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ВЕРБАЛЬНЫЕ СРЕДСТВА ВЫРАЖЕНИЯ ЮМОРА В АМЕРИКАНСКОМ ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКОМ ДИСКУРСЕ

В данной статье обобщаются основные этапы развития и подходы к изучению теории комического в лингвистике, а также излагаются ключевые теоретические выводы, которые помогают выявить механизмы порождения и восприятия комической информации. Опираясь на представленную теоретическую базу, автор статьи анализирует вербальные средства, используемые для достижения юмористического эффекта в американском экономическом дискурсе и представленные на разных уровнях языковой системы, а также определяет наиболее частотные стилистические приемы порождения юмористического эффекта. Кроме того, в статье рассматриваются лингвопрагматические характеристики американского экономического дискурса и коммуникативные стратегии использования вышеупомянутых вербальных средств. В статье приводятся примеры из статей на экономическую тематику, опубликованных в качественных периодических изданиях США, таких как Bloomberg, Forbes, Financial Times, InvestorPlace, National Review, Newsweek и др.

Проанализировав вышеупомянутый практический материал, автор приходит к выводу, что вербальные средства выражения юмора в американском экономическом дискурсе употребляются на всех уровнях языковой системы: фонетическом, семантическом и синтаксическом.

Вербальные средства также включают в себя стилистические приемы достижения юмористического

эффекта. Среди данных стилистических приемов в американском экономическом дискурсе наиболее частотными являются аллюзии на известные произведения и явления популярной культуры.

Юмор в американском экономическом дискурсе характеризуется также достаточной прямолинейностью. Автор статьи отмечает широкое использование сленговой лексики и слов из низшего регистра, а также элементов персонального (бытового) дискурса и разговорного стиля.

Ключевые слова: дискурс, теория комического, лингвопрагматика, экономический дискурс, юмор, вербальные средства.

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VERBAL MEANS OF HUMOUR IN AMERICAN ECONOMIC DISCOURSE

The article summarises the development and main approaches to comic theory in linguistics, as well as scientific findings that help to reveal the rules of producing and perceiving comic information. Based on the presented theoretical information, the article examines verbal means of achieving humorous effect in American economic discourse at different levels of language system, as well as determines the most frequently used stylistic devices of humour production. It also analyses linguopragmatic peculiarities of American economic discourse and communicative purposes of using the above-mentioned means. The examples presented the article are taken from American quality newspapers, such as Bloomberg, Forbes, Financial Times, InvestorPlace, National Review, Newsweek, etc.

After analyzing the above-mentioned practical material, the

author comes to the conclusion that verbal means of humour in American economic discourse are used at all levels of the language system: phonetic, semantic and syntactic.

Verbal means also include stylistic devices of achieving humorous effect. The most popular of them in American economic discourse is using allusions to well-known works of popular culture.

American humour in economic discourse is also characterised by the lack of subtlety and wide use of slang and low register words, as well as elements of personal (everyday) discourse and colloquial style.

Keywords: discourse, comic theory, linguopragmatics, economic discourse, humour, verbal means.

Introduction

Humour occupies a special place in linguistics, since it is a complex mental, social, pragmatic, ethnocultural, and historical phenomenon revealed in the process of verbal communication.

For a long time, the representatives of different approaches have been trying to define and classify different types of comic, to differentiate the concepts of comic, humour, satire and jokes, to establish the causes of originating of humour in speech, to identify the components of a humorous speech act and to reveal the means of achieving the comic effect.

The most popular linguistic approaches to studying humour are cognitive, pragmatic and linguocultural ones.

The first cognitive approach to studying the comic was presented by the frame theory of M. Minsky. He established that, due to polysemantic words used in jokes, we substitute the meaning of the word in order to make a proper assumption, thereby causing a frame change in the course of reasoning (Minsky, 1988). M. Minsky notes that "... the most common element for all types of humour is the unexpected change of frames: first the scene is described from one point of view, and then unexpectedly (for this to happen, often one single word is

enough) appears in a completely different perspective” (Minsky, 1988, p. 293-294). There are different definitions of the frame. Minsky introduced the concept of a frame as a data structure intended to represent a stereotyped situation (Minsky, 1988, p. 289).

