Communicative and Linguistic Characteristics of the Comic Discourse (on the Material of English-Language Belles-Lettres Works)

Iryna Blynova

Correspondence: Iryna Blynova, Department of Foreign Languages for Specific Purposes, National Pedagogical Dragomanov University, 01054, 8-14 Turhenievska Str., Kyiv, Ukraine.

Abstract

The article deals with the investigation of the communicative and linguistic features of the comic discourse on the basis of the English-language fictional works by M. Spark, R. Dahl, K. Vonnegut Jr, I. Shaw, R. Carver and K. Barry. The author represents the description of a comic discourse in terms of Linguistic Pragmatics. Extra-linguistic components of the literary text creating and actualizing, which include pragmatic characteristics, social and cultural factors, psychological peculiarities, cognitive component and paralinguistic supplement, are described. The article also provides a detailed classification of comic discourse linguistic components on the material of belles-letters communication in the works of aforementioned writers. All linguistic characteristics within five groups, according to the violation/lack/incompleteness of the discourse certain communicative qualities disclosure, are distinguished. Besides, there is a thorough analysis of the presupposition as a constituent part in the comic discourse definition. The article dwells on the interlocutors' micro and macro presuppositions introducing, the absence of which leads to non-cooperative communication with, predominantly, a comic effect. The results of the experiment show that the participants' (readers' particularly) background knowledge helps them interpret a literary discourse. The article continues the study of special special means and techniques of comic effect producing that provides a further understanding of the authors' individual styles.

Keywords: comic discourse, belles-letters communication, text, linguistic characteristics, extra-linguistic factors, presupposition

1. Introduction

The topicality of the research paper is predetermined by the increasing interest of modern linguists in the humorous realization of the language potential issues (Dalbergenova et al., 2021; Dautova et al., 2017). It indicates that social and cultural peculiarity of the comic category defines both theoretical and applied aspects of its analysis. As a result, the mechanisms of comic literary text creation and perception in various lingua-cultures, as well as communicative and linguistic characteristics of the comic discourse are in the scholars' focus in the present day. For the last four decades the comic notion has become more and more widespread in linguistic scientific literature in terms of a discourse practice (Toktagazin et al., 2016; Khaybullina et al., 2020; Nurgali et al., 2013; Verbytska, 2005; Lipka, 2009; Bassai, 2016) where it appears traditionally in two approaches of study. Within the first approach, the scientists pay attention to the consideration of the *real* communication comic discourse, in which the text, generated by this communication, serves as the subject of the investigation. For instance, the research work has been introduced on the basis of German anecdotes on ethnic topics (Bassai, 2016); British and American verbal jokes (Zhanysbayeva et al., 2021); clichéd stylistic devices, related to the 'food' concept, of Ukrainian and American communicative scope, namely: situational comedy, feature film, (cartoon) television series, humorous satirical magazine, contemporary song (Kharchenko, 2014); stand-up comedy (Badara, 2018); English films and TV shows with children's participation, British and American Internet sites (Kharchenko, 2014).

According to the second approach, the linguists concentrate their interest on the analysis of the belles-letters communication comic discourse, which takes place on the material of mini-texts of contemporary Ukrainian humorous content (Prokopenko, 2017); of satirical and humorous poetry works (Harachkovska, 2015); of plays by Friedrich Dürrenmatt, the Swiss playwright of the second half of the 20th century (Fedorenko, 2012); of sketches, lyrical and ironical essays by M.M. Zhvanetskyi (Kolesnychenko, 2015); of English and Ukrainian fictional and folklore texts (Amangeldiyeva et al., 2020); of English limericks, Chaucer's and Shakespeare's works (Lipka, 2009). The objectives of

the research are to define the comic discourse concept in accordance with the Linguistic Pragmatics principles, to single out the linguistic and extra-linguistic components of the discourse and to characterize communicative and linguistic peculiarities of the comic discourse in the studied literary works. The study had the opportunity to take into account the specifics of the discourse aspects of a comic category in the process of literary text reading/translating/analyzing in order to perceive and understand the necessary comic effect, created by the aforementioned authors – the representatives of a distinctive lingua-culture.

The purpose of the study is, firstly, to characterize the parameters that influence the creation and actualization of literary discourse; secondly, the definition of communicative and linguistic characteristics that help the reader correctly interpret the comic effect in literary discourse.

