



**VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL MEANS IN COMIC TEXTS:  
A THEORETICAL AND PRAGMATIC APPROACH IN FRENCH AND UZBEK**

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**Abstract.** This article examines the theoretical and pragmatic foundations of verbal and non-verbal means in comic discourse. The research is based on the premise that comic meaning emerges through the interaction of linguistic units and extralinguistic resources, including gesture, facial expression, intonation, kinesics, proxemics, and visual-graphic elements. Drawing on pragmatic, semiotic, cognitive, and multimodal approaches, the study conceptualizes comic discourse as a complex communicative system in which humor, irony, and parody are generated through implicit meanings, presuppositions, implicatures, and communicative intentions. Particular attention is paid to the role of cultural and contextual factors in shaping comic interpretation, emphasizing that verbal and non-verbal means function differently across national communicative traditions. From a comparative perspective, the article outlines the theoretical principles relevant to the analysis of French and Uzbek comic texts and demonstrates how multimodal interaction contributes to their semantic and pragmatic coherence. This study provides a conceptual and methodological framework for the comparative and multimodal analysis of comic texts.

**Keywords:** comic texts; verbal means; non-verbal means; pragmatics; multimodality; discourse analysis.

**KOMIK MATNLARDA VERBAL VA NOVERBAL VOSITALAR:  
FRANSUZ VA O‘ZBEK TILLARIDA NAZARIY VA PRAGMATIK  
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**Annotatsiya.** Mazkur maqolada zamonaviy tilshunoslik, diskurs tahlili va matn nazariyasi doirasida komik matnlarda verbal va noverbal vositalarning nazariy hamda pragmatik asoslari yoritiladi. Tadqiqot komik ma'no til birliklari bilan bir qatorda imo-ishora, mimika, intonatsiya, kinesika, proksemika va vizual-grafik elementlarning o'zaro ta'siri natijasida shakllanishi haqidagi konsepsiyaga asoslanadi. Pragmatik, semiotik, kognitiv va multimodal yondashuvlar asosida komik diskurs murakkab kommunikativ tizim sifatida talqin qilinib, unda kulgi, kinoya va parodiya presuppozitsiya, implikatura hamda kommunikativ niyat orqali yuzaga kelishi ko'rsatiladi. Tadqiqotda komik ma'noning madaniy va kontekstga bog'liqligi alohida ta'kidlanib, verbal va noverbal vositalarning turli milliy kommunikativ an'analarda o'ziga xos namoyon bo'lishi asoslanadi. Qiyosiy nazariy yondashuv asosida fransuz va o'zbek komik matnlarini tahlil qilish uchun zarur metodologik tamoyillar belgilab beriladi hamda multimodal o'zaro ta'sir matnning semantik va pragmatik yaxlitligini ta'minlovchi muhim omil sifatida e'tirof etiladi. Mazkur tadqiqot komik matnlarni qiyosiy va multimodal yondashuv asosida o'rganish uchun konseptual va metodologik asos bo'lib xizmat qiladi.

**Kalit so'zlar:** komik matnlar; verbal vositalar; noverbal vositalar; pragmatika; multimodallik; diskurs tahlili.

## Introduction

In the field of linguistics, the study of human speech and communication processes requires a multidisciplinary approach. Different linguistic frameworks, including structural, semantic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic approaches, examine distinct aspects of language organization and use. From this standpoint, verbal and non-verbal expressive means are examined in pragmatics, discourse studies, cognitive science, and semiotics. This includes theories that illuminate modes of expression with and without language, as well as conceptual frameworks that facilitate a deeper understanding of communicative processes.

Human communication constitutes a complex system, manifested not only through linguistic units but also through various signs such as gestures, facial expressions, intonation, and spatial distance. Therefore, contemporary research emphasizes the necessity of analyzing speech activity not solely within the confines of words or grammatical units, but in conjunction with the accompanying non-verbal codes. Such an integrative approach serves to clarify the semantic-pragmatic structure of texts and discourse, as well as to highlight factors contributing to their effectiveness and semantic coherence.

