

Novelty. The scientific novelty of the obtained results is that in the research the further development of a complex of decisions, methodical recommendations, concerning application of organizational and managerial technologies in management of the socio-cultural sphere has been received. At the same time, we are paying attention to festival projects that are capable of ensuring the dynamic and effective socio-cultural activities of the organization.

The practical significance. The practical significance of the results obtained is that the proposed theoretical positions can be used to formulate a policy of management of organizations of cultural industries, which will increase the efficiency of the work of specialists in management of the socio-cultural sphere. Prospects for further scientific research are the thorough study of the specifics of organizational and managerial technologies, the process in the field of culture and arts.

Key words: organization, management, technologies, organizational and managerial technologies, management of socio-cultural sphere.

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THE ROLE OF HUMOUR IN CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

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The aim of the paper is to analyse the phenomenon of humor in the context of cultural differentiation and the resulting possible communication barriers. Humour is usually perceived as an ice-breaker in contacts between people representing different cultural circles. However, the lack of knowledge concerning the specificity of a given culture, language nuances, codes, social conventions affecting the sense of humour can result in communication failure. On the other hand, humour is recognised as a specifically human trait, and some universal humour mechanism can also be found all around the world. In the so called «humour studies» at least three groups of theories referring to the essence of humour can be distinguished: the superiority theory, the energy release theory and the incongruity theory. The jokes that contain all the above mentioned three elements, and which are not restricted to hermetic cultural aspects have the best chances to be universally understood and appreciated.

Key words: humor, laughter, philosophy of humour, communication, cross-cultural communication.

Problem statement and analysis of major achievements. The studies devoted to multifarious aspects of humour have become quite popular recently among representatives of such disciplines as philosophy, psychology, pedagogy, sociology and linguistics. Especially philosophy of humour seems to have spectacular achievements, especially in Anglo-Saxon countries, assuming the name of «humor studies» or «humor research». In search of universal mechanisms of humour, the contemporary scholars refer to classical philosophy, quoting the names of first thinkers who tried to define the essence of humour: Plato, Aristotle, as well as later great thinkers such as Immanuel Kant, Arthur Schopenhauer, Henri Bergson. In the context of globalisation and vastly developing international and intercultural communication, the major research question concerning the role of humour in such globalised processes – both on the individual and the social plane – can be formulated as follows: is the sense of humour in its essence one and the same for humankind (as philosophers tend to maintain), and as such fostering communication on the global scale, or is it somehow restricted to a given culture with its tradition, topoi and language illegible to representatives of other cultures, thus hindering the proper communication? The present paper constitutes an attempt at analysing this major problem from various angles.

The place which humour occupies in the reflections of the greatest thinkers points to its importance in human life and social relations. Socrates was perhaps the first to prove the significance of humorous elements in the solemn discourse, introducing wit and irony into the realm of philosophy. In the hands of the sage of antiquity, irony turned to be a cognitive-dialogical tool, an indirect method of arriving at truth. The two incongruous layers of meaning are involved in this rhetoric: the apparent foolish and the wise hidden. Thus irony creates a humorous illusion rooted in the opposites: serious – non-serious, god-like – clown-like [11; 6]. For Socrates, the intended audience is expected to grasp eventually that the speaker is highlighting the literal falsity of the utterance, and not *eironeia* which aims at deception and is predominantly malevolent [14; 176].

Democritus, presented in iconography as a «laughing philosopher», emphasised the element of joy in life as a highly rational standpoint, based on a detached attitude towards the follies of the world. The words uttered by

Hans Blumenberg can characterise best this attitude of the author of atomic theory: «Philosophy is when we laugh. And we laugh at stupidity» [2; 149]. This aspect of humour and laughter will be often repeated later on in the history of humour research, especially in the so-called superiority theories. This superior attitude of Democritus – the true philosopher, was described by Seneca in the following words: «Democritus (...) never appeared in public without laughing; so little did the serious pursuits of men seem serious to him» [10]. And even though he did not believe in the possibility of improving the citizens of his native Abdera, laughter devoid of bitterness or malice enabled him to preserve inner balance and independence from the crazy human world.

