THE FORMAL COMPOSITION OF PUNS IN SHAKESPEARE'S
LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST: A CORPUS-BASED STUDY

MAGDALENA ADAMCZYK

Poznań University of Technology

ABSTRACT

The present paper is a corpus-based study seeking to demonstrate, both qualitatively and quantitatively, the formal composition of puns in one of Shakespeare's early festive comedies, i.e. *Love's labour's lost* (*c*1593/4). Pun is defined here after Delabastita (1993: 57) as a phenomenon depending for its existence on the juxtaposition of (at least two) similar/identical *forms* and (at least two) dissimilar *meanings*, where, broadly speaking, the subtler the formal contrast and the sharper the semantic one, the finer the punning effect. The reason behind selecting this particular play for the examination has been the initial assumption that, rich in verbal experiments of all sorts, it might prove a fertile source of punning forms which, indeed, run altogether to 423 instances. The qualitative study is essentially two-partite and, initially, sets out to investigate linguistic phenomena which lay down the framework of formal relationships in a pun (and are, thus, in a mutually exclusive way, obligatory for its creation), namely homonymy, homophony and paronymy. Next, punning forms are grouped into interlingual puns, proper name puns as well as idiom- and compound-based puns. On top of that, a quantitative analysis is carried out which demonstrates (in a tabular and graphic form) the overall numerical and percentage distribution of all categories of puns established in the present research study.

0. Preliminary remarks

There is no need to argue a case for Shakespeare's lavish preoccupation with verbal wit which ranks high among the most recurrent markers of his idiosyncratic style, and is perhaps as much a response to the 16th-century vogues as a reflection of his deep-seated propensity for punning. As such, it has come in for considerable criticism, chiefly literary and editorial, where two contradictory approaches to the phenomenon can be observed, namely enthusiasm on the one hand and reluctance on the other. Irrespective of the approach, quantitative analyses of all sorts agreeably present Shakespeare as an incorrigible punster.

They may each yield slightly different figures but the score is invariably high, with the total of three thousand puns in the whole canon and the average of seventy-eight apiece, *Love's labour's lost* (*LLL*), the play of sole concern in the present study, being most generously studded with them.

Unlike the literary criticism, offering a remarkable insight into the character and function of punning practices in many authors (with Shakespeare holding the lead), linguistically-oriented scholarship emerges comparatively fragmentary, leaving puns a largely unexplored domain. Although reasons for this can be multiplied many times over, the heaviest charge against the phenomenon and the most efficient deterrent from it relates principally to lack of both terminological and classificatory rigour in critical literature.

Since it is not germane to the present discussion to explain reasons for terminological chaos which puns create, those of prime importance will only be mentioned in passing. Firstly, considered either a non-complex linguistic formation or a phenomenon which, entailing ambiguity, upsets neat regularity in language, pun has not received enough critical attention and, accordingly, a coherent account of the mechanisms underlying it is sorely lacking. Secondly, puns have been approached from a couple of diverse angles in multiple academic disciplines, linguistic and other (e.g. semantics, psycho- and socio-linguistics, philosophy, rhetoric, stylistics), each tackling a different aspect of puns and submitting its own terminological apparatus. Thirdly, the phenomenon has received the attention of scholars employing nomenclature from various languages (alongside English, principally German and French) which, barely congruent intralingually, tends to soak through language borders.[1] Fourthly, as a result of the Empsonian tradition nascent in the thirties, ambiguity, the cornerstone of (nearly all sorts of) puns (see footnote 8 (ii) above) has been loosely defined as an umbrella term for any uncertainty permitting alternative meanings/interpretations of the same piece of language, which has obliterated some of the phenomenon's niceties. Finally, all too frequently puns have been regarded roughly equivalent to wordplay, which, if not wholly fallacious, is somewhat imprecise on the recognition of the fact that the latter is a more capacious cover term for phenomena not subsumable under pun.[2]

---

[1] Notice the fact of terms like *jeau de mot* or *double entendre* passing as currency in English.

[2] Further confusion may arise from the fact that modern terminology draws heavily on ancient and Renaissance rhetoric which, although lacked the notion of pun as such, made quite disorderly use of formal devices (principally *paronomasia*, *antanaclasis*, *sillepsis* and *asteismus*, corresponding roughly to individual pun types) lumped under the common name *figura elocutionis* (Freidhof 1984: 12; Kohl 1966: 55, 94; Redfern 1984: 82).

1. Pun: The definition and selected facts about the semantic structure

However diverse the dictionary entries for a pun may be, they all agree that (i) the phenomenon depends for its existence on the juxtaposition of (at least two) similar/identical *forms* and (at least two) dissimilar *meanings*, and (ii) broadly speaking, the subtler the formal contrast and the sharper the semantic one, the finer the punning effect.[3] While, as the focal issue of the present paper, the formal composition of puns will be handled in detail in section 3, it should be mentioned at this point that, concerned with the intersection of orthography and pronunciation, it rests on linguistic mechanisms encompassing homonymy, homophony, homography and paronymy. In turn, the semantic composition, understood as a union of primary (surface-level) and secondary/tertiary/quaternary, etc. (underlying) meanings (hereafter referred to as *s(ense)1* and *s(ense)2*, respectively) which, to permit a pun, need to be sufficiently distinct, calls for further commentary. Given that homophonic, homographic and paronymic types of puns emerge semantically relatively unproblematic,[4] the following brief discussion will be apposite to the homonymic variety of pun alone.

A fundamental assumption made right at the outset should be that the sole kind of meaning able to engender contrast needed for the desired punning effect is conceptual (alternatively termed "denotative", "cognitive" or "logical"). Referring to a regular (non-punning) performance Leech (1974) is positive that conceptual meaning "can be shown to be integral to the essential functioning of language in a way that other types of meaning[5] are not (which is not to say that conceptual meaning is the most important element of every act of linguistic communication) ... [because] it has a complex and sophisticated organization of a kind which may be compared with, and cross-related to, similar organization on the syntactic and phonological levels of language" (Leech 1974: 9). In a playful use of language conceptual meaning will, likewise, be claimed primary to other types of meaning, notably connotative and affective, themselves capable only of augmenting the overall import of words as defined by conceptual meaning.

