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A CORPUS-BASED STUDY ON HUMOUR: A CASE OF CONTEMPORARY RUSSIAN YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE

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Abstract

This study explores the mechanisms of verbal humour in contemporary Russian young adult literature through a corpus-based approach. It aims to determine how humour is embedded within the linguistic structure and to suggest a systematic methodology for its annotation. The analysis draws on a representative sample of Russian young adult fiction, A Diary of a Cat Sapiens by Tamara Kryukova, which is characterized by diverse semantic layers and cultural references. The methodology combines close reading with manual annotation, and corpus analysis using AntConc. The findings reveal that humour emerges from semantic shifts, stylistic incongruity, and allusions. The study concludes that annotated texts, enriched with linguistic and cultural commentary, serve as valuable resources for Russian language learners and translator training programs. It further recommends incorporating generative models to improve the annotation and analysis of humour.

Keywords: *Corpus, Antconc, Humour, Young Adult Literature, Russian.*

MİZAHIN DERLEM TEMELLİ İNCELENMESİ: ÇAĞDAŞ RUS GENÇLİK EDEBİYATI ÖRNEĞİ

Öz

Bu çalışmada çağdaş Rus gençlik edebiyatında sözel mizahın işleyiş mekanizmaları derlem temelli bir yaklaşımla incelenmektedir. Araştırmanın temel amacı, mizahın dilsel yapıya nasıl yerleştiğini belirlemek ve bu unsurların sistematik biçimde etiketlenmesine yönelik bir yaklaşım ortaya koymaktır. İnceleme, çeşitli anlam katmaları ve kültürel göndermeleri içeren, Rus gençlik edebiyatından temsilî bir örnek olarak Tamara Kryukova'nın Bir Kedi Sapiens'in Günlüğü adlı eserine dayanmaktadır. Yöntem olarak yakın okuma, manuel etiketleme ve AntConc yazılımı ile yapılan derlem analizi bir arada kullanılmaktadır. Bulgular, mizahın anlamsal kaymalar, üslup uyuşmazlıkları ve anıştırmalar aracılığıyla biçimlendirildiği göstermektedir. Çalışmada, etiketlenmiş ve dil kullanımına ve kültür özelliklerine ışık tutan açıklamalarla desteklenen metinlerin hem Rusçayı yabancı dil olarak öğrenenler hem de çevirmen adayları için önemli kaynak olabileceği sonucuna varılmaktadır. Mizahın daha derinlemesine çözümlenebilmesi ve etiketlenmesi için üretken modellerin potansiyelinin araştırılması gerektiği ileri sürülmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: *Derlem, Antconc, Mizah, Gençlik Edebiyatı, Rusça.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Humour is a complex phenomenon, which has been explored across various disciplines such as linguistics, psychology, and cognitive science. Linguistic analyses focus on humour mechanisms in the language system. Cognitive approaches connect humour to creativity and problem-solving capabilities. Psychological research, in turn, addresses its roles in social interaction and emotional regulation.

This study examined how humour could be systematically identified, visualized, and analyzed within a corpus-based framework, using contemporary Russian young adult literature as a case study. We employed an approach that involved marking up instances of humour in the text, visualizing their distribution, and analyzing emerging patterns to understand their role in meaning construction. The research was driven by the question: where exactly is humour embedded within the linguistic structure? Is it found in word meaning, shaped by context, or constructed through cultural references? To answer these questions, we stepped up with the hypothesis that humour can be detected in the language system through classification that accounts for semantic shifts in the language, culturally motivated patterns, and pragmatic frames. We developed a classification system that includes such categories as: 1) Secondary naming patterns, revealing semantic shifts and deviations from primary meanings 2) Allusions, introducing cultural, literary, or historical references and 3) Stylistic Features, including linguistic creativity and pragmatic elements.

Our study followed a two-phase methodological framework. First, we employed close reading for manual annotation, allowing for the precise identification of humour-related elements in the text. This step ensured that humour patterns were systematically captured. Following this, we applied distant reading techniques, facilitated by corpus analysis tools such as AntConc, to visualize the distribution of these humour categories across the text. The integration of these methodologies enabled both qualitative and quantitative insights into humour construction in Russian young adult literature.

Given the limited corpus-based research on humour in the Russian language, we offered a framework for systematically identifying and analyzing humour-related elements. By examining how humour emerged through language, context, and cultural references, we provided a structured approach to humour annotation and analysis that could be applied across different linguistic and literary contexts. The results of the study indicated that contemporary Russian literature for young adults contains multiple examples of language material that plays an essential role in developing semantic, cultural, and stylistic awareness among native speakers. A key conclusion of the study is that such texts are valuable tools for “Russian as a foreign language” courses and translation training, since they provide rich examples of humour, cultural references, and linguistic creativity that are crucial for understanding the intricacies of Russian language and culture.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Historical Perspectives on Humour

Humour has been examined across various disciplines and through different approaches, but its modern association with funniness dates back only to the 18th century. Prior to that, philosophical discussions focused on laughter and comedy, often with a negative connotation. Ancient Greek philosophers, such as Plato, viewed humour with skepticism, often associating it with “moral harmfulness” (Trivigno, 2019). According to Aristotle, laughter is connected to aggressiveness and can be considered “educated hubris” (Destree, 2019). These Greek ideas profoundly influenced Christian morality. Biblical texts often framed laughter as hostile or sinful**,** reinforcing the medieval rejection of humour. Church doctrine and Puritanism further condemned comedy, viewing it as morally corrupt and disruptive (Morreall, 2009).

Later this approach to laughter formed the Superiority Theory, suggesting that humour arises from a feeling of dominance over others. However, by the 20th century**,** alternative theories—such as Incongruity Theory and Relief Theory—began to challenge these views, shifting the study of humour toward cognitive and social functions rather than moral critique. The Relief Theory developed in Freud’s works explains laughter as a release of unnecessary energy, while the process of creating jokes is conceived as a shift of unconscious thoughts into the conscious mind. The Incongruity Theory suggested that humour emerges from the unexpected positioning

of ideas or meanings. Currently, this approach is considered to be the dominant theory of humour in philosophy and psychology (Morreall, 2024).

2.2. Humour in Linguistics

While humour has long been considered a subject of literary and philosophical inquiry, systematic linguistic analysis began in the late 20th century with the emergence of formal models explaining humour's mechanisms. One of the key theoretical models is proposed by Viktor Raskin and suggests a cognitive approach to humour. According to Raskin's "Semantic Script Theory of Humour" native speakers have "semantic scripts" in their mental lexicon. Rather than being limited to lexical meanings, these scripts encapsulate the speaker's entire mental representation of a concept. Thus, while native speakers possess comparable scripts for common words, their interpretations may subtly differ. Humour emerges when a text aligns with two conflicting semantic scripts, such as the contrast between the "normal" and the "absurd." The comedic effect arises when the reader or listener experiences a sudden shift between these scripts, thereby resolving the perceived incongruity. The oppositional scripts that generate humour in jokes are restricted in number and vary depending on cultural norms and values (Raskin, 1984).

