

Genre and stylistic markers of Ukrainian folk jokes

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Abstract

This article focuses on the study of Ukrainian social and domestic folk jokes that contain information about the life of people, their habits, customs, traditions, and relations, and ridicule the weak sides of Ukrainians. The research material comprises 311 folk jokes that date back to the second part of the 19th century – the beginning of the 20th century. They are selected from the collection by M.V. Nagorny (1940) and the book of Ukrainian folk satire and humour (1959). The goal of the research is to study the main genre and stylistic markers of Ukrainian folk jokes. It is noted that Ukrainian folk jokes have a form of dialogue. Ukrainians' longstanding tradition of self-deprecating humour is also mentioned. The stylistic markers of the texts under consideration are the choice of vocabulary with diminutive suffixes, a wide range of expressive means, and stylistic devices that are a basis for achieving humorous effects. Diminutive suffixes are proved to have acquired specific characteristics in folk jokes giving positive or negative evaluation. Ukrainian social and domestic folk jokes, some of which take the form of joke-stories, are distinguished by precision, witty expression, and concise and dynamically constructed plot. The future research might involve the detailed study of the peculiarities of the Ukrainian social and domestic jokes of the third millennium, focusing on their linguistic and extra-linguistic features.

Keywords: *Ukrainian folk joke, self-deprecating humour, diminutive suffixes, grammatical means of the comic, stylistic devices.*

1. Introduction

Globalisation puts forward new requirements for education policy that supports principles of professional, legal, economic, communicative, ecological, and moral culture, traditions, ethical norms, and customs. Global citizenship does not mean the loss of national values. On the contrary, it stands for equal opportunities for all nations in life and development.

The topicality of the research is related to the challenges that have arisen before Ukraine was forced to protect its independence in the international arena and preserve the national identity of its citizens. One of the national identity markers is humour, which is “often seen as essential to the construction of identities” (Adler-Nissen & Tsinovoi, 2019, p. 11), relying heavily on “cultural knowledge” (Hutcheon, 2005, p. 93) and requiring “the presence of a common memory shared by addresser and addressee” (Lotman, 1982, p. 81). As Adler-Nissen and Tsinovoi point out, “humour can generate a strong sense of self-identity (as a member of an inclusive, ‘us’ group) resting on the fact that sometimes people just don’t ‘get’ it” (Adler-Nissen & Tsinovoi, 2019, p. 11). The scholars (Adler-Nissen & Tsinovoi, 2019), studying the role of humour in international politics, emphasise that humour serves as a crucial social tool that enables countries to engage in discussions and navigate delicate matters within the realm of international relations; humour also acts as a potent instrument for addressing international misunderstandings and reinforcing the feeling of shared identity in opposition to foreign and domestic Others.

2. Literature review

Humour has ignited the scientific interest of many scholars. Astapova (2021) investigates the multiplicity of humour manifestations and finds intertextual links between jokes and rumour. Humour is viewed as a reply to historical and social events (Yehorova et al., 2023). As it is a powerful means to protect the psyche in hard times, psychologists discuss how to use it in their practical activity (Vasylevska, & Dvornichenko, 2018). Humour is embodied in literature (Triezenberg, 2008), folklore (Oring, 2008) and other forms of art. As a form of folklore, it has been reflected in popular media (Kelley, 2020). Special attention is paid to investigating political humour (Kondratenko, 2019). The discrimination between such types of humorous texts as a joke and a poetic fable is made (Pichtownikowa, 2022). Scholars analyse the linguistic theories of humour (Attardo, 1994; Attardo et al., 2002). In many experts’ and researchers’ opinions, humorous texts are valuable in education, e.g., they are resorted to as an effective tool in the classroom and as a material for translation (Nikonova et al., 2019; Mazur & Radetska, 2019; Ali et al., 2023; Bakar & Mallan, 2023).

While modern humour is widely analysed, the Ukrainian folk jokes of previous periods were under consideration in a certain number of scientific research papers (Holovetska, 2007; Kyrchiv 2008; Kostenko, 2014; Ivasheniuk, 2017) but require further through study. The 19th century – the beginning of the 20th century was a new stage in the development of the Ukrainian language and culture that influenced the further state of laughing traditions.

3. Corpus and methods of analysis

The research focuses on the study of the Ukrainian social and domestic folk jokes of the second part of the 19th century – the beginning of the 20th century representing the peculiar national Ukrainian form of oral storytelling. It was used to pass down traditions, preserve history, teach lessons, entertain, and foster a sense of community (Kuzmenko, 2010; Kimakovich, 2017). The

analysed material comprises 311 folk jokes that belong to a specific period, namely the second part of the 19th century – the beginning of the 20th century. They are selected from the collection by M.V. Nagorny (1940) and the book of Ukrainian folk satire and humour (1959) on the basis of their thematic belonging, namely, jokes on social and domestic topics. The analysis of the Ukrainian social and domestic folk jokes in the aspect of the word count shows that the vast majority of jokes consist of either 50-100 words (31.83%) or 12-50 words (27.5%). A bit longer jokes (101-150 words) amount to 16.7%. It is worth mentioning that many long jokes have more than 301 words – 11.57%. The shortest jokes observed in the estimated period consist of 12 words.