Leech's (1974) model of a multi-layered semantic structure, where ultimately also a terminological differentiation is made between the conceptual

---

[3]   "Im allgemeinen kann man behaupten, dass die witzige Wortverknüpfung umso überraschender und schlagender wirkt, je geringer die Verschiedenheit der Laute bei möglichst großem Bedeutungsunterschiede ist ..." (Wurth 1895: 18).
[4]   This follows from the fact that they are each the product of (at least two) separate words (or word strings, where non-lexical varieties are concerned) working towards the punning effect, which carry singly an autonomous meaning (i.e. *s1* and *s2/s3/s4*, etc.).
[5]   For a systematic account of alternative types of meaning the reader is referred to Leech (1974: 9-23).

meaning, labelled "sense", and the remaining types of meaning, subsumed all under a collective name "communicative value", bears some resemblances to Cruse's (1995: 33-49) scrupulous delimitation between genuine meanings, termed likewise "senses", and fake ones, referred to as "facets",[6] and claimed to belong more in the domain of reading/interpretation.[7] Returning to puns, it can be reinstated, this time with the use of Cruse's (1995, 2000) nomenclature, that semantic contrast sufficient to generate a pun is attainable only where fully-fledged senses operate. Unlike facets, which can get simultaneously activated in a single qualifying (non-ambiguous) context, senses are characterized by "mutual antagonism" in that context of this type, where they are admitted individually, always disambiguates them. In other words, whereas facets are capable of generating pure *vagueness* (i.e. lack of specification) only, where semantic distance does not suffice for a pun to emerge, senses engender genuine *ambiguity*, the *sine qua non* of the majority of pun types.[8]

Conclusions of a similar order can be reached from the examination of Hausmann's (1974) semasiological model, where contrast is argued to hold between *Plurivalenz*, in which semantic disparity between individual semems of a sign suffices to engender a pun (*Wortspiel*), and *Kontextvarianz* with insufficiently distant interpretations of a single semem capable of yielding *Meinungsspiel* only (Hausmann 1974: 106).[9]

Another difficulty with the desired semantic distance lies in the fact that, within the domain of senses themselves, it is, likewise, of gradable nature. The upper limit thereof is demarcated by words which, having individually distinct semantic identities, happen to be identical in both pronunciation and spelling. To borrow terminology from lexical semantics, this phenomenon, customarily referred to as *homonymy*,[10] covers cases, where (etymologically) unrelated lexi-

---

[6]   The correspondence between the two approaches is partial since Cruse's "facets" are apparently (roughly) synonymous with Leech's collocative meanings alone.

[7]   For areas of overlap between semantically autonomous senses and (normally) non-autonomous facets cf. Cruse (2000: 27-29).
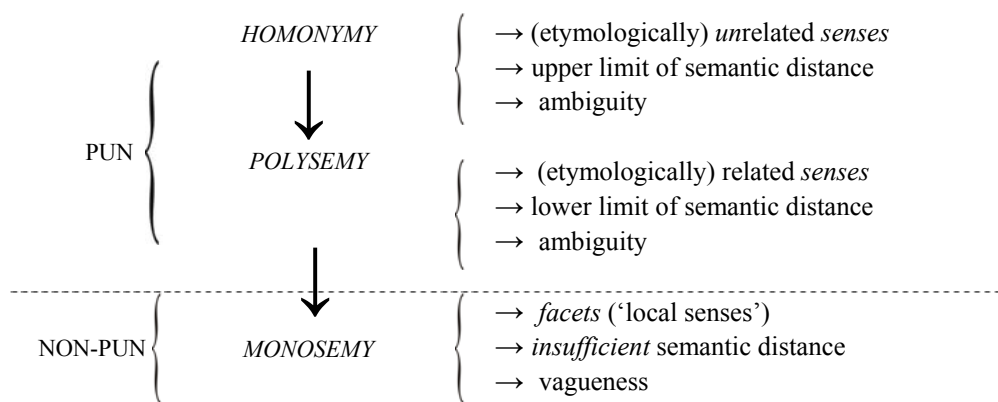
[8]   The following remarks seem in order here: (i) of numerous types of ambiguity listed in critical literature (e.g. Kooij 1971; Cruse 1986), the only varieties pertinent to punning purposes are of lexical and lexico-syntactic character; (ii) ambiguity does not appear (unrestrictedly) in all pun types in that, homonymy excepted (where it can always be taken for granted), homophony confines it to spoken medium, homography to written one and paronymy precludes altogether; (iii) a rich collection of diagnostic tests (context-variant (indirect) and context-invariant (direct)) for differentiating between ambiguity and vagueness has amassed in linguistic scholarship, for which see, for example, Cruse (1986: 50-66) (favouring the term "generality" for the latter) and Kempson (1977: 123-137).

[9]   "Mit verschiedenen Meinungen eines Semems kann man ein Meinungsspiel machen, mit verschiedenen Sememen eines Zeichens aber ein Wortspiel" (Hausmann 1974: 110).

