Viorica LIFARI
doctor în filologie,
conferențiar universitar, USM
Departamentul Lingvistică Germanică și
Comunicare Interculturală

SMILE AS A MEANS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Zâmbetul este o modalitate de interacțiune umană sau mai bine zis, un mijloc de a comunica non-verbal. S-ar părea că acest mijloc este universal odată ce aparține omului, care reacționează la varii evenimente din mediul înconjurător emanând diferite emoții, iar zâmbetul asociidu-se cu bucuria sau veselia. Însă, din studiile savanților psihologi, culturologi, antropologi, sociologi și lingviști notăm că fiecare cultură modelează situații sau creează norme de punere în aplicare a zâmbetului, fiecare cultură ascunzând un secret al zâmbetului său.

În lucrarea propusă facem un studiu al zâmbetului la nivel intercultural atât în baza cercetărilor sociologice și antropologice interculturale existente, cât și analizând mijloace lingvistice precum grupuri de sinonime, proverbe și zicători din limbile engleză, română și rusă pentru a identifica modelul cultural sau varii paternuri cu care un popor asociază zâmbetul pentru a ține conversații la nivel intercultural și a interpreta corect comportamentul interlocutorului străin într-un context cultural-specific.

Cuvinte cheie: comunicare interculturală, model cultural, smile, zâmbet, улыбка.

People from various ethnic groups and different cultures are all humans who by their nature are sensitive, i.e. feel emotions. This knowledge may lead us to a wrong assumption that we all have the same emotional experience and behave in the same way finding ourselves in similar situations. But the reality is different. The various emotions manifested in human interaction all over the world and the pattern of behaviour we follow leads us to the idea that the manifestation of emotions on the social level is culturally dependent. Thus B. Mesquita et al. [2] support the idea that "cultural differences in emotion inform us about the ways in which socio-cultural environments influence emotions. Cultural differences make us aware of our culture."

At the same time we have to keep in mind that each society 'somehow' identifies the types of emotions that can be visible in the human interaction and thus transmitted values or as moral norms.

"Because emotions stand for certain interpretations of reality, they are culturally "moralised" [Apud: 2]. Analysing this idea we conclude that an emotion that is promoted in a certain culture may be not supported socially in the other one. As an example of the stated above reality we can consider the ritual of weeping the dead at a funeral in the Romanian culture [1] and the non-manifestation of emotions at a British funeral: "An open manifestation of emotions, especially negative, is not accepted in the English culture. A kind of behavior is considered infantile, impolite and causes embarrassment for the people around. … at the funeral of Princess Diana it was stated that her sons did not drop a tear, thus showing that they are real Englishmen." [5, p. 100-101]

Thus we notice that the degree of emotional representation inter-culturally is directly dependent on the type of culture. An idea supporting the above mentioned thought would be the cultural "spotlight"; an emotional phenomenon which stands for "the function of the emotion talk". Thus differences in the cultural "spotlight" of emotions reflect the differences in cultural models of behaviour generally. In independent cultures, such as the United States, feelings, thoughts and actions are understood to arise from the individual and his or her internal states. In contrast, in interdependent cultures, such as Japanese, feelings, thoughts and actions are understood to arise from the relationships between individuals; emotions here are an interdependent project, necessarily involving the psychological states and associations of others. For the Japanese, emotions are 'between people,' whereas for Americans emotions are 'within people' [2].

Emotions are primarily the subject of psychology, but in the last 30 years emotions became the main topic of research in philosophy, anthropology and cognitive linguistics. As humans we communicate, moreover in the era of globalization this communication extended on a global level between representations of various cultures and ethnic groups. Even if English is used as a means of verbal communication not always does it help to deliver exact messages to the interlocutor who comes from a different realia. This is partially because the level of the used language is not always advanced (this could have helped

interlocutors to avoid intercultural conflicts) and because of the non-verbal message that is carried by the speaker, that does not correspond to the language of communication.