Till the present, in the studies related to the essence of humour, three major groups of concepts tend to dominate: the superiority theory, the incongruity theory and the theory of energy release. The superiority theory was initiated by ancient Greek philosophers including Plato and Aristotle, and fully developed by Thomas Hobbes. For the English philosopher, laughter has its source in a sudden outburst of joy caused by a feeling of one's superiority in relation to others or to one's own former position. The theory of energy release, with its chief representatives: Herbert Spencer and Sigmund Freud claims that laughter is caused by the release of the accumulated nervous energy abundance and plays mainly a therapeutic role. The incongruity theories seem to be most pertinent in attempts at explaining the very mechanism of humour. Generally speaking, this vast and differentiated group of concepts finds the essence of humour in incongruity between our expectations resulting from the so far experience, knowledge or dominating stereotypes, and the actual perception of a given thing or situation. The phenomena given are simultaneously placed in two separate systems of reference, governed by different rules, and the immediate bisociation of the phenomenon evokes a sudden flow of thoughts from one associative context to another. The evoked emotional tension finds its outlet in laughter [4; 27–87].

The human and social aspects of humour constitute another aspect analysed in humour studies. It was Aristotle who said that laughter is a specifically human phenomenon. Henri Bergson developed this idea in his famous book *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*. As he said, there is no comicality outside the scope of human phenomena, and even when we laugh at animals or objects it is only because we discover certain human elements in them. He also underlined the social context of humour. «It seems that laughter needs an echo. Our laughter is always the laughter of a group» [1]. This last quotation points to the «communal» or communicative dimension of humour. For Bergson, we laugh in a certain definite company, having a special secret «agreement» with real or imaginary «laugh companions».

Numerous comic effects cannot be transferred into foreign languages, because of the untranslatable meanings of words, but also because of the cultural differences, connected with customs and outlooks of alien societies. So in order to understand laughter we should analyse it in its «native» environment, i.e. in the context of a given society and its culture.

As Dolf Zillmann remarks, «humour is primarily a communicative affair. As such it apparently serves a multitude of psychological and sociological functions» [15; 291]. The mode and content of communication is affected by the local cultural determinants. On the other hand, especially in the epoch of globalisation and the Internet, numerous elements of mass communication containing humorous traits are subject to specific «mcdonaldisation» processes, which is well visible in the mass and social media, especially in commercials, soap operas, blogs, tweets, but also in a new journalistic genre – infotainment where information is mixed up with a form of entertainment. The function of humour is meant here to amuse, to relax, to please and distract, thus attracting the audience which otherwise is only slightly motivated to watch, listen or read, thus aiming at «smuggling» some useful or persuasive information. However, the effectiveness of humorous elements in educational mass media programmes is not that obvious. Zillman says that programmes for children like *Sesame Street* which triggered efforts to teach in a humorous fashion the alphabet, numbers, and spelling skills gave a relatively modest results, while being meritorious in teaching ethnic integration and cooperation, and occupying children in a constructive way [15; 294].

If we consider the phenomenon of humour from the individual perspective, it is obvious that people differ in their sense of humour even if they «have access» to the same general mechanism of humour at their disposal and belong to the same culture or society. Anna Radomska explained the roots of these differences in the psychological terms: «The crucial temper-personality traits related to the predilection towards definite types of humour are as follows: intolerance-tolerance, ambiguities, conservatism-radicalism, tendermindedness – toughmindedness of thinking, searching for experience, neurosis-emotional stability, extravertism-introvertism [7]. Such features contribute to sensitivity to comic impulses and determine the individual sense of humour, as well as affect the type of reception of humorous elements in interpersonal communication.

Considering personal differentiation of the sense of humour, communication even within the same cultural circle can evoke several misunderstandings, thus reactions to the comic situations/jokes can radically differ. If we take into consideration communication across different cultural backgrounds, the whole process can encounter even greater disturbances, and humorous factors can become blurred or illegible. This is why

W.S. Lee considers humour to be the most challenging form of intercultural communication [5; 373–382]. Exactly, first of all intercultural communication requires the awareness of assumptions made by the interlocutors as well as their expectations, which in the case of alien cultures are usually hidden, whereas for the members of the same culture they are taken for granted and therefore are difficult to explain. Hence many jokes which are strictly related to a given culture or even restricted to its tradition and paradigms can remain unperceived, misunderstood or even read as offensive.

Discussion of study results. It is a well known opinion, that humour can help initiate contacts between people representing different cultural circles. On the other hand, one should be aware of the possible threats to the success of cross-cultural communication, in the case of which it is harder to know the audience, cultural taboos and values, language nuances, social conventions, and the resulting intents. As Andrew Reimann pertinently notices: «A harmless joke, a witty remark, an interesting anecdote, a sarcastic comment or a sharp insult can originate from the same utterance, however the consequences will vary depending on the audience's reception and interpretation» [8; 24]. Also the knowledge of *savoir-vivre* and degree of formality accepted in a different culture is necessary in order to decipher the humour code properly, and to be oneself understood in accordance with our intentions as well as continue the communication process successfully.

