groups, popular stereotypes and beliefs. In the American variant more widespread are scripts related to popular culture, and representatives of popular culture and politics.

2.4.3 Cultural Conceptualisations in Serbian

The universal script of laughing at the other can be outlined in the humorous telecinematic discourse in Serbian, as well as in English. Accordingly, the most frequent targets in the selected corpus of Serbian comedies are ethnic groups that live in Serbia or in some of the neighbouring countries around Serbia, politicians or political parties and women and/or the gay population. The cultural conceptualisations that are known to the members of the given cultural groups are usually based on popular beliefs and stereotypes, and universal scripts related to stupidity and sexuality, which is, generally speaking, typical of any ethnic humour (Raskin 1985, pp. 191–194).

The elements of cultural scripts are usually referred to metonymically. A case in point is the following example, taken from the film *Seven and a Half*. The main character, Tadija, a big bully who terrorises his neighbours, lives in a suburb in Belgrade, in which there are two boulevards, one named after the famous Russian astronaut, and the other after Mahatma Gandhi. In his world view, people who live in the Gandhi Boulevard are inferior to those living in Yuri Gagarin. Due to this, Tadija addresses Samir and everyone else with Krishna:

- (08) (1) Tadija: Dođi, Hari Krišna! [Come here, Hare Krishna!]
 (2) Samir: Nisam ja Hari Krišna. [I'm not Hare Krishna.]
 (3) Tadija: Vi svi iz Gandijeve ulice ste Indijanci. Ko je bio Gandi? Ko je bio Gandi? Indijanac. [All of you guys from Gandhi's Street are Indians. Who was Gandhi? Who was Gandhi? An Indian] (sings along) Hare Hare, Krishna Krishna, Gandhi, Gandhi, Hare Hare, Krishna Krishna, Gandhi, Gandhi...

- (4) Samir: A vi iz Jurija Gagarina ste šmekeri, šta? [And you from Yuri Gagarin are pretty boys, aren't you?]
- (5) Tadija: Gagarin, prvi čovek u kosmosu, Rus pravoslavac, kenjao je iz kosmosa i na Gandija i na sve te indijanske sekte. Zdrastvujte patuljci, prihajt vam jedno govno iz kosmosa. [Gagarin, the first man in space, Russian orthodox, he had a shit from outer space on Ghandi and all these Indian sects. Здравствуйте (Hello there) you dwarfs, доходит here comes a shit from space.]
- (6) Samir: Pa ni Jurij Gagarin nije bio pravoslavac. [Well, Yuri Gagarin was not an orthodox Christian either.]
- (7) Tadija: Šta je bio, Hari Krišna? [What was he, Hare Krishna?]
- (8) Samir: Komunista. [A communist.]

By using the name of the Hindu deity, Tadija metonymically activates the conceptualisation that is shared by speakers of Serbian. In this conversation, several scripts are activated. First of all, Tadija's faulty reasoning and his superior attitude reflect the widely spread conceptualisation that exists in Serbian society, and that is the rather inferior position of the Romani people, who are known to be of Indian descent. In addition to this, in line (03) there is a pun which is quite frequent in Serbian, using a word to denote a Native American (in Serbian *Indijanac*) instead of the one for an Indian (*Indijac* or *Indus*).

There is another cultural script that can be delineated in this dialogue, which is related to politics: the political and historical relations of Serbia and Russia. First of all, part of this script is based on the common religious and ethnic background the Serbian and Russian people share. Tadija draws attention to this bond by turning to broken Russian in line (05). Yet, the most salient element in this script is the topical debate related to the political relations of Serbia and Russia, which, beside the attitudes of the people towards religion, have been one of the reasons for divisions in Serbian society throughout history, till the present day. So the whole conceptual network of meaning based on referential metonymy, is activated during the process of dynamic meaning construction, which serves to achieve a specific humorous effect.

Another typical feature of humorous mechanisms used to create verbal humour in the given corpus is the use of specific dialects as implicit use of reference and using English, as a foreign language to activate a specific schema. Namely, using dialects of Serbian, most notably those that are spoken in the southern and south-eastern parts of Serbia, seems to be quite a common method the scriptwriters resort to so as to create register humour. At the same time, the use of these dialects serves as an implicit way to create ethnic humour, i.e. to highlight the salient elements of knowledge that are common to speakers of Serbian and which are closely related to typical stereotypes one can find in any country.

The results of this study in terms of ethnic humour are in line with some previous research (Davies 1990, p. 40; Laineste 2005, pp. 11–12) in the sense that ethnic humour is always asymmetrical, directed from the centre of the country to the more/most peripheral regions. These conceptualisations are, of course, based on stereotypes, such as PEOPLE LIVING IN THE SOUTH/EAST ARE PEASANTS (used derogatorily), PEOPLE LIVING IN THE SOUTH/EAST ARE UNEDUCATED/LESS INTELLIGENT/STINGY, etc. Though it is difficult to illustrate this with specific examples, as dialects in

Serbian differ from the standard in paralinguistic features and specific grammatical/lexical forms, using a dialect to create register and ethnic humour was present and quite frequent in all films and television series analysed. In most cases, it was accompanied by verbal humour based on playing with non standard use of grammatical forms.