The research took into consideration already existing literature (Nagorny, 1940; Ukrainian folk satire and humour, 1959) and relied on a qualitative content analysis of folk jokes where the meaning and structure were investigated. The translation of the Ukrainian jokes into English, given in the article, is performed by the authors of this research. The inferences about target units were made through the interpretative method disclosing meanings of the source text.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Compositional and genre properties of Ukrainian jokes

The Ukrainian folk jokes belong to folklore that has become “instrumental”, as Kelley (2020, p. 18) mentions, and has already penetrated different spheres of our life. As Laineste (2017, p. 21) points out, “[h]umour is a trans-genre phenomenon seen in some form and degree in almost all folklore genres.” The Ukrainian folk jokes share the key characteristics of the folklore genres, which are the following: firstly, the anonymity that is inherent to a folk joke. Even if a particular speaker invents one, they distance themselves from authorship assuming the role of an ordinary joke-teller and, at the same time, being an “active part” (Kant & Norman, 2019) in joke-teller – joker-listener exchange. Additionally, when determining the folkloric nature of a text, its origin holds less significance than its integration into oral tradition. This fact highlights the second characteristic of a joke as a folk genre – its primary form is oral, conveyed through storytelling and performance. Thirdly, like other folk genres, jokes undergo multiple reproductions and transmissions between narrators, resulting in variations. This variability stems from either the nuances of oral content delivery or deliberate improvisation, as narrators modify jokes to suit their preferences or fit current situations. Consequently, during the reproductive process, jokes can develop diverse versions and storylines akin to folk tales, anecdotes, and songs. Jokes, being “the most common of all folklore genres” (Asika, 2011, p. 223) are characterised by situational nature, marking “identity and uniqueness of a society” (Asika, 2011, p. 223) – this is their fourth and main characteristic.

The typical compositional structure of folklore jokes, Ukrainian social and domestic folk jokes included, comprises three key structural elements: 1) setup (beginning), 2) situation development, and 3) climax (punchline). However, these three structural elements cannot be distinguished in all folk jokes. The setup and the punchline are obligatory, while in some jokes, the situation development can be clipped or omitted.

The research shows that the Ukrainian social and domestic folk jokes take the form of expanded texts. However, they can also consist of only a few lines. This research paper focuses on the specific period (the second part of the 19th – the beginning of the 20th century) when jokes-stories or “humorous tales”, as Oring (1992, pp. 81-82) labels them, are the ones that prevail.

The humorous effect of the Ukrainian folk jokes is achieved through their structural specifics that foresee explicit or implicit answers to the questions: *Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?* For example:

- (1) Ostap was going from Romny, and Fedir – to Romny, and they met. Ostap asks Fedir: - Where from?
- Romny, – says Fedir.
- And what?
- Ox.
- How?
- Thirty.
- Hum!...
- Hey!
And they went their separate ways.

The joke rests upon the idea that, if people live in a close-knit society, know each other very well, and have the same interests and worries, there is no need to fully formulate questions and answers. The communicators can easily decipher the message containing only a single word. But for an uninitiated person, a stranger this conversation can sound meaningless. Particularly puzzling may be the closing part of the conversation – the exchange of interjections *Hum!... – Hey!* implying: 30 karbovantsi is a good price you have sold the ox for. – Yes that’s true. I’m satisfied (*Karbovantsi*, singular *karbovanets*, was the basic legal tender of Ukraine in 1917). Most Ukrainian folk jokes rest upon the dialogues making them more engaging and memorable. For example:

- (2) A woman once asked her husband:
- Where have you been for so long?
And the man says:
- At the market, listened to the news.
The woman asks again:
- What interesting news have you heard?
- Ah, is it possible to get to the news because of the people?! I stood far away, so I didn’t hear anything.

The analysed material shows that dialogues are essential in Ukrainian social and domestic folk jokes. They contribute to the flexibility, liveliness, and dynamism of the narrative, aiding in the progression and resolution of concise yet rich plots.

The topics of Ukrainian social and domestic folk jokes range from everyday life, behaviour, children’s deeds, family relations, and the generation gap to social interaction. Such negative personal traits that are laughed at in them are stupidity, ignorance, laziness, stubbornness, mediocracy, and other vices. Meanwhile, Ukrainians have a longstanding tradition of self-deprecating humour that belong to the self-supporting type of humour, which is “based on a person’s desire to maintain a positive, optimistic view of the world” (Shportun, 2018, p. 62). Ukrainians are always ready to make jokes about themselves, their quite conspicuous or masterly hidden flaws and weaknesses, or their cultural peculiarities. For example:

- (3) The man bought new boots for himself, rings for his wife, and earrings for his daughter. The holiday came, and everyone got dressed in everything newly purchased.
Just then, a guest came.
The man sat down in a holy corner (place of honour), shuffling his feet, showing off his new boots, looking around the house, and then, pointing with his foot (so that the boots could be seen), said:
- And why is the house not swept?

