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МОВОЗНАВСТВО

**COMMUNICATIVE FAILURES CAUSED BY ETHOLOGICAL FACTORS
(on the material of American cinema discourse)**

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ABSTRACT

The paper reveals and describes communicative failures caused by differences in structures of communicants' ethological encyclopedic knowledge within the framework of the intersubjectivity paradigm. A communicative failure is viewed as an inability of interacting subjects to make an inference or making a faulty inference in an intersubjective act. An intersubjective act is interpreted as an inter-action, where communicants' verbal/non-verbal communicative actions are viewed as perceptual stimuli, which trigger parallel conscious/non-conscious inference processes involving cognition, volition and affect resulting in a motivated communicative social action. Inferential analysis applied in the research provides tools for the recreation of communicants' inferential processes and enables to consider cognitive, perceptual, affective and volitional aspects of interaction stipulating their goal-oriented motivated communicative verbal and non-verbal actions. American cinema discourse represented by the genre of a situation comedy and modeling live communication supplied instances of communicative failures subjected to analysis. We claim that differences in structures of communicants' ethological encyclopedic knowledge are one of the causes of

cognitive communicative failures. Cognitive communicative failures depend on the centrality of the content and structure of encyclopedic knowledge evoked by verbal/non-verbal communicative actions of interacting subjects in an intersubjective act. Centrality depends on how well a particular conceptual content is established in the communicant's memory as well as on a particular context in which a lingual unit is embedded. We give evidence for ethological knowledge to be of both declarative and procedural nature. We prove that cognitive communicative failures caused by differences in structures of communicants' ethological encyclopedic knowledge result from the addresser's ignorance of social values and ethic norms of social behavior.

Key words: *affect, cognition, communicative failure, ethological encyclopedic knowledge, inference, intersubjectivity, verbal/non-verbal communicative action, volition.*

КОМУНІКАТИВНІ НЕВДАЧІ ЗУМОВЛЕНІ ЕТОЛОГІЧНИМИ ЧИННИКАМИ

(на матеріалі англомовного кінодискурсу)

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АНОТАЦІЯ

У роботі виявлено й описано комунікативні невдачі, спричинені розбіжностями у структурах етологічних енциклопедичних знань комунікантів в межах інтерсуб'єктивної парадигми. Комунікативна невдача розглядається як нездатність суб'єктів інтеракції вивести інференцію або виведення хибної

інференції в межах інтерсуб'єктного акту. Інтерсуб'єктний акт тлумачиться як взаємодія, в межах якої вербальні/невербальні комунікативні дії комунікантів розглядаються як перцептивні стимули, що запускають паралельні свідомі/несвідомі інференційні процеси, які включають когніцію, волевиявлення й афект в ініціацію мотивованої комунікативної соціальної дії. Інференційний аналіз, застосований у дослідженні, надає інструментарій для відтворення інференційних процесів комунікантів та уможливорює врахування когнітивних, перцептивних, афективних та волевиявних аспектів взаємодії, зумовлюючих їх цілеспрямовані мотивовані вербальні/невербальні комунікативні дії. Випадки комунікативних невдач, що підлягають інференційному аналізу, відібрані з американського кінодискурсу, представленого жанром ситуаційної комедії, який моделює живе спілкування. Ми стверджуємо, що розбіжності у структурах етологічних енциклопедичних знань комунікантів є однією з причин когнітивних комунікативних невдач. Когнітивні комунікативні невдачі залежать від центральності змісту та структури енциклопедичних знань, активованих вербальними/невербальними комунікативними діями суб'єктів інтеракції під час інтерсуб'єктного акту. Центральність залежить від того наскільки відповідна концептуальна структура є укоріненою/сформованою у свідомості комуніканта, а також від контексту, в якому уживано мовну одиницю. Ми стверджуємо, що етологічні знання є водночас декларативними та процедуральними за своєю природою. Ми доводимо, що когнітивні комунікативні невдачі, спричинені розбіжностями у структурах етологічних енциклопедичних знань комунікантів, є наслідком неусвідомлення адресантом соціальних цінностей та етичних норм соціальної поведінки.

