

Ukrainian Humor in the Context of the Russian-Ukrainian War: Cognitive and Stylistic Features.

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12. Introduction.

The situational context of this research connected with the war-time Ukrainian humorous discourse presents the reflection of the dramatic war launched by Russia against Ukraine on February 24, 2022.

The cognitive and linguistic study of such multifaceted phenomenon as humorous discourse is influenced with the approaches of R.A.Malphurs (2010), supporting the psychological tension relief theory, according to which people get rid of the negative emotions by laughing and smiling; G. Kuipers (2009), developing the incongruity theory together with N.Goldman (2013), affirming that the cognitive mechanism of incongruity between what is expected and what is experienced triggers the comic effect shaping, underlying that the humorous discourse can serve as a medium of social correction; V.Raskin (1985) and S.Attardo (1991), focusing on the semantic mechanisms and models of humor in the most profound way; A. Barton, backing up the superiority theory and saying, “The superiority theory is the theory that the humor we find in comedy and in life is based on ridicule, wherein we regard the object the object of amusement as inferior and/or ourselves as superior” (Bardon, 2005); O.Kharchenko, developing the reframing theory, according to which the comic effect is caused by a semantic complication that occurs due to unexpected reframing of the situational context, contrasting inferences and cognitive patterns, exposed through a set of stylistic figures (Kharchenko, 2014).

Separately, we note that the war-time Ukrainian humorous discourse circulates primarily in the electronic social networks influencing thousands and even millions of

its consumers and the communicative “Wheel Model” theory of humor (Robert, Wilbanks, 2012) looks appropriate to throw an additional light on the functioning of this type of humorous discourse. According to this theory, humor is emotionally contagious and regular humor events serve as essential drivers of social group happiness, cohesion and well-being through their positive effects. The intentionally created ‘positive humor effect’ triggers individual ‘state positive affect,’ leads to ‘emotional display,’ socially shared ‘group positive affect’ and then to ‘humor supportive environment.’

The idea that humor with aggressive and negative overtones can promote a sense of identity and community expressed by Terrion and Ashforth (2002) looks appropriate in this research too. Being aimed at outsiders of some social group (they) such humor can lead to solidarity and better in-group cohesivity (we). The smart sarcastic put-down humor can generate the worse image of the target-group opponents and shape the better image of in-group members.

The successful humor is supposed to be well-timed and relevant. The importance of the category of timeliness is expressed by S.Odmark (2018). Underlying the idea that the humor of TV comedians has the agenda-setting and persuasive effects, she affirms that to be fortunate the TV comedians ‘mostly handle current events as opposed to historical or future events.’

Taking into account the definition of humor by N.Goldman (2013) and the humorous discourse by V.O.Samohyna (2007), we define the war-time Ukrainian humorous discourse as the text with particular linguistic and extra linguistic devices of realization of inner laughing intention, unrolled in the dynamic situation of joyful and humorous communication. It is based on the effect of the deceived expectation, caused by the reframing of cognitive patterns, from the neutral to other ones, supported with the shift or manipulation of inferences (from logic to illogic, imaginative, absurd, paradoxical, probably inductive, fantasy, unlikely, religious, and

so on), as well as situational contexts, causing a clash of explicit and implicit meanings and the further comic effect.

D.Wilson and D.Sperber consider inferences as cognitive operations, mainly of an inductive plan, which derive knowledge from given statements and the information they carry and, apparently, contribute to the prediction of subsequent statements (Wilson, Sperber, 1986).

For example, a communicant can hear the following question, “What does a Ukrainian woman think before a large hole from a missile in her garden?” Making a logical inference he or she can suppose an answer, “How good that I survived, the danger was nearby.” However, the communicant gets another answer, “Maybe I will have time to replant the cucumbers”. Instead of a logical inference, a probably inductive inference is used. It sounds funny and creates a comic effect.

In our opinion, such cognitive mechanism as ‘reframing’ relates to the key cognitive mechanisms of humorous discourse. It is responsible for the shaping, shifting and tuning of all devices leading to the comic effect, placed on various linguistic and extra linguistic levels. It relates to the switching of cognitive patterns too.

12.2 Methodology.

In this section, we dwell on the methodological basis applied in this study. The holistic approach is used, combining the instruments of the stylistic analysis, the discourse analysis and the empirical cognitive analysis. Besides, we apply the method of the monitoring of Ukrainian multimedia with the following content analysis, the methods of scientific generalization and interpretation of the researched material for the further comparison and conclusions.

The sample material for the research covers twelve war-time Ukrainian jokes based on the ‘Availability Heuristic’ cognitive pattern; eight jokes illustrating the ‘Negativity Thinking’ pattern; four humorous articles from Ukrainian multimedia taken from February 25, 2022 to February 5, 2023.

12.3.The ‘Availability Heuristic’ Cognitive Pattern in the War-time Ukrainian Humorous Discourse

Accepting the idea that the flow of humorous discourse goes through some cognitive frames (Vaina, Hintikka, 1994), we assert that, at least partly, the comic effect is formed by changing cognitive patterns.

