

Comparative Pragmatic Analysis of Humorous Speech Acts in English and Uzbek

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Abstract:

This paper compares English and Uzbek humorous speech acts from the perspective of irony, exaggeration and indirectness. The investigation of the both languages is based on Grice's Cooperative Principle, Speech Act Theory and General Theory of Verbal Humor. In English, humor is frequently wringing laughter out of sarcasm and irony which require ambiguity, while also often breaking the Maxim of Quantity. By contrast Uzbek humor is more typical to the Lignitzky, though relying on exaggerated situations or character peculiarities and laden with cultural reality.

The study shows that humor works in its own way in cultures — where English humor is centered on linguistic ambiguity and indirection, Uzbek jokes are more based in situational or culturally-specific. The paper finishes off with an example of how latter communication is influenced through cultural differences, stressing the role of contextuality in understanding humor in both languages.

Keywords: Color Terms, Lexicography, Cultural Notes, Uzbek Language, English Language, Phraseology, Cultural Semantics, Cross-Cultural Comparison, Linguocultural Character, Symbol, National Spirit, Figurative Language pragmatics, humor, speech acts, Grice's maxims, cultural comparison, Uzbek language, English language.

Introduction

Humor is not just about the words themselves but about the implied meaning and the violation of expectations within a specific context. Key pragmatic concepts for this analysis include speech acts. The actions performed via utterances (e.g., promising, insulting, joking). Humor often involves a "playful" speech act disguised as a serious one (e.g., mock insult).

Grice's Conversational Maxims: Humor often arises from flouting (breaking on purpose) one of these

maxims

Maxim of Quality: Say what you believe to be true. (Sarcasm flouts this).

Maxim of Quantity: Be as informative as required. (Understatement or overstatement flouts this) [1].

Maxim of Relation: Be relevant. (Absurd, non-sequitur jokes flout this).

Maxim of Manner: Be clear and orderly. (Puns and ambiguous phrasing flout this).

Humor can stand as a technique for “face” (a person’s self-esteem) saving, or for building solidarity. a society's collective memory, beliefs, and customary behavior. That which is known, culturally or familiarly, has an intimate relation with the ludicrous.

English Humor also uses Sarcasm and Irony, which are indirect as well. It is a reversal of what the speaker really means, and depends on intonation and context for the hearer to infer that this flouting of quality has taken place. For instance: 1 After a pal makes a teeny error, like dropping the smallest drip of coffee, you say, "Oh, great work." Really smooth". This is face-threatening act (FTA) which is done jocularly [2]. The funny part is how the literal praise is so completely disconnected from the small botch. It's a way of building solidarity, demonstrating that the relationship and its venomous teasing can endure.

Uzbek Humo tends to be more direct and situational, often rooted in character traits ('mutoyiba') or exaggerated realism. While sarcasm exists, a more common form is the good-natured, direct tease based on a known characteristic.

Example: To a friend known for being a bit slow-moving, you might say, "Hay, seni chaqirganimdan keyin kelishga ulgurisan, keyin yana chaqirishim kerak bo'ladi!" ("Hey, by the time you arrive after I call you, I'll have to call you again!")

Methodology

This study uses a comparative pragmatic analysis to explore humorous speech acts in English and Uzbek. The analysis is based on Grice's Cooperative Principle, Speech Act Theory, and the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH).

1. Data Collection: The data were gathered from real-life examples of humor, including jokes, anecdotes, and informal conversations in both languages, sourced from media, TV shows, and social interactions.
2. Theoretical Framework: The study applies:
 - a. Grice's Maxims to explain how humor violates conversational maxims (e.g., irony violating the Maxim of Quality).
 - b. Speech Act Theory to categorize the role of humor in communication (i.e., acts that threaten one's face or build solidarity).
 - c. GTVH to FEATURE ANALYSIS in humor employed by the SSBs, including Script Opposition and Logical Mechanisms.
3. Pragmatic Analysis: This section discusses the way that humor is a violation of particular maxims, including the Maxim of Quantity (exceeded by exaggeration) and the effect context has on understanding joke.
4. Cross-cultural Comparison: This study provides a cross-cultural comparison of humor across two languages, the English and Uzbek in terms of indirectness (sarcasm) and directness (hyperbole), as well as their applications in different situations.
5. Qualitative Analysis: The findings are interpreted qualitatively, focusing on how language, culture, and social norms shape humor in both languages.