Ключові слова: афект, вербальна/невербальна комунікативна дія, волевиявлення, етологічні енциклопедичні знання, інтерсуб'єктивність, інференція, когніція, комунікативна невдача.

The phenomenon of a communicative failure has captured scientists' attention for many decades. It has been studied from different linguistic perspectives: representatives

of formal approaches treat it as a deviation from language norms [15]; some proponents of functional approaches address it as communication disruptions caused by the inability of certain speech patterns to fulfill their functions [8, c. 67], while others stress the role of a non-verbal aspect of communication [12; 20]; within pragmatics it is viewed as the addresser's failure to achieve perlocutionary goals [2; 5; 28], as the inability to understand «what is meant by what is said» [29, c. 91] or as a result of the divergence between a predicted and actual effect of the utterance [22]; in cognitive studies it is interpreted as the speaker's inability to generate the desired mental state in the mind of his/her communication partner [3] or as an addressee's inability to interpret an utterance, i.e. to correlate an addresser's utterance with his/her own cognitive model in the way expected by an addresser [24].

We claim that all the above-mentioned approaches fail to uncover the roots of a communicative failure. Pragmatic studies of communicative failures are based on Relevance theory [26; 32], which develops H. P. Grice's pragmatic approach to meaning in communication. H. P. Grice [10; 11] assumes that (a) a speaker's meaning is an overtly expressed intention that is fulfilled by being recognized; (b) it has to be inferred from the speaker's behavior and contextual information; (c) in inferring the hearer is guided by a cooperative principle and conversational maxims. Thus, Relevance theory treats utterance comprehension as «an inferential process which takes as input the production of an utterance by a speaker, together with contextual information, and yields as output an interpretation of the speaker's meaning» [32, c. 3]. Other things being equal, «the greater the cognitive effect achieved, and the smaller the mental effort required, the more relevant this input will be to you at the time» [26, c. 260–266]. This brings us to the point that inference is viewed as a purely rational, logical cognitive procedure.

The notion of inference is also widely employed by cognitive linguists, who refer to it as purely rational cognitive structure, a logical conclusion [9; 19; 27; 31]. We would rather disagree with such an assumption as a number of studies suggest that nonconscious thought processes operate concurrently with the conscious ones: natural thought processes are nonlogical, «arational» [23], underpinned by low-level

spontaneous nonlinear connective dynamic where intuition, creativity and insights prove more powerful than linear reasoning [13, c. 216]. Here we side with A. P. Martynyuk defining inference as a «contextually motivated semantic structure, emerging in an intersubjective act as a result of complex parallel conscious and nonconscious multi-level intersubject linkage processes recruiting the multi-level cognitive, volitional and affective elements of the psychic experiential context of the intersubjective act» [21, c. 67].

The notion of intersubjectivity has turned out to be particularly valuable for the analysis of communicative failures. It is viewed as a human capacity of «sharing experiential content (e.g., feelings, perceptions, thoughts, linguistic meanings) among a plurality of subjects» [33, c. 1], «not only, and not primarily, on a cognitive level, but also (and more basically) on the level of affect, perceptual processes and conative (action-oriented) engagements» [33, c. 3].

Thus, going beyond cognitive linguistic theories relying on the embodied model of cognition and focusing on the importance of bodily experience in understanding the nature of linguistic signs [4; 6; 14; 16; 17; 30], the intersubjective model of cognition and communication [21] enables to take a broader look at the process of meaning generation in communication accounting for volition and affect adapting cognitive experience to the needs and feelings of the interacting subjects and triggering their goal-oriented motivated communicative actions [21, c. 65].

The goal of the present paper is to discover and describe cognitive communicative failures caused by differences in structures of communicants' ethological encyclopedic knowledge.

This goal is achieved through the following objectives:

- to give a definition of a communicative failure from the intersubjective perspective;
- to discover cognitive communicative failures resulting from differences in structures of communicants' ethological encyclopedic knowledge;
- to describe communicative failures caused by ethological factors within the intersubjectivity paradigm.

