Humour and parody in political satire: from radio broadcasting to the world wide web

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The online presence of TV and radio shows, as evident in the proliferation of their official websites and social media profiles, attests to the increasing convergence of the so-called new media and traditional broadcasting. This study investigates humour and parody in political satire, with a focus on the (re)construction of a satirical radio show’s identity online. It explores how practices of editing and remixing speech for humorous effect on radio get recontextualised in the multimodal composition of the show’s website. In addition to language resources, graphic elements, including orthography, layout and overall design, prove paramount in visually reinforcing verbal parody on the show’s website.

At the same time, such parody acts appear to invoke tensions between the local (Greek) context where the radio show is aired and the more global or transnational space of the web. The tensions become evident in playful stylisations of non-national forms, especially English, where normative associations between scripts and linguistic codes are found to be transgressed. This case of stylised ‘trans-scripting’ (Androutsopoulos, 2013) is discussed in relation to (a) similar practices in digital environments and their socio-cultural associations, (b) the values associated with the use of English in global templates of web design, and (c) local/national language ideologies as they have been shaping up historically and are currently contested in comments by the radio show’s fans. Using ‘parody’ as a framework for understanding such stylisations (Morson, 1989; Coupland, 2001) brings to the fore an intricate web of different positionings played out on different areas of the website and reveals heightened reflexivity upon the circulation of multiple linguistic and graphic resources on the web.

Keywords: parody, media, stylisation.