[10]   Due care should be taken not to confuse the present understanding of homonymy, as focused on the semantics (or, strictly speaking, the semantic distance) of formally identical words, with

cal units, or, properly speaking, lexical senses of the units, are singly assigned to individual lexemes which happen to be indistinguishable on formal plain in terms of spelling and sound.[11] In turn, the lower admissible threshold of semantic distance prerequisite for the emergence of puns belongs with *polysemous* structures, where discrete but (etymologically) related senses of lexical units represent component parts of a single lexem. The degrees of semantic contrast discussed hitherto can be diagrammatically represented as follows:

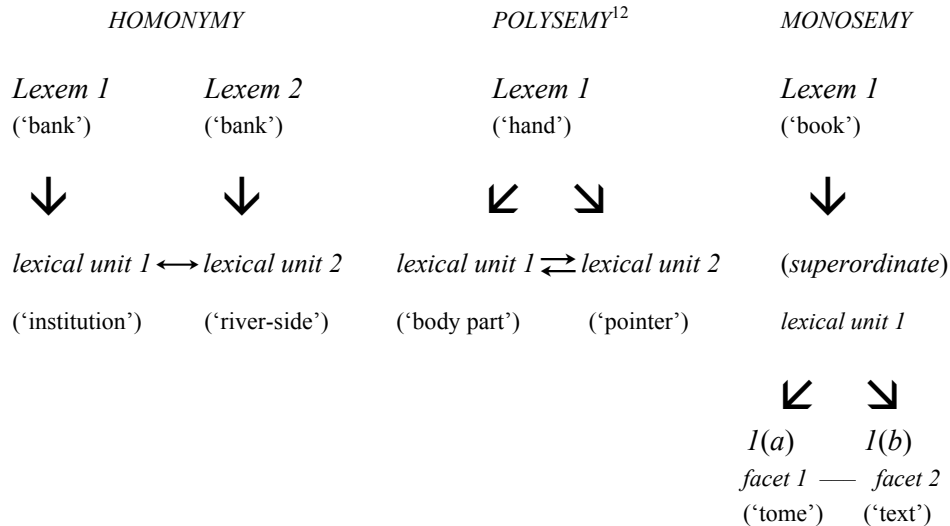Diagram 1a. The degree of semantic contrast in puns vs. non-puns*

	HOMONYMY	→ (etymologically) *un*related *senses* → upper limit of semantic distance → ambiguity
PUN	↓	
	POLYSEMY	→ (etymologically) related *senses* → lower limit of semantic distance → ambiguity
NON-PUN	↓ *MONOSEMY*	→ *facets* ('local senses') → *insufficient* semantic distance → vagueness

* Downward-pointing arrows mark the descending order of semantic distance.

what has been labelled homonymy heretofore (and will be termed the same way in section 3), where it has been preconditioned solely by identity in sound and spelling.

[11] After Cruse (1986), "lexem" is understood as a cluster of lexical units which are characterized by a heterogeneous structure combining a single sense (the meaning aspect of a unit) and a lexical form (its formal aspect variable only inflectionally). By way of contrast, "lexem" and "lexical unit" are used indiscriminately in Kempson (1977), where they are roughly synonymous with Cruse's (1986) understanding of the latter alone who, in turn, contrasts them jointly with "words".

Diagram 1b. The degree of semantic contrast in puns vs. non-puns: Examples

HOMONYMY		*POLYSEMY*[12]		*MONOSEMY*
Lexem 1	*Lexem 2*	*Lexem 1*		*Lexem 1*
('bank')	('bank')	('hand')		('book')

↓   ↓   ↙   ↘   ↓

lexical unit 1 ⟷ *lexical unit 2*   *lexical unit 1* ⇄ *lexical unit 2*   (*superordinate*)

('institution')   ('river-side')   ('body part')   ('pointer')   *lexical unit 1*

                                                                                ↙   ↘
                                                                              1(a)   *1(b)*
                                                                            facet 1 —— *facet 2*
                                                                             ('tome')   ('text')

2. The scope of the study and technicalities of the corpus

The present paper is a corpus-based study targeted at a quantitative and qualitative representation of the formal structure of puns in Shakespeare's *LLL*. The qualitative study is essentially two-partite and, first, sets out to investigate linguistic phenomena which lay down the framework of formal relationships in a pun (and are, thus, in a mutually exclusive way, obligatory for its creation), namely homonymy, homophony and paronymy (v.i. section 3.2.). More precisely, they are initially grouped into lexical, partly lexical and non-lexical varieties (3.2.1.), then located within *in praesentia*/*in absentia* patterning (3.2.2.) and finally their incomplete varieties are briefly discussed and exemplified (3.2.3.). By way of contrast, the second part of the study is an attempt at classifying punning forms into interlingual puns, proper name puns as well as idiom- and compound-based puns (3.3.). On top of that a quantitative analysis is carried out which demonstrates (in a tabular and graphic form) the overall numeri-

---

[12] While a theoretical scheme such as this one may have some initial appeal, fixing a clear-cut border between polysemy and homonymy is in practice often a vexing problem and sometimes an impossible task. While the diachronic perspective (where the etymological relatedness between words is regarded as criterial in drawing a demarcation line between the two phenomena) emerges relatively unproblematic, the synchronic approach (employing, for instance, componential analysis) is fraught with numerous problems. For pertinent discussions, which are beyond the scope of the present study, see, for instance, Ullmann (1963: 180-188), Hausmann (1974: 100-111), Kooij (1971: 124-146).

cal and percentage distribution of all the established categories of puns.

The entire body of data has been culled from one of the earliest Shakespearean comedies *LLL* (the Arden edition of 1951) written, as it is conjectured, around 1593/4. The play has been selected for this purpose somehow despite the overall negative opinion on it in critical literature, where the imbalance between a poorly developed plot and elaborate linguistic devices introduced to communicate it is stressed. It has been also assumed that, rich in verbal experiments of all sorts, *LLL* would provide a perfect battery of puns which, indeed, run to 423 instances.[13] The admittance of candidate forms to the category of pun was conditioned by their fulfillment of the above mentioned formal and semantic prerequisites (v.s. section 1). This resulted in dismissing from the corpus a group of playful linguistic devices cognate with puns, such as malapropic formations (assumed, after Sobkowiak (1991: 7), to belong more fittingly with speech errors), anagrammatic structures (instances of word games) or forms resting on pure syntactic ambiguity, to name just a few.

The understanding of multiple obsolete meanings put to punning purposes was markedly facilitated by explanations found in: Schmidt (1902), Onions (1919), Rubinstein (1989), Ellis (1973) and Partridge (1961). For comments on pronunciation, in turn, regular recourse was made to Cercignani (1981) and Kökeritz (1953).

