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FORMAL AND FUNCTIONAL SPECIFICITIES OF THE INTERRUPTION-REPAIRS IN SPEECH INTERACTION

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Abstract

The paper provides the study of the phenomenon of interruption as speech repair in Modern English dialogical discourse. The article outlines the analysis of the interruption-repairs from the point of view of their formal and functional characteristics. The research presents a methodology, consisting of the method of text interpretation, semantic, contextual, and functional methods, which are aimed at studying speech realisation of the interruption-repairs. It is stated that the interruption-repairs may have varied forms: correction, repetitions (full or partial), what-queries, paraphrases, echo questions, explicit recognition of misunderstanding, requests to confirm the correctness of vision of a situation in a certain light, conjectures or beliefs. The paper introduces the following basic types of the interruption-repairs depending on its functional peculiarities: interruption-correction, asking for clarification, explanations and additions / specifications in accordance with the needs of the speaker who interrupts his/her interlocutor. The results obtained illustrate that the basic model of the interruption-repairs can be depicted as the emergence of the need for repair – repair – reaction to repair. According to the results of the research, the interruption-repairs are amplified by the phenomenon of the second utterance that illustrates the reaction of the speech recipient, presupposing the semantics of consent, negation and assumption, disclosure, refutation, justification, or refusal. The conducted research helps acknowledge that the interruption-repairs contribute to overcoming communicative failures and cognitive dissonance, which is the key to a productive and successful communicative interaction. The prospects of the present study consist in further investigation of age characteristics, non-verbal means of the interruption, as well as strategies and tactics, which are involved in responding to the speech interruptions allowing a more detailed study of an addressee factor.

KEYWORDS: Interruption, Repair, Stimulus-Utterance, Reaction-Utterance, Communication, Interaction.

1. Introduction

Topicality of this scientific research is predetermined by the fact that nowadays a lot of researchers are referring to the problem of verbal interaction as a result of a growing interest in the study of a vast paradigm of communicative behavior. Communication is a two-way process, which includes speech generation of and its perception. In the course of a communicative interaction, partners adhere to certain role norms, but the balance between communicators is not always present. Quite often, one of the partners takes on the initiative in the conversation. Under this condition, the interruptions of speech may occur. The theory of repair includes self- correction and correction of another communicant¹. A characteristic feature of repairs² (correction of another communicant) that are employed in the process of interruption is that they help find "mutual understanding"³ during communicative interaction. This peculiarity of the interruption-

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¹ Schegloff 1977, 363

² Schegloff 1977, 363

³ Bazzanella 1999, 832

repairs cannot be neglected, since the speakers involved in communication should make efforts to ensure that the result of the speech interaction is successful. That is why it can be stated that the interruption-repairs require great effort since communicative partners are supposed, firstly, to be completely immersed in the communicative process, being active listeners; secondly, to focus on those moments of communication that remain unclear; and thirdly, to contribute to the achievement of "linguistic transparency"¹ in communicative interaction. The **object** of the research is interruption-repairs in speech interaction. The **subject** of the research is presented by formal and functional characteristics of the interruption-repairs. The **aim** of the paper is to outline the phenomenon of interruption as speech repair in Modern English dialogue discourse by means of characterizing its formal and functional specificities.

2. Methodology

The research methods include the method of text interpretation that involves the analysis of each extract from dialogical discourse containing speech interruption; contextual method, which is used to characterise the interruption in a particular context; functional method that helps to study specific functions of each example of the interruption as speech repair; and semantic method, which is aimed at studying speech realisation of the interruption-repairs by certain verbal means.

3. Results and Discussion

The interruption-repairs (the correction of the unutterance of a communicative partner in the form of the interruption) can have fairly varied forms, namely: interruptions can be in the form of correction, repetitions (full or partial), what-queries, paraphrases, echo questions, explicit recognition of misunderstanding, requests to confirm the correctness of vision of a situation in a certain light, conjectures or beliefs. We consider that such interruption-repairs help the addresser of the interruption stimulate the consciousness of the addressee in accordance with their own needs and personal vision of a particular communicative situation in which the speakers are involved. Of particular importance are the interruptions aimed at solving problems (task-oriented dialogues)², since the constant agreement with the communicative partner does not always have a positive effect and may lead to misunderstanding instead of a successful communicative cooperation.

