

COGNITIVE FEATURES AND DISCOURSE REALIZATION OF JOKES IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH LANGUAGES

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Annotation: This article explores the cognitive and discursive characteristics of jokes in Uzbek and English languages, emphasizing how humor reflects and constructs cultural and linguistic worldviews. Drawing on theories from cognitive linguistics and discourse analysis, the study identifies key mechanisms such as incongruity, schema violation, conceptual blending, and metaphor, analyzing their manifestation in both linguistic contexts. It further examines how cultural norms and communicative practices shape the production, structure, and interpretation of jokes, providing a comparative perspective that highlights universal and language-specific features of humor. The findings contribute to cross-cultural pragmatics and cognitive stylistics, offering insights into the cognitive processes underlying humor and its function in discourse.

Keywords: humor, cognitive linguistics, discourse analysis, incongruity, conceptual blending, schema violation, metaphor, Uzbek jokes, English jokes, cultural pragmatics, joke translation, cross-cultural communication

Humor plays a crucial role in human communication, serving as a vehicle for social bonding, cultural expression, and psychological relief. Across cultures, jokes embody distinct worldviews and cognitive patterns, offering unique insights into the human mind. This paper examines the cognitive underpinnings and discursive realizations of jokes in the Uzbek and English languages, highlighting how different linguistic and cultural traditions shape the way humor is constructed, conveyed, and interpreted. The research employs the tools of cognitive linguistics and discourse analysis to explore conceptual mechanisms such as incongruity, schema violation, conceptual blending, and metaphor, alongside the pragmatic and socio-cultural functions of humor in each language.

In cognitive linguistics, humor is understood as a product of mental operations that challenge or subvert expected patterns. A central theory in this regard is the Incongruity Theory, which posits that humor arises when there is a mismatch between expectation and reality. In English jokes, this incongruity often takes the form of wordplay, irony, or logical twists. For instance, puns and double entendres are common in English, exploiting phonetic or lexical ambiguities to produce a humorous effect. Consider the joke: «Why don't scientists trust atoms? Because they make up everything». Here, the verb «make up» plays on its dual meaning—to fabricate and to constitute—creating an incongruity that is resolved humorously.

Uzbek jokes, in contrast, tend to rely more heavily on situational irony, cultural frames, and folk wisdom. Humor in Uzbek culture is deeply embedded in oral traditions, with figures such as Nasreddin Afandi serving as archetypes of wit and wisdom. These jokes often involve social situations that reflect shared cultural values, norms, and expectations. For example, a typical Uzbek joke might involve an exaggerated scenario where a character's actions subvert traditional roles or expectations, leading to a humorous outcome that also conveys a moral lesson. This interplay between humor and

morality is a key cognitive feature of Uzbek jokes, wherein the laughter serves both to entertain and to instruct.

Another cognitive mechanism central to humor is conceptual blending, which involves the mental integration of disparate cognitive spaces to produce a novel and often humorous meaning. In English, this is evident in absurdist humor or surreal jokes that blend unrelated concepts. For instance, the joke «I told my wife she was drawing her eyebrows too high. She looked surprised» relies on a blend between the literal and figurative meanings of «looked surprised», creating a humorous cognitive dissonance. Uzbek jokes also utilize conceptual blending, though often grounded in more culturally familiar domains, such as daily life, kinship relations, and social hierarchies. The humor emerges from blending the expected social scripts with unexpected outcomes, often revealing the incongruities within societal norms.

Schema violation is another vital cognitive process in humor production. Schemas are cognitive structures that represent knowledge about typical situations. When a joke violates a familiar schema—such as the expected behavior in a marketplace, a wedding, or a classroom—the resulting surprise can generate humor. In English, this might involve subverting professional stereotypes, as in: «What do you call a lawyer gone bad? Senator». This joke plays on the schema of legal professionalism and public service, subverting it with a cynical punchline. In Uzbek jokes, schema violations frequently draw from local customs and expectations. For example, jokes that depict a son-in-law defying his in-laws' authority can evoke laughter by challenging traditional family hierarchies.

