



**HUMOR AS A DIDACTIC TOOL IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH CHILDREN'S
LITERATURE: A COMPARATIVE STYLISTIC AND PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF
*SHUM BOLA AND THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER***

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Received: 26.02.26

Accepted: 28.02.26

Published: 01.03.26

ABOUT ARTICLE

Keywords: humor, didactic function, children's literature, stylistics, pragmatics, satire, irony, Uzbek literature, English literature, Tom Sawyer, Shum bola.

Kalit so'zlar: humor, didaktik vazifa, bolalar adabiyoti, stilistika, pragmatika, satira, kinoya, o'zbek adabiyoti, ingliz adabiyoti, Tom Soyey, Shum bola.

Ключевые слова: юмор, дидактическая функция, детская литература, стилистика, прагматика, сатира, ирония, узбекская литература, английская литература, Том Соьер, Шум бола.

Abstract. Humor is often seen as a captivating aspect of children's literature, yet its educational significance goes well beyond mere entertainment.

This article delves into the use of humor as a teaching tool in Uzbek and English children's stories by conducting a comparative stylistic and pragmatic analysis of Gafur Gulom's "Shum bola" (The Mischievous Boy) and Mark Twain's "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer." The research seeks to uncover how humorous scenes, dialogues, and storytelling methods lead young readers to reflect on morals, become socially aware, and learn behaviors without overt moralizing. In "Shum bola," humor is intricately linked to the traditional Uzbek way of life and the daily experiences of common people, highlighting cultural values like diligence, patience, honesty, and community spirit. The comedic elements often stem from social circumstances, economic struggles, and the main character's interactions with his environment, creating laughter that also imparts lessons on responsibility and empathy. Conversely, Twain's novel uses irony and satire to critique societal hypocrisy and strict adult authority, particularly in the realms of school, family discipline, and community norms. Tom's playful antics serve as a means of exploring freedom and individuality, emphasizing personal initiative and independent choices. The article employs a methodological approach that combines stylistic analysis (such as hyperbole, irony, dialogue humor, and expressive vocabulary) with pragmatic methods (including speech acts, implicature, and face strategies) to identify recurring humor patterns and their educational roles. The results show that humor in both works acts as a "soft pedagogical force," influencing ethical understanding and cultural values while maintaining entertainment and reader engagement.

Annotatsiya: Bolalar adabiyotida hazil ko'pincha kulgi manbai sifatida qaralsa-da, uning tarbiyaviy imkoniyatlari bundan ancha kengdir. Ushbu maqolada G'afur G'ulomning "Shum bola" asari va Mark Tvenning "Tom Soyerning sarguzashtlari" asari misolida hazilning didaktik (tarbiyaviy) vosita sifatidagi vazifalari qiyosiy tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotning maqsadi har ikki asarda kulgili epizodlar, dialoglar va badiiy tasvir vositalari orqali bolalarda axloqiy tushunchalar, ijtimoiy ong va xulqiy me'yorlarning shakllanishiga qanday ta'sir ko'rsatilishini aniqlashdan iborat. "Shum bola" da hazil o'zbek xalqining an'anaviy turmush tarzi, oddiy insonlarning kundalik hayoti va jamiyatdagi ijtimoiy sharoitlar bilan uzviy bog'langan holda yoritiladi hamda mehnatsevarlik, sabr-toqat, halollik, jamoaviylik kabi qadriyatlarni targ'ib qiladi. "Tom Soyer" asarida esa hazil ko'proq kinoya va satira ko'rinishida namoyon bo'lib, maktab, jamiyat va kattalar tomonidan belgilangan qoidalar ustidan kulish orqali mustaqil fikr, shaxsiy tanlov hamda tashabbuskorlik g'oyalarini ilgari suradi. Maqolada stilistik

(mubolag'a, kinoya, satira, dialogik kulgi) va pragmatik (nutq aktlari, tagma'no, muloqot strategiyalari) yondashuvlar asosida hazilning didaktik funksiyalari tahlil qilinadi. Natijalar shuni ko'rsatadiki, hazil har ikki asarda ham bevosita nasihat qilmasdan, yumshoq tarbiyaviy ta'sir ko'rsatib, o'quvchining fikrlashini faollashtiradi.

