

SPEECH PERSONALITY: COMMUNICATIVE ASPECT (THE ANALYSIS OF SPEECH ACTS BY SHELDON LEE COOPER IN "THE BIG BANG THEORY" TV SERIES)

Anastasiia Kulish

National Academy of the National Guard of Ukraine (Kharkiv, Ukraine)

ORCID iD: 0000-0002-5634-0034

bezdetkonastenka@gmail.com

The article discusses the speech personality of Sheldon Lee Cooper in a communicative aspect. The aim of the article is to identify linguistic features of speech acts of Sheldon Lee Cooper. The subject matter of this research is the speech acts typology of Sheldon Lee Cooper's utterances. Respectively, the object is locution of the utterances, indicating the speech personality of Sheldon Lee Cooper. The article utilizes the classification of speech personalities based on the level of communicative competence, where personality can belong to a strong, mediocre (average) or weak type. Determination of the type of Sheldon Lee Cooper includes the following parameters: creativity, level of text construction of any thematic and genre-stylistic design; mastery of all functional and stylistic varieties of literary language; expanded active vocabulary; combination of different elements of speech, adequate to the objectives of communication; fluency in both oral and written form of speech and unmistakable choice of speech form depending on communicative goals. Analysis of the lexical and grammatical layers of Sheldon Lee Cooper's speech gave grounds to classify the speech personality to a certain type (strong, mediocre (average) or weak). To achieve the aim, the following methods were used: descriptive and structural methods allow us to characterize the typological features of the classification based on level of communicative competence; contextual and speech act analysis were applied to identify the communicative intentions of Sheldon Lee Cooper's utterances and his attitude to the conversation; the method of linguistic modeling helped to figure out the level of communicative competence of Sheldon Lee Cooper's speech personality.

Key words: speech personality, linguistic features, speech act, communicative competence, communicative linguistics, strong speech personality.

Куліш А. Р.

Мовленнєва особистість: комунікативний аспект (аналіз мовленнєвих актів у мовленні Шелдона Лі Купера у ТБ серіалі «Теорія великого вибуху»)

У статті розглядається мовленнєва особистість Шелдона Лі Купера в комунікативному аспекті. Метою статті є виявлення лінгвістичних особливостей мовлення Шелдона Лі Купера на основі класифікації, що здійснюється за параметром рівня володіння комунікативною компетенцією і поділяється на сильну, посередню та слабку мовленнєві особистості. Предметом цього дослідження є типологія мовленнєвих актів у висловлюваннях Шелдона Лі Купера. Відповідно, об'єктом є локуція висловлювань, що вказує на мовленнєву особистість Шелдона Лі Купера. Визначення рівня комунікативної компетенції Шелдона Лі Купера реалізується за наступними параметрами: креативність, рівень текстобудування будь-якої тематичної та жанрово-стилістичної оформленості; великий об'єм активного словника; володіння усіма функціонально-стильовими різновидами літературної мови; поєднання різностильових елементів мовлення, адекватне цілям і задачам спілкування; вільне володіння як усною так і письмовою формою мовлення та безпомилковий вибір форми мовлення у залежності від комунікативних цілей. Аналіз лексико-граматичних шарів мовлення Шелдона Лі Купера дає підстави віднести його мовленнєву особистість до певного типу (сильна, посередня (середня) чи слабка). Для реалізації мети були використані такі методи: описовий та структурний методи для характеристики типологічних ознак класифікації за рівнем комунікативної компетентності; контекстуальний аналіз та аналіз мовленнєвого акту для виявлення комунікативних намірів Шелдона Купера та його ставлення до розмови; метод лінгвістичного моделювання для визначення рівня комунікативної компетентності мовленнєвої особистості Шелдона Лі Купера.

Ключові слова: мовленнєва особистість, мовні особливості, мовленнєвий акт, комунікативна компетентність, комунікативна лінгвістика, сильна мовленнєва особистість.

Introduction. In the theory of communicative linguistics, speech personality is interpreted as an immanent feature of personality — a native speaker and communicator, which characterizes speech and communicative competence and their implementation in the processes of production, perception, understanding and interpretation of communicative interaction. The components of a speech personality are speech ability, communicative competence, worldview, which is reflected in the individual speech picture of the world, and fixed in the cognitive picture of the world.