The main cognitive biases were described and defined by D. Kahneman and A. Tversky (Kahneman & Tversky, 1982). From our point of view, a cognitive pattern is a mental filter, linking several frames and the active model of the reality cognition, rotating around a key value dominant, the frequent usage of which shapes as well as distorts the cognitive frames of the real-world cognition, leading to the same name cognitive bias functioning in the world map of a person. The cognitive pattern is an interim filter between a frame and a related cognitive bias.

C. Gleason (2022) proves that the ‘Availability Heuristic’ cognitive bias allows people “to make fast...estimations in many real-world scenarios” which are not always accurate and prone to err, though they are based on important recent information.

We argue that the ‘Availability Heuristic’ cognitive pattern (AHCP) is the constituent part of the ‘Availability Heuristic’ cognitive bias, according to which a decision is made as a result of pursuing fresh experience or information reflecting frequent and recent events. It is based on such key value dominant as “correct solution” and consists of two main frames: the “problem” frame and the frame "new reality" reflecting the present-day war reality.

12.3.1 Sample Jokes

The sample jokes taken for the analysis circulate in Ukrainian electronic multimedia: in social networks and mass media outlets. Jokes 1 and 2, 8 and 9, are viral with millions of views, posted on many Ukrainian popular websites and numerous social network messages. The least popular is joke 11. The other jokes from this sample take the middle positions.

(1) “In the new Ukrainian school, money is collected not for curtains, but for Bayraktars” (Baraban, 2022). Before the war, teachers asked parents to collect money for new curtains and small classroom renovations. It is a pre-war reality. During the war teachers ask money for various volunteers' funds to help Ukrainian military with first aid kits, bulletproof vests, small and big drones. That is the war-time reality.

This joke is based on situational humor, applying such stylistic devices as paraprosoodokian, which we define as an unexpected joke end or a punch line, and pastiche, taken in the narrow postmodernism meaning as the mixture of the lexicon belonging to various registers, genres, social groups. There is the juxtaposition of the educational language and the military language *school –Bayraktar*. Cognitively, we see the application of the AHCP. After the beginning of the war, new realities appeared, the joke reflects the recent experience which sounds unusual and funny.

(2) “To get a kick in the ass on Zmiinyi (Snake) island is called as a Goodwill gesture” (Gornostal M. 2022). The joke reflects real events happened on this Black Sea island belonging to Ukraine. After a successful artillery and missile attack of the Ukrainian Army, the Russian commanders withdrew their troops using euphemism and calling this act as ‘a goodwill gesture.’ The AHCP functions in this joke because “an ass kicking action” (the bathos stylistic device is applied) is called as “a goodwill gesture,” which reflects the recent war-time reality. Bathos presents a funny transition from the literature lexicon (register) to the rude or colloquial lexicon (register) in writing or speech. Additionally, the cognitive pattern of the ‘Distinct contrast’ is used, being exposed through such stylistic figure as paradox. So the comic effect of the joke is caused by the complex involvement of bathos, euphemism, irony and paradox,

reflecting the stylistic level, and two cognitive patterns – the AHCP and the ‘Distinct Contrast’ cognitive pattern, exposing the cognitive level of the humorous discourse. As for the cognitive pattern of the ‘Distinct Contrast’ (from ‘*contrast effect*’ bias) (Kahneman et al.,1982), it is based on the fact that contrastive referents, placed together, present more interest and are fixed in the mind better. This pattern includes such frames as ‘contrastive objects’ and the value dominant ‘the attention to all unusual things.’

(3) “The police stopped the car. Did you drink? Drank. Why are you driving? I wanted to donate my car to the Ukrainian Armed Forces!” (Persha.kr, 2022).

The joke reflects the real situation during the war time when millions of Ukrainians donated money, clothes and cars to the Ukrainian Armed Forces. However, this phenomenon is imposed on the widespread traffic wrongdoing – the drunk driving. Stylistically, we see the application of paraprosookian, anti-irony (the drunk driver looks smarter than police officers.) and pastiche (the juxtaposition of the police and military lexicon: *drank – to donate...to the Ukrainian Armed Forces*). Cognitively, the AHCP is exposed revealing the creativity and laughing intentions of a speaker.

(4) “Friends and relatives from Russia who do not believe Ukrainian news! Welcome to Ukraine. I will hospitably share my cellar with you”(Zotenko, 2022). The joke describes two real war phenomena in Ukraine during the war: many Russians don’t trust Ukrainian news believing in their propaganda news; many Ukrainians go down to their cellars because of the air alarms brought about by Russian rocket attacks. However, stylistically, these two phenomena are connected by a funny logic, irony and pastiche (the mixture of mass media and household lexicon: *news – cellar*). Cognitively, there is the application of the AHCP.

(5) “The vacancy for which Ukrainians have been waiting for a long time: HIMARS operator...” (Novosti-n, 2022). In Ukraine such war phenomenon as the popularity of HIMARS, a multiple rocket launcher made in the USA, caused the creation of this joke. From the stylistic point of view, the comic effect of the joke is evoked by the

appliance of parapsydokian, irony, and pastiche (the mixture of the business and military lexicon: “vacancy – HIMARS”). At the cognitive level, the AHCP is manifested with a war reality ousting the civil one. The logical inference shifts to probably inductive, which sounds funny.

