Mask «Buffoon» in modern english discourse

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Abstract. The article deals with the problem of phenomenon of mask "buffoon" in modern English discourse. Mask "buffoon" has become an integral feature of the present and the socio-cultural situation in the world. It is seen as a multifunctional, versatile, multidimensional mean of implementation of ideas. The detailed analysis of functional and image-value features of mask "buffoon" in English discourse is given and examples of their actual implementation are provided.

Keywords: buffoon, creativity, irony, language game, mask, self-presentation.

“In era of great change and revaluations, changing truths the whole life in a sense takes character of a carnival”. (M.M. Bakhtin)

Introduction. Dynamic processes of modern life and culture are characterized by actualization of holiday phenomenon in socio-cultural space. Society and every person needs holidays. During holidays people forget about their problems, loss, and grief; distract from diseases and weaknesses; feel omnipotent; begin to feel energy and even try to get rid of this surplus – holidays are becoming a part of our life. Significance and value of holidays cannot be reduced to cultural, social or psychological mechanisms, as one should pay attention to its ontological aspect.

Holiday process covers a wide range of phenomena from archaic myth up to postmodernism, so one regards holiday phenomenon not only as a cultural phenomenon, but as a way of living [2]. M. A. Zahibalova claims that today there is a new correlation of holiday and casual phenomena that is characterized by blurring the boundaries between solemnity and common pace, an interpenetration of holiday into casual and vice versa [3, p. 3], the world gains carnival characteristics.

Overview of material on the topic. Carnival is one of the most important parts of modern culture, "type of perception", "system of behavior" that has developed over the centuries its own language that "is not possible to translate" into verbal [6, p. 214] but it has a huge creative potential.

Carnival world model is a variant of a particular worldview. It is a system with a clear structure, rules, regulations, forms, type of imagery, but it is organized on the basis of laughter and is in constant opposition dialogue with the official culture (M. M. Bakhtin, M. Ja. Kulinska, A. S. Muratova, etc.). Considering culture as an integrated performance, following prof. V.O. Samokhina, one argues that modern carnival demonstrates duration signs – it dissolves in everyday life and its elements are always present in culture, art and human nature [7, p. 84-97].

According to E. O. Semenova the basis of carnival world model is a model of "carnival man" who has carnival worldview, the source of which is real lives with their values and social positions (culture) as well as forms and types of household laughter [9].

Man in society demonstrates a lot of stylized images, situational "faces" of "variable" personality. One of attribute characteristics of "carnival man" is a gaming mask, which is defined as "cultural form of representation of self in society and designed for a specific purpose – substitution of the image – to hide external manifestations of real personal being a man enables to use images that are different in meaning” [10, p. 18].

Today the term "mask" is beyond its subject area and is a cultural representation of self in everyday life because of multiplicity and plurality of human self. For modern person mask has become an important part of his/her determination in society and culture, acting as modus vivendi (way of social life) and a necessary condition for joining the social discourse.

Today masking in modern English discourse is defined as presentation of human existence and some of its manifestations as something frivolous, mocking, condescending attitude to ideals, foolery – people tend to over mock serious things. The subject of masking is a person in the image of buffoon. The study aims to identify image-evaluation characteristics of mask buffoon in contemporary English discourse.

Materials and methods. Analyzing the notion of mask “buffoon” to obtain a complete picture of values it is needed to involve the following sources: various types of dictionaries (linguistic, encyclopedia, industry (medicine and psychiatry)), fiction, including stories, media, scientific literature on linguistics, culture and history, as each type of text represents a certain type of consciousness that affects representation of the same object of reality. Contextual environment of notion “buffoon” is regarded as its classifier and marker.

To consider the origins of emergence of the notion “buffoon” in English linguistic culture it is good to consult English etymological and lexicographical dictionaries which give this token the following definitions:

1) Buffoon n. 1585; clown, earlier 1549 a pantomime dance, borrowed from Middle French buffe jester, from buffa a jest, from buffre blow out the cheeks (as a comic gesture) (The Barnhart Dictionary of Etymology)

2) Buffon (buffa a jest, connected with buffareto puff; Tommaso and Bellini considered the sense of 'jest' to be developed from that of 'puff of wind' applied fig. to anything light and frivolous; e.g. Littru, refer it to the notion of puffing out the cheeks of a comic gesture (The Barnhart Dictionary of Etymology).

Using dictionary definitions we can set logical meaning of notion “buffoon” and define its essential and distinctive features. Name is attributed by extensional
(object) or intentional (sign) as its semantic content. Here below are the most prototype meanings of this token according to semantic interpretation of the most authoritative lexicographical English sources:

1) a person who amuses others by ridiculous or odd behavior, jokes, witty phrases etc. (Collins English Dictionary);

2) ridiculous but amusing person; clown (Oxford advanced learner's dictionary of current English. Oxford);

3) a man whose profession is to make sport by low jests and antic postures, a comic actor, a clown. A low jester who practices indecent raillery, a wag, a joker (implying contempt or disapprobation) (Oxford advanced learner's dictionary of current English.);

4) a person who amuses others by tricks, jokes, odd gestures and postures, etc.;

5) a person given to coarse or undignified joking (Random House Dictionary);

6) someone who behaves in a stupid and annoying way (Macmillan English dictionary).

