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ECHO QUESTIONS IN ENGLISH CONVERSATIONAL DISCOURSE: STRUCTURAL-SEMANTIC, COGNITIVE-COMMUNICATIVE, AND FUNCTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS
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N.S. Strelchenko. Echo questions in English conversational discourse: structural-semantic, cognitive-communicative, and functional characteristics. The article focuses on echo questions, common in English conversational discourse, presenting their structural-semantic, cognitive-communicative, and functional characteristics from the perspective of cognitive-discursive research paradigm. The language material under analysis (13,938 echo questions in discourse contexts) has been selected from British and American prose of the 20th and 21st centuries as well as 92 feature films. In the study, echo questions are identified on the basis of semantic and/or structural relation to the preceding utterance (stimulus), manifested as its full, partial or paraphrased repetition. Structural and semantic differences from the stimulus are viewed as operation of the syntactic processes of complication and compression, which may be combined with the realization of actualizing, qualifying, and social modus categories. Cognitive-communicative characteristics of echo questions encompass their role in building/updating a mental context model of the communicative situation, repairing communicative failures and restoring discourse coherence, verbalizing mental processes operating during comprehension of the interlocutor's utterance (sensation, perception, thinking, memory, attention) and emotions. Functioning of echo questions, regulated by the mental context model of the communicative situation, involves performing speech acts, both direct (quesitives) and indirect (directives, expressives, metacommunicatives, constatives, and commissives), as well as realizing a number of communicative strategies (information-cognitive, directive, argumentative, evaluative, and metacommunicative) by means of the corresponding tactics.

Key words: communicative strategy, communicative tactic, conversational discourse, discourse coherence, echo question, mental context model of the communicative situation, speech act.

Н.С. Стрельченко. Питання-перепити в англомовному діалогічному дискурсі: структурно-семантичні, когнітивно-комунікативні та функціональні характеристики. У статті розглядаються мовні та мовленнєві характеристики питань-перепитів, поширених в англомовному діалогічному дискурсі, з позицій когнітивно-дискурсивної парадигми лінгвістики. Матеріалом дослідження слугували фрагменти діалогічного дискурсу, відібрані з прозових творів британських та американських авторів XX–XXI ст., а також англомовних художніх кінофільмів. Виокремлення питань-перепитів як одиниці аналізу було здійснено на основі семантичного та/або структурного зв'язку з реплікою-стимулом, відмінності розглянуто як реалізацію синтаксичних процесів ускладнення/компресії репліки-стимулу, які можуть поєднуватися з актуалізаційними, кваліфікативними та соціальними категоріями модусу. Когнітивно-комунікативні характеристики питань-перепитів пов'язані з їхньою роллю в побудові/оновленні ментальної моделі контексту комунікативної ситуації, подоланні комунікативних збоїв, вербалізації психічних процесів та емоцій, а функціонування – з реалізацією мовленнєвих актів та ряду комунікативних стратегій і тактик.

Ключові слова: діалогічний дискурс, когерентність дискурсу, комунікативна стратегія, комунікативна тактика, ментальна модель контексту комунікативної ситуації, мовленнєвий акт, питання-перепит.

Н.С. Стрельченко. Вопросы-переспросы в англоязычном диалогическом дискурсе: структурно-семантические, когнитивно-коммуникативные и функциональные характеристики. В статье рассматриваются языковые и речевые характеристики вопросов-переспросов,

распространенных в англоязычном диалогическом дискурсе, с точки зрения когнитивно-дискурсивной парадигмы лингвистики. Материалом исследования послужили фрагменты диалогического дискурса из прозы британских и американских авторов XX–XXI веков, а также англоязычных художественных кинофильмов. Определение вопросов-переспросов как единицы анализа производилось на основании семантической и/или структурной связи с репликой-стимулом; отличия рассматривались как реализация синтаксических процессов усложнения/компрессии реплики-стимула, которые могут совмещаться с актуализационными, квалификативными и социальными категориями модуса. Когнитивно-коммуникативные характеристики вопросов-переспросов связаны с их ролью в построении/обновлении ментальной модели контекста коммуникативной ситуации, преодолении коммуникативных сбоев, вербализации психических процессов и эмоций, а функционирование – с реализацией речевых актов, коммуникативных стратегий и тактик.

