LINGUISTIC AND STYLISTIC MEANS OF COMIC EFFECT CREATION IN PROSE TEXT-AN EDUCATIONAL STUDY

MEIOS LINGUÍSTICOS E ESTILÍSTICOS DE CRIAÇÃO DE EFEITOS CÔMICOS EM TEXTO EM PROSA-UM ESTUDO EDUCACIONAL

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Abstract. The article is dedicated to the study of linguistic and stylistic means of comic effect creation in English-language and French-language prose texts. *The relevance of the study* is stipulated by the constant interest of scientists in the phenomena of humour and its functioning in literary works. *The research aims at* the detection of linguistic and stylistic means for comic effect achievement in English-language and French-language prose texts. *Study methods:* descriptive method, comparative analysis, correlation analysis, quantitative analysis. *Received results.* Analysis of English-language and French-language prose texts found linguistic and stylistic means of comic effect on phonetic, lexical and pragmatic levels. Hyperbole, occasionalisms, allusion, similes, as well as devices such as irony, sarcasm, and paradox are widely used in two languages. The comic effect is the most evident at the lexical level. *Conclusions drawn.* Linguistic and stylistic means of comic effect creation have a universal nature. Nevertheless, their functioning varies in different languages and cultures, which affects the specifics of humour in English-language and French-language texts. *The scientific novelty of the study.* The novelty of the work lies in the attempt to systematise linguistic and stylistic means by which comic effect is created in English-language and French-language prose texts. Further study perspectives include a comparison of comic devices in different literary genres. The study of the comic at the intercultural level will enable a better understanding of cultural context and the effectiveness of means of humour in different cultures.

Keywords: Linguistic and stylistic means. Comic effect. Phonetic level. Lexical level. Pragmatic level.

Resumo. O artigo é dedicado ao estudo de meios linguísticos e estilísticos de criação de efeito cômico em textos em prosa em inglês e francês. A relevância do estudo é estipulada pelo interesse constante de cientistas nos fenômenos do humor e seu funcionamento em obras literárias. A pesquisa visa à detecção de meios linguísticos e estilísticos para obtenção de efeito cômico em textos em prosa em inglês e francês. Métodos de estudo: método descritivo, análise comparativa, análise de correlação, análise quantitativa. Resultados recebidos. A análise de textos em prosa em inglês e francês encontrou meios linguísticos e estilísticos de efeito cômico em níveis fonético, lexical e pragmático. Hipérbole, ocasionalismos, alusão, símiles, bem como recursos como ironia, sarcasmo e paradoxo são amplamente usados em duas línguas. O efeito cômico é mais evidente no nível lexical. Conclusões tiradas. Os meios linguísticos e estilísticos de criação de efeito cômico têm uma natureza universal. No entanto, seu funcionamento varia em diferentes línguas e culturas, o que afeta as especificidades do humor em textos

em inglês e francês. A novidade científica do estudo. A novidade do trabalho está na tentativa de sistematizar meios linguísticos e estilísticos pelos quais o efeito cômico é criado em textos em prosa em inglês e francês. Outras perspectivas de estudo incluem uma comparação de dispositivos cômicos em diferentes gêneros literários. O estudo do cômico no nível intercultural permitirá uma melhor compreensão do contexto cultural e da eficácia dos meios de humor em diferentes culturas.

Palavras-chave: Meios linguísticos e estilísticos. Efeito cômico. Nível fonético. Nível lexical. Nível pragmático.

1. INTRODUCTION

The issue of the definition of the comical from the position of linguostylistics is tightly related to the forms of comic manifestation and means of comic effect creation in the language. The study of language tools, giving the text comic effect, is important to solve issues related to the formation of communicative efficiency and pragmatism of the speech.

The study of the peculiarities of comic effect creation is an important research area, which enables a deeper understanding of various cultural contexts and the influence of language peculiarities on humour perception. The comical is a complex phenomenon that is formed under the influence of sociocultural factors and linguistic means, which vary in different languages and cultures.

In particular, linguistic and stylistic techniques, used in English-language and French-language prose, may have different influences on the comic effect in relevant texts. Identification of the specifics of the use of the comical in different languages may be the basis for further studies in this field, opening new possibilities to study the interaction between language, culture, and humour.

The main purpose of our study is to explore linguistic and stylistic means of comic effect creation in the text on the example of English-language and French-language texts. Tasks:

- to study theoretical aspects of linguistic and stylistic means of comic effect realisation.
- to determine specifics of linguistic and stylistic means of comic effect creation in the work “An utterly impartial history of Britain: (or 2000 years of upper class idiots in charge” of the British author John O’Farrell and the work “L’Appareil-photo” by the French writer Jean-Philippe Toussaint.
- to present comparative characteristics of the use of linguistic and stylistic means with the purpose of comic effect realisation in two works.