Importantly, the resultant corpus should not be regarded as an all-inclusive collection of finite character, given that data-collecting such as this one is marked by a significant degree of arbitrariness and subjective choice-making. This proved inescapable for reasons both within and outside the phenomenon itself. Firstly, puns are fairly elusive formations (especially when in paradigmatic arrangement (see section 3.2.2.)) which, given no prior signal (a common practice in Shakespeare), can easily pass undetected. Secondly and more importantly, the process of selecting data from Shakespeare's texts is beset with difficulties arising from appreciable temporal distance, separating his plays from their modern recipients, which affects language materially, blurring the true picture of the playwright's punning practices. The four-century historical gap seems to have had the most devastating impact on the investigation of Shakespeare's pronunciation and semantics, and, in consequence, on the identification of his homophonic and homonymic puns. Just as it is impossible to determine beyond doubt the precise numbers of puns in the play, it is also overly optimistic to attempt to fix sharp borders between their particular types and subtypes (cf. section 3.1.). Accordingly, it seems that particularly promising results of

---

[13]   While the strategy in gathering data has been towards making the collection of puns as comprehensive as possible, an attempt has been undertaken to see to it that no uncalled-for "pun-hunting" (see Hill 1988) takes place.

research into puns can be produced when the adopted approach is flexible enough to permit some degree of fuzziness and indeterminacy.[14]

3. The formal structure of puns (in *LLL*)
3.1. Homonymy, homophony, homography, paronymy: Facts and problems

The four linguistic processes constituting the underlying mechanisms of formal structure in puns can be contrastively defined at the interface between pronunciation and orthography and represented as follows:

Table 1. The properties of linguistic processes underlying the formal composition of puns*

	Homonymy	*Homophony*	*Homography*	*Paronymy*
Pronunciation	+	+	−	±
Orthography	+	−	+	±

* "+" stands for identity, "−" for difference and "±" in terminal cells denotes similarity.

Regrettably, none of the above categories emerges unproblematic upon closer examination, be it synchronically or diachronically. So far as *homography*[15] is concerned, it should be highlighted that the phenomenon can emerge only in a perfectly codified orthographic system of which the 16th-century system is clearly a poor example. Absent from the entire Shakespearean canon, it will merit no attention hereafter.[16]

Of the remaining three processes *homonymy* appears to be the least nebulous concept, which however proves true of its lexical rather than sentence-level variety, given that in the latter case it can be easily upset by phenomena as subtle as varying intonation patterns (Delabastita 1993: 79). Diachronically, being

---

[14]   An approach of this type will represent a middle-ground solution between two ambivalent attitudes towards the issue in critical literature which (i) opt for scrupulous (not infrequently over-subtle) categorizations of puns, on the one hand (see Wurth 1895; Heller 1974; Freidhof 1984; Brown 1956), and (ii) recognise puns as phenomena defying any attempt toward rigid pigeon-holing, on the other (see Mahood 1957; Redfern 1984; Culler 1988).
[15]   Misgivings about admitting homographic play to the category of genuine puns will be found in Sobkowiak (1991) who observes that "[a]s opposed to such 'printed' puns, true puns are, in their mass, a decidedly spoken phenomenon …" (Sobkowiak 1991: 13).
[16]   With reference to the lack of puns in the entire canon Kökeritz (1953: 87) observes: "… no Shakespearean pun was ever based upon the spelling of a word; either meaning or pronunciation is involved, but never orthography". See also Delabastita (1993: 81).

in fact a combination of homophony and homography, homonymy poses problems which the two phenomena present individually.[17]

The phonological system of contemporary English, fossilized and rule-governed, warrants a comparatively uniform description of *homophony* in its lexical (words) and non-lexical (word strings) dimensions alike. However, it does so insofar as the phenomenon is defined loosely as involving near-identity in sound, whereas a radical approach demanding absolute phonic identity renders doubtful seemingly plain cases of lexical homophony like *course/cores*, where it may successfully get upset through mere contrast in voicing ([s], [z], respectively). Where word strings are concerned, the effect of homophony depends on the selection of phonostylistic representation, *viz.* careful vs. casual speech, in that it may surface as a result of fast-speech processes in sequences, where heterophony operates in slow speech (Sobkowiak 1991: 77-80). On top of those, the diachronic perspective besets the investigation of homophony with problems resulting from historical distance between the Elizabethan and contemporary English, which obviously precludes the possibility of fixing beyond doubt the exact pronunciation in Shakespeare.[18] Furthermore, the reader needs to reckon with the practice of deliberate phonetic manipulation intended for punning purposes, where regular pronunciations of the day are abandoned in favour of substandard varieties of dialectal or vulgar provenance (Delabastita 1993: 85; Kökeritz 1953: 65-66), which markedly obscures the overall picture of Shakespeare's homophony.

All things considered, the definition of the phenomenon in general and its 16th-century variety in particular needs to be flexible enough to permit, alongside pure homophony, instances of near-homophony (near-identity in sound).[19] The latter triggers off the problem of discriminating between low-degree (incomplete) homophony and high-degree *paronymy*, defined as similarity in sound and spelling. While, terminologically, deciding where precisely (incomplete) homophony retires and paronymy takes over becomes unproblematic the moment the labels "near-identity" and "close-similarity" are applied to near-homophony and paronymy respectively, conceptually, the borderline can only be intuited. In a similar vein, intuitive approach will be favoured in fixing the

---

[17]   That is why extra care was taken in the present study to consult relevant sources before admitting these, as well as other, types of candidate puns to the corpus (see section 2 above).

[18]   On the authority of Kökeritz, only around half of Shakespeare's homophones are readily accessible having retained their original sound quality down to the present day (Kökeritz 1953: 62).