The situation of interruption as speech repair can be a part of interaction limited to the communicative dyad or triad. A communicative dyad is the interaction of two communicants, where one of them, wishing to correct the utterance of the interlocutor, interrupts him/her. Communicative dyads are associated with a specific local segment of discourse and embrace cognitive pictures of only two communicants. The communicative triad takes place when the third communicant intervenes in a conversation, correcting the utterance of one of the speakers or completely changing the course of a conversation of both speakers. Such interruptions are marked by the imposition of three cognitive pictures. That is why the communicative triad comprises the layering of contexts.

Functional peculiarities of the interruption-repairs are revealed in the following types of interruptions depending on the pragmatic aim of communication: the interruption-correction, asking for clarification³, explanations and additions / specifications in accordance with the needs of the communicator who interrupts the partner.

¹ Colman 2011, 1563

² Colman 2011, 1563; Concannon, Healey, and Purver 2015, 17

³ Colman 2011, 1564

The most common type of the interruption-repair is **the interruption-asking for clarification**, which can be defined as a kind of repair, where the speaker interrupting the communicative partner expresses the need for a further clarification of some information, usually due to the lack of understanding of the previous utterance.

The interruption-repairs, especially the type of asking for clarification, represent a significant contribution to the successful development of communicative interaction, since they are potentially useful and conducive to the progress of a dialogue⁴. In addition, these interruptions can have a positive effect on the results of the interactive process. Thus, such interruption-repairs perform the function of optimising the communicative process of dialogical interaction and, which is of utmost importance, contribute to reaching the interlocutors' mutual understanding, as is shown in the example:

"He was swarthy, with deep-set light brown eyes and a little mole on his cheek. His gun had a silencer on it, and—"

Greenburg was looking at her in confusion. (a) "I'm sorry. I don't understand what—"

(b) "The carjacker. I called 911 and—" She saw the expression on the detective's face. (c) "This isn't about the carjacking, is it?"⁵.

In the given above example the interruption-asking for clarification indicates that a detective Mr. Greenburg misunderstood what his partner was referring to. Therefore, this type of interruptions is the result of incompatibility of the communicants' cognitive pictures. The first part of the second interruption (b) is the interruption-explanation that demonstrates compliance with the cooperative speech strategy. The second part of the interruption (c) is the interruption-asking for clarification, which is used to reach an agreement, because at this stage the possibility of a communicative failure is strong.

The formal indicator of the interruption-asking for clarification in the form of repair is an explicit recognition of misunderstanding using phrases like *Sorry for interruption but.../ Sorry. I don't understand... / Sorry. Can you explain... / Would you explain me*, which help clarify the situation or a certain moment of communicative interaction being difficult to comprehend within the concrete interaction, or with the help of "what queries"⁶, which signify the difficulty of understanding and the impossibility of producing a correct interpretation. Consider the following example:

"But I've been offered a scholarship and—"

(a) "So what? You'll spend four years wasting your time. Forget it. With your looks, you could probably peddle your ass"⁷.

The provided example of the interruption is marked by the usage of the question structure (a). The conversation is between the father and the daughter, who made up her mind to become a teacher. Despite the fact that the daughter received a scholarship her father is against such a choice, as the teachers receive poor salary. Because of his convictions the father does not listen to his daughter till the end, interrupting her. The father's goal is to understand the reasons for choosing such a career and, at the same time, to impose his own vision of the daughter's future.

The interruption-correction implies the semantic link between the stimulus-utterance and the reaction-utterance at the point of non-matching of visions of the same subject of discussion by communicative partners, which causes the interruption. The formal indicators of such interruptions

⁴ Colman 2011, 1563; Concannon, Healey, and Purver 2015, 17; Healey 2008

⁵ Sheldon 2004, 16

⁶ Bazzanella 1999, 833; Fleisher Feldman 1996

⁷ Sheldon 2004, 54

are lexical inclusions and various deictic markers. The following example shows the lexical inclusion *marriage* in the stimulus-utterance and the reaction-utterance. This lexical unit demonstrates the attitude of communicants to relationships in which they are: Ross perceives relations with Rachel as a marriage, Rachel attempts to correct Ross's point of view interrupting him:

00:15:36 Ross: *Oh, okay, y'know what this is? This is a difference of opinion. And when that happens in a **marriage**—*

00:15:46 Rachel: ***Oh Ross, come on! This is not, this is not a marriage!! This is the world's worst hangover! Ross, listen, if you do not get this annulment, I will!***

00:15:58 Ross: *All right. All right, I'll do it⁸.*

The basis of **the interruption-additions / specifications of one's own utterance** is the semantic link between an interruption and one's own utterance in the preinterruption phase, as demonstrated in the following example:

00:20:20 Summer: *(a) Well, what does that word even mean? I've been in relationships, and I don't think I've ever seen it.*

00:20:24 Tom: *(b) Well, maybe that's—*

00:20:25 Summer: *(c) **And most marriages end in divorce these days⁹.***

The utterances (a) and (c) are related in meaning, moreover, the utterance (c) is a logical continuation and addition of (a). This type of the interruption-repair is often characterized by ignoring the partner's point of view (preinterruption phase (b)), as well as emotional excitement of the communicant. In the case of such repairs the speaker feels the need to complete the thought till the end, which is the reason for the interruption.

