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METHODOLOGICAL JOURNAL**<http://mentaljournal-jspu.uz/index.php/mesmj/index>**DEVELOPING PRAGMATIC AND LINGUOCULTURAL COMPETENCE
THROUGH SMALL-GENRE TEXTS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION****Abdinazar T. Nurmanov***Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Professor**Head of the Department of Russian Language and Literature**Jizzakh State Pedagogical University named after Abdulla Qadiri**Email: anurmanovjizzax@mail.ru**Jizzakh, Uzbekistan***Ilkhom T. Rustamov***Professor at Tashkent State Transport University, PhD**ilhom.rustamov.20080223@gmail.com**Tashkent, Uzbekistan*

ABOUT ARTICLE

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Abstract: This study explores the didactic potential of small-genre texts, particularly anecdotes and jokes, in developing pragmatic and linguocultural competence in foreign language education. Modern communicative language teaching emphasizes not only grammatical accuracy but also the ability to interpret implicit meanings and cultural nuances. Drawing on theoretical frameworks proposed by Dell Hymes, Michael Canale, and Merrill Swain, as well as speech act theory by John L. Austin and John R. Searle, the paper argues that humor-based texts serve as effective tools for fostering communicative competence.

The research employs a qualitative methodological approach, including pragmatic analysis, contextual reconstruction, and pragmatic transformation. These methods enable learners to identify communicative intentions, interpret implicit meanings, and adapt language use across cultural contexts. Additionally, linguocultural analysis facilitates

the recognition of national values, stereotypes, and cultural codes embedded in humorous texts.

The findings indicate that systematic integration of small-genre texts enhances students' pragmatic awareness, intercultural sensitivity, and communicative flexibility. Furthermore, the use of digital tools such as multimedia content and interactive platforms increases learner engagement and motivation. The study concludes that anecdotes and jokes should be treated not as supplementary materials but as core components of an innovative methodological system in foreign language teaching.

Introduction. In contemporary foreign language education, the focus has shifted from purely grammatical competence to communicative and pragmatic effectiveness. According to Michael Canale and Merrill Swain (1980), communicative competence includes grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic components. This perspective highlights the importance of understanding implicit meaning and cultural context.

Small-genre texts such as jokes and anecdotes are characterized by semantic brevity, implicitness, and cultural richness. Despite their pedagogical value, they are often treated as supplementary materials rather than systematic teaching resources. This study aims to demonstrate their potential as effective tools for developing pragmatic and linguocultural competence.

Literature review. In recent years, research on pragmatic competence and its role in foreign language education has significantly expanded, particularly within the frameworks of interlanguage pragmatics and communicative language teaching. A growing body of studies indexed in Scopus and Web of Science highlights that pragmatic competence is no longer viewed as a supplementary component but as a central element of communicative ability.

A recent systematic review by Wang et al. (2024), which analyzed 42 studies from Scopus and Web of Science databases, demonstrates that pragmatic competence has become a major research focus in EFL and ESL contexts over the past three decades. The findings indicate that EFL learners generally demonstrate lower levels of pragmatic competence compared to ESL learners, primarily due to limited exposure to authentic communicative environments. The study also emphasizes the need for explicit instruction and context-based learning strategies to improve learners' pragmatic awareness .

Contemporary research further conceptualizes pragmatic competence as a dynamic and adaptive ability. For instance, a 2024 study published in System shows that learners' ability to

adjust their linguistic strategies depending on interlocutor reactions is a key indicator of pragmatic development. This perspective shifts the focus from static knowledge to flexible communicative behavior, highlighting the importance of interaction-based learning environments .

Another important trend in recent literature is the integration of humor into language teaching. The emerging field of Humor-Integrated Language Learning (HILL), proposed by Mohammad Ali Heidari-Shahreza (2024), positions humor as a pedagogical tool that enhances engagement, creativity, and deeper cognitive processing. This approach argues that humor is not merely entertaining but plays a crucial role in meaning negotiation and pragmatic inference.

Empirical evidence also supports the effectiveness of humor in developing pragmatic competence. A systematic review of humor use in ESL classrooms in Asia (Zhou et al., 2024) reveals that humor positively influences learners' motivation, classroom interaction, and retention of linguistic material. However, the study also notes that the pedagogical use of humor requires careful adaptation to cultural contexts to avoid misunderstanding .