His wife put her hands in front of her, spreading her fingers so that the rings could be easily seen, and said:

- Haven't I said that?

And the daughter wiggle-waggled her head so that the earrings dangled hard and said:

- What a nuisance! How many times should it be swept a day?

The joke brilliantly ridicules the weakness that many Ukrainians have – boastfulness. The humorous effect is attained via the detailed description of the non-verbal behaviour of the members of the family who are making a great display of their new purchases (*The man sat down in a holy corner (place of honour), shuffling his feet, showing off his new boots, looking around the house, and then, pointing with his foot (so that the boots could be seen); his wife put her hands in front of her, spreading fingers so that the rings could be easily seen; the daughter wiggle-waggled her head so that the earrings dangled hard*). As Shportun (2018, p. 115) points out, “laughter, a humorous attitude allow a person to overcome unproductive and limiting forms of life, self-realisation and switch to new, more productive ones”.

Ukrainians are known to be exceptional *salo* lovers. *Salo* is the Ukrainian version of pork fatback, a traditional Ukrainian food. The analysed material shows that there are many folk jokes about it. For example:

(4) A thief crept into Sava's house at night to steal salo; fell off the beam right in the middle of the hallway holding salo. Sava heard it and asked:

- Who's there?

The cunning thief replied:

- Savo, Savo, the devil sent you some salo!

- Get away with it! I don't hob-knob with devils and don't want their salo either!

- Well, if you don't want it, open the door and help me carry salo out.

So that poor wretch even jerked his salo up the thief's shoulders!

It should be mentioned that according to the research conducted by Fiadosik (1984, p. 341), the plot of the above given joke is common in Eastern Slavic folklore as 8 variants were recorded in Ukraine, 4 in Belarus and 2 in Russia. Self-deprecating humour allows the Ukrainians to laugh at their weaknesses; it fosters the feeling of camaraderie among Ukrainians.

Thus, Ukrainian social and domestic folk jokes represent the folklore genre in its essential features. The beginning and climax are indispensable in their composition. Vibrant, energetic, and meaningful dialogues, complemented by unexpected punchlines, play the most crucial role in Ukrainian social and domestic folk jokes. Self-deprecating humour characteristic of them acts as an antidote to fighting vices people have.

4.2. Derivational creativity in Ukrainian folk jokes

The characteristic feature of Ukrainian folk jokes is the abundance of lexemes with suffixes that express the affective evaluation. Suffixes as productive word-building elements are indicators of the national-linguistic identity; they are the micro-units through which a word acquires specific national-linguistic colouring (Ruda, 2013, p. 42; Samoilenko, 2020, p. 106). They also serve as a means of creating a humorous effect. For example:

(5) A panok (landowner) and a simple girl are having lunch in a teahouse quite close to each other. The landowner yawned broadly without bothering to cover his mouth.

- Oh, panon'ku, you might even eat me, – the girl said.

- I don't eat veal! – replied to the landowner. (He hoped that by saying this, he would humiliate the girl and kill her with a sharp word).

- Oh dear, I forgot that donkeys only eat hay! – the girl replied, immediately disarming the haughty landowner.

As Betsenko (2019, p. 29) points out, “[o]ral lore ... is a fertile ground on which a whole system of diminutive affixes has formed.” The scholar distinguishes the following diminutive suffixes for noun formation: *-on’k*, *-en’k*, *-ochk*, *-echk*, *-en’k*, *-k*, *-ik*, *-ok*, *-atk*, *-ts*, *-us*, *-ik*, and others (Betsenko, 2019, p. 30). The diminutive suffix *-ok* in the word “*панок*” (*panok*) used in the introductory line of the joke informs the addressee that the person (a landowner) belongs to landowners of modest means. The girl, addressing the landowner, employs the title *паноньку* (*panon’ku*) with the diminutive suffix *-оньк* (*on’k*). Noun-forming suffixes *-ok* (*ok*), *-оньк* (*on’k*) are used to denote disregard and irony.

The Ukrainian language, belonging to Slavic languages, relies heavily on affixation in its derivational structure (Tsaruk 1998, p. 223). Tsaruk (1998, p. 233) makes a valuable remark that “the closeness between individual languages is most clearly established at the level of vernacular emotionally coloured forms” where “suffixes of the subjective assessment that are divided into two groups: diminutive and caressing (diminutive) and augmentative-coarse (pejorative)” are relevant for linguistic analysis (Tsaruk 1998, p. 233).

Adjectival diminutive units are one of the means for comic effect creation in Ukrainian social and domestic folk jokes. For example:

(6) A young man decided to get married. So, he thinks: “Who would I take as a matchmaker? I’ll go to my uncle and take him as a matchmaker.” He did so. He came to his uncle and said:

- Uncle, uncle, help my grief, come, I’ll send you as a matchmaker.

Uncle asks:

- Who are you thinking of sending me to, nephew?

- Why not to Hordiy Ivanovych, uncle; he has a good girl: black eyes, very swift – I’d better send to her.