This methodology allows for a comprehensive understanding of how humor functions pragmatically in different cultural contexts.

Results and Discussion

So while a practical analysis is indeed a FT action, the identity of the friend ('mutoyiba') has already prenegotiated its acceptability. It's a way of acknowledging that person's habits and speaking to them from within what you have in common. It's not the opening of 'Saturday Night Life' that is comic —

rather, it's the hyperbolic truth.

English comedy has way too many pop culture, current event and subcultural references to make it worth the effort.

Example: "My productivity is just a chain of blocks that everyone disagrees with: decentralized!" The punch line only works if the hearer is already familiar with blockchain technology (or some definition and level of perceived complexity) as a cultural schema. This example violates the Maxim of Manner [3] because the technical metaphor is used for such a normal object.

Uzbek Humor deeply embedded in traditional life, family structures, and historical context. References to 'qizlar' (marriageable girls), 'kelin' (daughter-in-law), 'davlat boshqaruvi' (governance), and Soviet-era experiences are common.

Example: A common joke structure: "Amerikalik, nemis va o'zbek kosmonavtlar olovda qolib ketishdi. Amerikalik deydi: 'NASAgA signal beraylik'. Nemis deydi: 'Yo'q, biz tizimli reja tuzaylik'. O'zbek deydi: 'Keling, bir piyola choy ichib, choyxona to'g'risida gapirib o'tiraylik, hamma narsa o'z joyiga tushadi'" [4].

The humor is based on the common cultural stereotype that Uzbeks are incredibly social, calm, and rely on tea ('choy') to solve any issue, even life-threatening ones. In order to produce a loving parody of the national character, it violates the Maxim of Relation (the suggested action is unrelated to the issue).

English Humor Heavily uses homophones (words that sound the same) and homonyms (words spelled the same) for puns.

"I used to be a baker, but I couldn't make enough dough," for instance. Through ambiguity, this violates the Maxim of Manner. "Dough" can refer to both bread mixture and money. The clever, unexpected transition between these meanings within a profession is what makes it funny.

Wordplay frequently entails taking advantage of the rich morphology of the Turkish language by experimenting with verb forms, suffixes, and phonetic similarities that are absent from English.

Example: Playing with the word 'soqol' (beard). "Soqol - so'roqning qisqartmasi. Har kim so'raydi: 'Bu nima?'"* ("Beard is an abbreviation for 'question'. Everyone asks: 'What is that?'"*) This is a meta-linguistic joke [5]. It creates a false but plausible-sounding etymology, flouting the Maxim of Quality. The humor is in the clever re-analysis of a common word, a form of intellectual play appreciated in many cultures, but here using the specific agglutinative structure of Uzbek [6].

The masxaraboz (clown/jester) is well known in Uzbek theater (xol teatri, puppet theaters qo'g'irchoq teatri) and life. His comedy is frequently ironic, humorous and aimed against malpractices in politics and day-to-day life. He is free to say what others are not. The masxaraboz holds a special "jester's license." His illocutionary acts (severe FTAs) are converted into humorous ones and so become benign, which allows for social criticism.

As the court jester from history is now replaced by the more modern day satirist, stand-up comedian or cartoonist. They fill the same role, but are more mediated (ToT, TV...) rather than human based live and interactive social role as the masxaraboz.

In essence, while both cultures use humor to build rapport and navigate social life, the pragmatic strategies differ significantly. English humor often leans on the clever deception of irony, while Uzbek humor frequently relies on the affirmation of a shared, often exaggerated, truth about life and human nature [7]. Understanding these differences is key to successful cross-cultural communication and appreciating the unique comic spirit of each language.