Ключевые слова: вопрос-переспрос, диалогический дискурс, когерентность дискурса, коммуникативная стратегия, коммуникативная тактика, ментальная модель контекста коммуникативной ситуации, речевой акт.

1. Introduction

Echo questions are attracting considerable interest due to being a common feature of conversational discourse [Carter & McCarthy 2006: 199]. Researchers have addressed them from a number of standpoints: as dialogical citation [Arutjunova 1986], expression of distrust [Kovsh 2007], a strategy to realize lying [Pyrozhenko 2001], a grammatical-syntactic means of speech contact prolongation and turn-taking [Chhetiani 1987: 146–151], discourse cohesion and rapport-building [Tannen 2007: 48–101]. However cognitive-communicative characteristics and functioning of echo questions in English conversational discourse have not been dealt with in depth, which makes the present study **topical.** The **object** of analysis is echo questions in English conversational discourse and its **subject matter** is constituted by structural-semantic, sociocognitive, and pragmatic-discursive characteristics of echo questions functioning in English conversational discourse. The **aim** of the research is to examine semantic-syntactic, sociocognitive, and communicative characteristics of echo questions in English conversational discourse. The language **material** under analysis (13,938 echo questions in discourse contexts) has been selected by means of continuous sampling from 26 prose works of British and American authors of the 20th and 21st centuries as well as 92 English feature films. To achieve the aim of the study a number of **methods** have been employed at different stages of the research: general scientific (analysis, synthesis, induction, deduction), structural (constructional and transformational analysis, following G.G. Pochepcov [2009]), and functional method (cognitive-contextual, speech-act, contextual-pragmatic, and discourse analyses).

2. Results and discussion
2.1 Structural-semantic characteristics of echo questions

In the literature, several terms are used: "echo" [Huddleston 1984: 376–377], "echo question" [Artstein 2002; Biber et al. 1999; Carter & McCarthy 2006; Cruttenden 1986; Fiengo 2007; Leech 2006; Quirk et al. 1985; Radford 2009; Santorini 2007], "repeat question" [Fiengo 2007: 76], and "metalinguistic question" [Horn 2001: 381]. P. Collins [2006: 186] uses the terms "echo" and "echo question" interchangeably.

Identification and study of echo questions as a language and speech unit presupposes considering formal, semantic, and functional criteria applied by researchers. According to the form, Quirk et al [1985: 803] distinguish four types of simple sentences (clauses [Collins 2006: 180–181]) in English: declaratives, interrogatives (yes/no and wh-), imperatives, and exclamatives. Structurally, echo questions may correspond to any type of the "stimulus" (J. McCawley's term [1998: 561]) which they repeat.

Taking into account the differentiation between the terms "interrogative" and "question" suggested by M.I. Zhinkin [1955: 23], it should be noted that according to their formal

characteristics, echo questions may be represented by general/special interrogatives and depending on the type of the expected answer [Quirk et al. 1985: 806; Tsui 1992: 90] they may be general (with/without inversion or tag questions), special, and alternative questions.

According to their functional-semantic characteristics, echo questions are regarded as "a type of sentence used to question something which someone else has just said (often in an air of incredulity), repeating all or most of what they have just said" [Radford 2009: 383], repetition of the interlocutor's previous utterance [Leech 2006: 35; Teschner & Evans 2007: 64], which performs a number of functions in conversational discourse such as confirming that the interlocutor's utterance has been perceived and understood accurately, requesting to repeat the utterance or elaborate on the provided information, often caused by misunderstanding, which may be real or feigned [Santorini & Kroch 2007], expressing emotion/evaluation: surprise, disbelief, disapproval or anger [Leech 2006; Santorini & Kroch 2007; Teschner & Evans 2007].