Thus, the interrelation of verbal and non-verbal forms enables a deeper understanding of human cognition, cultural experience, and mechanisms of social interaction. While verbal units establish the substantive basis of communication, non-verbal elements impart expressivity and emotional

nuance. Their combined analysis allows for a comprehensive examination of texts and discourse, revealing not only their linguistic but also their socio-pragmatic dimensions.

Verbal and non-verbal means constitute one of the central categories in contemporary linguistics and discourse studies. Their separate and integrative analysis is crucial for addressing core theoretical issues in discourse analysis, including coherence, expressivity and communicative efficiency.

A significant contribution to this field is the multimodal discourse theory advanced by G. Kress and T. van Leeuwen [Kress 2002: 343]. According to this theory, verbal and non-verbal means are interpreted as an interrelated system of meaning. Concurrently, pragmatic theories proposed by H. P. Grice, J.L. Austin, and J. R. Searle focus on the purpose and intentionality of communication [Haddadi 1995: 63], whereas F. de Saussure, C. S. Peirce, and R. Barthes develop its semiotic foundations [Caparrós 1992: 169]. T. A. van Dijk, in turn, analyzes discourse as a socio-cognitive process, elucidating the pragmatic dynamics of text [van Dijk 2017: 26].

French linguists P. Charodot and D. Mengno, in their “French School of Discourse,” explain the interaction between verbal and non-verbal modalities through the concept of a “communicative contract” [Maingueneau 1979: 27]. This concept refers to an implicit set of norms and expectations that regulate the relationship between the author (addresser) and the audience (addressee). In other words, verbal or visual message relies on specific cultural and social conventions. Consequently, the meaning of a text is shaped not only by linguistic means but also through the contextual framework in which it is read and interpreted. This approach is particularly valuable for analyzing comic texts, as humor often arises when this “agreement” is violated or reinterpreted in unexpected ways.

The French linguist O. Ducrot, emphasizes the notions of presupposition and implicature in his pragmatic studies. A presupposition refers to an implicit assumption required for the content of a statement, whereas an implicature denotes additional meaning inferred by the listener or reader based on context [Ducrot 1966: 30]. For instance, the sentence “He was late again” presupposes that “he has been late before”. In comic discourse, such implicit meanings and unexpected inferences are primary sources of humor. From this perspective, presuppositions and implicatures serve as key pragmatic mechanisms shaping comic effects. Scholars also note that these concepts are not universal and may vary depending on context and

culture, necessitating careful application when analyzing comic texts. For example, the semantic meaning of a joke and its reception by an audience may differ.

Semantics scholar François Rastier's "theory of semantic interpretation" focuses on analyzing the multi-layered meaning of texts [Rastier 2025: 97]. According to Rastier, every text contains lexical, contextual, cultural, and aesthetic layers of meaning, which interact to form the overall semantic structure. This approach allows the text to be perceived not merely as a collection of words but as a system of symbols, images, and social codes. Research findings indicate that the semantic richness of comic texts is revealed precisely through such multi-layered analysis, wherein words, imagery, and intonation function as complementary units of meaning.

In this way, the "communicative contract" concept of P. Charodot and D. Mengno, O. Ducrot's presupposition and implicature theory, and F. Rastier's semantic interpretation model collectively provide a robust scientific foundation for elucidating the pragmatic and semantic mechanisms of comic discourse. The advantage of this approach is that it demonstrates how humor in comic texts emerges not solely through linguistic units but via complex interactions between non-verbal signs, visual symbols, and cultural contexts.

In Uzbek linguistics, this topic has been explored in the works of A. Nurmonov, M. Saidxonov, Z. Akbarova, D. Abduazizova, T. H. Asadov, A. G'ulomov, A. Mamajonov, D. Xudoyberganova, Sh. Safarov, U. Yo'ldoshev, and N. Xursanov, who address the communicative nature of language in close relation to the pragmatic function of texts [Abduraxmonov 2025: 25]. Within this framework, scholars analyze the linguistic, semiotic, and pragmatic properties of verbal and non-verbal means through functional and discourse-oriented approaches. The primary focus is on understanding their function in comic texts and on establishing a methodological foundation for the practical analyses presented in subsequent chapters.