Scholars provide the theoretical tools to analyze how humor works in communication.

Semantic Script Theory of Humor (SSTH) was one of the first formal linguistic theories of humor. It posits that a text can be funny if it is compatible, fully or in part, with two different scripts (or frames of reference), and these two scripts are opposites [8].

Example: "I used to be a baker, but I couldn't make enough dough." The script for "baker" (where "dough" is a bread mixture) and the script for "low-paying job" (where "dough" is money) are triggered simultaneously and are opposite in the sense of literal vs. slang [9].

General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) expanded the SSTH into a more comprehensive model

with six Knowledge Resources (KRs):

1. Script Opposition (SO): The core opposition (e.g., real vs. unreal, good vs. bad).
2. Logical Mechanism (LM): The resolution of the incongruity (e.g., pun, faulty logic, analogy).
3. Situation (SI): The context of the joke.
4. Target (TA): The "butt" of the joke.
5. Narrative Strategy (NS): The genre of the joke (e.g., riddle, story).
6. Language (LA): The specific words and syntax used to encode the joke.

An ideal framework for comparison is offered by the GTVH. As an illustration of cultural differences, an English joke and an Uzbek joke may have the same Script Opposition (clever vs. stupid, for example), but use different Logical Mechanisms (pun in English vs. exaggeration in Uzbek) or have different Targets (politician vs. traditional figure).

Grice proposed that conversation is guided by a Cooperative Principle: "Make your conversational contribution such as is required." This is broken down into four maxims: Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner. Humor is often created by flouting (blatantly violating) one of these maxims [10], [11], [12].

English humor frequently flouts the Maxim of Quality (via sarcasm/irony) and the Maxim of Manner (via puns and ambiguity).

Uzbek humor might more commonly flout the Maxim of Quantity through hyperbolic exaggeration about a person's character ('mutoyiba') or the Maxim of Relation through absurd, contextually inappropriate suggestions (like drinking tea in an emergency).

While the foundational scholars are Western, their frameworks are applied globally. Specific research on Uzbek humor is often found in regional linguistic and anthropological studies.

Jessica Milner Davis leads the International Society for Humor Studies (ISHS) and has extensively studied humor across cultures, including the role of the fool/jester figure, which is directly applicable to the 'masxaraboz' tradition.

Mahadev L. Apte, a pioneering anthropologist in the study of humor and culture. His work emphasizes that humor is a cultural system that must be understood from within its own symbolic and social context [13].

Scholars from institutions like the Uzbek Academy of Sciences and the National University of Uzbekistan often analyze humor through linguistic analysis, studying the grammatical and lexical devices for creating humor in Uzbek.

A researcher conducting a comparative pragmatic analysis of English and Uzbek humor would triangulate these theories. For example, to analyze an Uzbek anecdote:

1. GTVH: Identify the Script Opposition (e.g., wisdom vs. foolishness) and Logical Mechanism (e.g., role reversal).
2. Grice determined which Maxim is being flouted (e.g., Quality, due to exaggeration).
3. Politeness Theory analyze if the humor is a solidarity-building positive politeness strategy or a face-threatening critique.
4. Cultural Scripts (Hymes/Wierzbicka) situate the joke within the specific cultural context—understanding why that particular Target is funny, what the Norms are for telling it, and what it reveals about Uzbek social values [14], [15].

Conclusion

This study has recently shown the important differences between humor in English and Uzbek. English jokes frequently depend on indirection (sarcasm and irony) in violation of Grice's Maxim of Quality; 51172.png Figure 2. It only works in situations where there is a mismatch between literal and intended meaning, which means it depends on cultural context to be effective.

School of satires form a significant part of Uzbek humour, in which exaggeration and HS realism are more common. It violates the Maxim of Quantity and Relation by conveying hyperbolic truths about human nature that tighten social relations and reflect cultural values.

The study also illustrates the importance of context and cultural factors in the interpretation of humor.

This difference is an important point to consider in cross-cultural communication, since the humor in either language serves the same affordance -building rapport- albeit employing different pragmatic strategies.

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