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**HUMOR IN DIALOGIC COMMUNICATION: THEORETICAL
MODEL OF DISCURSIVE AND PRAGMATIC DESCRIPTION**

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Abstract

The article is devoted to humor as the peculiar versatile discursive strategy in the dialogic communication following various goals of interpersonal interaction. The theoretical humor model suggested in the publication analyzes this phenomenon as not only linguistic and psychological means of reinforcing the solidarity between interlocutors, forming the creative friendly atmosphere, but also as a tool of excessive emotional impact upon the listener resisting to support the speaker's communicative strategy. The implementation of a humorous statement influences the whole course of dialogical interaction and becomes a kind of guidance for the subject of speech as to how to construct a corresponding statement, to program the recipient's reaction, and to generate laughter at the right moment of communication. The fact that humor is not only linguistically depended category, but also an individual one, an ethical category associated with culturally conditioned boundaries, makes it hard to study. In pragmatic terms, humor is called upon to defuse the tension that has developed in a given communication situation. Based on the strategy of establishing and maintaining empathic contact with the listener, humor inevitably uses the incongruities of various types which in fact could destroy the listener's original expectations, trigger metacommunicative reflection on the current dialogic process. The incongruous elements of humorous utterance turn out to be the most important (implicit) metacommunicative signals of the humorous discourse demanding further pragmatic and cognitive detailing.

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Keywords: Dialogic communication, discursive model, humor, implicit meaning, joke, perlocutive aim.



1. Introduction

Despite the fact that research on humor is conducted within different scientific disciplines and paradigms, this social-humanitarian phenomenon is still of special relevance and research significance at the present time, involving extensive interdisciplinary analysis. In particular, it requires further detailed consideration of verbal mechanisms of actualization of humor, revealing how the existing discursive models prove to be optimal for multivariate analysis of these models, determining the conditions and sufficient grounds for generating humorous effect in different types of discourse. Humor is not only one of the most attractive discursive strategies for the aesthetic construction of statements, which inevitably evoke laughter and thus a good mood of the addressee, but also a contextual rethinking of actual concepts, suggesting an alternative, playful view of everyday reality, "communicative action in play" (Bochkareva, 2013).

At the same time, humor is an ethical category associated with culturally conditioned boundaries of what is permissible in terms of "depicting someone in an unsightly light", ridiculing traditional (political, ethnic, gender, etc.) stereotypes, which can potentially become a source of aggression and conflict. "Laughter," writes Bakhtin (1965) in this regard, "is always limited to social conventional norms, although often "turned inside out" in comparison with ordinary life" (p. 229). In this connection, humor borders on irony, sarcasm and parody, enters into close interaction with rhetorical categories of persuasion and politeness, involves cognitive, psychological and ethno-linguistic mechanisms of influence on the addressee.

2. Problem Statement

When a humorous effect is generated, conflict may also occur on the discursive level - between verbalized and non-verbalized parts of a speech work (Stephankova, 2011). At the same time, humor is a phenomenon of the meta-communicative order, i.e., a bright characteristic of the current communicative process associated with a change in its dialogical position from an active participant of the process to a contemplative observer. Hence, metacommunication plays a constructive role in the generation and dynamic development of humorous discourse.

3. Research Questions

Implicitly embedded in a humorous statement, the phenomenon of the funny and comic is translated into the sphere of indirect communication, which is closely connected "with the ideas of how native speakers use knowledge about the world around them, how they structure information in the process of communication" (Shilikhina, 2014, p. 135), which in turn requires further discursive study of humor. In connection with the above, humor is extensively studied in a whole range of scientific disciplines, namely in philosophy, anthropology, linguistics, psychology, sociology, and in the interdisciplinary aspect, bringing particular relevance to the theoretical research we are conducting. Thus the key questions to be answered in this research are: what is the role of humor as a peculiar versatile discursive strategy in the dialogic communication? What are humor pragmatic functions in the context?

4. Purpose of the Study

The increased interest in humor arouses in the sphere of problems connected with the pragmatism of interpersonal relations, which "emphasizes the contextual use of language units" (Kudryashov, 2005, p.17), considered as one of the basic conditions of humorous effect in the interaction of interlocutors. A pragmatic approach to understanding humor from the point of view of both the speaker and the addressee makes it possible to analyze the reverse side of the action of the conversational principles of dialogical interaction, confirming the perspective of research into the game with language. As our observations show, within the framework of communication humor pursues two pragmatic goals:

- 1) manipulation of the addressee's interpretive activity;
- 2) strengthening or focusing on the inactivity of generally accepted social and cultural stereotypes, such as gender roles, ethnic origin, professional activity, etc.