(6) “Give a man a fish, and he will be fed for a day. Give him headphones, and he will listen for 24 hours — Good evening, we are from Ukraine!” (Karmazina, 2022). In Ukraine, one of the new war realities is the creation of a new music subculture, reflected in the popularity of the dozens of brutal and militant songs, inspiring Ukrainian soldiers and officers, volunteers and patriots, protecting their state. The song “Good evening, we are from Ukraine” belongs to such military music. It sounds like a threatening phrase imposed on various video footage showing the destruction of the enemy`s tanks and armored personnel carriers, fighters and helicopters. So, in this joke the innuendo is made that if a person looks video materials with this music, he or she gets pleasure from the explosions of enemy's warehouses, military vehicles, etc. Stylistically, in this joke, the comic effect is caused by parapsydokian, double entendre (the phrase “Good evening, we are from Ukraine” has two meanings), accompanied with anaphora (“give...give”) and pastiche, where the lexicon of peaceful fishing is mixed with the lexicon of music, having a military time innuendo. Cognitively, we notice the application of the AHCP because the recent war reality connected with the modern Ukrainian music pops up in the punch line.

(7) “True Ukrainians should love Ukraine, the Ukrainian language, borsch and Boris Johnson!”(Levkovych, 2022). During the war time, Boris Johnson, Prime Minister of the UK, is the most popular Western leader with 90% of the population support in Ukraine, according to several sociological polls. His name is mentioned in many informational, opinion and humorous multimedia texts posted in Ukraine. Therefore, stylistically, the punch line of the joke is based on parapsydokian, with obvious application of the incongruity mechanism. Cognitively, the AHCP is exposed, when the new war-time reality overshadows the traditional description of the ‘true

Ukrainian person. Additionally, the joke adopts the cognitive pattern of ‘Distinctive contrast’; the opposition of such concepts as ‘Ukrainian culture’ and ‘British culture’ is blurred here. The laughing and creativity intentions are revealed too.

(8) "If my son is born, he will be named Bayraktar, if a daughter – Javelin." "As for me, I will call my son as Boris and my daughter as Lend-Liza" (Krutogolov, 2022, Levkovych, 2022). The cognitive base of this joke relies on the AHCP and the ‘Easel’ pattern, creating a funny picture of four militarized kids. This joke elucidates such war-time realities as Javelin, an American portable anti-aircraft missile; Bayraktar, a Turkish unmanned aerial drone, applied by Ukrainian Armed Forces; Boris Johnson, the most reliable world leader, helping Ukraine, and ‘The Ukraine Democracy Lend-Lease Act’ adopted by the US Congress and signed by President Joe Biden in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine on May, 2022. This act is mentioned through the allusion and wordplay devices in the female name Lend-Liza. These war-time realities ousted the civil life realities in the cognitive world map of Ukrainians leading to the comic effect through the incongruity mechanism together with the cognitive ‘Easel pattern’ based on the ‘Picture dominance’ cognitive bias which was experimentally proved by A. Paivio, according to which communicants remember visual pictures and images shaped by words considerably more quickly than any logical or abstract information (Paivio, 1971). The ‘Easel’ rotates around such value dominant as the ‘picture delight’ and includes such frames as ‘visual picture’ and ‘mental image.’ Stylistically, this pattern is realized through various metaphors, similes, hyperboles and bright epithets. In this joke, the above mentioned cognitive patterns are actualized, stylistically, through metaphoric allusions to Javelin, Bayraktar, Lend-Lease act, the corresponding wordplay (*Lend-Lease and Lend-Liza*), pastiche (the mixture of the war-time lexicon and the neutral family lexicon), parapsydokian because the punch lines in this joke sound too unexpected.

(9) "A dog loves meat. A crow likes cheese. And I love cotton, with delivery to Crimea" (Jokes in Ukrainian, 2022). In this joke, the AHCP is applied because the

war-time realities, exposed through aggressive intentions presented figuratively (“And I love cotton, with delivery to Crimea.”), are imposed on the common peaceful time realities (“The dog loves meat. A crow likes cheese”). Additionally, the ‘Easel’ cognitive pattern is applied because the word cotton is used metaphorically. The Russian word “хлопок” has several homonymous meanings “clap” and “cotton.” The Russian mass media call the explosions in Crimea as “хлопок” in the meaning “claps” or “small explosions”. It sounds like euphemism. Ukrainian social networks users started calling Crimean explosions as “бавовна” or “cotton”, poking fun at the opponents. The cognitive pattern of ‘Superiority or Illusory Superiority’ is exposed in this joke too. The speaker is sure that he or she is smarter and stronger than occupants. This cognitive pattern means that communicants estimate their IQ and EQ qualities as high and the qualities of their opponents as low. It lies in the foundation of the same named cognitive bias, defined by D. Kahneman and A.Tversky, who asserted that such cognitive bias is intrinsic to many people (Kahneman et al.,1982). The functioning of this cognitive bias is the manifestation of the superiority theory in humor. As asserts T. Hobbes: “The passion of laughter is nothing else but sudden glory arising from a sudden conception of some eminency in ourselves by comparison with the infirmity of others or our own formerly” (Hobbs, 1958). Morreall J., the supporter of this theory, adds the following: “Simply put, our laughter expresses feelings of superiority over other people or over a former state of ourselves” (Morreall, 2013). The cognitive pattern of ‘Superiority or Illusionary Superiority’ is based on such value dominant as “We are smarter!” It consists of two main frames: the frame “We” of a speaker (IQ, EQ, gender, profession, ethnic group, nationality, social position), and the frame “They” (opponents, rivals, enemies). Stylistically, these three cognitive patterns are actualized through such figures as pun formed by two meanings of “cotton” (the metaphoric Ukrainian meaning ‘explosion’ and the direct ‘fluffy plant’), leading to the creation of double entendre. Double entendre or ambiguous expression is the stylistic figure characterized with a special way of