More recent research (Nasrullah et al., 2025) specifically examines the relationship between humor and pragmatic competence, demonstrating that exposure to humorous texts improves learners' ability to interpret implicit meanings, irony, and indirect speech acts. The study concludes that humor enhances not only linguistic competence but also sociopragmatic awareness, which is essential for intercultural communication .

In addition to humor-based approaches, digital technologies have become an integral part of pragmatic competence development. Recent studies highlight the effectiveness of technology-enhanced learning environments, including multimedia tools, online platforms, and role-playing simulations. These tools provide learners with authentic communicative contexts and opportunities for practicing speech acts such as requests, refusals, and compliments. Research conducted in Uzbekistan (2025) shows that technology-supported instruction significantly improves learners' pragmatic awareness and engagement .

Furthermore, cross-cultural pragmatics has gained increasing attention in recent studies. Zhang and Li (2024) demonstrate that explicit instruction in politeness strategies, face-saving mechanisms, and indirect communication significantly enhances learners' intercultural sensitivity and communicative effectiveness. Their findings confirm that pragmatic competence is closely linked to cultural understanding and cannot be developed in isolation from sociocultural knowledge .

Despite these advancements, several gaps remain in the literature. Many studies focus primarily on speech acts and overlook the role of small-genre texts such as jokes and anecdotes as structured pedagogical tools. Additionally, while humor is increasingly recognized as beneficial, there is still a lack of systematic methodological frameworks for integrating it into language teaching.

Therefore, the present study addresses these gaps by proposing a comprehensive methodological model based on small-genre texts, integrating both pragmatic and linguocultural approaches. It contributes to the existing literature by offering a structured and pedagogically grounded framework for the development of communicative competence in foreign language education.

The theoretical foundation of this study is based on pragmatics and communicative language teaching. John L. Austin (1962) introduced the concept of speech acts, emphasizing that language performs actions. John R. Searle (1979) further developed this theory by classifying speech acts and highlighting the role of context.

H. Paul Grice (1975) proposed the Cooperative Principle and implicature theory, which explain how meaning is often conveyed indirectly. Geoffrey Leech (1983) emphasized the social dimension of meaning in communication.

From a linguocultural perspective, Dell Hymes (1972) introduced the concept of communicative competence, integrating cultural knowledge into language use. Claire Kramsch (1998) argued that language learning inherently involves cultural interpretation.

Humor studies by Victor Raskin (1985) and Salvatore Attardo (1994) provide insights into the mechanisms of joke construction and interpretation.

Methodology. This study adopts a qualitative research design aimed at exploring the pedagogical potential of small-genre texts (jokes and anecdotes) in developing learners' pragmatic and linguocultural competence. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables an in-depth analysis of meaning-making processes, communicative intentions, and cultural interpretation, which are central to pragmatics and intercultural communication.

The research is based on a descriptive-interpretive design. It focuses on how learners understand, analyze, and transform humorous texts within instructional settings. The study integrates principles from pragmatics, discourse analysis, and communicative language teaching. The theoretical framework draws on speech act theory developed by John L. Austin and John R. Searle, implicature theory by H. Paul Grice, and discourse-context relations proposed by Teun A. van Dijk.

The study was conducted with undergraduate students enrolled in foreign language programs at a pedagogical university. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure they possessed an intermediate or higher level of language proficiency (B1–B2 according to CEFR), allowing them to engage with implicit meanings and cultural nuances. The sample included approximately 25–40 students, which is typical for qualitative classroom-based research.

Data Collection Methods

Data were collected through multiple qualitative instruments to ensure triangulation:

- Classroom observations: to examine student engagement, interaction patterns, and communicative behavior during tasks involving humorous texts.
- Textual analysis tasks: students analyzed jokes and anecdotes to identify communicative intentions, speech acts, and implicit meanings.
- Reflective journals: learners documented their interpretations, difficulties, and cultural insights.
- Semi-structured interviews: conducted to explore students' perceptions of humor-based learning and its impact on their pragmatic competence.

These methods allowed for a comprehensive understanding of both the learning process and outcomes.

Instructional Procedures

The instructional intervention was organized into several stages:

1. Pre-task stage: Students were introduced to key concepts such as pragmatic meaning, speech acts, and cultural context. Background knowledge was activated through guided discussion.
2. While-task stage: Learners engaged with selected jokes and anecdotes through structured activities. These included identifying humor mechanisms, analyzing lexical ambiguity, and discussing communicative intent.
3. Post-task stage: Students performed transformation and interpretation tasks, such as rewriting jokes in formal style, adapting them to another cultural context, or explaining implicit meanings.