Reimann gives interesting examples of differences in approaches towards humour and related behaviours resulting from national traditions. Japan, for instance, is a country known for strong social conventions and formalities. So even though the Japanese may be fond of fun, humour is not expected to be spontaneous; the forms of humorous reactions are defined and limited, and formal situations exclude any outbursts of laugh. Hence, also in conversations humour appears more rarely than among other nations. As Takekurofound, in Japanese conversations, humour appears four times less frequently than in English ones, and occurs only in the circles of family and friends [12]. And the famous «Japanese smile» is related rather to dealing with shame or anger, and not to amusement, as Lafcadio Hearn once mentioned [3]. Generally, the essence of Japanese humour can be characterized as «harmless fun», i.e. it is not malicious [6]. This example seems to contradict the superiority theory which claims that mechanism of humour is based on aggressive feelings.

In Japan, word plays are also popular. The untranslatability of word plays may be a factor contributing to the failure in communication. In fact, the communicative problem with plays on words refers to other cultures as well, as they are hardly ever translatable without detriment to their witty essence. Especially in the case of Japanese culture the knowledge of *topoi* is required, which is not an easy thing for Europeans. This also concerns the ambiguities of jokes and comedies that may be grasped by the native audience, but missed by foreign ones.

American humour, by contrast, is more individualistic, often relying upon exaggerations and hyperboles. Americans are also far more spontaneous in showing their amusement, with open outburst of laughing [9; 26]. Approaching the phenomenon from the mass culture angle, it can also be said that the preferred type of humour is not formalised here and usually less intellectual, i.e. more accessible to the public.

The worldwide known British humour, on the other hand, often employs irony and word plays. In its best representations, it philosophically emphasises the element of the absurd and paradox. The unquestionable master of this trend, Oscar Wilde – Lord Paradox, expressed his deep ideas in extremely witty and perverse aphorisms. It is often said that this type of humour is alien to other nations. However, the international success of the Monty Python movie seems to contradict such stereotype. Perhaps the feeling of the absurd nature of reality is deeply ingrained in the human nature, regardless the specific culture.

On the other hand, also a tradition of slapstick is alive in contemporary British mass culture. The best illustration is provided by Mr. Bean film series which represents a balance of simple visual gags and antics with British wit and sarcasm. As Rowan Atkinson – the actor playing the title character in the film says, an object or a person can become funny in three different ways. By behaving in an unusual way, by being in an unusual place or by being the wrong size [8]. This is a basic universally popular formula for typical sight gags or slap stick humour. It also makes for the recognition of the movie abroad, as it seems to be cross-culturally communicative.

The French humour tends to be a little frivolous, but elegant, sometimes also surreal (as British humour often is, as well). It can be also intellectually sophisticated, as in the «philosophical joke» which – for the especially qualified audience is a humorous illustration of the everyday illogicality:

Jean-Paul Sartre, the author of *Being and Nothingness*, was sitting at the *Café the Fleurtable*, working. A waitress approached him. «Can I get you something to drink, Monsieur Sartre?» – she asked. «Yes, I'd like a cup of coffee with sugar, but no cream», the philosopher replied.

A few minutes later, the waitress returned.

«I'm sorry, Monsieur Sartre, we are all out of cream – how about with no milk?» ?

Zermello-Fraenkel set theory has taught us that there is only one empty set. In the case of *Café de Fleur* situation, we burst in laugh realising that that the situation is illogical, as there are not two separate sets of nothing – one with no milk, the other with no cream....

For people of different countries being aware of at least the basis of Western philosophy and logic this joke can be found intellectually amusing. But is it to be fully appreciated by those for whom this cultural tradition is alien?

In Poland, especially during the Nazi and communist occupations, the most popular jokes were political ones, permeated with bitter satire. They provided the people with outlets for frustration and disappointment. It seems that many of such jokes can be adequately understood exclusively by Poles, and could be found amusing only by those foreigners who know the national history circumstances.

