

## THE PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS OF HUMOROUS DIALOGUES IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGE SYSTEMS: UNIVERSAL PATTERNS AND DIFFERENCES

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### Introduction

Humor is not merely a collection of funny stories or jokes but a complex, multifaceted, and culturally conditioned phenomenon of human relations. It exists in any society and any language, serving not only to uplift the mood but also to perform deep social, pragmatic tasks. Through humor, people communicate, strengthen or weaken relationships, criticize or affirm social norms, relieve stress, and even gain the opportunity to discuss difficult topics.

The purpose of this article is to conduct a comparative analysis of the main pragmatic functions of humorous dialogues—establishing solidarity, criticism, and coping—in various languages, specifically Uzbek (a Turkic language), Russian (Indo-European, Slavic group), English (Indo-European, Germanic group), and Chinese (Sino-Tibetan family). At the heart of the research lies the similarity and difference in the expression of humor due to the linguocultural specificities of these languages.

**Pragmatic Functions and the Basis for Linguistic Analysis of Humor.** Pragmatics is a field of linguistics that studies the importance of context, participants' intentions, cultural background, and speech rules in understanding the meaning of a word or utterance. Humor is one of its brightest objects because it often operates not on a literal level but through subtext, specific language, and cultural codes. The main pragmatic functions of humor can be distinguished as follows:

- Establishing solidarity: Humor creates an emotional connection among group members, affirming shared values and experiences. It serves to form a sense of "we."
- Criticism: Humor is a soft and acceptable form of criticizing social, political, or personal shortcomings and inconveniences through ridicule. This function often relies on satire and irony.
- Coping mechanism: Humor provides an opportunity to alleviate psychological pressure, logically analyze, and build resilience in difficult, stressful, or severe situations.

Let us now examine how these functions are expressed in different languages.

**Humor as a Means of Establishing Solidarity in Different Languages.** In Uzbek, humor to establish solidarity is often used in family, friendly, or local settings. Unique linguistic tools play an important role here: nicknames, jokes based on proverbs and riddles, as well as the unusual use of words (e.g., a mild reproach mixed with humor like "Wow, buddy, work-work, you want to do everything yourself, don't you!"). While humor is used cautiously with figures requiring great respect (parents, teachers), among peers, it quickly increases closeness.

In Russian, humor as a means of solidarity develops especially within a "kompaniya" (group of friends). Solidarity is often strengthened through dark humor, funny anecdotes, or jokes based on shared cultural and historical references. It is precisely such humorous dialogues that demarcate the boundary between "svoys" (one of us) and "chuzhoy" (a stranger). For example, knowing and laughing at classic anecdotes (like stories about "Vovochka") enhances mutual understanding.

In English, establishing solidarity often involves skillful "small talk" and the light humor within it, as well as a method called "banter"—friendly teasing. This is especially widespread in British and Australian cultures. "Banter" occurs on the basis of mutual respect and does not lead to anger or offense. For example, colleagues making light jokes about the weather or the latest



football game during breakfast strengthens team spirit. The important aspect here is not the act of joking itself but the solidarity shown in the reaction to the joke.

In Chinese, establishing solidarity is traditionally tied to a clear hierarchy of relationships. However, in modern urban culture, especially among youth, humor serves a strong connective function. Chinese humor often relies on the playful use of "chengyu" (proverbs) or "xiehouyu" (a type of folk saying), understanding which requires shared linguocultural knowledge. Humor is also used subtly to strengthen "guanxi" (network of personal connections), for instance, through a light joke aimed at a mutual acquaintance.

**General Pattern:** In all languages, humor serves as a means of drawing a boundary between "insiders" and "outsiders" and strengthening the solidarity of the "insiders" group.

**Difference:** The methods of expressing this solidarity depend on cultural norms: it is more direct and sometimes rougher in Uzbek and Russian, while in English it is constrained and rule-bound ("banter"), and in Chinese, it manifests within the framework of traditional hierarchy.

**Humor as a Means of Criticism in Different Languages.** In Uzbek, critical humor is traditionally expressed through jokes, proverbs, and tales, and in modern form, through satirical newspapers and memes on social networks. An important aspect is softening the sharpness of criticism with humor. For example, the proverb "The deceived one is to blame" is used to ridicule foolishness in society. Or the problem of unemployment is raised with a critical tone in short dialogues like: "What are you doing? – On my way to work. – Okay, see you later then."