The study of the comic in linguistics is important not only for linguists, but also philosophers, culture scientists, and sociologists, as humour reflects the values, attitudes, and world-view of the society. Understanding the mechanics of comic effect creation enables a deeper perception of various strategies authors use to interact with readers.

While each culture has its unique traditions and peculiarities of humour perception, comparative analysis of English-language and French-language texts in the example of works of O’Farrell and Toussaint helps to establish the formation of comic effects within the context of specific cultural and language traditions by specific linguistic and stylistic means.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of comic effect in prose texts received a special meaning in modern literature studies, as humour significantly affects text perception by a reader. Analysis of linguistic and stylistic means, used for comic effect creation, deserves special attention as these means can significantly differ depending on language and cultural contexts.

In the article "Poétique comparée de l’humour" Moura (2022) studies humour aesthetics, emphasising the importance of the comparative approach to its analysis. He focuses on the

national peculiarities of humour and the difficulties of its translation, indicating that comic texts are among the most difficult for intercultural rendering due to hidden meanings and cultural contexts. Moura summarises that humour studies require an interdisciplinary approach, which would consider sociological and anthropological aspects.

Trolé (2021) in his work "How to (mis)use language: humour, creativity and lexical creation in Rikki Ducornet's The Stain, The Fountains of Neptune and Phosphor in Dreamland" studies the relationship between lexical creativity and humour in the works of Rikki Ducornet. He views lexical innovations and linguistic manipulations as the main means of comic effect creation, which also have an important metatextual component.

Tianyu (2021) analyses the history of studying humour and satire in literature, tracing the evolution of humour conceptualization from ancient times to modernity. The author studies changes in the role of humour in literature and journalism, emphasising the gradual fading of classical satire into the background, giving way to entertainment forms.

The study of Salayeva at al. (2023) focuse on the linguistic and stylistic peculiarities of English anecdotes. The authors have found that phrasal verbs, neologisms, polysemy, and homonyms are important components of humorous texts, and their use significantly differs in English-language and French-language discourse.

Piirainen (2020), Miller (2020) and Kozlova (2019) studies idioms and idiomatic models within the context of interlingual phraseology, emphasising their systematisation and role in the development of related linguistic disciplines. The pragmatic functions of phraseological units of modern English, the history, types and trends of their development are the subject of research by Batirkhanova (2021).

Kozlova and Polyezhayev (2021, p. 91) in their work found the way language means contribute to the formation of comic, pragmatic, and aesthetic effects in phraseologisms. In the study of English and French anecdotes, Litvinenko et al. (2020) focus on the cultural and semantic peculiarities of these texts. They found that homonyms are more frequently found in the English language, and polysemy is more widely used in French anecdotes, which reflects national values and humour peculiarities.

Slipetska et al. (2023) study stylistic devices of aggression expression in English-language journalism texts. Devices such as oxymoron, metaphor, synecdoche and irony may be used for comic effect creation, as humour and aggression sometimes intersect at the linguistic and stylistic level. Physical, verbal and sexual aggression against women is the source of the study by Arya and George (2022). Also, this topic was studied by Bushman (2019). These articles can be useful for our study, as they offer an analysis of different linguistic and stylistic means that can be used to create a comic effect.

Obasi and Melafa (2022) study comic devices in sketches by Broda Shaggi and Mr. Macaroni, focusing on rhetoric and satire. Their analysis demonstrates the creation of socially significant humour with the use of repetition, malapropisms and sarcasm, underlining the necessity of further studies of lexical and stylistic techniques of the comic.

Shohobutdinova et al. (2023) study aesthetic and linguistic characteristics of the comic of foreign language comedies, emphasising the cultural aspect of humour as a means of social criticism and protection from stress. This underlines the importance of further studies of the comic in different cultural contexts. Haines (2022) presents a new approach to the analysis of the comic in modern literature, underlining the multidimensionality of humour and the necessity of a multidisciplinary approach.

The article by Saifudin et al. (2024) presents linguistic approaches to humour analysis in comics. The authors offer the method of comics transcription for the analysis of verbal and non-verbal means of comic effect creation, underlining that humour in comics emerges from subverting the expectations of readers through punchline jokes.