### **Verbal means in linguistic and pragmatic perspective**

First and foremost, the term *verbal means* in linguistics pertains to the internal, linguistic elements of language. These include phonemes, morphemes, lexical units, phraseological expressions, syntactic constructions, and semantic structures. In his *Cours de linguistique générale* ("Course in General Linguistics"), F. de Saussure, interprets language as a system of signs and theoretically substantiates the arbitrary relationship between the signifier and the signified [De Saussure 1989: 32].

Linguist N. Khursanov, in his research, explains speech sound phenomena in terms of speech rate, volume, modulation, pitch, speech weight, sound quality, intonation, and clarity. According to Khursanov, the expression of sound quality manifests in human speech through specific sounds—such as laughter, hiccups, crying, whispering, snoring—as well as through pauses and nasalization. In this respect, sound quality bears not only phonetic but also psychological and paralinguistic significance [Khursanov 2024: 66].

Linguist D. Abduazizova, in her studies, emphasizes that speech tempo is an essential feature of individual speaking style. She notes that prosodic means (which convey the melodic aspects of speech, including intonation, stress, tempo, and pauses) and paraproprosodic means (which reflect emotional states, mood, and attitudes through tone, pitch, and timbre) play an active role in the natural course of communication. They also determine the emotional and pragmatic aspects of interpersonal interaction. According to the researcher, prosodic means function as structured elements within the phonological system, whereas paraproprosodic features are more variable and context-dependent. These insights reveal that the prosodic system is crucial not only for conveying semantic content but also for expressing the emotional and psychological layers of speech. D. Abduazizova emphasizes that variability in paraproprosodic means directly affects the listener's perception, understanding of the speaker's emotional state, and the overall communicative efficacy. Accordingly, the verbal aspect of speech is intrinsically linked to tone, with fluctuations in pitch, volume, and tempo often serving paralinguistic functions. From this perspective, paraproprosodic sounds are interpreted as specialized means that, while lacking linguistic structure, convey emotional and pragmatic meaning in communication [Абдуазизова 1997: 46].

The linguistic and pragmatic nature of verbal means constitutes a central research focus within the Russian linguistic school. Notably, L. V. Sherba, in his work *Языковая система и речевая деятельность* (“Language System and Speech Activity”), distinguishes between the language system (*языковая система*) and speech activity (*речевая деятельность*). Sherba argues that linguistic units realize their semantic potential only within communicative contexts. Hence, verbal means are not static elements of language but dynamic units whose meaning emerges in the course of speech and depends on context [Щерба 1974: 25].

Russian linguist R. Jakobson further identifies the primary communicative functions of language. According to Jakobson, each speech act simultaneously fulfills multiple functions: 1) conveying information (referential); 2) expressing the speaker's emotions (emotive); 3) influencing the listener (conative); 4) explaining language itself

(metalinguistic); 5) maintaining or strengthening communication (phatic); and 6) creating artistic expression (poetic) [Якобсон 1975: 193]. Jakobson's classification elucidates the multi-layered nature of verbal communication and allows texts to be understood not merely as vehicles for transmitting information but as systems capable of emotional and aesthetic impact.

### **Functional and pragmatic aspects of verbal means**

Furthermore, in his works *О языке художественной прозы* ("On the Language of Artistic Prose") and *О теории литературных стилей* ("On the Theory of Literary Styles"), V.V. Vinogradov analyzes the functional-stylistic potential of verbal means, demonstrating that each linguistic unit possesses an expressive function suited to the communicative situation. According to Vinogradov, the stylistic system of language is a social phenomenon determined by the speaker's purpose, the characteristics of the addressee, and the requirements of the genre. Thus, verbal means are regarded not only as grammatical or lexical units but also as expressive forms that serve a specific communicative purpose [Виноградов 1980: 23].