In contrast to the previous type of interruptions, the basis of **the interruptions-additions / specifications of the partner's utterance** is the semantic connection of the interruption-utterance with the utterance of the communicative partner, which forms the preinterruption phase. In this case, the communicant feels the need to supplement the utterance of a communicative partner, as in the example:

00:03:30 Ben: *Clothes That Fit... Is that the outfit that took over the—*

00:03:33 Patty: ***Yeah, I think they bought one of the factories on Front Street. My daughter tells me they sell clothes on the web¹⁰.***

In this example, the connecting element, which combines the utterance of the preinterruption phase and the interruption-utterance, is the lexical unit *Yeah*, which expresses agreement with the communicative partner and leads to complementing the utterance of the partner, helping adhere to the Cooperative Principle. Thus, the formal indicators of such interruptions may be expressions that show consent, confirmation of the viewpoint, additions: *yeah, yes, I agree, totally agree, moreover, what is more, in addition, besides*, and other words / expressions-connectors that show the link between the stimulus-utterance and the reaction-utterance.

The interruption-explanation is used to put emphasis on the speaker's own vision of the manner of verbal or non-verbal behavior, an explanation of the point of view, being usually limited to the specific communicative situation. The example below illustrates the interruption-explanation of non-verbal behavior while praying:

00:30:54 Brian: *Dear God—*

⁸ Friends 6/01 1999

⁹ Five Hundred Days of Summer 2009

¹⁰ The Intern 2015

00:30:55 Drew: **Brian. We hold hands at grace**¹¹.

It should be noted that the interruption-repairs are not always found in their pure form. Quite often, in conversations there occur mixed groups of functions within a single utterance, as in the following example, where the interruption (see (a) and (b)) is at the same time the interruption-asking for clarification (a) and the interruption-explanation of one's own point of view (b):

00:52:36 Charlotte: Yes, but—

00:52:37 Samantha: (a) **But what? What's the problem?** (b) **I mean, we haven't been anywhere together since Carrie and Big's wedding blowup honeymoon disaster**¹².

In the example given above, the interruption-utterance is the interruption-asking for clarification (a) in the form of a rhetorical statement, indicating that the communicant does not wait for the partner's response, but continues uttering her own thoughts (b), that acquire the form of the interruption-explanation. Let us consider another example:

(a) "Andrew, we could get contracts from some of the big companies and—"

(b) "That's not what we do, Tanner."

(c) "The Chrysler Corporation is looking for—"

And Andrew smiled and said, (d) "Let's do our real job"¹³.

In the illustrated fragment, the interruptions act as the repair, being the correction and explanation at the same time ((b), (d)). From the context of the dialogue it is clear that the basic structure of the interruption in the form of the interruption-repair is the stimulus-utterance ((a), (c)) and the reaction-utterance ((b), (d)), where the reaction functions as the repair. The given basic structure of interruptions as the repair can acquire various transformations in accordance with the context of a concrete dialogical interaction. In the example provided above, the interruptions are endowed with semantics of denial, where the addressee does not accept the suggestion of the communicative partner ((b), (d)) and offers his/her own understanding of the situation.

It should be noted that the effectiveness the interruption-repairs can be evaluated by the recipient's response to them. The reaction for the interruption can be quite varied, and the interrupter cannot fully predict how the other communicant will respond. Still, the purpose of this interruption is to achieve a communicative consonance. That is, we analyse the reaction to interruptions in the postinterruption phase. Therefore, in our study we take into consideration three phases of the interruption: preinterruption, interruption and postinterruption phase. The first utterance is the stimulus, while the second one is responsive and reactive. The preinterruption phase is the stimulus-utterance, the interruption phase is the reaction- and the stimulus-utterance, and the postinterruption phase comprises the reaction-utterance. Thus, the situation of interruption comprises the *stimulus-utterance – reaction-utterance+stimulus-utterance – reaction-utterance*. Hence, the basic model of the interruption-repairs is as follows: *the emergence of the need for repair – repair – reaction to repair*.