Considering this our goal is depicting humor effect in communication within pragma linguistics.

5. Research Methods

Descriptive method is used in the study of the social functioning of the humor in language system. The consideration of each element is carried out formally and semantically. This technique is currently used in conjunction with structural method of linguistic research.

The structural method of our research consists in the knowledge of the language in the form of an integral structure, parts and components of which are correlated and linked through a strict system of relations. The structural method also allowed us to explore the relationships between personal humor and ways of its expression in the language.

The main subject of comparative method of our research are structures of language systems comparing both individual elements and entire areas of the structure.

Logical and semantic modelling was used to analyse the meaning of humor expression used in the language.

6. Findings

As an object of research on the pragmatics of interpersonal relations, humor is difficult to define: it is easier to demonstrate it clearly than to describe it scientifically. According to our research, the vast majority of studies on dialogical problems of humor are conducted within the framework of psychology, based on concepts relevant to this science. At the same time, humor is mainly defined as the initiation of funny and entertaining statements that inevitably cause laughter among the audience (Arbitajlo, 2008; Dedov, 2000; Martin, 2019). Such a definition of humor is actively adapted by researchers from other disciplinary branches of scientific knowledge. However, humor can also be initiated unintentionally, without introducing an element of fun and entertainment into the communication process (for example, "black humor"). Taking this into account, Mullany (2004) defines humor in a more generalized way, namely, as "cases in which interlocutors signal each other about the element of amusement based on a preliminary analytical assessment of paralinguistic, sketchy and discursive indicators. These cases ... can

be classified as successful or unsuccessful. Humor can be a logical result of intentional or unintentional verbal behavior of the interlocutors" (Mullany, 2004, p. 21).

Such a definition appears to have several research advantages. First, it incorporates less typical cases of the implementation of humor, such as unintended humor, humor that has failed to achieve its purpose. This definition can also be interpreted in such a way that it covers the possibility of initiating the "dark" side of humor, namely, cases of its realization for the purpose of personal attack on the addressee, insulting his honor, dignity and reputation. Of course, in such circumstances, no element of fun in the communication process is out of the question. Secondly, the definition proposed by Mullany (2004) recognizes the fact that communication strategies of response to humorous expression can take various discursive forms.

Laughter is recognized as a prototypical way to respond to humorous language. However, many statements question the very effectiveness of interpreting laughter as the only indicator of humor (Karakowsky et al., 2020; Thomas et al., 2020). Although humor and laughter have much in common, they are not inseparable entities. Provin (1996), for example, found that most cases of initiation of laughter do not form a response to a humorous statement. In the experimental study conducted by this researcher, reactions to humor were less than twenty percent of laugh initiation among interlocutors engaged in spontaneous dialogues. It was found that "the playful onset of communication, a sense of belonging to the same socio-cultural, age, professional, and gender group, and a positive emotional - not comic - mood form situational attitudes for generating laughter" (Provin, 1996, p. 42).

Researchers from various disciplinary spheres also analyze the possible nature of response to a humorous statement. In this problem area it was found that different types of humor suggest no less diverse reactions to it (Almazova et al., 2019; Bashkin, 2009; Bylieva et al., 2017, Dyrkin, 2012; Evans et al., 2019; Moskaleva, 2010). The expediency of reactive support of a humorous statement is determined by the contexts of initiation of this statement. The addressee can react to a humorous statement, in fact, in various ways, either supporting or rejecting the subject's initiative, namely, strengthening the humorous effect of the stimulating statement, supporting it with no less humorous details, or blocking the very possibility of its realization. The reaction to humor may be less intense than laughter, such as a smile or an approving shake of the head. In particular, self-deprecating humor becomes the basis not of laughing response, but of reciprocal expressions of sympathy or any contradictory judgments (Holmes, 2000).

The humorous effect of a statement is decoded by the addressee based on the context of dialogical interaction available for observation. In the interactive exchange of dialogical replicas, the interlocutors make corresponding implications, produce and simultaneously interpret statements with implicit meaning (Azarova & Kudryashov, 2015). In other words, humor in conditions of interactive interaction presupposes actualization of the corresponding communicative competence of the speaker, the desire of the addressee to appreciate the effect produced by the addressee. The said competence includes the knowledge of how to initiate a humorous statement and how to react to it. Humor can work as a strategy of establishing and maintaining empathic contact with the listener, controlling the course of spontaneous conversation, and identifying psychological personalities of interlocutors.