Metaphor and metonymy also contribute to humor by enabling conceptual mappings that highlight incongruity. English humor often employs metaphorical thinking to create ironic or exaggerated comparisons, as in: «He's about as useful as a chocolate teapot». The absurdity of the comparison highlights the subject's ineffectiveness in a humorous way. Uzbek jokes, rich in proverbial wisdom, often use metaphor and metonymy to condense complex social commentary into pithy, humorous statements. The cognitive effort involved in unpacking these metaphors contributes to the humor's impact.

From a discourse perspective, the realization of jokes varies significantly between the two languages. In English, jokes are commonly structured with a clear setup and punchline, often designed for performance in stand-up routines or casual banter. Timing, intonation, and delivery are crucial elements that influence the joke's effectiveness. In Uzbek, jokes are typically embedded within storytelling traditions, with humor arising more organically through narrative development and character interactions. The delivery may be less formulaic but is deeply tied to the speaker's performance and the cultural resonance of the scenario.

Context plays a vital role in the interpretation and effectiveness of humor. English speakers may appreciate sarcasm, understatement, or deadpan delivery, whereas Uzbek audiences might prefer humor that reflects communal values, intergenerational wisdom, or moral teachings. Understanding a joke thus requires not only linguistic competence but also cultural literacy. Misinterpretation often occurs when jokes are translated or shared across cultural boundaries without sufficient contextual framing. For instance, English self-deprecating humor may be perceived as genuine modesty or insecurity in Uzbek contexts, while Uzbek hyperbolic humor might seem exaggerated or confusing to English speakers unfamiliar with its cultural codes.

Pragmatically, jokes serve multiple functions in discourse: they can ease tension, establish rapport, critique authority, or reinforce group identity. In English, humor often acts as a face-saving strategy or

a means of asserting individuality. In professional or academic settings, jokes can lighten the tone and facilitate engagement. In Uzbek discourse, humor is frequently used to navigate social hierarchies, maintain harmony, or deliver indirect criticism. A well-timed joke can diffuse conflict, express disapproval subtly, or reaffirm social bonds.

Audience response is another crucial dimension of humor. A joke's success depends on the audience's ability to recognize the underlying cognitive mechanisms and cultural references. In English-speaking contexts, laughter is often immediate and individualistic, reflecting personal amusement. In Uzbek settings, laughter may be more collective, serving as a social signal of agreement, solidarity, or appreciation of shared values. This difference reflects broader cultural patterns: individualism in English-speaking societies versus collectivism in Uzbek culture.

The translation of jokes presents unique challenges due to the interplay of language, culture, and cognition. Literal translations often fail to convey the intended humor, as they may miss the cultural frames, wordplay, or conceptual blends that make the original joke funny. Effective translation requires not only linguistic equivalence but also cultural adaptation, recreating the humorous effect within the target language's cognitive and discursive norms. This process, known as transcreation, is especially relevant in humor studies, highlighting the creative and interpretive skills needed to bridge cultural divides.

Nasriddin Afandi is selling eggs in the market. A customer approaches and asks:

— Afandi, bu tuxumlar o'zinikimi?

— Yo'q, tuxum tovuqniki.

— Afandi, are these eggs yours?

— No, they belong to the chicken.

The humor in this joke emerges from the incongruity between the expected and actual interpretation of the question. The customer's question "Are these eggs yours?" is pragmatically intended to inquire whether Afandi is the seller and responsible for the eggs. However, Afandi humorously interprets it literally — focusing on biological ownership — and replies, "No, they belong to the chicken."

This incongruity, central to many theories of humor (especially Attardo's Script-based Semantic Theory of Humor and the Incongruity-Resolution Model), creates cognitive dissonance in the hearer, which is resolved by realizing the playful misinterpretation.

Marketplace discourse typically follows a well-established schema: buyers inquire, and sellers provide relevant, informative answers to facilitate a transaction. Afandi's response violates this schema by diverting from expected communicative norms. Instead of confirming his role as the seller, he introduces an unexpected script — a literal ownership scenario — thereby subverting the listener's expectations.

This schema violation triggers a humorous effect, as it reflects both cognitive creativity and discursive play.

The joke hinges on a conceptual shift from the transactional domain (where "your eggs" implies possession for sale) to the biological domain (where "your eggs" refers to the source of origin). This kind of shift is a form of conceptual blending [3, 1284], where elements from two mental spaces (commercial interaction and natural ownership) are combined to produce a humorous outcome.

