

**ФИЛОЛОГИЯ***(шифр научной специальности: 10.02.19)*

УДК 81

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**SOME COGNITIVE AND PRAGMALINGUISTIC ASPECTS  
OF RUSSIAN ANECDOTE****[Н.Г. Бирюков, Т.Н. Шарыпова Некоторые когнитивные  
и прагмалингвистические аспекты русского анекдота]**

It is discussed the cognitive and pragmatic aspects of the Russian anecdote. Russian anecdote is an independent speech genre with a set of characteristic features and stereotypical elements, including the use of indirect speech acts, which at a cognitive level are perceived by one of the participants in anecdotal dialogue as direct. The stereotypical semantic content of the anecdote still presupposes the two-partness of cognitive and pragmatic elements, creating asymmetry of introduction and decoupling, an obligatory structural and semantic pause before the final. The pragmatic attitudes of the anecdote as a speech genre differ significantly depending on many sociocultural circumstances and the cognitive background of the communicative situation.

*Key words:* anecdote, anecdotal discourse, Russian anecdote, cognitive theory of humor, cognitive field, frame, pragmatic function.

The anecdote is considered to be a short story most often of comic content, with a witty but sometimes instructive ending, where the clash of meanings is the main text-forming tool. Initially, an anecdote was understood as a short story describing an insignificant event in the life of a historical person. Such a perception of the anecdote was associated with the textbook work of Procopius of Caesarea "Anecdota", where the manners of the court of Emperor Justinian were reflected. Today, the anecdote is inextricably linked with the conceptual sphere of humor. Humor is a special form of social consciousness, a kind of representation of the cultural code reflecting the specificity of a certain nation's thinking. A person without humor often falls into diametrically opposite emotional extremes – sometimes baseless optimism, but more often into pessimism. A view of the world through the prism of humor

helps to overcome these extremes, serves as a means of resolving the communicative impasse and communicative detente, as a form of exposing various kinds of imposed officialism based on cultural stereotypes and various kinds of myths of power. Such a common form of oral folk art, as an anecdote is the only productive, “living” genre of urban folklore, which concentrates the most productive communication strategies and tactics of everyday discourse, reflecting the depth of the national conceptual sphere of humor [2]. The "cornerstone" of the cognitive theory of humor is – cognition – cognitive mastery. It is precisely the comprehension of the meaning of the anecdote that is the dominant point at which the increase in cognitive tension is replaced by a sharp decline. However, comprehension does not constitute the very essence of humor, since it is also inherent in the most diverse mental processes that require stress, which subsides after the task is solved. A.G. Kozintsev [6] notes that, although the moment of comprehending the essence of the anecdote and the moment of scientific discovery are really similar, but behind this similarity there is a fundamental difference. “Unbridled, infectious laughter would have sounded a clear cognitive dissonance to the cry of “eureka!”. This is quite understandable: the person who has made the discovery or even just solved a rebus really has found something. The man, who has understood the essence of the anecdote, has not found anything. M.A. Panina [8], analyzing the cognitive-linguistic mechanisms of the comic, indicates that the comic speech act proceeds in a frame game consisting of the fictional perception of modus vivendi and the message itself, at the end of which there is an unexpected change in the communicative attitude, provokes a comic effect. *Homo loquens* always perceives and produces speech through mental mechanisms for categorizing and conceptualizing the world [7]. In the description of the anecdote, modern linguistics uses primarily the categories of cognitive semantics: frame – mental linguistic structure, fixing stereotypical situations, script – culturally conditioned set of information caused by the lexical association in the mind of the communicator and script – keywords of the text describing the sequence of stereotypical speech act. Frames have a conventional nature and therefore fix what is characteristic of a particular linguoculture, and what is not. In multidimensional episodes of social interaction, frames regulate the individual's daily behavior, “prompting” standard, stereotypical modes of action and patterns of communication. “The concept of a frame is often applied to situations characterized by a stereotypical set of actors and a known sequence of events. The concept of scenario is also used in this meaning”