As humour is a culturally and linguistically specific phenomenon, many researchers pay attention to the difficulties and strategies of its rendering in other languages. In such a way, we outlined works by Borisova (2020), Ishchenko (2020), Litvinenko et al. (2020), Salayeva et al. (2023), Shohobutdinova et al. (2023), Lisun and Sovietna (2020).

The peculiarities of irony have also been studied: Kucheryavykh (2018), Mavlonova (2022), Pilyarchuk (2023), Yusliarti and Miranti (2020) and others. These studies create a substantiated framework for further analysis of comic effect in literature, considering lingual and stylistic and cultural aspects of humour formation in different languages and genres. Comparative analysis of linguistic and stylistic means, used in English and French languages, remains limited. Nowadays, there are only a few works, directly addressing this theme, mostly regarding comparative analysis of anecdotes in English and French languages. This underlines the necessity of deeper research, which would involve not only anecdotes but also other prose literature genres.

3. METHODS AND MATERIALS

Study procedure

This study was conducted in several stages. In the initial stage, a systematic review of literature on linguistic and stylistic means and comic effects in prose works was conducted. In the second stage, a comparison of theoretical approaches to the study of humour and means of comic effect creation in English-language and French-language texts was conducted. The sample consisted of 100 examples of linguistic and stylistic means used for comic effect creation.

In the following stage, selection and classification of examples taken from the works “An utterly impartial history of Britain: (or 2000 years of upper class idiots in charge” by John O’Farrell and “L’Appareil-photo” byJean-Philippe Toussaint was conducted. Each example was subject to stylistic analysis to determination of its role in comic effect creation.

The final stage involved a comparison of the received data in English-language and French-language texts, which enabled the detection of similarities and differences in the use of linguistic and stylistic means. We used comparative analysis methods for data analysis. The received results enabled drawing conclusions on peculiarities of stylistic means of humour creation in English and French prose.

Study methods

We used complex study methodology for the study of linguistic and stylistic means of comic effect creation in English-language and French-language texts, in particular, descriptive, comparative and correlation methods, as well as a partial method of quantitative analysis were used.

Descriptive method

This method was used for a detailed description of linguistic and stylistic means, contributing to the comic effect creation in the English-language and French-language prose texts. With its use, examples of stylistic devices such as irony, wordplay, and sarcasm, which are frequently found in English-language and French-language prose works, were systematised.

Comparative analysis

To illustrate differences in the use of linguistic and stylistic means for humour works of English-writing and French-writing authors were selected. The comparative analysis allowed us to determine the specifics of comic strategies in each language culture.

Correlation analysis

Correlation analysis was conducted to establish the relationship between the frequency of the use of certain linguistic and stylistic means and their effectiveness in comic effect creation. This enabled the creation of peculiarities of humorous perception of works in two different languages.

Quantitative analysis method

Determination of the frequency of the use of certain stylistic devices enabled receiving a more accurate picture of the means, which are the most widely used for comic effect achievement in English-language and French-language prose texts.

Materials of the study

The work "An utterly impartial history of Britain: (or 2000 years of upper class idiots in charge" by the British author John O'Farrell and the work "L'Appareil-photo" by the French writer Jean-Philippe Toussaint were analysed. The sample consisted of 100 examples of the use of linguistic and stylistic means for comic effect creation in English-language works and 100 examples in French-language works.

Works of John O'Farrell and Jean-Philippe Toussaint were selected for the sample as these two authors are famous for the use of humour and irony in their works, which enables analysis of linguistic and stylistic means of comic effect at different linguistic levels. O'Farrell combines humorous use with a historical narrative, while Toussaint studies the absurdity of everyday situations, creating comic effects using paradox and irony. This enables comparison of different approaches to the comic creation in English-language and French-language prose.

The number of 200 examples (100 for each language) was sufficient to establish patterns in the use of linguistic and stylistic means. The sample ensured representativeness, which enabled the comparison of approaches to humour in English-language and French-language texts. Such a number of examples allowed us to trace the main means of comic effect creation and study their frequency and influence on humour perception in different languages and cultural contexts.

The procedure of sample formation lay in the selection of excerpts having expressed linguistic and stylistic means, used for the comic effect creation. The sample includes examples, where the following means were used: irony, puns, hyperboles, alliterations, and other stylistic devices, which are characteristic of humorous works. Herewith, the important criterion was a clear perception of the comic effect by the readers of both language cultures.

4. RESULTS

Within the study, we analysed linguistic and stylistic means of comic effect presenting on phonetic, lexical and pragmatic levels. The work "An utterly impartial history of Britain: (or 2000 years of upper class idiots in charge" of the British author John O'Farrell (O'FARRELL, 2008), and the work "L'Appareil-photo" by the French writer Toussaint (1989) were used as the basis.

