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CULTURAL SPECIFICS OF RUSSIAN IRONY

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Abstract

The paper discusses characteristics of irony used by speakers of Russian in various discourse domains. The study is based on the texts and transcripts of oral communication complied in 2008-2019. For the analysis of the wider context literary texts written by authors belonging to the Russian, British and Jewish cultures were also analysed. The aim of the research is to show how speakers of Russian use irony to create social and cultural meanings in oral and written interaction, to demonstrate contexts which are more irony-prone and some linguistic means which are used to signal the speaker's ironic intention. In the paper, verbal irony is viewed as a discursive practice commonly found in many contexts, including, but not limited to, public political discourse, mass media discourse and online discussions in social networks. These discourse domains are highly competitive and evaluative, therefore, irony-prone. Specific cultural and political context of modern Russia triggers ironic reactions, and these reactions mark the speaker's negative evaluation of the situation. Speakers shape their ironic intention by using various verbal techniques which require deep knowledge of both culture and language and make irony a culture-specific phenomenon. Cultural specifics of Russian irony can be seen in comparison with other cultures, e.g. Jewish or British. The final section of the paper addresses the issue of irony as a cultural phenomenon and describes types of irony that are typical for different cultures. The typology is based on the type of inversion of the meaning of the utterance.

1. Introduction

Irony and sarcasm still attract a lot of attention now despite the fact that their first descriptions date back to the antiquity (Bailin, 2015; Garamendia, 2018; Vaulina & Bulataya, 2019). The traditional view on these phenomena stating that the addressee should understand the meaning of the utterance vice versa, has been enriched by the application of the pragmatic principles of communication (Piskorska, 2014), cognitive theories (Filik et al., 2018; Giora, 2016; Libura, 2017) and ontological and computational approaches (Taylor, 2017).

The paper discusses characteristics of irony used by speakers of Russian in various discourse domains. The collection of texts and transcripts of oral communication for the study was compiled in 2008-2019. For the analysis of the wider context literary texts written by authors belonging to the Russian, British and Jewish cultures were also analysed. The purpose of the study is to show how speakers of Russian use irony to create social and cultural meanings in oral and written interaction, to demonstrate contexts which are more irony-prone and some linguistic means which are used to signal the speaker's ironic intention.

2. Problem Statement

Irony has been the object of scholarly interest for centuries, yet, researchers are still discussing its discursive status and properties. Irony is referred to as a rhetorical trope or a figure of speech, a type of insincere communication, a subtype of humorous discourse the aim of which is to express critical stance, a mode of postmodern thinking (Hutcheon, 1995) or, more recently, it has been defined as "… a device of both mind and language for acknowledging the gap between what is expected and what is observed" (Gibbs & Colston, 2007, p. 9), etc. This difficulty in categorization of irony arises from the fact that in discourse it comes in various forms and guises and it is not always easy to recognize the ironic intention of the speaker.

Traditionally, researchers focus on stylistic properties of irony, its multiple social functions (Kuipers, 2015), verbal and non-verbal signals of ironic intention (Garamendia, 2018) and cognitive mechanisms of its recognition in discourse (Borisova & Pirogova 2013, p.143; Gibbs & Colston, 2007). However, not much research is devoted to the use of irony in a specific cultural context or by speakers of a particular language. In this paper, we are going to describe the use of irony by speakers of Russian with the aim to demonstrate social and cultural context in which irony emerges and some linguistic tools which are conventional or typical for ironic discourse.

Since irony is not a ready-made tool, but rather something that people construct in discourse, irony can be categorized as a discursive practice, i.e. something that people regularly do in discourse with a particular aim. In general, as a recurring phenomenon irony reflects deficiencies of social reality and existing social relations. Since these relations can differ, it is necessary to reveal the main characteristics of irony as a discursive practice that can differ in various cultures.

3. Research Questions

The article is aimed at answering the following questions:

- what is irony, how it should be defined, what characteristics are to be listed;

- what are the signals of 'inverted understanding' of the ironic utterance;

- what types of irony exist in various cultures.

4. Purpose of the Study

The study should show the various characteristics of utterances that make them ironic. The difference in some cases of irony is to be revealed and explained. Then the correlation of types of irony and national traditions (namely Russian, British and Jewish) should be demonstrated.

