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THE STYLISTIC PECULIARITIES OF HUMOUR IN ENGLISH JOKES

Humour is a national phenomenon. It is believed that Englishmen can be recognized by their sense of humour. It reflects English national identity and mentality, shows the way of life, history, customs and traditions. English humour is special and quite difficult to understand by foreigners. Therefore, it is not surprising that the interest of linguists in the issues of English humour comprehension is also growing.

Since there has been a huge need for cross-cultural interaction, one of important conditions for successful communication is an ability to understand humour. Incomprehension of English humour while communicating with the British, watching films or TV series, when reading books or magazines leads to misunderstanding and incorrect perception of information. So, the issues of studying English humour and stylistic devices of its creation in English jokes still remain relevant.

As the hypothesis of the research work we put forward the idea that study of the stylistic peculiarities of humour in English jokes plays a significant role in getting people's message and a linguistic concept of the original lexical units.

In this work, we turn to the English jokes. So, as the subject of the research is the stylistic devices of humour in English jokes.

The purpose is to trace the depth of a foreign language comprehension due to the knowledge of special stylistic devices used while creating jokes of a particular language.

It can be assumed that nothing shows the concept of humour as clearly and distinctly as *a joke*. It is one of the most common examples of any humour. It is relevant and universal. "Jokes can be different: funny and black, situational and observant". Typically, jokes contain linguistic types of narration that attract attention of linguists to a greater extent.

The stylistic devices in English jokes have attracted attention since ancient times. A special contribution to the field of comedy was made by V. V. Vinogradov. According to the analyzed material, we will refer to the following stylistic devices for English humour creation: *irony, paradox, pun, and repetition*.

At the very beginning of our research we turned to an online book *More One Liners, Jokes and Gags*. It was full of jokes. We were eager to find out whether the 10th grade students of our Gymnasium would understand humour in English jokes. So, we have conducted an experiment. The students were given the list of jokes and were offered to tick the box in one of four columns after each joke (a hilarious joke, a funny joke, an unfunny joke and the joke that is impossible to understand).

According to the experiment, we have confirmed the fact that English jokes are not always easy to understand by the students as it may seem at first sight. Misunderstanding undoubtedly affected the general perception of humour by

the students. According to the experiment English jokes with irony and paradox turned out to be the most hilarious and understandable as they were considered to be easy to read and perceive. The jokes with pun were the most difficult to understand and perceive. Their comprehension required not only a good command of English, but also wits and immersion into the English mentality.

Referring to the results of the experiment we have come to conclusion that we have to study the stylistic peculiarities of humour in English jokes in detail and introduce the students our Gymnasium to them, and a very special attention we should pay to pun as it has caused the greatest incomprehension by the students.

Pun is also known as a play on words. According to *the Modern Explanatory Dictionary of the Russian Language* by T. F. Efremova, *pun* is “a witty expression, based on the use of words that sound similar but have different meanings or different meanings of one word” (the translation is ours). It involves words with similar or identical sounds but with different meanings or vice versa. Here are some examples:

- *Why is it so wet in England?*
- *Because many kings and queens have reigned there.*

The verb *reigned* sounds completely the same as *rained*, so a phonetic pun is used.

I changed my iPod name to Titanic. It's syncing now.

In English the word *syncing* or *linking the data between two devices* sounds completely the same as *sinking* or *going down below the surface*.

– *Why did the bald man paint rabbits on his head?* – *Because from the distance they looked like hares.*

The word *hares* that means *little fluffy animals* sounds similar to *hairs* as *part of body*, so the pun is based on the consonance of homophones.

According to the list of examples, we can conclude that pun is the most widespread stylistic device of humour creation in English as it is encouraged in everyday situations. In order to “catch” pun, we need to be not only educated and well-read, but also witty.

Irony is a stylistic device where the words are used “to convey the contextual meaning, opposite to their logical one by changing a positive appreciation to a negative one used in an incompatible context”. The contrast often produces a humorous effect or shows bitter mockery and sarcasm. It is the second most popular stylistic device as it helps to create a typical friendly atmosphere, where the funny is hidden under the mask of the serious. Here are the examples:

Don't steal, the Government hates competition!

