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EXPLORING LINGUISTIC LUDICITY/CREATIVITY: A CASE OF LANGUAGE PLAY AS A MENTAL EXPERIMENT

ABSTRACT

From the standpoint of linguophilosophical views on the system and structure of the language the synthesis of its cognitive and communicative functions determines in its main features the integrative cognitive-discursive paradigm of modern linguistics. The latest achievements of linguistics have actualized the functional and communicative perspective, which involves concentrating the main research interest around speech problems, cognitive and communicative aspects of semantics. The research hypothesis is that linguistic activity and creative ability of an individual are expressed not only with regard to a "linguistic experiment", but also involve a mental experiment, understood as a heuristic strategy of the speaker, a conscious deviation from the norm in order to generate entities with the ludic (playful) charge.

Key words:

language play, education, lingvocreativity, ludism, mental experiment.

Linguistic and philosophical thought of the XX-XXI centuries created a whole gallery of language images developed within the framework of three basic paradigms: immanent-semiologic (language as a system of hierarchically organized units), transcendental (language in the existential context of "God – world – man") and anthropological (language in close interrelation with speech, consciousness and thinking). Typologically, these paradigms can be represented as three stages of intralinguistic and general scientific synthesis aimed at developing an adequate image of the extra-linguistic world. Thus, language appears as a multifunctional sign system,

which provides for the recognition of its main functions as cognitive and communicative.

In the process of considering speech activity against the background of internal mental processes, cognitive and communicative perspective particularly emphasizes such a product of these processes as "language play", since the switching to the expressive ludic mode of communication expands the limits of the functioning of the language, refuting the established notions about the algorithm of perception and verbal reflection of reality. It is therefore quite natural that language system admits a significant amount of freedom of manifestation of linguocreativity of *homo loquens*. The lingual activity of an individual can be expressed, in particular, in a conscious violation of the rules (norms, canons) in order to attract attention to various kinds of speech experiments with the sign.

Despite the fact that in the course of the recent decades in a number of branches of linguistics there has been a significant number of studies in the sphere of linguocreativity¹²³⁴, there has not been highlighted an interdisciplinary coverage of the leading linguistic oppositions (system – norm, normative – abnormal, core – periphery) in the light of the language play.

The phenomenon of language play has become the subject of a number of lingophilosophical, logical-semantic, functional-communicative, and linguocognitive (N. Arutyunova, S. Attardo, E. Bern, G. Brone, D. Buttler, D. Chiaro, D. Crystal, R. Giora, T. Gridina, V. Karasik, D. Nilsen, V. Sannikov, J. Sherzer, L. Wittgenstein, O. Zemskaya, etc.)⁵ studies on the empirical data of different languages. As of late, we observe a keen interest to linguistic creativity, and in particular to generation, modeling of the language play and ludic style, ludic discourse, etc.

The purpose of the study is to identify the means of the language play that enable the mental experiment in discourse, addressing the difference

¹ B. Zawada, *Linguistic creativity from a cognitive perspective*, Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies, 2009, 24:2, 235-254; R. J. Gerrig, R. W. Gibbs Jr. Beyond the Lexicon: Creativity in Language Production, Metaphor and Symbolic Activity, 2009, 3:3, 1-19.

² A. Langlotz, *Language, creativity, and cognition*, [in:] R. H. Jones (ed.), The Routledge Handbook of Language and Creativity, Routledge, 2015, p. 40-41.

³ T. Veale, K. Feyaerts, Ch. Forceville, *Creativity and the Agile Mind: A Multi-Disciplinary Study of a Multi-Faceted Phenomenon*, [in:] Applications of Cognitive Linguistics, Vol. 21, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin 2013.

⁴ M. Borkent, B. Dancygier, J. Linnell (eds.), *Language and the Creative Mind*, Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications, 2014.

⁵ D. Crystal, *Language Play*, London: Penguin, 1998, p. 10-11.

between the cognitive structures of sense creation and the discursive function.

However, against the background of this variety of theoretical interpretations of language play, modern studies in linguistics need the tools for its purposeful, comprehensive and cutting-edge description. As a phenomenon of heuristic activity and cognitive strategies of the speaker, language play has not yet received a clear and consistent interpretation from the point of view of the internal and extra-lingual preconditions of its production, as well as means and forms of its speech functioning.

