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TRANSFORMATIONS OF EXPRESSIVES THROUGH HISTORY IN COGNITIVE-COMMUNICATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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This article is based on cognitive-communicative approach to discourse in historical pragmatics: it first surveys a variety of different approaches to discourse studies, then takes a close look at the theoretical issues of emotions and finally suggests our understanding of emotional discourse. The article centers on the minimal unit of emotional discourse – a corresponding speech act, with a special emphasis on the historic change of expressives with negative modality, various aspects of these speech acts and their functioning in the English discourse in the 16th–20th centuries.

Key words: cognitive-communicative approach, emotion, English discourse, history, speech act.

Шевченко І.С. Історичні трансформації експресивів: когнітивно-комунікативний аналіз. Стаття базується на когнітивно-комунікативному підході до дискурсу в рамках історичної прагматики: в ній розглядаються різні підходи до досліджень дискурсу, теоретичні проблеми емоцій і пропонується трактування емоційного дискурсу. Стаття досліджує мінімальну одиницю емоційного дискурсу – відповідний мовленнєвий акт і зосереджена на історичних змінах експресивів з негативною модальністю, на когнітивних і прагматичних аспектах цих мовленнєвих актів і їх функціонування в англійському дискурсі XVI – XXI століть.

Ключові слова: англійський дискурс, емоція, історія, когнітивно-комунікативний підхід, мовленнєвий акт.

Шевченко И.С. Исторические трансформации экспрессивов: когнитивно-коммуникативный анализ. Статья основана на когнитивно-коммуникативном подходе к дискурсу в рамках исторической прагматики: в ней рассматриваются различные подходы к исследованиям дискурса, теоретические проблемы эмоций и предлагается трактовка эмоционального дискурса. Статья исследует минимальную единицу эмоционального дискурса – соответствующий речевой акт и сосредоточена на исторических изменениях экспрессивов с отрицательной модальностью, на когнитивных и прагматических аспектах этих речевых актов и их функционирования в английском дискурсе XVI – XXI веков.

Ключевые слова: английский дискурс, история, когнитивно-коммуникативный подход, речевой акт, эмоция.

1. Introduction

This article is aimed at both theoretical and practical issues: on the one hand, it is to sum up the theoretical approaches to discourse analysis and suggest a cognitive-discursive understanding of a

specific type of discourse – emotional one. On the other hand, an expressive speech act is considered here the minimal unit of discourse, and this analysis is centered on expressives with negative modality.

Emotions are an integral part of human communication, they stipulate the speaker – hearer interchange and at the same time are negotiated in it. In psychology, emotions are understood either from a Superordinate Dimensional or the Discrete emotional perspectives. The latter holds emotions to differ in kind, though the resulting category system doesn't have sharp boundaries and rather is a fuzzy set of constituents. The cognitive-discursive perspective emphasizes emotive mental processing. Being a part of human social and cultural practice cognition is of historic nature. I argue that historic variation of expressive speech acts is rooted in historic transformations in the worldview due to the fact that communicating emotions goes alongside with their mental processing.

In this essay, I will first highlight the issues of the discourse and its emotional vector; then I will define negative emotions and the two major approaches to their study. Adopting a discrete perspective to negative emotions I will then present evidence from English literature to demonstrate the tendencies of historic development of negative expressives in the English discourse of the 16th–20th centuries with the focus on the interface of their cognitive and communicative (semantic-pragmatic) aspects.

2. Discourse and emotions

The cognitive approach in modern linguistics is based on the assumption that linguistic meaning is experientially grounded, encyclopedic and not separate from other forms of knowledge of the world [3]. These ideas correspond to the anthropocentric, functional and explanatory view of linguistics, and have lead to the formation of a cognitive-discursive paradigm of knowledge [5]. Within the framework of this paradigm discursive activities are described against the background of internal mental processes.

Understanding human communication in this paradigm introduces a new vector into pragmatic studies known as Cognitive Pragmatics: “Pragmatics is a capacity of the mind, a kind of information-processing system, a system for interpreting a particular phenomenon in the world, namely human communicative behavior” [2, p. 128-129].

Cognitive Pragmatics focuses on mental operations related to meanings construed in discursive situations; its subject is meaning production and interpretation viewed as mental / cognitive phenomena in linguistic interaction. In a cognitive-communicative perspective discourse is “an integral phenomenon, mental-and-communicative activity, which takes place in a broad social – cultural context; being a unity of the process and result it possesses continuous and dialogic character” [11, p. 28].

Emotions are vital in the human communicative behavior; this makes the emotional sphere the object of research of a number of sciences: evolutionary biology, physiology, neurophysiology,

psychology, cybernetics, philosophy, psycho- and sociolinguistics, general science of language, stylistics and other. Each of these branches tries to create the fundamental theory of the emotions.

The problem of the emotions and senses is one of the most ancient being in the focus of attention beginning with Plato and Aristotle, in whose works one can find the definition and the description of separate elements of the emotional sphere. Later Herbert Spencer, Baruch Spinoza, David Hume, Immanuel Kant gave detailed philosophical definitions of the essence and the characteristic features of emotions. In philosophy, the role of emotions in forming the subjective image of the real world was described as well as the heuristic aspect of their analysis. According to Cartesian theory of reflection, a person in his perception and notions reflects the outward reality through a complex mixture of sense experience and mental experience, thinking, needs, emotions.