This theoretical model was extended by Raskin and Attardo later into the "General Theory of Verbal Humour", introducing six hierarchical Knowledge Resources that shape verbal humour. These include Script Opposition**,** which defines the core incongruity in the joke; Logical Mechanism**,** which determines how the incongruity is resolved; Situation**,** referring to the joke's setting and context; Target**,** identifying the person or group at whom the joke is directed; Narrative Strategy**,** which dictates the joke's structural format; and Language**,** encompassing specific wording and linguistic choices (Attardo, 2024). By incorporating these elements, this theory enables a comparative analysis of humour across different languages and cultures, offering a more comprehensive framework for understanding verbal humour.

The study of humour in linguistics is a multidisciplinary field that examines how language structures, meanings, and contexts contribute to humour creation and interpretation. Cognitive linguistics has provided its methodology for the exploration of humour. Cognitive linguistics has studied the influence of metaphors and other naming patterns in the creation and interpretation of humour. One of the key contributions to the study of humour has been made by conversation and discourse analysis. Laughter, now a distinct field of study, has been explored through topics such as its acoustic characteristics, its occurrence within speech, and the relationship between humour and laughter (Attardo, 2017).

In recent years there has been a growing interest in applying corpus-assisted methodologies to the study of humour. Recent studies have reshaped humour research, showing that women generate more humour than men but do not necessarily support humour more or tell more jokes. These findings contrast with earlier gender humour theories, which characterized women as passive in both humour production and reception (Attardo, 2017).

2.3. Humour in Russian Language

Research on humour in the Russian language has flourished in recent years, particularly with the growing interest in the social and cultural contexts that shape humour in Russian society. The linguists have focused on humour in various domains, including diplomacy (Manor, 2021), political discourse (Budnitsky, 2024), gender studies (Donskikh & Akopov, 2024), social media (Lunde, 2016), and comparative studies (Shardakova, 2016). Advances in artificial intelligence allow researchers to explore humour beyond textual analysis. Several studies introduced a roadmap for humour recognition in Russian using machine learning methodology (Blinov, Bolotova-Baranova, & Braslavski, 2019), (Ermilov, Murashkina, Goryacheva, & Braslavski, 2018). Several case studies have also explored humour in literary works, analyzing wordplay, irony, and intertextual references in Russian literature (Fefelova, Fatkullina, Suleymanova, Abdullina, & Akhmatyanova, 2018), (Milne, 2004).

However, humour in Russian young adult literature remains an underexplored field. A relatively recent study by Kolojarceva and Artemyeva (2017) found that Russian elementary school students primarily associate

humour with transformations, norm violations, and wordplay in popular animated films and children's fiction. The study proposes a classification of humour based on the analysis of actions and situations, aligning with the sociolinguistic paradigm. While this approach is valuable for understanding humour perception, it does not account for the linguistic mechanisms that trigger the comic effect.

Corpus-based studies on humour in the Russian language remain underdeveloped as well. This gap presents an opportunity to introduce new methodological approaches, such as corpus annotation and computational humour analysis, to Russian studies. By applying a digital humanities approach to humour in Russian young adult literature, this study seeks to contribute to both humour research and the broader field of Russian linguistics.

2.4. Approach and Hypothesis

In this study, we build on the idea that language is one of the key factors influencing the formation of the "comic effect" (Attardo, 2024). We identify the linguistic level as fundamental for analyzing verbal humour, as it serves as the medium through which other humour-generating factors manifest. Our approach is based on the concept of language as a primary modeling system that structures and conveys other semiotic systems created by humans—most notably culture, understood in its broadest sense (Zaliznyak, Ivanov, & Toporov, 1962). At the linguistic level, reality naming processes occur through primary and secondary naming patterns (Serebrennikov & Ufimtseva, 1977).

Our hypothesis suggests that the comic effect primarily arises within secondary naming patterns (Yartseva, 1990), as the recipient associates the primary situation and its characteristics with the primary situation. For example, the primary naming pattern *грянул гром* ("thunder struck") in Russian linguistically encodes an action through an auditory image linked to thunder or a loud noise (potentially an onomatopoeic expression, грянуть -греметь *(rumble)* -гром *(thunder)*). This unit can function as a secondary naming in expressions such as *грянул апокалипсис* ("the apocalypse struck"), where the unexpectedness of the phrase contributes to the comic effect. Within our hypothesis, we also identify allusion and stylistic elements as categories with potential comic effects. Allusion (Nikolyukin, 2001) is associated with the secondary modeling system, namely culture, and its use in naming processes. For instance, in the phrase *Эх, Ваня! И ты, друг…* ("Ah, Vanya! You too, my friend…"), the recipient must reconstruct a frame linked to the well-known legend of Julius Caesar's assassination, where Caesar's last words, *Et tu, Brute?* signify betrayal. Stylistic elements (Nikolyukin, 2001) relate to the association of a linguistic unit with a specific register, such as everyday discourse, scientific style, diplomatic language, poetic expression, or colloquial speech. A shift or disruption in register can generate a comic effect. For example, in the phrase *Явились родственнички* ("The dear relatives have arrived"), the diminutive suffix in *родственнички* ("relatives") typically conveys a positive connotation. However, in real usage, such forms may carry irony or disapproval, as observed in this context. It is worth noting that no comprehensive classification of stylistic elements has been established, and the categorization of registers remains a subject of debate among linguists. In this study, we associate stylistic elements with specific registers based on data from the Russian National Corpus (www.ruscorpora.ru). This analysis allows us to determine usage patterns within particular registers based on large-scale linguistic data rather than relying solely on subjective native-speaker intuition.

3. METHODOLOGY

The dataset for this study consists of the full text of "A Diary of a Cat Sapiens", a contemporary Russian young adult book by Tamara Kryukova (Kryukova, 2023) and known for its humour and linguistic creativity. Tamara Shamilievna Kryukova (b. 1953, Vladikavkaz, formerly Ordzhonikidze) is a prolific Russian author specializing in children's and young adult literature. Her works span a wide range of genres, including fairy tales, fantasy, humourous stories, young adult novels, science fiction, and poetry; educational books for children and young adults; and even school textbooks. Kryukova's books have been widely recognized and translated into multiple languages, including German, Polish, Slovak, Czech, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Azerbaijani, Armenian, and Kyrgyz. By the end of 2012, the total circulation of her works exceeded 1.5 million copies. Her literary contributions have also been adapted for cinema, with three films based on her works: the romantic drama "Kostya + Nika", the comedy "Potapov, to the Board", and the mystical thriller "The Witch" (Kryukova, 2025). The book "A Diary of a Cat Sapiens" was first published in 2015.

