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HUMOROUS DISCOURSE IN ENGLISH AND ITS FUNCTIONS

Mehriban Mammadli,

*Postgraduate Student, Azerbaijan University of Languages
(Baku, Azerbaijan)*

Abstract. The article opens the concept of humorous discourse based on the materials of the English language, determines the role of humor in pragmatic, linguistic and social discourses. It becomes clear that humor in English discourses is not only used to create laughter, but also acts as a discourse strategy that expresses social criticism, identity demonstration, ideological position and state relations. These strategies and goals of humor have found their bright reflection in the works of Oscar Wilde, Jonathan Sweet, Mark Twain and Jerome K. Jerome. In this regard, the article also examines the main functions of humorous discourse. The basis of these functions is to reflect the contrasts and contradictions of society with humor, demonstrate identity and social status through the English language, have an ironic, comic effect on the other party, create a status difference, create intimacy through jokes using puns (word play), metaphorical expressions, paradoxes, lexical transformations, criticize with irony, etc. The article gives an explanation of what each function will do and the role of these meanings in humorous discourse.

Key words: English literature, humor, discourse, social criticism, identity.

Introduction. Humor is a type of art related to human nature. Humor and laughter are embedded in the soul and blood of every nation as a hidden force. With humor and laughter, a person is spiritually refreshed, feels light, healthy and cheerful.

In the English people and in fiction, comicism appeared at a time when the inner emptiness and ugliness, which claimed reality and vital content, were covered with an external veil. In this literature, healthy humor and deep lyricism are very closely connected. However, the English do not only create laughter through humor. In fact, this goal is not pursued. Humor also appears in English fiction as a discourse strategy that reflects the ideological position and internal and external relations of power in response to criticism by some members of society (social criticism). Humorous discourse can regulate social distance between the parties to the dialogue, demonstrate identity, and in an ironic aspect, reveal hypocrisy, hypocrisy, flattery, etc. ugliness in society. Through humor, information is obtained about what is good, what is bad, what is exemplary, what is inappropriate. Through humor, objects that become the target of laughter are accurately determined.

“The general name of this great force, which rests on the arms of satire and humor, is comedy. It is the prey of backwardness and inertia, of vulgarity and ignorance, of oppression and violence, of malice and evil forces, of bribery, meanness, betrayal of the people and wickedness, it is the whip that is applied to them; it is the measure and indicator of a person's negative superiority over others” (Kazimov, 2021, p. 6).

The purpose of the article is to explore the features of humorous discourse in the English language and to determine its pragmatic, linguistic and social functions.

Discussions and results. The prominent figures of English literature – Oscar Wilde, Jonathan Swift, Mark Twain and Jerome K. Jerome created excellent examples of discourse humor. They showed the importance of humor in the formation of the worldview of the English people. The works of these authors emphasize the humorous nature of the English people. Funny jokes, apt anecdotes that are a generalized analogue of life reality, phraseologisms that are an example of high wit, wise words have been a bright hope in the difficult times, hard, tiring days of English life.

They showed that at the center of humorous discourse are various language means and word games (puns), satire, sarcasm, irony, anecdotes, paradoxes, metaphorical expressions and parody (Hajiyeva, 2010).

At the center of humorous discourse are various terminological concepts. For example:

Irony – is an indirect criticism in humorous discourse. Irony is a social message transmitted in a non-sense way.

Sarcasm – open and sharp criticism in humorous discourse.

Anecdote – anecdote, bonding (closeness) is the strengthening of social connections and relationships in humorous discourse.

Satire – unlike humor, social, political and religious criticism in discourse.

Pun – (wordplay) word play, language play, here the semantics of humor in humorous discourse is reflected.

Occasionally, paradoxical humor can also be found in humorous discourse. This humor arises due to the illogicality of the parties.

The main functions of humorous discourse in the text are as follows:

Social Criticism. Through this function, contradictions, contrasts, etc. occurring between members of society are shown with humor.

Identity Display. This function demonstrates identity and social status using the rich tools of the English language.

Power Relations. In this function, a difference in social status is created, and the other party is ironically influenced.

