

Expression of Empathy in Speech Acts

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Abstract. The article focuses on one of the current problems: verbal empathy. Verbal empathy is an inescapable ability that is an integral part of interpersonal communication. The inability or unwillingness to show verbal empathy creates communication difficulties. Verbal empathy is a speech act that expresses feelings of empathy towards others. The use of these speech acts is a natural necessity for building healthy verbal communication. Verbal empathy is conditioned by our perception of the world, i.e. our thoughts, emotions, feelings and knowledge. According to research, verbal empathy is an integral part of human existence. It is a way of communicating together, not only between people of different cultures, but also between people of the same culture.

1 Introduction

Compassion, rivalry, empathy are inherent in every human being, but with the development of new communication technologies - the Internet, mobile phones and other gadgets, people have started to communicate more at a distance through these modes of communication, in which there is less and less expression of feelings.

But nothing can replace live communication, which is mainly manifested in dialogical discourse. It is therefore through dialogue that the agonal and competitive aspect of verbal communication must be taken into account, which has made this work relevant.

Our research focuses on the description and analysis of varieties of empathy in dialogic discourse.

2 Research Methodology

The theoretical basis of the research is the work of modern linguists, both domestic and foreign, devoted to empathic discourse as a means of communication.

The research material includes key works of national and foreign linguists, such as I.V. Arnold, N.D. Arutyunov, T.A. Van Dyck, V.I. Karasik, M.M. Makovsky, M.I. Otkupshchikova, L.N. Sinelnikova, E.I. Sheigal, A.V. Yarovoy, Edward Titchener, F. James, James B. Stiff, Kerbrat-Orreccioni, C. Mehrabian, A. Young, A. L., & Sato, S. Auchlin/Ferrari et al.

Descriptive, comparative and analytical methods were used in the article.

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At the heart of empathy is sympathy, which has always had a very broad meaning. Sympathy appears more as a process by which we can represent the 'judgments' of others than as a process by which we share their emotions. Thus, the register of sympathy includes cognitive aspects (Smith's judgements), affective aspects (emotions), but also conative aspects (desires, intentions).

Indeed, as Cooley notes, Shakespeare sometimes spoke of "sympathy in choice", when two subjects see their similar desires converge towards the same object [1].

Pity and compassion are words used to describe empathy with the pain of others.

However, this aspect is increasingly disappearing, as sympathy is understood as compassion and is mainly characterised by the desire to relieve the suffering of others.

Sympathy is associated with emotional non-reproduction; empathy is naturally pushed towards the register of emotional contagion.

It thus perceives the traits of similarity with which sympathy was previously endowed. This state of affairs is highly controversial and needs to be discussed.

As Goffman points out, "the fundamental invariant between empathy and sympathy" is obviously one of reproduction. Succeeding the original sympathy, empathy has indeed become a carrier of this meaning and therefore generally means having "feelings more adapted to the other's situation than to one's own" [2]. It is also called "putting oneself in the place of the other" or "accepting the role" of the other person.

Many researchers distinguish between cognitive and emotional empathy [3].

But all concepts agree that empathy is a form of emotional reproduction, in the sense that the emotion aroused in one person is similar to that perceived by another [4].

Thus, most consider emotional contagion and empathy to be perfectly equivalent: "Emotional empathy consists of an interpersonal process in which, almost by a process of contagion, one responds with emotions similar to those of others present" [5]. Etymology of the word empathy: "what one feels inside": "*I see that you are sad and I understand why*". It is the ability to feel another person's emotions and to put ourselves in their shoes. We share their feelings because we can identify with them and understand how they feel.

Understanding is the basis of empathy. For example, a friend loses his job and feels depressed. We can empathise because we can imagine how we would feel if such a situation happened to us. However, we feel a softened version of what the other person is really experiencing, because we have a certain objectivity. There is a certain distance between us and our emotions, because we know that it is the other person, not us, who is experiencing the drama. We say: "*I am sorry for what is happening to you*".

Empathy is said to be our participation in the other person's emotion (positive or negative) or pain. We identify - sometimes feel - what is affecting the other person because we are aware of what they are experiencing. Again, there is an emotional distance that allows us not to carry these emotions on our shoulders. We are sensitive to them, but not more so. The gestures made towards this person help to create a positive emotion, a certain relief.