2. Materials and Methods

To solve specific problem questions as well as to achieve the objectives of the study, the following methods and techniques were used:

– those belonging to general sciences: observation method, quantitative analysis, comparative method, which allow to reveal the communicative and linguistic universal features of comic discourse creation and various individual features of its perception;

– those belonging to general Linguistics: semantic and contextual analyses, aimed at studying means of creating a comic effect in the context of discourse formation;

– those belonging to special Linguistics: semantic and stylistic analysis, which is based on the study of semantic shades of linguistic means used by the author of a literary work; discourse analysis and its subtype – a pragmatic one, which involves the study of the characteristics of communication course under the influence of comic).

The material of the study is the English-language works of the small forms by the brightest authors of the late 20th – early 21st centuries: the collections of short stories – "Palm Sunday. Welcome to the Monkeyhouse" by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. (1922-2007); "Five Stories. Five Decades" by Irwin Shaw (1913-1984); "Collected Stories" by Raymond Carver (1938-1988); "The Public Image. Stories" by Muriel Spark (1918-2006); "Dark Lies the Island" by Kevin Barry (2013); "The Collected Short Stories" by Roald Dahl (1916-1990).

According to the principles of Linguistic Pragmatics, which studies the language as means used by a person in a communicative activity, a discourse as a way of actualizing the text in certain mental and pragmatic conditions was considered. It is in line with van Dijk (1998) who states that "discourse is a unit of language use or performance (parole)", which represents a combination of verbal and non-verbal dimensions. In this research the notion of a comic discourse as a written coherent text with an inherent set of linguistic characteristics in connection with extra-linguistic factors, the implementation of the implicit comic meaning of which takes place by overlapping the participants' (author's – reader's, character's – character's, author's – translator's) presupposition in literary prose communication onto the text system of language signs was described. Thus, such interpretation of a discourse involves taking into consideration all extra-linguistic components of the situation of literary text creating and actualizing. What happens when a researcher views a discourse from the five component perspectives? First, one should focus on the pragmatic component, included into this multi-levelled category. This component, established in the language unit, expresses speaker's attitude to: 1) reality (general assessment, estimation by the parameter of quantity, by the parameter of desirability/reluctance); 2) the content of the message (evaluation of the truth parameter (reliability, probability, doubt, incredibility) and the parameter of the illocutive function of the statement); 3) the addressee (realized in addressing, greeting and some other formulas of speech etiquette in particular).

3. Results and Discussion

As the analysis of the material shows, it was considered the idea of the communicators' influence on each other when interacting is a guiding one. After G. Cook (1990), who proposed to divide the discourse into reciprocal and non-reciprocal, two types of literary discourses represented in the dialogue form, such as: those aimed at positive/mutual/cooperative communication and those aimed at negative/conflict/non-cooperative communication were defined. Cook (1990) found a discourse as reciprocal when "there is at least a potential for interaction, when the sender can monitor reception and adjust to it or, to put it in another way, where the receiver can influence the development of what is being said". The basic principles of artificial intelligence in understanding/interpreting texts by communicators inspired G. Cook (1990) to create the schemata theory and later other scholars (Dolynska et al., 2020; Akhmetova et al., 2020; Koshekov et al., 2021) to introduce the maxims, postulates, models of successful/cooperative communication within Pragmatics. As a result, the use of communication strategies and tactics of non-cooperative communication is a predominant part in our study of a comic discourse.

Second, an analyst should emphasize on the social and cultural factors that exist in the discourse structure and include the characteristic of the time/era of the literary work creation, its belonging to a certain literary direction, a certain method, genre and features of idiolect used by the author. This perspective occupies one of the three central positions in Pike's (1976) theory, according to which "a discourse can be viewed as a system defined in relation to culture (relational)". Developing his theory, Poythress (1982) stated that "the same discourse owes its significance to a complex of relations to a whole culture". It means that a discourse may belong to an established genre of oral or written literature and, once produced, it also makes its contribution to the culture impression of the limits of the genre. Hence, the aforementioned factors are clearly manifested while analyzing a discourse as a result of the interaction process in the social and cultural aspect. Third, one should concentrate on the psychological characteristics of a discourse. They represent a set of rules, strategies and tactics in the generation and understanding of speech under various circumstances. Fourth, the cognitive component should also be paid attention to as the total number of the participants' (in our case, of the author's, the character's/characters', the readers of the literary work) different knowledge in the process of communication (knowledge of the language, knowledge of the world etc.). Fifth, a paralinguistic supplement of speech is of importance here and it includes a combination of non-verbal means, involved in speech communication, among which are phonetic, kinetic and graphic ones.

