

PSYCHOLOGICAL SPEECH IN RUSSIAN COMEDIES

Isfandiyor Xomidov

PhD Student, Uzbek State Institute of Arts and Culture

Abstract: This article focuses on the issues of stage speech in the interpretation of Russian comedies. It examines key aspects of creating an actor's speech character, such as logical pauses, emphasis, and subtext. The analysis is illustrated using Alexander Vampilov's comedy "Metranpaj" as a case study.

Keywords: uzbek theatre, stage, performance, stage speech, speech character, genre, russian comedy, logical pause, psychological speech, subtext, pronunciation

Until 1991, almost three-quarters of the Uzbek theatre repertoire consisted of works by Russian playwrights. During the post-independence period, Russian comedies were not completely abandoned. This is because the issues addressed in the works of playwrights such as Alexander Vampilov, Nikolai Gogol, Leonid Filatov, Anton Chekhov, and Semyon Zlotnikov were also relevant to Uzbek society. That is, plays exploring human choices in difficult situations and questions of self-interest versus the interests of others were important to stage. In such theatrical works, the ideas expressed by the characters naturally contain logical pauses and are imbued with deep emotional states. In this regard, among the first Russian comedies staged, Alexander Vampilov's "Metranpaj" holds particular value.

Vampilov, the author of comedies such as "Farewell in June", "The Eldest Son", "The Tenant", "Outskirts of the City", and "The Glass House in the Field", combines subtle humor with profound psychological insight. Almost all of his works encourage reflection on human relationships and interpersonal dynamics. In "Farewell in June", he prompts contemplation on young people on the threshold of independent life; in "The Eldest Son", he explores the consequences of misunderstandings and lies; in "The Tenant", he examines loneliness and the struggle to find one's place in life; in "Outskirts of the City", he invites audiences to see people from a different perspective; and in "The Glass House in the Field", he reflects on the daily lives of ordinary people.

It is appropriate to include Vampilov's seemingly simple yet morally and ethically profound work, "Provincial Incidents", among these comedies. The play depicts how ordinary people, through trivial misunderstandings in daily life, create significant problems for themselves. Vampilov conveys the idea that "people create problems for themselves." Recognizing the relevance of this comedy to the early years of independence on the Uzbek theatre stage, director Muzaffar To'raqulov, in 1997, consulted with experienced director Bahodir Nazarov and entrusted the translation of the play to Anvarjon Shukurov, who was both proficient in Russian and an enthusiast of theatrical arts. The work consists of two incidents, "The Metranpaj Incident" and "Twenty Minutes with an Angel", with the Metranpaj incident forming the basis of the performance. Ultimately, the comedy "Metranpaj", translated by Anvarjon Shukurov and directed by Muzaffar To'raqulov, was staged in 1998 at the Qashqadaryo Regional Musical Drama Theatre. Vampilov's one-act play, "The Metranpaj Incident", revolves around a mysterious (unknown) term that transforms the peaceful life of a provincial town into a series of complex events. The play is set in a provincial hotel, with the stage design depicting one room of the hotel. The room's setting reflects the style of a 1960s–1970s provincial hotel and remains



unchanged throughout the performance. This stage solution was designed by artist Azamat Sattorov.

In the play, the hotel manager, Kaloshin, while performing his duties, notices that a man has entered a room occupied by a young woman. Kaloshin intervenes to maintain order and peace. The development of the plot begins from this point, leaving the audience in anticipation of how events will unfold. In fact, Potapov, a passionate football fan who has just arrived at the hotel, finds that the radio in his room is not working. To follow an important game, he rushes into the neighboring room, where a girl named Viktoria is preparing to sleep. Potapov enters and starts a rapid, breathless conversation with Viktoria, leaving her astonished:

Potapov: Hello! Is the radio working?

Viktoria: Radio?

Potapov: The radio, the radio!

Viktoria: Is it quiet?

Potapov: Is it working or not?

Hearing the football commentary on the radio, Potapov moves closer to listen, completely startling Viktoria. Portraying Potapov, actor Erkinjon Shodiyev initially used a polite, pleading tone, but now switches to a commanding tone, demanding silence. Viktoria, trying to intervene, is pushed aside. Potapov focuses entirely on the commentary, causing Viktoria to become serious and attempt to expel him.

However, the heartfelt passion of a football fan does not allow him to simply follow the rules. Viktoria invites him to sit and listen. After the first half ends, Potapov regains his composure and apologizes to Viktoria, explaining that his radio had stopped working. Viktoria offers Potapov her radio so he can use it in her room. Potapov happily takes the radio, leaves briefly, and then returns, saying, "It's not working in my room either; perhaps it's an electrical issue," and attempts to return the radio. Actor Erkinjon Shodiyev delivers this line in such a despondent tone that Viktoria, feeling sympathy for this unusual and fervent football fan, invites him to stay and listen to the match until the end. In this scene, the influence of one person's enthusiasm, effort, and genuine fandom on another is vividly portrayed. Actress Ra'nokhon Mustafoyeva conveys Viktoria's modern thinking and worldview through expressive pronunciation, relying on logical pauses. The scene depicts a girl allowing a stranger into her room, a situation unusual for our cultural mentality, which is drawn from Russian societal life. Here, the dialogue illustrates fan devotion and interest in one's favorite team at a near-obsessive level.