Uncle says to him:

- I’d relieve your grief if you were a little brighter, or else I’ll go to people with you and only get ashamed because of you, and that’s all we’ll get.

The nephew says:

- How is it that you say, uncle, that I am not bright? Am I really stupid or something?

- It’s not that you’re stupid; it’s just that your language is somehow not very good – whatever you say, it’s all off the point.

- How so?

- Look! When we go there and enter the house, think about what you have to talk to people there!

- What to talk about?

- When you enter the house, you’d kindly say hello to people, you’d think about what kind of word to say that is nice and roundish.

- Well, thank you, uncle, for the good lesson! That’s what I’m going to say.

They went to Hordiy Ivanovych. He invited them into the house and sat them at the table. They began talking business, and the young man was sitting at the table and thinking: “How not to forget the uncle’s advice? What is the best word to say that is nice and roundish?”

And he came up with the idea and shouted at the top of his lungs:

- A hoop, hoop, hoop!

Hordiy Ivanovych goggled at him and asked bewildered:

- Where have you seen the hoop?

And the young man says:

- Hey, there is no hoop, all right! My uncle taught me to say a roundish, nice, nice word; well, I said a roundish one: which more roundish word do you need if it’s not a hoop?”

The Ukrainian adjectives *гарненьке*, *кругленьке* (слівце) with the diminutive suffix *-еньк* (*-en’k*) translated into English as *nice* and *roundish* are the focal point of the joke. They are

repeated several times (*nice* – 4 times; *roundish* – 5 times), generating the comic effect via contrasting the metaphorical meaning (*a nice, roundish word*) used by the uncle, implying that the nephew's speech should be smooth, well-rounded, and sonorous and the blunt direct visualisation of a *nice, roundish word* that takes the form of a *hoop* in the nephew's mind and which he proudly voices: *Hey, there is no hoop, all right! My uncle taught me to say a roundish, nice, nice word; well, I said a roundish one: which more roundish do you need if it's not a hoop?*

Diminutive components do not change the actual (denotative) meaning of a word. However, they convey emotionally evaluative information within a word form, which can be equally significant as conceptual and logical information. Diminutives within lexemes convey both emotionally positive and friendly evaluations and the speaker's contemptuous, derisive, and satirical attitudes toward the subject under discussion (Tsaruk, 1998, p. 233–237; Bondarenko, 2007). Many of the suffixes used for emotive evaluation reflect a positive assessment from the author's perspective.

In addition to conveying positive emotions, diminutives can express various negative (pejorative) nuances in specific contextual and situational conditions. The negative connotation suggests that the object is associated with undesirable qualities or characteristics or that the speaker holds a negative attitude toward the subject under consideration. Such formations evoke expressions of irony, contempt, humiliation, surprise, disapproval, familiarity, disregard, and disgust. In Ukrainian folk jokes, they serve the purpose of expressing antipathy and openly mocking the addressee. When combined with diminutive-affectionate suffixes, the names of individuals, concepts, and lexical meanings that carry shades of solemnity, importance, and grandeur acquire negative semantics (for example, *pan* – *panok*).

Comparisons or juxtapositions of lexemes with diminutive-affectionate forms and those without them are expressive and emotive techniques used in the language of jokes. Lexemes containing diminutive suffixes are commonly employed in Ukrainian folk jokes to convey various nuances of irony. It ranges from lighthearted teasing to irony accompanied by condemnation, contempt, and the expression of intense emotions such as anger, bitterness, biting mockery, open disrespect, and cynicism.

Diminutive suffixes, originally meant to convey affection and endearment, have acquired specific characteristics in folk humour. They often carry a negative connotation and create a distinct emotional tone in jokes. On a linguistic level, the endearment conveyed by these suffixes is merely superficial and, in certain contextual conditions, is associated with diametrically opposite emotions. It leads to expressions of irony, contempt, feigned endearment, familiarity, disdain, and sarcasm. These linguistic elements are actively utilised due to the ability of endearment affixes to express positive and negative emotional evaluations. This fact demonstrates the functional and stylistic versatility of diminutive affixes within Ukrainian folk humor.

Therefore, derivational creativity in Ukrainian folk jokes is verbalised in diminutive suffixes that depending on the context of its telling and the joke-teller's intention express either positive or negative evaluation of a person or object creating a comic effect.

4.3. Expressive means and stylistic devices in jokes

Expressive means and stylistic devices are a source of achieving a comic effect in Ukrainian social and domestic folk jokes. For this purpose, pun or play on words is widely used in Ukrainian folk jokes. It refers to the intentional use of sound, lexical, or grammatical word elements, including their parts, idioms, and syntactic structures that create specific phonetic, semantic, and stylistic effects by comparing, reinterpreting, and manipulating linguistically similar units with distinct meanings. For example:

(7) Two friends met, and each was moaning about their woes.

- If you only knew what a damn wife I have. She doesn't give me room to breathe! - one says.

- Oh, that's no woe at all! Mine, as soon as I am at the door, yells that very moment, "Come here, breathe!"