The above-mentioned model was subsequently transformed by A. Koestler, V. Raskin and S. Attardo into their own cognitive theories: the theory of bisociation (A. Koestler), the script-based semantic theory (V. Raskin) and the so-called formal theory (S. Attardo). Later on, in their joint article “Script theory revis(it)ed: joke similarity and joke representation model” V. Raskin and S. Attardo developed General Theory of Verbal Humour.

Since humour is an act of communication, that is, a special way of conveying information resulting in a comic effect, the study of humour in the pragmatic aspect is also one of the most important directions in the study of the comic.

The study of the comic in linguopragmatics is connected with the well-known principle of cooperation of H.P. Grice who derived the postulates of quantity, quality, relevance and clarity, and showed that their non-observance leads to a comic effect. Taking this theory as the basis, J. Searle defined a humorous speech act. He defined it as an individual manifestation of the stimulus to something funny or hilarious.

The concept of humorous communicative act was introduced by V. Raskin (Raskin, 1985) who defined it as a discrete communication situation causing a participant to laugh, obligatory characteristics of which are:

A. Communicators: the speaker (in this role, a specific writer, radio, television) and the listener (similarly, readers and the audience of radio or television). B. Stimulus, provoking a reaction in the form of laughter.

This approach was later successfully supplemented by new characteristics of a humorous act. V. I. Karasik highlights the communicative intention of the participants to get away from serious conversation, humorous tone of communication, i.e., the

desire to shorten the distance, and the presence of certain laughing patterns of behaviour adopted in this linguistic culture (Karasik, 2001).

Depending on the allocated functions of humour, the researchers describe various language tools for achieving humorous effect. Thus, V.Z. Sannikov conducted a detailed analysis of such means, demonstrating that all levels of the language system are involved in creating humorous effect (Sannikov, 1999): phonetic, morphological, lexical and syntactical ones.

Various scholars have studied the use and peculiarities of humour in different types of discourse. In this article, we would like to analyse the most frequent verbal means of humour in American economic discourse.

Verbal means of humour in American economic discourse

After studying various American economic quality press articles, we have managed to depict different verbal means of creating humorous effect at different language levels.

At the phonetic level, the most popular means are homophony and the use of rhymes: “*The **dollar** is so sad, we should consider renaming it the **dolor***” (*author's note*: “dolor” means “deep sorrow”) (Newsweek, March 15, 2008);

“America First’ Policies: Longterm Financial **Pain**, Little **Gain**” (Newsweek, February 12, 2017).

It should also be noted that in the latter example phonetic means are combined with lexico-semantic means: transformation and play upon the meaning of a set phrase “no pain, no game” which is borrowed from sports discourse.

At the lexical level, humorous effect is most frequently achieved by means of metaphors:

“*The first flares of the global **big bang** are already visible*” (Newsweek, January 8, 2007) - the instability of current economic situation is expressed through its comparison to explosion.

“*Hedge funds, like **Moby Dick**, are mysterious and potentially*

threatening” (Newsweek, July 3, 2006).

However, it should be mentioned that even when such implicit means as metaphors are used in American economic discourse in order to produce humorous effect, they meaning can be explicitly explained later on: “*To a lot of investors, 2009 looks like twilight at the bottom of the ski run. Ahead is the icy walk down to the parking lot and the challenge of maneuvering the car out of the resort without crushing someone’s fender*” (Bloomberg, December 31, 2008). – In this example, after using a metaphor, the author doesn’t leave it to the addressees to make out its meaning and elaborates it in an explicit way.

