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M.M. Najmiddinova
E-mail: m.nazhmiddinova@mail.ru

Alfraganus University, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

METALINGUISTIC CONCEPTS: STRUCTURE, CLASSIFICATION AND ANALYSIS

Abstract

This article explores key aspects of metalinguistics, including the concepts of metalanguage, metatext, and metacommunication. Particular attention is paid to lexical and grammatical indicators used in metacommunicative speech acts, such as introductory constructions, verbs of intention and correction, negative particles, interrogative constructions, and evaluative adjectives.

Examples from S. Dovlatov's work "Pushkin Hills" illustrate the theoretical provisions. The research methods include a literature review and a qualitative analysis of metacommunication examples. The study aims to provide a deeper understanding of human communication mechanisms by analyzing metacommunicative processes, defining and classifying the basic concepts of metalinguistics, and identifying and describing metacommunicative conflicts, their causes, and their resolution methods. Understanding these aspects enhances communication skills and helps prevent misunderstandings.

Introduction

In today's world, where communication plays a key role, the study and understanding of linguistic structures and processes are becoming increasingly relevant. Special attention is given to concepts such as metalinguistics, metalanguage, and metacommunication, which represent important areas of linguistic research that enable a deeper comprehension of how language is used for communication and self-expression. This article examines modern approaches and research in these fields. Despite differences in the phenomena they describe, these terms are often used interchangeably in linguistic studies, necessitating a clarification of their content.

The prefix meta- in linguistics represents one of the fundamental properties of language – its reflexivity, meaning the ability of language to analyze and describe itself. Metalinguistics studies language as a system, analyzing its structure, functions, and usage. This branch of linguistics focuses on how language operates in different contexts and how it influences our perception of the world. Modern metalinguistic research includes studies on language change, dialectology, and sociolinguistic factors affecting language.

One of the key aspects of metalinguistics is the study of metalanguage, which is used to describe and analyze language itself. Metalanguage allows linguists to formulate rules and principles explaining how language functions. This includes developing grammatical and syntactic models and creating terminology for describing linguistic phenomena.

Materials and research methods

The term metacommunication was introduced into scientific discourse in the mid-1960s by researchers who identified two levels in the communication process: verbal messages (communication) and accompanying non-verbal instructions (metacommunication) [Mortensen, 1972; Ruesch, 1972].

M.L. Makarov [Макаров, 2003], following R.L. Lanigan [Lanigan, 1977], G.N. Leech [Leech, 1980], M. Stubbs [Stubbs, 1983], G. Brown [Brown, 1983], and other researchers, interprets metacommunication as an element of communication that focuses on communication itself and its multiple aspects, such as the linguistic structure of discourse, strategic dynamics, and transactional structures [Makarov, 2003].

The research methods include a review of existing literature and qualitative analysis of metacommunicative examples. The literature review involved studying works dedicated to various aspects of metacommunication, including its functions, properties, and lexical-grammatical indicators. Special attention was given to research examining metacommunication in interpersonal communication and its role in preventing and resolving conflicts.

Discussion

Metacommunication refers to the process of communicating about communication itself. This involves using language to discuss and analyze communicative acts. Metacommunication plays an important role in interpersonal relationships, as it enables participants to clarify and adjust their messages, thereby avoiding misunderstandings.

Modern research on metacommunication focuses on how people use metacommunicative strategies in various contexts, including business communication, education, and media. For example, in business communication, metacommunication may be used to clarify goals and expectations, which contributes to more effective interaction.

The analysis of utterances performing a metalinguistic function in the context of relationships between communicative participants has shown that elements commenting on the code often also reflect interpersonal connections between the communicators. This allows us to conclude that metacommunication encompasses both references and utterances related to the codification aspect, as well as interpersonal aspects of interaction that imply the relationships between the communicators, their opinions about each other, the situation, the subject of interaction, etc.

According to this definition, we can distinguish the following functions of metacommunication that contribute to improving and clarifying the communication process. Let us consider the main ones:

1. Clarification and Explanation. Studies show that metacommunication plays a key role in clarifying and explaining messages. It helps participants in communication to avoid misunderstandings and achieve mutual understanding. Metacommunicative expressions such as "What do you mean?" contribute to a more accurate perception of information.

2. Control and Regulation. Metacommunication also serves the function of controlling and regulating communication. Metacommunicative signals help participants manage the flow of conversation and maintain its structure. For example, phrases like "Let's get back to the main topic" help keep the focus on the key aspects of the discussion.

3. Evaluation and Interpretation. The function of evaluation and interpretation in metacommunication has been studied in the works of D. Schiffrin [Schiffrin, 1994], who emphasizes that metacommunicative elements help participants interpret and assess each other's

messages. This is especially important in situations that require an accurate understanding of the interlocutor's intentions and emotions.

4. Establishing and Maintaining Relationships. Metacommunication promotes the establishment and maintenance of interpersonal relationships. Metacommunicative signals such as "It's important for me to understand how you feel" play a crucial role in building trust and supportive relationships between people.