While analyzing a speech work (text), these constituents of a discourse are attracted by researchers to determine its coherence and communicative adequacy, to find out the components of its content, to choose means for achieving a desired goal, to fix the speaker's point of view and so on. Nevertheless, the linguistic components are no less important in the situation of literary text creating. The analysis of the practical material gives grounds to name such basic linguistic features of comic discourse that are tentatively grouped according to the violation/lack/incompleteness of the discourse certain communicative qualities disclosure.

According to our observations, the first group embodies the linguistic characteristics, due to which logic is violated in the comic discourse, that is, the consistency, reconcilability of the statement or the construction of speech in accordance with the laws of logic, the relations and connections of true reality. Here includes the following:

1) a contradictory lexical combinability, a combination of logically heterogeneous concepts, matching of incompatible/mutually exclusive ideas: "*But we had **things in common**, Ross and me, which was more than just **the same woman**. For example, **he couldn't fix the TV** when it went crazy and we lost the picture. **I couldn't fix it either**"* (Carver, 2009);

2) the use of:

a) contextual antonyms (Dahl, 1996):

"You see," she said, "if you really have decided to reform, then what on earth am I going to do?"

"You don't know what you're saying."

*"Arthur, how could **a nice person** like you want to associate with **a stinker**?"*;

b) speech enanthosemy that appears as a result of a special intonation, which gives the opposite meaning to a word or phrase (Dahl, 1996):

"Towards the end he was so covered in tiny little white scars he looked exactly like it was snowing."

"Yes," I said. "All right."

*"Poacher's arse, they used to call it," Claud said. "And there wasn't a man in the whole village who didn't have a bit of it one way or another. **But my dad was the champion.**"*

*"**Good luck to him**," I said*;

c) objections when comparing identical concepts, their non-compliance (Shaw, 2013):

*"Unhappily, when my husband told the lady of my impending arrival and announced to her that that would mean the end of their relationship, she made one of those half-hearted attempts at suicide with which **silly and frivolous women try to prove to themselves and their lovers that they are not silly and frivolous**"*;

3) the displacement of the emotional plan for the thought's formulation, the ambiguity dealing with the transition from one thought to another one, the violation of causal and consequential connections, incorrect word order, an illogical choice of communication means (excessive use of insert words/phrases/sentences, interrogative or exclamatory sentences):

*"- **Well!***

*- **Imagine that!***

- Right out of the blue, just when she was feeling so happy.

*- **No more Colonel.***

*- **What a dreadful shock.***

- She would miss him enormously.

- Slowly, Mrs Bixby began stroking the lovely soft black fur of the coat.

*- **What you lose on the swings you get back on the roundabouts**"* (Dahl, 1996);

*"There's a man who has **a nightmare and, in the nightmare, he dreams he's dreaming** and wakes to see a man standing at his bedroom window. **The dreamer is so terrified he can't move, can hardly breathe**. The man at the window stares into the room and then begins to pry off the screen. The dreamer can't move"* (Carver, 2009);

*"- When I say to you that my friends were my whole life – everything, absolutely everything in it – then **perhaps** you will begin to understand.*

*- **Will you**? **I doubt** it unless I digress for a minute to tell you roughly the sort of person I am.*

*- **Well – let me see**. Now that I come to think of it**, I suppose** I am, **after all**, a type; a rare one, **mark you**, but nevertheless a quite definite type – the wealthy, leisurely, middle-aged man of culture, adored **(I choose the word carefully)** by his many friends for his charm, his money, his air of scholarship, his generosity, and **I sincerely hope** for himself **also**. You will find him (**this type**) only in the big capitals London, Paris, New York; of that **I am certain**"* (Dahl, 1996);

*"He jumped up and peered out of the porthole. The sea – **Oh Jesus God** – was smooth as glass, the great ship was moving through it fast, obviously making up for time lost during the night. <...>*

*"**Oh, my God**," he said aloud. "**What shall I do**?"*

*"**Oh, my God. What shall I do**?"*

*For it was at this moment that the idea came. It hit him hard and quick, and he jumped up from the bed, terribly excited, ran over to the porthole and looked out again. Well, he thought, **why not? Why ever not?**"* (Dahl, 1996);