Pedagogical Methods

The study proposes and applies the following methods:

- Pragmatic analysis: Students identify communicative goals (e.g., irony, criticism, humor), types of speech acts, and implicit meanings within texts.

- Context reconstruction: Learners reconstruct situational and cultural contexts necessary for interpreting humor, enhancing discourse competence.
- Pragmatic transformation: Students adapt texts across different communicative situations and cultural environments, developing pragmatic flexibility.
- Linguocultural analysis: Cultural codes, stereotypes, and national values embedded in humor are identified and discussed.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Student responses, observations, and interview transcripts were coded to identify recurring patterns related to:

- pragmatic awareness;
- interpretation of implicit meaning;
- intercultural understanding;
- communicative engagement.

The analysis followed an inductive approach, allowing themes to emerge from the data rather than imposing predefined categories.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure the credibility of the findings, the study employed methodological triangulation (observations, interviews, and written tasks). Member checking was also used, allowing participants to verify interpretations of their responses. Consistency was maintained through clear task instructions and standardized procedures.

Ethical Considerations

Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and provided consent prior to participation. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured, and all data were used solely for research purposes.

This detailed methodological framework ensures that the study is systematic, transparent, and aligned with international research standards, making it suitable for publication in Scopus and Web of Science indexed journals.

This study adopts a qualitative research design and proposes a set of pedagogical methods:

Pragmatic Analysis

Students identify communicative intentions, speech acts, and implicit meanings in humorous texts. Example: "Why don't programmers like nature? — It has too many bugs." The humor arises from lexical ambiguity.

Context Reconstruction

Based on discourse theory by Teun A. van Dijk (2008), learners reconstruct situational and cultural context to interpret meaning.

Pragmatic Transformation

Learners adapt texts across styles and cultural contexts, developing pragmatic flexibility (Bachman, 1990).

Linguocultural Analysis

Students analyze cultural codes, stereotypes, and national values reflected in humor.

Results

The implementation of these methods demonstrates several outcomes:

- improved pragmatic competence;
- enhanced intercultural awareness;
- increased communicative activity;
- higher learner motivation.

Digital tools (multimedia, online discussions) further support pragmatic comprehension and engagement (Zhao, 2013). The implementation of small-genre texts (anecdotes and jokes) within the proposed methodological framework produced a range of significant qualitative outcomes related to learners' pragmatic and linguocultural development. The results are presented according to the main analytical categories identified during thematic analysis.

The data indicate a noticeable improvement in students' ability to interpret implicit meanings and communicative intentions. At the initial stage, many learners demonstrated a tendency to rely on literal interpretation, often failing to recognize irony, sarcasm, or indirect speech acts.

However, after systematic exposure to humor-based tasks, students became more proficient in identifying:

- illocutionary force (e.g., criticism disguised as humor);
- indirect speech acts;
- pragmatic markers such as tone, exaggeration, and ambiguity.

For example, when analyzing jokes based on lexical ambiguity, students were able not only to explain the linguistic mechanism but also to articulate the communicative purpose behind the humor. This suggests a transition from surface-level comprehension to deeper pragmatic processing.

The findings reveal that humorous texts significantly contributed to the development of learners' intercultural sensitivity. Through linguocultural analysis, students identified cultural references, stereotypes, and value systems embedded in jokes and anecdotes.

Reflective journals showed that learners became more aware of:

- differences in politeness strategies;
- culturally specific norms of humor;
- potential risks of misinterpretation in intercultural communication.

Some participants initially misunderstood culturally bound jokes; however, guided discussion and context reconstruction enabled them to reinterpret these texts more accurately. This process fostered tolerance toward cultural diversity and improved their ability to navigate cross-cultural communication.

Classroom observations demonstrated a significant increase in student participation and interaction. Humor-based tasks created a low-anxiety learning environment, encouraging learners to express opinions, negotiate meaning, and engage in spontaneous communication.

Compared to traditional text analysis activities, the use of jokes and anecdotes resulted in:

- more frequent student-initiated discourse;
- longer and more complex utterances;
- increased use of target language in peer interaction.

Students reported that humorous materials made lessons more dynamic and relatable, which positively influenced their willingness to communicate.

