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NEGATIVITY THINKING' COGNITIVE PATTERN IN WAR-TIME UKRAINIAN BLACK HUMOR

The article researches the multimedia functioning of the 'Negativity Thinking' cognitive pattern in Ukrainian black humor discourse created during the dramatic Russian-Ukrainian war. Primarily, it is created by Ukrainian bloggers and journalists, and relies on the psychological tension relief, superiority and reframing theories. Being a constituent of the same named cognitive bias, this mental filter spins around such value dominant as 'negativity protects' and consists of three main frames: the 'self-preservation reaction' frame and «the real fact» and 'the real situation' frames. According to the analysis of seven sample black humor jokes, the 'Negativity Thinking' cognitive pattern with 'emotional reasoning,' 'cynical skepticism' and 'tragic event framing' distortions could be exposed together with the 'Distinct contrast,' 'Availability Heuristic,' 'Easel,' 'Von Restorff' and 'Superiority or Illusionary Superiority' cognitive patterns. All of them have a set of stylistic figures accompanying them. In the analyzed jokes, the 'Negativity Thinking' cognitive pattern manifests through such stylistic figures as paraprosdokian, irony, pastiche, bathos, double entendre, metaphor, with such innuendoes as the solidarity between Ukrainians and the mockery of the enemy. The main communicative functions of the Ukrainian war-time black humor discourse are the following: the relief of stresses, the motivation to protect their state, the whole nation unification, the optimistic mood creation and the discouragement of the invaders.

***Key words:** 'Negativity Thinking' Cognitive Pattern, Ukrainian war-time black humorous discourse, stylistic figure, cynical skepticism, irony, bathos, pastiche.*

Methodology and research approaches. The methodical tools of the research are following: the cognitive and the stylistic analyses methods, the discourse analysis tools, the monitoring of Ukrainian multimedia, the scientific generalization and interpretation approaches to the researched material.

Introduction. A considerable contribution to the exploration of the black humor phenomenon was made by W. Ruch [23] and R.A. Malphurs [21], who studied it from the psychological perspective, where the latter adhered to the psychological tension relief theory, with laughing people driving the negative emotions away. In general linguistics, the tendency to analyze the specifics of the functioning of black humor in multimedia discourse becomes more and more widespread. The black humor discourse was researched by such linguists as J.R. Alexander [9], A. Breton [12], B.J. Blake [11], A. Leibold [18], S.I. Huluieva [10]. V.V. Kuzebna and Usyk L.M. [4], V. Samokhina [5]. It is quite justified that with the rise of multimedia content applying black humor, more scientific articles appear in the linguistic, cognitive and psychological paradigms focusing on its various aspects. However, the Ukrainian war-time black humor discourse remains outside the attention of scholars and needs adequate scientific coverage too.

For the first time, the term 'black humor' was used by A. Breton who printed 'L'Antologie de l'humour noir' in 1940 [12]. 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" [20].

In Ukrainian multimedia, *black humor* relates to the jokes and other fragments of humor discourse covering the traditional taboo themes including the concepts of death, heavy injury, serious diseases 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.

The **purpose** of the article is to determine the combined functioning of the key cognitive patterns, including the 'Negativity Thinking' pattern, and

stylistic figures, leading to the comic effect in the Ukrainian black humor discourse during the war time.

It sets the following **tasks:** 1) defining the 'Negativity Thinking' cognitive pattern as a part of the 'Negativity Thinking' cognitive bias; 2) determining the connections between the 'Negativity Thinking' and other cognitive patterns forming the comic effect; 3) exposing the connection of the elucidated cognitive patterns with a series of stylistic figures producing the comic effect; 4) the stylistic and cognitive analyses of a number of Ukrainian black humor jokes based on the actualization of the 'Negativity Thinking' cognitive pattern.

Taking into account the affirmation that the stream of humorous discourse moves through cognitive frames [27], we consider that the black humor comic effect is shaped by spinning cognitive patterns too.

The **object** of the research is the wartime black humor discourse circulating in Ukrainian multimedia.

The **subject** of the research is the functioning of the 'Negativity Thinking' cognitive pattern, accompanying cognitive patterns and stylistic figures of the realization of the humorous intention.

As S. Frothingham affirms, "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" [14].

The research conducted by Nielson Norman Group proved the idea that "humans…pay more attention or give more weight to negative experiences over neutral or positive experiences. Even when negative experiences are inconsequential, humans tend to focus on the negative" [19]. While seeing a spectacular sunset with a flock of storks flying in the foreground, people will remember better the enemy`s cruise missile and the air-to-air missile catching it up somewhere faraway in the background.