"A Diary of a Cat Sapiens" is narrated from the perspective of Barsik, a highly intelligent domestic cat who not only navigates everyday feline concerns but also actively engages with human life, including the use of the internet. He lives in a household with a relatively large family: The owner, his wife (the mistress), and their three children—Alyona, a high school student; Anton, an eighth-grader who frequently clashes with Barsik and is humourously nicknamed Оболтус (scatterbrain) by the cat; and Vanya, a preschooler who acts as Barsik's close companion and protector. Throughout the novel, Barsik provides witty commentary on both the complexities of feline existence and the peculiarities of human behavior. He offers humourous observations on daily life, shares his personal opinions on human habits and societal norms, and even gives satirical advice on how various events should be perceived. The combination of narrative engagement and playful language makes this text a representative example for studying humour in contemporary Russian young adult literature.

The digital version of the text was converted into plain text (.txt) format to ensure compatibility with annotation and corpus analysis tools. The study systematically identified, marked up, and analyzed humour-related elements through a combination of close reading (Mironova, 2021) and distant reading (Lopatina, 2021) approaches.

To examine humour in the selected literary text, we adopted a two-phase methodology combining qualitative manual annotation and quantitative corpus analysis. The first phase of the study involved close reading and manual annotation to systematically identify and categorize humour-related elements in the text. This step was essential for capturing humour patterns that might not be immediately evident through automated processing. The annotation process followed these steps:

1. Text Familiarization: A thorough reading of the entire text to understand its narrative structure and humour strategies.

2. Identification and Categorization: Marking instances of humour based on three predefined categories:

- Secondary Naming Patterns: Semantic shifts and deviations from primary meanings.

- Allusions: Cultural, literary, or historical references contributing to humour.

- Stylistic Features: Linguistic creativity, rhetorical devices, and phonetic play.

3.Corpus Cross-Referencing: Comparing annotated instances with data from the Russian National Corpus (www.ruscorpora.ru) to validate linguistic patterns and contextual usage.

4.Tagging System: Assigning standardized tags to humour-related elements for systematic classification: <SEC> for secondary naming patterns, <ALL> for allusions, and <STYL> for stylistic features.

5.Annotation Refinement: Reviewing and refining the annotations to ensure consistency and accuracy in classification.

After the manual annotation phase, we applied distant reading techniques using AntConc (https://www.laurenceanthony.net/software/antconc/)**,** a corpus analysis tool, to analyze humour distribution and patterns. The distant reading phase involved the following steps:

1.Processing the annotated text using AntConc to examine the distribution of humour-related elements across the text.

2.Generating visual representations of <SEC>, <ALL>, and <STYL> tag occurrences to identify trends in humour usage.

3.Conducting frequency analysis to determine the prevalence of each humour category.

4.Performing collocation analysis to explore the relationships between humour-related words in context.

By integrating these qualitative and quantitative methods, we aimed to provide a structured and systematic analysis of humour in Russian young adult literature.

4. RESULTS

The most frequent categories in the annotated corpus were those marked as <SEC> (330) and <STYL> (330), corresponding to "secondary naming" and "stylistic features", respectively. The category of "allusion" (<ALL> (106)) was the second most numerous in terms of annotated instances. A visual representation of the distribution of these categories across the text is provided in Figure 1.

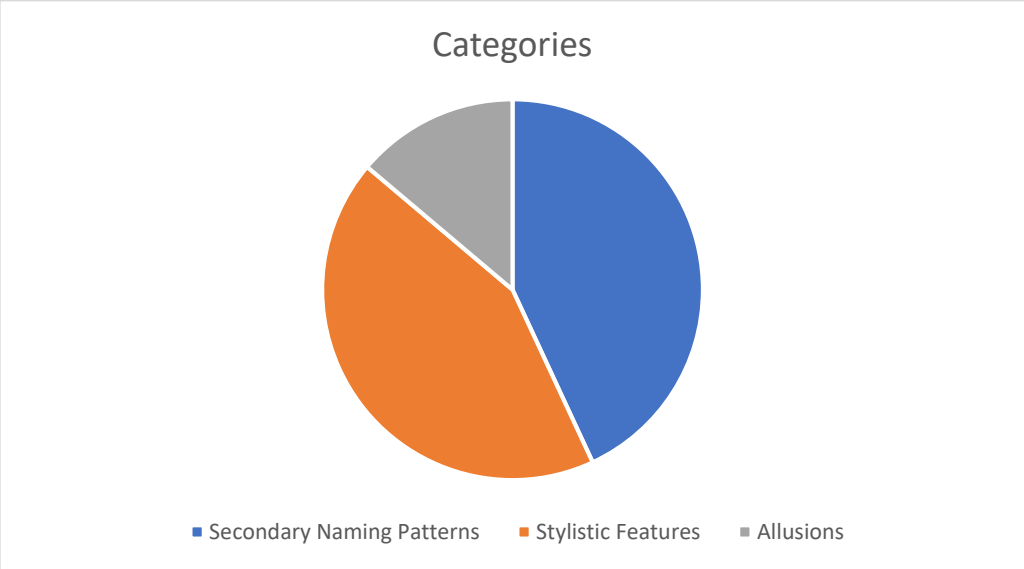

Figure 1: Distribution of the categories in the text

4.1. Secondary Naming Patterns

The analysis of units categorized under "Secondary Naming Patterns" revealed the following findings[1]:

The comic effect within this category is produced at the level of the word, collocation, and lexicalized syntactic constructions[2].

4.1.1. Secondary naming at the word level

At the word level, a specific word form becomes associated with multiple fragments of reality and acquires a particular emotional charge. Within the analyzed material, the following models of lexicalization were identified:

1.Lexicalized onomatopoeic units

Только он (крот) из норы высунулся, я его – цап – схватил за шкирку.
(Just as he (the mole) poked his head out of the hole, I – zap – grabbed him by the scruff.)

Я упал на спинку – брык – прикинулся опоссумом, не дышу.
(I fell on my back – flop – pretended to be an opossum, not breathing.)

Белка – шурк – на грушу, потом на забор.

(The squirrel – rustle – onto the pear tree, then onto the fence.)

Такого удара шар не выдержал – шмяк! дзынь! – и это уже не шар.
(The ball couldn't handle such a blow – thud! clink! – and it was no longer a ball.)

[1] Due to page limitations, only examples illustrating the main categories are provided here and in the following sections.
[2] For a more detailed discussion of lexicalized syntax, see Kozan (2022).

2.Fusion of a preposition and an onomatopoeic word or a unit with opaque etymology

Щенок вдрызг изгрыз кроссовки.
(The puppy completely chewed the sneakers to pieces.)

In this example, the unit *вдрызг* is a fusion of the preposition *в* ("into") and the unit *дрызг*, which is not used independently in contemporary Russian. This formation can appear in different contexts and is typically associated with the sound of shattering glass or with an extreme degree of a condition (e.g., *вдрызг раскритиковать* – "to harshly criticize", *разбитая вдрызг дорога* – "a road shattered to pieces")[3].

Such fused forms are created not only with onomatopoeic elements but also with other lexemes, whose primary meanings may relate to various fragments of reality. For example:

Наесться всласть мне не удалось.
(I didn't manage to eat to my heart's content.)

In this example, *всласть* is a fusion of *в* ("into") and *сласть* (with a primary meaning related to something sweet or pleasurable in taste).