4) parallel connection of sentences (parallel nominative sentences, imperative sentences, elliptical ones, sentences with a common time plan of expression etc.) accompanied by a combination of speech figures, various repetitions (anaphora, framing, polysyndeton), similes in particular: *He refused to smoke for fear of harming his palate, and when discussing a wine, he had a curious, rather droll habit of referring to it as though it were a living being. '**A prudent wine**,' he would say, 'rather diffident and evasive, **but quite prudent**.' Or, '**A good-humoured wine**, benevolent and cheerful slightly obscene, perhaps, **but none the less good-humoured**.'* (Dahl 1996); *No legs to run away on. No voice to scream with. Nothing. I'd just have to grin and bear it for the next two centuries. **No mouth to grin with either*** (Dahl, 1996); *Mr Botibol recalled that people had killed their fellows for far less than six thousand dollars. It was happening every day in the newspapers. So why take a chance on that either? **Check on** it first. **Be sure** of your facts. **Find out** about it by a little polite conversation* (Dahl, 1996); *He tried to think of Reno. **He tried to think** of the slots and the way the dice clicked and how they looked turning over under the lights. **He tried to hear** the sound the roulette ball made as it skimmed around the gleaming wheel. **He tried to concentrate** on the wheel. He **looked and looked and listened and listened and heard** the saws and the machinery slowing down, coming to a stop…* (Carver, 2009); *Young men marry like mice, almost before they have reached the age of puberty, and a large proportion of them have at least two ex-wives on the payroll by the time they are thirty-six years old. To support these ladies in the manner to which they are accustomed, **the men must work like slaves, which is of course precisely what they are*** (Dahl, 1996); *Later on, in her narrow, lumpy bed, under the heavy quilt, she was too excited to sleep. What a day, she thought. **I am on the verge of being a painter. I am on the verge of being a woman*** (Shaw, 2013); *"**Change the subject**." – "**Change the course** of the Mississippi! **Talk about politics, and she talks about remodelling** the White House; **talk about dogs, and she talks about doghouses**"* (Vonnegut, 1994).

The second group includes linguistic characteristics related to the lack or incompleteness of the speech discourse comprehensiveness accompanied by a comic effect, such as:

1) accidental/deliberate misinterpretation of lexical units (homonyms, paronyms, terms, polysemantic words, borrowings) (Carver, 2009):

"That's terrible," Mel said. "That's a terrible thing, Nicky. I guess they'd just lay there and wait until somebody came along and made a shish kebab out of them."

*"Some other **vessel**," Terri said.*

*"That's right," Mel said. "Some **vassal** would come along and spear the bastard in the name of love..."*;

2) double interpretation of words, images, associations (Barry, 2013):

"The Turkish model stroked the inside of my arm and said she was not exclusively homo and had always liked redheads. I was on a roll with ladies who liked ladies. Eventually some photos were taken. The Rottweiler took a dump in the middle

of the floor. Silvija said:

*'Perfect! We use **the shit**!'*

*This was the Berlin fashion scene, in the summer of 2005, in the district of Wedding. There was a lot of heroin and a lot of **dog shit**. Everybody was thin and gorgeous.*

And Jesus, did we smoke";

3) non-differentiation of shades of words meanings, of concepts scope, of vocabulary expressive colouring:

*"But that's only half the story," he said. "There's more to come. The really amazing thing about royal jelly, I haven't told you yet. I'm going to show you know how it can transform **a plain dull-looking little worker bee** with practically no sex organs at all into a great big beautiful fertile queen."*

*"**Are you saying our baby is dull-looking and plain**?" she asked sharply* (Dahl, 1996);

*"Now," he said, "**I am the canvas. Where will you place your canvas**?"*

*"As always, **upon the easel**."*

*"Don't be crazy**. I am the canvas**."*

*"**Then place yourself upon the easel**. That is where you belong."*

"How can I?"

*"**Are you the canvas or are you not the canvas**?"*

*"**I am the canvas. Already I begin to feel like a canvas**."*

*"Then **place yourself upon the easel**. There should be no difficulty."* (Dahl, 1996);

"Wait." the dealer interrupted. "See here, old one. Here is the answer to our problem. I will buy the picture, and I will arrange with a surgeon to remove the skin from your back, and then you will be able to go off on your own and enjoy the great sum of money I shall give you for it."