Another issue in intercultural communication connected to the level of the used language is the translation method used by the speaker to express his/her opinion on this or that topic. It is generally known that a true beholder of an advanced level of bookish register of vocabulary in a certain language would make use of idioms and various expressive means characteristic to this very tongue. Thus idiomatic expressions, saying, proverbs and quotations are considered to be the markers of concepts that are valuable for the representatives of a certain culture. Not only the physical behavior patterns, but also the linguistic patterns render the cultural specificity of a language. "Some differences in emotion constructions can be planted along the dimension of 'mentalistic' versus 'somatic' interpretations. A well-known example comes from Robert Levy's ethnography about the Tahitians, and concerns the emotion of sadness." These people have no linguistic term for the concept of "sadness". They call this state as 'feeling troubled' [Apud: 2], thus somatizing a mental experience.

We consider that the process of somatizing various types of emotional states by showing their location in the body is a universal phenomenon. The Russians associate "irritation" with "liver", Romanians say they feel "the spleen" when being angry and envious. Usually the concept of "envy" is located in the chicken small stomach that is artificially placed in the human body in the Romanian culture. The state of fear is expressed by the movement of the "heart" from the chest down to one's heel in English, Romanian and Russian. The same happening with the Tahitians who focus on the meaning of the situation and remember or "mentalize" it [Apud: 2].

Quite often in various psychological linguistic or cultural studies of emotions concepts one can encounter the concept of "anger". One argument why "anger" is so much researched is the objective side of this emotional state as it is visible on an angry person, and many linguistic expressions and idioms render this state of the mind by describing the Experiencer or by comparing this state with an object, e.g.: " I was boiling with anger," "I was red with anger".

Another side of the coin is seen in the situations that would arise such an emotion in humans belonging to various ethnic groups. For an Englishman or an American getting into their personal space, i.e. not keeping the social distance may make them angry, while coming too close to a Romanian or a Russian person will not cause them angry but will emphasize their spiritual closeness.

Moreover the attitude to the concept of anger is different in these cultures. Similar to the individualistic types of cultures (USA) "anger" is associated with yielding (hitting or shouting) whereas in Belgium "anger" is associated with words indicating containment of the emotions (ignoring), connotations for shame which is the opposite of anger." The reason for cultural differences in emotion experience are the different situations that people pass through, at the same time the type of society is also very important. "Shame" is a value that violates the US cultural models, because it undermines positive self – regard, but it is consistent with self – improvement, as it increases an individual's awareness of his/her own shortcomings [Apud: 2].

Alongside the mentioned emotion concepts another interesting instance of manifesting emotions is the "smile", a non – verbal means of expressing emotions across cultures. It is a human reaction to some funny or pleasant situations or content or just a way of meeting people in social environments. To identify the differences in meaning of smile and its usage or functioning as a means of non-verbal communication we conducted a humble linguo-cultural study. The definition of the notion "smile" in English in the Collins Cobuild Dictionary is the following: "Smile is an expression on your face in which the corners of your mouth curve upwards and you sometimes show your teeth. A smile usually shows that you are happy, pleased or amused, but can sometimes also express other feelings as bitterness or resignation." [6, p. 1374]

Consulting Dex [8] we find out that "zâmbet" in Romanian means "mișcare ușoară de alungire a buzelor, însoțită de o expresie specifică a feței, pentru a exprima, de obicei, bucurie, satisfacție."

In the Russian language we encounter the following definition for "улыбка": Мимическое движение лица, губ, глаз, показывающее расположение к смеху, выражающее привет, удовольствие или насмешку и другие чувства, as in the combinations: добрая улыбка, веселая улыбка, насмешливая, злая, горькая улыбка) [12].

While analyzing the definitions of smile in three languages we notice that it is described as an expression on a human face which involves the mouth or lips, a movement which happens when the bearer of the smile is happy and joyful in English and Romanian, the person is pleased and amused in English, Romanian and Russian and it also expresses a greeting, fact expressed in the Russian definition only. In spite of the traditional association of the smile with joy and amusement it can also denote other feelings that are not always pleasant or positive.