In order to be interpreted as ironic an utterance should meet three requirements: (1) it should contain some sort of semantic incoherence; (2) it should convey negative evaluation; and (3) the speaker should pretend to be serious or silly, i.e., he or she should hide their real intention behind a "mask" (Shilikhina, 2014). The three components – incoherence, negative evaluation and pretense – are "packed" in various verbal and non-verbal forms which function in specific social and cultural contexts. Taken together, the components of irony and a specific context make irony a tricky component of discourse.

5. Research Methods

The first step in our study was to analyse texts published by mass media and samples of computer-mediated discourse. For the analysis of the wider context literary texts written by authors belonging to the Russian, British and Jewish cultures were also analysed.

The semantic componential analysis was used to pinpoint the parts of meaning that are ironically inverted. The discourse analysis makes it possible to qualify media texts as ironic. The pragmatic analysis reveals the actions of the Speaker and the Hearer in ironic discourse. Some elements of the multicultural comparison were used. The sentiment analysis was also taken into consideration.

The easiest way to create semantic incoherence is to invert the meaning of the utterance. This is the reason why irony is often described as "turning the meaning upside down".

The following components of meaning can be the subject of inversion:

1.   The assertion (or dictum), e.g. *My vse brosili i pobezhali vypolnyat' zadanie. (So, we forgot everything and ran to complete the task.)* The utterance is used as the answer to the call to execute some task, meaning, that the addressees refuse to do that.

2.   The evaluation, e.g. *Nu da, chudesnaya pogoda – azh pyat' minut dozhdya ne bylo! (Oh, yeah, the weather is wonderful. It hasn't rained for the five minutes!)*

3. The modal frame (modus) i.e. type of the speech act. The following example of online discussion illustrates the case:

Ilya da kto takoj soros? Ne znaem my nikakogo sorosa! soros v amerike i niche pro nas ne znaet. (Ilya well who the hell is soros? We don't know any soros! soros is in America and he doesn't know anything about us.)

Valery Koval'chuk Il'ya, kto-to minus stavil vam, ne ponyali chto eto ironiya. (Valery Kovalchuk Ilya, someone marked you with a minus, you didn't get the irony.)

<u>*Il'ya*</u> *Valere. nu nakonec-to kto-to dogadalsya. ya uzh dumal sovsem ploho s yumorom. (*<u>*Ilya*</u> *to Valery Well, finally someone guessed it right, I thought no one would understand the humour)* (Soros nazval Rossiju…, 2013)*.*

The indignation expressed by the first sentence underlined with the particle *da (well)* should be understood as mocking those who express the negative attitude cited above.

It is a well-known fact that both humor and irony can sometimes be difficult to grasp for people from other cultures. Difficulties stem from their inability to recognize verbal markers of irony and / or from not being familiar with the current social and cultural context.

Since the negative stance of irony and cognitive mechanisms underlying the semantics of irony and its understanding in discourse are assumed to be universal, the question arises what can be treated as culture-specific in ironic discourse. In our view, cultural and language specific properties of irony are defined by irony-prone contexts and linguistic means of creating irony in discourse. In the following sections we will talk about the contexts and the language of irony respectively.

6. Findings

6.1. Where to expect irony: irony-prone discourse domains

One of the major properties of irony is its dependence on the context. To explain ironic meaning researchers should give a detailed account of the immediate situation and often a wider cultural context is needed to demonstrate the roots of irony.

In modern Russian culture some typical contexts in which irony emerges include political discourse (Gornostayeva, 2016), mass media discourse and online discussions in social networks. All these discourse domains share the same property – they are highly competitive and at the same time evaluative by nature. Not only do participants of discourse tend to express their points of view, but they also explicitly or implicitly evaluate opinions of their opponents. Evaluation becomes the part and parcel of communication (cf. Voloshinov's claim that "Any word used in actual speech possesses not only theme and meaning in the referential, or content, sense of these words, but also value judgement: i.e., all referential contents produced in living speech are said or written in conjunction with a specific *evaluative accent.* There is no such thing as word without evaluative accent" (Voloshinov & Bakhtin, 1986, p. 103). It comes as no surprise that irony is likely to be created when speakers want to tease their opponents, express implicit aggression or demonstrate their non-conformity.

A good example of irony in the public political discourse is the comment made in 2016 by Maria Zakharova, the official representative of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in her private Facebook account:

"SMI: "Obama poprosit Gretsiju zakryt' porty dlya rossijskikh korabley».

I ved' eto ne predel! Obama, naprimer, vpolne mozhet poprosit' zakryt' Pushkina dlya golubej ili doski dlya gvozdej.

Druzja, a chto eshcho mozhet poprosit' zakryt' Obama? (Zakharova, 2016).