speaking, designed to get a double meaning. Usually, one meaning is obvious due to the context, while the other requires further thinking. Besides, in the Ukrainian language this joke is characterized with rhyme.

(10). “I went out to the garden and looked around - it was full of weeds. I imagined that these were orcs... In an hour I pulled out all of them... with the roots!” (Ukraina Moloda, 2022). In this Ukrainian joke, a recent war-time reality is mentioned. Russian soldiers who participate in the invasion of Ukraine are nicknamed ‘orcs.’ This nickname is given after the gloomy goblins shown in the epic fantasy film ‘The Lords of Ring’ (2001-2003) staged after the novel of J.R.R.Tolkien. While putting her garden in order, the speaker, the old female farmer, remembers the newly appeared phenomenon – the so-called “orcs”, feeling the surge of hatred, she uproots all weeds on her land. Cognitively, the AHCP is applied because in the mind of the old woman, the civilian village reality is replaced by the reality of wartime. Additionally, the ‘Superiority of Illusionary Superiority’ cognitive pattern is exposed, so far as the old woman feels the moral supremacy over occupants – she works on her own land. Besides, the ‘Easel’ cognitive pattern is used, since the joke leads to the creation of the “weed-orc” image. In terms of stylistics, the comic effect is caused by such figures as pastiche (the mixture of the lexicon of farmers and the war-time lexicon), bathos (“orc” is a rude word), and metaphor (“weeds” are “orcs”). The joke makes an innuendo that the old woman is ready to eliminate all occupants.

(11) “Jesus taught us to forgive and love people. But he did not say anything about the Russian occupiers...” (Zotenko, 2022). In this joke, the role of the new war-time reality is played by Russian soldiers on the territory of Ukraine. So we notice the application of the ‘Availability Heuristic’ cognitive pattern. The logic inference (“If you follow Jesus Christ, you should forgive and love all people”.) is shifted with the probably inductive inference based on funny logic (“If Jesus Christ had not mentioned Russian occupiers in his gospels, they were not supposed to be forgiven and loved.”). Stylistically, the comic effect is evoked by pastiche based on the mixture of religious

and military lexicons (“Jesus”, “Russian occupiers”) and funny logic. Besides, an innuendo is made in this joke that Jesus permits not to forgive occupants...

(12). “Girls, whom Turks write to, ask Bayraktars! Such times we have...” (Beleniuk, 2022). Stylistically, the humorous effect of this joke is caused by the paraprosookian figure (unexpected joke end) and the metaphoric allusion to Bayraktar, a Turkish unmanned aerial drone, used by Ukrainian Army. The cognitive base of this joke is the AHCP, shaping a funny picture of a beloved girl asking Bayraktar instead of some romantic gift.

While analyzing the stylistic innuendoes, having the same named inner intentions behind them, we single out the ideas of solidarity between Ukrainians and ridicule of the occupants, which permeate almost all above-mentioned jokes. Such linguist as M.Billig affirms that humor could be social, leading to solidarity by bringing people together and anti-social by excluding people through mockery (Billig, 2005). The researched Ukrainian jokes uphold such approaches since they are social for Ukrainians, leading to their fellowship and cohesive group thinking, and anti-social for Russian occupants, poking fun at them through mockery and ridicule. The aggressive intentions towards occupants pass through all sample jokes excluding jokes 3, 4 and 8. It means that they sound amusing for Ukrainians and negatively for their enemies. So, during the current conflict the war-time Ukrainian humorous discourse functions as the tool self-enhancing and inspiring Ukrainian soldiers and people as a whole, relieving their tensions, making their spirit stronger, uniting them, creating positive humorous environment, teasing the enemies.

All sample jokes are characterized with such categories as brevity and timeliness reflecting the events happened recently.

12.4.The War-time Ukrainian Humorous Discourse in Literature Journalism Style

While defining literary journalism, we think that the definition given by R.Marnane looks as the most comprehensive: “Literary journalism, as a form of reportage that employs narrative techniques more commonly associated with fiction, remains uniquely suited for bridging gaps between class content and contemporary, real-world applications” (Marnane, 2019).

N. Sims asserts: “Among the shared characteristics of literary journalism are immersion reporting, complicated structures, character development, symbolism, voice, a focus on ordinary people...and accuracy. Literary journalists recognize the need for a consciousness on the page through which the objects in view are filtered” (Sims, 2007).