To achieve the goal and objectives we employ a unit of analysis called **an intersubjective act of communication** defined as «an inter-action, structurally including at least two verbal or/and co-verbal utterances: one initial and the other responsive, embedded in the complex dynamic psychic experiential context ‘shared’ by the communicants focusing attention on the same verbal/co-verbal utterance as a perceptual stimulus which triggers parallel conscious/nonconscious inference processes involving cognition, volition, and affect to issue a command of a meaningful goal-oriented communicative and/or (immediate or postponed) social action» [21, c. 65].

Within the framework of the intersubjectivity paradigm **a communicative failure** is viewed as an inability of a subject to make any inference or making a faulty inference. Inference is explained both as «the natural emergent product of conscious/nonconscious interplay of volition, cognition, and affect, triggering a motivated communicative and social action» and as «a tool of discovering this key structure of human physic experience in linguistic analysis» [21, c. 69].

Our sample consists of 1000 instances of communicative failures taking place in intersubjective acts extracted from American situation comedy series.

The causes of communicative failures have been identified applying **inferential analysis**. Carrying out inferential analysis, a researcher becomes a participant of an intersubjective act assuming the role of an observer interpreting communicative actions of other participants. While watching TV series, the researcher shares the mental (becomes aware of the events, the participants’ relationships, etc.) and physical (has access to all the perceptual stimuli – wording of the utterances, intonation patterns, body language, facial expressions, etc.) context of the intersubjective act. The task of the researcher-interpreter is to make inferences about the addresser’s intended meanings and the addressee’s inferences, embodied in their verbal and/or non-verbal communicative actions, and identify causes of communicative failures considering perceptual, cognitive, affective and volitional aspects of interaction triggering their goal-oriented motivated communicative actions.

The results of the inferential analysis suggest that differences in structures of communicants' ethological encyclopedic knowledge happen to be one of the causes of cognitive communicative failures.

Cognitive communicative failures result from the specificity of the communicants' cognitive experience influencing the content and structure of encyclopedic knowledge evoked by the verbal/non-verbal communicative action in an intersubjective act. This specificity can be explained in terms of centrality, which depends on 1) how well a particular conceptual content is established ("entrenched") in the memory; 2) the particular context in which a lingual unit is embedded [18, c. 159].

Encyclopedic knowledge includes both *declarative knowledge* (conscious precise memories and recognition of objects and events as expressed through language [1]) and *procedural knowledge* (implicit memory of psychomotor processes as procedures that have become automatic and non-conscious [ibid.]).

The structural organization of *declarative* knowledge presupposing conceptual ontology and hierarchy of conceptual structures is covered by R. Langacker's domain theory [18], whereas structuring relations between *declarative* knowledge of the same hierarchy level is explained within Ch. Fillmore's frame semantics [7]. Schematic arrangement of *procedural* knowledge about different types of communicative situations presupposing succession of actions is described in terms of a script [25].

Ethological knowledge is associated with both a declarative and procedural content that accumulates experience of social behavior.

Cognitive communicative failures caused by differences in structures of communicants' ethological encyclopedic knowledge, as a rule, result from the addresser's ignorance of social values and ethic norms of social behavior. For example:

Niles and Frasier met at the café.

NILES: *Alright, the least you could do is say hello to Aunt Patrice.*

FRASIER: *I'm not driving out to your house.*

NILES: *You don't have to. She's sitting out in the car.*

FRASIER: *You left her in the car?!*

NILES: *I cracked open a window.*

FRASIER: *Well, then she's fine.* (Frasier: season 1, episode 5)

Responding to Niles' rebuke that he should at least greet his aunt, who has just arrived, Frasier says he does not want to go to his brother's house believing that the aunt is there. Frasier's misinterpretation is explained by the fact that it does not occur to him that Niles could leave their aunt in the car while they were sitting in the cafe because it is against ethic norms of social behavior.

Joey and Michael's apartment – Gina (Joey's sister), Michael (his nephew), and Alex (their neighbour) are in the living room, Joey comes downstairs.