In Russian, critical humor developed especially strongly during the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. The shortcomings of the government, the state system, and life's difficulties were the main themes of anecdotes. This was a safe way to express dissatisfaction with the "vlast" (authorities). For example, anecdotes from the Brezhnev era mocked his mental capacity and the repetitiveness of his speeches. Even today, jokes about "Vladimir Vladimirovich" are widespread. Russian satire is sharp, dark, and often tinged with hopelessness.

In English, the brightest examples of critical humor are found in satirical shows (e.g., Saturday Night Live, The Daily Show), cartoons, and humor during Prime Minister's Questions in parliament. The mutual humorous and sharp questions between the opposition and government leaders in the British parliament are world-famous. Here, criticism is open but within strict rules of speech. In the US, due to "political correctness," criticism is often carried out by subverting stereotypes related to race, ethnicity, and gender.

In Chinese, critical humor is the most delicate area. Open criticism of the Communist Party, state leaders, and national policy is strictly prohibited. Therefore, critical humor is more often directed at general human flaws, corruption, and bureaucratic errors (but not of high-ranking officials). Allegory, symbols, and very subtle irony are often used. For example, social inequality or injustice might be criticized through fables about animals. On the modern internet, expressing dissatisfaction through "egao" (funny face) emojis is widespread.

**General Pattern:** In all cultures, humor serves as a safe "paravane" for social criticism.

**Difference:** The degree and subject of criticism depend on the political system. In Western languages (English), criticism is relatively open and institutionalized; in Russian, it is sharper and darker; in Uzbek, it is softened and folk-style; and in Chinese, it is the most restricted and symbolic.

**Humor as a Coping Mechanism in Different Languages.** In Uzbek, the coping function often manifests as "qalbaki kulish" (laughing through tears) by a person facing difficulties, directed at themselves or close ones. Sayings like "I haven't laughed before doing something" or "If you cry, you cry; if you laugh, you laugh" reflect this philosophy. It is a psychological mechanism to endure life's harsh conditions and alleviate them.



In Russian, coping is deeply expressed through "cherniy yumor" (black humor) and "sarkazm" (sarcasm). This is closely linked to the national concepts of "terpeniye" (patience) and "stoykost" (resilience). Jokes like "Under collectivism, the people waited, but endured" serve to psychologically overcome heavy historical experience by mocking it. This provides a sense of control over a difficult situation.

In English, particularly in the US, coping manifests as "self-deprecating humor"—openly talking about one's own shortcomings or failures to lessen their weight. It makes a person seem humble and relatable and also signals to others that "you are not alone." This approach is also related to a culture that avoids pride and self-praise.

In Chinese, coping is linked to traditional Chinese philosophy (e.g., Taoism), based on acknowledging the naturalness of life's contradictions ("yin" and "yang"). Jokes in the spirit of "Don't cry over what happened, because crying won't change it" are common. In Chinese culture, "bao bian" (complaining) is frowned upon, so humor has become a socially accepted way of managing difficult situations. Through funny internet memes or videos, Chinese youth express stress about workload, management problems, or housing costs.

General Pattern: In all languages, humor is a means for a person to emerge from difficult psychological states, gain a sense of control over the situation, and maintain psychological stability.

Difference: The coping methods are determined by cultural values: they are more philosophical and oriented towards accepting fate in Uzbek and Chinese cultures, while they are based on dark humor in Russian culture and on self-criticism in English culture.

## Conclusion

The analysis of the pragmatic functions of humorous dialogues in different systemic and cultural languages shows that the basic tasks—establishing solidarity, criticism, and coping—are universal. Humor is an important social tool for any society. However, the methods of expressing these functions and their boundaries are closely tied to the specific linguocultural context of each language—its history, politics, social norms, and traditions.

In Uzbek, humor is warm, humanistic, and sometimes mixed with mild reproach; it strengthens solidarity, expresses criticism in a folkish and softened form, and approaches coping with wisdom and simplicity.

In Russian, humor is often dark, sarcastic, and sharp; it strengthens solidarity in difficult conditions, makes criticism open and acute, and undergoes coping with sternness.

In English, humor is rule-abiding, institutionalized, and based on self-criticism; it establishes solidarity through "banter," conducts criticism openly but within rules, and achieves coping through acknowledging one's flaws.

In Chinese, humor is the most traditional, cautious, and symbolic; it establishes solidarity through subtle wordplay, expresses criticism on limited topics and in an allegorical form, and realizes coping based on philosophical concepts.

Thus, understanding humor requires a deep knowledge of not only the grammar of a language but also its cultural codes, history, and the psyche of society. Humor is a mirror of culture. Through it, one can see not only the language but also a people's attitude towards the world, its values, and its hardships.

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