The aim of the article is to identify the main linguistic features of Sheldon Lee Cooper's utterances through the analysis of his communicative competence. Despite the interest of researchers in speech personality, there is a noticeable lag in the formation of speech portraits of TV characters in communicative linguistics. Generally, the study of a speech personality starts from studying the level of communicative competence of real representatives of a particular nation with the whole spectrum of speech manifestation. However, when it comes to a TV character or a fiction protagonist, the spectrum of speech manifestation is narrowed and restricted to a certain communicative situation (discourse). This article focuses on interpretation of Sheldon Lee Cooper, thus, the material of our research is the TV series «The Big Bang Theory» (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

Theoretical Background. The tradition of studying the speech personality originates in the works of V. Vinogradov, Yu. Karaulov, O. Leontiev, G. Bogin, and others. The ways of speech personality formation are laid down in the theory of linguistic personality by Yu. Prokhorov, V. Krasnykh, L. Klobukova, etc. Yu. Prokhorov (Prokhorov, 2006) suggests that speech personality is revealed in a specific communication situation, and in order to achieve a positive result of this communication, all components of the speech personality are realized. Research on the typology of speech personality depending on the characteristics of individual discourse acts (communicative strategies, communicative competence, speech culture) is laid in the works of V. Neroznak (Neroznak, 1996), O. Pushkin (Pushkin, 1990), O. Syrotynina (Syrotynina, 2001), T. Kochetkova (Kochetkova, 1998) etc.

One criterion for differentiation of speech personalities is the level of their communicative competence. In this perspective the works of Tetiana Kochetkova and Olga Syrotynina are notable. They developed a classification of speech personalities based on communicative competence level. According to the communicative competence formation level parameter, speech personality is divided into strong, mediocre (average) and weak. The representative of each type is the bearer of a certain speech culture.

Considering a strong speech personality, T. Kochetkova identifies the following characteristics: creativity, high level of text construction of any thematic and genre-stylistic design; text processing productivity; mastery of all functional and stylistic varieties of literary language; expanded active vocabulary; combination of different elements of speech, adequate to the objectives of communication; fluency in both oral and written form of speech and unmistakable choice of speech form depending on communicative goals.

Strong speech personality is characterized by a high level of communicative competence. The defining feature of this speech personality type is the operation of a large number of intellectual and emotional blocks, cultural and axiological signs.

Unlike the strong type of speech culture, mediocre speech personality does not have the standard of maximum communication success. The mediocre speech personality does not require to replenish knowledge and expand the active vocabulary; such speech personality does not use the language in its variety of functional varieties. For a mediocre speech personality, it is typical to have a conversational style and one of the functional styles needed professionally.

Weak speech personality is a carrier of literary-colloquial and familiar-colloquial type of speech culture. Such speech personality uses only a conversational system of communication under any circumstances. Weak speech personality is the antithesis of the strong one. In addition, representatives of this type often use jargons, crude vocabulary etc. Weak speech personalities do not require replenishing their own knowledge, which is reflected in the indicators of their communicative competence.

The **object** of analysis comprises Sheldon Lee Cooper's utterances. Respectively, **subject matter** of this research is pragmatics and locution of the said utterances that mark a number of Sheldon Lee Cooper's features as a speech personality. The material of the research is video recordings and scripts of the TV series «The Big Bang Theory». The series have 12 seasons, each includes over 20 episodes, so a total of 240 episodes are under our scrutiny. In each episode we find and focus on certain set of lexical and grammatical features that help identify Sheldon Lee Cooper's communicative competence. To achieve the aim, the following methods were used: descriptive and structural methods allow us to characterize the typological features of the classification based on level of communicative competence; contextual and speech act analysis were applied to identify the communicative intentions of Sheldon Lee Cooper's utterances and his attitude to the conversation; the method of linguistic modeling helped to figure out the level of communicative competence of Sheldon Lee Cooper's speech personality.