Studying cognitive-communicative characteristics and functioning of echo questions, we take the following features into account: the preceding and following utterances, expression of rational and/or emotional information, full/partial or paraphrased repetition of the stimulus, semantic and/or structural connection with the latter [Strelchenko 2015: 246]. Consider the following situation with an echo question demonstrating a paraphrased version of the interlocutor's utterance.

(A) *"... I got laid off yesterday, replaced by a computer."*
(B) *"You got fired?" Her mother sounded stunned* [Steel 2010: 30].

While the grammatical structure of the stimulus is completely preserved (S + get + Participle II), the echo question expresses additional connotative meanings (negative evaluation of the past event and the emotion of surprise).

In order to define systematic relations underlying functional realizations of echo questions compared with the structure of the stimulus, the "stimulus – echo question" unity has been analyzed from the viewpoint of its structural modifications. According to G.G. Pochepcov [2009: 361–381], relations between syntactic units may be explained with reference to the term "syntactic process", which presupposes formation of a derivative unit from a basic one. Syntactic derivation pertains to the level of the sentence and its parts. According to the structural changes of a syntactic element, G.G. Pochepcov distinguishes processes which involve its complication (expansion, complication, contamination, extension, adjoinment, enclosure) and compression (replacement, representation, ellipsis). In this study, we view the stimulus as a basic structure and the echo question as a derived one, which differs from the stimulus in the number of the repeated elements (full/partial repetition), part-of-speech characteristics, and the vocabulary used. The following example illustrates operation of two syntactic processes: ellipsis and extension:

(A) *"You saw her?"*
(B) *"Didn't see her. Wasn't looking that way. Just a rustle and a sort of smell of scent."*
(A) *"Scent? A good scent?"* [Christie 2007: 173].

In the English language, an echo question constitutes a structural-functional pattern generalizing a number of communicative meanings [Bloh 2000: 47], which is actualized in speech [Pochepcov 2009: 312] in a particular communicative situation.

Predicativity, understood as reference of the sentence meaning to reality, encompasses the categories of tense, modality, and person (in a broad syntactic sense) and is expressed with varying degrees of completeness in any sentence [Vinogradov & Istrina 1960: 78–82]. Studying modality in echo questions, we follow the approach of T.V. Shmeleva [1984], who, drawing on the ideas put forward by Ch. Bally, V.V. Vinogradov, and F. Daneš, differentiates between objective and subjective (communicative aspect and modus) meaning of a sentence. Communicative aspect pertains to the opposition of questions/non-questions and information structure of an utterance, while modus encompasses actualizing (personalization, placement in time and space), qualifying

(modality, authorization, persuasiveness, evaluation), and <u>social categories</u> (attitude to the interlocutor and directness in formulating an utterance).

The expression of modus categories by means of echo questions (as compared with the stimulus utterance) may be combined with the operation of syntactic processes. For instance, the category of authorization may be realized along with the syntactic processes of replacement and enclosure:

Beth: *You're terrific.*

Nick: <u>*You really think so?*</u> Beth nods [Frost 2004].

In the language material analyzed, <u>non-clausal echo questions</u>, realizing implicit predicativity [Dymarskij 2013], are represented by (a) <u>syntactic non-clausal units</u> [Biber et al. 1999: 1082–1089], which can form clauses (units of a higher level) and stand alone: (A) *I mix it up myself from phosphorus.* (B) **Phosphorus?** [Bennet 1996], or (b) <u>inserts</u>. For instance, interjections, discourse markers, and backchannels may join another structure by means of intonation, however, they are not related to it syntactically [Biber et al. 1999: 1082–1089]:

"Words!" said Megan Barnard.

<u>*"Eh?"*</u> *Poirot looked at her inquiringly.*

"What you've been saying. It's just words. It doesn't mean anything" [Christie 1989: 81].