*"**With no skin on my back**?"*

*"No, no, please! You misunderstand. **This surgeon will put a new piece of skin in the place of the old one. It is simple**"* (Dahl, 1996);

4) making the text of the literary prose work more difficult for perception by the use of vocabulary of the terminological character, specifically by the medical one: *"As you wish, William. And now, as I say, I'd take a small **oscillating saw** and carefully remove your complete **calvarium** – the whole **vault of the skull**. This would expose the top half of the **brain**, or rather the outer covering in which it is wrapped. You may or may not know that there are three separate **coverings** around the brain itself the outer one called the **dura mater** or **dura**, the middle one called the **arachnoid**, and the inner one called the **pia mater** or **pia**. Most laymen seem to have the idea that the **brain** is a naked thing floating around in **fluid** in your head. But it isn't. It's wrapped up neatly in these three strong **coverings**, and the **cerebrospinal fluid** actually flows within the little gap between the two coverings, known as the **subarachnoid space**. As I told you before, this fluid is manufactured by the brain and it drains off into the **venous system** by **osmosis**.*

*I myself would leave all three coverings – don't they have lovely names, **the dura, the arachnoid,** and **the pia**? – I'd leave them all intact. There are many reasons for this, not least among them being the fact that within the **dura** run the **venous channels** that drain the blood from the **brain** into the **jugular**…"* (Dahl, 1996).

The third group consists of linguistic characteristics that reflect the violation of the correctness of speech or the accuracy of the assessment of reality, causing difficulties in the perception of objectively existing reality by the speakers/readers:

1) grammatically wrong speech, accompanied by inappropriateness/non-compliance of the combination of lexical units, impracticability of syntactic link of the sentence members: *I am seventeen years **of age, and left** school **two years ago last month**. I had my A certificate for typing, **so got** my first job, as a junior, in a solicitor's office. Mum was **pleased at** this, and Dad said it was a **first-class start**, as it was **an old-established firm**. I must say that when I **went for** the interview, I was **surprised at the windows**, and the **stairs up** to the offices were **also far from** clean* (Spark, 1976);

2) a combination of lexical units that belong to different speech layers: stylistically marked vocabulary or vocabulary of the limited use (dialecticisms, vulgar words, colloquial language units, jargonisms, professionalisms) with a neutral/bookish/poetic word: *She had **amazing tits, too, small but textbook**, perfectly cuppable, and **an outstanding arse**. I mean **literally an outstanding arse**. Lasciviously draw in the air, while letting your tongue loll and eyes roll, the abrupt curve of a perfect, flab-free butt-cheek: she had a pair of those. **It was shelved, the kind of arse** my father used to say (in wry and manly side-mouthing) you could settle a mug of tea on. Also, she had a raunchy laugh and unwavering taste and*

*she understood me. In retrospect, with the due modesty of middle age, I accept there wasn't that much to understand. **I was a moderately poetical kid**, and moderately rebellious, but **diligent in my studies** all the same, and three months out of college I had a comfortable nook secured in the civil service* (Barry, 2013); *'That's more of it you **buck-fucking eejit**! That's more of the **emotional**! If you're **emotional,** how are you going to think straight? You've to stay clear in the head, Steven. Don't mind **the fucking emotional**.'* (Barry, 2013); *The money he has was earned by his dead father whose memory he is inclined to despise.*

*This is not his fault, for there is something in his make-up that compels him secretly to look down upon all people who never had the wit to learn the difference between **Rockingham and Spode, Waterford and Venetian, Sheraton and Chippendale, Monet and Manet, or even Pommard and Montrachet*** (Dahl, 1996);

3) the presentation of connections and relations of things/events/facts/phenomena in an unlikely, fictitious, erroneous or distorted way: *"And there's another thing, Mr Hoddy. A good maggot-factory don't just breed ordinary maggots, you know. Every fisherman's got his own tastes. Maggots are commonest, but also **there's lug worms**. Some fishermen won't have nothing but lug worms. And of course, there's coloured maggots. Ordinary maggots are white**, but you get them all sorts of different colours by feeding them special foods, see. Red ones and green ones and black ones and you can even get blue ones if you know what to feed them. The most difficult thing of all in a maggot-factory is a blue maggot**, Mr Hoddy."* (Carver, 2009);

4) the use of verbs in the conditional mood: *"**I wish to hell he was here now**," Claud said, wistful. "**He'd have given anything in the world to be coming with us on this job tonight**."*

*"**He could take my place**," I said. "**Gladly**"* (Dahl, 1996);

There was an open gate leading into a field, and Mr Feasey's wife came forward to take our admission money before we drove in.