(Mass media: "Obama will ask Greece to close its ports for the Russian navy".

And there is more to come! For instance, Obama might ask to close Pushkin's monument for pigeons or wooden boards for nails.

Folks, what else can Obama ask to close?[1])

Zakharova'a public comment is made online on her private page, so it is available to an unlimited number of Facebook users. She makes a political statement "as if" she expresses her private thoughts and not the official position of the Ministry. Her writing complies with all three requirements for ironic interpretation: it is based on obvious semantic incoherence (political action of the American President is aligned with the apparently impossible and senseless actions), it contains implicit negative evaluation and, finally, the author of the comment "puts on a mask" of a simpleton. The comment was widely quoted as ironic by Russian mass media in their publications prior to Obama's official visit to Greece.

Another example of irony comes from the article which describes the opening of a new commercial highway between Moscow and Saint-Petersburg in November, 2019. The participants of the first official journey were high-rank state officials and journalists. In his article the journalist ironically describes the evening part of their trip on a dark highway:

Pravda, stemnelo, i fonari pochemu-to ne goreli. Glava «Avtodora» Vyacheslav Petushenko zvonil komu-to i sil'no nervnichal:

– Eshcho i moros', i minus, ya ponimayu… Da, avariya na Ryabovskoj podstancii! – on dazhe, kazhetsya, obradovalsya, kogda prichina nakonec obnaruzhilas', i dostojnaya. To est' delo bylo ne v tom, chto fonari prosto ne goreli, i vse. Net, vse horosho: avariya na podstansii

[*In fact, it got dark but the street lamps wouldn't work. The head of "Avtodor" Viacheslav Petushenko phoned someone and was very nervous:*

– And it's drizzling, and below zero, I understand… Oh, yes, there is an emergency at Ryabovskaya electric power substation! – he seemed to start feeling happy when the cause was found, and a good cause it was! In other words, it was not just that the street lamps were not working. No, everything was ok: there was an emergency at the electric power substation]. (Kolesnikov, 2019, p. 1)

The journalist's irony is aimed at both the officials' behavior and the gap between what was expected (a highway of a good quality) and the reality (instead of driving on a well-lit highway the officials have to drive in the dark). The journalist pretends to accept a rather absurd official's explanation as the sound one, which goes against common sense. Ironic interpretation allows the readers to interpret this pretense rationally.

Russian officials and politicians often become targets of irony – in fact, this long-standing cultural tradition of implicit mocking of state officials was established in the 19th century by Saltykov-Shchedrin. Since then irony has always been a safe way to express critical stance. In the following example the author mocks a corrupt member of the Russian Parliament who got arrested and whose case at the time of his arrest was widely discussed in the media:

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[1] All examples were translated from Russian into English by the authors.

Vprochem, za Mitrofanova obidno. Tselyj deputat, glava komiteta, avtoritetnyj chelovek. A pogoret' mozhet iz-za tseny voprosa men'she sotni tysyach dollarov" ("Est` problemy`?...", 2013, p. 1)

(Well, as for Mitrofanov, it's a shame: the whole member of Parliament, the head of the committee, and a man of standing – and he can be on fire while the problem at stake is less than a hundred thousand dollars.)

The comment presents the size of the bribe as insignificant, especially in the context of the official status of the arrested person. The common stereotype of a Member of Parliament in Russian culture is not a favorable one, dishonesty being one of its main characteristics. The journalist's irony, again, is easier to recognize if the reader is familiar with both the immediate context, existing stereotype and a wider cultural context of the tradition to criticize indecent behavior of politicians and state officials.

To sum up, to understand the examples like these, one needs to be familiar with the political context and agenda of mass media. What is more, to recognize the ironic intention one needs to see markers of irony in discourse.

6.2. What to expect: markers of irony in the nearest context

In this section we will discuss typical markers of irony. To do this, we will need to go back to the elusive concept of intended incoherence.