Structurally, Poirot's utterance differs from the stimulus, however, its functions in this communicative situation (indicating misunderstanding and requesting to repeat and elaborate on the information provided) allow us to regard it as an echo question.

2.2 Theoretical approach to studying cognitive-communicative characteristics and functioning of echo questions

Examining echo questions in English conversational discourse presupposes interpreting both the utterance and the context of its use. Developing his sociocognitive theory of discourse studies, T. van Dijk [2008: 15–24] defines *context* as a dynamic (constantly updated), individual and subjective mental model regulating the processes of discourse production and comprehension.

Identifying cognitive-communicative nature of echo questions involves studying their role in building a mental context model of the communicative situation (elaborating on its components), repairing communicative failures (in cases when communicators have difficulty building a mental model), as well as verbalizing the speaker's mental processes and expressing emotions after he/she perceives the interlocutor's utterance. Describing the functioning of echo questions calls for examining the influence of the existing mental context model on their illocutionary/perlocutionary success, and the communicative strategies and tactics they realize.

2.3 Cognitive-communicative characteristics of echo questions

Cognitive-communicative nature of echo questions may be studied with reference to their role in the processes of information exchange and comprehension. According to T. van Dijk, discourse production and comprehension are regulated by <u>mental models</u> ("subjective representations of *events* or *situations* in which a person participates at a certain *moment of time*, at a certain *place*, with other participants (with variable *identities* and social *roles*), engaged in a specific *action* and with specific *goals*" [van Dijk 2012: 588]). A mental model may feature both the speaker's personal experience and discourse (e.g., the news) [van Dijk 2012: 588–589]. Apart from the explicitly expressed verbal information, a mental model is complemented by inferences based on the knowledge and beliefs shared by members of a language community, which make mutual understanding possible [Zwaan & Radvansky 1998: 163]. The structure of a mental model is at least partially isomorphic with the sentence meaning (e.g., in the case of reading the protagonist in a story corresponds to the agent on the syntactic level) [van Dijk 2014: 53].

Characterizing the types of mental models, T. van Dijk [2012: 588–589] differentiates between a <u>semantic situation model</u>, which represents the situation or events described in a

discourse/text, and a dynamic <u>pragmatic context model</u> of the communicative situation in which the interlocutors are currently taking part. In the course of comprehending the interlocutor's utterance, speaker B (who produces an echo question) reconstructs mental model of A's (interlocutor's) discourse or intentions and uses an existing mental context model of the communicative situation to plan his/her own discourse. Context models ensure that the discourse is pragmatically appropriate for the communicative situation, while their influence remains implicit and is manifested only in cases of communicative failures [van Dijk 2008: 19].

Analysis of the language material revealed that apart from repairing communicative failures, echo questions in conversational discourse are also used to build/update mental <u>context models</u>, influencing communicative interaction, and <u>situation models</u> of the past events being discussed, by asking for repetition (clarification/elaboration) of the respective elements of the previous utterance or discourse. Besides, echo questions are used as inferences or assumptions by speaker B to verbalize implicit information necessary to build a mental (context/situation) model.

In the case of building a <u>context model</u>, echo questions are used to ask about the interlocutor's personality, status and role, knowledge, beliefs, intentions, wishes, plans, attitudes, emotions, and the subject being discussed, while a situation model of a past event may be updated in terms of time/period, place of action, the participants, their characteristics and behaviour, attitudes, wishes, and motives. A <u>situation model</u>, which contains information about past events or previous conversations of the communicators, constitutes a component of the context model (namely knowledge), while past actions of the people interacting (and their motives) are defined by context models in the past.

Identifying who the interlocutor is usually takes place at the beginning of a conversation, with echo questions being used to inquire about his/her name and occupation:

Makinson: *Is there some way I can help you, gentlemen? My name is Makinson.*
Poirot: <u>*Peter Makinson? The agent of Henry Gascoigne?*</u>
Makinson: *Yes, what a tragic loss!* [Rye 1989a].

