

## **ENGLISH-UKRAINIAN CODE-MIXING IN HUMOROUS DISCOURSE: COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE**

The notion of communicative competence was introduced by Dell Hymes to denote a set of beliefs, abilities, and skills of a speaker that constitute a prerequisite of successful communication. This set includes knowledge of grammar and vocabulary (linguistic competence), awareness of social context, norms, and roles (sociolinguistic competence), ability to produce coherent and cohesive spoken/written texts (discourse competence), and ability to manage communication and repair breakdowns (strategic competence) [2].

Teun A. van Dijk's theory of discourse and cognition suggests that speakers construct mental models that guide the interpretation and production of discourse and are crucial in understanding how language functions in real contexts. These models are built based on the knowledge of the situation, beliefs about the interlocutors, awareness of the discourse goals, and social and cultural schemas and scripts [1].

Combining the term and the notion of communicative competence suggested by Dell Hymes and enriching it with the aspects of knowledge singled out by Teun A. van Dijk, we are going to use the term *communicative competence* to denote a spectrum of knowledge of a speaker which makes their communication successful.

For the purpose of our investigation we will focus on the speaker who produces humorous discourse and will consider that the important aspects of their spectrum of knowledge are

- 1) their awareness of the subject of communication,
- 2) their beliefs about their addressee, and
- 3) their knowledge of the general context in which communication takes place.

These three aspects will be discussed in the context of humorous Internet discourse, as is found in video products of different formats that aim to entertain the audience. However, before going into the analysis of the aspects, it is important to outline the features of the communicative situation of humorous Internet discourse.

*The communicative situation* is peculiar as on the surface level it may vary in the number of participants. However, there are always two main participants which form the deep communicative framework includes the audience, which is the recipient, and the comedian(s), which is (are) the producers of this type of discourse.

The first scenario that this communicative situation allows is when the interaction happens between the comedian(s) and the audience, whereby the comedian produces discourse directed at the audience and observes the audience's reaction. The second scenario is when the audience observes an interaction on stage which is played out before it, and the interaction happens between two or several comedians in a form of a dialogue or polylogue. Within the humorous Internet discourse, none of the participants on stage is the main recipient. Their interaction is governed by their aim to entertain the audience and therefore we can call the second scenario "staged". However, it doesn't mean that the rules are predetermined or that the discourse is prepared — on the contrary, it is always almost always spontaneous and that what makes it entertaining. We will be using the term "staged interaction" to separate the communicative set-up of the second scenario from that of the first one.

Having outlined this, we can now focus on the communicative competence of those who produce the humorous discourse, that is — comedians (outlining the communicative competence of the recipient, i.e. the audience, would be the prospect of this study).

### *1. Knowledge of the subject of communication*

The awareness of the subject of communication would include the *factual knowledge* (i.e. the facts of the matter), as well as the so-called *operational knowledge*, that is the knowledge of the code which the speaker uses to talk about the factual knowledge.

In the context of our investigation, the point of interest lies in the level of proficiency of the speaker in their native tongue (language 1 – L1) as well as in the second language (language 2 – L2) which they use in discourse. This can be understood by means of analysis of the vocabulary and grammar structures that the speaker uses, which is similar to understanding the level of proficiency in speaking tests. Here it is possible to classify the knowledge of the speaker within the common European framework of reference (CEFR). Our guess for the future study would be that speakers with higher level of proficiency of the second language will be more efficient in being funny.

### *2. Beliefs about the addressee*

Comedians who produce the humorous Internet discourse have the aim of being funny, which is, in our view, the governing strategy of humorous discourse.

In order to create a joke that would be funny for the audience a comedian must understand the audience's mind. In the context of communication which includes two languages where jokes are based on code-switching and code-mixing it is essential for a comedian to understand which level of proficiency in L1 and L2 their audience has. As with the comedians, we believe it's possible to classify the knowledge of the audience of L2 within the common European framework of reference (CEFR). Our observation shows that it is essential for the audience to have some minimal understanding of L2 (or both languages which are involved in code-mixing and code-switching) in order to be able to understand the humor.

Specifying the limit which allows the audience to understand a joke involving code-switching or code-mixing is a prospect of this investigation.

In order for the speaker to be successful, they need to have a clear understanding of the language proficiency of the audience. When the audience has little knowledge of L2 that is being mixed into the predominant L1 (or vice versa), the communicative effect is very little. A good illustration of this would be a fragment of discourse which involves two foreign languages. The Ukrainian-speaking audience laughs at the “English” phrases and not as much at “French” phrases, although one of the participants of the show who has a good command of French laughs at the “French” interpretation the moment he hears it. Our hypothesis is that because French as L2 is not as typical as English, there are not many people in the audience who can appreciate the humour produced by imitating French interpretation.

Discourse	French- and English-speaking participant's laughter	English-speaking audience's laughter
– Hello, native speakers!		
– Bon sua, nateev speakerion!	+	
– We are gald to see you on this YouTube channel.	+	
– Le fua de vuzil con chantel e mua zhizel.	+	

– We'll have some questions...		+
– We'll have some questions...		
– OK		
– ...and some pokareishns	+	+
– Pokareishines		+
– Pokareishines, olivietes, salates, everything will be.		+
– Pokareishines, olivietes, salates, everything will be.	+	

As is seen from the table, the audience does not laugh at the first and the second phrases that imitate French interpretation and only reacts with laughter when the French “interpreter” fails to render the third English phrase. On the other hand, a participant of the show who knows French, laughs right away when he hears the interpretation of the first phrase. He also laughs at the rendering of the last English reply, but the audience fails to see the humour in those cases.

### 3. Knowledge of the general context

The third aspect of communicative competence is the knowledge of the general context of communication. This would include the knowledge of the facts which are relevant for the audience at the time of discourse generation and discourse perception. It would also include the knowledge of the immediate context that is time and space where the communication takes place. However, since at the moment we feel like these have little influence on the code-switching and code-mixing, or rather — are not that related to using a mixture of L1 and L2 in order to create a joke, we are not going to focus on this aspect that much, as our primary concern is the humorous effect within the communication where the humorous effect is created from the fact of using different language languages within one linguistic or discourse unit.

## REFERENCES

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