To signal the discrepancy between the observed situation and the desired situation or the norm, irony should be based on intended semantic incoherence or irrationality, whether subtle or easy to notice. Incoherence can be created when typical collocation patterns are broken. Below there are two examples of irony in oral and written discourse created and signalled by non-trivial collocations:

Vsem dobrogo dnya, v studii "Vesti FM" Anatolij Kuzichev. Tema nashej besedy – eto vystuplenie olimpijskoj sbornoj komandy Rossii na Igrah v Vankuvere. Uzhasayushchee vystuplenie. Chudovishchnyj rezul'tat, chut' li ne samyj plohoj za desyatiletiya. U nas est' **celaya bronzovaya medal'***!*

(Good day to everyone, here at the studio of "Vesti FM" is Anatoly Kuzichev. The topic of our discussion today is the performance of the Russian Olympic team at the Games in Vancouver. What a horrific performance. A dismaying result, the worst in several decades. We've got the total of a bronze medal!). ("Nu a cho?" – novyj gimn rossijskoj sbornoj, 2010, p. 1)

The speaker's exclamation is a marker of implicit evaluation: he pretends to praise the devastating result of the Russian Olympic team by presenting their poor result as a significant one. The incoherence arises as the writer presents a single item as an entity; its rational interpretation is possible is only in the ironic mode of discourse.

Another example of non-trivial collocation as a marker of irony comes from the abovementioned newspaper article about the new highway. The journalist describes the evening part of their journey, when all participants had to drive in the darkness as the street lamps were not functioning:

Fonari goreli, vprochem, nedolgo. I on opyat' komu-to zvonil, i vot oni vdrug vspyhivali za nashimi spinami.

– Vot chto zvonok zhivotvoryashchij delaet!.. – kachal golovoj Aleksandr Drozdenko. (Kolesnikov, 2019, p. 1)

(The street lamps did not work long, anyway. And he made another phone call again, and the street lamps would suddenly turn on behind our backs.

*– This is what a **vivifying phone call** can make!.. – Alexander Drozdenko shook his head.)*

The speakers of Russian intuitively perceive collocations *tselaya bronzovaya medal' [the whole bronze medal]* and *zvonok zhivotvoryashchij (a vivifying phone call)* as unusual. What is more, the second collocation contains an intertextual reference to stable collocations *voda zhivotvoryashchaya (vivifying water)* and *krest zhivotvoryashchij (vivifying cross)* which are used in religious discourse in the descriptions of miracles. The nouns *water* and *cross* function as symbols and the collocations express positive judgement. In the new context the adjective *vivifying* collocates with the non-symbolic noun and functions as the trigger of incoherence.

Another example of markers of irony is the use of words that signal a specific ideology by its opponents. For instance, if terms like *trudyashchiesya (toiling masses), ekspluatator (exploiter), proletariat (proletariat)* are used by anti-communist sources, it is a sure sign of irony. Irony of the blogger in the following example is based on the echoic use of the phrase *otobrat' i podelit' (take away and share)* which was widely used by communists:

Sluchajno poschastlivilos' priobshchit'sya k odnoj iz zhemchuzhin narodnogo – ili antinarodnogo? – tvorchestva: stoletnij anekdot "pro otnyat' i podelit'!" Poetomu ya ego tozhe otnyala tam, gde nashla, i delyus'. (Skol'ko vy poluchite… , 2019, p. 1)

(Quite by chance I was lucky enough to become familiar with the gem of the folk – or, perhaps, anti-folk? – art: the old joke about "to take away and share!". So, I, too, took it away from where I'd found it and share it with you.)

Intertextual references – frequent markers of irony – exist within a particular culture. They form a wide context in which ironic utterance or a text should be interpreted. This creates yet another difficulty for recognition of irony in discourse and makes it even more culture-specific. In fact, this intertextual nature of irony gave rise to the echoic theory of verbal irony (Sperber & Wilson, 1981). Intertextual allusion creates double reference which, in turn, becomes the source of incoherence and triggers ironic interpretation.

An example of intertextual irony is a blog entry written as a comment to the conflict between the state road police and the citizen group "The Blue Buckets" which protested against the unlawful use of blue lights by the cars of state officials.

Ish' chego sebe udumali. Parodiruyut svyashchennye rossijskie «migalki» kakimi-to sinimi «vederkami». Malo togo. Avtoprobeg protesta protiv «migalok» ustroili. Net, chtoby udarit' avtoprobegom po bezdorozh'yu i razgil'dyajstvu, oni protiv «migalok» protestuyut. Pryamo po Kutuzovskomu prospektu i poekhali. Kolonnoj s «vederkami». Vidite li, oni aktivisty Federacii avtovladel'cev Rossii. Nu, horosho, ih GIBDD ostanovila. Aga, za narushenie «pravil perevozki gruzov». Vot eto, ya ponimayu, hod. Vot eto, ya voskhishchayus', torzhestvo logiki i zakona. (GIBDD i dvuglavye orly, 2010, p. 2)

Fancy what they've come up with! They make a parody of the sacred Russian "blue lights" with some "blue buckets". On top of that, they organized a road rally against the "blue lights". Instead of making the road rally a blow struck against sloppy work and bad roads, they protest against the "blue lights". The went straight along Kutuzovsky prospect. A convoy with "blue buckets". See, they are the activists of the Federation of car owners of Russia. It's good that the road police stopped them. Right, for breaking the rule of cargo transportation. That is quite a move, I tell you. I am delighted to say it is a triumph of logic and law.