The joke is foregrounded in the play on words – the witty use of the verb *to breathe*. The first friend, using an idiomatic expression, is complaining that his wife controls every step of his life (*She doesn't give me room to breathe!*), while the other friend laments that his wife smells his breath each time he comes home (*Mine, as soon as I am at the door, yells that very moment, "Come here, breathe!"*) implying that he cannot have a booze without his wife knowing about it and making a scene.

A comic technique in Ukrainian folk jokes that we understand as methods or techniques used to create humour or provoke laughter solidly rests upon the repetition that can be:

(a) a simple repetition where a particular phrase is reproduced without changes. For example:

(8) A wife decided to bake Easter bread (paskha) and sent her husband to the market in the city and said:

- Go and buy me some saffron.

He was riding and muttering:

- Hey, saffron, tsabe, saffron. Hey, saffron, tsabe, saffron.

He arrived in the city and commanded to the ox:

- Whoa, shpynyhar!

So, he bought some shpynyhar and brought it home. The wife asks:

- Have you bought saffron?

- Did you tell me saffron? I bought shpynyhar. If I hadn't said 'whoa', I would have bought saffron, but that 'whoa' blocked by mind!

Not to forget the fancy word, the husband even named the ox *saffron* goading it by the traditional *tsabe* and repeating the word *saffron* constantly right until the last stop when the interjection *whoa* (traditionally used to command oxen and horses to stop) somehow welcomed the word *shpynyhar*, which is an archaic word meaning *turpentine*.

(b) the repetition with the change in the grammatical construction. For example:

(9) One fine day the people elected a foreman. And that foreman became so stuck-up and snobbish that it was even scary to approach him. One day the new foreman was sitting on his porch when he saw someone riding through the village. The foreman shouted for his nephew and said, "Quick! Run and find out who is that riding through my village!" Off rushed the boy to catch up. He is running and shouting at the rider to wait for him. The traveller halted. The boy ran up to him.

- What do you want? – The rider asked.

- Our dear new foreman told me to ask who you are riding here.

- Tell your new foreman that both you and he are fools! – The traveller replied.

The boy returned.

- Well?

- That's some acquaintance!

- How so?

- That's how: he knows you, and he knows me!

- And how does he know us?

- Well, he said that both you and I are fools!

It is interesting to note how the shift in use of personal pronouns enhances the comic effect of the situation. In the initial response, the traveller firstly calls the boy the fool and then the new foreman (*Tell your new foreman that both you and he are fools!*); and the boy, reporting the information, deliberately shifts the personal pronouns referring to the foreman first (*Well, he said that both you and I are fools!*).

(c) the repetition as the foregrounding of the logical mechanism of implicit parallelism (in Attardo et al.'s, 2002, p. 18 terminology). For example:

- (10) A traveller walks through the village and asks a passerby:
- Tell me, good man, how can I cross the river here?
And that one to him:
- I am not a good man but a foreman here.

Faulty reasoning as another logical mechanisms from the *General Theory of Verbal Humour* (Attardo et al.'s 2002, pp. 13–15) is another technique of creating a comic effect. For example:

- (11) The father is sitting in the tearoom, drinking vodka. His little son comes in and calls his father home.
- Okay, okay, I'm coming, son, but take this drink and try it yourself.
The son tried vodka and coughed.
- Bitter, son?
- Bitter, Dad!
- See, see – says the father, – how bitter it is, how hard it is to drink it, but you and your mother think that it's good for me to be here, that I'm drinking honey here.

The father gives his son a misleading reasoning trying to put himself right: - *See, see – says the father, – how bitter it is, how hard it is to drink it, but you and your mother think that it's good for me to be here, that I'm drinking honey here.* The parallel opposition of both parts of speech and meaning (*bitter – honey; hard – good*) is highlighted by antithesis, and it enhances the humorous effect.

Paradox is another comic technique used in the Ukrainian folk jokes. For example:

- (12) - Who came to see you yesterday? - the landowner asks his peasant, – that you ran to me to borrow the samovar.
- It was some landowner, – he replies.
- Well, which one? What's his name?
- Oh, I forgot. It somehow resembles a bird; there's a bird like that.
- Sorochinsky? – the landowner suggests.
- No.
- Horobievsky?
- No, not that either!
- Synytsky?
- No. Oh, darn it! It's on the tip of my tongue, but I can't remember... Verbitsky, Verbitsky, sir! I barely remembered.
- But you said his name somehow resembled a bird.
- Ha! Well, can't a bird sit on a willow?

The paradox is foregrounded in the opposition of surnames *Sorochinsky* (originates from the Ukrainian noun *soroka* – a magpie), *Horobievsky* (originates from the Ukrainian noun *horobets* – a sparrow), *Synytsky* (originates from the Ukrainian noun *synytsia* – a tit), but the surname *Verbitsky* originates from the Ukrainian noun *verba* (a willow), which is a tree. And the punch

line enhances the paradox: *But you said his name somehow resembled a bird. – Ha! Well, can't a bird sit on a willow?*

Metaphor is a powerful expressive means in creating humour. For example:

(13) Omelko was riding home from the province, and a seminarist was also running home. The seminarist sees a big puddle on the road and asks Omelko to take him over. But Omelko replies:

- You, little brother, are a scholar; you can cross as you wish.