M. M. Bakhtin approaches this issue from a socio-pragmatic perspective. In his work *Проблема речевых жанров* ("The Problem of Speech Genres"), he interprets each speech unit as a "speech genre" formed within a social context. According to Bakhtin, speech genres have typical lexical, grammatical, and intonational forms, which are integrally connected to cultural and communicative experience. Consequently, the selection of verbal means is determined by the speaker's social role, the topic of conversation, and communicative intent. Bakhtin's approach treats verbal means as a part of a broader discursive system, functioning as tools for expressing the speaker's personal and social position [Бахтин 1996: 68].

Additionally, L. S. Vygotsky interprets verbal means as the external manifestation of human thought and consciousness. In his seminal work *Мышление и речь* ("Thought and Language"), he establishes a dialectical relationship between word and thought, wherein thought acquires social form through language, and the word becomes a tool of human cognition. Accordingly, verbal means represent the manifestation of cognitive activity in social communication, through which humans create, understand, and exchange meaning [Выготский 2014: 16].

B. Yu. Norman, a leading figure in contemporary Russian pragmatics, in his work *Лингвистическая прагматика* ("Linguistic Pragmatics"), analyzes the illocutionary (expressing the speaker's intention) and perlocutionary (indicating the effect on the listener) potential of verbal means. He argues that the speaker selects linguistic units not only to

convey information but also to achieve communicative influence. Norman emphasizes the contextual variability of verbal units and their role in expressing social and emotional intent. Thus, verbal means are considered an active component of communicative strategy [АХМАНОВА 2018: 9].

Synthesizing these perspectives, it becomes evident that Russian linguists have investigated verbal means along three primary dimensions: 1) L.V. Sherba and V.V. Vinogradov – from the linguistic system and stylistic-functional perspective; 2) M.M. Bakhtin – from the socio-pragmatic and genre-contextual standpoint; and 3) L. S. Vygotsky and B. Yu. Norman – from cognitive and pragmatic-functional approaches. The integration of these approaches provides a holistic understanding of the semantic, stylistic, and pragmatic nature of verbal means.

Furthermore, British linguist M. A. K. Halliday, in *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, interprets language as a system directly linked to social activity. According to Halliday, linguistic units perform three primary functions in communication: 1) expressing content (ideational), 2) regulating interpersonal relations among interlocutors (interpersonal), and 3) ensuring textual cohesion and integrity (textual) [Skubic 2000: 351].

Similarly, P. Charaudeau studies verbal structures within the framework of the “scène d’énonciation” (“speech scene”), interpreting them in relation to social role, addressee, and contextual factors. In this way, verbal means are revealed not merely as a system of linguistic signs but as structural units that mediate the integral relationship between communicative purpose, addressee, and social context. This perspective allows them to be understood not only as linguistic units but also as instruments of communication [Charaudeau 2002: 301].

In the analysis of comic discourse, these theoretical approaches make it possible to identify how humor emerges through pragmatic incongruity, shifts in communicative expectations, and contextual reinterpretation.

Furthermore, O. Ducrot and J.-M. Adam, representatives of the French school of pragmatics, that conflicts between word meanings and contextual oppositions play a significant role in producing humor [Omer-Attali 2025: 154]. In the context of Uzbek linguistics, scholars such as A. G‘ulomov, M. Yo‘ldoshev, and I. Rustamov have investigated the linguistic and poetic devices in literary and satirical texts, relating them to national cultural thought [Rustamov 2021: 5321]. Consequently, comic lexis is always interpreted in accordance with culture, stereotypes, and the discursive context in which it appears.

When discussing the function of verbal means within a text, grammatical resources also play a critical role. Specifically, morphological forms (for example, augmentative suffixes or word modifications) and syntactic structures (such as word order variation, repetition, or juxtaposition of clauses) contribute vitality and expressiveness to comic texts. M. A. K. Halliday links such grammatical choices to social situations [Halliday 2011: 27], while O.L. Kamenskaya emphasizes that variations in sentence structure play an important role in eliciting humor [КОЛЬЦОВА 2007: 58]. In Uzbek linguistics, scholars including A. Mamajonov, M. Abdupattoyev (*Matn sintaksisi*), and T. Asadov (*Matn tilshunosligi*) have analyzed syntactic devices in literary texts from the perspectives of communicative function and coherence [Asadov 2023: 94].