Linguistic Creativity. In this function, humor in discourse is formed by language play, metaphors, paradoxes, as well as transformations (transformations) of lexical units.

Solidarity (Bonding). The essence of this function is as follows: In humorous discourse, the parties come closer to each other through jokes. For example: Algernon – “I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read in the train”. *Self-irony* in this example creates emotional intimacy with the audience by making fun of the character himself and reducing social distance.

Bitterness (biting). This function has an open and sharp criticism content, the parties criticize each other through irony. Lord Darlington – “We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars”. The speaker claims moral superiority by placing himself in the position of “stargazing”. From the point of view of discourse, this is status-creating and critical humor.

Different types of humor are found in discourse:

Joking humor in discourse. This consists of light, and in some cases, stinging expressions. In English, this is called “Teasing”. The purpose of using these expressions is not only to create laughter, but also to regulate social relations, emphasize national identity, bring to mind the difference in status, establish a sensory-emotional distance or, conversely, to establish closeness. The teasing of the parties in discourse is called the Bonding and Biting function (Boxer, Contes-Conde, 1977).

In English discourses, this humor both creates a comic mood and, as mentioned above, controls social distance in the communication process. The role of the function in humorous discourse is to create closeness between the parties through friendly jokes. This function both strengthens social connections and relationships and, as they say, warms them up.

Light teasing can also take on an ironic and harsh form in some discourse contexts. This turns into criticism. As a result, the role of this function in discourse is again characterized by creating a status difference and increasing social distance.

In the Identity Display function, the parties introduce themselves. The role of this introduction in discourse is characterized by intelligence and superiority of mind.

In the function called Face-Threatening Act, the effect on face protection is expressed. It can be characterized by aspects that can touch the “personal respect” of the other party in discourse.

The essence of the function called Social Correction is that the parties criticize each other indirectly. The role of this criticism in the discourse is to show the subject's mistake without directly expressing an opinion.

Another function is called “Power Control”. This function is aimed at reshaping power in the discourse, showing social hierarchy and status.

Another function is “Humor & Entertainment”. The content and essence of this function is to provide people with comfort through laughter. Its role in the discourse is characterized by lightening the speech and raising the mood.

Approaching humor in the discourse. In this type of humor, the parties tease each other, but the goal is not to embarrass, that is, they do not cause suffering, do not disturb, do not touch the heart, do not offend, do not hurt, in other words, kindness and sincerity are created between the participants in the discourse. For example, an example from Oscar Wilde’s discourse: Algernon: “I hope my cigarette case is not offended by the lack of attention. It has been very lonely without me.” In this humorous discourse, Algernon teases Jack, says things, but the goal is not to hurt, but to create social closeness between them. Creating a sensory-emotional attitude to a household object (a cigarette case) is absurd. This aspect, as it seems, forms the approach humor.

Contrary to the above, humorous discourse is also actively used in English as “Biting Teasing”, that is, the hurtful status of teasing. As it is said, the goal here is to seriously tease the other person, to hurt him, as well as to show his weaknesses or to remind him of his status. Let's look at an example: Lady Bracknell scene: “To lose one parent may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose both looks like carelessness.” Losing one parent may be regarded as a misfortune, losing two parents is already irresponsible. In this discourse, humor is used to demonstrate teasing, intentional hurt, irony and social superiority.

In this discourse, the small approaches the big through a phraseological unit: to make a mountain out of a molehill = to make an elephant out of an ant.

“Is Stephanie making a mountain out of a molehill?”

“Yes, while describing the event, she exaggerates a minor issue and presents it as a serious problem” (Hajiyeva, 2010, p. 71).

Hyperbole-exaggeration also creates humor in many situations.

Identity and status humor in discourse (Identity Display and Social Status).

This humor can also be called identity display and humor. In the issue of the human factor, the display of identity also occupies one of the main places. Through teasing, they also present their superior aspects in the discursive process. The parties want to show themselves as intelligent, superior, cultured, speaking with humor, joking or speaking with sarcasm, etc. For example: go fly a kite – “Yes it'll be better to say “I want to be alone”.