We would like to add that literary journalism presents a fusion of common journalism with storytelling and stylistic devices used in fiction, making an emotional appeal and forcing the audience to feel the facts. The application areas of literary journalism are different including politics and war, economics and ecology, traveling and art, etc.).

(1). Funny Snippets Of The Bloody War In Ukraine (Kharchenko, 2022).

“Military trucks entered Ukraine from Russia.”

“March 10, 2022. In Chernihiv region, one local man shot a video with 15 Russian trucks belonging to logistic support units circling solemnly on a snowy agro field. The video looks bewildering. The first idea striking the head says, “The loaded trucks are drilled for a parade march.” The second idea asks, “Why does it happen on the territory of Ukraine?” Only the third flash of mind solves this catch-22, I mean this paradoxical war ploy, - this logistic unit just only wants to run out gas in order not to go into the nightmare of this ‘military operation...’”

The humorous discourse of this article, presented as an anecdote, written in the literary journalism style, applies situational humour with facts mixed with storytelling technique and emotional appeal. The article exposes the cognitive pattern of ‘Von Restorff’ (the situation looks weird), revealing the inner intentions of the mockery of

the enemy, the self-enhancing of Ukrainian farmers and lighthearted fun. Stylistically, the author uses metaphors (“catch-22”, “nightmare”, “flash of mind”), alliteration (“solemnly snow”), paradox (“trucks circle on a field”).

The cognitive pattern of ‘Von Restorff’ is an essential one in humorous discourse. The key idea of it lies in the fact that people pay more attention to unusual, non-standard and bizarre objects and words. Von Restorff affirmed that such cognitive bias is intrinsic to a lot of people (Von Restorff, 1933). This pattern is based on such value dominant as “Curiosity” and consists of two main frames: the frame “extraordinary objects” and the frame “unusual phenomena and puzzles”.

(2). ‘Funny Snippets Of The Bloody War In Ukraine’ (Kharchenko, 2022).

“March 8, 2022. In Sumy region, four Russian tanks T-72 got crashed by two Ukrainian flags. In the morning, local folks noticed 4 Russian tanks pulled up to the center of their small village. Young tank men, being baffled by the lack of fuel, drained gas from two tanks and filled the tanks of two others. After that they moved away seeking the way and leaving two T-72 with closed hatches. In a while, jolly farmers fixed two Ukrainian flags on the tanks` turrets parked in their settlement. On arrival, puzzled troopers of two tanks racked their brains for a sec and started shooting at tanks with Ukrainian flags. After getting a decisive ‘victory,’ they came closer and got disappointed looking at their own damaged tanks. Then they brainstormed for a while, actively gesticulating and bitching. Soon they decided that the best way ran across the local bridge with a load capacity of 5 tons. Ignoring the traffic sign, the first tank broke down the bridge and tumbled into a quite deep river, leaving no chances to save it. The last tank chose another way and after a long circling around the village outskirts, at long last, found a deep ditch where it got stuck till the end of the war”.

This humorous article, presented in the literary journalism style, looking like an anecdote, is based on situational humour, where facts are mixed with storytelling technique, emotional appeal and dramatic tension. It actualizes the cognitive pattern

of ‘Superiority or Illusionary Superiority’ (locals look smart and Russian soldiers show their low IQ), revealing the inner intentions of the ridicule of the enemy, the self-enhancing of Ukrainian farmers, and lighthearted fun. Stylistically, the author uses metaphors (they racked the brains, brainstormed.), bathos (bitching), alliteration (deep ditch).

(3). ‘In the Kherson region a flock of wild geese ravaged a Russian fighter jet’ (varta1.com.ua)

“March 18, 2022. Wild geese joined the air defense of Ukraine. According to SpecMachinery.com.ua, another enemy fighter crashed near Kalanchak in the Kherson region. According to eyewitnesses...a pair of Russian fighters flew near Kalanchak. The first raised a flock of geese who decided to perform a patriotic duty to the people of Ukraine. One or more birds heroically got into the engine of a Russian fighter, as a result of which it fell into the swamp”.

In this short article, written in literary journalistic style, looking like an anecdote, the author applies real situational humour; personification metaphors mixed with irony– the wild geese like people “joined the air defense of Ukraine’ and ‘decided to perform a patriotic duty””; hyperbole – they did it “heroically”. Besides, we notice the emotional appeal and dramatic tension causing together the humor effect. Cognitively, the ‘Easel’ pattern is used. The readers see the funny picture of Ukrainian geese attacking the Russian fighter.

(4). ‘The Powerful Punch of Ukrainian Police To Poltava Farmers buying and selling Russian Tanks On Their Black Market’ (Kharchenko, 2022).

“The profit is not so big, but it`s honest work.”

(a farmer from Poltava)

“March 26, 2022. Poltava police smashed a serious strike to local farmers buying and selling Russian T-72 tanks and armored personnel carriers (APC military vehicles) on

the black market after their successful ‘Hadiach safari’ on Russian military vehicles started on February 24, 2022.

As it was informed by Evgen Rogachov, Chief of Poltava region police, "Since the beginning of the large-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, Poltava police have seized 11 tanks, 2 armored vehicles, 8 machine guns, 9 submachine guns, 5 rifles, 10 pistols, about 4,000 rounds of ammunition, 14 grenades and about 200 other ammunition."

