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RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE UNIVERSAL PRAGMATIC PRINCIPLE OF COOPERATION IN THE LIGHT OF EMPATHIC COMMUNICATION

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Abstract

Key words:-

Principle of Cooperation, Empathic communication, Maxim, Quality, Quantity, Relation, Manner.

The article focuses on the realization of the universal pragmatic Principle of Cooperation in modern English discourse. This subject is relevant in the context of the growing interest in the pragmatic aspects of empathic communication. The Gricean paradigm of Cooperation was analyzed through the exploitation mechanism on the material from modern English literary and political discourses. The research has proved that to provide empathic communication the Cooperation maxims ideally work as follows: to achieve a coordinated interaction an interlocutor should try to make his/her conversational contribution truthful (the maxim of QUALITY), as informative as it is required (the maxim of QUANTITY), relevant (the maxim of RELATION), brief and orderly (the maxim of MANNER). The relation of reciprocal determination is established among the postulates of the Cooperative maxims with the further dominance of several of them in determining the direction of a communicative act to its goal (mutual understanding and empathy through the least cost spent). To achieve empathic communication the speaker can: 1) adhere to a certain postulate; 2) avoid it in some way; 3) consciously violate a postulate, exploiting its absence according to the chosen tactics of the discursive act conduct, which generates speech implicatures.

Introduction:-

Among the laws regulating empathic speech communication, the leading place is given to the universal pragmatic Principle of Cooperation, which plays an important role in the theory of successful verbal interaction. According to the Cooperative Principle speakers should make their conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange (Grice, 1975: 41). At the heart of etiquette postulates are the deep ideas of people about the world order, the human values, and the fundamental moral principles associated with them.

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The maxims have spawned a considerable interest and criticism in naturalistic studies of speech interaction. For example, Jeremy Campbell (2001) notes in his natural history of falsehood: “Communication is a cooperative effort, and as such should conform to certain definite rules, or maxims of conversation, which Grice enumerates. The maxims presuppose an almost Utopian level of gentlemanly conduct on the part of a speaker and an old-fashioned standard of truthfulness that George Washington might have found irksome. They remind one of the early Puritanism of the Royal Society. A speaker should give not too much but just enough information, hold his tongue about what he believes to be false, or for which he has insufficient evidence, be relevant, be brief and orderly, avoid obscurity of expressions and ambiguity. . . . Would we want to have dinner with such a person, such an impeccably polite maxim observer?” (Campbell, 2001: 256). It has also been emphasized that maxims do not fully regulate communication, and for a better understanding of the communicative process mechanisms, it is necessary to apply non-linguistic principles: “Given a desired end, one is to choose that action which most effectively, and at least cost, attains that end, *ceteris paribus*” (Kasher, 1982: 32).

This point of view is controversial since neither communication nor general rationality can a priori be explained without involving linguistic mechanisms. Besides, according to Paul Grice, his program extends beyond communication to nonlinguistic interchanges through rationality: “As one of my avowed aims is to see talking as a special case or variety of purposive, indeed rational behavior, it may be worth noting that the specific expectations or presumptions connected with at least some of the foregoing maxims have their analogues in the sphere of transactions that are not talk exchanges” (Grice, 1975: 41). It seems worthwhile to agree with Laurence R. Horn who thinks that the generalized forms of Cooperative principles govern any goal-oriented activity: a person brushing her teeth or working out a problem in the philosophy of language, a dog digging a hole to bury a bone. In this way, the maxims should be treated as a linguistic instantiation of rationality-based constraints on the expenditure of effort (Horn, 2006: 25).

Linguists argued that the Principles failed to apply to phatic and other non-information-based exchanges being naïve, trivial to the point of simple-mindedness, and culture-dependent (Keenan, 1976). However, a more accurate interpretation is to view them as presumptions, the awareness of which, shared by interlocutors, generates the empathic communication. The Principles should operate through the exploitation mechanism, doing as much work when they are ostentatiously disregarded – when the speakers recognize the apparent violation and make the appropriate contextual adjustment. In such a way they continue to play a key role in the dynamic models of communication and remain at the heart of linguistic pragmatics.