Empathy is understanding the feelings and emotions of another person, while keeping an emotional distance from them. Empathy is different from sympathy, compassion or "emotional contagion". Together they improve the quality of communication by facilitating dialogue and cooperation. They open the person's heart and lead to a better sense of well-being, helping the person to understand the other person and to have a respectful dialogue with him or her.

Empathy is a term of Greek origin. Originally, its meaning was quite general: the word meant affection or a favourable emotional disposition towards people or things. The concept did not even exist in the Roman lexicon, as if the Romans had never known empathy.

But this is not to say that the Romans were incapable of empathising with others; it is simpler to say that the Romans did not have a name for this experience, which made it irrelevant and condemned it to the margins of emotional and rational life.

It was only in the second half of the nineteenth century that this concept began to be used in a scientific environment, becoming, for some German philosophers interested in aesthetic theories, the most important for understanding the meaning of contemplating beauty not only in art, but also in nature.

For them, empathy consisted in identifying in artistic works the feeling that their authors or readers themselves had transmitted to them, giving them life [6]. However, the systematic and critical study of such a process only began in the early 20th century.

Freud and, following him, various psychoanalytical schools as well as psychologists and psychotherapists, both in their theoretical and more practical reflections, began to focus on empathy.

In the last century, the scientific literature on this subject has become internationally impressive; a multidimensional paradigm has emerged, especially since the 1980s, which considers empathy as the totality of the factors of the subject's mental life; on the other hand, an evolutionary paradigm which sees the development of empathy by linking it to the history of the subject, in particular to the growth of his or her affectivity [7]. The main purpose of empathy-based dialogue is to help the person to perceive and articulate their own feelings. Empathy is most important in personal life: in general, a person's behaviour is determined by his or her ability to express his or her inner world; in empathic dialogue, the decisive factor remains the word, which helps the person who needs sympathy.

This is why verbalisation makes it possible to structure a singular world, an increasingly personalised universe.

To better understand empathy, we can use the diagram proposed by H. Franta. It consists of four semantic fields arranged around the two axes "*submissive-dominant*" (first axis) and "*pleasant-very pleasant*" (second axis); each field allows us to make the most appropriate lexical choice possible.

Joy, for example, finds its place in the second semantic field, defined by the coordinates *domination* (on the first axis) - *pleasant* (on the second axis); it can find an adequate expression through a sentence like: "*It warms my heart to see you here*".

Tenderness, on the other hand, is found in the fourth semantic field, whose coordinates are *dominance* (first axis) - *pleasantness* (second axis). An appropriate expression might be: "*If you could hug me, when greeting me, it would make me happy*".

Sadness is located in the dominance-pleasure coordinate area and can therefore be expressed as follows: "*Because of what is happening to me, I feel discouraged*".

Anger is in the dominance-hate coordinate field and can therefore be expressed in simple terms: "*I am sorry if I hurt him and he is suffering*" [8].

It is about seeing oneself in the other. Whatever the differences, there are always bridges between people. Self-awareness and understanding of the other naturally leads to greater compassion, which can, for example, be seen through acts of support for others through donations to common causes, increased attention whenever an act of discrimination is committed [9]. For example, if you notice that the opinion of a person belonging to a minority group is being ignored, you can bring this up in the discussion: "*It is important that we also listen to their opinion...*".

Brené Brown refers to the work of Teresa Wiseman, a British professor of medicine, who listed four qualities of an empathetic person.

The first is the ability to accept another person's point of view as true,

The second is to refrain from judging, which she says is the least obvious, because in our society we are constantly judging,

The third is to understand how the other person feels, and the last is to be able to communicate that you understand.

Empathy is a difficult choice, because to be able to feel another person's pain, one has to draw on an experience deep in one's consciousness that allows one to feel what the other person is feeling, and this can sometimes be painful.

Unfortunately, there is a deficit of empathy in today's society, which can be compensated by an increase in loneliness. *Fear* speech is everywhere: in live and virtual communication [10]. Above all, many people are overwhelmed by their own fears, stress and feelings of injustice, both personally and professionally. As a result, people are unable to feel the fears of others. This was particularly evident when, during the last pandemic, people were deprived of their ability to express their feelings as before. Deprived of live human communication, forced to wear masks that hide much of their face and thus their emotions, it is as if people have given up their emotions and replaced them with fear.