Ему и невдомек, как надо мной изгаляются.
(He hasn't the slightest clue how they're mocking me.)

Here, *невдомек* is a fusion of the negation particle *не*, the prefixes *в-* and *до-*, and the root morpheme *мек-*, etymologically linked to cognitive actions (compare: *смекнуть* – "to figure out", *намекнуть* – "to hint").

3. Lexicalization of a grammatical form and its transformation into a highly emotive unit

This model involves cases where a grammatical form becomes lexicalized and acquires a high degree of emotional expressiveness.

Дожили! Мне купили ошейник!
(We've really lived to see the day! They bought me a collar!)

In this example, the word *дожили* (literally "lived to this day/time") is lexicalized from the verb *дожить* (as in *Они дожили до 100 лет* – "They lived to the age of 100") into a standalone exclamation *Дожили!*. It expresses the speaker's negative or ironic attitude toward the situation.

Могла бы свои ахи-охи не прятать. (You could have stopped hiding your sighs and moans.)

Here, the interjections *ах* and *ох*—both of which carry broad emotional semantics—are fused and nominalized into *ахи-охи*, a pluralized form functioning as a noun. This transformation turns expressive exclamations into a label for exaggerated emotional display.

4.Grammaticalization of a lexical form

In this model, lexical items are reanalyzed and repurposed into grammatical markers.

Хозяйка сначала надулась: мол, я старалась, а никто даже не оценил.
(The owner sulked at first, like, "I tried so hard and no one even appreciated it.")

The unit *мол* originates from the verb *молвить* ("to say") and the noun *молва* ("rumor"), and it has undergone grammaticalization to become a discourse marker. In this function, *мол* is associated with evidentiality—it marks that the speaker is reporting or quoting someone else's speech. It may also convey the speaker's ironic distance, disbelief, or sarcastic tone toward the reported content.

[3] The analysis of linguistic usage in contemporary Russian relies on data from the Russian National Corpus.

5.Lexicalization of a word

This category includes cases where an originally concrete or narrowly defined lexical item becomes associated with a different fragment of reality and acquires emotional or stylistic coloring through lexicalization.

Молоток Хозяин! Очко в его пользу!
(Well done, Master! One point to him!)

In this case, the noun *молоток* (literally "hammer") is lexicalized to function as a colloquial expression of praise or approval, comparable to "nice job!" or "well done!" in English. The original object (a tool used for hammering nails) is reinterpreted in a new context. Such lexicalized forms often acquire stylistic nuance. In this example, the use of *молоток* reflects a colloquial, familiar tone.

However, a lexicalized unit can also belong to a higher stylistic register. For instance:

Я привык к его грязным выпадам, поэтому не реагирую.
(I'm used to his crude attacks, so I don't react.)

Here, the word *выпад* (from *выпадать* – "to fall out") is lexicalized as a noun referring to a verbal or rhetorical attack. This lexicalized form aligns with formal or elevated style, and in this context, the character uses it to assert intellectual or moral superiority over another.

Lexicalization can affect different parts of speech. When it involves verbs or adjectives, it often includes a shift in intensity or semantics, which may create a humourous effect. For example:

Я тотчас загорелся туда попасть.
(I immediately burned with desire to get there.)

This is a lexicalized use of *загорелся* (literally "caught fire," as in Дерево загорелось от молнии (The tree caught fire from lightning), now meaning "became extremely eager." Compare to the more neutral: *Он захотел попасть туда* (He wanted to go there).

The analysis revealed a large number of lexicalized action nouns and verbs, particularly related to movement. These forms are perceived by native speakers as conventional, yet may pose interpretive difficulties for non-native learners of Russian. In many cases, the semantic shift is opaque and hard to reconstruct, making it difficult to explain the emergence of the current meaning. For example:

Скоро до Хозяйки дошло, что кричать бесполезно.
(Soon the Mistress realized that shouting was pointless.)
(compare: *Дойти до магазина за 10 минут* – "to reach the store in 10 minutes")

Меня так и подмывало наподдать ему лапой.
(I was itching to give him a good smack with my paw.)
(compare: *Водой подмыло берег* – "The shore was eroded by water")

В дверь просочился незнакомый барбос.
(A strange mutt slipped in through the door.)
(compare: *Масло просочилось сквозь бумагу* – "The oil seeped through the paper")

Я прямо остолбенел от такой наглости.
(I was petrified by such audacity.)
(compare: *Вдоль дороги стоят столбы* – "There are poles along the road")

These lexicalized expressions still retain traces of their original, literal meanings, and this duality is often the source of humour.

4.1.2. Secondary naming at the collocational level

At the collocational level, comic effect often arises from the interaction between the semantic components of the words forming the collocation. This semantic interaction is the result of a process of secondary naming applied not to individual words, but to entire word combinations. Over time these combinations become entrenched in the language system through lexicalization.

In some cases lexicalized collocations are also accompanied by stylistic shifts, making them relatable to specific registers (e.g., high, low, or neutral styles). In the analyzed material, the following types of collocational models were identified:

1. Collocations without stylistic shift

These collocations retain a neutral stylistic register, but the comic effect arises from the metaphorical reinterpretation of at least one component. The examples below illustrate how phrases are lexicalized to acquire extended meanings:

После семейного просмотра дневника Оболтуса в доме разворачиваются нешуточные драмы. (After the family's reading of Oboltus's diary, serious dramas start unfolding in the house.) Lexicalization model: *разворачивать* («to unwrap» – *Он стал медленно разворачивать сверток.* (He began slowly unwrapping the bundle.)) → *разворачиваться* in a figurative sense (*События разворачивались с невероятной скоростью.* (The events unfolded at incredible speed.))

Новомодное увлечение дневниками докатилось до нашей семьи. (The trendy craze for diaries finally reached our family.) Lexicalization model: *докатиться* («to roll to a stop» – *Шар докатился до столба и остановился.* (The ball rolled to the pole and stopped.)) → metaphorically *докатиться* as "to spread/reach" (*Весть о нашем разговоре докатилась до директора.* (News of our conversation reached the principal.))

А когда миска пустая, надо срочно бить тревогу, даже если в данный момент не голоден. (And when the bowl is empty, one must urgently raise the alarm—even if not hungry at the moment.) Lexicalization model: *бить* ("to hit" – *Нельзя бить человека.* (You shouldn't hit a person.)) → *бить в колокола* ("to ring the bells") → *бить тревогу* ("to sound the alarm").

2.*Collocations with stylistic shift*

The second group of collocations identified in the analyzed material demonstrates a stylistic shift, particularly toward colloquial or expressive registers of contemporary Russian. These collocations create humour through the figurative reinterpretation of their components and reflect creative thinking that evolves alongside linguistic and cultural development. For instance:

"Поймаю, шкуру спущу!" – Хозяйка полезла за диван.
("If I catch you, I'll skin you alive!" – The owner dove behind the sofa.)