Аннотация: Юмор в детской литературе часто воспринимается как способ развлечения, но его образовательный потенциал гораздо шире. В этой статье проводится сравнительный стилистико-прагматический анализ юмора как дидактического инструмента на примере произведений Гафура Гуляма «Шум бола» и Марка Твена «Приключения Тома Сойера». Цель исследования — выяснить, как комические эпизоды, диалоги и повествовательные приемы способствуют формированию у молодых читателей нравственных установок, социального сознания и моделей поведения без прямого морализаторства. В «Шум бола» юмор тесно связан с традиционным узбекским образом жизни и повседневной реальностью простых людей, подчеркивая такие ценности, как трудолюбие, терпение, честность и коллективизм. В романе Твена юмор проявляется в основном через иронию и сатиру, направленные на школьную дисциплину, социальные нормы и правила, навязанные взрослыми, при этом акцентируется внимание на свободомыслии, индивидуальном выборе и личной инициативе. Методологическая основа статьи сочетает стилистический анализ (гипербола, ирония, диалогический юмор) и прагматический подход (речевые акты, импликации, коммуникативные стратегии). Полученные результаты показывают, что юмор в обоих текстах выступает как «мягкая педагогическая сила», формируя культурные ценности и этические представления через смех и эмоциональное вовлечение читателя.

INTRODUCTION

Humor holds a unique and impactful role in children's literature, as it not only draws in young readers but also contributes to their moral, emotional, and social growth. Unlike straightforward instructional language, humor imparts values and behavioral standards through engaging stories that promote contemplation rather than mere compliance. Across many literary traditions, particularly in children's prose, humorous scenes enable authors to tackle delicate topics—such as discipline, social inequality, hypocrisy, and responsibility—without resorting to harsh didacticism. Consequently, humor serves as a subtle yet potent educational tool that can shape readers' ethical understanding while keeping them entertained and emotionally at ease [1,2].

From a theoretical perspective, humor has been interpreted through various lenses, including the incongruity theory (where laughter stems from unexpected contrasts), the superiority theory (where humor arises from feeling intellectually or socially superior to the subject), and the relief theory (where humor alleviates tension) [10]. Contemporary linguistic and pragmatic studies have also emphasized that humorous meaning is frequently constructed indirectly, requiring contextual inference, shared knowledge, and interpretive effort from the reader [11]. In children's stories, these mechanisms often intertwine with moral education, as children perceive comedic events not only as amusing but also as a form of assessment [3]. The humorous portrayal of mischief, errors, and playful defiance often aids readers in discerning which behaviors are acceptable, which are risky, and which highlight deeper societal issues [12].

In Uzbek children's prose, humor is closely linked to cultural norms and communal ethics. The comedic aspect is frequently grounded in everyday life, familiar social archetypes, and oral storytelling traditions. This is vividly illustrated in Gafur Gulom's *Shum bola (The Mischievous Boy)*, a tale that depicts ordinary people and social realities through vibrant comic episodes. The protagonist's antics elicit laughter, yet this laughter is rarely "empty": it is intricately connected to the struggles of common life, the individual's moral duties, and the community's collective values. In this way, humor supports didactic objectives by promoting hard work, patience, honesty, and community spirit, while demonstrating the repercussions of irresponsible actions. Such culturally embedded humor can be viewed as a form of "socialization through laughter," where narrative pleasure reinforces collective norms rather than direct instruction [13].

Conversely, Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* uses humor as a tool of irony and satire to critique social systems and adult authority. Twain's

young protagonist serves as a lens through which the adult world is scrutinized. School discipline, religious expectations, and community rules become sources of comedic tension, and humor reveals how social norms can be inflexible, hypocritical, or emotionally detached from children's actual experiences. Tom's playful defiance thus becomes a narrative device for exploring free thought, individual choice, and personal initiative. Twain's humor not only entertains but also encourages readers to question authority and develop independent moral reasoning [4,14].