The text contains allusions to a well-known novel "The Little Golden Calf" by Il'f and Petrov and multiple speech formulas which are used by speakers of Russian to express indignation. The expression "The Road Rally against sloppy work and bad roads" is a quotation from the book and since its publication is often used to denote some kind of purposeless activity performed with a lot of publicity. The speech formulas indicate author's mock indignation and his hyperbolic praise of the actions of road police are also a sign of irony.

Another example of irony based on intertextual allusion is the discussion of the election campaign in Moscow:

Nado kak mozhno chashche provodit' vybory mera Moskvy. Oni prevrashchayut tykvy v karety. Ispolnyayut mechty vracheǐ, uchiteleǐ i osobenno avtolyubiteleǐ. Prichem za etim mozhno sledit' pryamo po televizoru – 24 chasa v sutki. YA posvyatila etomu chetyre dnya, kotorye predshestvovali dnyu golosovaniya.

Glavnaya feya – eto kanal TVC. V pazhah-pomoshchnikah u nego vystupayut Pervyi kanal i «Rossiya». Vo vtornik, 3 sentyabrya, vsya eta gruppa dobryh volshebnikov radovala menya otkrytiem dvuh novyh estakad na Yaroslavke (Rykovtseva, 2013, p. 3)

*Elections for the mayor of Moscow should be held as often as possible. They **turn pumpkins into carriages**. They fulfill the dreams of doctors, teachers, and especially car enthusiasts. And you can watch it directly on TV 24 hours a day. I dedicated the four days leading up to the day of voting to this.*

***The main fairy** is the TVC channel. Its page boys are the First channel and "Russia". On Tuesday, September 3rd, this **group of good wizards** made me happy with the opening of two new overpasses on Yaroslavka.*

The text refers readers to the *Cinderella* fairy tale. The allusions to magic and parallels between fairy tale characters and politicians clearly show the gap between the picture of the TV screen and reality. The irony for Russian people familiar with the realia of political life in this country is obvious, however, for those who are not familiar with the traditions of election campaigns (e.g. sudden attention to the problems of ordinary people) some comments may be necessary.

6.3. Cultural specifics of irony: the wider context

Our further discussion of cultural specifics of irony will take into account the wider context which includes the following parameters:

1. The object of mocking

Irony can target either the speaker (this is the case of self-irony which signals that the speaker is not afraid to demonstrate her / his shortcomings), e.g. *I tut ya gerojski sbezhal (So, I ran away as a hero.)*

The interlocutor's words or actions can also become the object of speaker's irony: e.g. *I skhodi, nakonec, za hlebom! – Uzhe izgotovilsya! (And go buy bread after all! – Yeah, I have taken the starting position to run for in!)*

Finally, the most frequent case is when irony targets the third person, e.g. *I tut direktor pokazal sebya Sokratom. (And the director proved himself to be the real Socrates).*

2. The part of meaning of the utterance to be inverted

The variant of this type is inverting the assertion, as did Boris Pasternak commenting on his getting a Nobel Prize:

Chto zhe sdelal ya za pakost',

Ya, ubijca i zlodej?

Quite often only part of the sentence is inverted, and this makes irony hard to understand. When the owner of the crashed laptop just after its damage declares "Some unattended obstacle for further communication" the sense to invert is the degree of the drama: in fact, the obstacle is understatement for the event that leads to total liquidation of plans.

3. The sentiment of the whole utterance or text

Since irony is not always meant to be funny and entertaining, the utterance can be more or less humorous or sad, as the following example demonstrates.

I have it good – I am an orphan. (Aleichem, 2009, p. 52)

Sometimes the speakers along with irony express their indignation which results in sarcasm. Since sentiment is a scalar characteristic, it is obvious that many nuances here are also possible.

By using these parameters, we can describe several types of irony and link some of them to national cultural traditions.

6.4. Russian irony against the background of British and Jewish irony

British and Jewish cultures are well-known for their love for irony. Ironic discourse is part of British and Jewish literatures, the wide use of verbal irony by the British and Jewish authors is a well-known fact. For this reason, our comparison of cultures will be based predominantly on the literary texts.