At the climax of the football match, the hotel manager, Kaloshin (actor Odiljon Ismoilov), enters. He demands that Potapov leave the room, emphasizing that everyone must be in their assigned rooms: "Friends, it's eleven o'clock at night. Strangers should leave. Everyone should return to their own rooms." He speaks in a strict, official tone, attentive to the smallest disturbances, perceiving the commotion as a trivial pretext. Later, Kaloshin returns to a locked door, knocking and demanding it be opened. He uses a whispered but authoritative tone: "Football... so you are listening to football? Football, yes..." His speech is marked by logical pauses and subtextual emphasis.

Potapov, absorbed in the match on the radio, sharply retorts to Kaloshin, provoking the manager's anger. The situation escalates to the point where Viktoria intervenes, taking Potapov's side and insisting he remain in the room. Viktoria's action reflects the protection of a person's genuine interest. Possessing a calm character, she speaks sincerely and expresses her opinions



freely, for example: “I am the master of this room. I want him to stay here. No one can give me orders!” This dialogue reveals her independent and self-assured speech characteristics. She asserts control over the situation, exercising her will and rights, which serves as a form of “address” for young people to understand during the early years of independence. Kaloshin reacts angrily, adopting a harsh attitude toward both characters. He turns off the radio, berates Viktoria, and forcibly expels Potapov. His speech is dominated by accusation and attempts at compliance, alternating between interrogative and imperative sentences, such as: “You do not understand the truth,” “You do not know how to behave,” “Do you even know the law?”, “Answer me!”, “Do you have any shame?” When addressing Viktoria, he asks in a serious tone, “Is that how you earn money?”—a line delivered with logical pauses and regret. As he drives Potapov out of the room, he utters phrases like “Did I warn you?... I warned you!”—lines rich with dual meaning. Interrogative sentences end with a logical pause, intensified by wide-open eyes and furrowed brows toward the partner. Emphatic statements stress the final syllable, accompanied by a smile directed at the partner, giving the interaction profound significance.

Potapov demands an apology from Viktoria. A furious Kaloshin goes so far as to raise his hand against him. As Potapov leaves, he utters lines such as, “You will answer me for this,” “I will not let this go,” and “I promise, you will remember me,” delivered with logical pauses and in a tone of veiled threat. These words, charged with anger and resentment, are performed by actor Erkinjon Shodiyev using precise logical pauses, conveying not only intimidation but also the underlying inner rage and rebellion affecting his partner. After calming down, Kaloshin asks Viktoria about Potapov’s identity. Viktoria explains that he is a guest from the capital and that she has no further information. Kaloshin contacts the information desk to clarify who he is. When he learns that Potapov’s occupation is “Metranpaj,” he is perplexed and begins calling acquaintances to determine what kind of profession this is—whether he is an official, inspector, journalist, deputy, or secret service agent. The uncertainty surrounding “Metranpaj” causes Kaloshin great distress. He agonizes, thinking, “I insulted an important person, I even raised my hand against him—what should I do now?” and begins to feel a heart attack. Viktoria, after unsuccessfully searching for Potapov, returns to find Kaloshin lying on the couch. The actor Odiljon Ismoilov portrays Kaloshin with a shifting speech character—initially dominant, then moving to a pleading tone.

Kaloshin’s wife also works as a maid in the hotel. She enters looking for her husband and, seeing him lying intimately on Viktoria’s bed, erupts in genuine jealousy and anger. She accuses her husband of betrayal. The situation escalates to the point where she intends to introduce her own close acquaintance into the room, seemingly as an act of revenge. A younger man named Oleg Kamayev enters, warmly greeting Maria, revealing a closer relationship. Kaloshin feels a real cardiac shock, while Maria incessantly blames her husband. Actress Hurriyat Isroilova, portraying Maria, vividly demonstrates how jealousy can overwhelm women. Excited by her husband’s actions, she shouts in anger, “Shameless, what have you done?” Following her character’s impulses, she frequently raises her voice, hurling insults at Viktoria such as, “Is your head all right? Would you do this with an old man too?”, “You’ve twisted your tail and gotten yourself involved,” and “Good-for-nothing scoundrel!” She engages in open conflict with both her husband and Viktoria. Her jealousy generates nervousness and resentment, prompting her to reveal her own misdeeds and admit to having a young lover, whom she summons to the room as proof, thereby exposing her true nature under extreme stress. Kamayev (actor Bahodir Mustafojev) is a lively, joking young man. Every line he speaks carries sarcasm and a whispered undertone. From his first appearance, he addresses Viktoria and Kaloshin with lines such as, “What have we done... So I will join you,” while reacting to Viktoria with, “How could you, such a fairy...” and to Kaloshin, “Bravo, what a fairy with such an old man...” Bahodir