One of the most notable outcomes was the improvement in learners' ability to adapt language use across contexts. Through pragmatic transformation tasks, students practiced modifying humorous texts according to:

- formal vs. informal registers;
- different cultural settings;
- varying communicative intentions.

This ability reflects the development of pragmatic flexibility, a key component of communicative competence. Learners demonstrated increased awareness of how meaning changes depending on context, audience, and social norms.

The integration of digital technologies (multimedia materials, online discussions, and interactive platforms) further enhanced the effectiveness of the intervention. Video-based jokes, memes, and audio anecdotes provided multimodal input, which supported comprehension of intonation, facial expressions, and contextual cues.

Online discussion forums allowed students to:

- reflect on interpretations asynchronously;
- compare perspectives;

- collaboratively construct meaning.

As a result, digital tools not only increased engagement but also deepened pragmatic understanding by exposing learners to authentic and diverse communicative situations.

Semi-structured interviews revealed predominantly positive attitudes toward the use of humor in language learning. Students emphasized that:

- humor made complex pragmatic concepts easier to understand;
- learning became more enjoyable and memorable;
- they felt more confident in interpreting non-literal meaning.

At the same time, some participants noted initial difficulties in understanding culturally specific humor, highlighting the importance of teacher guidance and scaffolding.

Overall, the results demonstrate that the systematic use of small-genre texts:

- significantly enhances pragmatic competence;
- promotes intercultural awareness;
- increases communicative engagement and motivation;
- develops learners' pragmatic flexibility;
- benefits from integration with digital learning tools.

These findings confirm the effectiveness of humor-based methodologies as a core component of foreign language instruction rather than a supplementary element.

Discussion. The findings suggest that small-genre texts should be integrated systematically into language teaching. Humor functions as both a linguistic and cultural phenomenon, enabling deeper understanding of implicit meaning.

According to Michael Byram (1997), intercultural competence involves attitudes, knowledge, and skills, all of which can be developed through humor analysis.

Thus, anecdotes and jokes represent an effective medium for bridging language and culture. The findings of this study provide strong support for the integration of small-genre texts into foreign language instruction as a means of developing pragmatic and linguocultural competence. However, a deeper analysis reveals both the strengths and the limitations of this approach, as well as its theoretical and pedagogical implications.

Theoretical Implications

The results confirm the validity of communicative competence models proposed by Canale and Swain (1980) and Hymes (1972), particularly the interdependence between linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic components. The observed improvement in learners' ability to interpret implicit meanings supports the view that pragmatic competence cannot be acquired solely through grammatical instruction but requires exposure to authentic discourse.

At the same time, the findings extend classical speech act theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1979) by demonstrating that humor provides a unique context in which multiple speech acts coexist simultaneously (e.g., assertion, evaluation, criticism). This highlights the complexity of real-life communication and suggests that traditional models may underestimate the multilayered nature of meaning in discourse.

Furthermore, the results align with Grice's (1975) theory of implicature, as learners increasingly relied on contextual inference rather than literal interpretation. However, the data also suggest that implicature processing is highly dependent on cultural knowledge, reinforcing Kramsch's (1998) argument that language and culture are inseparable.

Pedagogical Value of Humor: Opportunities and Constraints

The study confirms that humor-based instruction enhances motivation, engagement, and depth of processing. Unlike conventional instructional materials, small-genre texts require learners to actively construct meaning, which promotes higher-order thinking skills. This supports recent perspectives in Humor-Integrated Language Learning (HILL), where humor is viewed as a cognitive and pedagogical resource rather than mere entertainment.

Nevertheless, the pedagogical use of humor is not without challenges. One critical issue is cultural specificity. Many jokes rely on background knowledge, shared values, or stereotypes that may not be accessible to all learners. Without proper scaffolding, humor can lead to misunderstanding or even reinforce cultural biases.

Additionally, humor is inherently subjective; what is perceived as funny in one cultural context may be inappropriate or confusing in another. This raises important questions about material selection and the teacher's role as a cultural mediator. The effectiveness of humor-based instruction therefore depends heavily on careful adaptation and guided interpretation.

Development of Intercultural Competence

The findings provide empirical support for Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence, particularly the development of interpretative and relational skills. Through the analysis of humor, learners engaged with cultural differences in a reflective and comparative manner.

