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Realization of the category of expressivity in communicative situations

Anna Nikolaeva

69, Prospek Sorokoletiya Pobedy, Flat 49, Rostov-on-Don, 344072, Russia

Abstract

The semantic category of expressivity serves to express additional notional shades of meaning. We divide the language means of the expressivity category into those of lexical and syntactical. We analyze the realization of expressive means in 5 communicative situations: communication between friends, communication between birth relatives, communication between colleagues, communication between an employer and an employee, communication between a lawyer and a witness. The analysis of these situations proves that realization and distribution of the expressive language means inside the situations are basically determined by the situational variables as well as the social roles of the speaker and the listener.

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1. Introduction

Language is characterized by such functions as communicative, informative, as well as expressive and emotive. The last two functions refer to utterance intensification, which is considered to be one of the means of the speaker’s influence on the listener. Utterance intensification, according to prof. I.I. Turanski (1990), is a complex

Anna Nikolaeva. Tel.: +7 929 816 8351.
E-mail address: annanick@mail.ru
of such notions as intensity and expressivity.

In this article we study expressivity as a semantic category, we also analyze the means of its realization in communicative situations, basing on the theoretical studies of prof. A.V. Kunin (1984) (the study of expressivity), prof. I.F. Galeeva (2010) (stylistics and expressive constructions). The sociolinguistic works of V.N. Belikov and L.P. Krysin (2001) are the bases for defining the structure and nature of communicative situations.

The primary purpose of our study is to find out the consistency which determines the choice of different means of expressivity and their realization in particular communicative situations.

The practical application of our study is proved by the fact that its results can be used in the process of linguistic and stylistic analysis of fiction texts, in pragmatic and sociolinguistic analysis of different kinds of discourse, in lecture courses in stylistics and in functional grammar.

2. Expressivity

Taking into consideration the purposes of the paper, we study the problem of the nature of expressivity. Expressivity is a semantic category. We resort to A. Kunin’s (1986) definition of expressivity which says that the essence of the semantic category of expressivity is expressing additional notional shades of meaning. These additional notional shades overlap the basic (lexical or grammatical) meaning and can reinforce it. As a result speech is made more expressive and metaphorical, as it refers to all language spheres. The inventory of expressive means is immense, which enables us to study deep text structures, a language personality as a subject of speech activity. As for the functional aspect of expressivity, it serves to produce a pragmatic effect. With the help of various expressive means we analyze colloquial speech, oral dialogues, the relationships between the speaker and the listener. Expressivity is characterized by a linguistic nature, as it acts through language facilities, but the effect of expressivity is reflected only in speech, beyond the scope of a word or a phrase. It can be seen most obviously in texts (Bezrukova, 2004).

The means of comparison and contrast of the unknown with the known create a specific structure of the utterance which has some increased expressiveness. The most important components of the latter are figures of speech and imagination. It’s essential to add an unusual, non-standard form to an utterance. Then the listener will understand the importance of the speaker’s words. To achieve such a result of utterance intensification in communication expressive language means are used. The latter are divided into those of lexical and syntactical.

Among lexical expressive means we distinguish the following:
- Simile
- Metaphor
- Hyperbole
- Oxymoron
- Irony
- Epithet

As for syntactical expressive means we distinguish the following constructions:
- Ellipsis
- Repetition- anadiplosis
- Repetition with widening and specification
- Inversion
- Parallel constructions
- Interrogative constructions (which include various types of questions, including a rhetorical question)
Exclamatory constructions (sentences which are characterized by emotive colouring and increased expressiveness)

We refer to the notion of a communicative situation to follow up the textual realization of the semantic category of expressivity. According to the sociolinguistic study conducted by V.N. Belikov and L.P. Krysin (2001), a communicative situation has a certain structure which consists of the following elements:

- The speaker (the addressant)
- The listener (the addressee)
- Relationships between the speaker and the listener
- The tone of a conversation (formal- neutral- informal (friendly))
- The purpose of communication
- The means of communication (standard language or language sub-systems- dialects; registers or styles; paralinguistic means- body language, gestures)
- The ways of communication (oral or written; contact or distant)
- The place of communication

All the above listed elements are called situational variables. The change of any of these variables results in the change in a communicative situation, and consequently it leads to diversification of language means speakers use in communication, it also changes their communicative behaviour on the whole.