According to off-the-record sources, in Poltava region the price of a working T-72 varies from \$15,000 to \$100,000...Armored personnel carriers of various modifications including BTR-70 and BTR-80 are offered by farmers for considerably lower prices...The brand-new ones used for military parades could be more expensive and it sounds reasonable.

So, in spite of Poltava police persecution, local farmers keep on chasing Russian tanks T-72 and APC of various modifications...On the one hand, it is time to start seeding and sowing works, so they need additional vehicles. On the other hand, speaking honestly, extra money wouldn't hurt..."

In this article, looking like an anecdote, written in the literary journalistic style, with emotional appeal and dramatic tension, the writer uses metaphors – “smashed a serious strike”, “Hadiach safari”, and “black market”; alliteration – “seeding and sowing works”, “Poltava police persecution”. Anti-irony is displayed in the fact that Ukrainian farmers turned out to be smarter than professional Russian military men. The humorous discourse reveals the inner intentions of the superiority of Ukrainian farmers and the mockery of Russian soldiers. At the level of context, we see the contrast referents, juxtaposed together: Russian military men loosing tanks – Poltava farmers chasing tanks – Ukrainian police seizing tanks from farmers. From the cognitive point of view, the ‘Easel,’ ‘Superiority or Illusionary Superiority’ and ‘Distinct contrast’ patterns are applied. All together it leads to the humor effect.

12.5. ‘Negativity Thinking’ Cognitive Pattern in the Ukrainian War-time Black Humor

For the first time, the term ‘black humor’ was used by A.Breton who printed ‘L’Antologie de l’humour noir’(Breton, 1940). In his opinion, black humor is limited by stupidity, skeptical irony, mild jokes and is “the mortal enemy of sentimentality par excellence”. Being the product of ‘a short-term phantasy’, it stands against the “obsolete artifices”.

As defines J.L.Luebering: “Black humor...juxtaposes morbid or ghastly elements with comical ones that underscore the senselessness or futility of life. Black humor often uses farce and low comedy to make clear that individuals are helpless victims of fate and character” (Luebering,2022).

Before the war, black humor was a rare phenomenon in Ukrainian multimedia, maybe because of the cultural heritage and the peculiarities of the mentality of Ukrainians. The personal experience testifies that while hearing a black humor joke, some students left audience rooms or started crying. After the beginning of the war, the situation changed.

In the present-day Ukrainian multimedia, black humor relates to the jokes, memes and other fragments of humor discourse covering the traditional taboo themes including the concepts of war, death, heavy injury, tragic event and so on. Like any kind of humor, stylistically, black humor is shaped by a combined number of stylistic figures and tropes. As for the cognitive level, in our opinion, it is caused primarily by the ‘Negativity Thinking’ pattern accompanied with other cognitive patterns.

As S.Frothingham argues: “We humans have a tendency to give more importance to negative experiences than to positive or neutral experiences. This is called the negativity bias. We even tend to focus on the negative even when the negative experiences are insignificant or inconsequential” (Frothingham & Legg,2019).

The research of A. Ledgerwood proves the idea that people are more apt to stick to negative thinking patterns and, at least partly, it happens because of their instincts accepted in the prehistoric times. Just only at the age of seventies people get rid of negative thinking patterns and start switching positive and negative thinking patterns easily (Ledgerwood, 2019).

Accepting the reasoning of S.S.Casabianca and K. Gepp (2012), 'Negativity Thinking' bias functions through the following cognitive distortions as:

- all or nothing thinking (polarization);
- overgeneralizations;
- discounting the positive;
- jumping to conclusions;
- magnification and minimization;
- catastrophizing;
- emotional reasoning;
- labeling;
- shoulds;
- exaggerated personal moral obligations;
- fallacy of fairness;
- personalization and blame;
- fallacy of change;
- always being right.

This list is not complete; we can add several more cognitive distortion:

- cynical skepticism as a habit of some people;
- tragic events framing, when people suffering from personal or family tragic events could not think impartially etc.

To our mind, a cognitive distortion could be defined as a wrong and, at the same time, shortcut logic cognitive operation not reflecting the reality properly.

We think that the ‘Negativity Thinking’ cognitive pattern (NTCP) as a part of ‘Negativity Thinking’ bias presents a mental filter permitting just only negative thoughts to pass through, being based on such key value dominant as “negativity protects” and consists of three main frames: the ‘self-preservation reaction’ frame and the frames of "the real fact" and ‘the real situation.’

The unexpected reframing of situational contexts with taboo topics and cognitive patterns (from Neutral to Negative Thinking and other), is exposed through a number of stylistic devices and leads to the comic effect.

Pointed at foreign outsiders coming to conquer the territory of Ukraine (they), black humor jokes promote the solidarity among Ukrainian defenders (we). The snarky sarcastic humor paints the worst image of the occupants, displaying the inner intention of mockery, and forms the better image of Ukrainian soldiers, exposing the inner intention of superiority. So, within a dramatic situational context, the war-time black humor is accepted positively by Ukrainian multimedia community and negatively by their opponents from Russia.