Results and Discussion. In constructing Sheldon Lee Cooper's speech personality, a strong type of speech culture is seen as a model, taking into account the specific features of the character and his behaviour. Sheldon's level of intelligence is higher than of an ordinary person, so it can be argued that he is endowed with a high level of intelligence. Some linguists note that the level of intelligence determines the level of communicative competence. In view of this, we can say that Sheldon has a high level of communicative competence. Sheldon's high level of intelligence helped him become a genius in his field — a theoretical physicist.

Focusing on the work of Sheldon Lee Cooper, we can explore the evidence of excellent ability to observe, a rare ability to focus on a particular group of phenomena, the affluence of associations, velocity and accuracy of deduction, acuteness of reasoning. His eidetic memory engraves everything that attracts his attention; he notices and remembers a lot of phenomena that usually escape the attention of others.

Starting with the analysis of Sheldon Cooper's speech behaviour, it is important to note that he often uses the adjective *interesting* in his speech in order to find something appealing in a communicative situation.

1) **Interesting.** *Anyway, that gives us a total weight of, let's say, 4,400lb* (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

2) **Interesting.** *My mother and I have the same agreement about church* (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

3) **Interesting.** *So you're saying my insomnia is caused by a guilty conscience* (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

4) **Interesting.** *I suppose if someone could teach sign language to KoKo the gorilla, I could teach you some rudimentary physics* (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

Sheldon's speech personality is characterized by the mastery of all functional and stylistic varieties of literary language — a type of language that serves a particular area of socio-linguistic practice of the individual and is characterized by a set of certain speech means. Sheldon Cooper's speech behaviour is expressed by a wide range of language units that belong to specific layers of vocabulary, such as narrow terms (*reductio-ad-absurdum*), specialized terms (*hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, congestive heart failure*), narrow special terms (*sacks, quarterback*):

5) *He's engaging in reductio-ad-absurdum. It's the logical fallacy of extending someone's argument to ridiculous proportions and then criticising the result, and I do not appreciate it* (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

6) *Enlargement of the heart muscle, or hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, is a serious disease*

which could lead to congestive heart failure (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

7) *The comforting part is that the Germans have a term for what you're feeling. Weltschmerz. It means the depression that arises from comparing the world as it is to a hypothetical, idealized world* (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

8) **Leonard: Sacks, sacks...**

Sheldon: *It's football nomenclature for when a quarterback is tackled behind the line of scrimmage. The line of scrimmage is the imaginary transverse line separating the offence from the defence* (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

Taking into account the features of strong speech personality, Sheldon Lee Cooper is characterized primarily by creativity. He can produce fundamentally new ideas and this talent is his independent factor. As a rule, a certain character's creativeness helps to attract attention, mainly due to shock, parody, ease of perception, brightness and high memorability. This is manifested in a number of lexical items that Sheldon creates in his speech, namely blending words (*dogapus, preevning*) and author's neologisms and terms (*fish nightlights, "Rock, Paper, Scissors, Lizard, Spock"*):

9) *I read an article about Japanese scientists, who inserted DNA from luminous jellyfish into other animals, and I thought hey, fish nightlights. It's a billion dollar idea. That's just the beginning. I also have an idea for a bulk mail-order feminine hygiene company. Oh, glow in the dark tampons! Leonard, we're going to be rich* (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

10) **"Rock, Paper, Scissors, Lizard, Spock":** *Scissors cuts Paper, Paper covers Rock, Rock crushes Lizard, Lizard poisons Spock, Spock smashes Scissors, Scissors decapitates Lizard, Lizard eats Paper, Paper disproves Spock, Spock vaporizes Rock, (and as it always has) Rock crushes Scissors* (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

11) **Leonard: What's a dogapus?**

Sheldon: *A hybrid dog and octopus. Man's underwater best friend* (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

12) **Sheldon:** *That's not afternoon. That's preevning.*

Howard: *What?*

Sheldon: *It's a time of day I invented. It better defines the ambiguous period between afternoon and evening. Preevning. I'm fairly certain it will catch on as it fills a desperate need* (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

Expanded active vocabulary is one of the features of a strong speech personality. In Sheldon Lee Cooper's speech we trace the presence of a significant number of speech units that indicate a high level of intelligence, especially when they make up certain lexical layers, for example technical terms (*Asimov's three laws of robotics, the Doppler Effect, Chinese*

food retrieval robot), general terms (*film, comic-books, Anime*), abbreviations (*D&D, TV, CSI*):