Thus, a communicative situation is a situation of speech communication of two or more people, this situation consists of 8 elements.

In our paper we study 5 communicative situations taken from fiction texts: communication between friends, communication between birth relatives, communication between colleagues, communication between an employer and an employee, communication between a policeman (a lawyer) and a suspect (a convict/a witness).

The above listed situations were selected as result of the analysis of 1000 pages of fiction texts written by British and American authors. We analyzed 300 communicative situations (60 situations of each above mentioned types) containing various means of utterance intensification with the help of expressive stylistic means.

Further on we describe and register the 5 above mentioned communicative situations and the expressive means which are used in them.

First we deal with the realization of lexical means which express the category of expressivity in the communicative situations. In the communication between friends the expressive lexical means are used in 8 % out of the total number of the examples in these situations. (Here and further on when we refer to percentage, we take the total number of examples in one particular situation as 100 %). Utterance intensification is achieved here through the use of a simile:

1. "The World? The Universe?... ""You sound like you were trying to sell me something."
(Plays).

Epithets are less used in this type of the situations. Mostly they are descriptive, evaluative and metaphorical epithets. Hyperboles and irony are least used in this type of communication. For example:

2. "I want a glass of whiskey for my mother."
"Oh, the thundering ruffian." (Further Recollections).

3. "You'd better hurry or you'll be killed."
"I'm not going. My mother is sick, and I have to mind the house." (Further Recollections).

3. "Did you bring this wind with you?"
"No, it brought me." (Plays).
A metaphor and an oxymoron were found only in two examples in these communicative situations.

In the communication between birth relatives we found 6% of examples where the category of expressivity is realized through lexical language means. Epithets (constant/fixed epithets, descriptive epithets, evaluative epithets) and hyperboles play here the leading role. For example:

4. "Yes, she’s been here too."
   "Oh, I suppose she’s been telling you that I’m a selfish brute."(Plays)

5. "Any problems?"
   "Problems? Yes, thousands. "(V.Blumenthal).

The examples of irony in this type of the situations are very few.

Thus, we can sum up that the utterance intensification in the communication between friends and birth relatives is realized mostly through the use of evaluative and descriptive epithets, hyperboles, which can be explained by the fact that the tone in the communication between the speaker and the listener is informal, the inner conditions of their communication are not changing, the role-playing and individual characteristics of the speaker and the listener are not changeable. The external conditions of the communication in these types of situations are not constant, i.e. time and place of the communication may be quite different, which influences the emotional state of communicants.

The communication between colleagues and the communication between an employee and an employer in our study are not characterized by utterance intensification through the use of lexical expressive means. In contrast to the two previously described communicative situations, in the communication between colleagues and in the communication between an employee and an employer the external conditions of the communication are constant, which probably makes this communication less emotional.

The communication between a policeman (a lawyer) and a suspect (a convict / a witness) is not characterized by high frequency of the use of lexical expressive means. The statistics is only 4% of examples. In this type of communicative situations the category of expressivity is realized by means of simile, constant/fixed or descriptive epithets. For example:

6. Thank you, sir. Mr. Ewell, would you tell us in your own words what happened on the evening of November twenty-first, please?"
   "Well, the night of November twenty-one I was comin’ in from the woods with a load o’kindlin’ and just as I got to the fence I heard Mayella screamin’ like a stuck hog inside the house—(H. Lee).

7. “Do you want to tell us what happened?”
   “I got somethin’ to say an’ then I ain’t gonna say no more. That nigger took advantage of me an’ if you fine fancy gentlemen don’t wanna do nothin’ about it then you’re all yellow stinkin’ cowards. “(H. Lee).