- Well then, – says the seminarist, – if that's the case, I'll do you a thing, wait.

Just as Omelko rode into the puddle, the seminarist ran after him, mounted the horse, cut the reins from the collar, and rode across the puddle. And Omelko was left in the puddle. What should Omelko do now? He has to get off the wagon and catch the horse that the seminarist left on the other side and just ran away. Omelko caught the horse, harnessed it the best he could right there in the puddle, and rode home. He enters the house and sees the seminarist sitting in the front corner of his house. Open-mouthed Omelko asks his wife:

- What's this? How is this?

- Oh, he asked to stay overnight, – says the wife.

- Ha! – says Omelko. – Well, thank you, wife, for letting him in! Now I'll get even with you, devilish child.

What should the seminarist do here? He would have fled, but Omelko locked the house and stood by the door himself. Then Omelko says to the seminarist:

- Come up here, you scholar!

The seminarist approached.

- What is this? – asks Omelko, pointing to the fire.

- And what, uncle, – says the seminarist, – if not fire?

- No, you're lying, – says Omelko, and he grabs the student by the wisp of hair, twisting and twisting it, and declares:

- You're lying; it's not fire, it's purity!

The student was terrified but could do nothing. Then Omelko told his wife to bring a mug of water and asked the seminarist again:

- What is this?

- Water, – says the seminarist.

- No, you're lying, – says Omelko.

- It's not water, it's grace! And he grabs and twists the seminarist's hair again and keeps twisting until tears like peas start falling from the student's eyes. Omelko keeps twisting his hair and keeps saying:

- It's not water, it's grace!

- Well, what's this? – asks Omelko again, pointing to the ceiling.

- The ceiling, uncle! – says the seminarist.

- Ah, I see, you're educated, but you don't know that it's height!

And he starts twisting the seminarist's wisp of hair again, twisting and twisting until sparks fly from the seminarist's eyes; the poor guy even fell! Then Omelko said:

- Enough!

After that, Omelko and his wife had dinner, but the seminarist was not given any, and they went to sleep. The seminarist lay down too, but he couldn't sleep. He heard the man and his wife snoring, so he quietly pushed back the shutter in the stove, took out the fire, left the house, and put that fire under the roof; the man's house caught fire, and the seminarist opened the window and shouted to the man:

- Uncle, uncle! Get up and see what's happening!

- What's going on? – says Omelko.

- What? Don't you see that purity has run up the height? And you, uncle, grab grace fast and go quenching aghast!

When a peasant uses an elevated style and gives a seminarist a lesson by teaching him that *fire is purity; water is grace and ceiling is height* it is a sure way to bring a smile to an

addressee's face. Moreover, the punch line unveils what an apt student the seminarist is when he artfully blends all the metaphors in a witty rhyming line: *Don't you see that purity has run up the height? And you, uncle, grab grace fast and go quenching aghast!*

Personification of animals is also used in Ukrainian folk jokes to create a comic effect. For example:

- (14) The man is riding and encounters his kum.
- What are you carrying, kum?
Kum got up from the cart, came close, and whispered into his ear:
- Oats.
- And why are you whispering so secretly?
- So that the mare couldn't hear.

The transliterated word “*kum*” in translation denotes as person who is usually your friend and a godfather to your child.

Metonymy is another expressive means used in Ukrainian folk jokes for humorous effect. For example:

- (15) - Have you been to the market?
- Yes, I have.
- What did you buy then?
- A goat.
- How much did you pay?
- Seven kops.
- Where is it then?
- Oh, I sold it.
- And how much for?
- For five kops.
- Why did you lose so much?
- It doesn't matter how much I lost, as long as it's a fresh kopyyka.

Ukrainians know how to be thrifty. The gist of the joke rests upon the irrationality of the speaker's actions: to buy a goat for seven kops and then to sell it for five kops (*kop* is the shortening of the noun *kopyyka* that was the legal tender in Ukraine in the 19th century – the beginning of the 20th century, and it is now since Ukraine's independence) and considering a loss of two kopyikas to be an obvious benefit as he gets *a fresh kopyyka*.

Epithets as such greatly assist in generating humorous effects in Ukrainian folk jokes. For example:

- (16) One neighbour bought a piece of land from another neighbour for a high price. But when they went to the field, the buyer started complaining that it was narrow but expensive, costing a whole hundred.
The seller responded:
- You say it's narrow and short but think how deep it is. No matter how much you dig, you won't find the end.

Contrasting the adjectives *narrow and short* versus *deep* gives profound reasoning that will make the listener laugh.

Onomatopoeia is another stylistic device actively employed in Ukrainian folk jokes for humorous effect. The use of words or phrases that imitate sounds of nature metonymically projects rough satire of a particular person's behaviour. It is a sure way to ridicule the wrong. For example:

(17) This was before the revolution. Someone stole sheep from a peasant. He found out who the thieves were and went to court. They started the trial, but the thieves bribed the court, and the peasant was not awarded anything. So, he filed a lawsuit again, but once again, he was awarded nothing. He filed for the third time...

