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Term Paper

Humorous effect of flouting conversational maxims in Modern English Comic  
Books

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## INTRODUCTION

Humor covers many aspects of human life and is one of the conditions for the normal functioning of human society. Humor is a universal and at the same time deeply national phenomenon. By studying humor in various linguistic communities, we will be able to identify both general and specific characteristics of the worldview of people who speak a certain language and share the ethnocultural value system of a certain society. Humor in any society is one of the means of identification, a way of expressing emotions, and a way of developing connections between people. The study of humor as an element of culture contributes to the understanding of both one's own and another's culture, the difference in the interpretation of the images of oneself and others.

Pragmatics is a key area of linguistics in relation to humor, as understanding context and intent is often key to interpreting humor. The concept of a sense of humor belongs to the features of the English national character, of which the English are particularly proud. Therefore, the interpretation and explanation of the characteristic features of English humor acquires special importance.

The **object** of the study is humorous expressions in modern English comics.

The **subject** of the study is the pragmatic nature of humorous expressions in modern English comics.

The **purpose** of the study is to analyze the flouting conversational maxims in modern English comics. To achieve this goal, the following **tasks** are set:

- to define the concept of humour and analyze its features in modern English comic books.
- to explore conversational maxims as a tool for studying humor.
- to analyse the flouting of conversational maxims of quality, relevance, quantity, and manner in producing a humorous effect.

The research **methods** include: textual analysis, pragmatic analysis, discourse analysis.

The practical value of the study is determined by the fact that its provisions, conclusions and factual material can be used to study how flouting of the maxim of quality, the maxim of relevance, the maxim of quantity, the maxim of manner ensures a humorous effect in modern English comic books.

## CHAPTER 1

### THEORETICAL ASPECTS OF HUMOR IN MODERN LINGUISTICS

#### 1.1. Linguistic theories for the study of humor in language and concept of English humor

Humor as a whole is too vast and multifaceted to be included in a single integrated theory. According to Attardo, theories of humor are divided into three main categories: essentialist, teleological, and substantialist (Attardo, 2002, p.177).

There are countless theories as to why we laugh – 88 theories of humor were described in *The Psychology of Laughter and Comedy*. And although classical theories of humor and laughter often appear under different names in academic literature, three theories of humor are repeatedly mentioned:

1. liberation theory,
2. theory of superiority,
3. theory of inconsistency.

According to release theory, people laugh because they occasionally need to relieve physiological tension. The release theory suggests that laughter is the result of the accumulation and release of nervous energy. In this view, humor is mainly used to reveal secret desires. Humor that is explained by liberation theory usually contains aggressive themes.

The theory of superiority is sometimes called the theory of aggression, mockery, or triumph. After all, any humorous situation can be compared to a game where there is a winner and a loser. According to superiority theory, humorous situations can best be understood by knowing who wins and who loses, and if we remove these elements, it robs the joke of its comic effect (Івасишин, 2018, с. 43).

According to incongruity theory, humor occurs when two scenarios overlap. The transition from one scenario to another is achieved by a semantic scenario

switching trigger in the text implemented by a key phrase. The incongruity theory of humor can be summarized in three main propositions, briefly outlined by Ross:

- there is a conflict between what is expected and what actually happens in the joke.
- the conflict is caused by ambiguity at a certain level of language.
- the main point is surprising because it is an unexpected interpretation, but it resolves the conflict.

Thanks to the interaction of verbal and non-verbal components in a comic, it combines a large amount of information designed for maximum ease of perception. Verbal components mean the alphabetic text, the entire speech unity within the comics. There are two subtypes here: character speech and author's speech (titles, headings, author's summary, comments on the entire comic or on individual episodes). Example, British comics «Hilda and the Midnight Giant» [1]:



Fig. 1.1. The structure of the British comic «Hilda and the Midnight Giant» [1].

In order for a comic to be correctly understood by the reader, its content must be correctly structured, the text and image must be clearly correlated, and the images must be presented in a clear sequence. A distinctive feature of the comics



laughing culture has a long tradition in everyday life, customs, rituals and, especially, in folklore, it is distinguished by its originality, unique forms of expression, closely related to the culture of Great Britain (Smith, 1991). Each language, including English, has its own peculiarities of comic creation, as well as its own special forms of their manifestation, relevant to the specific historical and social conditions of the country. The analysis of the specifics of English humor contributes to the disclosure of national psychology, national character, social coloring of humor, its connections with history, and the mood of the nation.