The research of A. Ledgerwood, a professor of psychology, 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 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 [17].

Accepting the reasoning of S.S. Casabianca and K. Gepp [13], 'Negativity Thinking' bias functions through the following cognitive distortions as:

– *all or nothing thinking* (*polarization*), when people look at all situations and facts through black and white prism without noticing gray shadows;

– *overgeneralization,* when one negative fact is assumed as a stream of failures and defeats;

– *discounting the positive* through ignoring the positive information;

– *jumping to conclusions* without support of facts;

– *magnification and minemalization*, "A mistake! How could I be so stupid?" The second approach, "OK! That`s nothing";

– *catastrophizing* with the acceptance of the worst scenario;

– *emotional reasoning* through ignoring logical reasoning;

– *labeling* based on negative experience;

– *shoulds,* "I should make everyone happy";

– *exaggerated personal moral obligations* through eternal complaints, "I should have helped them and it was my fault too";

– *fallacy of fairness*, according to which a person thinks that he or she knows what is fair and what is not and if somebody disagrees, it upsets this person;

– *personalization and blame*, a person takes personal responsibility for a negative outcome though he or she did not control the process completely;

– *fallacy of change*, a person expects that other people will suit his or her expectations;

– *always being right*, when a person considers his or her opinion as the most significant and correct;

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

– *cynical skepticism* as a habit of some people;

– *tragic events framing*, based on situational context, 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 facts and reality.

We think that the 'Negativity Thinking' cognitive pattern 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.

The affirmation that black humor with aggressive and negative hints could shape a sense of identity and community mentioned by Terrion and Ashforth [25] sounds appropriate too.

Pointed at foreign outsiders coming to conquer the territory of Ukraine (they), black humor jokes promote the better cohesity among Ukrainian defenders (we). The snarky sarcastic humor paints the worst image of the occupants and forms the better image of Ukrainian soldiers. 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.

In the sample of the Ukrainian black humor jokes chosen for the analysis, we just took only the jokes based on the 'Negativity Thinking' cognitive pattern.

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!"* [2]. 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 'Negativity Thinking' cognitive pattern 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. The 'Distinct Contrast' pattern, a constituent part of the '*contrast effect' bias*, elucidated by D. Kahneman and A. Tversky [26], Kahneman), is based on the statement that contrastive referents, put together, attract more attention, being more memorable. Focusing on such frames as 'contrastive objects,' the pattern rotates around such value dominant as 'the attention to all unusual things.'

(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"* [6]. 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 'Negativity Thinking' pattern with 'emotional reasoning,' 'cynical skepticism' and 'tragic events framing' distortions gets activated. In addition, the cognitive pattern of *'Von Restorff'* is applied. As it was found out by Von Restorff, communicants pay more attention to uncommon and strange objects and words [28]. This pattern is grounded on such value dominant as "*Curiosity*" and includes two key frames: the frame "*extraordinary objects*" and the frame "*non-standard phenomena.*"

(3) *"When will Prytula start fundraising for nuclear weapons?"* [7]. The black humor of this joke is incited by such stylistic figures as hyperbole and paraprosdokian. 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 'Negativity Thinking' pattern 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) [7]. 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 paraprosdokian (an unexpected end). On a cognitive level, we see the actualization of the 'Negativity Thinking' pattern with 'emotional reasoning' distortion and the 'Easel' pattern.

(5) *"Welcome to Chornabaivka! Welcome to Hell!" (22 air strikes)* [8].

Stylistically, this joke applies double entendre, because the phrase '*Welcome to Chornabaivka!*' 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 paraprosdokian 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 'Negativity Thinking' cognitive pattern with 'emotional reasoning' and 'tragic events framing' distortions. The 'Availability Heuristic' cognitive pattern is used too. 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 'Availability Heuristic' cognitive pattern rotates around such key value dominant as "correct solution" and includes two main frames: the "problem" frame and the frame «new reality» that reflects the war reality in the time of the Russian-Ukrainian war. In its turn, the cognitive bias of 'Heuristic representativeness,' discovered by D. Kahneman and his colleagues [16],

manifests in the predisposition of the audience to link imagination and creativity to resolve problems by the spur-of-the-moment analogy search.

(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…*[3].

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 'Negativity Thinking' pattern based on 'cynical skepticism' and 'tragic events framing' distortions; 'Availability Heuristic' cognitive pattern 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. The latter 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 [26]. The functioning of this cognitive bias is the manifestation of the superiority theory in humor developed by A. Bardon [10] and T. Hobbes [15]. 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).