[19]   "Wenn wir in der Praxis dieselben Anforderungen an diese Art von Spielen stellten, die wir bei der rein theoretischen Betrachtung dieser Gattung geltend machen müssen, so würde sich die Zahl der s i c h e r e n Fälle verhältnismäßig recht niedrig stellen ... Wir dürfen also in der Praxis Spiele mit sehr leichter Klangverschiedenheit, wenn sie auch theoretisch vom Gleichklang zu scheiden sind, immerhin mit diesem gemeinsam behandeln ..." (Wurth 1895: 112-113; the emphasis original).

lower level of formal similarity in paronymy, where neither the length of paronymic pairs nor the number of shared phonemes will emerge as an apposite criterion. Accordingly, paronymy will be viewed as a continuum rather than a box-like category and defined after Hausmann (1974) as "diejenige Gemeinsamkeit an Phonemen oder phonologischen Merkmalen zwischen zwei Sequenzen, die bei gleichzeitiger Divergenz von Phonemen oder Merkmalen ausreicht, zwei Isotopien im Wortspiel zu konnektieren" (Hausmann 1974: 61-62). A definition such as this one will be capacious enough to permit, in terms of spelling, two substantial paronymic categories to enter the forthcoming analysis, namely (i) forms defined by a somewhat accidental, not infrequently distant similarity (as in *Acquitaine*/*acquittances* (*LLL*: II. I. 158-162)[20]) and (ii) instances, where the operation of derivational and inflectional morphemes is solely responsible for upsetting absolute identity of pun components, either in pronunciation and orthography (precluding homonymy, as in *mean*/*meanly* 'tenor or alto'/'moderately' (*LLL*: V. II. 327-328))[21] or the former alone (blocking homophony, as in *beseech*/*besieged* (*LLL*: I. I. 226-229)). Clearly, this does not mean that one of the paronymic pun components constitutes a derivational base for the other, which although possible (as in *maculate*/*immaculate* (*LLL*: I. II. 85-88); *grace*/*disgrace* (*LLL*: IV. III. 65)), cannot be regarded as a rule because it would (i) insist on a common etymological origin in paronymic pairs (which is not prerequisite as in *pitch*/*pitched* 'tar'/'established' (*LLL*: IV. III. 1-3)) and (ii) often admit insufficient semantic distance between them, upsetting the final punning effect.[22]

Numerous are also difficulties born out of terminological discrepancies. Well beyond the present concern, they will only receive a brief mention to the effect that, for instance, (non-polysemic) "homonymic" puns, as understood here, are labelled "homographic" in Wurth (1895) who, in turn, uses the name "homonymy" to describe the present "homophony". To make things worse, in both Kökeritz (1953) and Ellis (1973) the term "homonymic" puns is synonymous not only with the present understanding of "homophonic" but also "non-polysemic (homonymic)" punning.

---

[20]   All examples cited hereafter have been culled from *LLL*.
[21]   Cf. Sobkowiak (1991: 10) who refers to this type of operation as "manipulation of 'zero' element(s)."
[22]   For further difficulties involved in defining paronymy and measuring the degree of formal similarity therein see Sobkowiak (1991: 10-11).

3.2. The analysis of the formal composition of puns in *LLL* (Part 1)
3.2.1. Lexical, partially lexical and non-lexical puns

The analysis is initially targeted at a closer representation of the aforementioned phenomena (namely homonymy, homophony and paronymy), as used in *LLL*, along the axis "lexical – partially lexical – non-lexical", and their subsequent quantitative distribution there. Of the two axial extremities, the former is said to operate within individual words, whereas the latter obtains within larger units, i.e. word strings up to a sentence level; partially lexical variety in turn surfaces as the upshot of the combination of the two, where one of the pun components represents a lexical and the other a non-lexical arrangement. The only phenomenon disallowing the middle-ground option is homonymy which, entailing pure identity of its constituents in sound and spelling, is confined to the lexical and non-lexical varieties alone (the latter operative in the examined play principally in literal interpretations of idiomatic expressions). Conversely, all the above patterns can be successfully incorporated into homophonic and paronymic structures alike. See the *selected* examples:

(1)   Non-lexical homonymy:

   Arm. Villain, thou shalt fast for thy offences ere thou be pardoned.
   Cost. Well, sir, I hope when I do it I shall do it *on a full stomach* (*LLL*: I. II. 137-140)

   s1 = (*lit*.) with one's belly full; satiated
   s2 = (*idiom*.) proudly, courageously

(2)   Lexical homophony:

   Ber. Would that do it good?
   Ros. My physic says, *ay*.
   Ber. Will you prick't with your *eye*? (*LLL*: II. I. 187-189)

   s1 = yes
   s2 = organ of sight

(3)   Partly lexical paronymy:

   Arm. Sirrah Costard, I will *enfranchise* thee.
   Cost. O! marry me to *one Frances* – I smell some l'envoy, some goose in this.
   (*LLL*: III. I. 118-120)
       s1 = set free
       s2 = one courtesan,

The overall quantitative distribution can be represented in the following fashion:

Table 2. Homonymy, homophony, paronymy: The obligatory formal arrangement (1)

	HOMONYMY		HOMOPHONY		PARONYMY	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Lexical	231	94.3%	103	85.1%	55	96.5%
Partly lexical	0	0 %	13	10.7%	1	1.7%
Non-lexical	14	5.7%	5	4.1%	1	1.7%
TOTAL:	245	100%	121	100%	57	100%

3.2.2. *In praesentia* vs. *in absentia* patterning of puns

The description of the formal composition of a pun, if expected to give a fuller picture thereof, must not fail to recognize its structural duality manifested in the juxtaposition of two determinants, i.e. (i) linguistic mechanism defining the degree of similarity in sound and spelling of pun components (as discussed above) and (ii) the positioning of those components against each other within *in praesentia*/*in absentia* patterning. When *in praesentia*, the arrangement of pun components belongs with a *syntagmatic* relationship, demanding that both are physically present in a piece of text as individual carriers of discrete senses (see examples 2, 3 in section 3.2.1.).[23] By way of contrast, the *in absentia*-type-of-arrangement, much more difficult to trace in practice, is of *paradigmatic* nature and disallows an overt manifestation of the word punned upon which is subsumed under the punning word, the latter burdened with carrying a double/multiple signification (see example (1) in section 3.2.1.). The two types of the alignment of pun components are sometimes assigned illustrative spatial labels, respectively *horizontal* and *vertical*, favoured also hereafter (Hausmann 1974).[24] The moment they are confronted with the linguistic mechanisms discussed in the foregoing sections, a six-fold structure emerges which incorporates six fundamental pun types in *LLL*, as exemplified below:

---

[23] In the homonymic type of pun syntagmatic arrangement can easily be confused with mere repetition. The two can only be distinguished from one another by virtue of applying a purely semantic criterion which restricts the latter to operating within a single sense.
[24] Cf. Delabastita (1993: 78) for a still different terminology.