Твой дом опозорили, а ты даже и ухом не ведешь.
(They've disgraced your home, and you don't even bat an eye.)
(lit. Your house has been disgraced, and you don't even twitch an ear.)

Да котик чуть концы не отдал!
(The poor kitty almost kicked the bucket!)
(lit. Well, the kitty almost gave (his) ends!)

Они все равно ни бельмеса не поймут.
(They won't understand a thing anyway.)
(Commentary: The lexicalized form бельмес originates from the Turkic word "bilmez" (he does not know))

These expressions are characteristic of spoken Russian and reflect fixed idiomatic usage, often classified as phraseme-like or semi-idiomatic collocations. The semantic bond between the components is strong and non-substitutable. For example, in *отдать концы* ("to die"), the phrase functions as a unit of meaning, and substitutions like *выдать концы* or *издать концы* would be impossible.

Many of these collocations, as well as single lexical units, are shaped by cultural conceptualizations, including zoonyms, phytonyms, ethnonyms, or real-world cultural referents. Examples include:

Но тут хозяин подложил мне свинью.
(But then the owner set me up / pulled a dirty trick on me.)
(lit. "laid a pig under me" – a culturally bound idiom)

Просто курам на смех!
(That's just ridiculous! (lit. "only good for chickens to laugh at"))

Но у меня-то ума палата, и с логикой всё в порядке.
(Well, I've got a palace of brains, and my logic is flawless.)
(sarcastic/ironic exaggeration of intelligence)

«Лично я щенка не просила», – открестилась Алена.
("I personally didn't ask for a puppy," Alyona disavowed.)
(the verb *откреститься* literally means "to cross oneself away from" and metaphorically "to deny responsibility")

In contrast, stylistic shifts can also occur in the opposite direction, toward elevated or formal stylistic registers. This includes collocations that are metaphorically rich and reflective of bookish or high-register idioms:

Она не проявила широты души.
(She did not show breadth of soul.)
(a stylized expression indicating lack of generosity or compassion)

На меня снизошло озарение.
(An epiphany/revelation descended upon me.)
(elevated register with religious or poetic overtones)

Хозяйка остудила его пыл.
(The owner cooled his ardor.)
(a high-register metaphor implying calming someone's emotional outburst)

4.1.3. Lexicalized syntactic constructions

The lexicalized syntactic constructions identified in the analyzed material exhibit a high degree of emotivity and may generate comic effects in specific contextual settings. These constructions correspond to particular semantic functions within the language system, regardless of the lexical meaning of their individual components. In other words, a lexicalized construction conveys a fragment of reality through "fossilized" syntactic forms and inherently carries the speaker's subjectivity, functioning as a pragmatic marker in communication.

The study reveals the following lexicalized constructions:

1. Reduplication

Reduplication may involve various grammatical categories—verbs, nouns, adjectives, pronouns, and particles—and result in lexicalized constructions that carry distinct semantic and pragmatic nuances.

1.1. Verbal Reduplication

Я её ловил-ловил, безрезультатно.
(I kept trying and trying to catch her—without success.)
Semantics: duration
Subjectivity: frustration, speaker's exhaustion from the action

«Ищи-ищи», – мысленно усмехнулся я.
("Keep searching," I smirked inwardly.)
Semantics: duration
Subjectivity: the speaker's doubt about the result of the action, irony toward the action

Старайся не старайся, благодарности не дождёшься.
(Try as you might, no one's going to thank you.)
Semantics: intensity
Subjectivity: futility of the action

Приехали к ветеринару. Тут уж кричи не кричи.
(We arrived at the vet's. Whether you scream or not—it's no use.)
Semantics: intensity
Subjectivity: futility of the action

Понять-то я понял, но зачем лишать себя удовольствия?
(I did understand, but why deprive myself of the pleasure?)
Semantics: confirmation
Subjectivity: internal disagreement or mismatch between action and speaker's expectations

1.2. Noun Reduplication with Case Forms

Смех-смехом, а вы когда-нибудь видели кота в брюках?
(All jokes aside, have you ever seen a cat in pants?)
Semantics: confirmation, stating a fact
Subjectivity: surprise, the speaker's attempt to reassess the situation

Дурак-дураком, а иногда соображает.
(He's a total fool, but sometimes he does have a point.)
Semantics: confirmation, stating a fact
Subjectivity: surprise, the speaker's attempt to reassess the situation

Абориген аборигену рознь.
(Not all natives are the same.)
Semantics: multiplicity
Subjectivity: speaker's differentiation of one object from a group

1.3. Reduplication of Adjectives, Pronouns, and Particles (with modifications)

These constructions may involve phonological variation, synonymic/antonymic opposition, or semantic shift.

Пускай видят, что в доме есть какой-никакой, а самец.
(Let them see that there's at least some kind of male in the house.)
Semantics: affirmation of quality
Subjectivity: mismatch between expectation and reality
Какое-никакое, а удовольствие.
(It may not be much, but it's still a pleasure.)
Semantics: affirmation of quality
Subjectivity: mismatch between expectation and reality

Если хозяева в театр собираются, то чеснок ни-ни!
(If the owners are heading to the theater—then no garlic at all!)
Semantics: prohibition
Subjectivity: depending on the context, can convey the speaker's confirmation, irony, or skepticism

Ваня вот-вот расплачется.
(Vanya is just about to burst into tears.)
Semantics: immediacy (just before an event)
Subjectivity: depending on context—worry, sadness, or joy

Ведь про перец я правильно угадал? То-то же.
(See, I guessed right about the pepper, didn't I? Told you so.)
Semantics: speaker's justification or affirmation
Subjectivity: depending on context—assertiveness, warning, or boast

2. *Infinitive constructions*

The infinitive is a structural element of many lexicalized syntactic constructions in the Russian language (Kozan, 2022). Such constructions can correspond to various semantic categories (obligation, prohibition, advice, etc.), but they are always emotional. In the structure of such constructions, the subject of the situation is often expressed in the dative or genitive case, which in Russian are markers of the speaker's subjective evaluation of the situation (compare: *Я хочу спать* (I want to sleep) – the subject expresses their desire directly through the use of the "I-construction" – *Мне хочется спать* (I feel sleepy) – the subject implies an external factor: the subject is not active, he/she is the experiencer of the state). For example:

Харизмы мне не занимать.
(I've got charisma to spare.)
Semantics: presence of a certain property or object
Subjectivity: depending on the context – agreement of the speaker with the situation, irony, criticism

Охотников читать все равно не найдется.
*(*You still won't find any takers to read.*)*
Semantics: multiplicity
Subjectivity: speaker's irony toward the situation

Я тоже не прочь качественным продуктом полакомиться.
*(*I wouldn't mind indulging in a quality product either.*)*
Semantics: desire to realize a situation or speaker's agreement with the situation
Subjectivity: unwillingness of the speaker to directly express their desire

3. Constructions with verbal forms

Lexicalized syntactic constructions can contain fossilized verb forms that have lost their original meaning. The concept of grammaticalization can be applied to such units (compare: *возьми книгу (*take the book*)* – here the imperative corresponds to the speaker's desire to make the other subject perform an action – *А чашка возьми да упади! (*And the cup went and fell!*)* – the imperative form in Russian conveys the suddenness and unexpectedness of the action). For example:

*А он знай хвостом машет, как ни в чем не бывало. (*And he just keeps wagging his tail like nothing happened.*)*

Commentary: знай is an imperative of the verb знать (to know)
Semantics: duration, repetition of action
Subjectivity: criticism, irony, sarcasm

*Хозяйка почем зря унижала мое достоинство. (*The landlady humiliated my dignity for no reason at all.*)*

Commentary: the lexicalized construction почем зря derives from the preposition по, the interrogative что *(*чем*)* and the lexicalized from of the verb зрить (see, watch).