Another common lexico-semantic means of humour in American economic discourse is use of idiomatic expressions:

Why not hire the Dutch? It’s cheaper to go Dutch” (Newsweek, September 3, 2006). In this example, humorous effect is achieved through using a popular idiom (“to go Dutch”) in its direct meaning.

At the syntactical level, humorous effect can be achieved by means of syntactical parallelism:

“First comes Tax Day, then comes the Tax Grope”. (Bloomberg, April 16, 2013). It is also worth mentioning that humorous effect is intensified by the use of different register words: the term “grope” is used in its slang meaning “an act of folding someone for sexual pleasure” – [encyclopedia.com]. With the help of the above-mentioned means, the author compares the taxing authorities with “*an unwanted suitor, with a ghastly expression of benignity*”. At the end of the article, the author also violates the norms of economic discourse and transforms a slang word of low register into an economic term (“the Great Grope”).

“GE must hone predatory instincts to ensure survival: General Electric’s annual meeting in April began, as it always begins, with an invocation from a pastor: “We give you thanks for the many ways you have blessed this world-renowned corporation.” It ended, as it always ends, with the chairman flying to Augusta, Georgia, for golf with selected directors and clients”. (Financial

Times, June 21, 2002).

It should also be noted that various stylistic devices are particularly popular and frequent verbal means of humour in American economic discourse. The most common types of them are allusions, mainly to phenomena of popular culture: literature, films, TV shows, video games, songs and sports.

Bellow are given some examples:

“Sears Holdings Corp (SHLD): A Great American Tragedy Nears Its End” (InvestorPlace, January 30, 2017).

“Gatsby, Galbraith and the Myth of Coolidge’s Crash” (Bloomberg, February 26, 2013).

“Saving Mr Bank” (National Review, April 16, 2014) – reference to a 2013 film “Saving Mr Banks”.

“Make way for more wolves of Wall Street” (Financial Times, January 9, 2014) - reference to a 2013 film “The Wolf of Wall Street”.

“Brexite Abbey” (Forbes, August 23, 2016) – reference to an extremely popular British TV show “Downton Abbey”.

“A Need for (Higher) Speed” (Newsweek, August 17, 2008) - the given title contains allusion to a highly popular computer racing game “Need for Speed”.

“Big Game Economics: What Super Bowl 50 Says About America. Look at the recent action on the New York Stock Exchange and you won’t get a particularly confidence-inspiring view of the U.S. economy. Look 3,000 miles across the country, where the Super Bowl kicks off Sunday in Santa Clara, California, and the picture tells a different chapter of the same story.” (Forbes, February 6, 2016).

“Let the good times roll” (Newsweek, January 8, 2007) - the given example is allusion to a highly popular and instantly recognisable song. Yet the use of allusion to a cheerful song in an article tackling the problem of a potential economic crisis clearly produces humorous effect by violating the addressees’ expectations.

Another frequent stylistic device of humour in American

economic discourse is mixing of functional styles, as well as use of slang and low register words. Let us have a look at some examples:

*“Ben Bernanke is **spooked**. That’s one explanation for the Federal Reserve chairman’s decision to lead the Open Market Committee in yesterday’s unprecedented 75-basis-point cut in the fed funds rate”* (Bloomberg, January 23, 2008). – In the given example, the author’s disapproval of the Federal Reserve’s policy is explicitly expressed by the use of a slang word “spooked” while referring to a high figure in the US most federal agency.

Another article, *“Inflation vacation”*, published in National Review on July 16, 2014, is almost completely written in colloquial style despite the fact that it deals with a serious economic problem.

Conclusions

Verbal means of humour in American economic discourse are used at phonetical, semantical and syntactical levels of the language system.

Verbal means also include stylistic devices of achieving humorous effect. The most popular of them in American economic discourse is using allusions to well-known works of popular culture.

American humour in economic discourse is also characterised by the lack of subtlety and wide use of slang and low register words, as well as elements of personal (everyday) discourse and colloquial style.

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