JOEY: *Okay, family meeting.*

ALEX: *Aww, you think of me as family?*

JOEY: *Oh, hey, Alex. I didn't see you there.* *Um, as you all know, my new show Deep Powder is premiering next week. My official unveiling as a big time celebrity and someone gets to with me to the party as my guest.* (Joey: season 1, episode 14)

Joey addresses everyone present calling them «family». Alex, Joey's neighbor, also includes herself in the reference sphere and creates her question based on REQUESTING A COMPLIMENT – RECEIVING A COMPLIMENT script, as required by etiquette. Instead, Joey insults her with his response based on REQUESTING INFORMATION – PROVIDING INFORMATION script, ignoring ethical standards.

Will's Office. Will is working at his desk as Jack enters with his dog.

WILL: *Hey, hey, no muddy paws, and no surprises on the carpet.*

JACK: [puppy-talk voice] *Klaus Von Puppy is clean and housebroken, thank you very much.*

WILL: *I wasn't talking about the dog.* (Will and Grace: season 1, episode 15)

In the given example the addressee cannot interpret the addresser's utterance correctly as the latter violates ethic norms: Will's remark falls under a WARNING FOR A DOG rather than a WARNING FOR A HUMAN script. However, it turns out that Will addressed Jack but not the dog.

There are cases when it is possible to trace the reason for the addresser's violation of ethic norms:

Joey and Michael's house.

JOEY: *Hey, Michael. Who was that girl last night?*

MICHAEL: **I wasn't with a girl.**

JOEY: **No, the one I brought home.** *I can never remember her name.* (Joey: season 1, episode 11)

Responding to Joey's question *Who was that girl last night?* Michael interprets it as a personal question answering that he was not with the girl. In this situation the addressee fails to make the right inference because the addresser's behavior goes beyond stereotypical expectations: Joey brought the girl home but he does not remember her name and hopes that his neighbor Michael knows it. However, Joey's communicative actions can be explained if we look closer at his personality: he is very popular with women, he sees them a lot, having no intention to develop relationships with anybody, so he does not even bother to remember their names.

Jill is worried as her son broke up with his girlfriend.

JILL: *Jennifer's his first love. It hurts when you lose your first love.*

TIM: ***You don't have to worry about that. I see mine every day.***

JILL: **That's so sweet.**

TIM: [walks to the garage] **You should meet her sometime!** (Home Improvement: season 2, episode 18)

Trying to comfort Jill, who is worried about their son's first love, Tim says he sees his first love every day. Jill interprets this as a COMPLIMENT as she considers herself her husband's first love. However, Tim refers to another woman and creates his verbal utterance based on ARGUMENTATION (PROVIDING FACTS TO PROVE THE OPINION) script. Jill makes a faulty inference presupposing that it is not customary to talk about a past lover in the presence of a current one but it is obvious that her husband does not share this belief and even mentions seeing his first love daily as a mere fact. Thus, we assume that the fact that Tim does not have any feelings for his ex-girlfriend accounts for his communicative actions.

The example given below represents a case of the addresser's disregard for social values prompted by his feelings and attitudes that are inseparable from interests, needs and desires:

FRASIER: *I need to talk to you. Here, have a seat, right here. Now listen Niles, I'm having a young lady over on Friday night, I was hoping you could take Dad out for me.*

NILES: ***Oh, I wish you'd said Saturday.***

FRASIER: ***Why, you have plans Friday?***

NILES: ***No, I have plans Saturday.*** (Frasier: season 1, episode 13)

Frasier asks his brother to spend time with their father on Friday. Niles regrets that Fraser did not ask him to do so on Saturday. Therefore, Frasier interprets his brother's verbal utterance within REFUSAL script. However, Niles actually regrets that he is not busy on Friday and has no reason to turn his brother down. The addresser's disregard for social values prevents the addressee from making the right inference: the son does not feel sorry for not being able to take care of his father but for being forced to do so having no other plans.