From a practical standpoint, verbal means in a text serve to establish order, clarity, and the speaker's intention. H. P. Grice has explained how irony and humor arise when ordinary conversational rules are violated [Grice 1978: 113]. T. A. van Dijk, in turn, interprets word choice and textual organization in relation to human social and cognitive activity [van Dijk 2006: 159].

Sh. Safarov notes that pragmatics studies the subjective aspects of speech activity, namely the speaker's goals, intentions, and strategies for influencing the listener. According to him, each verbal unit functions not only as a grammatical entity within the language system but also as a pragmatic tool for realizing communicative intent [Safarov 2008: 10].

Additionally, D. Xudoyberganova, in her research, connects the pragmatic dimension of the text to human cognition and cultural models [Худойбергано́ва 2015: 45]. Therefore, the pragmatic essence of the verbal layer requires understanding it not merely as a linguistic unit, but as an expression of social intent and cultural context.

### **Non-verbal means as a pragmatic and cultural component of comic texts**

Non-verbal communication refers to the transmission of information through extralinguistic means such as gestures, facial expressions, intonation, voice quality, and spatial behavior. It constitutes an integral part of human communication, playing a crucial role in clarifying emotional states, attitudes, social status, and the context of interaction. Non-verbal means often complement, reinforce, or even contradict verbal information, thus being considered an integral component of the communication system.

The function, linguistic, and national-cultural characteristics of non-verbal means have been extensively studied within Russian linguistics, with

significant contributions from scholars such as G. V. Kolshansky, I. N. Gorelov, O.V. Mudraya, and G. E. Kreydlin. Specifically, G. V. Kolshansky, in his work *Paralinguistics*, emphasizes that non-verbal means are an inseparable part of the communication process alongside linguistic units [Колшанский 2005: 23]. According to him, paralinguistic, i.e., non-verbal, means do not directly belong to the language system, yet they ensure the full comprehension of speech content and supplement meanings, emotions, and attitudes that may not be adequately expressed through linguistic tools. G. V. Kolshansky interprets non-verbal means as “elements of communication that compensate for aspects of speech that remain outside attention.” In his view, non-verbal tools clarify the inherent polysemy of language, enabling the delivery of information in a precise and understandable manner. As he notes, “paralinguistics studies not what is said, but how it is said.” Furthermore, Kolshansky identifies components such as gestures, facial expressions, voice intonation, body posture, and other means as a natural system of signs that convey human emotional states and communicative attitudes. He considers their primary function to be “supplementing meanings not expressed through linguistic units and ensuring communicative clarity.”

American philosopher and scholar Ch. S. Peirce categorized such signs into icons, indices, and symbols [Peirce 1985: 29], while the French scholar R. Barthes analyzed them as cultural codes [Barthes 1985: 192]. Yu. Lotman, within the framework of the *semiosphere* concept, regards non-verbal signs as part of the culture’s information system. According to the semiosphere concept, every culture generates and transmits meaning through signs such as language, symbols, gestures, clothing, art, and customs. This collection of signs constitutes the semiosphere, or “the world of signs.” In Lotman’s view, non-verbal signs – i.e., means of expression without words—also function as part of the culture’s information system, conveying meaning and serving as an essential cultural component [Lotman 1989: 40].

Additionally, P. Watzlawick proposed the principle that “non-verbal messages are stronger than verbal ones” in communication, interpreting non-verbal signs as a fundamental layer of the pragmatic context [Watzlawick 1971: 16]. According to A. Mehrabian, a large portion of meaning in communication is perceived not through words but through non-verbal signals. His research indicates that approximately 55% of communicative content is conveyed through body language, 38% through tone of voice, and only 7% through words [Mehrabian 2017: 193]. This demonstrates the critical importance of analyzing non-verbal cues to fully

understand communicative content. Mehrabian emphasizes that these findings are specific to emotional contexts and should not be generalized.