Resources and Procedures:-

Paul Grice’s Cooperative Principle may be considered as a desire to comprehend interactions from the point of view of other interlocutors, that is, an attempt to understand their goals and preconditions. It is instantiated by general conversational maxims (each one consists of several postulates) of QUANTITY, QUALITY, RELATION, and MANNER, which determine the contribution of the communicative act participants to the speech situation and govern rational interchange (Grice, 1975: 41-58).

The maxim of QUALITY assumes the truth of the statement. The postulates are: 1) do not say what you believe to be false; 2) try to make your contribution one that is true. The example from “Angels & Demons” shows an impeccably true contribution to the conversation (Brown, 2009: 182):

“Signore,” Olivetti said, his tone apologetic but still unyielding. “You should not concern yourself with matters of security. You have other responsibilities.”

“I am well aware of my other responsibilities. I am also aware that as direttore intermediario, I have a responsibility for the safety and well-being of everyone at this conclave. What is going on here?”

Observance of this maxim is especially important since the violation of the dosage of information is condemned by communicants to a lesser extent than the violation of the truth of the statement. According

to Paul Grice, the maxim of QUALITY, enjoining the provision of contributions which are genuine rather than spurious (truthful rather than mendacious), does not seem to be just one among a number of recipes for producing contributions; it seems rather to spell out the difference between something's being, and (strictly speaking) failing to be, any kind of contribution at all. False information is not an inferior kind of information; it just is not information (Grice, 1975: 42).

The maxim of QUANTITY is associated with the completeness (or rather, the dosage) of the information involved in the communicative act. It is realized in the following postulates: 1) make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange); 2) do not make your contribution more informative than is required. Their observance can be illustrated in modern English literary discourse (Martin, 2011: 306):

“Is the Hound the champion now?” Sansa asked Ned.

“No,” he told her. “There will be one final joust, between the Hound and the Knight of Flowers.”

Here we can see that the answer is as informative as it is required. Nevertheless, it should be noted that this maxim entails a significant amount of communicative mistakes and inaccuracies since the amount of information required depends on many factors related to the speakers' presuppositions, their mental state, the context of communication, culture, etc. The significance of QUANTITY postulates (together with RELATION and MANNER) for the function and form of natural language lies in the fact that they regulate the economy of linguistic information. They correlate with the Law of Least Effort dictating minimization of form, and also with the human cognitive activity which is driven by the goal of maximizing relevance: that is . . . to derive as great a range of contextual effects as possible for the least expenditure of effort (Carston, 1995: 231).

The essence of the maxim of RELATION is that in order to achieve the communicative goal speakers must implement appropriate communicative actions that do not contradict the cooperative interaction. Its most important postulates are: 1) do not deviate from the topic; 2) be relevant. An example from “Game of Thrones” illustrates how interlocutors try to keep the topic of the conversation (Martin, 2011: 163):

*“My lady,” Ser Rodrik said, “I have thought on how best to proceed while I lay abed. **You must not enter the castle. I will go in your stead and bring Ser Aron to you in some safe place.**”*

*She studied the old knight as the galley drew near to a pier. Moreo was shouting in the vulgar Valyrian of the Free Cities. **“You would be as much at risk as I would.”***

*Ser Rodrik smiled. **“I think not. I looked at my reflection in the water earlier and scarcely recognized myself. My mother was the last person to see me without whiskers, and she is forty years dead. I believe I am safe enough, my lady.”***

Moreo bellowed a command. As one, sixty oars lifted from the river, then reversed and backed water.....

“We shall not be going to the castle. Perhaps you can suggest an inn, someplace clean and comfortable and not too far from the river.”

