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## The Role of Irony in Main Characters' Speech of O'Henry's Stories

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### Abstract

*We can say that a literary text is rich in various means of expression, with the help of which the author builds images and concepts of what is being discussed in a work of art. The literary text has a high degree of emotionality. The author cannot only convey his own emotions, but also evoke them in readers. Artistic texts are also characterized by integrity. This means that the individual categories of the text are interconnected, they form an integral structure. In addition, a literary text should always have the main idea of the author. A literary text always has an addressee and carries specific information. It also plays an important role in the cultural context.*

**Key Words:** *a stylistic device, lexical semantic means, zeugma, dramatic irony, situational irony, verbal irony.*

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Irony (Greek Eironeia - pretense, mockery) is a satirical technique in which words or expressions contain a mocking assessment of an object, phenomenon or person. A hallmark of irony is a double meaning, where it is not the directly expressed thought that is considered true, but the implied one. The greater the contradiction between them the stronger is the irony. However, not only the essence of the subject, but also its individual aspects can be ridiculed. In linguistics, irony is a fairly popular object of study, its pragmatic potential is known in terms of influencing and manipulating the reader [3, 315-317].

There are 4 types of means of expressing irony as a stylistic device. At the phonetic level, irony is most often found in oral speech. The speaker may change intonation or pause, emphasizing the most important part of the sentence. For example, in the work "Gifts of the Magi", the announcer highlights the word that in order to focus the reader's attention on the worthlessness of the amount - "One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all" [4].

In the story "The Last Leaf", the announcer emphasizes the word colony, ridiculing the process of creating the so-called colony.

"So, to quaint old Greenwich Village the art people soon came prowling, hunting for north windows and eighteenth-century gables and Dutch attics and low rents. Then, they imported some pewter mugs and a chafing dish or two from Sixth Avenue, and became a colony"[5].

At the morphological level, the use of plural nouns or superlatives of

adjectives is highlighted to create irony. In the story "Duel" the author uses an oxymoron, brilliantly showing the various facets of New York life.

«It has the poorest millionaires, the littlest great men, the haughtiest beggars, the plainest beauties, the lowest skyscrapers, the doleful pleasures of any town I ever saw»[5].

In the work "Gifts of the Magi", the author depicts the humour of the situation with the help of the most unwisely.

"And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house" [4].

Lexical semantic means are distinguished for creating irony at the lexical level. They are the use of proper names, antithesis, homonymy, polysemy, ironic word formation, affixation and paradoxical word formation. In the story "The Leader of the Redskins", the play on words helps to achieve an ironic atmosphere by replacing the welter-weight champion with a welter-weight cinnamon bear.

"That boy put up a fight like a welter-weight cinnamon bear; but, at last, we got him down in the bottom of the buggy and drove away" [5].

O. Henry also often used antiphrasis (the use of a phrase or word in the opposite sense). For example, in the work "Peaches" the hero ironically calls a fight with a heavy opponent "a little quarrel".

"Say, sport, I wish you'd size up this rib of mine and see if it's broke. I was in a little scrap and bumped down a flight or two of stairs" [5].

In his works, we can also find polysemy. For example, in the short story "The Pharaoh and the Choral", the word "hand" appears in the text a few times, but has different semantic meanings and refers to different parts of speech.

1) "...and when Soapy moves uneasily on his bench in the park, you may know that winter is near at hand" (as a description of the imminent onset of winter).

2) "At the corners of four streets he hands his pasteboard to the North Wind..." (as the verb "transfer").

3) "If not in coin you must pay in humiliation of spirit for every benefit received at the hands of philanthropy" (in direct meaning)

Understanding the polysemantic word "hand" allows the reader to feel the sarcastic atmosphere and at the same time appreciate O` Henry`s ironic writing style.

And, finally, the syntactic level consists of logical-syntactic means, or rather repetitions, rhetorical questions, introductory constructions, gradation, enumeration, and intonation graphic means (ellipsis and quotation marks). In the story "The Pharaoh and the Choral", the irony over the hero's dream (to go to prison) is achieved through the use of rhetorical questions.

"Well, why don't you call a policeman? I took it. Your umbrella! Why don't you call a cop? There stands one on the corner" [5].

In the work "The Last Leaf" irony is demonstrated in the repetition of the characters' questions with an interrogative intonation. The doctor

thinks drawing is stupid, and Sue thinks men.

"Has she anything on her mind?"

