

The Structural Features of Conceptual Semantics of “Humor” in English and Uzbek Languages

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the structural-semantic properties of the concept of "humor" in English and Uzbek languages from a conceptual semantics perspective. Employing a lexical-semantic and conceptual field framework, the study delineates between core semantic components—such as laughter, fun, and cheerfulness—and peripheral elements, including sarcasm, irony, satire, and mockery. The research further illustrates cross-cultural humor through a comparative analysis of folklore genres, particularly anecdotes and jokes, and highlights distinctive features and humor types, such as ethnic jokes, ironic jokes, and absurdist humor (e.g., shaggy dog stories). Findings underscore the complexity and cultural specificity of humor, suggesting that humor's conceptual structure demonstrates both universal and culture-bound dimensions.

Keywords: Humor, conceptual semantics, lexical-semantic analysis, core-periphery structure, comparative linguistics, cultural specificity, folklore genres, anecdotes, sarcasm, satire

INTRODUCTION

In cognitive linguistics there is a term “concept”, which is considered a cultural layer that connects a person and being. A concept is a perceptual-cognitive-affective construct that obeys the laws of human mental life and has a dynamic nature in the process of human cognition and communication. The ambiguity

of the definition of the term “concept” can be explained by the difficulties in interpreting the functions it performs.

The study of the concept on linguistic material was founded by the Russian linguist N. D. Arutyanova. The scientist proposed a logical approach to the study of the concept. In the collection *Logical Analysis of Language. Cultural Concepts* (1991), such cultural concepts as truth, freedom, good and evil, truth and lies, memory and beauty and other similar concepts are defined. Without a doubt, the concept of “Humor”, which is the subject of our dissertation, can also be attributed to the number of cultural concepts.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODS

According to the conceptual field theory in linguistics, each concept has its “core” (central field) and “periphery” (peripheral circles of meaning). The core of the concept “humor” (HC) is the sum of the most typical and central elements of this concept, while the periphery is made up of features that can be included in the content volume, but are not central. As noted above, the concept of humor is based on “laughter”.

Laughter is the most important component of humor. “Core semantics” (the most basic semantic components) include fun (comedy), curiosity, cheerfulness and humor. For example, the words “joke”, “adjective”, “funny saying” and “laughter” are the closest and most central representatives of the concept of humor. When we say “humor” in English, the first thing that comes to mind is such basic concepts as “funny”, “entertaining” and “comedy”. The lexemes in the root structure semantically directly express the concept of humor: for example, “joke,” “joking,” “funny” – they form the basis of the concept.

In English and Uzbek (Russian) languages, the periphery of the HC includes concepts indirectly related to humor. For example, “irony” and “sarcasm” – despite the presence of an element of humor, do not always strive for pure humor, but rather have a more critical tone; therefore, they are considered peripheral units. At the same time, “sarcasm” is used in English in the sense of humor, but it is also peripheral – because not all

sarcasm causes laughter (sometimes it even hurts). Similarly, "mockery", "ridicule" – a form of ridicule directed at someone, sometimes bordering on insult; They are also on the edge of humor. "Satire" is also on the periphery of the concept: although this concept exposes shortcomings through laughter, the main emphasis is on criticism, not laughter. Another peripheral zone is the art of "comedy": it is in theater and cinema, masters of laughter (clowns, jesters) – cultural components of the concept, representing practical forms of humor.






The core and the peripheral parts sometimes overlap. For example, "wit" (resourcefulness, ingenuity) is a very interesting case: it is close to the center, because witty humor (*latifa*) is the highest form of humor; However, overly complex intellectual ingenuity may not be interesting to everyone, so there is a certain peripherality. “Laughter” is undoubtedly the central phenomenon, but different types of laughter, such as “giggling” or “tittering,” create more subtle differences on the periphery. The core of the concept of humor is positive, pleasant laughter and humor, while the periphery includes such elements as critical laughter (satire), irony, scandalous laughter (mockery), expressions of laughter (from a smile to a guffaw), as well as characters associated with humor (for example, "jester" - a court jester, "comedian" – an actor in the comedy genre). Researchers place words in the field of humor in this order using lexical-semantic analysis.

For example, in one study, when analyzing the semantic field of the Russian word “laughter”, its core included words such as “laughter” and “joke”, and its periphery included words such as “irony” and “mockery”. Similarly, in the English-Uzbek humor field, the core is: joke, laughter, anecdote, elegance; the **inner peripheries** are: sarcasm, mockery, cheerfulness, resourcefulness; **the outer peripheries** include layers such as humor that causes anger (bittersweet remarks), laughter mixed with sadness (tragicomic situations). So, if the core of the concept of humor includes, first of all, humor and joyful emotions that cause laughter, then the periphery covers various forms of humor and related concepts (satire, irony, sarcasm, etc.). Such a distinction between the core and the periphery is

important for a systematic understanding of the complex and rich content of the phenomenon of humor.