*"**He'd have her winding the bloody pedals too if she had the strength**," Claud said. "Old Feasey don't employ more people than he has to."* (Dahl, 1996);

5) the modification of the utterance modal plan: *In his opinion there were two possible reasons why **she might fail him**. Firstly, she **might be deaf and blind**. <...> Mr Botibol advanced casually towards the woman and took up a position beside her, leaning on the rail. "Hullo," he said pleasantly. She turned and smiled at him, a surprisingly lovely, almost a beautiful smile, although the face itself was very plain. "Hullo," she answered him.*

*Check, Mr Botibol told himself, on the first question. She is **neither blind nor deaf*** (Dahl, 1996);

There was about a mile to go.

*"I don't suppose by any chance **these keepers might be carrying guns**?" I asked.*

*"**All keepers carry guns**," Claud said.*

"I had been afraid of that" (Dahl, 1996);

6) the lack of a real assessment of actions/things in the context connection of separate meanings of synonyms: *"**She's stuck**," Sir Basil said.*

And now the man was walking to the other side of the carving, the side where the woman's body was, and he put out his hands and began trying to do something with her neck. Then, as though suddenly exasperated, he gave the neck two or three jerky pulls, and this time the sound of a woman's voice, raised high in anger, or pain, or both, came back to us small and clear through the sunlight.

*Out of the corner of one eye I could see Sir Basil nodding his head quietly up and down. "**I got my fist caught** in a jar of boiled sweets once," he said, "and I couldn't get it out."* (Dahl, 1996).

The fourth group contains linguistic means, due to which, the comic discourse is described with the violation of the presentation brevity characterized by the redundancy and super length of the expanded expression of thought (up to one and a half pages). As a result, it can cause annoyance to the reader:

1) pleonasm, redundant words and facts, tautology, repetitions: ***Hugh Forester always remembered** everything. **He remembered** the dates of the Battle of New Cold Harbor (May 31 – June 12, 1864); **he remembered** the name of the his teacher in the first grade (Webel; red-haired; weight; one-forty-five; no eyelashes); **he remembered** the record number of strikeouts in one game in the National League (Dizzy Dean, St. Louis Cards, July 30, 1933, seventeen men, against the Cubs); he remembered the fifth line of "To a Skylark" (Shelly: In Profuse strains of unpremeditated art) ... <...> **He also remembered** the species of birds, the mean depths of the navigable rivers of America; the names, given and assumed, of all the Popes, including the ones at Avignon; the batting averages of Harry Heilmann and Heinie Groh. **Then he forgot his twenty-fourth wedding anniversary (January 25th)*** (Shaw, 2013); *Things are better now. But back in those days, when my*

*mother was putting out, I was out of work. **My kids were crazy, and my wife was crazy.** She was putting out too. The guy that was getting it was an unemployed aerospace engineer she'd met at AA. **He was also crazy** (Carver, 2009);*

2) speech intensifiers, which exaggerate its evaluative: *Bar none, it was **the ugliest baby** I'd ever seen. It was **so ugly** I couldn't say anything. No words would come out of my mouth. I don't mean it was diseased or disfigured. Nothing like that. It was **just ugly** ... **Even calling it ugly does its credit** (Carver, 2009).*

In **the fifth group** we distinguish such linguistic characteristics, due to the use of which the comic discourse is deprived of the presentation completeness, transmitted by half-statement, hint, implication, concealment:

1) the introducing of interrogative sentences in the relevant question-reply (Dahl, 1996):

His lips were thin and dry, with some sort of a brownish crust over them.

*"You're Cubbage and Hawes and you're from the fillin'-station on the main road. **Right**?"*

*"**What are we playing**?" Claud said. "**Twenty Questions**?";*

2) the parcelling: *He was fidding with a trouser zipper. "Join me?" he said. "One of the most satisfactory of pleasures. **Adding to the dew in the moonlight in this overmechanized age**" (Shaw, 2013); When, about eight years ago, old Sir William Turton died and his son Basil inherited The Turton Press (as well as the title), I can remember how they started laying bets around Fleet Street as to how long it wouldbe before some nice young woman managed to persuade the little fellow that **she must look after him. That is to say, him and his money**" (Dahl, 1996).*