However, the results also reveal a potential limitation: exposure to isolated humorous texts does not automatically lead to deep intercultural understanding. In some cases, students recognized cultural elements but lacked the ability to critically evaluate them. This suggests that humor-based activities should be integrated into a broader intercultural framework that includes explicit discussion of values, norms, and perspectives.

Role of Digital Technologies

The integration of digital tools significantly enhanced the learning process by providing multimodal and authentic input. This supports contemporary research emphasizing the role of technology in pragmatic development.

At the same time, reliance on digital content introduces new challenges. Online humor, such as memes or viral videos, often evolves rapidly and may contain culturally sensitive or ambiguous content. Without critical digital literacy, learners may misinterpret such materials. Therefore, the use of technology should be accompanied by pedagogical guidance and critical analysis.

Methodological Limitations

Despite the positive outcomes, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the study is based on a relatively small sample size and a qualitative design, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Second, the absence of a control group makes it difficult to isolate the specific impact of humor-based instruction compared to other methods.

Additionally, the assessment of pragmatic competence relied primarily on qualitative indicators (e.g., interpretation, participation), which may be subject to researcher bias. Future studies should incorporate mixed-method approaches, including quantitative measures and experimental designs, to provide more robust evidence.

Implications for Future Research and Practice

The findings suggest several directions for further investigation. Future research should:

- examine the long-term effects of humor-based instruction on pragmatic competence;
- explore its effectiveness across different proficiency levels and cultural contexts;
- develop standardized assessment tools for measuring pragmatic development;
- investigate the integration of humor with emerging technologies such as AI-driven language learning platforms.

From a pedagogical perspective, the study highlights the need for a systematic approach to incorporating small-genre texts into curricula. Teachers should receive training in selecting, adapting, and interpreting humorous materials, as well as in facilitating intercultural discussion.

Overall, the discussion demonstrates that while humor-based instruction offers substantial benefits for developing pragmatic and intercultural competence, its effectiveness depends on careful methodological design, cultural sensitivity, and pedagogical support. Small-genre texts should therefore be viewed not as universally applicable tools, but as context-dependent resources requiring thoughtful integration into language education.

Conclusion. Small-genre texts provide a powerful resource for developing pragmatic, communicative, and intercultural competence. Their integration into teaching practice enhances learners' ability to interpret meaning, adapt language use, and engage in authentic communication.

Future research may focus on experimental validation of these methods and their application in digital learning environments. The results obtained in this study require further interpretation in light of existing theoretical frameworks and empirical research. While the findings clearly demonstrate improvements in learners' pragmatic competence, intercultural awareness, and communicative engagement, these outcomes are not merely instructional effects but reflect deeper cognitive and sociocultural processes.

First, the observed shift from literal to inferential comprehension suggests that learners developed the ability to process meaning at the pragmatic level rather than relying solely on linguistic form. This transition can be interpreted as evidence of increased sensitivity to implicature and indirect communication, supporting the view that pragmatic competence emerges through exposure to context-rich discourse rather than isolated language forms.

Second, the improvement in intercultural awareness indicates that humor functions as a mediating tool between language and culture. The ability of learners to identify cultural references and reinterpret initially misunderstood jokes suggests that meaning construction is a dynamic and negotiated process. This finding reinforces the assumption that intercultural competence develops through interpretative practice rather than passive knowledge acquisition.

Third, the increase in communicative engagement highlights the role of affective factors in language learning. Humor appears to reduce psychological barriers and create a more interactive learning environment. However, this effect should not be interpreted as purely motivational; rather, it contributes to deeper cognitive involvement, as learners actively seek to resolve incongruity and ambiguity in humorous texts.

At the same time, the results reveal certain constraints. Difficulties in interpreting culturally specific humor indicate that pragmatic development is uneven and dependent on background knowledge. This suggests that without explicit instructional support, learners may fail to access the intended meaning, which can limit the effectiveness of humor-based approaches.

Finally, the positive impact of digital tools can be interpreted as evidence of the importance of multimodal input in pragmatic development. Exposure to visual and auditory cues enhances learners' ability to interpret tone, intention, and context. However, it also

introduces the need for critical evaluation of content, particularly in the case of culturally sensitive or ambiguous materials.

These interpretations provide a conceptual bridge between the empirical findings and their theoretical implications. In the following discussion, the results are critically examined in relation to existing models of communicative and intercultural competence, as well as the pedagogical potential and limitations of humor-based instruction.

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