The following examples of identity and status humor in English are given. We have also used the same material: Algernon (Wilde): “I never change, except in my affections.” One of the participants in the discourse, as it seems, presents himself to the other as romantic, humorous and attractive. The examples also show that a person’s identity is determined not by his true character, material status, external appearance, but by his image in the social environment. The identity of a person is expressed in different linguistic ways in the discourses of the languages being compared and contrasted. In general, the concept of identity is perceived in discourses as a unit of communication, a result of speech. Messages about a person’s identity and status are sent: Lady Bracknell (about Jack Worthing). “A man should have an occupation of some kind. I do not approve of idleness. It leads to mischief”.

There is an ironic image in this humorous discourse. This function (Identity Performance) can be interpreted as follows: Identity is determined by social roles (Lord, Lady, Banker, Guardian). It is understood in society as a dangerous person who has no work or occupation. Interestingly, Lady Bracknell herself has never worked, but exposes “unemployment”. That is, pay attention to the contrast, the contradiction, aristocrats, intellectuals criticize and criticize those who “do not work” without working themselves. This status can be called irony, moreover, it is a serious social parody.

Identity in humorous discourse is expressed by explicit and implicit means. D. Crystal writes that “when expressing identity explicitly in any discourse, the age of people, as well as the chosen topic, or rather, familiarity with the context, play a key role in differentiating the style of message texts” (Crystal, 2006, p. 156).

Implicit expression of social identity in discourses is observed in many initials. For example: the abbreviation VGC is found in ancient writings – “very good condition” (very before wicket), etc. (İmanova, 2024, p. 21).

The explicit expression of identity in social discourses is also observed in phraseological units. For example: in Azerbaijani, the phraseological unit “oxlov udmaq” expresses negative identity. Negative emotion is manifested in the meaning of this phraseological unit (to pull oneself together, to drag oneself, to walk around, to boast) (Hüseynov, Əhmədov, 2011, p. 199).

In the implicit expression of identity, the emotions of the parties, gestures and facial expressions also play a key role. These gestures and facial expressions can be replaced by a phraseological unit. For example: everyone can imagine the appearance of a person who is afraid of a snake. This is a gesture. But this fear can also be expressed with the invariant phraseological units “İlan vuran ala çatıdan qorxar” / “İlan çalan ala çatıdan qorxar”.

Discourse censure humor (Social Correction). In some cases, in a discursive situation, the parties indirectly convey to the other party through humor what they cannot say directly. For example: *It seems to me that you are not late for work again. We just arrived too early.* The humor here has a warning feature. But there is also polite behavior here. Politeness is one of the most important issues in any communication, including discourse communication. Politeness rules, which are the ethics of sociological self-presentation of an individual or organization, are actually the identity of people. “Politeness is an exemplary action; they must be accepted by everyone and be appropriate to a specific situation.” Politeness is a system of ethical rules that regulate cultural communication.” (Hacıyeva, Məmmədova, Seyidova, 2025, s. 182).

Let us give an example: *She said “I didn’t think it’s polite to listen”.* Oscar Wilde’s play “The Importance of Being Earnest” ridicules listening as unacceptable behavior, impoliteness, etc. in that era.

In this situation, the concept of appreciation is revealed. Not everything is appreciated in society. For example: Lady Bracknell writes, “I do not approve of anything that tampers with natural ignorance. Ignorance is like a delicate exotic fruit”.

In general, ignorance and darkness have been exposed in English literature throughout history. In this construction, ignorance is presented as if it were a valuable social attribute. L. Bracknell exposes the false identities of English aristocrats based not on knowledge and science, but on image, appearance and social status.

Image is related to self-confidence. Image is a global concept. People, especially business people, attach great importance to image when they are building a discourse with each other. “Image” is used in the meaning of image, appearance, description, picture in English translation. In humorous discourse, image is actually a means of gaining people’s sympathy. The value and technological functions of image are applied in humorous discourses. Oscar Wilde does not take humor in imicology only as laughter, but also presents it as an intellectual tool that demonstrates social criticism, identity demonstration and the discursive power of language.