Mustafojev reveals Kamayev's attempt to appear cultured by repeatedly saying, "After all, we are cultured, understanding people..." On stage, Kamayev aligns himself with whoever has the upper hand, agreeing with their opinion. For instance, if Kaloshin criticizes Maria, he joins in; if Maria criticizes Kaloshin, he sides with her. This variability is evident in his speech, and his nature combines cunning with opportunism, while his perspective remains superficial.

Rukosuyev's speech is also noteworthy. He is a doctor and Kaloshin's friend. Upon arrival, he examines his friend, noting the heart's distress, and removes the persistently agitated Maria, administering a calming injection. Actor Husan Amirqulov portrays Rukosuyev with doctor-specific phrases, agile movements, and visible earnestness. His speech is concise, formal, tonal, and characteristic of a medical professional. Especially after making a diagnosis, he calmly states, "He is dying." Regardless of the situation, he remains composed, delivering his lines clearly and syllable by syllable, unaffected by emotional turbulence. From the speech characteristics of the main characters, it can be concluded that one should not always view events and their participants with disdain. Even in tense situations, it is advisable to act with composure and adopt an attitude of tolerance toward others, similar to the principle of "consider everyone wisely." In this regard, it becomes clear that Kaloshin's speech in the play is formal and commanding. He attempts to present himself as an important figure in the hotel, yet due to his low level of education and lack of social etiquette, he repeatedly finds himself in comical situations. When his wife arrives and accuses him of infidelity with Viktoria, he becomes flustered. His speech is filled with false flattery and fabricated explanations, such as, "I am foolish, I am naive..." Early in the play, he uses assertive speech, but later shifts to a more farewell-oriented style, addressing his partners with advisory tones. In conversations, Kaloshin's speech strives for dominance while ultimately aiming to preserve his reputation. However, his attempts to appear knowledgeable, combined with nervousness and stammering, transform him into a comically dramatic character.

Viktoria's speech is complex, requiring her to balance sincerity and assertiveness. She speaks warmly to Potapov, saying, "Please sit, you may listen while seated," yet addresses Kaloshin angrily: "Leave the room; I will decide who stays." When Kaloshin has offended Potapov, she responds with irony: "I didn't know this. Eat the pilaf you cooked yourself." A third type of speech is evident, particularly when Kaloshin's wife confronts Viktoria about the alleged infidelity. Viktoria, initially hesitant and speaking softly, explains her innocence. As events unfold, her speech demonstrates courage, responsibility, and even subtle mockery. Her words are concise, deliberate, and intelligent. Potapov is portrayed as an educated and cultured individual. Consequently, he initially speaks in a sincere and polite tone, maintaining civility even in tense circumstances. Lines such as, "Excuse me... Football, you know..." exemplify this. When Kaloshin insults him, Potapov shifts to a firm and angry tone: "You will answer me for this!" His speech reflects simplicity, realism, humanity, and sincerity, showing that he is polite yet refuses to be belittled. His words convey confidence without arrogance. Sometimes, unfamiliar, novel, or unusual words acquire interesting meanings in context. Who is Metranpaj, arriving at the provincial hotel? An ordinary worker or builder? Or an official from Moscow? Due to the hotel manager's ignorance, Metranpaj is insulted, causing Kaloshin to suffer a heart attack. The manager's discomfort, attempts to resolve the situation, and awkward speech elicit laughter from the audience.

At the end of the performance, a phone call finally reveals Metranpaj's identity: he is an ordinary typesetter, a letterpress worker for a newspaper. This information gives Kaloshin courage. He delivers a farewell monologue, emphasizing that every person deserves respect and dignity regardless of their social status. Just as Kaloshin had disrespected others during the crisis, he is reproached by his wife. He blesses his wife Maria, allowing her to marry Kamayev. In this



scenario, Maria is also chastised by Kamayev, as he insists she remains unmarried and had merely spent time frivolously. Kamayev's true character is revealed, and Maria finds herself caught between two parties. Observing these events, Kaloshin's heart begins to beat normally again, and his health is restored. His wife admits her guilt, expressing a desire for them to live happily. Metranpaj announces that his football team has won, and the celebration begins. In this performance, events unfold rapidly, often through misunderstandings. The speech characteristics of the characters reveal their personalities in moments of conflict. The reactions of the characters to unexpected situations define their traits while generating lighthearted and humorous dialogue. The interactions among the characters are crucial, multidimensional, and show how each strives to defend their position. This intensifies the conflicts and brings vitality and realism to the stage.

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