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COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF COMMUNICATIVE AND PRAGMATIC INTENTION OF HUMOR IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK

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Abstract: *Understanding and expressing the humor in English and in Uzbek are problematic for foreign language learners since understanding the jokes requires being familiar with their linguistic, cultural and social elements. During the last fifty years there have been numerous works in humor studies, emphasizing linguistic humors and involving the field of rhetoric. The present study therefore applied Austin’s Speech Act Theory (1975) and Grice’s Cooperative Principles (1957), and Berger’s rhetorical techniques (1993) to crack the funniness of the written jokes. Specifically, the study aims at describing: how the rhetorical and pragmatic strategies are used in the jokes, and how the pragmatic and rhetorical strategies complement to create humor. The study employed a qualitative research method. Document studies were the means of data collection. The collected data were then analyzed using a qualitative content analysis. The results showed that there was a relationship between the two pragmatic theories.*

Key words: *pragmatics; rhetorical strategies; English-written jokes.*

Humor is a complex and universal human phenomenon. Since the earliest times, it has performed an essential role in human interaction (Kao, Levy & Goodman, 2015). There are a number of functions of humor, as humor is an important tool to achieve certain purposes and commonly used as a discourse strategy. Humor can be broken down into two basic functions: unification and division. Unification refers to the idea that humor is a tool to construct, promote, strengthen, and unite communicators. Humor provides a social medium through which information can be shared and friendships can be made. The division function points to hierarchy building. In this instance, humor may send “an explicit message of superiority.”(Meyer, 2000, p. 311).

Humor research draws upon a wide range of disciplines: anthropology, linguistics, medicine, psychology, philosophy, sociology and women's studies. The field of the linguistics of humor is in many ways still in its infancy (Attardo, 2014). For the past five years, linguistic humor research in language has shed light on humorous discourse, for instance, dialogues of the American TV series The Big Bang Theory (Ma & Jiang, 2013), Obama’s most memorable speeches (Kayam, 2014), a computational model of linguistics humor in puns (Kao et al., 2015), StandUp Project (Daniel Musaelov, 2021).

Most of those linguistic humor studies address the analysis of spoken jokes, since humor primarily consists of jokes (Sen, 2012). There are two kinds of humor: spoken and written (Golchi and Jamali, 2011). There are differences between spoken and written

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language; the written language is relatively more complex than spoken one. Furthermore, written language has more grammatical complexity—usually contains longer words, lexically more dense, and has a more varied vocabulary (Willis, 2003). The present study thus focuses on the humor mechanism of written jokes through rhetorical and pragmatic perspectives (Rochmawati, 2017).

Humorous texts may be categorized as complex communicative acts which draw upon certain mental process both in their production and their reception, and which are therefore open to pragmatics. Rhetoric is regarded as the entire range of resources that human beings share for producing effects on one another; these effects can be ethical (including everything about character), practical (including political), emotional (including aesthetic), and intellectual (including every academic field). It is the entire range of use of “signs” (Booth, 2004, p. xi) for communicating, effectively or sloppily, ethically or immorally. It accounts for the specific features of texts that cause them to be meaningful, purposeful, and effective for readers or listeners. These features relate to diction, syntax, figurative language, organization, structure, and style (Rochmawati, 2017).

There are many theories explaining the mechanisms by which humor is created. The principal theories of humor can be classified into three main groups: superiority theory, relief theory, and incongruity theory. The superiority theory maintains that humor stems from enhanced self-esteem based on the recognition of the target’s infirmities, foibles, weaknesses or misfortunes. The relief theory, however, points that humor is used mainly to overcome socio-cultural inhibitions and reveal suppressed desires, whereas the incongruity theory states that humor is created out of a violation of an expectation. For humor to result from this unexpected circumstance, the event must have an appropriate emotional climate, comprised of the setting, characters, prior discourse, relationships of the characters, and the topic (Schwarz, 2010).

METHOD

Since the main focus of the present study is to analyze and describe jokes, the study is thus qualitative in nature. Specifically, it drew on discourse and conversation analyses, as it examined texts as “objects” in order to discover the rhetorical and pragmatic strategies used in the jokes. The main data of the present study are the rhetoric and pragmatic features of narrative discourse composed of conversations and narration.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the rhetorical strategies showed that there were basically three types of humorous discourse found in the jokes: (1) universal, (2) socio-cultural and political discourse, and (3) linguistic jokes. They were presented in various themes or categories, such as business/work, college/education, ethnic, family/marriage, kids, man vs. woman, political, puns, technology, and so forth.