So it can be stated that notion “buffoon” is unfairly equated to talkers and jokers not counting significant semantic differences between buffoonery and chatter. Basing on the entries it should be emphasized that buffoon is not a usual cheerful talker, a practical joker, because dominant characteristics are ridiculous person, odd behavior, funny, witty phrases. To cod and flutter is vital position of the character defined. Buffoonery is a rare gift to see comic in life situations neglecting selfishness, make fun of his/her own shortcomings and failures.

Research results. Here are given image-value characteristics of mask “buffoon” withdrawn on materials of fiction, lexicographical sources and historical references of the time.

1. Wit. Buffoonery as quality is determined by individual susceptibility to communicate with people in a funny way, interspersing language with witty jokes, have a relaxed conversation on any topic. In the book “The Fool, His Social and Literary History” Enid Welsford presents "buffoon" as a man who sees life easy, offers entertainment to his/her friends, and does not think about serious aspects of life. Enid Welsford states that their company is welcome, good stories about them accumulate, and if they have little conscience and no shame they often manage to make a handsome profit out of their supposed irresponsibility” [12, p.3]; they are “a quick-witted sociable race, who expressed themselves easily not only with the pen, but with the tongue” [Ibid., p. 14].

The ease of life views and living it in the form of entertainment does not mean that a buffoon is a frivolous man – he/she only wears a mask to "joke up" life, provide his/her experience and ideas to the public. But because of rejection and misunderstanding of their position by others, being outsiders in society, they are subjects of human ridicule because of inability to achieve a normal level of human dignity as a man in a mask “buffoon” has to be always ready to defend him/herself. Wit response usually manifests through reaction agility that results in stunning recipient who does not expect a sharp response from the interlocutor. For example, a comedic play by O. Wilde’s "An Ideal Husband” Lord Goring uses irony (addressing "My dear ..." in contrast to the exaggerated statement about "a very bad husband ") to show his bad attitude to Disapproved and Mrs. Chivli. But he was not ready to hear Laura answer in a humorous tone. Wearing a mask "buffoon", usually very restrained Mrs. Chivli surprised him by the answer in a form of a joke.

Lord Arthur Goring: My dear Mrs. Cheveley, I should make you a very bad husband.

Laura: I do not mind bad husbands. I’ve had two. They amused me immensely [16].

Such dexterity and reaction we can find see in conversation of W. Churchill with Lady Astor to create a favorable atmosphere and maintain friendly relations.

Lady Astor to Winston Churchill: " Winston, if you were my husband I would flavor your coffee with poison.”

Churchill: " Madam, if I were your husband, I should drink it. [13]"

Despite the fact that Lady Astor tried to pique W. Churchill by her commentary, he does not offend; vice versa – putting on a mask «buffoon» he reacts in the relevant ironic manner and this creates a comic situation. The mechanism of irony serves as a hidden mockery that the recipient certainly understands.

2. Language creativity. G. Guildford was the first one who defined language creativity as a skill. E. P. Ilyin understands creativity as divergent thinking process with which people are looking for solutions in all possible areas to consider as many options as possible and choose the best one [4, p. 179] – one of these areas is our language. Language creativity is an essential characteristic of a man in a mask «buffoon». Thanks to it he/she can use his knowledge to create new words, modifications of existing words and expressions to expand their semantics, focus attention, create comic effect etc. Thus, language creativity is the use of language and knowledge of it in a non-trivial way. A striking example of language creativity may be a speech of President John F. Kennedy to the electorate.

“You know nothing for sure...except the fact that you know nothing for sure.” — President John Kennedy [13].

In his speech he paraphrased Plato’s famous phrase "I know that I know nothing". This philosophical humor is life pattern; it distinguishes by context and specificity of speech expression, a short form and creative development of metaphor process of an appropriate expression.

3. Language game. Language game is traditionally defined as a form of linguistic expression of creativity[11, p. 147], violation of linguistic norms (phonetic, grammatical, lexical, stylistic, etc.) to achieve the comic and emotional effect. Functionality of language games can be interpreted by V. Z. Sannikov: 1) language creation – one of the ways to enrich the language; 2) entertainment — it is recognized both by the speaker that uses language game for his/her own purposes, and the recipient who seeks “to reveal the deep intention of the author”, taking the game; 3) masking – joke allows to mask a message and thereby state things that are banned for various reasons [8, p. 27].