5. Feedback. Metacommunicative elements help participants adjust their actions and messages based on the feedback received. Phrases like "Did I understand you correctly?" contribute to a more precise perception and interpretation of information.

Indicators characterizing metacommunication from the perspective of organizational structure can be defined as follows (according to the classification of E.M. Dubrovchenko [Dubrovchenko, 2011]):

1. Verbal and Non-verbal Metacommunication. Verbal metacommunication includes the use of language, words, and grammatical structures. Non-verbal metacommunication includes gestures, facial expressions, intonation, and other non-verbal signals.

2. Timing of Occurrence. Metacommunication may occur in real-time (synchronously) or with a delay (asynchronously). Synchronous metacommunication is typical for live communication, while asynchronous communication may occur through letters, emails, and other forms of delayed communication.

3. Form of Communication. The form of communication in metacommunication may be either direct or mediated, depending on who participates in the process of evaluation and commentary and how.

4. Modes of Information Presentation. Metacommunication can be explicit (direct reference to the communicative act) or implicit (indirect reference to components of the communicative process).

5. Intentionality. The intentionality of metacommunication is associated with the purpose or intent with which it is carried out. It may be a conscious or unconscious action aimed at managing the perception and interpretation of the message.

6. Forms of Linguistic Presence. Metacommunication may be oral or written. Oral form includes conversations, lectures, discussions, while the written form includes letters, articles, social media messages, etc.

Understanding metacommunication as utterances that structure, clarify, and comment on the content or form of various discourse elements has made it possible to distinguish two categories within the metacommunicative domain:

A. Metatextual Components of Utterances ("metatext within the text")

– These components include elements embedded directly into the main text and serve to explain, structure, or comment on it. Examples of such components include introductory phrases, explanatory remarks, references to previous or subsequent parts of the text, and various markers indicating the importance or significance of certain parts of the utterance. Metatextual components help the reader or listener better understand and interpret the main text by providing additional context and clarification.

B. Proper Metatexts

– These are separate texts or utterances that are entirely devoted to the analysis, commentary, or interpretation of another text or discourse. Proper metatexts may take the form of reviews, critical articles, analytical surveys, textbooks, and other genres whose primary goal is the clarification and interpretation of the original material. Such texts are often used in academic and professional settings for in-depth analysis and discussion of various aspects of original works or statements.

Thus, metacommunication encompasses both elements embedded within the main text and separate texts fully dedicated to analysis and commentary, allowing for a more complete and profound understanding and interpretation of various aspects of discourse.

Metalinguistics, metalanguage, and metacommunication represent important aspects of contemporary linguistic research. Metalinguistics studies language as an object of investigation, metalanguage serves as a means for describing and analyzing linguistic phenomena, while metacommunication is aimed at analyzing and regulating the process of communication. The distinction among these concepts emphasizes their unique functions and significance in the context of linguistic and discourse analysis.

The main lexico-grammatical indicators of metacommunicative speech acts include:

1. Introductory Constructions – often used to initiate a metacommunicative act. For example: "I want to say", "what I mean is".

2. Verbs of Intention and Correction – verbs expressing intention or correction of an utterance, such as "want", "mean", "meant to say".

3. Negative Particles – used to correct or negate a previous utterance. For example: "no", "not".

4. Interrogative Constructions – used to request confirmation or clarification. For example: "Do you understand?" "What am I talking about?"

5. Evaluative Adjectives – used to assess an utterance or its parts. Examples: "strange", "correct".

The key properties of metacommunication include:

1. Reflexivity. Metacommunication allows communication participants to reflect on the communication process itself. This includes awareness and analysis of their own words, actions, and reactions.

2. Regulativeness. Metacommunication performs a regulatory function, helping participants adjust their actions and behavior in the communication process.

3. Interpretiveness. Metacommunication helps participants interpret and clarify the meanings of words and expressions used in communication.

4. Empathic Quality. Metacommunication promotes the development of empathy and understanding between participants, helping them take each other's emotions and feelings into account.

5. Coordination. Metacommunication aids in coordinating the actions and behavior of communication participants, ensuring consistency and mutual understanding.

We examined the main types of metacommunicative speech acts based on material from Sergei Dovlatov's "Pushkin Hills" [Dovlatov, 2018]:

1. Self-reflection of the narrator. The narrator frequently comments on his own words and actions, which is an example of metacommunication. For instance, he might say something like, "I said it, although I knew it wasn't quite true". This is a commentary on his own utterance.

2. Addressing the reade. Dovlatov occasionally addresses the reader directly, commenting on the course of the narrative or explaining his intentions. For example: "You probably think I'm exaggerating, but it's really true". This is a metacommunicative act, as it comments on the storytelling process.

3. Discussion of language and style. In "Pushkin Hills", we can find moments where characters discuss language, style, or the meaning of their utterances. For example, when one character says to another: "You speak too ornately; say it more simply". This is a comment on speech style, and therefore, a metacommunicative act.

4. Irony and sarcasm. Dovlatov often uses irony and sarcasm, which can also be seen as metacommunicative acts, as they imply a double meaning and require the reader's interpretation. For instance, when a character says: "Of course, I'm a genius", implying the opposite.