The interruption-repairs are amplified by "the phenomenon of the second utterance"¹⁴. The second utterances usually depict the reaction of the speech recipient, presupposing the semantics of consent, negation and assumption, disclosure, refutation, justification, or refusal. The choice of strategies and tactics of communicative behavior in second utterances (the reaction-utterances) is predetermined by the stimulus-utterance. Consider the following example:

"I don't know if you remember me—"

¹¹ Surviving Christmas 2004

¹² Sex and the City 2 2010

¹³ Sheldon 2004, 102

¹⁴ Arutiunova 1999, 661

"I remember you," she interrupts. "How could I not remember you?"¹⁵.

The example illustrates a situation, where the reaction-utterance of the interruption is subordinated to the communicative strategy of cooperation and is marked by compliance with the Principle of Cooperation, the Principle of Politeness, and thus helps the communicant who interrupts the partner save face. The communicant of the second utterances may accept a scenario offered by a partner (cooperative interruptions) as in the above given example, or reject the manner of behavior given by the communicative partner (intrusive interruptions), as in the following example:

00:12:44 Rachel: No, it wasn't. It was actually the—

00:12:45 Monica: **Okay, now Thanksgiving's over, let's get ready for Christmas. Who wants to go get a Christmas tree?!¹⁶.**

Thus, the main feature of the second utterance is the dependence on the previous statement. It must be noted, though, that this phenomenon does not work in situations of interference by a third person who has not participated in the communicative interaction.

4. Conclusions

Thus, the analysis of the implementation of intentions of communicants who interrupt their partner with the aim to repair their utterance, as well as the analysis of functional feasibility of the interruption-utterance can be performed only after a complex study of the communicative situation, namely, the situation of interruption together with the context, linguistic and extralinguistic factors. Consequently, the process of interruption should not be perceived only as a negative phenomenon, depriving a speaker of the right to complete his communicative step in order to demonstrate a dominant communicative position and a desire to organize an interactive process according to his/her own scenario. On the contrary, the interruptions may serve to clarify or adjust the speaker's speech depending on the needs of the communication, to reach consensus and agreement with the interlocutor. Interruptions perform the function of repairing the speech flow, and also help overcome communicative failures and cognitive dissonance, which is the key to a productive and successful communicative interaction. The prospects for study consist in further research of age characteristics, non-verbal means of the interruption, as well as strategies and tactics, involved in responding to the speech interruptions, allowing a more detailed study of an addressee factor.

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¹⁵ Sorensen 2012, 38–39

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Анотація.

У статті досліджено явище перебивання як репаратури в сучасному англомовному діалогічному дискурсі. Досліджено перебивання-репаратури у ракурсі їхніх формальних та функціональних характеристик. Представлено методологію дослідження, що складається з методу інтерпретації тексту, контекстуального, функціонального та семантичного методу, спрямованих на вивчення мовленнєвої реалізації перебивання-репаратури в різноманітних комунікативних ситуаціях. Встановлено, що перебивання-репаратури можуть мати різноманітні форми: виправлення, повторення (повні або часткові), що-запити, перефрази, питання-перепити, явне визнання нерозуміння, прохання підтвердити правильність бачення ситуації, гіпотези або переконання. Запропоновано основні види перебивань-репаратур в залежності від їхніх функціональних особливостей: корекція / виправлення, прохання прояснення, пояснення та доповнення / деталізація відповідно до потреб комуніканта, який перебиває свого партнера. Отримані результати показують, що основна модель перебивання-репаратури може бути зображена таким чином: виникнення необхідності репаратури – репаратура – реакція на репаратуру. Згідно з результатами дослідження, перебивання-репаратури посилюються феноменом другої репліки, що відображає реакцію адресата мовлення та передає семантику згоди, заперечення, припущення, розкриття, спростування, обґрунтування або відмови. Проведене дослідження підтверджує, що перебивання-репаратура допомагає подолати комунікативні невдачі та когнітивний дисонанс, що є ключем до продуктивної й успішної комунікативної взаємодії. Перспективи дослідження полягають у подальшому вивченні вікових характеристик перебивання та їхніх невербальних засобів, а також стратегій і тактик, які застосовуються при реагуванні на перебивання мовлення, що дозволить детальніше вивчити фактор адресата.

Ключові слова: Перебивання, репаратура, стимул-висловлення, реакція-висловлення, спілкування, взаємодія.

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