Moreover, some of the mentioned linguistic means of comic discourse have a stylistic specificity and function as a certain stylistic device, stylistic figure, trope, for example, various repetitions (anaphora, epiphora, anadiplosis, etc.): *"**Maybe** I won't call the kids, after all. **Maybe** it isn't such a hot idea. **Maybe** we'll just go eat. How does that sound?" – "Sounds fine to me," I said. "**Eat or not eat. Or keep drinking**. I could head right on out into the sunset." (Carver, 2009). As we can observe from a considerable number of text examples, stylistic means/techniques are often constructed on the basis of some special linguistic means, for example, a pun is based on a parallelism: **My brother got the house, my sister got the money, I got the manic depression** (Barry 2013). Furthermore, some linguistic means combine with stylistic means / techniques, giving a more expressed comic effect, for example, parallelism and metaphor: **His one wife jailed** him once. **The second one did.** I found out from my daughter that **my wife went bail**. Two busted **Plymouths** in the yard" (Carver, 2009); an anaphorical repetition and a simile: "You'd better **take off that yellow pullover**," he said.*

"Why should I?"

*"**You**'ll be shining **like a bloody beacon** out there in the moonlight."*

"I'll be all right." (Dahl, 1996).

Realized in these text fragments, the named linguistic means help to decipher the implicit (hidden) comic sense of the text / statement by interpreting a particular type of information by the participants in literary prose communication. It is obvious that the information contained in the text is not homogeneous: being the main category of the text, it varies according to its pragmatic purpose. The last constituent in our discourse definition is the **presupposition** notion, which will be discussed further. Indeed, a presupposition is a significant component of knowledge, represented in the mental reality. It depicts well-known information about a particular situation or event to the communicators. Consequently, by getting into a communicative act, both partners (the addresser and the addressee) expect some general knowledge about the world that will enable them to stay in the process of communicating guidelines and limits, known to both of them. In this respect van Dijk (2006) points out that "discourses are like the proverbial icebergs: most of their meanings are not explicitly expressed but presupposed to be known, and inferable from general sociocultural knowledge".

A particular community or an individual has background knowledge. Taking it into account we divide pragmatic presuppositions (on the basis of the addressee) into: 1) *macro presuppositions*, which include: a) culturological presuppositions when before the starting of a speech message all members of some ethnical and cultural community have background knowledge on the subject of a special statement/text; b) collective/societal presuppositions when before the receiving this message all members of any social, professional, religious, gender, etc. community have background knowledge on the subject of a particular statement/text; and 2) *micro presuppositions*, which include: a) group presuppositions when before the beginning of their interaction more than two participants of the communicative act have background knowledge on the subject of a certain statement/text; b) individual presuppositions when before the beginning of communication only two participants have background knowledge about the topic of a certain statement/text. Here is an example of a conversation between three little sisters (Phyllis, Carol and Alice) from R. Carver's (2009) short story "The Father", aimed at ascertaining the similarity in the appearance of the infant brother with his father, which meaning becomes clear only to a group of communicants – the adult members of the family (a mother, a father and a grandmother) (Carver, 2009):

"Who does the baby look like?"

"He doesn't look like anybody," Phyllis said.

*"I know! I know!" Carol said. "He looks like **Daddy**!"*

*"But who does Daddy **look** like?" Phyllis asked.*

*"Who does Daddy **look** like?" Alice repeated, and they all at once looked through to the kitchen where the father was sitting at the table with his back to them.*

"Why, nobody!" Phyllis said and began to cry a little.

*"Daddy doesn't look like **anybody**!" Alice said.*

*"But he has to look like **somebody**," Phyllis said, wiping her eyes with one of the ribbons.*

What is known to the interlocutors?

1. The infant boy should be similar to one of the parents.

2. The child is similar to his father.

3. The father in his turn must inherit similarities from the representatives of the previous generation – his parents, i.e., their grandparents.

4. The father does not look like his mother, i.e., their grandmother.

5. The father does not look like his father, i.e., their grandfather.

6. The father is similar to someone else.

The listed information forms the essential set of micro presuppositions necessary for understanding the discourse, for effective communication, and, most importantly, for the conclusion that the listeners/readers make after the sounded/retold/read part of the message. As a result, because of the small age and the lack of life experience, the children come to a conclusion that the baby looks like their daddy and the daddy looks someone else. Having background knowledge, the grown-ups come to a more significant conclusion, which is represented by the author with a non-verbal hint in a black-humoured tone: "*And all of them except the grandmother **looked** at the father, sitting at the table. He had turned around in his chair and **his face was white and without expression**"* (Carver, 2009). Each adult member of the family knows his/her own truth.