The following dialogue exemplifies a situation in which the addresser's needs and desires prevail over social values:

ZACH: *Hey Joey! How'd you get here before me?*

CHUCK: *I'm not Joey. I'm Chuck. I'm his stuntman* [goes to shake Zach's hand].

ZACH: [shakes his hand] *Hey, I'm Zach. I'm handling craft services. **Hey listen, whatever you do, stay away from the roast beef.***

CHUCK: ***Oh why? Is it bad?***

ZACH: ***No, I like it.*** (Joey: season 2, episode 4)

Chuck interprets Zack's remark about the roast beef as good advice within TAKING CARE OF THE NEIGHBOR'S INTERESTS script, underpinned by adherence to social values. Alternatively, Zack creates his verbal utterance based on TAKING CARE OF SELF-INTERESTS script, solely driven by his own needs and desires determining his goal-oriented communicative social action.

There are cases when the addressee's psychological state (feelings and emotions), motivating inferencing processes, accompany a communicative failure caused by addresser's ignorance of ethic norms of social behavior:

MARTIN: *Great. How about you and me having a beer together?*

FRASIER: *Wow. You know, in all these years you've never asked me that. I'd love to have a beer with you, dad.*

MARTIN: *Well then, you better haul ass, 'cause the store closes in ten minutes.*

FRASIER: *Right* [exits]. (Frasier: season 1, episode 2)

Interpreting Martin's communicative action as an INVITATION TO DRINK, Frasier makes a faulty inference. This inference can be called emotional as it results from the addressee's psychological state: Frasier was glad that his father, with whom he had a very tense relationship, offered to drink together. However, creating his utterance, Martin relied on REQUESTING TO BUY A DRINK script. It is obvious that the addresser violates stereotypical expectations: usually a person, offering a drink, arranges it.

Phoebe has a twin sister, whose name is Ursula. Joey bought a present for her.

JOEY: *Phoebe, could you do me a favor? Could you try this on? I just wanna make sure it fits.*

PHOEBE: *Oh, my first birthday present. Oh, this is really –*

JOEY: *Oh, no no no. It's for Ursula. I just figured, you know, size wise.* (Friends: season 1, episode 16)

As it was just before her birthday, Phoebe interprets her friend's request to try on a dress within RECEIVING A GIFT script as it seems to be the most likely interpretation in this situation: Phoebe was already in the mood to accept presents and thus makes an emotional inference resulting from her psychological state. However, Joey creates his verbal utterance based on ASKING FOR ADVICE script, which is inappropriate given the ethic norms of social behavior (it is not a good idea to ask one girl to try on a gift for another girl especially when they have a birthday on the same day). In this situation we would rather suggest that this communicative failure is the result of the 'clash' of addresser's cognitive experience (ethological encyclopedic knowledge being a part of it)

and the addressee's psychological state (feelings and emotions) determining their motivated communicative actions.

The necessity of taking into account not only cognitive experience serving as a basis for meaning generation but also volition and affect, adjusting this experience to the communicants' interests, needs, desires and feelings stipulating their goal-oriented motivated communicative verbal and non-verbal actions, derives from understanding communication as an intersubjective phenomenon.

Application of the inferential analysis, having in its foreground the notion of inference as a cognitive operation of acquiring new experience through conscious/nonconscious use of psychic resources including rational thinking, affect and volition, provides new opportunities for the study of the phenomenon of a communicative failure. It offers a new approach to understanding forces driving communicative and social behavior of the interacting subjects, thus enabling to get insight of communicative failures.

The results of the inferential analysis suggest that cognitive communicative failures stem from the specificity of the communicants' cognitive experience influencing the content and structure of encyclopedic knowledge evoked by the verbal/non-verbal communicative action in an intersubjective act.

Cognitive communicative failures can be caused by differences in structures of communicants' ethological encyclopedic knowledge resulting from the addresser's ignorance of social values and ethic norms of social behavior.

The study opens perspectives for the further inquiry in the specificity of communicative failures in other types of discourse, their further classification and description on the basis of the intersubjective model of communication.

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