(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..."* [7]. The situational humor of this joke is mixed with dirty phantasy ideas revealing such stylistic figure as paraprosdokian (an unexpected joke end). The 'Negativity Thinking' pattern, based on 'cynical skepticism' and 'emotional reasoning' distortions, is accompanied with the cognitive 'Easel' pattern, responsible for the dominance of visual pictures and images. According to A. Pavio people remember visual pictures and images shaped by words much faster than any logically connected information [18]. The 'Easel' cognitive pattern turns around such value dominant as the 'picture delight' and consists of such frames as 'visual picture' and

'mental image.' 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.

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 team spirit and cohesive group thinking of Ukrainians and aggressively negative emotional reasoning towards Russian invaders. So, during the war, from the communicative point of view, the Ukrainian black humor discourse acts as an instrument optimistically motivating Ukrainian people, relieving their tensions, making their spirit stronger, uniting them and discouraging the enemy and its supporters.

Conclusions. The war-time Ukrainian black humorous discourse is created in the background of the dramatic Russian-Ukrainian war realities. Primarily, it is thought up by Ukrainian bloggers and journalist. It relies on the psychological tension relief, superiority and reframing theories. All seven jokes taken for the analysis apply the 'Negativity Thinking' cognitive pattern, characterized with the solution search through negative experience reflecting the bloody war events. This cognitive pattern turns around such value dominant as 'negativity protects' and focuses on three main frames: the 'self-preservation reaction' frame and «the real fact» and 'the real situation' frames. According to this analysis, the 'Negativity Thinking' cognitive pattern with 'emotional reasoning,' 'cynical skepticism' and 'tragic event framing' distortions could be accompanied with the 'Distinct contrast' and 'Availability Heuristic' cognitive patterns. Besides, the cognitive 'Easel' pattern, responsible for the dominance of visual pictures and images, and the cognitive patterns of 'Von Restorff' and 'Superiority or Illusionary Superiority,' could be exposed too. The number of cognitive patterns, involved in the war-time Ukrainian black 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, functioning in Ukrainian multimedia, is the further determining, classifying and describing all cognitive patterns engaged in it. Every cognitive pattern has a set of stylistic figures standing behind it. In the researched jokes, the 'Negativity Thinking' cognitive pattern exposes through such stylistic figures as paraprosdokian, irony, pastiche in its narrow meaning. Besides, there could be used allusions, bathos,

double entendre, metaphor, and such innuendoes as the solidarity between Ukrainians and the mockery of the enemy. All of them display the intentions of unity between Ukrainians creating homogenous collective mood and better group-think cohesity. The main communicative functions of the Ukrainian war-time black humor discourse are the following: the relief of stresses, the motivation to protect their state, the whole nation unification, the optimistic mood creation and the discouragement of the enemies.

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Харченко О. В. КОГНІТИВНИЙ ПАТЕРН «НЕГАТИВНОГО МИСЛЕННЯ В УКРАЇНСЬКОМУ ЧОРНОМУ ГУМОРІ ПІД ЧАС ВІЙНИ

У статті досліджується мультимедійне функціонування когнітивного патерну «негативне мислення» в українському дискурсі чорного гумору, створеного під час драматичної російсько-української війни. В першу чергу, чорний гумор створюється українськими блогерами та журналістами, і спирається на теорії психологічного зняття напруги, переваги та рефреймінгу. Будучи складовою однойменного когнітивного упередження, цей ментальний фільтр обертається навколо такої ціннісної домінанти, як «негативне ставлення захищає», і складається з трьох основних фреймів: «реакція самозбереження», «реального факту» та «реальної ситуації». Відповідно до аналізу вибірки з семи жартів, що побудовані на чорному гуморі, когнітивний патерн «негативне мислення» з когнітивними викривленнями «емоційне міркування», «цинічний скептицизм» і «обрамлення трагічних подій» застосовується разом з іншими когнітивними патернами, такими як «чіткого контрасту», «еврістичної доступності», «мольберту», «фон Ресторфа», «переваги або ілюзорної переваги». Всі вони проявляються через певний набір стилістичних фігур. У проаналізованих жартах когнітивний паттерн «негативного мислення» проявляється через такі стилістичні фігури, як парапросдокіан, іронія, пастиш, бафос, двозначність, метафора, і такі іннуендо як солідарність між українцями та глузування з ворога. До основних комунікативних функцій українського дискурсу чорного гумору під час війни належать зняття стресів, спонукання до захисту своєї держави, об'єднання усього народу, створення оптимістичного настрою і знеохочення окупантів і тих хто їх підтримує.

Ключові слова: когнітивний патерн «негативне мислення», дискурс чорного гумору під час воєнного часу, стилістична фігура, цинічний скептицизм, іронія, бафос, пастиш.