Let us begin with the first parameter – the object of mocking. Examples of self-irony and mocking the third person can be found in every culture. The real differences begin when we look at the irony addressed to the hearer: in the British culture irony can be addressed only to the part of the audience which can recognize the ironic intention. This can be called splitting of the audience, when not all the addressees can see the irony. And sometimes the unaware part of the audience becomes the object of mocking that is understood by the other part.

The traditions of the Russian culture demonstrate at least two types. The first one is widely spread and is based on the most common model – mocking other people, inverting evaluative part of meaning. This model is traditional for Russian and Soviet folklore.

The same type is widely known in Russian literary tradition, which was widespread in the 20th century mostly due to the authors of the so-called South-Russian school, e.g. Y. Olesha, and V. Kataev. Perhaps, the most well-known authors are Ilf and Petrov, the authors of the books about a trickster Ostap Bender:

V dvornickoj stoyal zapah gniyushchego navoza, rasprostranyaemyj novymi valenkami Tihona. Starye valenki stoyali v uglu i vozduha tozhe ne ozonirovali. (The room stank of rotting manure, brought in on Tikhon's new felt boots. His old ones stood in the corner and did not help to purify the air, either.) (Il'f & Petrov, 1997, p. 87).

This mode of joking gave birth to the so-called "styob" – ironic description of the Soviet reality, where some clichés and types of speech acts (e.g. political slogans) were extremely fervent in the Soviet period. (Borisova & Pirogova, 2016, p. 30)

Another type of irony used in Russia is traditional as it is used even in folklore. It is based on mocking on the addressee and therefore is unfriendly.

A mozhet, i nam dadut? – Aga, dadut! Dogonyat i eshche dadut (Perhaps, they will give us some? – Yeah, right! They'll run down to us and will give us some more!)

This variant of irony can be heard in everyday communication. A similar example can be found in literary texts:

– Chto ya zabyl? YA vchera na rabote byl!

– Da? I skol'ko plotyut za takuyu rabotu? Na rabote on byl! (Shukshin, 2010)

(What did I forget? I was at work yesterday!

– Really? And how much d'ya get for this job? At work he was?)

The second parameter – the part of utterance meaning to be inverted – allows us to say that the English irony (sometimes called *sarcasm*) is known for its fineness and uniqueness. It is based on inverting evaluative and modus parts of utterances. The fervent sentiment is changed by a rather calm understatement (Gornostayeva, 2013). This can be related to the famous facial expression of "stiff upper lip".

The third parameter – the utterance sentiment – allows us to name understatement as one of typical way of expressing irony in the British culture. The ironic usage of understatement coordinates with the traditional British rules of self-control.

One should also mention traditional Jewish irony based on sadness and self- irony that can be found in classical books of Jewish authors and some other modern authors using Russian language:

O defitsite. Ya lyublyu zasnut' i prosnut'sya sredi zapasov. ... Zato mesyac mogu avtonomno prosidet', kak v podvodnoj lodke – mesyac sizhu (Zhvanetsky, 2003-2018, p. 1)

*(On the deficit. I love to fall asleep and then wake up surrounded by supplies... I can go on autonomously for a month, **like in a submarine** – I stay inside for a month.)*

7. Conclusion

So, what can give irony its culture-specific and language-specific flavour? It is the knowledge of the context and culture, and the knowledge of language usage. Basically, all explanations that were given

to every example in the paper, explicate the minimum knowledge a reader or a listener should possess to understand ironic intention in every text and to interpret these texts rationally.

Political discourse, mass media discourse and online discussions are perfect discourse domains for irony to emerge. Being competitive and evaluative at the same time, they are irony prone, as speakers and writers use irony to demonstrate their critical stance in highly competitive discourse domains.

To express irony, speakers can use a variety of ways, some of which, e.g., non-trivial collocations and intertextual references are culture- and language-specific: as signals of irony they require profound knowledge of language and immersion into culture.

The model of the description of the types of irony includes the object of inversion, the object of mocking, and the sentiment of the utterance. Combination of these parameters makes it possible to describe several types of irony in various national traditions.

There are two traditions of using irony in the Russian culture: one is based on mocking of the hearer, while another is based on mocking other people together with the addressee.

The British tradition can be called "understatement" as it is based on the inversion of evaluation and fervent sentiment changing by more calm ways of expression.

The Jewish tradition is remarkable for self-irony and sadness.

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