Semantics: lack of reason, groundlessness

Subjectivity: speaker's disagreement with the situation, disapproval

4. Constructions with case forms

The semantics of these constructions are related to a quality, feature, or property of a situation, phenomenon, or subject. Very often, they are verbless constructions in which the focus is placed on information about the phenomenon, object, or subject expressed by a specific case form. The quality or feature is conveyed through various grammatical categories. Such constructions are used by the speaker to convey a certain attitude toward the situation—in other words, they are manifestations of the speaker's subjective evaluation. For example:

С дружбой у нас напряженно. (We're not exactly swimming in friendship.
(There is tension when it comes to friendship.))
Semantics: small quantity
Subjectivity: irony, hint, joke

Умом она небогата. (She's not rich in brains.)
Semantics: small quantity
Subjectivity: mockery, criticism, irony

Комментов тьма. (A ton of comments.)
Semantics: large quantity
Subjectivity: depending on context—surprise, unexpectedness

Народу собралось! (Look at all the people who showed up!)
Semantics: large quantity
Subjectivity: depending on context—surprise, unexpectedness

Мозгов-то нету! (No brains at all!)
Semantics: absence
Subjectivity: criticism, mockery

5. Constructions with interrogative words/pronouns/conjunctions/particles

These constructions possess high emotive value and are often used in everyday speech—in other words, they are an expression of the colloquial style. For example:

Что ни день, то хозяева какую-нибудь каверзу устроят. (Every single day the hosts pull some kind of trick.)
Semantics: multiplicity, recurrence (что ни день)
Subjectivity: depending on context—surprise, disapproval, irony

Я весьма недурен собой, да что там, просто красавец!
(I'm not bad-looking at all—who am I kidding, I'm a total heartthrob!
Semantics: marker indicating that the speaker will shift perspective (что там*)*
Subjectivity: depending on context—enthusiasm, delight, disappointment

Чтоб елку не трогал!
(Don't you dare touch the Christmas tree!)
Semantics: speaker's desire (here: prohibition) *(*чтоб with past tense verbs)
Subjectivity: depending on context—anger, irritation, resentment

Два дня стерег и подкараулил-таки мерзавца.
(He kept watch for two days and finally caught the scoundrel
Semantics: realization of a situation despite difficulties (verb forms with таки)
Subjectivity: praise, approval

6. Pragmatic markers of various kinds

These constructions are lexicalized; however, some elements within them are contextual—in other words, the use of a unit is determined by the context. For example:

Я вас умоляю! С его близорукостью, давлением и плоскостопием? (Oh please! With his nearsightedness, high blood pressure, and flat feet?)
Semantics: speaker's disagreement with the situation
Subjectivity: irony, indignation
Contextual variants: *Я вас прошу!*

Порядочный нашелся! Лучше у себя в комнате прибери! (Oh, what a gentleman! Why don't you clean your own room first!)
Semantics: negation of the situation, disagreement with it
Subjectivity: criticism, irony, disapproval
Contextual variants: *(*quality *+ нашелся!)* (*Хороший нашелся! Умный нашелся!* etc.)

4.2. Stylistic Features

The analyzed material reveals the following stylistic devices that create comic effect:

4.2.1. Colloquial or emotionally marked lexical items

These units often belong to the colloquial register and are marked in Russian dictionaries as "conversational," "familiar," "rude," or "nonstandard." Their etymology is frequently opaque to native speakers, though etymological dictionaries often trace them back to Old Russian. In other words, these units have undergone semantic and pragmatic shifts due to various factors. A semantic shift may involve a change from positive to negative evaluation (or vice versa). A pragmatic shift concerns the usage of the unit and its frequency in speech—for instance, a word previously used neutrally may now be confined to specific informal contexts. These lexical items can appear in various grammatical forms.

Пока пес на меня таращился, я его хвать когтем по морде.
(While the dog was gawking at me, I clawed him across the face.
Transformation model: *смотреть* (neutral) → *таращиться* (colloquial, coarse).
Subjectivity: criticism, disapproval, anger.

Тут уж из меня адреналин прямо попёр.
(Then the adrenaline just started surging out of me).
Transformation model: *выйти* (neutral) → *перть* (colloquial, vulgar in context).
Subjectivity: emotional evaluation of the situation by the speaker (usually negative).

А чего тут мудреного? Чай не цифровой замок на сейфе.
(What's so complicated about it? It's not like it's a digital lock on a safe.
Transformation model: *всё-таки, ведь* (neutral) → *чай* (archaic, colloquial)
Subjectivity: affirmation by the speaker

4.2.2. Phonetic compression typical of conversational speech

Чес-слово, я мог бы составить словарь современных слов.
(Cross my heart, I could compile a dictionary of modern words.)
Transformation model: *честное слово* (neutral) → *чес-слово* (phonetic compression)
Subjectivity: the speaker's attempt to affirm sincerity

Ща! Настоящие коты не унижаются до подачек!
(Please! Real cats don't stoop to handouts!)
Transformation model: *сейчас* (neutral) → *ща* (phonetic compression)
Subjectivity: emotional disagreement with the situation

Скока-скока? Почти пятьдесят семь тысяч?!
(How much?! Nearly fifty-seven thousand?!)
Transformation model: *сколько* (neutral) → *скока* (phonetic compression)
Subjectivity: surprise, disbelief

На кой мне надо было проявлять мягкосердечие?
(Why on earth did I have to show compassion?)
Transformation model: *который* (neutral) → *кой* (archaic for "which")
Subjectivity: surprise, doubt, negative evaluation of the situation

От этих разговоров у меня глюки начались.
(These conversations gave me hallucinations.)
Transformation model: *галлюцинации* (neutral) → *глюки* (shortened form characteristic of informal style
Subjectivity: emotional response depending on the context

4.2.3. Lexical units associated with the literary style

Such expressions are frequently labeled in Russian dictionaries as "obsolete," "historical," or "archaic." Some originate from the common Slavic lexicon, while others are linked to Church Slavonic. In contemporary Russian, these elements are typically associated with elevated or formal registers. However, when used in everyday contexts, they often serve as stylistic markers that reflect the speaker's stance toward themselves or the situation. For instance, these markers may implicitly convey the speaker's desire to appear intellectually refined or, conversely, function as sources of irony or sarcasm. The comic effect is achieved through the use of high-style vocabulary to describe ordinary situations.