Having analysed prose texts in English and French languages, we concluded that phonetic level is the least used in comic effect creation. Nevertheless, the authors use all methods and means for the expression of the comic approximately evenly for humorous effect creation on this language level (see Figure 1).

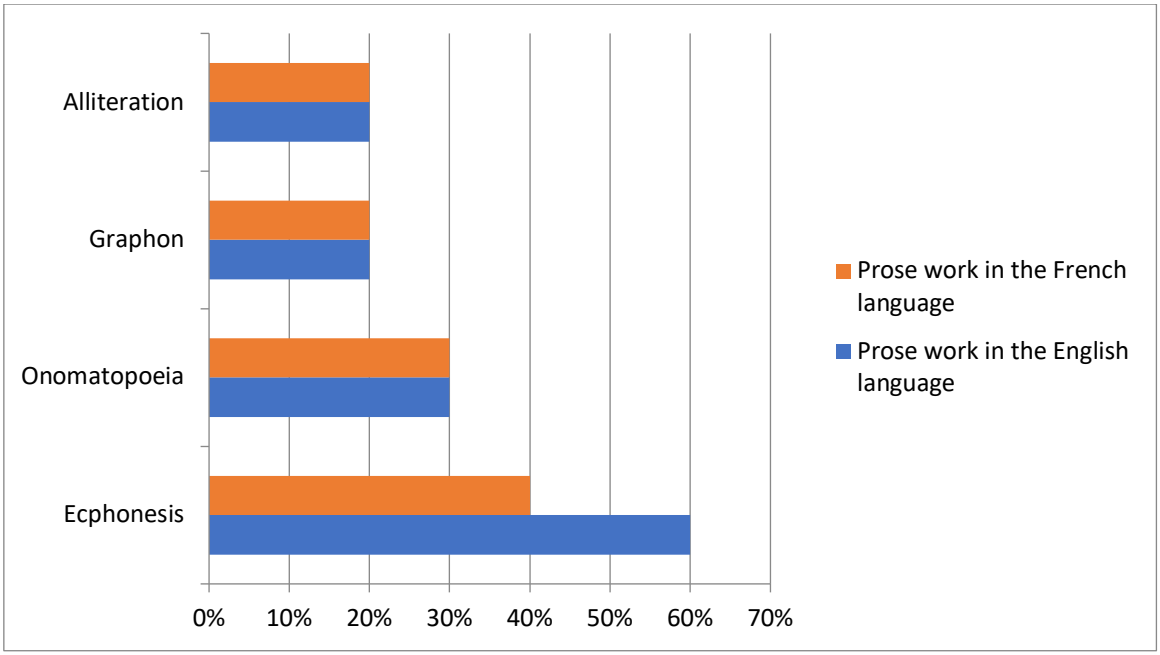

Figure 1. Frequency of the use of linguistic and stylistic means for the creation of the comic effect in the works in English and French languages on the phonetic level (construed by the author)

The chart demonstrates that authors frequently use alliteration, onomatopoeia, and graphon to achieve humorous effect creation on the phonetic level, and the most widely used is ecphonesis. For example, in the phrase "*Pah! Julius who*?" (O'FARRELL, 2008, p. 29) ecphonesis "Pah!" expresses contempt, creating an ironic tone. Ecphonesis "But!" (*But! T'as vu ça, dis-je* (TOUSSAINT, 1989, p. 40) in the work by Jean-Philippe Toussaint ("L'Appareil-photo") also intensifies the comic effect, adding emotional shade and underlining the contrast between the seriousness of events and the ease of expression.

According to Tanjung et al. (2020), the use of emotionally charged interjections in literary works has a dual function: first, it emphasizes the intensity of the characters' reactions, and second, it contributes to the creation of a comic effect by violating the reader's expectations. This change in tone, combined with emotional expression, allows you to stylistically emphasize the contrasts between the character's internal state and the external situation, which adds humor to the text.

Special attention should be given to the lexical level, as many linguists consider that it is the most productive (see Figure 2).

The presented chart shows that such means as occasionalism, allusion, simile, and hyperbole are the most frequently used. French humour was confirmed to be more frequently based on the wordplay than that in English.

For example, the wordplay modifying famous Caesar's expression "*Veni, vidi, vici*" is used in the expression "*He came, he saw, he went home again*" (O'FARRELL, 2008, p. 29), creating a comic effect. The allusion to Cherie Blair in the phrase "*Mary was no more joint ruler of England than Cherie Blair was*" (O'FARRELL, 2008, p. 257) underlines the absence of the real influence of Mary, alluding to the political context.

