

**HUMOUR AS A PRAGMATIC AND STYLISTIC DEVICE IN MARK TWAIN'S "THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER" AND GAFUR GULOM'S "SHUM BOLA"**

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**Introduction**

Humour occupies a central place in literary discourse not only as a means of entertainment, but also as a communicative and artistic instrument through which texts construct character, regulate social relations, and expose the contradictions of their cultural worlds. In linguistic research, humour is treated as a discourse phenomenon linked to pragmatics, irony, sarcasm, and conversational cooperation; Salvatore Attardo's overview emphasizes that humor in language is studied through semantic, pragmatic, discourse, and interactional models, including the social functions of solidarity and exclusion.

This article examines humour as a **pragmatic** and **stylistic** device in two works from different literary traditions: Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, presented by the Mark Twain Project as the authoritative text of the 1876 novel, and G'afur G'ulom's *Shum Bola*, a major Uzbek prose work that has recently been discussed in scholarship through the categories of national humor, childhood, and social criticism.

The relevance of the comparison lies in the fact that both novels are organized around a mischievous boy protagonist, yet the function of humor in each text emerges differently. In Twain, humor is frequently shaped by irony, performance, exaggeration, and satirical contrast between adult respectability and childish imagination. In *Shum Bola*, humor appears more strongly tied to colloquial speech, social hardship, national-cultural expression, and the practical intelligence of everyday survival. The article argues that in both novels humor functions simultaneously as a **social strategy** and as a **principle of narrative style**, though its cultural grounding and dominant stylistic forms differ.

**Methods**

This research uses a **comparative textual analysis** supported by concepts from humor studies, pragmatics, and stylistics. The theoretical framework is drawn primarily from Attardo's "Humor in Language," which presents humor as a discourse-based and pragmatically significant phenomenon, and from broader theoretical resources such as *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Humor*, John Morreall's *Philosophy of Humor*, and *The Cambridge Handbook of Irony and Thought*, especially its discussion of irony and humor in neo-Gricean pragmatic terms.

The analysis focuses on two major dimensions. First, the **pragmatic dimension**: how humor performs social work in dialogue, interaction, and character relations, including persuasion, indirect criticism, face-management, and solidarity. Second, the **stylistic dimension**: how humor is encoded through narrative voice, irony, exaggeration, situational contrast, colloquial speech, and episode structure. On the Twain side, the analysis is anchored in the authoritative Mark Twain Project text and scholarship on the satirical arc of *Tom Sawyer*. On the G'ulom side, the analysis draws on recent studies dealing with national humor, translation, childhood, and social criticism in *Shum Bola*.

**Results**



The comparative reading shows that in both novels humor is not a secondary ornament but a structural mechanism of narration. In *Tom Sawyer*, humor often emerges through **role-play, self-dramatization, comic exaggeration, and ironic narrative framing**. Tom repeatedly turns ordinary social situations into performances, and this comic performance gives him pragmatic leverage over other characters. Humor, therefore, becomes a means of persuasion and self-positioning, not merely amusement. At the same time, Twain's use of comic contrast exposes the artificiality of adult institutions such as school, church, and moral respectability. Scholarship on Twain's satire supports this reading by treating *Tom Sawyer* as a text in which humor carries moral and critical force.

In *Shum Bola*, the findings point to a different but related logic. Humor is generated less by ironic distance alone and more by **everyday speech, national-cultural codes, situational wit, and the adaptive ingenuity of the protagonist**. Recent studies explicitly describe the novel in terms of Uzbek national humor and childhood representation, while also identifying social criticism as one of its key dimensions. This means that laughter in *Shum Bola* often coexists with material difficulty and social vulnerability; the comic mode softens harsh reality without eliminating it.

A further result concerns translation and cultural transfer. Studies on the English rendering of *Shum Bola* indicate that much of its humorous effect depends on nationally marked expression, phraseology, and culturally dense meaning. This suggests that the pragmatic force of humor in the Uzbek text is partly embedded in shared cultural knowledge and is therefore less easily transported across languages than more overt comic structures. The finding strengthens the claim that humor in *Shum Bola* is deeply contextual and culturally situated.

### Discussion

From a pragmatic perspective, both novels confirm the view that humor in discourse performs interpersonal and social functions. Attardo notes that humor can be used pro-socially to build solidarity or anti-socially to exclude and attack. In *Tom Sawyer*, humor frequently works as a tactic of playful manipulation: Tom uses comic imagination, partial deception, and performative wit to influence others and to negotiate status. In *Shum Bola*, humor is more closely attached to communal speech and social navigation; it helps the protagonist manage the pressures of his environment and interpret reality without surrendering to it. Thus, the pragmatic distinction between the two novels can be formulated as **performance-oriented humor** in Twain versus **survival-oriented humor** in G'ulom.

From a stylistic perspective, the comparison also reveals a clear divergence. Twain's comic art relies heavily on **irony, exaggeration, and satirical orchestration**. The relationship between irony and humor has been treated in recent Cambridge scholarship as conceptually close but not identical, which is important here: *Tom Sawyer* is humorous not only because events are funny, but because the narrative continuously establishes gaps between appearance and reality, seriousness and play, moral language and lived behavior.

By contrast, *Shum Bola* produces humor through **liveliness of speech, anecdotal episode-building, cultural texture, and sympathetic comic realism**. The humor is less dependent on detached narrative irony and more dependent on the rhythm of social life itself. This makes the text particularly valuable for a pragmatics-oriented literary study, because its humor is inseparable from culturally meaningful expression. At the same time, both books share a deeper structural similarity: the child protagonist becomes a comic lens through which society is judged. Laughter in both works entertains the reader while simultaneously disclosing adult hypocrisy, social contradictions, and the instability of normative authority.



### Conclusion

The study demonstrates that humor in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Shum Bola* functions on two interconnected levels: as a **pragmatic device** of social negotiation and as a **stylistic device** of literary construction. Twain's novel privileges irony, performance, and satire, while G'afur G'ulom's novel foregrounds culturally embedded wit, colloquial expressiveness, and socially grounded comic realism. Despite these differences, both works employ humor to transform the child figure into a medium of critique and human insight. Comparative study of these texts therefore shows that humor is not peripheral to narrative meaning; it is one of the main ways literature organizes experience, cultural memory, and social evaluation.

### The list of used literature:

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