In Uzbek linguistics, the role of non-verbal and paralinguistic means in communication has been examined by several researchers. N. A. Nurmonov, in his work *Paralinguistic Means of the Uzbek Language*, analyzes non-verbal signs in human speech – gestures, facial expressions, body movements, and vocal intonation – and their semantic and pragmatic functions in communication. He argues that paralinguistic means serve as communicative elements that complement and enhance verbal meaning, playing a crucial role in conveying the emotional, expressive, and social layers of speech [HypMOHOB 1980: 177]. Moreover, he interprets non-verbal signs as phenomena closely tied to cultural context, noting that each nation's system of gestures, body language, and vocal intonation reflects its national mentality, values, and communicative culture. Therefore, he emphasizes the necessity of studying paralinguistic means not merely as linguistic phenomena but also as sociocultural indicators.

The linguist M. Saidxonov underscores that the use of non-verbal means in communicative interaction constitutes a unique factor in language development. He notes: “In the process of communicative interaction, humans involuntarily employ non-verbal means, since the dynamics of speech, dialogic situations, and the psychological state of interlocutors require the use of gestures, voice modulation, and bodily movements to convey ideas” [Saidxonov 1993: 56].

N. Xursanov, in his research, demonstrates that non-verbal means can express emotions that are otherwise inexpressible through words. He writes: “Typically, non-verbal messages occur involuntarily and spontaneously. People may control their speech to conceal desires and intentions, but they cannot regulate their non-verbal actions.” Thus, non-verbal means are regarded as a natural system of signs expressing an individual's genuine emotional state [Xursanov 2024: 78].

Furthermore, D. Abduazizova, in her dissertation *Typology of Paralinguistic Means in Various Linguo-Cultures*, interprets paralinguistic tools—such as voice tone, pauses, speech tempo, intonation, and voice strength—as means of communication. She demonstrates that their expressive forms and semantic load vary across different cultures. She also emphasizes that non-verbal means are widely employed across all genres of literary texts, including prose, poetry, and drama.

Overall, in Uzbek linguistics, non-verbal and paralinguistic means are interpreted as significant communicative units that operate alongside

words, supplement meaning, and convey cultural content [Абдуазизова 2022: 96].

In comic texts, gestures and kinesthetic movements serve as means to enhance humor, ironic sarcasm, or parodic situations. For instance, in French comedic culture (as exemplified in the works of Jean-Baptiste Molière and Louis de Funès), exaggerated or expressive kinesthetic actions amplify the verbal irony. In Uzbek comic traditions, gesticulation is often employed to convey national character traits and to create expressions of sarcasm.

### Conclusion

Theoretical analyses demonstrate that verbal and non-verbal means play a crucial role in ensuring the semantic, pragmatic, and cognitive integrity of a text. Their interrelation allows communication to extend beyond purely linguistic boundaries and function effectively within social, cultural, and emotional contexts. While the verbal layer expresses thought through the linguistic system, the non-verbal layer enriches it via visual, intonational, and kinesthetic cues, thereby enhancing the expressive-pragmatic impact of the text.

Representatives of the French schools of pragmatics and semiotics, such as P. Charaux, O. Ducrot, F. Rastier, and D. Ménard, interpret the interaction of verbal and non-verbal units as a semantic mechanism of social communication. Scholars in Uzbek linguistics, including T. Asadov, D. Abduazizova, D. Khudoyberganova, Sh. Safarov, and A. Mamajonov, explain this process in relation to national thought, cultural norms, and linguistic traditions. Moreover, researchers emphasize that the harmony between verbal and non-verbal layers is not constant, as context, cultural environment, or individual reception can significantly influence the text's effectiveness.

An integrative analysis of verbal and non-verbal modalities allows the text to be interpreted as a multilayered communicative system. The multimodal discourse theory by G. Kress and T. van Leeuwen examines linguistic, visual, and kinesthetic layers as a unified semantic system, thereby elucidating the mechanisms through which humor, irony, and parody emerge in comic texts.

Thus, the linguistic and pragmatic nature of verbal and non-verbal means constitutes a fundamental theoretical basis not only for text studies but also for broader communicative, semiotic, and discourse research. Their potential incongruence and context-dependence further highlight the need for context-sensitive multimodal analysis. This approach serves as a

methodological groundwork for integrative analysis and cross-linguistic comparison throughout the study.

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