Afandi manipulates the frame of reference, causing the audience to momentarily reassess the intended meaning of the original question — a classic cognitive trigger for humor.

This joke also functions as an example of pragmatic irony. Afandi pretends to misunderstand the communicative intention to highlight the ambiguity of everyday language. In the broader cultural context of Uzbek humor, such wit is attributed to folk wisdom and intelligence.

The joke reflects traditional values where cleverness, verbal dexterity, and subtle satire are more appreciated than direct confrontation. Through discourse, Afandi doesn't merely entertain — he critiques logical rigidity and celebrates lateral thinking, aligning with the cognitive-cultural model of humor prevalent in Central Asian societies.

Ultimately, the study of jokes in Uzbek and English reveals both universal cognitive patterns and culturally specific realizations. While mechanisms like incongruity, blending, and schema violation are common across languages, their expression is deeply influenced by cultural values, social norms, and linguistic structures. English jokes often emphasize linguistic creativity and individual perspective, whereas Uzbek humor prioritizes social cohesion and moral reflection.

The cognitive approach to humor offers valuable insights into how language shapes thought and social interaction. By examining jokes through this lens, we gain a deeper understanding of the mental operations involved in humor, as well as the cultural contexts that inform its production and interpretation. Discourse analysis further enriches this understanding by situating jokes within real communicative events, revealing how humor functions as a dynamic and adaptive aspect of human interaction [4, 26].

This cross-cultural comparison underscores the importance of cultural competence in global communication. As societies become increasingly interconnected, the ability to appreciate and interpret diverse forms of humor becomes a vital skill. Whether in diplomacy, business, or education, humor can build bridges or create misunderstandings, depending on how well it is attuned to the audience's cognitive and cultural frameworks.

Now consider an English joke that similarly relies on conceptual redirection:

Customer: "Waiter, there's a fly in my soup!"

Waiter: "Don't worry sir, the spider on the bread roll will take care of it."

This joke functions on a different, though parallel, cognitive axis. The customer voices a complaint within a conventional restaurant frame, expecting concern or an apology. Instead, the waiter responds with calm absurdity, suggesting the presence of a spider as a solution. Here, two cognitive frames are blended: the restaurant service frame, which implies hygiene, order, and attentiveness; and the ecological or natural predation frame, in which spiders eating flies is normative behavior. The humor arises from the unexpected juxtaposition of these two frames, resulting in a blended mental space that is both surprising and amusing.

Unlike the Uzbek joke, which relies on literalism and reinterpretation of speech acts, the English joke hinges on irony and absurdity. The waiter's response violates several conversational expectations, particularly the maxim of relevance, offering a solution that is logically coherent only within the wrong context. This violation signals to the listener that the utterance is meant to be humorous. Furthermore, the deadpan delivery — assuming the spider's presence is normal — enhances the effect, characteristic of Anglo-American dry humor.

What links both jokes is the strategic use of incongruity: in the Uzbek example, it is semantic and pragmatic; in the English one, it is contextual and logical. Both require the hearer to reconcile conflicting frames of reference, drawing upon shared cultural scripts to appreciate the humor. The differences, however, are equally illuminating. In Uzbek culture, humor often elevates linguistic cleverness and subtle philosophical critique. In English-speaking contexts, humor tends more toward surrealism and irony, playing with social expectations and narrative logic.

These cross-cultural examples illustrate how humor serves as a rich field for cognitive linguistic analysis. Through jokes, speakers reveal not only their linguistic agility but also culturally embedded ways of framing reality, negotiating meaning, and navigating social roles. While the mechanisms may vary — from literal reinterpretation to absurd frame blending — the underlying cognitive processes remain remarkably similar, highlighting both the universality and specificity of humor across languages.

In conclusion, jokes in Uzbek and English serve as a mirror to the cognitive and cultural landscapes of their speakers. They encapsulate shared knowledge, challenge assumptions, and reflect social realities in entertaining and enlightening ways. Through the lenses of cognitive linguistics and discourse analysis, we can appreciate the richness of humor as a form of human expression and a key to cross-cultural understanding.

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