Initiation of a humorous statement follows the general model of narration about something in a dialogical form, with the only difference that laughter of interlocutors is expected in the conclusion.

Humor in the form of a joke is initiated as a kind of "testing for understanding", because not everyone has to grasp the meaning of what has been said because of the lack of appropriate background knowledge or the speed of reaction to the processing of information. In the format of dialogue, this "testing" is aimed more at finding common points of contact between interlocutors than at embarrassing, knocking out the addressee's emotional track. In this case, both the speaker and the listener will learn something new about each other, including psychologically. Humor gives interlocutors an optimum opportunity to direct the aggression accumulated in dialogue to the third party which is not directly participating in conversation, to form conditions for a dynamic feedback with each other.

Introduction of the joke into the communicative register of dialogical communication requires from its participants certain thought operations, which are actively used in the interpretation of the situation preceding the joke, syntactic models and discursive organization of humorous statement, smoothness of the information flow in which the joke is realized. Interlocutors often laugh at the problems of the smooth presentation of the joke, which the speaking subject has.

The everyday dialogue highlights various humorous situations, including those related to the personal life of the speaking subject. At the same time, the speaker's identification of himself or herself is presented as a way to learn the addressee's evaluation judgment about himself or herself. This parameter of the implementation of a humorous statement influences the whole course of dialogical interaction and becomes a kind of guidance for the subject of speech as to how to construct a corresponding statement, to program the recipient's reaction, and to generate laughter at the right moment of communication. A humorous narrative told by one of the interlocutors may become an incentive for the collaborative construction of a humorous discourse, since it involves feedback from the addressee.

Details, interactive dialogue, comments tend to show a stable tendency for communication to move on to discussion of more serious problems or to strengthen the humorous effect of the original narrative (Perchtold-Stefan et al., 2020; Rubtsova, 2019). Humor makes any dialogical narrative more worthwhile to be told about, involves both interlocutors in this narrative, since the creation of humorous effect presupposes discursive creation of all participants in the communication. In this case, the act of creation is not based on the narrative content, but on the dynamics of the events reported in the constructed humorous discourse.

Personal information about the interlocutors, which is actualized in the process of joint construction of humorous discourse, reflects their social-psychological identity on different levels of spontaneous conversation. Reports of unusual events that the interlocutors have come to bring an element of entertainment to the dialogue, offering ample opportunity for both interlocutors to participate in spontaneous commenting and detailing of these events, which maintains a physical contact between them. The humorous narrative of one interlocutor is spontaneously supported by the other, thus developing a joint experience of the participants in the dialogue who once were in a similar situation. Such discursive cooperation between interlocutors has many pragmatic goals, among which we note the following:

- confirmation of belonging to a certain socio-cultural community;
- interactive modulation of the feedback between interlocutors;
- providing the opportunity to re-experience the once-tested experience of a given life situation;
- creating pragmatic conditions for long-term dialogue interaction (Chernyavskaya, 2017).

7. Conclusion

The humorous effect of a dialogical statement may not achieve its perlocutive purpose if the addressee refuses to participate in the further construction of communication based on humorous tonality, although he properly understands what the speaker means, obviously considering his speech behavior impolite. In this case, the need to protect the "positive face" of one of the participants in the communication and to preserve mutual respect becomes relevant. The given statement, in turn, sheds light on mutual relations between failed humorous effect and category of politeness in various dialogue circumstances.

It is possible to speak about such typological situations of initiation of humorous effect, as the humor directed on itself, humor directed on the addressee, the situation of communication itself, the third person not participating in dialogue.

Situational humor can also be a means of argumentative strategy of the speaking subject. In pragmatic terms, humor is called upon to defuse the tension that has developed in a given communication situation. As a peculiar argument, humor appears to be a sufficiently effective discursive means demonstrating the speaker's desire to preserve his or her "social face".

Thus, humor plays a constructive role in the optimal management of interpersonal relations, since it can be used to perform many pragmatic functions. As its basic function, humor provides an opportunity to strengthen solidarity among interlocutors, to create favorable conditions for a friendly dialogue atmosphere. At the same time, it can be used as a verbal method of forceful pressure on the interlocutor, an effective resistance to the communicative initiative chosen by the speaker. Humor can generate a sense of belonging to this or that sociocultural group or function as a kind of marker of social, cultural, political or professional differentiation of interlocutors, and an explicit removal of the addressee from the current communicative process.

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