12.5.1 Sample Black Humor Jokes

All sample black humor jokes are taken from Ukrainian multimedia: social networks and mass media outlets.

(1) “Hot tour. See Ukraine and die. Cocktails included!” (Dzyuba, 2022). Stylistically, the comic effect of this joke is caused by such figures as double entendre and irony. The explicit meaning of this joke is the advertising slogan with elements of hyperbolization (“see Ukraine and die”) and fake joy, having a positive connotation. The implicit meaning has an opposite negative connotation with an element of threat – those who come to Ukraine without invitation could die with the possible usage of Molotov cocktails. Cognitively, it actualizes the NTCP with ‘emotional reasoning’ distortion because this joke contains the death wish intentions to the invaders.

Besides, the cognitive pattern of the ‘Distinct contrast’ is applied, being exposed through irony.

(2) “I am in a mess, and I put likes on corpses in Facebook and Telegram... and if there are a lot of them, I also put a heart” (Serdyuk, 2022). Stylistically, this black humor joke looks like a fragment of real life situational humor based on irony. In common life to put a heart on photos with dead bodies looks horrible, but in the time of war the NTCP with ‘emotional reasoning,’ ‘cynical skepticism’ and ‘tragic events framing’ distortions gets activated. In addition, the cognitive pattern of ‘Von Restorff’ is applied.

(3) “When will Prytula start fundraising for nuclear weapons?” (Shymanska, 2022). The black humor of this joke is incited by such stylistic figures as hyperbole and paraprosoodokian. Serhiy Prytula, a famous Ukrainian showman, public leader and volunteer, launched a number of successful fundraising campaigns, including the purchase of Bayraktar drones. The proposal to start collecting funds for...nuclear weapons sounds unexpected and unusual. Cognitively, there is the applying of the ‘Von Restorff’ pattern and the NTCP with ‘cynical skepticism’ distortion.

(4) “Do you even know where you are? This is Konotop. Here, every second woman is a witch. Your dick won't stand tomorrow” (from a real conversation between a Ukrainian woman and a Russian tankman) (Shymanska, 2022). The comic effect of this joke is caused by the combined employment of such stylistic figures as pastiche (the mixture of the lexicon belonging to various genres and registers), where the neutral lexicon is mixed with a magic word “witch” and a rude word “dick”, bathos (“dick”), and paraprosoodokian (an unexpected end). On a cognitive level, we see the actualization of the NTCP with ‘emotional reasoning’ distortion and the ‘Easel’ pattern.

(5) “Welcome to Chornobaivka! Welcome to Hell!” (22 air strikes) (Trojanov, 2022). Stylistically, this joke applies double entendre, because the phrase “Welcome to Chornobaivka!” has two meanings: the explicit meaning looks like a touristic

slogan with a positive connotation; the implicit meaning sounds ironically with a negative connotation and fake joy. The end of the joke employs paraprosookian sounding unexpected relating to the explicit positive meaning. Additionally, the joke uses such means of figurative expression as anaphora (“welcome...welcome”) and isocolon with two sentences of the joke having the same number of words. Cognitively, it applies the NTCP with ‘emotional reasoning’ and ‘tragic events framing’ distortions. It exposes the cognitive pattern of ‘the Infantry Man Fallacy.’ Here, the new war reality with Chornobaivka airport, where enemy`s planes were struck 22 times by Ukrainian Air Forces, overshadows the typical touristic slogan.

‘The Infantry Man Fallacy’ cognitive pattern is based on the cognitive bias exposed by L.Santos. Rephrasing the famous saying “knowing is half the battle”, L.Santos affirms that “knowing is less than half the battle”. With this cognitive bias the researcher outlines the tendency of a communicant to adhere to his or her wrong biases, even if he or she wants to get rid of them: “I have biases – not enough. I know that I know knowing I have biases isn`t enough – not enough...” (Santos, 2015).

In our opinion, ‘the Infantry Man Fallacy’ cognitive pattern means that a communicant, in spite of his or her knowledge about the possible verbal delusion or trap, could get trapped and this knowledge do not protect him or her. This cognitive pattern is based on such value dominant as ‘caution’ and such frames as ‘trap’ and ‘experience.’

(6)“480 more occupiers will return home under the Christmas tree in black bags. The Ukrainian Armed Forces made a New Year's gift to Ukrainians” (Espresso TV, 2022). The comic effect of this black humor joke is shaped by such stylistic figures as personification and pastiche with the mixture of the Christmas holidays lexicon (Christmas tree, gift) and the military lexicon (occupiers, black bags). Cognitively, it exposes the NTCP based on ‘cynical skepticism’ and ‘tragic events framing’ distortions; the AHCP with the dramatic war reality overshadowing the typical

Christmas traditions; the cognitive pattern of ‘Superiority or Illusory superiority.’ The journalist is sure that she is smarter and stronger than occupants.