This comparison creates a comic effect, while at the same time hinting at political realities where formal power does not necessarily mean real political power. Adler-Nissen and his colleagues (ADLER-NISSEN et al., 2020) note that images, like phrases in literature, perform not just an informative function but become tools for creating emotional and political subjectivities that actively influence international relations.

Despite the prevalence of lexical means in the expression of the comical, it is necessary to note syntactic constructions found during the study (see Figure 3).

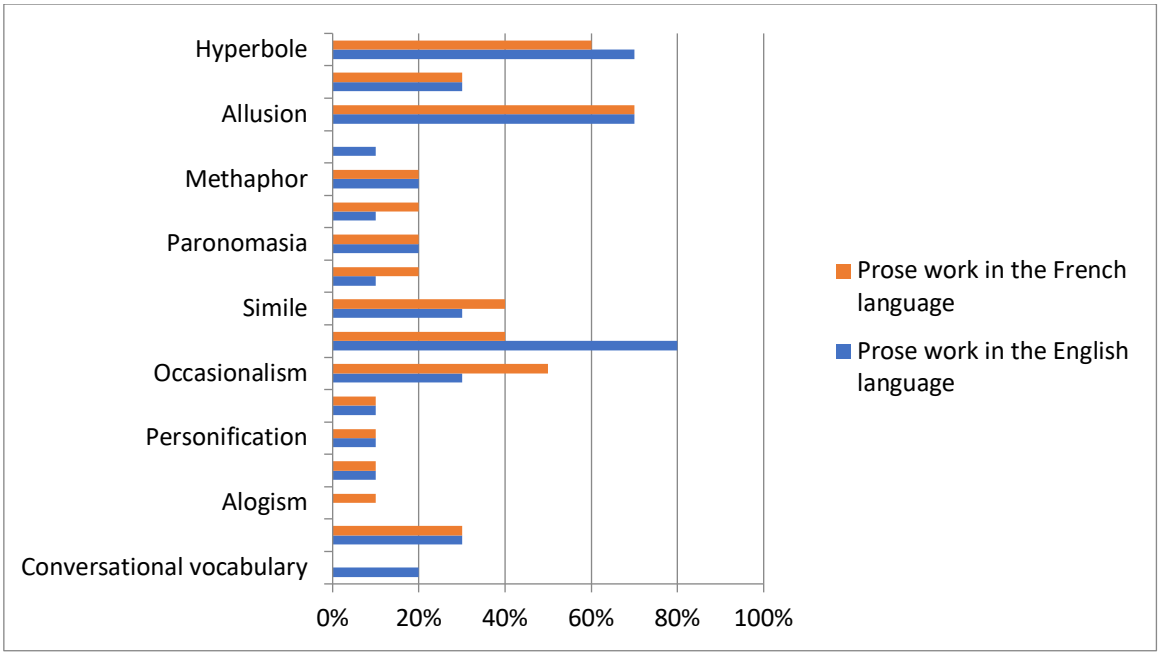

Figure 2. Frequency of the use of linguistic and stylistic means for the creation of the comical in the works in English and French languages on the lexical level (construed by the author).