In the article "What Feelings Mean in Different Cultures" by Charlene Solomon [4], the author being American shares her experience of work in London. She states that "in the UK, not everyone made as much eye contact on the street or tube as she did. And it was rare to hold eye contact during a business meeting", and later by comparing the British with the Americans Charles Solomon adds: "Americans are recognized internationally for their big, white, toothy grins – though perhaps less so in New York."

The fact that Americans smile more than other nations is explained in the following way: "Countries that were built and populated with many different cultures coming together smile more often and more enthusiastically than more homogenous nations. When immigrants from many different cultures and languages come together, they often have to rely on non-verbal communication cues to make connections with their neighbour. In such a way smiling played an important role in pleasant, nonverbal communication across cultures.

In the Romanian culture the smile associated with joy was promoted on the social level by organizing the national dance "Hora". This tradition was preserved during hundreds of years and the dancing festivals used to be organized seven times a year: after/on religious holidays [1] and some social celebrations as the Independence Day, the National Language Day, etc.

Nowadays cross-cultural studies start with the analysis of idioms and proverbs from a certain language as these linguistic means are considered to be culturally specific and render the ideology and values of the people who speak the language under analysis.

In what follows we propose to your attention a list of commented proverbs that render the concept of smile expressed by the lexemes "smile", "zâmbet" in Romanian and, "улыбка" in Russian and their

synonyms in the corresponding languages. We have considered several dictionaries and books (mentioned in the reference list) that are devoted to proverbs in English, Romanian and Russian and collected a certain number of example that we suggest for analysis.

In her book on the category of politeness in English and Russian, T. Larina claims that a well-known English proverb is "A smile opens many doors" and the smile represents an important communicative signal [5, p.113].

As we stated above the smiley face is more typical for Americans, while the Englishmen are more reserved. This fact is probably reflected in the small number of proverbs about the smile in English. E.g.: "He laughs best who laughs last" [13, p. 32] and "To cry with one eye and laugh with the other." [13, p. 66]. This proverb is also mentioned in [14, p. 79].

In Romanian we encounter proverbs with lexeme "a râde", their meaning being different: "Cine râde gura-și întinde."; "Nu râde de alți uită-te la tine."; "Râde rupt de cârpit."; "Cine râde mai la urmâ."; "Râde mai cu poftă."; "Râde om de om și dracul de toți."; "Nebunul râde când nu e de râs."; "A-i râde ochii"; "Să nu râzi omului în față."; "Când râde, soarele răsare."; "A râde pe sub nas."; "A-i râde musteața"; "Cu un ochi râde și cu altul plânge." [7, p. 270].

In the Russian language we have also selected some proverbs which include the word "смех" and its derivatives, for example: "Поспешишь – людей насмешишь (Haste makes waste.) [11, p. 203] and "Хорошо смеется тот, кто смеется последним." [11, p. 275].

As the list of proverbs in English and Russian is short we concentrated our research on the synonymic row of the lexemes "smile", "zâmbet" and "улыбка".

In Collins Cobuild Dictionary [6, p. 1374] we find the following expressions with the above mentioned lexemes: "He smiled coldly."; "She smiled a broad smile."; "His reputation was saved."; "He was all smiles." and "Fortune has smiled on (upon) us today." The synonymic row of "smile" includes such words as: "grin", "smirk" and "simper".

"To grin with amusement/contempt", "to grin" means "to smile" with an open mouth: "Children grin naively and cheerfully" , sometimes it means "sarcasm" and "humiliation": "to grin with foolish satisfaction".

"To smirk" means self-confidence, arrogance, to smirk self-satisfaction.

"To simper" denotes a smile of affection, "to simper an affected and languishing smile", "to simper sweetly like angels". Both "smirk" and "simper" may denote foolish smiles as soon as naivety and self-evaluation are exaggerated [10, p. 737].

Some sources on intercultural communication state that the English verbs "to giggle", "to chuckle" and "to cackle" mean something less than laughter and do not have equivalents in the Russian language [5, p. 109]. In the dictionary of English synonyms mentioned above we encounter " a giggle" as "a laughter" with synonyms like "cackle", "chuckle", "snigger", "snicker", "titter", "guffaw", "cachinnate", but no other comment is made here [10, p. 343].