- *Here, hold my horse a minute, will you?*
- *Sir, I am a member of the Congress.*

– *Never mind! You look honest. I'll take a chance.*

In two above jokes an ironical effect takes place where state power and its vices are ridiculed.

– *There are some people down there, sir.*

– *Get rid of them.*

– *But among them is a woman, sir!*

– *So get rid of them as politely as possible!*

Overpoliteness of aristocratic Englishmen is also an excuse for making jokes. So, in this case irony takes place.

Paradox is a sign of a special situation when something is contrary to common sense, life experience, logic, but at the same time it is admitted as possible or takes place in reality. Paradox is another stylistic device in jokes. It shows the desire to violate logic, carry to the point of absurdity. It is presented in English jokes, but not to a greater extent.

"I want to know Latin", said the man.

"Why Latin of all languages?" asked the language professor. "It's a dead language".

"That's it", answered the man, "I'm an undertaker".

In the joke, the logic of the man who owns a funeral home and wants to learn a "dead" language is ridiculous.

An American gets off the plane at Heathrow, when he suddenly sees foggy weather he says: "What a terrible weather! And how long will this weather be here, don't you know?" A local answers: "Alas, sir, I can not say anything definite. I've only lived here for thirty-five years."

In the above joke, the answer of a local man about foggy weather is ridiculous and absurd.

Repetition is a stylistic device that is used to create a humorous effect by repeating elements (words, word-combinations, phrases). It is the least popular stylistic device of humour creation in English jokes as repeating words or sayings is not always funny. Here is an example.

Golfer: Absolutely shocking! I've never played so badly before!

Caddie: Oh! Have you played before?

The humorous effect is achieved in the joke due to the sarcastic question.

To fill in linguistic and metalinguistic gaps in the in-depth study of English jokes, we have prepared a workbook *Learning to understand English jokes in your English lessons* that includes lexical exercises used for a detailed study of stylistic devices in English jokes at school. The workbook helps students deepen into the peculiarities of English humour, it aims to distinguish and recognize stylistic phenomena in different contexts and encourages them to make up their own jokes in the style of English humour. The exercises can make English lessons much more imaginative and extremely learnable.

We have also created flash cards. Each of them contains an English joke with a corresponding picture to the joke. The cards can make learning a foreign language much easier.

In addition, we decided to make up a collection of English jokes *Let's have a good laugh* which includes all the information that was found during our research work. This type of a researching analysis gave us an opportunity to fill in the linguistic and metalinguistic gaps in the in-depth study of English humour. From our point of view, the results of our research analysis will appeal not only to students but also to all the people who want to deepen into the English language and try to understand English mentality and national traits, broaden their minds and make their speech more expressive.

Using the results of our research work such as the workbook, the collection of jokes and flash cards we have proposed some ways how English jokes can be included into English lessons. They can be used as an introduction to the topic of the lesson, vocabulary drills, grammar drills, warming-ups, theatrical performances and moving activities. According to the list of ways English humour can serve as an excellent tool at all stages of educational activity. It will greatly enrich students' knowledge of a foreign language and will help to create a friendly atmosphere in the classroom.

In order to check the efficiency of the results of our research work, we have taken a decision to conduct a second experiment to determine the degree of understanding of English jokes by the students of our Gymnasium after applying the results in English lessons. The results have proved the efficiency of the research material usage in order to understand and perceive the stylistic peculiarities of English jokes at school. A lot more students understood humour in English jokes than it was presented in the previous experiment.

Due to the research, we can clearly see that English humour is an obligatory component of the British lifestyle and national character. The study of humour in English jokes plays a great role in English and it is a very important direction of a linguistic analysis in English Stylistics. The analyzed material gives a chance for students not just to enrich their vocabulary with new lexical units, but also to broaden their cross-cultural knowledge and create deep connection that effaces the boundaries between different languages and cultures.