According to T. van Dijk [2012: 589], understanding a discourse presupposes building its coherent mental model, which involves "integration of information from the discourse and the comprehender's knowledge and cognitive activities" [Zwaan & Rapp 2006: 737]. In research on discourse comprehension, three levels/types of mental models/representations are studied: the <u>surface structure</u> (a word-for-word representation of the text, which is forgotten quickly unless it is pragmatically relevant); the <u>textbase</u> or <u>propositional representation</u> ("idea units explicitly stated in the text, along with some bridging inferences"); and the <u>situation model</u> (information from the text complemented by background knowledge) [Zwaan & Rapp 2006: 737].

When speaker B has difficulty building/updating a mental model on the basis of the interlocutor's utterance and his/her own knowledge, echo questions are employed to repair communicative failures. Misunderstanding of the interlocutor's utterance may be caused by word identification problems, lexical/structural ambiguity, failing to identify the interlocutor's reference or communicative intention, implicit information or speaker A flouting P. Grice's Cooperative Principle and its subsequent maxims [Grice 1989: 26]. In such cases echo questions serve to restore discourse coherence:

Ann Shapland: *The Emir Ibrahim is in London, Miss Bulstrode. He wants to take Princess Shaista out tomorrow.*
Miss Bulstrode: <u>*To take her out of the school?*</u>
Ann Shapland: *No, no. Just out for lunch.*
Miss Bulstrode: *Oh! Yes, by all means. But she must be back by eight o'clock* [Kent 2008].

In this communicative situation, Miss Bulstrode uses an echo question to resolve lexical ambiguity of Ann Shapland's utterance.

Difficulties in building a mental model may also be caused by inconsistencies between the stimulus utterance and speaker B's general, cultural or situation-specific knowledge:

Hannah: *My last cake, he calls it "Delicious death".*

Miss Blacklock: *Oh, but that's a compliment!*

Hannah: *<u>Death is a compliment?</u> shrugs her shoulders* [Giles 1985].

Thus, echo questions indicate a coherence break and subsequent communicative failure; on the other hand, they are employed to increase discourse coherence by asking the interlocutor to resolve misunderstanding.

Being used as a reaction to the interlocutor's utterance, echo questions may be studied as a <u>means of verbalizing speaker B's mental processes</u> (sensation, perception, thinking, memory, and attention [Vynoslavs'ka et al. 2005]), operating when he/she perceives the interlocutor's utterance. Cognitive-contextual analysis [van Dijk 2000] of the language material revealed that echo questions serve to repair communicative failures on the levels of **sensation** and **perception**, caused by noise, speaker B's hearing impairment or speaker A's unclear pronunciation:

"He didn't say what he has going?" Rider asked.

"Not yet. But it must be something. He wouldn't even tell me which prosecutor he's working with."

"Ricochet."

<u>"What?"</u>

<u>She said it slower.</u>"Rick O'Shea. He's on the Waits case. I doubt Olivas has anything else going. They just finished the prelim on that and are heading to trial" [Connelly 2006].

During the process of **thinking** echo questions provide speaker B with additional time to elaborate on important details or consider his/her answer to the question posed:

The inspector was transfigured with excitement. His native accent rattled like a stick upon railings. "Man," he cried, "there's not a doubt of it! Barker has just marked the window himself. It's a good deal broader than any bootmark. I mind that you said it was a splay-foot, and here's the explanation. But what's the game, Mr. Holmes – what's the game?"

<u>"Ay, what's the game?" my friend repeated thoughtfully</u> [Doyle 1993: 878].

Memory is verbalized both in terms of its <u>processes</u> (remembering (*How on earth am I going to remember all this?* [Ephron 1998]), recollecting (*Alan Carstairs? I've heard that name before somewhere.* [Davies & Wharmby 1980]), forgetting), and <u>types</u> of memory (voluntary mechanical/logical, sensory/short-term/long-term) as well as stimulating the interlocutor's mental activity (*"Looking back at the evening which you spent together, does anything stand out in your memory as throwing any possible light upon the tragedy? Think carefully, Mr. Tregennis, for any clue which can help me."* [Doyle 1993: 786]). Communicative failures may also be caused by speaker B's lack of attention while perceiving/remembering the interlocutor's utterance or being unable to divide his/her attention between several communication channels.