I)　Horizontal homonymic pun

King. All *hail*, sweet madam, and fair time of day!
Prin. Fair in all *hail* is foul, as I conceive (*LLL*: V. II. 339-340).

s1 = an exclamation expressing greeting
s2 = sleet

II)　Vertical homonymic pun → see example (1) in section 3.2.1.

III)　Horizontal homophonic pun → see example (2) in section 3.2.1.

IV)　Vertical homophonic pun

Dum. In reason nothing.
Ber. Something then in *rhyme*.
King. Berowne is like an envious sneaping frost … (*LLL*: I. I. 98-100).

s1 = verse
s2 = *rime* 'frost'

V)　Horizontal paronymic pun → see example (3) in section 3.2.1.

VI)　Vertical paronymic pun

Ber. The king he is hunting the deer; I am coursing
myself: they have pitched a *toil*; I am *toiling* in a pitch, – pitch that
defiles… (*LLL*: IV. III. 1-3).

s1 = a trap
s2 = exerting/straining oneself

Approached quantitatively, the above pun types will be initially represented in a tabular form (showing the number and percentage of their occurrences) and, subsequently, plotted on a graph (demonstrating the former alone).

Table 3. Homonymy, homophony, paronymy: The obligatory formal arrangement (2)

	HOMONYMY		HOMOPHONY		PARONYMY	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Vertical	168	68.6%	93	76.8%	13	22.8%
Horizontal	77	31.4%	28	23.1%	44	77.2%
TOTAL	245	100%	121	100%	57	100%
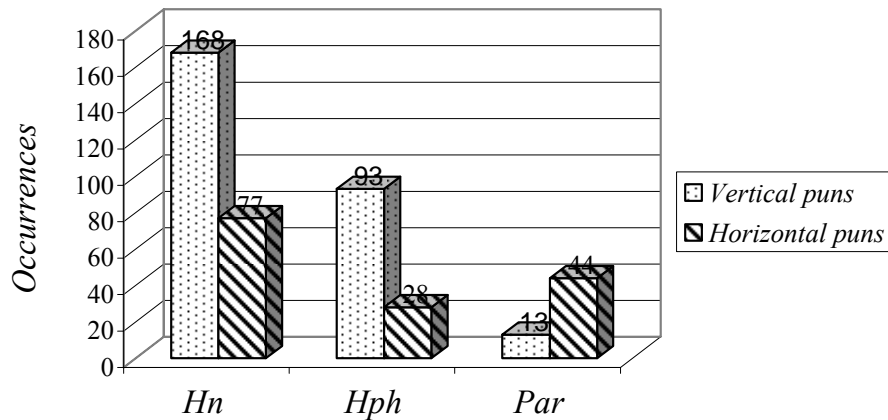
* *Hn* = homonymy, *Hph* = homophony, *Par* = paronymy

Graph 1. The distribution of six fundamental pun types in *LLL*. The occurrences index*

3.2.3. Partial homonymy, homophony and paronymy

To arrive at a fairly comprehensive picture of homonymy, homophony and paronymy it should not go unrecognized that they can be sub-divided further into partial homonymy (amounting to 6 instances in the present corpus), partial homophony (5) and partial paronymy (2), respectively. Accounting for puns of incomplete character (i.e. made on fractions of words), they are often subsumed jointly under the paronymic forms (see Sobkowiak 1991: 10 and Hausmann 1974: 29). Notice the following examples:

a)   Partial homonymy:

Moth. Yes, yes, he teaches boys the *horn*[-book]. What
is a, b, spelt backward with the *horn* on his head? (*LLL:* V. I. 46-47).

s1 = (as in *horn-book*) a leaf of paper containing the alphabet,
        protected by a thin plate of translucent horn
s2 = hard outgrowth on the heads of cattle, sheep, etc.

b)   Partial homophony:

Prin. What plume of feathers is he that indited this letter?
What vane? what *weather*[cock]? did you ever hear better? (*LLL:* IV. I. 93-94).

s1 = (as in *weathercock*) moody, changeable person
s2 = *wether* 'castrated ram; eunuch'

c)   Partial paronymy:

Prin. (…) I hear your grace hath sworn out [house-]*keeping*:
'Tis deadly sin to *keep* that oath, my lord,
And sin to break it… (*LLL:* II. I. 104-106).

s1 = (as in *house-keeping*) hospitality
s2 = fulfill, observe

3.3. The analysis of the formal composition of puns in LLL (Part 2)

Further analysis will distance itself from a close inspection of homonymy, ho-
mophony and paronymy (conditioning, in a mutually exclusive way, the emer-
gence of puns) and turn to optional mechanisms which only some puns addi-
tionally enter, refining somehow their structure. In consequence, an alternative
formal classification of puns in *LLL* will emerge (capable, however, of function-
ing only within the framework set up by the operation of homonymy, homoph-
ony and paronymy in both horizontal and vertical arrangements) which presents
itself as follows:

i)   Idiom-based puns

In *LLL* idiom-based puns appear to rest principally on tornures (formations rep-
resenting genuine idiom shape), where they either emerge as a result of the lit-

eral vs. idiomatic interpretation of these (non-lexical variety) or operate on a single component of an idiom (lexical variety) (cf. section 3.2.1.). Importantly, however, the interpretation of an idiom has been relaxed to encompass, alongside tornures, structures exhibiting a lesser degree of opacity (i.e. semantic non-transparency ensuing from non-compositional meaning assignment) and frozenness (i.e. resistance to whatever syntactic transformations), namely set phrases, proverbial expressions and (two instances of) phrasal verbs.