Мяуса! – не выдержав, возопил я.
(Mya-eat! – I couldn't hold it in and cried out.)
Transformation model: *закричать* (neutral) → *возопить* (high style)
Subjectivity: exaggeration, comic dramatization of an everyday outcry

Наконец я возликовал!
(At last, I rejoiced!)
Transformation model: *радоваться* (neutral) → *возликовать* (high style)
Subjectivity: ironic overstatement of a simple emotional reaction

Думаете, эти изуверы обратили внимание на мой протест?
(You think those fiends paid any attention to my protest?)
Transformation model: *мучитель* (neutral: tormentor) → *изувер* (high style: fiend, zealot)
Subjectivity: sarcastic exaggeration, heightened expressiveness

И внутренний глас говорил мне, что я не ошибся.
(And my inner voice told me I wasn't wrong.)
Transformation model: *голос* (neutral: voice) → *глас* (high style: utterance)
Subjectivity: stylization for rhetorical or ironic effect

Не надо путать отсутствие воспитания с актом возмездия.
(One shouldn't confuse a lack of manners with an act of retribution.)
Transformation model: *действие* (neutral: action) → *акт* (high style: act); *отплата* (neutral: repayment) → *возмездие* (high style: retribution)
Subjectivity: formalization of a judgment to elevate or mock a mundane behavioral conflict

4.2.4. Lexical units associated with the official style or professional jargon

These lexical items often originate from fields such as law, psychology, military discourse, and other areas of professional communication. Their use in colloquial or mundane contexts can either implicitly signal the speaker's intent to display intellectual sophistication or, conversely, serve as a tool for irony and sarcasm. The comic effect is achieved by incorporating elevated, domain-specific language to describe otherwise trivial or everyday situations.

Я набросился на еду, будучи в состоянии аффекта.
(I lunged at the food while in a state of emotional disturbance.)
Field of usage: psychology
Subjectivity: dramatization of a simple act, possibly self-ironic

Она лично идет засвидетельствовать акт осквернения.
(She's going in person to officially witness the act of desecration.)
Field of usage: law
Subjectivity: formalization of an emotionally charged but mundane event, potential irony

За распределение материальных благ в нашей семье отвечает не он.
(He is not the one responsible for the distribution of material goods in our family.)
Field of usage: legal/administrative language
Subjectivity: parody of bureaucratic speech applied to family life

Хозяйка заметила этот манёвр.
(The hostess noticed the maneuver.)
Field of usage: military terminology
Subjectivity: exaggeration or mock-heroism in describing ordinary movements

В случае конфликта нужно заручиться поддержкой властных структур.
(In the event of a conflict, one must secure the support of authoritative structures.)
Field of usage: socio-political discourse
Subjectivity: ironic formalization of a routine interpersonal issue

Оболтус возвращался к своему обычному амплуа злодея.(The good-for-nothing returned to his usual role of the villain.)
Field of usage: theatrical terminology
Subjectivity: stylized, ironic characterization using professional vocabulary

4.2.5. Units formed according to patterns uncharacteristic for a given grammatical category

This stylistic device involves the formation of lexical units using morphological models typically associated with other grammatical categories. For instance, in contemporary Russian, the suffix *-очк-* is a diminutive suffix primarily found in nouns (e.g., *ваза – вазочка*). However, in the analyzed material, units from various grammatical categories are formed with suffixes or morphological elements that are characteristic of a different category, creating a comic or ironic effect.

А я туточки, уже в дверях стою.
(And here I am, already standing in the doorway.)
Transformation model: *тут* (demonstrative adverb) → *туточки* (use of diminutive noun suffix *-очк-* and plural noun suffix *-и*)
Subjectivity: depending on context—mockery, irony, or affectionate playfulness

А тапочки Оболтуса чистёхоньки!
(And Oboltus's slippers are squeaky clean!)
Transformation model: *чистый* (neutral adjective) → *чистёхонький* (addition of emphatic diminutive suffixes *-ех-*, *-оньк-*)
Subjectivity: the speaker emphasizes the exceptional quality or condition of the object, possibly with admiration or irony

4.2.6. Units containing both positive and negative connotations ("battery units")

These lexical items contain elements traditionally associated with both affectionate or positive colouring and critical or negative evaluation. The result is a clash of connotations that often creates an ironic or sarcastic effect. This stylistic ambiguity plays a significant role in humour, particularly when the form suggests endearment or tenderness while the context signals disapproval or mockery.

Встречаются такие детки, что от них надо и общество охранять.
(You come across kids so awful that society needs protection from them.)
Transformation model: *дети* (neutral style) → *детки* (diminutive, typically affectionate form)
Subjectivity: in this context—sarcasm, critical irony

В кошмарном сне я видел такого родственничка.
(I saw such a dear little relative in a nightmare.)
Transformation model: *родственник* (neutral style) → *родственничек* (diminutive form)
Subjectivity: in this context—sarcasm, disdain

А те, наивные, наслушались сказочек про собак – друзей человека.
(And those naïve ones believed in the little fairy tales about dogs being man's best friend.
Transformation model: *сказка* (neutral style) → *сказочка* (positively evaluated form)
Subjectivity: in this context—sarcasm, mockery of unrealistic beliefs

Хвать меня ручонками загребущими!
(Grab me with your greedy little hands!)
Transformation model: *руки* (neutral style) → *ручонки* (diminutive form with negative implication
Subjectivity: in this context—sarcasm, critique of selfish behavior

4.3. Allusions

The analyzed material contains the following types of allusions that contribute to comic effect:

4.3.1. Global culture

Видя мою улыбку, Чеширский кот повесился бы от зависти.
(Seeing my smile, the Cheshire Cat would hang himself out of envy.)
Source: character from Lewis Carroll's "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland"

И ты, друг!
(And you, my friend!)
Source: According to legend, Julius Caesar's last words ("Et tu, Brute?")

Есть многое на свете, друг Антонио, что и не снилось нашим мудрецам.
(There are more things in the world, friend Antonio, than our wise men ever dreamed of.)
Source: Adapted quote from Shakespeare's "Hamlet"

Как говорится, кто был последним, тот станет первым.
(As the saying goes, the last shall be first.)
Source: The Bible

Я побежал на кухню, чтобы привлечь внимание общественности к возвращению блудного сына.
(I ran to the kitchen to draw public attention to the return of the prodigal son.)
Source: The Bible (Parable of the Prodigal Son)

Хуже цитрусовых, пожалуй, только «Шанель № 5».
(Only Chanel No. 5 is worse than citrus fruits, perhaps.)
Source: Famous perfume brand

А вот к «Металлике» я лично отношусь прохладно.
(As for Metallica, I personally feel lukewarm about them.)
Source: Name of a rock band

Моей реакции позавидовал бы сам Бэкхэм!
(Even Beckham would envy my reaction!)
Source: Famous footballer David Beckham

4.3.2. Global cinema

Ну что, поиграем во Фредди Крюгера?
(So, shall we play Freddy Krueger?)
Source: fictional horror character Freddy Krueger

Это что, типо побег из Шоушенка?
(What is this, some kind of Shawshank Redemption?)
Source: "The Shawshank Redemption" film

Да я звезда! Леонардо ди Каприо тихо плачет в сторонке!
(I'm a star! Leonardo DiCaprio quietly sobs in the corner!)
Source: Hollywood actor Leonardo DiCaprio

4.3.3. Russian literature

Дело не в глупости. Горе от ума.
(It's not about stupidity. It's Woe from Wit.)
Source: Comedy in verse by A. Griboedov, "Woe from Wit"

Скромненько так – и в тему: Кот Ученый.
(Modest and on point: the Wise Cat.)
Source: a character from the Introduction to the poem by A. Pushkin, "Ruslan and Lyudmila"

Люблю тебя в начале мая – а в марте я люблю минтая.
(I love you in early May – but in March I love Pollock.)
Source: Parody of F. Tyutchev's poem "I love a thunderstorm in early May..."