[5]. For the cognitive analysis of anecdotal discourse, the concept of an interactive frame is also relevant, which includes the “communicative expectations” of speakers. The task of frame semantics in the study of communication in general is to identify interactive frames that define the structure of the “communicative expectations” of the participants in the communication situation, and the factors that determine the conditions for the activation of a particular frame; the task of anecdotal discourse is to identify the conflict between the communicative situation, the corresponding communicative expectations and the speech actions of the anecdote characters. The immanent property of anecdotal discourse, causing the generation of comic meaning, is a cognitive impairment in the mind of an individual concerning the familiar picture of the world, the destruction of ideas about the objective connections and relationships of objects and phenomena of the surrounding world. A.Yu. Goloborodko [3] identifies the following breaking violations of the laws of logic, which lead to the generation of comic meaning: 1. violation of the law of sufficient reason. (*За что вы попали в тюрьму? – Я имел несчастье найти кошелёк какого-то господина... – Но это ведь не преступление! – Да, но я нашёл его раньше, чем он был утерян...*); 2. violation of the law of the excluded middle (Robber: – Trick or life? – Excuse me, could you suggest choosing something else?); 3. violation of the law of contradiction (Police officer: – It is forbidden to fish here! – And I don't catch it, I only train the worm to swim breaststroke); 4. violation of the law of identity (“New Russian” comes to the maternity ward: *Врач сообщает: У вас родился сын. Три восемьсот. – Нет проблем. Достает бумажник и отсчитывает: – Одна, две, три, ещё восемьсот долларов*).

Russian anecdote is a unique cultural phenomenon, the most productive genre of urban folklore and, most importantly, a method of axiological perception of the world. Anecdote is the most productive speech strategy that destroys the spontaneously arisen "dialogical dead end" that unites the diametrically opposite points of view of the speakers. L.N. Tolstoy in «War and Peace» explained when and why they tell an anecdote. At the very beginning of the novel there is an entertaining episode: at an evening at Anna Pavlovna Scherer, Pierre Bezukhov and Andrei Bolkonsky, with their rather clever and therefore tactless conversations, nearly burst the "spindle" of a small talk, and then the young prince Ippolit jumped out and with the words "And by the way ...", began completely inopportunistically telling a completely stupid anecdote about the notable lady, who put on the

bridles of the coach a tall maid instead of the lackey. It was really a very silly anecdote, which, nevertheless, fulfilled its function of relieving tension in conversation. Everyone was grateful to the prince, as probably in the Middle Ages there were some grateful to the jesters for help courtiers, who said something inappropriate, when jesters with daring or absurd joke smoothed out the communicative awkwardness that appeared [1,2]. However, today, much more often the success of an anecdote in the semantic-pragmatic space between the speaker and the listener is determined by the quality of the anecdote and the skill of the narrator. To tell an anecdote well means not just making a narrative about some funny episode, and presenting this episode in "faces." The narration of an anecdote is not a narrative, but a representation produced by a single actor. For many anecdotes, the intonation of the narrator, combined with the paralinguistic component (gestures, facial expressions), plays a paramount role. In a number of cases they create what is called the "salt" of the anecdote [10].

Anecdotal discourse is constituted by the actual text of the anecdote (verbalized component of discourse) and the cognitive background (non-verbalized component) [3]. As the genre of speech and the genre of urban folklore anecdote is very often an expression of a specific language game. All the plot content of the anecdote, all its comic potential in the process of "theatrical performance" are subordinated to the main goal: to give pleasure to the listener and to get it by the narrator himself. This is the essence of the game as a special kind of mental activity and language game at the same time, which is based on a wide variety of linguistic phenomena or effects: logical-semantic, lexical, grammatical. Thus, we can conclude that the stereotypical form of the anecdote, which is focused on the transmission of dramatic events, to the "stage" incarnation of the comic event, the stereotypical parody content of the anecdote that conveys the fictional actions of typed characters – parodies, as well as the communicative stereotype of the anecdote as a playful comic intertext in relevant situations – all this together makes up a complex typological feature: theatricality. The genre theatricality of the Russian anecdote should be understood as immanently inherent dramaturgy, involving the narrator playing a situationally conditioned comic parody, a fictional game situation occurring with typed characters in a single cognitive field. The genre uniqueness of the Russian anecdote lies in its unique strength of the nationality (folk identity). And this is true for a number of reasons:

1. The anecdote is anonymous, and this is its principal feature as a folklore genre. It is important to understand that the real stories told at the beginning with a clear indication of specific actors subsequently become common because of the typicality and significance of what is being said, take an "anonymous" form. For example, turning into an anecdote of a "bitter" joke of a revolutionary, a talented publicist and sharp-witted K. B. Radek: *Заполняя в тюрьме анкету, Радек в графе «Чем вы занимались до революции?», вписал: «Сидел и ждал». Следующим вопросом был: «Чем занимались после революции?». «Дождался и сел». Comparison in phase: – Что выделали до 1917 года? – Сидел и дождался. А после 1917? – Дождался и сел. Comparison in phase (other literally variant): Судьба русского интеллигента: до революции сидел и всё ждал, после революции дождался и отсидел [1]. Even if an anecdote is invented by a speaker (which is not rare), the narrator, as a rule, prefers not to advertise it, he is removed from the authorship, otherwise the anecdote loses the objective strength of the folk identity: speech situations like "I came up with an anecdote ..." or "Listen to my new anecdote " are very rare. There are, of course, exceptions to any rule, for example, there are cases where the author's anecdotes were presented to his listeners by L. Utesov, M. Bernes, or the tireless author, brilliant narrator and collector of national anecdotes A. A. Gerdt.*
2. The primary form of an anecdote is identical to other folklore genres ("bika", "byvalshchina"), is oral: an anecdote is narrated, played, and necessarily in the strict framework of the genre form – joking parody from the corresponding thematic series. Even written fixations of an anecdote are usually intended for their subsequent oral reproduction: "Tell your friends." In Russian idiom, there is even a steady expression "travit" anecdotes: telling jokes in series, without interruption, one after the other in a single thematic group.
3. Like any folklore genre, anecdote is repeatedly reproduced, transmitted from one narrator to another. The following expressions are known: a anecdote goes around or jokanecdotes go around, a joke to the topic ... And an indispensable consequence of an anecdote's reproduction is its constant, sometimes artsy variability. As a rule, anecdotes are told with different options: in some cases, the variability is the cost of oral transmission of content, and in

others, the result of the deliberate improvisation of the narrative, which seeks to adapt the anecdote to the actual speech situation or improve it in its own way, following specific cognitive and pragmatic attitudes. Moreover, some anecdotes in the process of reproduction acquire different variants of introduction and culmination. Such variability is typical for all traditional folklore genres: fairy tales, ditties, raving.

So, the anecdote is a unique, extremely developed and productive phenomenon of national culture, having its own nomination and its own typological features: the stereotype of form, content and communicative purpose. Anecdote is a special genre of oral speech, which contains the whole range of cognitive and pragmatic attitudes generated by the elite culture of the intelligentsia, supported and accepted by traditional culture and it becomes a mass manifestation of modern urban folklore in our country. Dwelling separately on the pragmatic elements of the anecdote stereotype, it should be noted that it usually manifests itself in the preferred choice of the types of tense forms of predicate verbs. As a rule, these are the forms of the actual present time or the past tense of the perfect tenses in the effective sense, and with the usual preposition of the predicate in the sentence, helping to present the event as relevant [1]. E.Ya Shmeleva and A.D. Shmelev [10] distinguish three linguistic layers in the joke: 1. "metatext" inputs; 2. speech characters; 3. text from the "author". Metatext entries imply such phrases as: It's like in that anecdote ... Well, just like that wife from that anecdote ... Do you know an anecdote? By the way, here comes the anecdote ... As a rule, these phrases do not belong directly to the structure of the anecdote. However, in some cases they acquire the status of a cognitively significant element. In particular, this applies to anecdotes told online: Do you know the shortest anecdote? .....? – Communism. – And the longest? ... – The path to communism [1]. Metatext usually reflects the basic cognitive attitudes inherent in a specific anecdote in a given communicative situation. Considering the speech of the anecdote characters, first of all, it should be borne in mind that all the "roles" are performed by one "actor" – the anecdote narrator or trickster, as the anecdote narrator was called in the old days. And the characters themselves represented by the narrator must be recognizable by the listeners, for the most frequent heroes of anecdotes are the "personalities" who are in the single cognitive space between the speaker and the listener. In the author's text, everything is subordinated to the tasks of visualization and a set of pragmatic elements, realized due to polysemy, figures and tropes come out ahead.