N'ayez pas peur de la vie. / Don't be afraid of life.

Sentez-vous libre d'exprimer pleinement vos craintes, doutes et appréhensions. / Don't hesitate to fully express your fears, doubts and concerns.

Vivez pleinement, sans crainte. / Live fully, without fear.

The pandemic showed the true face of world leaders who were not familiar with empathy.

Jacinda Arden, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, is the only leader singled out by communications experts for clear, consistent and sober messages that are always empathetic. As a result, New Zealand has been one of the most successful countries in managing the crisis.

Empathy has been of interest since the 19th century, when the term 'empathy' was coined by E. Titchener to describe an internal activity that results in an intuitive understanding of another person's situation. Titchener combined philosophical ideas about empathy with the theories of feeling of E. Clifford and T. Lipps.

The phenomenon was explored through a variety of philosophical frameworks that focused on issues of empathy and sympathy.

In the 20th century, interest in emotional cognition and helping behaviours increased, and a sufficient number of different theoretical and experimental studies on emotional reactivity in people of different ages were conducted.

In the 21st century, the study of empathy remains relevant, as the trend towards globalisation requires an effective construction of social interaction, the key to which is undoubtedly empathic speech acts expressing advice and wishes.

Ne soyez pas en retard sinon vous ne passerez pas la porte. / Don't be late, otherwise you will not get through the door.

Les inscriptions seront closes à 17h00 précise, sans possibilité de dérogation pour les retardataires./ Registration will close at exactly 5pm, and no exceptions will be made for latecomers.

Tout retard expose à l'interdiction d'accès à la salle. Les portes de la salle seront fermées à 08:30 précises. / Any delay will result in the banning of access to the room. The hall doors will be closed at 08:30 pm sharp.

Ne tourne pas en rond comme ça. / Don't go round and round in circles like that.

Ne prenez pas votre tension artérielle quand ça ne va pas./ Don't take your blood pressure when it's not right.

Évitez de mesurer votre tension artérielle lorsque vous êtes en colère ou dans un état émotionnel débordant. / Avoid taking your blood pressure when you are angry or in an emotional state.

Ne fais pas comme ça. / Don't do that.

Empathy is of paramount importance for group processes and interpersonal contacts, as it limits aggressive intentions and encourages prosocial behaviour towards others. People with a high level of empathy development (empaths) are more sensitive to the needs or desires of others. Empathy can therefore rightly be considered as one of the most important human qualities in the field of interpersonal relationships [11].

Empathy is the ability to project oneself into another person's situation in order to better understand their ideas, attitudes and feelings. It is the ability to put oneself in the other person's shoes while maintaining one's own point of view and avoiding judgement. In other words, empathy is not only about treating others better, but also about doing better. Empathy uses emotional speech acts to *improve interpersonal relationships*.

J'ai fait les courses. Te sents-tu inquiet, car tu as besoin de savoir que nous avons suffisamment à manger pour ce soir et demain matin ? / I've been shopping. Do you feel worried because you need to know if we have enough food for tonight and tomorrow morning?

The ability to listen and empathise improves relationships between people. This results in a sense of well-being that contributes to personal development.

Active listening is the quality of willingly listening, of taking an interest in the other person: perceiving the other person's words with the necessary benevolence, which makes it possible to establish authentic relationships with people.

J'entends que la situation est complexe. Êtes-vous anxieux, car vous avez besoin d'anticiper l'avenir et qu'à ce jour tout semble opaque ? / I hear that the situation is complex. Are you anxious because you need to anticipate the future and so far everything seems opaque?

Empathy is about understanding another person's feelings and emotions while maintaining an emotional distance from them.

Empathy is different from sympathy, compassion or "emotional contagion". Empathy and compassion, a word from Christian Latin, have exactly the same etymological meaning and are translated as sensitivity to the suffering of others, mercy, pity. But a distinction can be made between sympathy and compassion on the basis of etymology: we sympathise when we feel sad for someone, whereas we feel compassion when we feel sad for them. And in this case, it is possible to feel sympathy without compassion. Indeed, we can understand someone's pain without sharing it.

J'aimerais que tu te poses. / I'd like you to calm down.

Te sens-tu soucieux, car tu as besoin de t'amuser sans savoir exactement ce que tu pourrais faire ? / Do you feel worried because you need to have fun without knowing exactly what you could do?