So, the topicality of the research is determined by the importance of studying the phenomenon of "language play" in the perspective of the cognitive-discursive paradigm of linguistics, which provides a comprehensive description of this phenomenon in the context of the operating mechanisms of its formation and functioning. Thus, the focus of the linguistically relevant problem falls into a number of topical issues of the cognitive-discursive plan, namely: mental (logical) and psychological (emotional) preconditions for the emergence and use of playful (ludic) components in speech. A particular issue is the multi- and/or inter-level means of realizing language play, which are crucial for understanding modern English-language communication: the role of the creative component in language play, which opens the associative, rational and intellectual origins of the work of cognition with the word; the role and place of the speaker's pragmatic intentions in coining and use of the ludic elements in a particular communicative situation; the nature of the interpretation of unconventional lingual units – as errors or as specific operations on knowledge, etc.

Consideration of speech activity against the background of internal mental processes, undoubtedly, is relevant for modern linguistics⁶. Although the researchers approach this question from different perspectives, it is obvious that they share a profound belief as for the speaker's ability to play with language in providing "a unique insight into the complex interplay of quantitative and qualitative aspects of meaning construction"⁷. Turning to the study of various manifestations of the unconventional use of language, the cognitive-discursive approach singles out the phenomenon of language play

⁶ G. Fauconnier, *Mental Spaces: Aspects of Meaning. Construction in Natural Language*. Cambridge: CUP, 1994. 190 p.

⁷ Brône G., Feytaerts K., Veale T., *Introduction: Cognitive linguistic approaches to humor*, [in:] "HUMOR: International Journal of Humor Research", 2006, 19.3, p. 204.

as a product of mental procedures⁸⁹. An important factor in this process is the switch to the expressive playful mode of communication, because this transition expands the limits of the language functioning, refuting the established idea of the algorithm of perception and verbal reflection of reality. We can observe linguistic creativity, for example, in political election discourse, in election leaflets (cf. G. Majkowski¹⁰).

Within the entire scope of its historical and philosophical value, the play also has a culture-related significance, and the attempts to analyze it go back to the ancient times. The creative nature of the world of play makes it possible to freely express the attitude towards various visions and values. Moreover, play as one of the ways to create and accumulate cultural heritage contributes to the creation of a cultural space.

From the standpoint of cognitive-discursive approach, language play is considered as an integral part of the cognitive activity of the individual, realized in the acts of verbal communication.

That said, the meanings and implications of the linguistic units are not such that they can be described irregardless of the cognitive processes operating at all levels of the language system. These processes are most active in the domain of thought-making and prove to be systemically relevant. One of the major postulates of the modern linguophilosophical concept of systemicity is the theory of randomness, which in many respects stimulates interest in the study of asymmetric deviations from the norm. The integral application of structural-systemic, cognitive-semantic, and communicative-functional approaches to the study of linguistic matter makes it possible to consider the phenomenon of language play not only and not as much as the manifestation of unconventional use of the verbal sign, but also as a specific form of intellectually and emotionally marked speech activity. An integrative approach to the interpretation of language and speech phenomena will involve the interdisciplinary application of traditional and new research methods – component, conceptual, contextual, etc.

Language play has a discursive nature and is distinguished by the intention of linguistic units' form / content variation based on their association-

⁸ G. Brône, K. Feyaerts K., *The Cognitive Linguistics of Incongruity Resolution: Marked Reference-point Structures in Humor*, [in:] Preprints van het Departement Linguïstiek, Katholieke Univ., 2003, p. 52.

⁹ R. Giora, *On Our Mind: Salience, Context, and Figurative Language*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. 259 p.

¹⁰ G. Majkowski, *Dialogowość w ulotce wyborczej*, "Poradnik Językowy", nr 3, 2017, s. 44-55; G. Majkowski, *Qualitative research in the political discourse (on the example of election leaflets from XX-XXI centuries)*, "COLLOQUIUM", nr 2, 2018, s. 139-154.

building potential¹¹. From such standpoint, the language system allows for the freedom of manifestation of the linguo-creativity of the person, so understanding of the play beyond the limits of creativity is impossible, therefore it gives grounds to consider language play as a form of manifestation of the creative ability of the person. In the scope of linguistics of emotions V. Shakhovskiy emphasizes that language play is a highly intellectual form of expression of emotions, in this phenomenon the "emotional intelligence" of both (re)producer of language play and its recipient is reflected¹². We believe that linguistic activity and creative ability of an individual are expressed not only with regard to a "linguistic experiment", as this phenomenon is considered by V. Sannikov¹³, but also involve *a mental experiment*, which we understand as a heuristic strategy of the speaker, a conscious deviation from the norm in order to generate entities with the ludic (playful) charge, as well as the discovery of new characterological signs of the mental projection of phenomena's understanding.