The anecdote characters in the author's text do not need a special presentation (they are part of a single cognitive space), their number is limited and they are known to all representatives of Russian linguistic culture – they are representatives of various nations (Russian, American, Englishman, Georgian, Jewish and, of course, the Chukchi – the most typed character); political figures (Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Gorbachev); heroes of feature films and animations (Stirlitz, Muller, Sharapov, Crocodile Gena, Cheburashka). Also, such iconic characters as Little Johnny (Vovochka), collective images, such as a teacher, husband, wife, lover, boss, secretary, "new Russian", and some animalistic characters – hare, wolf, bear, fox [1]. The cognitive stereotype of the Russian anecdote is most consistently reflected in its basic, oral form, and the secondary nature of written anecdotes becomes apparent: the recording cannot convey the accentological structure that is very important for many anecdotes: the presence of semantic pauses, acceleration or slowing down of the narrative, the intonational highlighting of the second part, climaxes, and, in some cases, vocabulary – speech characteristics of the characters, because without this, many anecdotes lose their comic potential. The meaningful denouement in the anecdote (regardless of the volume of the anecdote) is always brief, unexpected, overly paradoxical, and it is preceded by a main pause that divides the text of the anecdote into two unequal parts. The pause carries a pragmatic meaningful component of the anecdote: a change in the development of the anecdote and the semantic structuring of all plotlines.

The connection of an anecdote with the pragmatic micro situation is traced at the level of its structural organization. The order of the components in the process of telling an anecdote, as well as its theme, is largely determined by the nature of the recipient's response, which, as a result of the perception of the anecdote, should laugh. In addition, the pragmatic task of the anecdote is the appearance of laughter in the very finale of the anecdote telling, by no means during or at the beginning. Therefore, the component most significant for the occurrence of the corresponding reaction is always located at the end of the anecdote discourse. “This component, which completes the process of telling an anecdote, which has a comic nature and has the greatest illocutionary power, is the core of the anecdote's genre structure, its invariant basis” [9]. The pragmatic features of the anecdote as a genre and as a text are determined by the peculiarities of its functioning. V. M Ivanov [4] supposes that the central pragmatic category of anecdote is the category of relevance, mainly tact as the relevance of playing an anecdote determines whether the speaker will achieve

the desired effect, that is, whether his listeners will laugh, will appreciate the humor that is inherent in the anecdote, as well as the skill of the narrator. However, regarding the category of relevance (along with clarity, logic and beauty) in general there is a basic condition for good (successful) speech, which was indicated in ancient rhetoric. Another thing is that the appropriateness or irrelevance of an anecdote is clearly manifested by the reaction of the audience. But since the anecdote in recent decades is increasingly being presented to the recipient in writing, this manifestation goes by the wayside. It turns out that the cognitive orientation of the anecdote is far from always being determined by such conditions as the skill of the narrator and the pragmatically determined situation having to do with this anecdote. The main prerequisite for the effectiveness and success of the anecdote are actually linguistic factors. However, it is natural that the primary functioning of the anecdote is connected precisely with the situation of the narration to a certain set of listeners. This process has a complex cognitive – pragmatic nature. “The storyteller’s intentional horizon is to promise the listener the pleasure of the anecdote being told. All his speech actions are directed at this. The intentional strategy of the listener is to anticipate the pleasure of a joke. He listens attentively to what is being told, trying to catch and understand the witty denouement in a timely manner”[4]. V.M. Ivanov revealed a “well-defined arsenal of pragmatic functions of the anecdote”. This arsenal is reduced to the following functions: 1. creation of a certain image of the narrator; 2. the establishment of trust, up to familial relations between people; 3. creating a good mood in society; 4. the aesthetic experience of the anecdote by the narrator himself; 5. feeling the pleasure of the narrator from the effect produced by the anecdote narrated; 6. marking the end of one topic and the transition to another, as well as a new form and atmosphere of conversation; 7. removal of tension or fatigue, that is, the relaxation function; 8. creation of imagery and visibility, attracting interest to the topic or problem under discussion; 9. ridicule of a fact in the social or personal life of a person; 10. creating political satire; 11. political manipulation of public consciousness [4]. Thus, in combination with pragmatic functions, another important factor in generating and successfully functioning anecdote is a pragmatically caused violation of the norm, standard, provided that the recipient has a set of cognitions that allow him to identify and evaluate the violation of the standard [1]. And the pragmatic attitudes of the anecdote as a speech genre differ significantly depending on many sociocultural circumstances and factors of the communicative situation.



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*21 ноября 2019 г.*

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