13) *When I learn that I'm a robot, would I be bound by?* (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

14) *What about comic-books, Anime, TV, D&D, Manga, Greek Gods, Roman Gods, Norse Gods?* (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

15) *Yes, the Doppler Effect. It's the apparent change in the frequency of a wave caused by relative motion between the source of the wave and the observer* (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

16) *When does the CSI team get here?* (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

17) *Now, Introduction to Physics. What is physics? Physics comes from the ancient Greek word physika. Physika means the science of natural things. And it is there, in ancient Greece, that our story begins. It's a warm summer evening, circa 600 BC, you've finished your shopping at the local market, or agora, and you look up at the night sky* (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

18) *Today, it's a Chinese food retrieval robot. Tomorrow, it travels back in time and tries to kill Sarah Connor* (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

Strong speech personality is characterized by a high level of communicative competence. In addition to perfect possession of language as a system, such speech is possible only if a speech personality constantly desires to expand the intellectual sphere. Sheldon Lee Cooper's speech is characterized by the combination of stylistically marked and stylistically neutral vocabulary, for example, slang (*to score, friggety-frak*), idioms (*Brobdingnagian monstrosity*), abusive language (*bitch, rats, drat*). Moreover, it can be traced the use of Sheldon's presented vocabulary in exclamatory sentences:

19) *Sheldon: Oh gravity, thou are a heartless bitch!* (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

20) *Leonard: What's going on?*

Sheldon: We scored. I'm the wingman (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

21) *I am the master of my own bladder. Drat!* (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

22) *Sheldon: This isn't a desk. This is a Brobdingnagian monstrosity.*

Raj: Is that the American idiom for giant, big-ass desk?

Sheldon: It's actually British (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

23) *Sheldon: Rats!* (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

24) *Sheldon: Oh, friggety-frak. Not this again* (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

Speech personality with high communicative competence plays a dominant role in communicative interaction. Dominance in communication means the attitude to the interlocutor as a means

to achieve certain goals, ignoring his/her interests and intentions, the desire to have unlimited one-sided advantage, open imperative influence. In speech, dominance is expressed in the imperative mood of verbs, short and imperative sentences, phrases with sarcastic and ironic coloring. Sarcasm and irony are manifested in Sheldon Cooper's speech as open disrespect, accompanied by rude comparisons (*mediocre minds, ordinary people, dogs, chimps*) of his interlocutor in order to show his mental superiority:

25) *Leonard, I know you're concerned about disappointing me I want you to take comfort from the knowledge that my expectations of you are very low* (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

26) *Oh, well this would be one of those circumstances that people unfamiliar with the law of large numbers would call a coincidence* (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

27) *Penny: How come you didn't go into work today.*

Sheldon: I'm taking a sabbatical, because I won't kow-tow to mediocre minds.

Penny: So you got canned, huh?

Sheldon: Theoretical physicists do not get canned. But yeah (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

28) *This is great. Look at me, out in the real world of ordinary people, just living their ordinary, colourless, workaday lives* (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

29) *Leonard: You know, some people might say that it's great that we're trying to make things work long distance. They'd say things like, love is stronger than the miles between you.*

Sheldon: When I rise to power, those people will be sterilized (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

30) *Penny, a moment. We just had Thai food. In that culture, the last morsel is called the krengjai piece, and it is reserved for the most important and valued member of the group, for me* (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

31) *Sheldon: Try to put yourself in my place. Imagine you're the sole human being living on a planet populated with nothing but dogs. And then it turns out there's another human being.*

Howard: Hang on. Are you saying the rest of us are dogs?