The synonyms found for "улыбка" in the Russian language outnumber the ones discussed in English. The Dictionary of synonyms [15] gives a list of 12 words, considered part of the synonymic row. They are "улыбка", "смехота", "хихиканье", "усмешка", "гогот", "хохотанье", "хохот", "забава", "хохотня", "умора", "хихиканье", "смешок", "фырканье", "ржание", "смешинка", "прысканье", "регот", "смехотища", "игра", "игрушка","шутка","развлечение","хиханьки-хаханьки","хиханьки да хаханьки", "гоготанье", "гомерический хохот", "три ха –ха", "глум". There are 28 words to mention the nouns and 22 verb synonyms to the word "улыбаться", they are: "смеяться", "оскалятся", "лыбиться", "усмехаться", "скалиться", "ухмыляться", "осклабляться", "скалить зубы", "щериться", "лыбиться", "приманивать", "предполагаться", "предвидеться", "улыбаться от уха до уха", "находиться в центре внимания", "щерить зубы", "оскаливаться", "привлекать", "предстоять", "улыбаться во весь рот", "расплываться в улыбке", "сиять улыбкой", "склабиться". In the Romanian language the verb "a râde" has 10 synonyms. They are: "a se distra", "a se desfăta", "a se dispune", "a se distra", "a se înveseli", "a petrece", "a se veseli", "a se distrage", "a se eglendisi", "a libovi" [9].

Some more expressions found in Romanian with lexeme "a râde" are: "a râde în barbă" (pe sub mustață) an equivalent to the English "to giggle"; "a zâde în nas" (față, obraz), expressing a fake smile; "a zâmbi"; "mă râd și câinii" (curcile, papagalul); "a râde cu poftă" – "смеяться от души"; "a râde în pumni", "a râde cu hohote" – "хохотать", "a-i râde cuiva inima" --"смеяться от души"; "a-i râde cuiva norocul" (soarta) – "the fortune smiles on you"; "судьба улыбается".

As “a zâmbi” is explained as “a surâde” in Romanian we come to the conclusion that the semantic dominant of the lexico-semantic group of “улыбаться”, “a râde” and “to smile” is “улыбка / улыбаться” in Russian, “a râde” in Romanian and “to smile” in English.

Thus, by conducting this study we can conclude that in spite of the fact that ‘the less smiling people’ from the four cultures are the Russians, the Russian people make use of so many synonyms when talking about “the smile” and “the act of smiling / laughing”, fact which means that even these people ‘do not make use of the smile in public’ as the Americans do, “the smile or laughter without reason” being a sign of inadequateness for Russians, they manage to describe the various types of cultural smiles on the verbal level as there are many synonyms that can describe the type of smile or action of smiling and thus the emotional state of the person; the feeling of joy and happiness being manifested less in public and more among family members or in familiar environments. T. Larina calls this phenomenon a paradox. As we could see, the Russian smile is also associated with sincerity and openness, fact which is missing in the Anglophone culture.

Even if the Americans are considered to be ‘the most smiling people’ in public, in English we have identified only about 14 synonyms for the verb “to smile”, the smile being a social instrument of communication which has a social integration function, especially in a “melting pot”. In Romanian we encountered just 10 synonyms in the lexico-semantic field of smile, though the Romanian dictionary of proverbs and sayings illustrated that the Romanians also like “to laugh at others”, meaning which is rendered by the verb “to mock at” in English. But also a pure meaning of joy and happiness can be expressed by the Romanian verb “a râde”, this mood of people being supported by organizing “hora” (a national dance in the Republic of Moldova and Romania) seven times a year to promote smiling and laughing on the social level.

We notice that the idiom “Fortune has smiled on him” is present in all three languages under analysis, fact that proves the existence of some culturally universal values, the same is said about the proverb: “He who laughs last, laughs best.” The vocabulary of the Romanian language concerning the smile concept is also very rich in expressions fact that underlines the emotional spirit of this people. The only thing is that under the influence of other cultures “the smile” is still not used as a

social instrument for showing openness and readiness to communicate in Moldova.

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