British (or English) humor is that which was formed in conditions of relative stability of British society and carries a strong element of satire on the "absurdity of everyday life". In *The English Sense of Humour*, H. Nicholson argues that the English have certain recognizable traits and temperamental flaws that have a particular bearing on their sense of humour. The researcher summarizes the specific components of the English sense of humor as follows: benevolence, sentimentality and pathos, the general basis of feeling and tradition, fantasy, special sensitivity to the distortion of human values, childishness, self-defense, economy of mental effort, the desire for mental and spiritual lightness, as well as the desire to feel pleasure (Nicholson, 1956, p. 154). In modern English studies, several types of comic are distinguished (Bloxham, URL):

- ethnic slurs – ethnic jokes that play on the peculiarities of national characters in a hyperbolic form;
- dry humor – ironic jokes where mockery hides behind seriousness;
- shaggy-dog stories - jokes based on uninteresting and long stories about events that seem interesting and funny only to the person who tells them; have an unexpected, often nonsensical or absurd ending;
- banana-skin humor – primitive jokes;
- elephant jokes – stupid or shallow jokes (elephant fantasies).

English humor is characterized by diversity due to the fact that people of different nationalities live on the territory of England. He is distinguished by sharpness, impudence, kindness and sophistication. Jokes about politicians,



lawyers and residents of neighboring areas are particularly popular (Івасишин, 2019, с. 68).

English humor is very multifaceted, according to Puritan heritage - a little cold, according to mentality - practical and, due to traditions - quite sarcastic. But at the same time, it acquires other shades, becomes desperate, loud and good-natured. A. V. Safir singles out six distinctive features:

- a) lack of hidden meaning, ironic directness;
- b) full "proof": each joke must be explained in detail;
- c) ridiculing nonsense, closeness, human attachments to base actions;
- d) situations of incredible nonsense, grotesqueness, absurdity when the event is completely obvious;
- e) use of unimaginable comparisons, exaggerations, wordplay;
- f) ingenuity (Chiaro, 2010, p 176).

Undoubtedly, the nature of humor has national and cultural features, being one of the elements of the national picture of the world, forming a nationally conditioned comic picture of the world. In order to correctly understand humor, it is necessary to know the linguistic and cultural specifics of communication within this or that society (Кожемякіна, 2020, с. 72).

When studying the national and cultural features of English humor, one can highlight its restraint, directness, calm and serious manner of storytelling, prevalence of wordplay, emphasis on small details. One of the most important features of English humor is the ability to laugh at oneself, that is, self-irony.

## **1.2. Conversational maxims as a tool for the study of humor**

In the pragmatic aspect, the discourse of humor is interpreted as a form of speech that deviates from linguistic rules and conversational principles. The effect of humor can mainly be achieved with the help of certain comic techniques or jokes, using appropriate methods in language. As a rule, the communicative intention of communication participants who use humor is manifested in the desire

to move away from a serious conversation, that is, the desire to reduce the communicative distance with the help of certain behavior patterns accepted in the language culture.

The study of the comic in linguistic pragmatics is connected with the principle of cooperation of P. Grice, who derived the maxims of quantity, quality, relevance and manner (way of expression), and showed that their non-observance leads to a comic effect (Grice, 2008, p. 41).

Through the prism of Grice's research, humor can be perceived as conversational implicature, a type of pragmatic inference in which meaning is conveyed through unconventional means. The scientist offers communication participants to follow some principles to ensure the success of communication.

The principles of cooperation introduced by P. Grice (Grice, 2008, p. 41):

1. The maxim of quality is to convey information that corresponds to reality: do not say what you consider to be false, do not say what you do not have sufficient evidence for.

2. The maxim of quantity: the contribution to the conversation should be as informative as possible, the contribution to the conversation should not be oversaturated with information.

3. Maxim of relevance: avoid obscurity, ambiguity, be short, be consistent.

Therefore, the participants in the act of communication must adhere to the principle of cooperation, because a conversation guided by these rules will lead to effective communication. Neglect of the principle of cooperation is described in the work of V. Raskin "Semantic Mechanisms of Humor" (Raskin, 1985, p. 34). The researcher adapted Grice's principle of cooperation mainly for jokes and presented them as the "non-Bona-Fide (NBF) Communication Mode of joke telling". He assumed that jokes are not created simply by violating Grice's maxims in conversation, so to be able to create successful humor, one or more "principles" should be followed:

(1) maxim of quantity: give exactly as much information as is necessary for a joke;

(2) maxim of quality: say only what is compatible with the words of the joke;

(3) maxim of relation: say only what is relevant to the joke;

(4) maxim of manners: telling a joke effectively (Rockwell, 2000, p. 491).