Reimann quotes a website survey that was conducted in Britain in 2000 to determine what serves as a model for intercultural humour [8; 28]. Jokes from around the world were collected, with the number of 350.000 people from 70 countries who were to evaluate jokes and also contribute their own. The collection on a «LaughLab» website was impressive: 40.000 jokes. The most universally funny joke in the opinion of international participants was the following:

Two hunters are out in the woods when one of them collapses. He doesn't seem to be breathing and his eyes are glazed. The other guy takes out his phone and calls the emergency services. He gasps: «My friend is dead! What can I do?»

The operator says: «Calm down. I can help. First, let's make sure he's dead».

There is a silence, then a gunshot is heard. Back on the phone, the guy says: «OK, now what?»

Both the theme of the joke, and the whole situation are not culture specific; it does not require any pre-knowledge of the cultural context. That is why it is so communicative and amusing for people from different cultural circles. The structure and contents are simple and easily understandable. Besides, the theme appeals because of its black tone which usually impresses people independent of their native traditions.

Jokes of akin «universal» type are popular in many countries, and can be equally easily read and appreciated all around the world. Often they contain the same element of cruelty, like in the joke that was once popular in Poland:

Two men are travelling on a motorbike on a windy and rainy day. In order to protect himself against the wind, the driver dresses his jacket backwards. They have an accident. The passenger wakes up in hospital and asks about his friend.

«We are very sorry», says the doctor. «When we arrived at the accident place, your friend was still alive. But when we tried to turn his head to the proper position, he died».

After Wiseman we can repeat that jokes of «the hunters type» appeal to people all around the world because they include all three major distinctions of humour mechanism: superiority element, effect of the reducing the emotional impact of anxiety-provoking situation and surprise over the incongruity [13].

Conclusion. Generally, it seems that people from different parts of the world have different sense of humour. However, if humour is a distinctive human characteristic and a social phenomenon, the knowledge of cultural background of people coming from different cultures which affect their sense of humour is essential for effective communication. Consequently, the types of humour which do not require specific or specialised language and knowledge of particular culture determinants play the most successful role in cross-cultural communication, leading to enjoyment that transcends boundaries between people and helps people from different environments meet.

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РОЛЬ ГУМОРУ В КРОС-КУЛЬТУРНИХ КОМУНІКАЦІЯХ

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Аналізується феномен гумору в контексті культурних відмінностей і наявності можливих комунікаційних бар'єрів. Зазвичай гумор сприймається як «криголам» у контактах між людьми, що представляють різні культурні кола. Проте відсутність знань специфіки конкретної культури, мовних нюансів, кодів, соціальних умовностей, що впливають на почуття гумору, можуть призвести до руйнування контактів. З іншого боку, гумор є специфічною рисою людей, і тому універсальні його механізми можна виявити в різних культурах. У т.зв. «гумористичних дослідженнях» виділяють щонайменше три групи теорій, які пояснюють сутність гумору: теорія втіхи, теорія переваги/першості й теорія абсурду. Жарти, що містять указані ознаки універсального гумору і які не обмежуються герметичними культурними аспектами, мають найкращі шанси на загальне розуміння й оцінку.

Ключові слова: гумор, сміх, філософія гумору, спілкування, міжкультурне спілкування.

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The aim of the paper is to analyse the phenomenon of humor in the context of cultural differentiation and the resulting possible communication barriers.

Research methodology. Selected philosophical concepts of humor have been reviewed, with emphasis on the communicative aspects. Differences in humour perception across various cultures have been highlighted on most vivid examples. The website survey conducted in Britain in 2000 to determine what serves as a model for intercultural humour has been analysed.

Results. It has been found that even though humour is usually perceived as an ice-breaker in contacts between people representing different cultural circles, the lack of knowledge concerning the specificity of a given culture with its codes and social conventions affecting the sense of humour can result in communication failure. On the other hand, humour is recognised as a specifically human trait, and some universal humour mechanisms can also be found all around the world. The types of humour which do not require specific knowledge of particular culture determinants play the most successful role in cross-cultural communication, leading to enjoyment that transcends boundaries between people from different environments. It has also been found that jokes which are based on the distinctive features of universal sense of humour: incongruity, superiority and energy release, and which are not restricted to hermetic aspects of given culture have the best chances to be universally understood and appreciated.

Novelty. Showing that for successful usage of humour in cross-cultural communication both the knowledge of an alien culture and the employment of universal humour mechanisms are necessary.

The practical significance. The paper can help people engaged in cross-cultural communication to avoid the improper (first of all offensive for a given culture) use of humour.

Key words: humor, laughter, philosophy of humour, communication, cross-cultural communication.

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