V. Sannikov considers language play as a kind of linguistic experiment, which allows the investigator to reflect on the meaning and functioning of linguistic units of various levels¹⁴. The author also notes that this deviation from the norm should be understood by the speaker, while the reader / listener must adequately assess and perceive this game with an attempt to find out the pragmatic intentions of the addressee. The mental experiment makes it possible to ensure that a deep understanding of the abyss of human problems involves playful elements in communication in order to create new semantic entities when the addressee carries out a purposeful search for techniques for the destruction of conventional linguistic structures and associated stereotypes of speech perception.

The selected empirical material of spoken language, newspaper, advertising and literary text suggests that in situations of language play the types of the coined entities are associated with the non-standard structure. The linguistic units through which the ludic function is realized¹⁵ are located on the periphery of the system or beyond it. Under the conditions of the language play, the means of creating ludic paradox is a *ludism* – a nonstandard

¹¹ Т. А. Гридина, *Языковая игра: стереотип и творчество*. Екатеринбург: Уральск. гос. пед. ун-т, 1996, с. 32.

¹² В. И. Шаховский, *Эмотивный код языка и его реализация*. Волгоград: Перемена, 2003, с. 10.

¹³ В. З. Санников, *Русский язык в зеркале языковой игры*. М.: Языки славянской культуры, 2002. 552 с.

¹⁴ В. З. Санников. *Русский язык в зеркале языковой игры*. с. 13.

¹⁵ В. Г. Гак, *Людическая функция языка как источник вариативности*. Языковые преобразования. М.: Школа "Языки русской культуры", 1998, с. 371.

linguistic unit, introduces into the context of the communicative situation of the ludic associative field (the context of language play)¹⁶.

The possibility of identifying a ludism as a unit of lexical level, in our opinion, has certain preconditions. The series of associative connections activate the processes of cognitive processing of information, stimulating creative imagination and linguo-creative thinking. In the associative chain the logical interdisciplinary relations are fixed, which is reflected in the language picture of the world¹⁷. Words, like verbal associations, have a twofold nature: they are exposed to the extralingual matter and to the connections between lexical units. One of the features of the lexeme as a verbal and cogitative unit is the mobility of the associative link "denotate – significate – connotate" from the point of view of the nucleus and periphery of the word, as well as from the point of view of its conceptual and denotative relevance in speech. In the framework of the language play as the realization of the associative potential of the word suggested by T. Gridina¹⁸, this concept covers the aspects of the sign as a unit of language and speech, which enable, firstly, to predict the likely connections and directions of actualization of lexical units, and secondly, to anticipate deviations from standard actualizations of system capabilities.

It is the dynamics of the interpretation of the denotative, conceptual and connotative aspects of the semantics of the word which determines the direction of a possible modification of the word in the framework of language play. This allows you to model the ludic associative field, taking into account the variability of the system prototype, on the basis of which ludism is created. Thus, the mental experiment in word-building ludisms is based on the rethinking of the morphological-derivative associative connections of the word. The specified type of a ludism is realized through the mechanisms of word formation, eg.: *wordsmith* ('locksmith' + 'word'); *Webmaster*, *webservant*; *blacketeer* ('black-market racketeer'); *jewtocracy* ('jew' + 'plutocracy'); *to bitamine* ('to bite' + 'vitamine'), *refujews* ('refugee' + 'Jew'); *Webonomics* (*Web* + *economics*).

Thus, the techniques used by language play are cognitive mechanisms of semantic compression in conjunction with linguistic experiments, testing the possibilities of language – on the one hand, and own erudition,

¹⁶ І. Е. Сніховська, *Функціонування мовної гри в умовно-реальному асоціативному полі*. Вісник Житомирського держ. пед. ун-ту ім. І. Франка. Житомир: Вид-во ЖДПУ, 2003. Вип. 11, с. 209.

¹⁷ J. Deese, *The Structure of Associations in Language and Thought*. Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1965, 216 p.

¹⁸ Т. А. Грідина, *Языковая игра: стереотип и творчество*, с. 56.

a sufficient level of linguistic and extralingual knowledge, emotional intelligence – on the other. H. Gadamer's dialectic notion of play suggests that, like any game, language play is a behavior in the field of possibilities that involves knowledge of a system of rules that may be deliberately violated only if the system knows the limits of the permissible, because "the game itself plays as well, involving the players".

To the mental pinpoints of the formation and perception of ludisms can be attributed the play on connotations. Ludisms are often created by non-traditional word-building models, often with violation of linguistic norms, to achieve this goal. For instance, in the context of the advertising discourse, ludic word-building innovations are not used in standardized language functioning, and irrespective of the model of their coining, can carry a pragmatic effect on the addressee. In view of the unconventional nature of ludisms as occasionalisms, it is sometimes very difficult to systematize them, though it's possible to track the of their formation mechanisms.