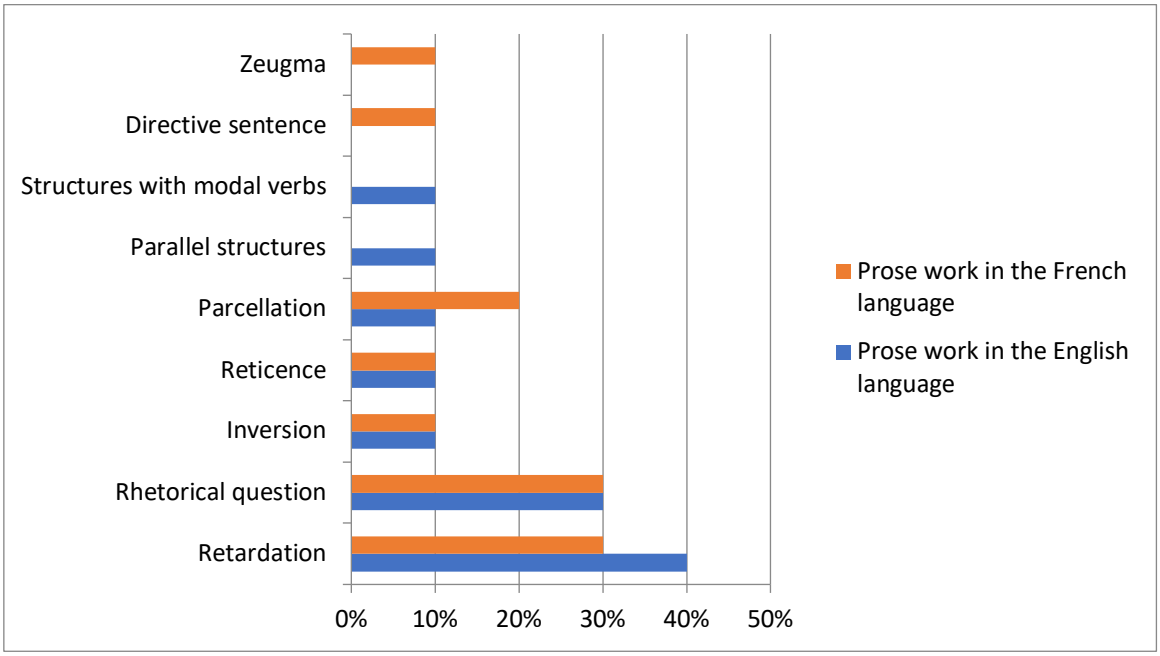

Figure 3. Frequency of the use of linguistic and stylistic means for the creation of the comical in the works in English and French languages on the syntactic level (construed by the author)

Data from the above-presented chart indicate absolute similarity in the use of the following means: rhetorical question, inversion, and reticence. In other events, we observed the absence of some stylistic devices in either English or French text.

For example, in the sentence: "*The Blitz: 'Britain can take it!' (You mean there's a choice?)*" (O'FARRELL, 2008, p. 257) the rhetorical question creates a comic effect because of controversy between the seriousness of the first part of the statement and the ironic comment.

The phrase "*Britain can take it*!" is a well-known slogan of World War II, which underlined the resilience of the British during the bombardment. Still, the rhetorical question adds the element of irony, hinting that people had no other way except to accept that challenge. The

irony is that the slogan transfers the optimistic message, while the question doubts it, demonstrating rather forced patience than voluntary choice.

Within the pragmatic level, authors use different means and devices to create comic effect. We made a chart of the use of linguistic and stylistic means to clearly define means and devices mostly used by the authors of the works (see Figure 4).

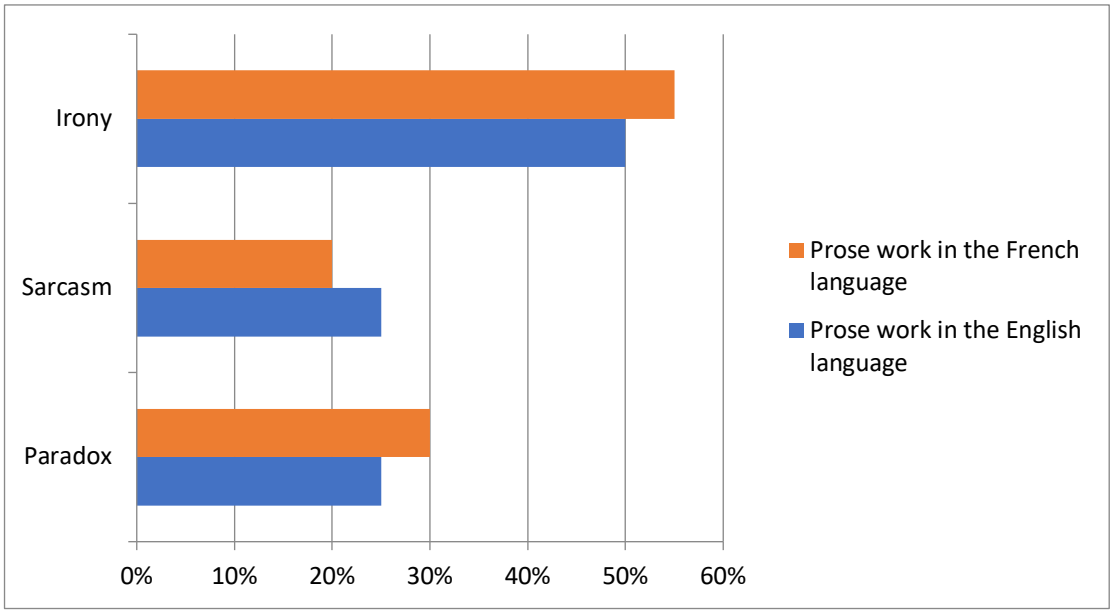

Figure 4. Frequency of use of linguistic and stylistic means for the creation of the comical in the works in English and French languages on the pragmatic level (construed by the author)