In addition, in the course of the experiment, 14 senior students of Foreign Philology Department were asked to make the conclusion after reading the aforementioned extract. The following variants were suggested by the students: 1) the children's grandmother gave birth to her son (their father) whose biological father is not her husband (their grandfather) but another man (5 students); 2) the children's grandparent adopted a son (their father) and they are not their biological parents (3 students); 3) the boy (the father) was exchanged with someone else in a maternity house (4 students); 4) what has this to do with a grandmother? It is mother's unfaithfulness (1 student); 5) every person is unique and it is not necessary to look like your relatives (1 student). The results of the experiment show that all the participants have their individual presuppositions, background knowledge (based on personal associations or previous experience), which help them interpret a literary discourse. Failure in communication appears, as a rule, when there is no macro presupposition that takes place within an intercultural and/or intersocial communication. The lack of communicants' overall culturological or social experience (background knowledge) leads to disharmonization of communication and the emergence of communicative gaps, misunderstandings and contradictions. For example, in the short story "Pig" by R. Dahl (1996) it was found the dialogue between a visitor of the restaurant and a cook:

The cook raised his right hand and began scratching the rash on his neck.

"Well," he said, looking at the waiter and giving him a sly wink, "all I can tell you is that I think it was pig's meat."

"You mean you're not sure?"

"One can never be sure."

"Then what else could it have been?"

*"Well," the cook said, speaking very slowly and still staring at the waiter. "There's just a chance, you see, that **it might have been a piece of human stuff**."*

*"**You mean a man**?"*

"Yes."

"Good heavens."

*"**Or a woman. It could have been either. They both taste the same**.*"

"Well – now you really do surprise me," the youth declared.

"One lives and learns."

"Indeed, one does."

*"As a matter of fact, **we've been getting an awful lot of it just lately from the butchers in place of pork**," the cook declared.*

"Have you really?"

*"The trouble is, **it's almost impossible to tell which is which. They're both very good**."*

"The piece I had just now was simply superb."

"I'm glad you liked it," the cook said. "But to be quite honest, I think that it was a bit of pig. In fact, I'm almost sure it was" (Dahl, 1996).

The main character Lexington, a visitor, is a vegetarian himself who has never tried dishes containing meat. He has primarily distorted views and ideas of cooking and tasting such dishes. Such opinions were imposed on him by his aunt, a vegetarian too. A comic effect is created due to the absence of Lexington's background knowledge concerning eating habits of meat eaters.

4. Conclusions

The discourse concept is studied in our research on the basis of the written coherent text in the context of various background factors. The interpretation of comic discourse involves taking into account all the components of literary text creating and actualizing situation, such as: (a) an inherent set of linguistic characteristics; (b) extra-linguistic factors; (c) the participants' presupposition; (d) the comic effect. The author creates directly or indirectly the situations of the intercourse in the work of fiction. Other participants (a reader, a character or a translator) of belles-lettres communication reproduce these situations in their own mental reality in accordance with the author's pragmatic presupposition. An overlapping of the presupposition on the system of linguistic signs in the text is responded by the addressee's understanding of the discourse meaning as a comic one. Five groups of linguistic parameters, due to which the comic discourse can be observed were pointed out. They comprise the disorder of logic, lack or incompleteness of the speech discourse comprehensiveness, the violation of the correctness of speech or the accuracy of the assessment of reality, the confusion of the presentation brevity and the absence of the presentation completeness.

Moreover, some extra-linguistic parameters, which include pragmatic characteristics, social and cultural factors, psychological peculiarities, cognitive component and paralinguistic supplement, are of great importance within comic effect introducing. In this respect a pragmatic presupposition (background knowledge) influences the perception of a set of linguistic signs by the addressee in the aspect of the comic realization. Thus, understanding of the comic discourse essence begins at a time when the reader is able to make a semantic (implicit) conclusion from the explicit part of the message in the perception of the received semantic components and in their conscious or unconscious correlation. The prospect of further investigation is to continue a detailed study of producing comic techniques to examine the uniqueness and originality of M. Spark's, R. Dahl's, K. Vonnegut's, I. Shaw's, R. Carver's and K. Barry's creative method and the idiostyle of those writers whose poetics is combined with comic.

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