These alternative maxims allow jokes to be communicative even when they violate Grice's principle of cooperation. It is important to note that there is some kind of signal embedded in this theory that the context is humorous, which, in turn, can be interpreted as humorous intent.

## CHAPTER 2

### FLOUTING CONVERSATIONAL MAXIMS (the maxim of quality, maxim of relevance, maxim of quantity, maxim of manner): A HUMOUR EFFECT IN MODERN ENGLISH COMIC BOOKS

As a research material, a number of English comics, obtained by the method of continuous selection, were used. In the course of the linguopragmatic analysis of these comics, the features of flouting conversational maxims of quality, maxims of relevance, maxims of quantity, maxims of manner were determined. In case of violation of these maxims, a comic effect is achieved.

**Maxim of Quantity.** The rule of maxim of quantity demands the participants of a conversation to give sufficient contribution as required. In other words, the speaker should not give too little or too much information. This maxim can be summarized as follow:

- 1) Make your contribution as informative as is required (Do not say too little);
- 2) Do not make your contribution more informative than is required (Do not say too much) (Muhartoyo, Sistofa, 2013, p. 105).

We usually assume that people are telling everything we need to know. If they do not say something, we will assume that they simply do not know.

An example of violation of the maxim of quantity is the British comic "Hilda and the Bird Parade" [2]. Violation of the maxim of quantity is observed in the language of the bird. This leads to a humorous effect due to the excessive use of words (Fig. 2.1.).

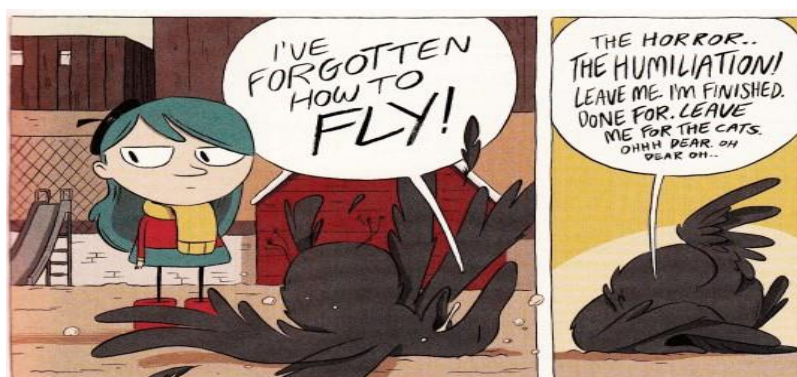


Fig. 2.1. Flouting maxim of Quantity [2]

Also an example of violation of the maxim of quality is the statement: "Could you pass me the salt?" (Fig. 2.2.). However, without violating this maxim, the statement can be perceived by the listener as impolite ("Give me salt") [4].



Fig. 2.2. Flouting maxim of Quantity [4]

**Maxim of Quality.** In order to fulfill the maxim of quality the speaker should make true contribution. It means that he/she should not say what he/she believes to be false and should not say something which lack of evidence. For example, somebody has to say that the capital city of Indonesia is Jakarta not other city, so the rule of this maxim can be briefly described as follows (Muhartoyo, Sistofa, 2013, p. 105).:

- 1) Do not say what you believe to be false (Do not lie);
- 2) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence (Do not say things



you cannot back up).

Fig. 2.3. Flouting maxim of Quality [5].

For example, a violation of the quality principle occurs when a speaker clearly says something that is not true and lacks evidence. The speech of the speaker contradicts the truth, which leads to a comic effect.

**Maxim of relevance.** This maxim aims the participants of a conversation give a relevance contribution with the topic at that time. The participants should give comments that are only related to the subject and each of them recognizes it. To follow this maxim one should be relevant (do not say things that out of the context) (Muhartoyo, Sistofa, 2013, p. 105).



Fig. 2.4. Flouting maxim of relevance [5].

**Maxim of Manner.** The last is maxim of manner, which says the people should be brief and orderly. Moreover, a person who follows this maxim should avoid obscurity and ambiguity. It means they should: avoid obscurity of expression, avoid ambiguity, be brief, be orderly (Muhartoyo, Sistofa, 2013, p. 106).



Fig. 2.5. Flouting maxim of Manner [5].