Я вас любил, любовь еще быть может…
(I loved you once, and love may yet remain…)
Source: Opening line of A. Pushkin's poem "I Loved You"

Ларчик просто открывался: под громкой вывеской Дня защитника Отечества маскировался банальный мужской праздник.
(The casket opened easily: under the grand banner of Defender of the Fatherland Day lurked a banal men's holiday.)
Source: Fable by I. Krylov, "The Casket"

4.3.4. Russian mythology and folklore

Оболтус покатывался от хохота, как будто его кикиморы щекотали.
(Oboltus was rolling with laughter as if kikimoras were tickling him.)
Image: *Kikimora* (mythical female spirit)

Или у нас в квартире завелся барабашка?
(Or have we got a poltergeist in our apartment?)
Image: *Barabashka* (domestic spirit)

Дают — бери. Народная мудрость.
(When they give — take. Folk wisdom.)
Source: Proverb “Take it when they give, run when they beat”

Хозяйку на мякине не проведешь.
(You can’t fool the hostess with chaff.)
Source: Proverb “You can’t fool a seasoned sparrow with chaff”

Однако голод не тетка. Я слизал желе.
(Hunger is no aunt. I licked up the jelly.)
Source: Proverb “Hunger is no aunt — she won’t feed you pies”

И Ваня, как мышка-норушка, завершающий.
(And Vanya, like the little field mouse, was the last one.)
Source: Folk tale “The Turnip”, featuring the mouse character

4.3.5. Realities of Russian linguoculture

Меня фактически можно уже заносить в Красную книгу.
(You can practically list me in the Red Book already.)
Image: *Red Book* (register of endangered species)

Вместо рыбной каши Хозяйка положила мне добрый кусок холодца.
(Instead of fish porridge, the Hostess gave me a fine piece of aspic.)
Image: *Kholodets* (traditional Russian meat jelly)

Профессиональный праздник Оболтуса – День дурака.
(Oboltus’s (Scatterbrain) professional holiday is April Fool’s Day.)
Image: April Fool’s Day

Видит, что перед ним не бабушкин валенок.
(He sees he’s not dealing with Grandma’s felt boot.)
Image: *Valenok* (traditional Russian winter footwear)

Я порадовался за соседку, когда барбос пропал.
(I was happy for the neighbor when the mutt disappeared.)
Image: *Barbos* (a typical dog name)

Врешь! Не возьмешь! – взревел я и понесся по кабинету.
(Liar! You won’t get me! – I roared and dashed across the room)
Source: Soviet film “Chapay”

4.3.6. Historical realities

Хозяйка одобрила варварские действия малолетнего инквизитора.
(The Hostess approved the barbaric actions of the juvenile inquisitor.)
Image: Inquisitor (an official of the Inquisition)

Зовите секундантов, сэр!
(Call the seconds, sir!)
Image: Duel and its participants

В то время, как другие называют котов Чингисханами...
(While others name their cats Genghis Khan...)
Image: Historical figure – Genghis Khan

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study has shown that verbal humour in contemporary Russian young adult literature is intricately structured and functions at multiple linguistic and cultural levels. Through the manual annotation and corpus analysis of "A Diary of a Cat Sapiens", we demonstrated how humour emerges through three primary mechanisms: secondary naming patterns**,** stylistic features, and allusions—each contributing to the humourous effect and to the overall communicative richness of the text.

Secondary naming patterns produced comic effects at the levels of individual words, collocations, and lexicalized syntactic constructions. These patterns often convey emotional expressiveness and rely on semantic incongruity for humourous impact. At the collocation level, humour typically arises from the interaction between the semantic components of the expressions, many of which reflect culturally embedded metaphorical thinking. Due to their idiomatic nature, these expressions often present challenges for non-native learners but also offer valuable material for building linguistic and cultural competence. Stylistic features, including phonetic play and register shifts, formed the second category of humour mechanisms. The comic effect is produced when high-style or domain-specific vocabulary is applied to trivial situations, resulting in stylistic incongruity. These stylistic patterns represent elements of language that native speakers acquire naturally within their linguistic environment. Thus, they serve as markers of linguistic competence and are particularly significant in the context of teaching Russian as a foreign language and in training translators working with the Russian–Turkish language pair. Allusions, the third category, often functioned through references to global and Russian culture, historical figures, and canonical literary works. These allusions enrich the humorous content by adding layers of cultural meaning that require background knowledge for full interpretation. All these elements provide insight into the intertextual nature of Russian humour and demonstrate how humour is shaped by shared cultural memory.

The results of this study show that the presence of diverse humourous strategies in young adult literature supports the early development of linguistic awareness. Exposure to idiomatic expressions, stylistically and culturally marked patterns in these texts contributes to developing pragmatic sensitivity and linguistic proficiency in native speakers of Russian. Such texts may be challenging for non-native learners because of their idiomatic and culturally specific nature. However, if these texts are systematically annotated and supported with explanatory materials, they become valuable resources for teaching Russian as a foreign language. They enable learners to engage with authentic Russian discourse and to develop skills in decoding pragmatic meaning and speaker intent, competencies of particular importance for translators and interpreters. Incorporating such texts into Russian language curricula, particularly in advanced reading, translation, or cultural studies courses, can significantly enhance learners' linguistic and intercultural competence.

From a research perspective, this study demonstrates the value of combining close and distant reading methods in a corpus-based framework for identifying, annotating, and analyzing humour in literary texts. As a future direction, we propose the development of a digital, annotated corpus of Russian young adult literature with integrated linguistic and cultural explanations. This resource could serve as a pedagogical tool for students of Russian language and translation studies. Additionally, future research could explore the integration of generative AI models for semi-automated annotation of humour and other culturally marked elements. While human expertise remains essential for identifying nuanced humour, machine learning models trained on annotated corpora may offer scalable support for tagging stylistic markers, metaphoric collocations, and allusive references. Such technologies could assist in building larger multilingual or comparative humour corpora and contribute to the development of AI-assisted tools in digital humanities, translation studies, and language education.

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