

Title: "I joke you not": Humor and Politeness across Languages and Cultures
Author: Maria Shardakova, University of Indiana-Bloomington

The role of humor in everyday interaction as well as in the construction and display of one's identity has attracted scholars of various theoretical viewpoints. In sociolinguistics, humor has been shown an essential component of everyday interaction and socialization and a customary way of displaying and creating one's personal and relational identity (Boxer & Cortés-Conde). However, humor becomes a serious hurdle when one crosses from one culture to another, as it is deeply embedded in cultural context and requires an extensive knowledge of schemas, associations, and assumptions, as well as conventional linguistic mechanisms employed to create humorous effects.

This study accepts a sociopragmatic perspective on humor and employs Politeness Theory (as advanced by Watts and Culpeper) while investigating spontaneous witticisms in both experimental and real-life electronic communication of the two groups of participants American English and Russian language speakers. The study explores general cultural patterns through cross-sectional quantitative analysis. The purpose of the study is to compare the preferred humor styles in relation to politeness amongst young Russian and American speakers. The study also examines the mechanics of humor, including linguistic devices employed to create comic effect, choice of targets in evaluative humor, as well as the use of routines and taboo words. Finally, pedagogical suggestions have been formulated based on the observed cross-cultural differences.

Boxer, Diana & Florencia Cortés-Conde. 1997. From Bonding to Biting: Conversational Joking and Identity Display. *Journal of Pragmatics*. 27, 275–294.

Culpeper, Jonathan. 1996. Towards an Anatomy of Impoliteness. *Journal of Pragmatics*. 25, 349–367.

Watts, Richard J. 2003. *Politeness*. Cambridge: CUP.

maalshar@indiana.edu