Thus, for example, one way is ludic word-formation is substitution is a lexeme's part for the nomination of some assonant feature of a new product or brand, eg.: *Cointreau ... My secret to best margarita. In Cointreauversial (More, November, 2012); Dita von Teese presents Cointreapolitan. "That's the way I love it" (Confidential, December, 2011)*. In the two examples provided above, French liqueur Cointreau, which is a component of many cocktails, are used ludisms *Cointreauversial*, *Cointreapolitan*. Both occasional lexemes are based on replacing initial parts of lexemes "cosmopolitan", "controversial" by the name of the advertised liqueur as a virtually exclusive feature of the product.

On the basis of the similarity of the sound, the nonce-word "scent-sational" is introduced as a ludism in the advertisement for detergents: *Scentsational laundry. Feel invigorated every time you wake up to the scent of your freshly washed pillow, thanks to the new Surf with Essential Oils. Surf (Better Homes and Gardens, 2012)*. By incorporating the semantics of these two components (scent-sational, scent + sensational), this ludism acquires an entirely new connotation and gives the advertised product a unique characteristic of "sensational scent". A similar case of formation of ludism based on phonetic similarity we can provide an example of advertising sunglasses: *Worry-free! Sun Protection in a sun-sational range of style. Enjoy the sun without a worry! (Good Housekeeping, 2012)*. Apparently, to focus the attention of the recipient on the characteristics of the advertised product, the creators of this text used a nonce-word *sun-sational* (*sun + sensational*), which has a similar phonetic form to a lexeme "sensational", but different

connotation. As we see, the correlation with the similar phonetic form opens the possibility of a varied interpretation of meaning.

Proceeding from the fact that in cognitive linguistics the meaning is considered as a frame structure, fixed by a certain sequence of phonemes, ludism is the cognitive form of mastering of the surrounding reality by the person. Undoubtedly, the ability to associate thinking is structuring our conceptual sphere, and therefore determining our perception of the surrounding world based on cultural experience.

The emotional and intellectual nature of the ludism correlates with cognitive representations of knowledge – frames, scripts, constructs, prototypes, as well as associative mechanisms of tropeization (metaphor, metonymy, zeugma, ozymoron, etc.).

Since the frame structures are the basis of the thinking and speech activity of the individual, the way of organizing knowledge, through their prism a psycholinguistic analysis of speech events is also possible with a special focus on the relationship between the motive, content and form of the speech act, on the one hand, and between structure and elements the languages involved in the speech – on the other¹⁹.

Consideration of linguistic (ludic) phenomena as products of mental operations involves the generating activity of the addressee and the interpretive activity of the addressee, as well as involving their subject-communicative experience, which determines the use of semantic (cognitive) analysis.

The methods and techniques of coining and functioning of the ludism serve as the goals of the mental experiment of language play, which actually transfer it to the rank of precedential formations. The prospect of research may be to involve the methodological basis of linguocultural analysis in the study of intertextual associative relationships in ludisms that reflect the national and cultural features.

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¹⁹ В. В. Красных, «Свой» среди «чужих»: миф или реальность? М.: ИТДГК «Гнозис», 2003, 375 с.

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ODKRYCIE LINGWISTYCZNEJ KREATYWNOŚCI: SPRAWA GRY JĘZYKOWEJ JAKO EKSPERYMENTU MENTALNEGO

STRESZCZENIE

Z punktu widzenia poglądów lingofilozoficznych na temat systemu i struktury języka synteza jego funkcji poznawczych i komunikacyjnych określa w swoich głównych cechach integracyjny poznawczo-dyskursywny paradygmat nowoczesnej lingwistyki. Najnowsze osiągnięcia językoznawcze unowocześniły perspektywę funkcjonalną i komunikacyjną, co obejmuje skoncentrowanie głównego zainteresowania badawczego wokół problemów mowy, poznawczych i komunikacyjnych aspektów semantyki. Postawiono hipotezę badawczą, że aktywność językowa i zdolności twórcze jednostki wyrażane są nie tylko w odniesieniu do "eksperymentu językowego", ale obejmują również eksperyment mentalny, rozumiany jako heurystyczna strategia mówiącego, świadome odchylenie od normy w celu generowania jednostek językowych z ludycznym (zabawowym) ładunkiem.

Słowa kluczowe:

gra językowa, edukacja, kreatywność lingwistyczna, ludyzm, eksperyment mentalny.