

THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURAL CONTEXT ON UNDERSTANDING IRONY IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

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Abstract

Irony is often based on the difference between a word's literal and figurative meanings, and its correct understanding depends on the cultural knowledge of the reader. The ways in which irony is perceived and interpreted in different cultural environments can differ, which can lead to misunderstandings. The article examines the role of cultural context in understanding irony, along with linguistic and pragmatic factors, through examples. It also examines the difficulties that English language learners face in understanding irony. The results of the study show that not only linguistic knowledge, but also a deep understanding of cultural context is important for the correct interpretation of irony.

Keywords: Irony, Sarcasm, Cultural context, Figurative meaning, Literal meaning, Interpretation, Pragmatics, English literature, Cross-cultural communication, Contextual clues.

Introduction

Annotatsiya:

Ironiya ko'pincha so'zlarning yuzaki ma'nosi bilan haqiqiy ma'nosi o'rtasidagi farq orqali namoyon bo'ladi, shuning uchun uni to'g'ri anglash o'quvchining madaniy bilimiga bog'liq bo'ladi. Turli madaniy muhitlarda ironiyani talqin qilish usullari farq qilishi mumkin, bu esa noto'g'ri tushinishlarga olib keladi. Maqolada lingvistik, pragmatik va madaniy omillar orqali ironiyani anglashdagi kontekstning roli misollar bilan yoritiladi. Shuningdek, ingliz tilini o'rganuvchilar uchun ironiyani tushinishda yuzaga keladigan qiyinchiliklar ham

ko‘rib chiqiladi. Tadqiqot natijalari shuni ko‘rsatadiki, ironiyani to‘g‘ri talqin qilish uchun nafaqat til bilimlari, balki madaniy kontekstni tushunish ham muhim ahamiyatga ega.

Ключевые слова: ирония, сарказм, культурный контекст, образное значение, буквальное значение, интерпретация, прагматика, английская литература, межкультурная коммуникация, контекстуальные подсказки.

Аннотация:

Ирония в английской литературе часто проявляется через несоответствие между буквальным и образным значениями слов, что делает её понимание во многом зависимым от культурных знаний читателя. Способы интерпретации иронии в разных культурных контекстах могут существенно различаться, что иногда приводит к недопониманию. В данной статье рассматривается роль контекста в интерпретации иронии на примерах с использованием лингвистических, прагматических и культурных факторов. Особое внимание уделяется трудностям, с которыми сталкиваются изучающие английский язык при понимании иронии. Результаты исследования показывают, что для корректной интерпретации иронии необходимы не только лингвистические знания, но и глубокое понимание культурного контекста.

Irony is a linguistic feature that arises from the discrepancy between the literal meaning of words and the meaning intended by the author or speaker. Understanding irony in English is often difficult, as it demands not only language proficiency but also awareness of cultural and contextual elements. The way irony is interpreted differs across various cultural settings, and misinterpretations may happen if the reader or listener does not correctly perceive the context.

This study seeks to highlight the role of linguistic, pragmatic, and cultural context in comprehending irony in English and to explore the challenges learners face when attempting to understand this phenomenon.

Understanding Irony in Written Discourse

Understanding irony in a written text is difficult, because the reader must determine the true meaning by considering the linguistic and pragmatic signs in the text. Irony often manifests itself in the form of humor or sarcasm. For

example, the phrase “Great weather!” on a rainy day may superficially mean “good weather”, but it conveys an ironic meaning. Such expressions require the reader to analyze the text and understand the author’s intention. Also, the ways in which irony is interpreted differ in different cultures and contexts. This creates additional difficulties for language learners and readers. The main goal in the process of studying irony is to teach readers to distinguish between the literal and intended meanings of words.

The Role of Context in Written Irony

The correct interpretation of irony in written text depends on the context, and the reader cannot determine the author's intention based only on the literal meaning of the words. Therefore, various aspects of context are important in understanding irony.

Linguistic context is determined by the sentence structure, surrounding words, and word combinations. For example, if the phrase "Lovely day!" is used in a written story in a rainy scene, the reader understands that this phrase is said ironically based on grammatical structure and surrounding words. At the same time, other sentences in the text, such as "I forgot my umbrella again," help to identify irony by contradicting the literal meaning.

Pragmatic context depends on the author's intention, the situation of the text, and the type of written material. For example, if the phrase "Fantastic timing!" is used in a blog post, the superficial meaning may be "great timing" but in reality, the author is using sarcasm to convey that the situation was awkward or inappropriate. The reader needs to know the type of text and correctly interpret the author's intention.

Cultural context refers to how different cultures interpret irony differently. For example, in English, "Break a leg!" is used to wish good luck, but a literal translation could be understood as "Break your leg!" Therefore, the reader needs to determine whether the expression has ironic or figurative meaning relying on cultural knowledge.

Discourse context refers to the sentences that come before and after a particular expression in a text. In order to interpret irony accurately, the reader needs to take the whole discourse into account. For instance, if a narrative describes poor weather conditions and is followed by the statement “What a perfect day!”, the reader can recognize the ironic meaning by relying on the surrounding sentences.

Situational context concerns the circumstances or conditions presented in the text, including when, where, and how the event takes place. For example, in a text describing a student who did not pass an exam, the phrase “That went really well” would be understood as ironic when the situation is considered.

Challenges in interpreting irony

Interpreting irony in written discourse can be difficult, particularly for language learners. A common problem is the tendency to focus on the literal meaning of words, which often results in misunderstanding (Gibbs, 2000). Furthermore, limited cultural awareness makes it more challenging to recognize ironic expressions (Kreuz & Roberts, 1993). Readers may also fail to understand irony if they do not pay enough attention to contextual cues. For this reason, the ability to notice linguistic and cultural signals is important for correct interpretation.

Interpreting irony in written texts involves identifying the contrast between surface and implied meanings. It also relies on the reader’s capacity to understand linguistic, pragmatic, and cultural signals. Greater awareness of these elements enhances the correct interpretation of ironic expressions.

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