The chart shows that the authors of both prose works in English and French approximately evenly use such means as paradox, sarcasm, and irony. For example, in the sentence "*Some charming souls took the opportunity of an air raid to go and burgle their neighbours; others fought over somewhere to shelter*" *(O'FARRELL, 2008, p.* 519) O'Farrell uses irony to underline the absurdity of people's behaviour in emergencies. While in the phrase "*je songeai que cela se détachait plus facilement les mains derrière le dos*" (TOUSSAINT, 1989, p. 11) the situation creates paradox: the physical distance of the character emphasises irony. As Gulnora (2023) notes, the peculiarity of emotional-evaluative vocabulary is the "imposition" of an emotional coloring on the lexical meaning of a word.

As a result of comparative analysis, the lexical level was found to be the most productive environment for the expression of comic effect in modern prose works. This level included 44 events of the use of linguistic and stylistic means in English (44%) and 45 - in the work in French language (45%). Pragmatic level holds the second place - 29 in the English work (29%) and 33 in French text (33%). 15 examples in the English language (15%) and 13 in the French language (13%) were found on the syntactic level.

The phonetic level was the least employed. It accounts for only 12 events of use in the English language (12%) and 9 events of use in the French language (Table 1).

Table 1. The number of events of the use of linguistic and stylistic means in prose works in English and French languages (author's own development)

Language levels	Text in the English language	Text in the French language
Phonetic level	12	9
Lexical level	44	45
Pragmatic level	29	33
Syntactic	15	13
Total	100	100

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The correlation of language, linguistic and stylistic means, used on different levels in works in English and French languages is demonstrated in Figure 5.

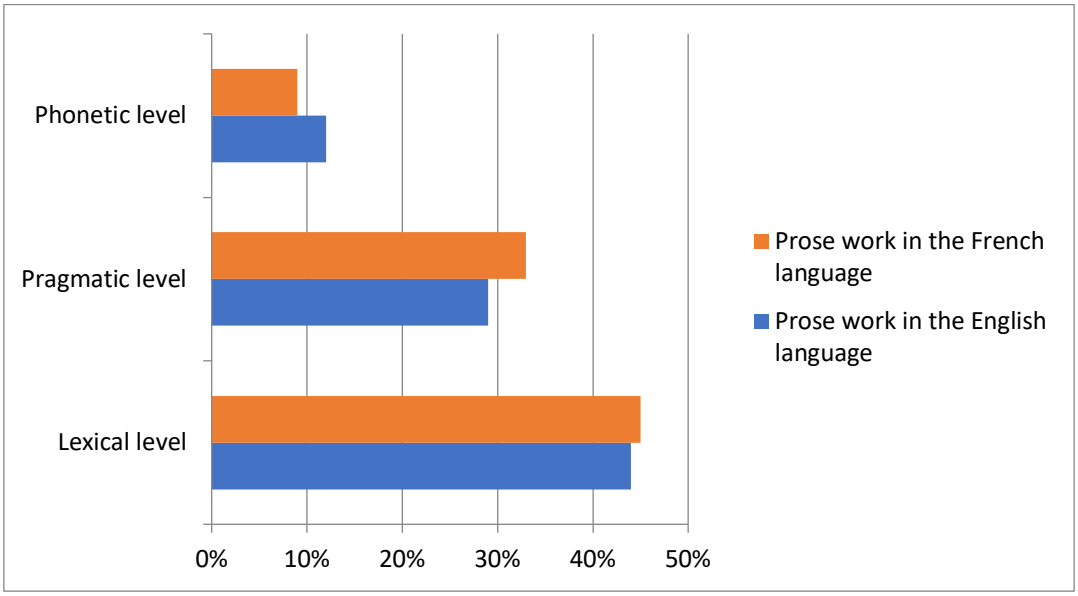

Figure 5. Linguostylistic levels of comic effect presenting in works in English and French languages (in %) (author's own development)

Based on the chart data, it is possible to conclude that the authors of works in English and French use approximately an even number of linguostylistic levels. But despite this similarity, different language means may be used within one level.

As a result of the study, the most effective linguistic and stylistic means of comic effect creation in English-language and French-language prose texts were found to be irony, hyperbole, illusion, and alliteration. Correlation analysis showed that the frequency of the use of these means directly affects humoristic text perception, but the nature of their use depends on the cultural and linguistic peculiarities of each language. For example, the main focus in French-language work is on wordplay and puns, while irony and sarcasm are more frequently used in English-language texts.

