

CONCEPTUAL COMPREHENSION OF IRONY

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The notion of irony is present in different historical and philosophical contexts as well as in linguistic ones. Each epoch introduced its shades to the meaning, the future trends of its development and study remain open. The urgency of the topic of investigation is determined by interest of scholars to conceptual comprehension of irony and availability of many gaps in the sphere. An object of investigation is presented by the concept of negation in English language discourse.

Ironic meaning is the meaning of a language unit of any level the direct meaning or stylistic coloring of which does not coincide with the essence of denotate. Irony works only if there are any formal signs in the context that point at the contrary content of the utterance. That is contradiction underneath the mask of approval and assent when phenomenon is intentionally imputed to pose the quality it does not really have. For example one of the Robert Burn's epigrams where contradiction underneath the mask of approval can be legibly trailed:

That there is a falsehood in his looks

I must and will deny;

They say their master is a knave –

And sure they do not lie [2].

The context determines irony of the situation through the contrast between expected information and reality opposed to it. Sometimes a hint for the pretence is given out of the text, in the situation of creating or in conditions of an epoch. Let us consider the example of ironical expression in the tragedy of William Shakespeare "Romeo and Juliette": *Two households, both alike in dignity ... [3].*

At first it seems that there is no irony. Learning the creation, however, a reader understands that none of the families indeed is noble and dignified since their doings affirm the contrary.

Negation is considered to be one of the means of denial, prohibition, reluctance. Negation is a special language category, one of the language universals that differs with exceptional status in many social sciences such as philosophy, logic, psychology, mathematics and linguistics[4, 79]. It is significant for the communication process and considered to be one of the main mental operations. It is an abstract concept that exteriorizes in modus of all languages. As for the means of expression of negative meaning in speech scholars distinguish explicit and implicit negation. Explicit expression of the concept means direct, open expression of some meaning whereas implicit expression is based on indirect, hidden verbalization. Implicit meaning forms due to stylistic devices and expressive means,

usage of certain language units that break logical connections within a text and usage.

Ironic utterance contains two contrary mental spaces, where lingual unit itself that is ironic utterance appears to be put in the forefront and the back burner is based on real cognitive encirclement. Irony represents the conceptual projection of two different mental spaces, contradiction of which within a context creates ironic assessment. This contradiction is an essence of negation and key feature of irony at the same time.

Among works of Robert Burns we can find the following epitaph:

*HERE lies John Bushby — honest man,
Cheat him, Devil — if you can[2]!*

A reader understands that it is easy to cheat an honest and righteous man unlike a sly one, who will stop at nothing for his own prosperity. Contradiction intensifies with mentioning of devil. After all he is master of temptation and swindle. Thus, inner and outer structures of an ironic utterance form the contradiction: with the help of outer structure the author claims that John Bushby was an honest man whereas by the inner structure this claim is objected. That confirms that negation objectifies through the contrast between inner and outer structures. Since irony is based on implicit negation that appears under breaking of logical connections within communicative units, so it takes the special place among stylistic devices. Consequently in ironic utterances negation finds its expression in the level of communicative language units. Characteristic feature of verbal expression of irony consists in coexistence of two meanings that is direct explicit and implicit. Thus, negation appears in nature of above mentioned stylistic device and serves as its key feature.

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