> *Dum*. Will you vouchsafe with me to *change a word*?
> *Mar*. Name it.
> *Dum*. Fair lady, –
> *Mar*. Say you so? Fair lord, – Take that for your fair lady (*LLL:* V. II. 238-239).

> s1 = (*idiom*.) hold social intercourse
> s2 = (*lit*.) alter/reorder a word

> *Arm*. Sweet Lord Longaville, *rein* thy tongue.
> *Long*. I must rather *give it the rein*, for it runs against Hector (*LLL:* V. II. 648-649).

> s1 = restrain; keep under control
> s2 = allow full scope, power

ii)   Interlingual puns

Interlingual puns, drawing on the lexicons of more than one language, can be defined as the products of a transaction between languages. In *LLL* they rest chiefly on French words (9 instances) (occasionally admitting words from Latin (3) and Spanish (1)) and exhibit exclusively a bilingual variety at a time. Interestingly, of the six fundamental pun types tracked down in the play (as charted in section 3.2.2.) they are absent from all horizontal arrangements.

> *Ber*. Will you prick't with your eye?
> *Ros*. No *point*, with my knife (*LLL:* II. I. 189-190).

> s1 = tapered end
> s2 = French negative 'not at all'

(iii) Proper name puns

This category of puns lends itself to a neat subdivision into (i) forms which employ given names of the characters in the play, on the one hand, and (ii)

forms which put into service all the remaining proper names used there, on the other. The former subsume both the invented names (which represent ho-mophonous structures, as in *Berowne*/*brown* (II. I. 6-68)) as well as names which have their counterparts in common nouns (homonymous structures, as in *Dull*/*dull* (V. I. 150)); on top of that, the latter allow for a wide-ranging reference spectrum, principally biblical, mythological, historical as well as national and topical (as can be seen in *Ajax*/*a jakes* example below).

> *Moth*. A wonder, master! here's a *costard* broken in a shin (*LLL:* III. I. 68).

> s1 = (a kind of large apple; here applied humorously to) a person's head
> s2 = *Costard* (the name of the character in the play)

> *Cost*. (…) your lion, that holds his poll-axe sitting on a close-stool,
> will be given to *Ajax*: he will be the ninth Worthy… (*LLL:* V. II. 570-572).

> s1 = mythological hero
> s2 = *a jakes* 'close, privy

(iv) Compound-based puns

The term defines the category of puns in which either an individual pun compo-nent involves a compounded form (the play is fixed on a single constituent of a compound; see the example below) or both/all are characterized this way (the play covers the entire compound, as in *hogshead*/*hog's head* (IV. II. 84-88)). In *LLL* the compound-based puns are constituted by compound adjectives as well as nouns. Whereas the former are formed either with a prefix (see the example below) or participle (e.g. *three-pil'd*/*pil'd* (V. II. 406-410)), the latter are either single-word compound nouns (see *hogshead* above) or display the following patterns: N(oun) + N(oun) (e.g. horn-book/*horn* (V.I.46-50)) and N(oun) + G(erund) (e.g. *house-keeping*/*keep* (II. I. 104-106)).[25]

> *Arm*. (…) it rejoiceth my intellect; true wit!
> *Moth*. Offered by a child to an *old* man; which is [wit-]*old* (*LLL:* V. I. 58-60).

> s1 = aged
> s2 = mentally feeble[26]

---

[25] Importantly, the above categories of puns may also intermingle with one another, as in *moon*/*moonshine* (V. II. 205-208) which is simultaneously a compound- and an idiom-based pun (the latter pun component appearing in the phrase *moonshine in the water*).
[26] See also examples of partial homonymy, homophony and paronymy in section 3.2.3. above.

Table 4. The distribution of non-obligatory formal arrangements in puns*

	PP		IP		IlP		PNP		CP	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Hn/Hph /Par	332	78.5%	43	10.2%	13	3.1%	20	4.7%	15	3.5%
TOTAL	423 (100%)									

* PP = pure puns (i.e. entering none of the above arrangements), IP = idiom-based puns, IlP = interlingual puns, PNP = proper name puns and CP = compound-based puns, the remainder as in Graph 1 above.

4. Conclusions

The quantitative distribution of puns, as mapped in the analysis, supports a widely-held belief that they fit into the category of verbal devices most lavishly worked into the linguistic substance of the play under consideration. The multiplicity of punning forms there is largely the consequence of the specificity of the English language which was undergoing sweeping changes in the Elizabethan era, principally lexical (such as the importation of Romance loan-words). Lexically well-stocked, syntactically unconstrained and marked by a sharp pronunciation – orthography asymmetry (the consequence of the pre-Elizabethan phonological changes, namely the Great Vowel Shift), English proved especially conducive to homonymous, homophonous and paronymous punning structures, all present in the examined corpus. A cursory look at these suffices to notice their acutely disproportionate representation, with the homophonous and paronymous varieties (which amount, respectively, to 28.6% and 13.5% of the total of 423 puns in the corpus) accounting jointly for less that a half (namely 42.1%) of the entire inventory of puns, and the homonymous forms running to 57.9%.