Although both texts are widely recognized and appreciated in academic circles, there is a scarcity of comparative studies that merge stylistic and pragmatic views on humor as an educational tool. Most research tends to concentrate on the thematic or historical portrayal of childhood, often neglecting the functional role of humorous language and interactional patterns. This study aims to fill that void by exploring how stylistic elements like hyperbole, irony, comic contrast, expressive vocabulary, and dialogue-based humor work in tandem with pragmatic mechanisms such as speech acts, implicature, and face-management strategies to convey didactic meanings in both works [15].

The purpose of this article is to investigate humor as an educational instrument in Uzbek and English children's literature by comparing *Shum bola* and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. The study intends to pinpoint the primary humorous strategies employed in each text, elucidate the pragmatic functions behind these strategies, and assess how humor aids in moral and social education.

The research questions steering this study include:

1. What educational roles does humor play in *Shum bola* and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*?
2. Which stylistic devices are most prevalent in creating humorous effects in each text?
3. How do pragmatic strategies like implicature and speech acts facilitate humor in imparting indirect moral lessons?
4. What cultural values and educational models are mirrored in the humorous discourse of each work?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research employs a qualitative comparative approach centered on two classic works: Gafur Gulom's *Shum bola* and Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. These texts were chosen because they both serve as significant examples of children's or youth-oriented prose in their respective traditions and because they both focus on mischievous child protagonists whose humorous actions and interactions shape the narrative's educational message. The primary materials

include: narratorial descriptions of comic events; dialogues between children and adults; episodes involving rule-breaking, punishment, or social confrontation; humor-driven scenes that contain clear evaluative meaning.

From each text, representative episodes were chosen according to the following criteria: the episode produces humor through linguistic or narrative means; the humorous effect has an implicit or explicit evaluative target (behavior, authority, norms, hypocrisy); the episode contains potential didactic meaning, either through consequences or narrative framing.

The methodological basis of the study combines stylistic and pragmatic analysis. Stylistics allows identifying narrative and linguistic techniques (exaggeration, irony, satire, comic contrast), while pragmatics helps explain how meaning is inferred through speech acts, implicature, and face strategies [11,15].

The stylistic analysis focuses on how comic effects are created through: hyperbole and exaggeration; irony and satirical tone; comic contrast; dialogue-based humor; expressive lexical choices [12].

The pragmatic analysis examines how humorous meaning can function as indirect evaluation and social regulation, especially through: speech acts (teasing, warning, advising, criticizing); implicature and hidden meanings; face strategies (softening criticism, protecting dignity, ridicule); context-based interpretation [11,15].

To evaluate humor as an educational tool, each analyzed humorous instance was categorized according to one or more didactic functions:

No.	Didactic Function (Category)
1	Behavior correction
2	Moral teaching
3	Social criticism
4	Authority negotiation

All examples were interpreted within their narrative and cultural contexts. Rather than focusing on frequency alone, the study emphasizes functional patterns: how humor repeatedly leads the reader toward evaluation, reflection, and learning.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis reveals that humor in *Shum bola* and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* performs significant educational functions. While both works rely on mischievous child protagonists and comic situations, their humorous strategies reflect different cultural models of upbringing, social relations, and moral learning. One of the most consistent functions of humor in both works is behavior

correction. In children's narratives, mischief becomes a narrative engine that drives the plot and simultaneously creates learning opportunities. The protagonist's mistakes are presented with comic effect, yet the consequences often contain moral evaluation [9].

In *Shum bola*, humor arises from the protagonist's quick-thinking actions and spontaneous decisions, often shaped by social hardship. Comic situations expose both the boy's cleverness and his immaturity. Importantly, the humor does not simply mock the child; it invites the reader to observe how everyday choices affect others. This creates a didactic effect: the reader laughs, but also understands the necessity of responsibility and patience [7]. The educational message is typically rooted in communal ethics, where behavior is judged by its impact on family and community relations [13].

In *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, behavior correction is achieved through irony and playful narrative framing. Tom's tricks and manipulations, such as avoiding unpleasant tasks or outsmarting peers, are humorous because they highlight the contrast between childish logic and adult expectations. Twain's humor allows the reader to enjoy Tom's creativity while gradually recognizing that true maturity involves moral accountability.

A major strength of humor as a didactic device is its ability to teach without sounding like preaching. Both authors avoid heavy moral lectures by embedding ethical lessons within comic contexts.