DISCUSSIONS AND RESULTS

There are two schemes are given below, which include the elements of humor in English and Uzbek languages.

-  - core
-  - subnuclear zone
-  -near periphery
-  -far periphery
-  - outer periphery



"anecdote". One definition of a joke is given in the *Macmillan Dictionary for Advanced Learners* as follows: "A joke is a story you tell about something interesting or funny that happened to you." Another English dictionary defines a joke as "a short humorous story about a person or event."

Often, it is a collective creation that is passed on by word of mouth and preserved in collective memory. The word "anecdote" comes from the Greek word meaning "unwritten, unpublished." The history of jokes is not well studied, and although they do not always gain worldwide fame, they exist in many countries. Jokes make you laugh, so they belong to the entertainment genre. But in addition to entertainment, they can also serve as objects of sociological and psychological analysis. It is believed that English humor is distinguished by its intelligence and depth of thought, which are sometimes inaccessible to the general public. There is even a famous joke about this, belonging to the British themselves. For example, in an English joke, one gentleman tells another something that the others do not understand. That is why they laugh like crazy. (In this case, from the context we can understand that only the two of them know it for sure).

Indeed, English humor requires intelligence, since it sometimes contains elements of absurdity, and its logic is not always easy to understand.

Another humorous genre in English is humor. The term "joke" is a short humorous oral story about a fictitious event, ending with an unexpected joke, which may involve famous people, folklore, or fictional characters. M. H. Abrams notes in his *Dictionary of Literary Terms*, humor is another type of popular folklore, but usually the "joke" is satirical (often immoral), while the anecdote is the most common type. "New jokes or new versions of old jokes remain an integral part of modern social interaction when people gather in a relaxed atmosphere," he explains.

O. K. Ilyina divides English jokes into the following categories:

1. **Ethnic slurs or ethnic jokes:** ethnic jokes that exaggerate specific features of national characters. For example:

An American walking through the streets of London, passed under Canary Wharf (London's biggest building). As he stood there looking up, a lad joined him. After a while the American turned to the kid and said, “Do you realize, son, that we have buildings like that in the States, only they’re three times the size? “I’m not surprised,” said the kid. “That’s a Lunatic Asylum! “

2. **Dry humor and ironic jokes:** ironic jokes in which mockery is hidden under the guise of seriousness. For example, a student asks the professor to let him go after the lecture, and he answers very seriously: “I am sure it’ll break my heart, but you may leave.”
3. **Banana humor jokes:** literally translated, this is a banana peel joke, which is how the British so elegantly refer to American jokes. This type of joke appeared in 1913, when a British theater staged a musical that featured the following episode: a man, walking down the street, almost runs into a lamppost and deliberately winks. And then suddenly he slips on a banana peel and falls backwards. In the general context of the comedy, this episode was perceived by the audience as very funny. Since then, such jokes have been called “banana jokes”. For example: “Why is the letter T like an island? – Because it’s in the middle of water.”
4. **Elephant jokes:** silly or flat jokes (elephant fantasies). For example, at a concert in a seaside town, the author of the text points to a late lady in a striped suit and addresses the audience: “There you are, a walking chaise lounge.”
5. **Shaggy Dog Stories:** absurd stories with a humorous side. For instance:

In the wealthy suburbs of Palm Springs, a strange malady was striking the gardeners on the large estates. They were becoming very morose and depressed, and had to be hospitalized. The first signs of the disease were when they started complaining that the lawns were in a terrible shape. A psychiatrist brought in to find out what was happening noticed that there were some gardeners who still remained cheerful and never developed the lawnhating symptoms. The psychiatrist went over and over this group, trying to find out why they were immune and what they were doing

differently. Finally, he noticed that the healthy gardeners always had garden twine in the wheelbarrow, whereas the sick gardeners carried the roll in their pockets. So then the cure was obvious: "Walk on, walk on, with rope in your cart, and you'll never knock a lawn"

In addition, English humor includes such types of jokes as narrative jokes, dirty jokes, Tom Swift jokes, Wellerisms, and knock-knock jokes.

CONCLUSION

The conceptual-semantic analysis presented underscores humor's nuanced conceptual architecture within English and Uzbeklinguistic contexts. The core elements – primarily associated with positive, joyful laughter – contrast significantly with peripheral concepts, characterized by critical, ironic, and sometimes socially abrasive forms. The cross-cultural comparison highlights notable parallels and distinctions, especially in humor genres like anecdotes and jokes, where subtle linguistic, cultural, and cognitive variances manifest. The diversity in humor types, from sophisticated British irony to absurdist "shaggy dog stories," emphasizes humor's intricate interplay between language, cognition, and cultural context. Ultimately, understanding these semantic structures enriches our comprehension of humor as both a linguistic phenomenon and a complex, culturally embedded communicative practice.

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