Sheldon: Yeah, okay, I can see you're going to take this the wrong way. Let me try again. Imagine you're the sole human being living on a planet populated with nothing but chimps (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

Sarcastic, satirical or ironic statements always make the brain think outside the literal meaning of words and understand that the speaker can think completely differently. In addition, humour in speech is a manifestation of the level of intelligence, and skillful

and successful use of humour is an indicator of high communicative competence. In his speech, Sheldon turns to onomatopoeic representation of laughter (*mwah, ha, ha*) and author's neologism (*bazinga*) with intension of mocking:

32) *Agreed. Amy, I find myself wondering if we should actually engage in coitus at least one time in our relationship. Bazinga. Bedtime. Please show yourself out* (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

33) *The reaction will be triggered when Kripke reaches the center of the room. Mwah, ha, ha* (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

Speech personality with high communicative competence tends to maintain leadership in communication. In his speech Sheldon operates not only with his high level of intelligence, but also considers himself a leader in all issues. Leadership in communication for Sheldon is dominance over all others. Motivated by such a basis as dominance, there is a desire for mental superiority over people. Based on this intention, Sheldon appeals to imperative verbs and imperative and exclamatory sentences:

34) *Leonard: No, I just got a text from Stuart. Brent Spiner is at the party.*

Sheldon: I don't care (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

35) *Come on, buddy. Let's not waste another second on this loser. Love your house* (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

36) *Amy: Will you listen to me play my harp now?*

Sheldon: No. I dislike the sound of the harp. Its overuse in classic television sitcoms always makes me think I'm going to experience an episode from my past. I'm sorry, Mommy. Don't be mad at me. Don't do that! (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

37) *Sheldon: Well then, it's all settled, Christie will stay with Howard, Penny can go back to her apartment, and I'll watch the last 24 minutes of Doctor Who, although at this point it's more like Doctor Why Bother.*

Leonard: Sheldon you just can't dictate...

Sheldon: No more talking, everybody go (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

38) *Dr Tyson: Dr. Cooper, I just wanted you to know I'm sorry for the role I played in the Pluto matter.*

Sheldon: Oh, shut up (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

Sheldon operates with mockery in his speech. Sarcasm is based not only on the enhanced contrast between what is meant and what is said, but also on the direct deliberate exposure of what is meant. Sheldon has a high self-esteem. During

the conversation he often emphasizes his superiority, showing rude attitude to the opponent and throwing disapproving and disrespectful statements (*stupid head, the rock-worshipping pasty-faced bastards*). Thus, Sheldon finds realization for self-affirmation, for example:

39) *Why are you such a stupid head? That is also rhetorical* (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

40) *Sheldon: That's our edge. All we have to do is move quickly over this ridge, the rock-worshipping pasty-faced bastards won't know what hit them. All right, let's move out* (Big Bang Theory Transcripts; The Big Bang Theory).

To summarize we collected evidence to prove that Sheldon Lee Cooper belongs to the strong speech personality, i.e. he has a high level of communicative competence. Sheldon is characterized by his creativity: he easily combines words in order to create a new term or concept (*dogapus, preevning, fish nightlights, glow in the dark tampons, "Rock, Paper, Scissors, Lizard, Spock"*). Sheldon possesses the high level of text construction of any thematic and genre-stylistic design: he uses declarative, imperative, interrogative and exclamatory sentences in order to achieve a certain communicative goal. He masters all functional and stylistic varieties of literary language: in examples of Sheldon's speech it is possible to trace the use of various styles of literary language (scientific, official-business, colloquial, literary). Also speech personality of Sheldon owns the expanded active vocabulary: Sheldon Lee Cooper's speech is characterized by the combination of stylistically marked and stylistically neutral vocabulary (*thou, drat, friggety-frak, reductio-ad-absurdum, the Doppler Effect, CSI team, agora etc*).

Conclusions. In this article we have outlined and described Sheldon Lee Cooper as a speech personality in a communicative aspect. The speech acts of Sheldon Lee Cooper's utterances were analyzed and systematized on the basis of classification of speech personalities based on the level of communicative competence. In order to determine the level of Sheldon's communicative competence, we used the following parameters: creativity, level of text construction of any thematic and genre-stylistic design; mastery of all functional and stylistic varieties of literary language; expanded active vocabulary; combination of different elements of speech, adequate to the objectives of communication; fluency in both oral and written form of speech and unmistakable choice of speech form depending on communicative goals. The above-mentioned analysis of Sheldon Lee Cooper's speech acts as well as the linguistic features gave us grounds to identify Sheldon Lee Cooper as strong speech personality.

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