From the physiological point of view, emotional processes form an important and integral part of the functional system of human behaviour. Though a definition of emotion is still debatable, emotions are generally viewed as internal mental states representing evaluative valenced reactions to events, agents, or objects that vary in intensity. Emotions are short-lived, intense, and directed at some external stimuli [4]. It was proved that the emotion is the complex phenomenon, which consists of neuro-physiological, neural-muscular (expressive) and phenomenological aspects [4]. R. Nabi sums up the theoretic foundations for emotions: "... emotion is a psychological construct consisting of five components: (1) cognitive appraisal or evaluation of a situation; (2) the physiological component of arousal; (3) a subjective feeling state; (4) a motivational component, including behavior intentions or action readiness; and (5) motor expression" [9, p.153-154].

Each emotion is the system created by these components and a result of their interaction. In linguistic analysis, the focus is on the cognitive evaluative process as well as on emotion's motivation in the human activities and on linguistic means of emotions' actualization in discourse. The former suggests a universal character of the concept EMOTION in the worldview and the latter supplies a deeper insight into the emotional linguistic means. The data of physiological surveys of emotions enabled the linguists to penetrate into the meaning of various metaphorical statements which describe physiological changes in the organism and definite emotional states, as in [6] and others:

e.g. She became scarlet from head to foot. – She was scarlet with rage.

In psychology, emotions are defined as a special class of subjective psychological states, which are reflected in the form of direct perceptions, pleasant or unpleasant person's attitudes to the world, the people, the process and the result of his practical activities [10, p. 367]. The psychology of emotions presents a unity of the intellectual and the emotional, though these two forms of human consciousness are still argued upon. Human emotions, on the one hand, are a part of the objective

reality, i.e. they are the reflected objects of the worldview, and on the other hand, they take part in its construction. The specific character of human emotions is revealed in the fact that they are both an object of linguistic reflection and the instrument of human self-reflection and reflection of other objects of reality.

There are two basic theoretical models of emotion: dimensional and discrete. Dimensional theory focuses on emotion as a generalized motivational state characterized by two broad affective dimensions: activation (high / low) and valence (pleasure / displeasure) [7]. Research from this perspective typically focuses on how the degree of positive / negative feeling affects various cognitive and behavioral outcomes.

Discrete emotion theory, on the other hand, mainly focuses on categorical emotional states (emotions, feelings, affects) typically identified by the unique set of mental patterns, underlying them [8]. Relative to one's goals these patterns lead to certain emotions. R. Nabi elaborates: "The associated physiological changes, together with the emotions' particular action tendencies (e.g., flight for fear, retaliation for anger), motivate perceptions, cognitions, and behaviors in ways consistent with each particular emotion's adaptive goal. Only states with unique appraisal patterns, subjective experiences, and action tendencies are considered discrete emotions" [9, p.154].

In discrete perspective, emotions are divided into positive and negative ones. The terms 'positive :: negative' are used here to define the emotions, caused by actions, states or processes with more or less desirable :: undesirable consequences.

3. Historic change of negative expressives

In human society, positive emotions are taken for granted and comprise fewer shades of emotionally evaluative attitude than the negative ones. The historic change in negative emotions for the last five centuries is the most vivid in Anger, Contempt, Disgust, Fear, Shame, Grief and Suffering [1]. In the 16th – 20th cc., these semantic-pragmatic subtypes of expressives share common markers which indicate direct expressives: on the level of lexis – emotionally marked vocabulary (interjections, emotionally evaluative words; stylistically marked words; on the syntactic level – nominative, unfinished or broken sentences. Indirect expressives may have the structure of imperatives, interrogative sentences, subjunctive mood etc.

The historic variation of semantic subtypes of expressive speech acts corresponds to the change in the worldview, in particular, to the ethic switch from predominantly positive to negative (in terms of the politeness principles), and demonstrates both common and varying tendencies. Among the former is a considerable reduction of interjections and other lexical intensifiers, vulgar words and blasphemies. Among the latter are changes in particular emotions: in speech acts of Anger epithets

become less frequent; in Disgust vulgar words vary and become more diverse in the 20th c.; in Fear blasphemy is noticed quite frequently over the five centuries, in Shame, Grief and Suffering the number of broken sentences and repetitions grows in the 20th c. [1].

4. Conclusion

In this article I have tried to show that a cognitive-communicative approach to discourse on the whole and expressive speech acts in particular supplies relevant instruments for the analysis of speech acts and their diachronic variation. It has been proved that historically expressive speech acts of negative emotionality demonstrate stability of their pragmatic-semantic properties and historic change of the aspects of locution and context (speech act variables). The former is based in the relevant stability of the universal concept EMOTION and the latter is a result of the transformation of the worldview, namely, politeness principles through history. The historic variation of pragmatic-semantic subtypes of expressives of negative emotionality reveals a general tendency of reduction of emotional markers. The results obtained may suggest further insight into emotions both in historic and cross-cultural aspects.

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