A speaker in the mask "buffoon" actively uses language game to create his/her own "anti-world" prompting unconventional form of expression to show deep thoughts concealing it for comic. A bright example of language game use can be found in English medical discourse as a nurse wearing a mask “buffoon” describes the symptoms of the patient in the form of a paradox – comparison of them with his personal data (name and surname), causing comic:
Sneeze patient: My name is ... *(achoo*)

Nurse: There’s no one in our appointment book by that name [15].

English political discourse is also full of examples of language games, providing powerful effect of linguistic creativity. For example, Barack Obama made allusion of his own omnipotence paraphrasing a biblical expression in a humorous way.

Finally, I believe that my next hundred days will be so successful I will be able to complete them in 72 days. *(Laughter). And on the 73rd day, I will rest* [13].

In this example usage of language game by Barack Obama in a humorous way.

Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;

and Brutus is an honorable man [14].

This quote is an example of an ironic tone of Julius Caesar in a mask “buffoon” because at this time the audience and part of the troupe know that Brutus is not noble at all – planning to strike Caesar. Comic is caused by contrasting characteristics: ambitious and honorable.

Another example of impact of an ironic tone of mask “buffoon” is speeches of political leaders to address their rivals. In the political sphere an appropriate tone serves as intellectually subtle ridicule which, on the one hand, exemplifies an object of ridicule for its negative characteristics, on the other – gives status and increases his/her importance for the electorate.

"In a recent fire Bob Dole's library burned down. Both books were lost. And he had not even finished coloring one of them." – Jack Kemp [13].

Mask “buffoon” which is used by Jack Kemp takes mockery characteristics of his opponent Bob Daul exposing him not in good light in public. Humor lies in quantitative characteristics: a library usually has a lot of different books, when the end of the speech proves it is not so – it is clear that there are only two books.

5. **Self-presentation.** Success of verbal influence is also supported by important self-presentation. In the general sense self-presentation is defined as the process of forming an impression of oneself in the social environment. The aim of self-presentation is creation of one’s image and demonstrating it to others. G. V. Borozdina considers self-presentation a process of perception management through targeted draw of a recipient’s attention to the features of appearance, behavior, situations that are trigger mechanisms of social perception [1, p. 98]. There are two main types of self-presentation – «natural» and "artificial". Natural self-presentation is unintentional – we acquire it from birth; artificial self-presentation" aims to gain loyalty to his/her personality.

Artificial self-presentation is used by language identities in mask "buffoon” because it presents oneself in a special way – he/she looks at reality from top to bottom, creating his/her own anti-world ("inverted one"), considering everything from the ironic position, demonstrating the bitter truth of life. An effective way to create artificial self-presentation is to implement it through artificial self-criticism – falsity of negative qualities of a recipient.

Tone is "emotional and stylistic format of communication that occurs in the process of mutual influence of communicants and determines their different settings on the choice of communication ways" [5, p. 384]. Mask “buffoon” affects both participants of communication. A special way of thinking that was unnoticed as a general trend of our lives is irony. Power of ironic tone used by speakers in a mask “buffoon” is an expression of doubt, subjective (mostly negative) assessment under guise of ridicule, derision, which is a tool for critical interpretation of reality. Julius Caesar turns to an ironic tone in the Shakespeare play with the same name:

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"These stories about my intellectual capacity really get under my skin. You know, for a while I even thought my staff believed it. There on my schedule first thing every morning it said, 'Intelligence Briefing.' " – President George W. Bush, joking at the 2001 Radio-TV Correspondents’ Dinner [13].

In his speech George W. Bush puts on a mask “buffoon”, uses his negative characteristics to flirt with the audience. Because of some obscurity of his speeches there was a stereotype of his inadequacy, despite the fact that he was a very educated man. Game and comic effect lies in the double meaning of the notion Intelligence.

Thus, considering image-value characteristics of a speech personality in a mask “buffoon”, one can assert that such intellectual ridicule is typical for modern English discourse. It is based on the following purposes: 1) coverage and joking life absurdity; 2) bringing to life joy and fun that people need; 3) achievement of communicative success; 4) avoid of reprisals for a bitter truth hiding behind a mask of carelessness; 5) psychotherapeutic component – to ease hardships of life.

**LITERATURE**


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"Маска «балагура» в современном англоязычном дискурсе"

С. А. Тарасова

Аннотация. В статье рассматривается проблема феномена маски «балагура» в современном англоязычном дискурсе. Именно маска «балагура» становится неотъемлемой характеристикой настоящего и социокультурной ситуации в мире. Она рассматривается как многофункциональное, универсальное, многомерное средство воплощения идей. Представлен детальный анализ функциональных и ценностных особенностей маски «балагура» в англоязычном дискурсе и приведены актуальные примеры их реализации.

Ключевые слова: балагур, ирония, креативность, маска, самопрезентация, языковая игра.