5. Retrospective commentary. The narrator may return to something previously said and provide a new interpretation or commentary. For example: "When I said that, I didn't realize how important it was". This is a metacommunicative act, as it comments on a past utterance.

These examples show how Dovlatov uses metacommunication to create depth and layers in his work. Thus, metacommunication, as an essential aspect of human communication, involves commentary and reflection on the communication process itself. However, despite its positive functions, metacommunication can also become a source of conflict. When communication participants face disagreements or misunderstandings related to the interpretation and discussion of the communication process itself, metacommunicative conflicts may arise. These conflicts can be caused by differences in interpretation, expectations, cultural norms, communication styles, or attempts at dominance.

Conclusion

Metalinguistics, metalanguage, and metacommunication are critical aspects of modern linguistic research. Metalinguistics studies language as an object of investigation, metalanguage serves as a tool for describing and analyzing linguistic phenomena, and metacommunication focuses on analyzing and regulating the communication process. The distinction between these concepts highlights their unique functions and significance in the context of linguistic and discourse analysis.

Understanding metacommunication processes helps improve communicative skills and prevents misunderstandings in communication. Further research in this field can provide deeper insights into language use in various contexts, enhancing the effectiveness of human interaction.

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М.М. Нажмиддинова
E-mail: m.nazhmiddinova@mail.ru

Университет Альфрагануса, Ташкент, Узбекистан

МЕТАЛИНГВИСТИЧЕСКИЕ ПОНЯТИЯ: СТРУКТУРА, КЛАССИФИКАЦИЯ И АНАЛИЗ

Аннотация. В статье исследуются ключевые аспекты металингвистики, включая понятия метаязыка, метатекста и метакоммуникации. Основное внимание уделяется лексико-грамматическим показателям, используемым в метакоммуникативных речевых актах, таким как вводные конструкции, глаголы намерения и корректировки, отрицательные частицы, вопросительные конструкции и оценочные прилагательные. Примеры из произведения С. Довлатова «Заповедник» иллюстрируют теоретические положения. Методы исследования включают анализ существующей литературы и качественный анализ примеров метакоммуникации. Целью исследования является углубленное понимание механизмов человеческой коммуникации через анализ метакоммуникативных процессов, определение и классификация основных понятий металингвистики, а также выявление и описание метакоммуникативных конфликтов, их причин и способов разрешения. Понимание этих аспектов способствует улучшению коммуникативных навыков и предотвращению недоразумений в общении.

М.М. Нажмиддинова
E-mail: m.nazhmiddinova@mail.ru

Альфрағанус Университеті, Ташкент, Өзбекстан

МЕТАЛИНГВИСТИКАЛЫҚ ҰҒЫМДАР: ҚҰРЫЛЫМЫ, ЖІКТЕЛУІ ЖӘНЕ ТАЛДАУ

Аннотация. Мақалада металингвистикадағы негізгі аспектілер зерттеледі, оның ішінде метамәтін, метатекст және метакоммуникация түсініктері қарастырылады. Зерттеу барысында метакоммуникативтік сөйлеу актілерінде қолданылатын лексика-грамматикалық көрсеткіштерге, мысалы, кіріспе конструкцияларына, ниет етілген етістіктерге және түзетулерге, терістеуші бөлшектерге, сұраулы конструкцияларға және бағалау сын есімдеріне назар аударылады. С. Довлатовтың «Заповедник» шығармасынан алынған мысалдар теориялық тұжырымдарды иллюстрациялайды. Зерттеу әдістері ретінде қолданыстағы әдебиетті талдау және метакоммуникацияның мысалдарын сапалық талдау қолданылған. Зерттеудің мақсаты – метакоммуникациялық процестерді талдау арқылы адамның коммуникация механизмдерін терең түсіну, металингвистикадағы негізгі ұғымдарды анықтау және классификациялау, сондай-ақ метакоммуникативтік қақтығыстарды, олардың себептерін және шешу жолдарын анықтап, сипаттау. Бұл аспектілерді түсіну коммуникативтік дағдыларды жетілдіруге және қарым-қатынаста түсінбеушіліктерді болдырмауға көмектеседі.

Information about the author:
Najmiddinova Madina Muzaffarovna, teacher at the department of Russian Language and Literature of a non – governmental higher educational institution Alfraganus University, Yunusabad district, Yukori Karakamysh st., 2A, Tashkent, Uzbekistan.
ORCID: 0009-0007-5089-4240

Автор туралы мәлімет:
Нажмиддинова Мадина Музаффаровна, «Alfraganus University» университетінің орыс тілі және әдебиеті кафедрасының оқытушысы, Юнусабад ауданы, Юкори Каракамыш көшесі, 2А, Ташкент, Өзбекстан.
ORCID: 0009-0007-5089-4240

Сведения об авторе:
Нажмиддинова Мадина Музаффаровна преподаватель кафедры русского языка и литературы негосударственного высшего образовательного учреждения «Alfraganus University», Юнусабадский район, ул. Юкори Каракамыш, 2А, Ташкент, Узбекистан.
ORCID: 0009-0007-5089-4240