Another concept closely related to empathy is "emotional contagion", which is defined as the spread of emotions from one person to another, characterised by "a form of undifferentiation between self and other", whereas the difference between self and other is preserved in empathy, empathy and compassion.

An essential component of empathy is the presence of affective resonance, i.e. the emotional generosity to recognise that the other is like oneself, while acknowledging differences. The more empathetic a person is, the easier it is for them to talk about their feelings.

3 Results and Discussions

Together, empathy, compassion and emotional contagion improve the quality of communication by promoting dialogue and cooperation. They open the heart and lead to a better emotional well-being that contributes to one's personal development.

Recognition of the context of the other is an important element that connects the person to his/her environment and facilitates understanding of the situation. This skill takes into account elements of a person's identity, such as place of origin, colour, ethno-cultural background, nationality, marital status, religion, age, sex, intellectual, physical or gender identity. All these elements influence people's values, beliefs and behaviour. When a person is analysed in relational terms, it is possible to understand them more deeply and to have a genuine and respectful dialogue with others.

Problem solving is about assessing a particular situation and trying to find a positive strategy that works for the people involved. This technique is based on understanding the problem and on rational dialogue.

Compassion is about suffering with someone.

- I understand your pain. I will spend an evening with you so that you do not feel lonely.

Compassion is a feeling that makes us sensitive to pain, suffering, the experiences of others, etc. We feel suffering. We are so immersed in the emotions of others that we seek to relieve or comfort them. Compassion is essentially the transformation of empathy into action. We don't just observe another person's misfortune, we experience it and seek a solution. Compassion requires constant emotional involvement. Although compassion is a good thing, it should not be wished to last because of the high emotional charge it involves.

For example,

- Est-ce que c'est vrai? Est-ce que mes pensées sont fondées sur des faits.

We also could say:

- Les autres vont remarquer que je tremble quand je suis nerveux», il faut que je fasse suivre cette affirmation de la question :

- Est-ce que c'est vrai? Est-ce que quelqu'un m'a déjà dit que je tremblais quand je m'exprimais? Probablement que non. Donc, on réalise que notre pensée n'est pas basée sur des faits. Et c'est à ce moment-là qu'on modifie notre façon de penser. Je vais changer ma pensée de :

- Les autres vont se rendre compte de mon tremblement à :

- Oui, peut-être que je tremble, mais les autres ne s'en rendent pas compte»

La deuxième question est :

- Si effectivement les autres se rendent compte du fait que je tremble, est-ce que vraiment la personne va penser des choses négatives sur moi? Est-ce qu'elle va penser que je suis une personne émotive, faible et qui ne peut pas contrôler ses émotions?

Et dans un troisième temps:

- Si effectivement la personne se rend compte que je tremble, et qu'elle pense des choses négatives de moi, est-ce que c'est si dramatique dans ma vie?

Est-ce vraiment dramatique que je ne sois pas parfait dans toutes les occasions?»

These are the questions people ask themselves when they are afraid of what others might think of them. Instead of admitting it to themselves:

- Je suis certain que tu vas être poché, tu vas mal te conduire, tu vas faire plein d'erreurs et tout le monde va se moquer de toi?

If someone has a problem, they will be informed:

- Laisse tomber les idées que tu as, viens on va y aller, on verra là-bas comment ça va se dérouler et puis on avisera ensuite.

The power of words is so strong that their impact is unlimited, they penetrate a person's soul and make them suffer.

The etymology of the word empathy is what you feel inside. It is the ability to feel another person's emotions and to put ourselves in their shoes. We share their feelings because we can identify with them and understand how they may feel. Understanding is the basis of empathy.

4 Conclusions

Thus, verbal empathy is valuable because it facilitates mutual understanding in verbal communication, shows the ability to choose one's communicative actions by showing interest in the other person, understanding their fear, anger, grief, sadness, and helps to improve interpersonal relationships, while maintaining emotional distance.

The state of verbal empathy is expressed through speech acts that improve interpersonal relationships while maintaining distance. The need for verbal empathy is a basic communication need common to all individuals. Verbal empathy is expressed through speech acts that can include the whole emotional universe of a person: pity, compassion, understanding, tenderness, sadness, etc.

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