Sometimes the maxim of RELATION is difficult to implement because interacting participants often discuss several topics. This fact raises the possibility of completely normal transition from one topic to another. However, it is extremely important to keep pace with the topic of communicative contact.

The maxim of MANNER is not related to what is being said, but to the way it is spoken. It is embodied in one general postulate: be perspicuous, and a few additional ones: 1) avoid obscurity of expression; 2) avoid ambiguity; 3) be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity); 4) be orderly. The observance of these postulates is shown in the following abstract from “Angels & Demons” (Brown, 2009: 279):

“Is the Pantheon even a church?” Vittoria asked.

“Oldest Catholic church in Rome.”

*Vittoria shook her head. **“But do you really think the first cardinal could be killed at the Pantheon? That's got to be one of the busiest tourist spots in Rome.”***

Langdon shrugged. **“The Illuminati said they wanted the whole world watching. Killing a cardinal at the Pantheon would certainly open some eyes.”**

“But how does this guy expect to kill someone at the Pantheon and get away unnoticed? It would be impossible.”

“As impossible as kidnapping four cardinals from Vatican City? The poem is precise.”

This maxim, although closely related to the language code, is largely based on the recipients' willingness to perceive information, that is, depends on the communicants' presuppositions and on how their conceptions of the corresponding fragment of reality coincide.

For empathic communication, strict adherence to all formulated maxims is not always required. They can either be observed or intentionally and openly violated, which generates conversation implicatures.

Let us turn to the illustration of maxims observance in Barack Obama's speech:

Q: *Do we know yet if **there are other Americans on board** beyond the person you mentioned?*

Barack Obama: *At this point, the individual that I mentioned is **the sole person that we can definitively say was a U.S. or dual citizen*** (The Washington Post, 2014).

This example shows that in a clear answer to the question Barack Obama observes the maxims of QUANTITY (information provided in full), QUALITY (information is accurate), RELATION (Obama speaks to the point, without deviating from the topic), and MANNER (the reply is unambiguous and clear).

The relation of determination among the maxims often leads to their conflict. In this case, the participant of the discursive act tries to circumvent the conflict by creating conversation implicatures:

Q: *“Sir, thank you. **How much blame for this do you put on President Putin?**”*

Barack Obama: **“We don't know exactly what happened yet, and I don't want to, as I said before, get out ahead of the facts. But what I do know is, is that we have seen a ticking up of violence in eastern Ukraine that despite the efforts of the Ukrainian government to abide by a cease-fire and to reach out and agree to negotiations, including with the separatists, that has been rebuffed by these separatists. We know that they are heavily armed and they are trained, and we know that that's not an accident. That is happening because of Russian support. So, you know, it is not possible for these separatists to function the way they're functioning, to have the equipment that they have -- set aside what's happened, you know, with respect to the Malaysian Airlines, a group of separatists can't shoot down military transport planes, or they claim, shoot down fighter jets without sophisticated equipment and sophisticated training, and that is coming from Russia”** (The Washington Post, 2014).

From this example, we can conclude that Barack Obama has violated the maxim of QUANTITY – he does not give the information concerning Putin's personal guilt (there is no direct answer to the question). The president avoids a direct answer because of the unwillingness to break the maxim of QUALITY – Obama does not know for sure whether Vladimir Putin was involved. However, the conversation implicature (the acknowledgment of Putin's fault) is seen through verbal contact propositions (*That is happening because of Russian support, a group of separatists can't shoot down military transport planes, ... without sophisticated equipment and sophisticated training, ... from Russia*).

Sometimes postulates of cooperation are violated deliberately:

Q: **“Tougher sanctions in Europe, will you push for ...”**

Barack Obama: **“Well, I think that this certainly will be a wake-up call for Europe and the world that there are consequences to an escalating conflict in eastern Ukraine, that it is not going to be localized, it is not going to be contained.**

You know, what ... what we've seen here is just in one country alone, our ... our great allies the Dutch, 150 or more of their citizens being killed. And ... and that, I think, sadly brings home the degree to which the stakes are high for Europe, not simply for the Ukrainian people, and ... and that we have to be firm in

our resolve in making sure that **we are supporting Ukraine's efforts** to bring about a just cease-fire, and that we can move towards **a political solution to this**" (The Washington Post, 2014).