Upon closer inspection, the prevalence of homonyms turns out to be the most relevant fact about the formal structure of puns in *LLL* as it proves a perfect criterion for carrying out a quality assessment of the phenomenon there. The least automatically responded to in practice, homonymy ranks highest on the list of the most subtle and sought-after pun types. It is followed by homophony, whereas paronymy, routinely regarded an imperfect pun, occupies the other polar extremity. Accordingly, the preponderance of homonymous puns, as evinced in the study, seems to run counter to a prevailing opinion on punning in the play as a carefree and naïve experimentation with words which lacks refinement, commonly ascribed to Shakespeare's riper writing. Equally challenging in this respect proves the asymmetrical distribution of horizontal and vertical arrangements of puns in the play. It seems symptomatic that vertical puns,

traditionally considered subtler, hold sway both in the entire corpus as well as within homonymous structures, whereas the predominance of horizontal ones is restricted to paronymous variety alone. All things considered, the finest pun type appears to belong with vertical homonymy and the least refined one is constituted by horizontal paronymy. The juxtaposition of figures from the upper left-hand cells of Table 3 above (168 (=68.6%)) with those from the lower right-hand cells (44 (=77.2%)), representing respectively the distribution of the two pun types, evinces that the overall quality assessment of puns in *LLL* should probably proceed towards the recognition of subtlety and complexity of a higher order than they are customarily credited with. On top of that, it could be mentioned in passing that the prevalence of the vertical arrangement leads to an interesting conclusion on a wholly distinct, i.e. semantic plain. Although well beyond the present concerns, the semantics of vertical puns, heavily charged with sexual undercurrents, may point to the fact that the paradigmatic organization of puns was calculated as a convenient strategy to covertly communicate the bawdry to the audience.

The alternative grouping of puns, as demonstrated in section 3.3., allows to conclude that Shakespeare did not content himself with plain punning forms but practiced refining their structure, locating some of them additionally within idiomatic, interlingual and other patterns. The presence of interlingual puns (entailing the interplay between languages), along with punning structures involving proper names (where topical references surface), clearly points to the esoteric character of verbal wit in the play, intended (at least in part) for a finely select audience.

REFERENCES

PRIMARY SOURCES

Shakespeare, William
  1956   *Love's labour's lost*. (Edited by Richard David.) (5th edition.) London: Methuen and Co. Ltd.
  [1960]

SECONDARY SOURCES

Beckmann, Susanne – Peter Paul König – Georg Wolf (eds.)
  2000   *Sprachspiel und Bedeutung*: *Festschrift für Franz Hundsnurscher zum 65. Geburtstag*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.

Brown, James
    1956   "Eight types of puns", *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 71: 14-26.
Cercignani, Fausto
    1981   *Shakespeare's works and Elizabethan Pronunciation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Cruse, Alan D.
    1986   *Lexical semantics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
    1995   "Polysemy and related phenomena from a cognitive linguistic viewpoint", in: Patrick Saint-Dizier – Evelyne Viegas (eds.), 33-49.
    2000   "Lexical 'factes': Between monosemy and polysemy", in: Susanne Beckmann – Peter Paul König – Georg Wolf (eds.), 25-36.
Culler, Jonathan (ed.)
    1988   *On puns*: *The foundation of letters*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
Delabastita, Dirk
    1993   *There is a double tongue*: *An investigation into the translation of Shakespeare's wordplay with special reference to* Hamlet. Amsterdam – Atlanta: Editions Rodopi.
Duncan-Rose, Caroline – Jacek Fisiak – Theo Vennemann (eds.)
    1988   *On language*: *Rhetorica, phonologica, syntactica. A festschrift for Robert P. Stockwell from his friends and colleagues*. London – New York: Routledge.
Ellis, Herbert A.
    1973   *Shakespeare's lusty punning in* Love's labour's lost. The Hague – Paris: Mouton.
Freidhof, Gerd
    1984   "Zur Typologisierung von Wortspielen mit Hilfe von oppositiven Merkmalen", in: Peter Rehder (ed.), 9-37.
Hausmann, Franz J.
    1974   *Studien zu einer Linguistik des Wortspiels*: *Das Wortspiel im* Canard Enchaîné. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.
Heller, L. G.
    1974   "Toward a general typology of the pun", *Language and Style* 7: 271-282.
Hill, Archibald A.
    1988   "Chaucer and the pun-hunters: Some points of caution", in: Caroline Duncan-Rose – Jacek Fisiak – Theo Vennemann (eds.), 66-78.
Katz, Jerrold J.
    1966   *The philosophy of language*. New York: Harper & Row.
Kempson, Ruth M.
    1977   *Semantic theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Kohl, Norbert
    1966   Das Wortspiel in der Shakespeareschen Komödie: Studien zur Interdependenz von verbalem und aktionalem Spiel in den frühen Komödien und den späten Stücken. [Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt am Main].
Kökeritz, Helge
    1953   *Shakespeare's pronunciation*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
Kooij, Jan G.
    1971   *Ambiguity in natural language*: *An investigation of certain problems in its linguistic description*. Amsterdam – London: North-Holland.
Leech, Geoffrey
    1974   *Semantics*: *The study of meaning*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Lew, Robert
    1996   An ambiguity-based theory of the linguistic verbal joke in English. [Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań.]

Mahood, Molly Maureen
    1957   *Shakespeare's wordplay*. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd.

Onions, Charles Talbut
    1919   *A Shakespeare glossary*. (2nd edition.) Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Partridge, Eric
    1961   *Shakespeare's bawdy*: *A literary and psychological essay and a comprehensive glossary*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Redfern, Walter
    1984   *Puns*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publisher Ltd.

Rehder, Peter (ed.)
    1984   *Slavistische Linguistik 1983*: *Referate des IX. Konstanzer Slavistischen Arbeitstreffens*. München: Otto Sagner.

Rubinstein, Frankie R.
    1989   *A dictionary of Shakespeare's sexual puns and their significance*. Houndmills – Basingstoke – Hampshire – London: Macmillan Press Ltd.

Saint-Dizier, Patrick – Evelyne Viegas (eds.)
    1995   *Computational lexical semantics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Schmidt, Alexander
    1902   *Shakespeare-lexicon*: *A complete dictionary of all the English words, phrases and constructions in the works of the poet*. (3rd edition.) Berlin: Georg Reimer.

Sobkowiak, Włodzimierz
    1991   *Metaphonology of English paronomasic puns*. Frankfurt am Main – Bern – New York – Paris: Peter Lang.

Ullmann, Stephen
    1963   *The principles of semantics*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Wurth, Leopold
    1895   *Das Wortspiel bei Shakspere*. Wien – Leipzig: Wilhelm Braumüller.