"She - she wanted to paint the Bay of Naples someday," said Sue.

"Paint? - bosh! Has she anything on her mind worth thinking twice - a man for instance?"

"A man?" said Sue, with a jew's-harp twang in her voice. "Is a man worth - but, no, doctor; there is nothing of the kind" [5].

In the same story, O. Henry uses zeugma as an expression of the author's irony towards his characters.

"So, to quaint old Greenwich Village the art people soon came prowling, hunting for north windows and eighteenth-century gables and Dutch attics and low rents" [5].

"They had met at the table of an Eighth Street "Delmonico's," and found their tastes in art, chicory salad and bishop sleeves so congenial that the joint studio resulted" [5].

There are three different types of irony.

#### 1. Dramatic irony

Dramatic irony is a graceful literary device that became popular in Greek tragedy. One famous example of dramatic irony is Shakespeare's hit Othello. The audience knows that Othello's best friend Iago is a bad guy who wants to destroy Othello. The audience also knows that Desdemona was faithful. Othello knows neither. This means that the audience can feel some kind of imminent fireworks while poor Othello remains in the dark.

There are three stages of dramatic irony: installation, exploitation, and resolution. In Shakespeare's tragedy «Othello», the setting occurs when Iago

convinces Othello that Desdemona is having an affair with the mysterious Cassio. Exploitation occurs when Iago puts Desdemona's handkerchief, Othello's gift, in Cassio's room. The resolution comes when Othello kills Desdemona after her friend Emilia says that Iago was kind [1, 101].

### 2. Situational irony

Situational irony is when the outcome of a situation is completely different from what people expect. This type of irony is a literary device with contradictions and contrasts. For example, in the book "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz", all inhabitants of the Emerald City assume that the land Oz is powerful and impressive. However, Oz is the complete opposite.

### 3. Verbal irony

Verbal irony is when the speaker says something opposite to what he means. While this sounds like sarcasm, it's not exactly the same. People usually use sarcasm to attack something, but this is not always the case with irony [1, 101].

Alanis Morissette managed to insert one example of irony into her song. When the person whose plane is crashing says, "Well, isn't that cute," this is clearly in the form of verbal irony. In fact, he is not very happy that the plane is about to crash, so his statement is exactly the opposite of what he means. Unlike dramatic irony and situational irony, verbal irony is always a deliberate move by the speaker. A common example of verbal irony is when people say, "What a nice day!" when there is a thunderstorm outside [2, 133].

There are different types of stylistic devices in literature. The role of the

translators is quite essential, and high demands are placed on them.

Emotional vocabulary is involved in the creation of the psychological nature of the main characters and embodies the positive and negative qualities of a character, contributing to positive or negative images. In general, emotional vocabulary performs several functions, the main of which is the creation of emotional content. The universal method of realizing the semantics of an artistic image lies in lexical, syntactic and stylistic devices.

Irony is a multifaceted and multifunctional phenomenon in linguistics, and its nature can be determined in specific situations, using the example of a single context. Modern linguistic science establishes the dialogical nature of irony and analyzes the relationship between the consciousness of the author and the addressee, as well as the subject of the ironic utterance. The starting position of most modern studies is the opinion that the very essence of ironic communication contains the need for active intellectual contact of its participants, and to explain the essence of irony, it is most important to pay attention to its iconic nature and paradox.

The main classifying feature of the linguistic means of expressing irony is their belonging to different levels of the linguistic structure. In this case, the appropriately organized context together with the communicative task determines the ironic semantic structure of the text. To express irony in the text, various linguistic means are used in accordance with the language levels like phonetics, vocabulary,

morphology and syntax. The main feature of irony is to indicate a humorous attitude of the reported facts and phenomena.

The interpretation of irony as a complex phenomenon of culture, a philosophical and aesthetic category that serves to reveal the value meaning of objects and phenomena of the surrounding world, made it possible to consider it as a form of the comic, as a way of perceiving the world.

Thus, we can conclude that the mastery of the language and the skillful use of irony allows O. Henry satirically

show the desires and problems of people in his works, focusing on more important things such as true love, the purpose of a person, family relationships and many others. As a stylistic device irony gives lightness and unobtrusiveness, it creates the feeling that the author is laughing at the characters and, of course, thanks to this device, reading is much more interesting, which is why many authors do not bypass this stylistic device. And as for our daily life, we use irony just as often, even in the most ordinary conversations.

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