In this example, the maxim of QUANTITY is ignored deliberately – Barack Obama does not answer the question of whether he will support stricter economic sanctions against Russia. Nonetheless, verbal contact propositions (*a wake-up call for Europe, there are consequences to an escalating conflict in eastern Ukraine, we are supporting Ukraine's efforts*) make it clear that Obama is not against sanctions, but he is not ready to openly support them.

Very often we deal with conscious violations of the QUALITY maxim when the truth of what has been said is doubtful. These are indirect speech acts, expressions of ironic character, metaphorical expressions, which are the general standard of communicative behavior:

Barack Obama: *"By far the country that lost the most people onboard the plane was the Netherlands. From the days of our founding, the Dutch have been close friends and stalwart allies of the United States of America, and today I want the Dutch people to know that **we stand with you shoulder to shoulder in our grief** and in our absolute determination to get to the bottom of what happened"* (The Washington Post, 2014).

In this example, Obama uses a metaphoric phrase *we stand with you shoulder to shoulder in our grief*, which violates the QUALITY maxim. This expression generates a conversational implicature: Barack Obama completely shares the grief of Danish people. Hyperbolizing his feelings about the tragedy contributes to the achievement of empathic communication.

Sometimes the violation of the MANNER maxim contributes to the empathic communication:

Barack Obama: *Well, I think it's too early for us to be able to guess what the intentions of those who might have launched the -- this surface-to-air missile might have had. **The investigation's going to be ongoing, and I think what we'll see is additional information surfacing over the next 24 hours, 72 hours, the next week, the next month*** (The Washington Post, 2014).

In this example, we observe ambiguity and lack of proper briefness of the statement. The verbal contact propositions (*The investigation is going to be ongoing, the next 24 hours, 72 hours, next week, the next month*) represent the latent proposition: the investigation of the remains of the aircraft is extremely laborious and complicated. This tactics achieves its goal – a high degree of empathic reflection from the addressees.

Results and Discussions:-

To provide empathic communication the universal pragmatic Principle of Cooperation ideally works as follows: to achieve a coordinated interaction an interlocutor should try to make his/her conversational contribution truthful (the maxim of QUALITY), as informative as it is required (the maxim of QUANTITY), relevant (the maxim of RELATION), brief and orderly (the maxim of MANNER). At the cognitive stage of creating cooperation, communicants should consider each other's thesauri since their nonconcurrence leads to communication failures, negative reaction or even the break of interaction. Usually, the relation of reciprocal determination is established among the postulates of the Cooperative maxims with the further dominance of several of them in determining the direction of a communicative act to its goal (mutual understanding and empathy through the least cost spent).

The choice of dominant maxims is carried out by interlocutors initially on a cognitive level, and then on speech-stylistic levels with the use of lexical items which are the most appropriate in pursuit of empathic interaction. Each conversational turn is analyzed by the speaker as near or far from the goal, better or worse. In its turn, it forms the next utterance, which is chosen under the influence of the previous one. Sometimes, the domination of some postulates leads to the violation of others. That is, the speaker can: 1) adhere to a certain postulate; 2) avoid it in some way; 3) consciously violate a postulate, exploiting its absence according to the chosen tactics of the discursive act conduct, which generates speech implicatures.

It is also worthy of note that in real communication there are strategies of non-compliance with the Principle of Cooperation. They constitute a demonstrative violation of the postulates – the participation in confrontational speech genres (controversy, dispute, etc.), in which the maxims of communication are not taken into account at all; the deliberate use of indirect speech acts (allusion, irony, sarcasm, etc.). These strategies are analyzed in numerous linguistic studies, which offer the prospect of further research.

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