(7)“The torn arse was lying neatly in the middle of the lawn, and the wind was blowing it...in the field - It sank into my soul...it kept coming out to me like a meatball in soup...horribly, the arse was chasing me. At some point I thought - What if it's not a torn arse? Which some Tikhon brought with him...maybe... there are no domestic animals, neither cats nor dogs...they keep asses to have something to shit into their heads if there are no TVs nearby...” (Shymanska, 2022). The situational humor of this joke is mixed with dirty phantasy ideas revealing such stylistic figure as paraprozdokian (an unexpected joke end). The NTCP, based on ‘cynical skepticism’ and ‘emotional reasoning’ distortions, is accompanied with the cognitive ‘Easel’ pattern, responsible for the dominance of visual pictures and images. Stylistically, the rude word ‘arse’ is used here as a personified metaphor because the arse keeps ‘chasing’ the speaker. Besides, such words as ‘arse’ and ‘shit’ testify the usage of bathos stylistic figure. The cognitive pattern of ‘Superiority or Illusory Superiority’ is applied in this joke too. The joke reveals the inner intentions of entertainment, creativity, mockery and self-enhancing.

(8)“Russian warship, go f**k yourself!” (Wikipedia, 2022). This joke presents a precedent phrase said by R.Hrybov, a Ukrainian border guard, to the captain of the Russian missile cruiser ‘Moskva’ who offered to surrender on Zmiinyi island which later turned into a famous and funny one-liner, chanted at world protest demonstrations, “Russian warship, go f**k yourself!” (Wikipedia, 2022) Cognitively, this funny one-liner elucidates the NTCP and ‘Distinct Contrast’ cognitive patterns. The rude words of this one-liner sound unexpectedly, creating a contrast. According to the situational context, the Ukrainian military garrison on Zmiinyi island had considerably less weapons than the Russian warship. Stylistically, in this example, the comic effect is caused by such devices as paraprozdokian, bathos (*go f**k yourself*)

and pastiche (the mixture of the military and rude informal lexicons). This funny one-liner belongs to the most cited war-time Ukrainian humorous jokes.

While studying the stylistic innuendoes in these black humor jokes, we notice the innuendoes of solidarity between Ukrainian defenders and mockery of the occupants passing through all sample jokes. These jokes lead to the cohesive group thinking of Ukrainians and negative emotional reasoning towards Russian invaders. So, during the war, the Ukrainian black humour discourse acts as an instrument motivating Ukrainian people, relieving their tensions, making their spirit stronger, uniting them and discouraging the enemy and its supporters.

12.6. Conclusions

In this chapter, the war-time Ukrainian humorous discourse is set against the background of the current Russian-Ukrainian war realities and Ukrainian culture at all. Primarily, the humorous text-creation process is done by Ukrainian bloggers and journalists.

Cognitively, it differs from the pre-war Ukrainian humorous discourse, because of the surge of the black humour, revealing the inner intentions of aggression, mockery and superiority more often. The researched war-time Ukrainian humorous discourse exposes the features of the main humor theories, including the psychological tension relief and the superiority theories, the incongruity and the reframing theories.

The sample material from 20 war-time jokes and 4 humorous articles displays the frequent usage of the ‘Availability Heuristic’ cognitive pattern and the ‘Negativity Thinking’ cognitive patterns, combined with the ‘Distinct contrast’, ‘Superiority or Illusionary Superiority’, ‘Easel’, ‘Infantry man fallacy,’ ‘Heuristic analogy,’ ‘Von Restorff’ patterns.

The number of cognitive patterns, involved in the war-time Ukrainian humorous discourse, creating a comic effect, is not restricted by those mentioned in this article, so the perspective of the study of this type of discourse is the further detection, classification and description of all cognitive patterns engaged in it.

All researched cognitive patterns, playing the role of reframing cognitive mechanisms and creating the humorous discourse comic effect, are exposed through a set of stylistic figures such as paraprosdokian, irony, pastiche in its narrow meaning, allusions, bathos, double entendre, antithesis, various types of metaphors, etc.

All jokes and humorous article fragments are written in an informal style, reflecting the categories of brevity and timeliness, being based on war-time current events.

The main functions of the Ukrainian war-time humorous discourse are the following:

- (1) the function of entertainment through creating positive emotional mood and promoting laughing;
- (2) the psychological stress relief through protecting and getting rid of the negative emotions;
- (3) the function of power (superiority) through self-enhancing, shaping strong will to protect their country, ridiculing and disparaging the enemies;
- (4) the function of unity and cohesion consolidating the whole nation through homogeneous collective mood, ridiculing and disparaging the enemies;
- (5) the function of the cognitive skills improvement through the creativity promotion.

The war-time news presentation in the form of Ukrainian humorous discourse is performed in the literature journalism style, looking like anecdotes based on short funny stories, characterized with the war facts providing, storytelling technique, emotional appeal, dramatic tension, issues of social importance, linear chronology. The prevalent topics: war realities, courage and smartness of Ukrainians.

12.7. Needs for Future Research

Though the chapter focuses its attention on cognitive patterns functioning as the inner mechanisms of war-time Ukrainian humor and the accompanying stylistic figures, it does not cover all of them. There is a necessity for further determining, classifying, and describing all cognitive mechanisms, shaping the nationally branded Ukrainian humor. The spotlight of future research could be extended due to the pragmatic dimension. Besides, the sample of war-time jokes can be enlarged, which in turn can reveal some additional statistical generalizations and culturally marked features.

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