Another finding that emerged from this analysis is the fact that English was used in all films and series in Serbian either to create or to enhance the given humours effect. It goes without saying that English has the status of a global language (Crystal 2003, 2012; Sharifian 2011; Wierzbicka 2006) and it has a special role in all countries in which it is spoken (Crystal 2003, p. 6). In that respect, Serbia is no exception: even though English is not an official second language in Serbia, it certainly has the status of *the* nativised foreign language (Prčić 2003, 2014a, b). Due to its three defining properties, as described by Prčić (2014b, p. 144), ready audio-visual availability, dual acquisition and supplementary language function, English acquired its specific role in the Serbian language community, as in any other all over the world, for that matter. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to deal with the specific effects of this influence, yet, in reference to humorous discourse, it is evident that English is frequently used either to produce or to enhance humorous effect. In the corpus analysed for this study, English was consistently used in all films and series.

The most typical examples are those similar to the slogan taken from the film *Black Gruya and the Stone of Wisdom*, which one of the characters, a local village fool, uses to give a toast:

(09) *Rakija* connecting people (Slivovitz connecting people)

Rakija is a type of brandy made from plums, typical of Serbia, and needless to say, extremely popular. In the film that is set in the eighteenth century, the very allusion to the global slogan that is used to advertise an international company represents an anachronism based on a pun that is intended to be humorous to the viewers in the modern age. The fact that the speaker utters this slogan in English is incongruous with the rest of the conversation, and of course, comes as quite a surprise to the viewers, which leads to the intended effect. In order to construct the appropriate meaning, the viewers need to have both global and culture-specific elements of knowledge, and to know English to understand the meaning of the utterance on the linguistic level.

Another representative example is the use of English by the main character in the television series *The White Ship*. As an upstart businessman and dilettante politician, Srećko Šojić represents a parody of a political figure in a transition country. As such, he has problems with using English even in simple situations. In example (10) given below, he tried to invite the attractive personal assistant of the USA ambassador for a drink, yet he did not know that she is actually Serbian:

- (10) Well, well, good morning lady! Eeeh, how are you? Eh, ah, eh, oh, pićance, eh, something to drinkić? How is his ekselencija?

In the interlingual utterance of this character, it can be seen that he starts confidently by addressing the girl in English, however, when he runs out of stock phrases and should find an equivalent for the Serbian *pićance/piće* (Engl. drink) or *ekselencija* (Engl. Excellency), he firstly uses a non-existent Serbian word (*pićance*), as part of his funny idiolect, and then creates a new hybrid lexeme, *DRINK* + *ić*, by adding a Serbian suffix for creating a diminutive noun. This hybrid lexeme is also a good example that is a result of an intralingual blend created both on the conceptual and formal level (Rasulić 2008).

However, in this speech act, the speaker is not just activating conceptualisations related to the formal level (lexical/morphological/semantic), but pragmatic as well. In the wider context of this episode, and the whole series, the viewers got to know the behaviour of the main character, Šojić, and his attempts to lobby for his party's political influence and bribe people in order to extend his power. His character is actually built on the cultural belief that is shared among the speakers of Serbian, which implies that politicians are dishonest, shrewd and mercenary, and accordingly, this invitation is actually based on this belief. What remains is a question—to what extent does English affect, change or modify cultural conceptualisations shared by the speakers of Serbian? However, in order to answer this question, more synchronic and diachronic studies in the field of Cultural Linguistics are needed.

2.5 Concluding Remarks

The analysis of verbal humour in telecinematic discourse from the perspective of Cultural Linguistics, as shown in the preceding sections, can offer a deeper insight into several pertinent issues. First of all, humorous discourse, as any other type of language use, embodies and reflects cultural cognition of a particular linguistic community. The fact that cultural cognition emerges from the cultural conceptualisations shared by the members of a linguistic community as a group is highly relevant, especially to telecinematic discourse. Namely, humour found in telecinematic discourse depends on this collective aspect to a great extent in terms of what is perceived as humorous within a particular linguistic community. In that way collective cultural conceptualisations affect the extralinguistic elements that will be highlighted in verbal humour.

As the results of the analysis indicate, the speakers of two languages, English and Serbian, differ more in respect to their preferences to specific types of humour when they are regarded as members of three cultural groups. In that sense, British and Serbian telecinematic humorous discourse is more based on word play of different kinds, as opposed to American, which features more verbal humour based on extralinguistic elements. Specifically, judging by the results of this study, collective cultural conceptualisations that are reflected in British and Serbian

telecinematic discourse give rise to ethnic humour and the ridicule of social classes, as opposed to American discourse, where the mockery of popular culture is more highlighted. This comes as no surprise, given the fact that the American films are usually made for the global market, and the humour that they feature should be perceived and possibly appreciated by different kinds of audiences all over the world, hence it contains more global than culture-specific elements. It is interesting, though, on the linguistic level, that English, as a global language, has found its way in Serbian telecinematic discourse. In that way, it serves as a basis for a whole range of interlingual and sometimes intercultural amalgams that are created to achieve the intended humorous effect.

To sum up, Cultural Linguistics provides an adequate framework to account for extralinguistic aspects of verbal humour, which play a significant role in creating verbal humour. These aspects either serve as a basis for verbal humour on their own, or they accompany the linguistic ones in order to enhance the intended humorous effect. As much as verbal humour has recently become quite a popular topic for research, studies dealing with extralinguistic aspects of verbal humour are really scarce and much needed, especially those carried out within a multidisciplinary approach, if we want to learn more about cultural conceptualisations of a given linguistic community, and their interrelationship with language.

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