

# INTERPRETATION OF “EMBARRASSMENT” LAUGHTER IN NARRATIVES BY PEOPLE WITH APHASIA AND NON-LANGUAGE-IMPAIRED SPEAKERS

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## ABSTRACT

We present an attempt to describe the semantics of “embarrassment” laughter in aphasic and non-language-impaired discourse based on the samples from the Russian CliPS corpus based on its place in discourse.

**Keywords:** aphasia, corpus, pear stories, discourse

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Laughter is a non-verbal vocalization that is known to express positive and negative emotions [1]. A number of studies addressed the type of laughter that could be called “embarrassment” laughter and occurs when the speaker treats the situation as embarrassing or delicate [2,3], for example failures to produce an appropriate word form by people with aphasia [4,5].

We present an attempt to describe the semantics of “embarrassment” laughter in aphasic and non-language-impaired discourse based on the samples from the Russian CliPS corpus.

Russian CliPS (Clinical Pear Stories) corpus is a multimedia corpus of narratives produced by speakers with aphasia and right hemisphere damage, as well as healthy speakers of Russian. The corpus contains retellings of the “Pear story” movie [6].

## 2. INTERPRETATION OF “EMBARRASSMENT” LAUGHTER

We have analysed 57 narratives (27 stories by people with aphasia and 30 stories by healthy speakers). Only 13 narratives had occurrences of “embarrassment” laughter, seven narratives by people with aphasia and six narratives by healthy speakers.

### 2.1. Failure to produce an appropriate linguistic form

The embarrassment can be related to failure to produce a linguistic form (example 1) or production of an inappropriate form (example 2) due to linguistic incompetence (examples 1 and 2) mostly in aphasia, or circumstances (example 3). All examples are given in translation from Russian.

- (1) And he looks, looks, whoever, how<is he called>, whoever, I don't know \*laugh\* [AP-s05, speaker with aphasia]
- (2) Three boys one eh grown-up, the second is smaller, the third \*laugh\* eh well ehm well bigger [AP-s08, speaker with aphasia]
- (3) So eh that one continues gathering, \*sound of a door creaking\* eh a small pause \*laugh\* [HP-v01, healthy speaker]

### 2.2. Failure to produce an appropriate interpretation

Laughter can occur when the speaker proposes a certain interpretation of what was happening in the movie and is not sure of the quality of this interpretation (example 4).

- (4) He has a strange animal with him. I understood it that way that it is a male\_goat, because he doesn't have an udder, and he bleats like a male goat, well obviously a male\_goat \*laugh\* [HP-v18, healthy speaker]

### 2.3. Dissatisfaction by the narrative

Laughter in the end of an episode or the story can be explained as the embarrassment of the speaker about the quality of their retelling (example 5).

- (5) They left. that's all. I don't know \*laugh\* [AP-s05, speaker with aphasia]

Here we presented a way to interpret the semantics of “embarrassment” laughter based on the place of the laughter occurrence in the discourse. A more thorough analysis will be performed on a larger set of narratives.

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