According to F. Daneš [2004: 25–26], conversational discourse is characterized by a complex interplay of cognitive and emotional activity. Rational evaluation of the interlocutor's utterance may be combined with the expression of positive or negative emotions; at the same time, emotions affect mental processes such as thinking and memory (recollecting). Emotions accompanying the operation of mental processes may be expressed by description of speaker B's nonverbal behaviour, nomination of his/her emotions, and emotionally charged vocabulary. Several emotions may be expressed simultaneously or succeed one another under the influence of the current context model and constant evaluation of speaker A's utterances. The emotions expressed differ in terms of being voluntary/involuntary, sincere/feigned, and conscious/unconscious.

Description of speaker B's emotions may be performed by his/her interlocutor/observer (the narrator in fiction) or result from introspection. Consider the following example:

Poirot's voice arrested her.

"Wait, mademoiselle. I have something to tell you. Come back."

<u>Rather unwillingly, I thought, she obeyed.</u>

Somewhat to my surprise, Poirot plunged into the whole story of the A B C letters, the murder of Andover, and the railway guide found by the bodies.

He had no reason to complain of any lack of interest on her part. Her lips parted, her eyes gleaming, she hung on his words.

"Is this all true, M. Poirot?"

"Yes, it is true."

"You really mean that my sister was killed by some horrible homicidal maniac?"

"Precisely."

She drew a deep breath.

"Oh! Betty – Betty – how – how ghastly!*"* [Christie 1989: 52–53].

In this communicative situation, Megan's emotional state is described by Captain Hastings, present during the conversation. Her unwillingness to continue communication gives way to interest expressed by means of naming the emotion, describing the girl's nonverbal behaviour (facial expression and gaze which show her attention and involvement) as well as her use of echo questions. Megan's interest is combined with surprise and fear, expressed by the discourse marker *really* and the adjective *horrible*, which have emotive connotations [Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English].

Thus, cognitive-communicative nature of echo questions has been studied with reference to their role in building/updating mental (context/situation) models, increasing conversational discourse coherence by repairing communicative failures as well as verbalizing mental processes and emotions.

2.4 Functioning of echo questions

Depending on the speaker's communicative intention they serve to realize, echo questions in conversational discourse are used to perform a number of speech acts. A typology of the latter, applicable to studying the English interrogative sentence from the diachronic perspective has been put forward by I.S. Shevchenko [1998: 47–51] (based on the works of J. Searle and G.G. Pochepcov) in which the following types of speech acts are distinguished: quesitive, directive (injunctive and requestive), expressive, metacommunicative, constative, and commissive.

The illocutionary force of a quesitive speech act is realized when echo questions are used to request elaboration, clarification or repetition of some elements of the stimulus utterance, check an inference or assumption, and ask for confirmation or commitment.

As formal and functional characteristics of an utterance may be correlated in a number of ways [Pochepcov 2009: 444–446], echo questions combine secondary illocution of a quesitive with primary illocution of an indirect directive (injunctive, requestive, disagreement-directive), expressive, metacommunicative, constative or commissive (promisive, asking for instructions, refusal, and menacive).

Pragmatic analysis of reactions to echo questions revealed that success of the latter in terms of illocution (recognizing the interlocutor's communicative intention) and perlocution (performing the required actions or changing one's beliefs [Davis 1980: 54; van Dijk 1977: 198–200]) is defined by mental context models of the communicative situation (namely similarities/differences in the communicators' aims, interests, knowledge/beliefs, their psychological/emotional state, social status and roles as well as linguistic features of a speech act [van Dijk 1981: 128–132]). For instance, perlocutionary success of a quesitive speech act lies in receiving the answer requested: Ellie Henderson: *How did you know that?* Captain Hastings: *Er, the captain mentioned it. He just happened to mention it* [Rye 1989b], whereas refusal to provide information means unsuccessful perlocution:

Deniston Russell: *They're my burglar tools.*

Constable: *Burglar tools? What do you want with them?*

Deniston Russell: *I refuse to say* [Zampi 1951].