5. DISCUSSION

Within the study of linguistic and stylistic means of comic effect creation in English-language and French-language texts, several aspects confirming and contradicting modern scientific studies in this area were found.

The article by Moura (2022) "Poétique comparée de l'humour" focuse on the importance of the comparative approach to humour analysis, which considers cultural and national peculiarities, but views them in the pan-European context. Our study confirms this approach, as we have found significant differences in the use of linguistic and stylistic means between English and French authors. English prose more often involves irony and wordplay for comic effect creation, while cultural allusions and intellectual humour prevail in French prose.

The work by Trolé (2021) underlines the role of lexical creativity and linguistic experiments in humour creation, which was confirmed in our study of English authors. But French works such as "L'Appareil-photo" by Jean-Philippe Toussaint have fewer lexical plays, while irony and paradoxes prevail, which partially contradicts the conclusion of Trolé.

The study by Tianyu (2021) on humour in a philosophical context underlines the importance of socio-political influence on the development of satire. We found that humour

often serves as the instrument of social criticism in English prose, while French authors use it for intellectual reflection.

Our work partially confirms the conclusions of Salayeva et al. (2023) on the role of phraseological constructions in humour creation. However, we found a lower dependence on phraseologisms compared to anecdotes in English literary works. Slipetska et al. (2022) emphasise the importance of stylistic means such as irony, oxymoron, and metaphor, which play a key role in our analysis of humour in English-language and French-language texts. However, our results focus on lexical and syntactic means more.

Obasi and Melafa (2022) analyse comic techniques in dialogues, which corresponds to our analysis of the use of satire and repetition in French-language prose. At the same time, humorous devices in prose texts are more delicate compared to comedy sketches. The publication of Shohobutdinova et al. (2023) is also relevant to our study, as it underlines the importance of humour for linguistic and creative activity. We also study humour as a means of social criticism in our study.

Haines (2022) offers a new model of humour analysis, where humour is not a consequence of incongruence, but draws attention to contrasts. We also observed that humour is often developed by undermining the expectations of readers when familiar situations are subjected to an unusual perspective, which makes them comical. However, we do not agree that humour is not related to incongruence. Our results showed that although incongruence is not the main mechanism of humour creation, it plays a significant role in comic effect creation, especially in English-language texts, where authors widely use oxymorons and metaphors to underline controversies.

The study by Saifudin et al. (2024) on humour in comics focuses on expectations undermining, which corresponds to our analysis of humour in prose. Nevertheless, our study is much concentrated on verbal means of comic effect creation. Lisun and Sovietna (2020) and Ishchenko (2006) offers the model of humour analysis, where comic effect is based on contrasts.

We agree with this model but believe that incongruence also plays an important role, especially in English-language prose, where oxymorons and metaphors are widely used, which, as Colston (2021) notes, can provide a stronger, richer, or sharper conveyance of a sentence.

Thus, our study confirms a number of conclusions of previous works, in particular related to lexical creativity, intellectual humour and social criticism. But we also focus on the necessity of further analysis of national peculiarities of humour, in particular in prose works, for a better understanding of cultural and linguistic specifics.

6. CONCLUSION

Analysing prose texts in English and French languages, language means of expression of the category of comic effect creation on phonetic, lexical, syntactic and pragmatical levels, were outlined. Comparative analysis showed the linguistic and stylistic means of all levels were used in both works and the use of analogous devices, directed at achieving the effect of humour, is characteristic for the two languages.

The category of the comical is the most widely expressed on the lexical level. The favourite devices used by authors of works at this level of language are hyperbole, allusion, occasionalism, and simile. To give a special humorous colouring, pragmatic-level means such as irony, paradox, and sarcasm are often used. Parcellation and rhetorical question are the most popular syntactic devices used by the English author, while retardation, rhetorical question and directive sentence are the main syntactic devices used in French-language works.

Finally, regarding phonetic devices, it is worth noting that authors often use ecphonesis and onomatopoeia to make the recipient laugh. We found that humour has connotations and associations with implicit culturological nature.

The scientific novelty of the work lies in the attempt to systematise linguistic and stylistic means using which comic effect is created in works in English and French languages. Many scientists aimed to unite linguistic means into a general system, but there is not a single system of such means at present time.

Due to this, we determined expressive means, which are the most frequently used in prose texts. Practical value of this work lies in the possibility of the use of received results in courses of Stylistics of English and French languages.

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