Q: Why can't a blonde dial 911?

A: She can't find the eleven.

(www.jokes.com)

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This joke is a linguistic joke. It uses a phonological element to create the joke. In this joke, “911” is pronounced “nine-one-one” and never “nine eleven”. Therefore the funny part of the joke lied in the answer “She can't find the eleven.” It is in line with Schmitz’ s classification of jokes (2002) that this kind of joke is the rhetoric device-dependent humor, whose funny effect derives directly from the language itself due to the clever use of rhetorical devices like pun.

The type of humorous discourse is one of the rhetorical strategies used in the jokes. Another found in this study deals with a rhetorical structure known as joke structure. The analysis reveals that the jokes have the structure of a narrative text (Rochmawati, 2017). The structure mainly covers two parts: the build-up and the punch-line. The build-up consists of an introduction and dialogues or events which usually function as the jab-line. They differ in the frequency of the events in each text.

Dear Dad,

School i\$ really great. I am making lot\$ of friend\$ and \$tudying very hard. With all my \$tuff, I \$imply can`t think of anything I need. \$o if you would like, you can ju\$t \$end me a card, a\$ I would love to hear from you.

Love,

Your \$on

The Reply:

Dear Son,

I kNOw that astroNOmy, ecoNOmics, and oceaNOgraphy are eNOugh to keep even an hoNOr student busy. Do NOt forget that the pursuit of kNOwledge is a NOble task, and you can never study eNOugh.

Love,

Dad

(<http://www.ajokeaday.com/Clasificacion.asp?ID=30>)

The next joke is a directive type, as it has an imperative mood (“\$o if you would like, you can ju\$t \$end me a card”, asking his father to send him his credit card). Thus, it is in line with Searle’s (1985) types of speech act, in that a directive is any speech act that involves the speaker trying to get the hearer to behave in some required way. Other humorous intents workable in the jokes are advising, admonishing, asking, begging, dismissing, excusing, forbidding, instructing, ordering, permitting, requesting, requiring, suggesting, urging, and warning.

Another pragmatic perspective suggests that humor has been created by violating Grice's (1957) maxims of cooperation, namely the maxims of Quality, Quantity, Manner and Relevance. These maxims are helpful to reveal what is said to what is meant, from the level of expressed meaning to the level of implied meaning (Grice 1989).

Another is a violation of maxim of Quantity as in the following joke.

Q. What do you call a polar bear with ear muffs?

A. Anything you want, he can't hear you!

(<http://www.ajokeaday.com/ChisteDelDia.asp>)

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The maxim was violated by the addressee when he gave the sarcastic answer “Anything you want, he can’t hear you!” to the silly question “What do you call a polar bear with ear muffs?” The maxim of Quality is violated also unintentionally several times in the jokes mainly by stating something that the character him/herself believes to be true, but the other characters in the exchange know it to be false, whether by mistake or misunderstanding.

The maxim of Relevance is also violated in this joke. It occurred when the addressee responded “Her blinker was on” irrelevantly to the question “Why did the blonde take a right into the ditch”. The maxim of Relevance is also violated throughout the jokes, but not as extensively as the two former. The maxim of Relevance, on the other hand, can be seen to operate on two levels; that of the reality of the jokes, and the reality of the reader (Rochmawati, 2017). The irrelevant absurdities the characters often utter comply with the reality of the series as it is intended to be irrelevant and thus funny and relevant, but from the perspective of the "real" reality, much of what the characters say is irrelevant.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analyses, it can be concluded that humor can be created and function in various ways. These different functions, in turn, may create different effects in the readers. It is also interesting to discover that there is a relationship between the two major pragmatic theories, i.e., Speech Act Theory (1975) and Cooperative Principles (1957), and Berger’s (1993) rhetorical techniques. They interconnect and are together able to bring forward a more coherent picture of the humor in the data. Due to the different nature of maxims, they co-occur with certain rhetorical techniques in the humorous texts.

These findings have several implications for instructional values, both in general education and in second language teaching and learning. In the general education context, the teaching of jokes can gain and keep students’ attention, increase their motivation and retention of materials, and relax their classroom environment (Wanzer, 2002).

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