We also observe a violation of the maxim of Manner in the comic "Hilda and the Midnight Giant", where a quick, unreasonable change in the weather forecast creates a comic effect. Example:

“...It's looking like there' ll be clear skies on the feels this morning ...change of snow tommorow and in the comming day's...” [1]:



Fig. 2.6. Flouting maxim of Manner [1]

These maxims relate to the form of speech being used. One should not use words which will not be understood or say things that you know could be taken multiple ways. You should also not state something in a long, drawn-out way if you could say it in a much simpler manner.

Thus, communicative behavior, as well as communicative reaction, are determined by the maxim of quality, maxim of relevance, maxim of quantity, maxim of manner, the observance of which forms correct speech. In case of violation of these maxims, a comic effect is achieved.



## CONCLUSIONS

British humor reflects the features of their national character (secretiveness, tact, veiledness, absurdity), expresses cultural and social values, has a variety of forms (jokes, various jokes). Humor is the most important phenomenon in the English national picture of the world, which depends on the mental characteristics, traditions and value attitudes peculiar to the English. English humor has a number of linguistic features.

Communication is subject to strict laws, it is regulated in a certain way. Speech is one of the types of purposeful and rational behavior. It was determined that how communication proceeds, how its principles are followed or not followed, reveal the keys to the interpretation of the meanings of statements, especially those that are implicit or not expressed literally.

Compliance with the principle of cooperation is connected with the observance of four communication maxims, also introduced by P. Grice, formulated in the form of rules:

- Maxim of quantity: the statement should contain no less information than is necessary to fulfill the current goals of the dialogue; the statement should not contain more information than necessary.
- Maxim of quality: don't say what you think is wrong; do not say what you do not have sufficient reason for.
- Maximum relevance: do not deviate from the topic.
- Maxim of clarity: avoid unclear expressions; avoid ambiguity;

A number of English comics obtained by the continuous sampling method were used as research material. In the course of the linguopragmatic analysis of these comics, the peculiarities of flouting the maxim of quality, maxim of relevance, maxim of quantity, and maxim of manner were determined. In case of violation of these maxims, a comic effect is achieved.

## RÉSUMÉ

The term paper examines the relationship between humor and the violation of conversational maxims on the example of English comics. The peculiarities of flouting the maxim of quality, maxim of relevance, maxim of quantity, maxim of manner were determined.

It is established that in case of violation of these maxims, a comic effect is achieved. The study highlights the importance of conversational maxims in creating humorous situations and demonstrates what neglecting these principles can lead to.

**Keywords:** English humor, pragmatics, maxim of quality, maxim of relevance, maxim of quantity, maxim of manner.

## РЕЗЮМЕ

В курсовій роботі досліджено зв'язок між гумором і порушенням розмовних сентенцій на прикладі англійських коміксів. Було визначено особливості нехтування максими якості, максими відповідності, максими кількості, максимиспособу.

Встановлено, що у випадку порушення цих максим досягається комічний ефект. Дослідження підкреслює важливість розмовних максим у створенні жартівливих ситуацій і демонструє, до чого може призвести нехтування цими принципами.

**Ключові слова:** англійський гумор, прагматика, максима якості, максима відповідності, максима кількості, максима способу.

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## ILLUSTRATION MATERIAL


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2. Hilda and The Bird Parade // URL: <https://lukepearson.com/Hilda-and-The-Bird-Parade>
3. Hilda and The Troll // URL: <https://lukepearson.com/Hilda-and-The-Troll>
4. TheOdd1sOut //URL: <https://theodd1sout.com/blogs/comics>
5. Peanuts comic (Charlie Brown) // URL: <https://www.peanuts.com/>

## APPENDIX A

### Humorous effect of flouting conversational maxims in Modern English

#### Comic Books

FLOUTING CONVERSATIONAL MAXIMS	<u>Text analysis</u>	<u>Example</u>
<u>maxim of quantity</u>	The rule of maximum quantity requires the participants of the conversation to report only the information that is necessary. If there is too much or too little information, a comic effect is created.	 <p style="text-align: center; font-size: small;">THEODDISOUT.TUMBLR.COM      JAMES R.</p>
<u>maxim of relevance</u>	The participants should give comments that are only related to the subject and each of them recognizes it.	

<p><b><u>maxim of Quality</u></b></p>	<p>The maxim of quality involves the reporting of true, valid information.</p> <p>Violation of the principle of quality occurs when the speaker clearly says something that is untrue and without evidence. The speech of the speaker contradicts the truth, which leads to a comic effect.</p>	
<p><b><u>maxim of manner</u></b></p>	<p>Moreover, a person who follows this maxim should avoid absurdity and ambiguity. it means they should: avoid absurdity of expression, avoid ambiguity, be brief, be orderly</p>	