Strategic use (production) of echo questions is regulated by the mental context model of the communicative situation. Thus, echo questions may serve to elaborate on the components of the context model, which is constantly updated, increase its coherence by repairing communicative failures, and attain speaker B's ends influenced by the existing context model.

Types of communicative strategies suggested in the study correlate with the components of the communicative act [Jakobson 1987: 66]: addresser (evaluative strategy), message (information-cognitive strategy), addressee (directive and argumentative strategies), context, code and contact (metacommunicative strategy). Table 1 presents the typology of communicative strategies and tactics developed.

Table 1

Typology of strategies and tactics

Strategies	Tactics
information-cognitive strategy	requesting elaboration/repetition/clarification/confirmation, checking an inference/assumption, summarizing, giving an answer, avoiding a detailed answer, asking for instructions/permission/commitment
directive strategy	ordering, exhorting, instructing, recommending/advising, requesting
argumentative strategy	providing conditions for possibility of an action, changing the subject of conversation, appealing to necessity/impossibility/absence of alternatives/ nonidentity/cause-effect relationship/the structure of reality/ compatibility/plausibility/insufficient evidence/common sense/authority/gains/pathos, arguing ad hominem
evaluative strategy	expressing rational evaluation, disagreeing, criticizing, expressing irony, expressing emotional evaluation, evaluating the interlocutor
metacommunicative strategy	establishing communicative contact and identifying the interlocutor, prolonging/terminating communicative contact, inducing the interlocutor to perform a communicative action, regulating the subject under discussion, regulating temporal aspect of the conversation, managing turn-taking, influencing the wording of the interlocutor's utterance, evaluating the interlocutor's utterance, defining the meaning of a word, suggesting a nomination

3. Conclusions

In this study, echo questions are identified on the basis of semantic and/or structural relation to the stimulus utterance, manifested as full/partial repetition or paraphrase thereof. Structural and semantic correlation of an echo question with the stimulus utterance is viewed as realization of the syntactic processes of complication/compression, which may be combined with actualizing, qualifying, and social modus categories.

Methodologically, the research is based on T. van Dijk's sociocognitive theory of discourse analysis, whereby cognitive-communicative nature of echo questions is viewed through their role in building/updating a mental context model of the communicative situation, repairing communicative failures thus increasing discourse coherence as well as verbalizing mental processes (sensation, perception, thinking, memory, attention) and emotions.

Functioning of echo questions in conversational discourse (realization of speech acts, communicative strategies and tactics) is regulated by the existing mental context model of the communicative situation. Speech acts performed by echo questions may be direct (quesitives) and indirect (directives, expressives, metacommunicatives, constatives, commissives), with their

illocutionary/perlocutionary success depending on the mental context model (communicators' differing aims, interests, knowledge/beliefs, their psychological and emotional states, social status and roles, and the language means used). The typology of communicative strategies and tactics developed in this study is based on the correlation between the speaker's communicative aim and the components of the communicative act proposed by R. Jakobson. In order to update a mental context model, the speaker employs tactics of information-cognitive strategy, which ensure gaining/providing the relevant information. Evaluative strategy enables the speaker to express his/her rational/emotional evaluation; argumentative strategy involves an attempt to change the interlocutor's beliefs, while directive strategy is aimed at his/her behaviour. Metacommunicative strategy regulates the communication process with respect to establishing, prolonging, and terminating communicative contact, turn-taking, temporal and status characteristics of the communicators, formulation of the stimulus utterance as well as defining the subject of conversation.

The approach developed may find further application in studying cognitive-communicative characteristics and functioning of echo questions in different types of discourse both synchronically and diachronically.

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