He was summoned to court for questioning. A senior defender is sitting to the peasant's right, the judge is opposite the peasant, and a freckled prosecutor is to the left.

- Tell me, old man, how were your sheep stolen? – the judge asked.

- Well, you see – he said, – Just like that (pointing at the defender) to the right, there's an old mill; in front (pointing in the direction where the judge is sitting) is a sheepfold; and to the left (pointing at the prosecutor) there is an old dapple dog tied up. So, I hear at night that the mill keeps grinding and grinding, grinding and grinding, but it's obviously no use. And the ram in the sheepfold (pointing towards the judge) keeps bleating 'baa, baa', and the dapple dog (pointing towards the prosecutor) keeps barking 'woof, woof,' 'woof, woof', and the sheep have just been stolen. Like that!

In the joke above, the judge is implicitly compared with the ram that keeps bleating 'baa, baa', the prosecutor is seen as a mongrel that keeps barking 'woof, woof,' 'woof, woof'. People perceive the judge and the prosecutor as the most powerful officials, but through the joke, they are openly sneered at for being corrupt, inefficient, and biased.

Satire and humour play a prominent role in the vast collection of folklore works (Kolessa, 1983; Andrusiak, 2013), representing a defining characteristic of most folk genres. Ukrainian culture and its creative expressions are notably characterised by humour and satire. Fairy tales, anecdotes, legends, songs, humorous verses, proverbs, and sayings all embody various degrees of laughter, ranging from sharp and biting to gentle and amiable, resonating with friendly and sociable tones. It is worth mentioning that within the Ukrainian folk tradition, laughter portrays a positive image while sharply and cleverly ridiculing enemies, snobs, fools, and idlers. It highlights the smart, resourceful, and cunning peasant, hired worker, soldier, simple girl, or even historical figures.

The Ukrainians can impartially assess societal and everyday facts, the qualities and disposition of individuals. They can speak critically and satirically about one thing and smile fondly about another. Some facts are condemned and sharply punished, while others are nuanced, corrected, and others are supported and encouraged with healthy laughter.

Double meanings, clever wordplay, and a strong focus on subtext and inference, where the intended meaning is so unmistakable that no other interpretation is considered, are recurring features in numerous jokes depicting officials, judges, and lawyers. For example:

(18) - Look, Dad, why is it so: one ear of corn, when you look at it, bends down to the ground, while the other stands straight like a trunk?

- Hey, hey! – father says, – I see that you're still naive and haven't figured it out, though being as tall as an oak, your mind's gone up with a cloud of smoke. The one that's full bends down to the ground, while the empty one strives to reach the sky.

- Now I understand, Dad, why our scribe Ivan Hurhunya is always going about with head in the air!

A humorous effect is attained via the metaphorical transfer of the meaning: what is true to an ear of corn is considered to be true for a person, thus indirectly alluding to his stupidity.

One of the means in a joke to ridicule the wrong is to introduce a protagonist-simpleton as if being naïve, plain, and uneducated, but whose remarks and comments exude shrewd satire. For example:

(19) An old woman went to Kyiv to pray at a monastery but didn't know exactly where it was. She approached a student and bowed to him, asking:

- Excuse me, dear student, can you show me where the monastery is here?

The student looked at the police officer who was standing nearby and said to the old woman:

- Lady, you'd better ask that cur over there!

The old woman thanked the student and approached the police officer, asking:

- Tell me, cur, where is the monastery located?

But the police officer shouted at the old woman:

- Get out of here, you old witch!

So, the old woman neither thanked him nor wasted more time with him and quickly walked away.

An old lady shows excellent reverence to the student, addressing him as *dear student*, and simultaneously demonstrates profound disrespect to the police officer, addressing him as *cur*. However, the disrespect is unintentional on the part of the woman, whose ignorance makes her a mouthpiece for meeting the witty student's intent to openly voice people's attitude toward the servant of the law and cause general laughter.

The researched material shows that nearly every other Ukrainian social and domestic folk joke has some rhyming lines and words in its structure. The punchline is very often represented by a rhyming line enhancing the humorous effect and making the joke easily memorable. For example:

(20) Taras Shevchenko is sitting with the nobles in the theatre, but the nobles are embarrassed that a peasant is with them – they want to make fun of him.

- How much do you sell pigs for, old man?

And Shevchenko responds:

- If it is such a boar as you are, sir, they pay a high price, but if it is such a swine as your dame, then it isn't worth a dime.

A sharp-witted retort on the part of a rustic, crammed with stingy metaphors and eloquently wrapped up in a catchy line that rhymes in the original (*If it's such a boar as you are, sir, they pay a high price, but if it's such a swine as your dame, then it isn't worth a dime*) is a very peculiar characteristic of the Ukrainian folk humour.

Thus, the expressive means and stylistic devices that contribute to a comic effect in Ukrainian folk jokes encompass metaphors, metonymies, epithets, onomatopoeias, repetitions, antithesis, pun, or paradox.