In English literature, many topics are centered on social rules and people’s behavior. For example, as in Oscar Wilde’s famous play “Importance without seriousness”. Humor plays a leading role in that play. Here, humor is used to break the tension in the plot line of the play. Famous writers add humor to serious works to make them more salty and readable.

The value functions we have mentioned include the elevation of personality in discursive conditions, the comfort of interpersonal relationships, and psychotherapeutic functions. With the help of

the right image, a person becomes a person necessary for the social environment, gains the sympathy of the discourse partner, and because of this, communication becomes comfortable, and he gains a constant positive mood.

In Azerbaijani literature, Mir Jalal, in his story “The Rules of Courtesy of a Fresh Wedding”, exposes those who turn weddings into a source of income in the name of marrying off sons and daughters. In the end, Teze Bey – Bahlul gets angry, gets angry, loses his temper, and is cursed profusely because the gifts are few and do not satisfy him.

There are rules and customs in life that, although they are not widespread anywhere, are more or less followed by everyone in everyday life. The collection of such well-known “politeness rules” of a newlywed couple, in the language of Bibi, is interesting in terms of the attitude towards anachronisms. Yawning, sobbing, straining, making tea during a conversation, giggling when laughing, muttering under your breath, speaking loudly – all these are negative aspects that create laughter in a conversation (Kazimov, 2021, p. 436).

Technological functions include adaptation between partners, attracting attention, highlighting the best personal and business qualities, overshadowing negative traits in a humorous situation, removing age-related obstacles. This means that a person enters any social environment thanks to his correct and humorous image, attracting attention with all his features.

Humor to enliven the environment in discourse. The British call it “Entertaining Teasing”. This humor is a tease used to completely entertain the partners, create comedy and lighten the conversation. The main purpose of this teasing is not to offend, expose and create a status difference, but simply to enliven the environment, create a funny atmosphere, and ensure people’s social comfort. For example, the following syntactic construction from Oscar Wilde’s “Entertaining Teasing”: Algernon: *I really don't know what a Gwendolen would do without me. I think she'd lose her reason.* In this sentence, the teasing and touching does not seem serious, it does not hurt Gwendolen, it simply makes fun of herself and praises her. At this point, the discourse is formed at the level of a funny dialogue, fun and romantic humor.

Types of teasing include bonding, biting, identity teasing, corrective teasing, and entertaining teasing. These different types establish social relationships between discourse participants, provide friendly criticism, expect hurt, distance, demonstrate identity and status, and warn against fun, joking behavior through humor.

Research on humor in the English literary environment began in the 1970s. Humorous activity is first described. Conversations are filtered through discursive analysis. In this way, interactive sociolinguistics is developed. These points reveal the content of the conversation in interaction and relationship, and allow for more detailed exploration of these issues. The research of that period was able to show how jokes can work as a strategy to strengthen the content and intimacy of people, as well as to control the conversation, such humor creates conditions for friendly communication and helps to discuss and evaluate the social identities of the interlocutors. Of course, the existing works on the issue of humor in discourse are not satisfactory. From this it can be concluded that humorous discourse provides an intensive study of the language not only from a theoretical point of view, but also from a practical point of view and manifests itself more at the phraseological level of the language system.

Conclusions. The study showed that carrying out a monographic study of humorous discourse together with other languages can give good results. Thus, English and Azerbaijani languages have specific features, therefore, a humorous act can be perceived differently in these languages, and especially it can manifest itself more when translated from one language to another.

The research materials once again prove that humor plays an important role in pragmatic, linguistic and social discourses.

The main features of humorous discourse are also measured by its numerous functions. That humor brings people closer together, defines identity and status, and rebukes those who have flaws.

When we pay attention, we see that in order to create humor in discourse, it is necessary to use various means of language correctly. One of them is the phraseological fund of English and Azerbaijani languages. Since the rich phraseological means of both languages have the properties of imagery, emotionality, and expressiveness, they act as an important linguistic factor that determines the vivid expression of thought and the beauty of form in fiction.

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