In *Shum bola*, moral teaching is closely tied to traditional Uzbek values such as hard work, honesty, and endurance. The protagonist's humorous experiences reflect the realities of ordinary people's lives, where survival often depends on resilience and mutual support. Humor here functions as an emotional buffer: it makes hardship readable and meaningful for young audiences. At the same time, it reinforces the importance of sincerity, respect, and communal responsibility [13].

In *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, moral teaching is often linked to personal choice and independent thinking. Twain presents childhood as a space where ethical understanding develops through experience rather than direct instruction. Humor helps construct moral complexity: adults are not always correct, rules are not always fair, and society can be hypocritical. Through satire, Twain encourages readers to judge social behavior critically while also developing internal moral principles [14].

Although both works produce humor effectively, their stylistic mechanisms differ in emphasis. In *Shum bola*, exaggeration is frequently used to intensify comic impressions and dramatize everyday events. The narrator's lively tone and

the child's emotional reactions create humor that feels close to oral storytelling traditions. This aligns with the view that humor often emerges through "incongruity" and exaggerated contrast between expectation and reality [10,12].

Dialogue humor is also significant. The protagonist's interactions with adults and peers contain misunderstanding, playful argumentation, and comic misinterpretation. Such dialogues function pragmatically as face strategies: the child attempts to protect his dignity or escape blame, while adults respond with criticism, mockery, or instruction. Through these conversational exchanges, the text implicitly teaches politeness norms, respect for elders, and the consequences of dishonesty [11].

In contrast, Twain's humor strongly depends on irony and satire. The narrator often describes events in a way that subtly critiques adult seriousness and social routine. The humorous effect emerges when the reader understands more than the child characters, especially regarding the absurdity of certain adult rules [5,6].

School is a major satirical setting. Discipline, punishment, and public evaluation become comic because they reveal how authority can be performative rather than meaningful. Twain's irony allows the child's perspective to expose contradictions: adults demand moral behavior yet often demonstrate hypocrisy, and institutions claim to teach virtue while sometimes encouraging fear and conformity [5,6]. In this way, humor is not only stylistic but ideological, promoting free thought and individual evaluation [4,14].

In practical terms, humor in both narratives is crafted through indirect meanings. Many comedic moments rely on implicature, where the intended message is grasped through context rather than direct language [11]. In *Shum bola*, humorous dialogue often involves justifications, making excuses, or playful deceit. The main character uses conversation strategically to navigate challenging situations. This not only generates humor but also highlights the ethical conflict between necessity and honesty.

In *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, humor frequently arises from teasing, sarcasm, and playful manipulation. Tom's speech acts are often persuasive: he persuades others to join his schemes or deflects responsibility from himself. The humor stems from the reader's recognition of Tom's cleverness and the social dynamics that enable his success. Simultaneously, the story gradually implies that genuine independence requires integrity, not just intelligence.

Thus, in both texts, humor is not merely a comedic embellishment. It functions as a culturally influenced educational tool that guides the reader toward moral comprehension through indirect, enjoyable discourse.

CONCLUSION

This article has examined humor as a didactic tool in Uzbek and English children's literature through a comparative stylistic and pragmatic analysis of Gafur Gulom's *Shum bola* and Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. The results show that humor plays a crucial educational role in both narratives. It serves as a "soft pedagogical force," influencing moral judgment, social consciousness, and behavioral learning without overt moral teaching.

In *Shum bola*, humor is rooted in the traditional Uzbek way of life and the daily experiences of common people. Comedic scenarios mirror social conditions and cultural truths, while promoting values like diligence, patience, honesty, and community spirit. The humorous dialogue fosters empathy and responsibility by connecting personal actions to the welfare of the community [2,8].

In *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, humor is mainly conveyed through irony and satire, critiquing school discipline, social hypocrisy, and adult authority. Twain's humor emphasizes independent thinking, personal initiative, and individual choice, portraying childhood mischief as a way to navigate social power and develop internal moral judgment [4,14].

Overall, the comparative study shows that although the humorous techniques differ in style and culture, both texts employ humor to fulfill educational purposes through indirect evaluation, implicature, and reader engagement. Future research could expand this analysis by exploring more children's literature across cultures, using reader-response methods, or investigating translation challenges related to humor and cultural significance.

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