4.4. Grammatical means of the comic

The syntactic means of the comic in the Ukrainian folk jokes are represented by antithetical predicates. For example:

(21) - What are your girls doing?

- Sewing and singing.

- And what is their mother doing?

- Unstitching and crying.

Contrasting of predicates (*sewing and singing – unstitching and crying*) within the same context creates an emotionally charged comic background. In Attardo's et al.'s (2002, p. 18) terms, the joke uses the logical mechanism of juxtaposition.

Predicates with negation are also actively used in Ukrainian folk jokes as a linguistic means of comic. For example:

(22) A drunkard is walking down the street, and a policeman is going in the opposite direction.

- Your Honour, tell me where I am?

- In Blagovishchens'ka Street!

- I am not asking in which street, but in which city.

The humorous effect is foregrounded via the complex-compound sentence with a coordinate conjunction that juxtaposes two notions: “the street” and “the city”.

The subjunctive mood can perform the stylistic function of being an evaluative tool to represent the comic evaluation of characters. For example:

(23) - Well, kum, your dog is getting on, it's hardly able to drag its legs and has dropped its tail...
- Ah, no, kum, if only you would bark like it does.

The first speaker implies that time spares no one, that both the dog and the owner are getting on, but the shrewd retort on the part of the dog's owner *Ah, no, kum, if only you would bark like it does* reminds the first speaker that time is merciless to him as well: he is getting old too.

The subjunctive is also actively employed in Ukrainian folk jokes as a linguistic means of the comic. For example:

(24) Two men are coming back home from the fair. And as they travelled five miles, it's high time to take a rest because there's a tavern every five miles. So, they are riding and talking:
- You know, –one says –how could we count how many miles it is to heaven?
- Only a Holy God knows how many! I think it's about five miles!
- Oh, come on, kum! If it were only five miles, there would be a tavern there!

Different types of pronouns can acquire a comic effect in Ukrainian folk jokes depending on the context. Personal pronouns are especially actively used for that purpose. For example:

(25) The daughter told her father that she was getting married.
- And who is he, daughter? You've only known him for ten days. Do you even love him?
- That's **my** business, Dad.
- Does he love you?
- That's **his** business, Dad!
- And what will you live on? Both of you have no qualifications.
- That's **your** business, Dad.

The analysed material shows that numerals are actively used to create a humorous effect in Ukrainian folk jokes. For example:

(26) A young man was telling a story:
- I was terrified yesterday walking through the woods! I barely escaped!
They asked him:
- What happened there?
- Well, perhaps a **hundred** wolves were chasing me!
- Phew!
- Why 'phew'? Maybe not a hundred, but **fifty** for sure!
- But there aren't so many in the woods!
- Look! He doesn't believe me! I'm telling you, there were probably **a dozen** of them chasing me...
- Oh, come on, don't lie!
- Why would I lie? I'm telling you; **the wolf** was hounding me...
- Where did you see it then?
- I swear, there was something behind the bush: rustling... rustling... It was gray and small, but its tail was like an owl.

The anticlimax displays a gradual decrease from one hundred wolves to one that is “*gray and small, but its tail was like an owl,*” which is easily deciphered as a mouse but not a wolf, and mocks such people’s weakness as faint-heartedness and the tendency to overstate the case.

Another peculiar Ukrainian folk joke is an endless joke. For example:

- (27) - Have we walked together?
- We have!
- Have we found the sheepskin coat?
- We have!
- But where is it?
- Who?
- The coat!
- Which one?
- What do you mean by “which one”? Have we walked together?
- We have.
- Have we found the sheepskin coat?
- We have!
- But where is it?
- Who?
- The coat.
- But which one?

5. Conclusion

The study involved a thorough analysis of the specifics of the Ukrainian social and domestic jokes, foregrounding their linguistic and extra-linguistic features. The Ukrainian folk jokes embody the core characteristics of folklore. They rely heavily on a well-defined structure that obligatory includes the beginning and climax. The heart of the jokes lies in their lively, spirited dialogues, which are enriched by unexpected punchlines. The Ukrainian social and domestic folk jokes actively employ diminutive suffixes, which commonly have negative connotation and set a specific emotional modulation in jokes ranging from light-hearted irony to bitter sarcasm. Antithetical predicates, predicates with negation, subjunctive mood, pronouns, numerals serve as the grammatical means of the comic. The expressive means and figures of speech that generate and enhance the humorous effect in the jokes include metaphors, metonymies, epithets, onomatopoeias, repetitions, antithesis, puns, paradoxes, irony, and anti-climaxes. Self-deprecating humour serves as a remedy to address common human flaws and vices. In the Ukrainian folk jokes human weaknesses, peculiarities of everyday life, behavioural deviations from rationality, demeanour that goes against societal norms, and personal flaws are dissected by humour that encompasses a multitude of nuances – from condemning the action to a gentle, playful attitude. The future research may follow up and analyse in detail the linguistic and extra-linguistic features of Ukrainian folk jokes in the 21st century.

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