Despite the fact that the tone of communication between the addressee and the addressee is formal, the external conditions of the communication are constant- the court room- the utterance of one of the communicants (the witness for prosecution) is characterized by a high emotional degree, which is manifested in intensification. It can be explained by the following factors. The communicants are individuals who have their personal qualities as society members, belonging to a certain class, ethnicity, age, gender. These characteristics are constant. It means that a social status of the witness for prosecution, an uneducated young girl from South Alabama, influences the way she is trying to intensify the sense of her utterance (e.g.: yellow stinkin’ cowards; fine fancy gentlemen). The relationships between communicants can be interpersonal. In the situation described above (example 7) the communicants do not like much each other.

Consequently, the intensifying and expressive means and the situational variables, as well as the structure of a communicative situation, are interdependent.
As for syntactical expressive means, we have to stress that the results of our study have shown that in all 5 analysed communicative situations they are quite frequently functioning.

In the communication between friends the semantic category of expressivity is realized through the use of syntactical means in 20 % of examples. The utterance intensification is achieved here by means of ellipsis, repetition with widening and specification. For example:

8. "A very secluded road."
   "Like this. Very secluded road. "(G. Grisham).

9. "You must not. You must not do that."
   "All right. Come on in." (D. Lessing).

Interrogative and exclamatory sentences rate second. For example:

10. "What exactly."
   "I have two jobs. ... That surprises you? But I have always been anxious to fill up every hour of the day..." (R. Dahl).

11. "And who buys the popcorn and soda? Huh?"
   "Big deal! One popcorn and one soda (R. Dahl)."

Situational variables and characteristics in the communication between friends enable to use a combination of syntactical expressive means: an elliptical question (example 10 ... That surprises you?)

In the communication between birth relatives we have found 16 % of examples with expressive syntactical means. Utterance intensification is achieved here by means of ellipsis, repetition with widening and specification, interrogative and exclamatory constructions and the combination of these language means. For example:

12."We did nothing that could be reasonably expected.."
   "How do you know? ...How do you know what can be reasonably”- (Recollections)

In the communication between colleagues syntactical expressive means are used in 11 % of examples:

13. “All our colleagues are young and unmarried... Which is a good thing.”
   “Why?”
   “Why? They give all their time and energy to school.” (W. Saroyan)

The results of analysis of the communication between an employer and an employee display 21% of examples:

14. “Are you still sure you want to do it?”
   “Quite sure, madam.”(W. Saroyan).

The range of syntactical structures is not various in these situations, as the social roles of communicants are rather stable; the tone of communication is formal.

In the communication between a policeman (a lawyer) and a suspect (a convict / a witness) syntactical expressive means realize the meaning of the semantic category of expressivity in 14 % of examples. The results of our study display that in this type of communicative situations all expressive means are realized. Elliptical sentences and repetition are most frequent. The functioning of ellipsis and repetition can be explained by the following. When the judge addresses the witness to find out his background information, the communication is supposed to be in the form of “question- answer”. This form is characterized by syntactical dialogue characteristics (elliptical sentences, the prepetition of some elements of a question by the witness, etc.). The judge addresses the witness for the purpose of reproducing the witness’s testimony during preliminary investigation. So the judge’s
monologue is dominating in the communication, while the witness is just agreeing or disagreeing in response. Actually the purpose of communication is changing, whereas the other situational variables keep unchanged. For example:

“No sir,” said Mr. Tate.
“Didn’t call a doctor?”
“No sir,” repeated Mr. Tate. (H. Lee)

3. Conclusion

We can deduce that syntactical expressive means are prevailing in the 5 analysed communicative situations, which is determined by the specific peculiarities of dialogue speech. The results of our study can be summed up in the following points:

- Utterance intensification is achieved by means of functioning of the semantic category of expressivity in speech. The semantic category of expressivity is realized through the use of expressive lexical and syntactical means which express additional notional shades, overlapping the basic meaning.
- In the communication between friends and birth relatives the prevailing lexical expressive means are epithets and hyperboles, while in the communication between colleagues and in the communication between an employer and an employee lexical expressive means are not functioning at all.
- In the communication between a policeman (a lawyer) and a suspect (a convict / a witness) all inventory of syntactical expressive means is realized.
- The distribution of lexical or syntactical expressive means in the analyzed communicative situations is determined by the situational variables, the sphere of communication and by the social roles of communicants.

References