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BLACK HUMOUR: ORIGIN DESCRIPTION AND AN ATTEMPT OF IDENTIFICATION

Стаття присвячена опису запропонованої автором методології виокремлення чорного гумору на матеріалі художнього прозового тексту. Матеріалом дослідження слугують твори малих форм, зокрема автентичне оповідання «Свиня» ("Pig"), найбільш яскравого представника англомовної літератури ХХ ст. – Роальда Даля (1916–1990). *Мета* статті полягає в обґрунтуванні методології виявлення та аналізу чорного гумору на матеріалі художнього прозового тексту. Для досягнення мети були використані наступні *методи*: метод спостереження, композиційний аналіз, контекстуальний аналіз і семантико-стилістичний аналіз. Простежено історію розвитку і традицію теоретичного осмислення терміну «чорний гумор». Наведено трактування вказаного терміну з опорою на вітчизняні і зарубіжні тлумачні джерела та виявлено провідні критерії його розмежування серед різновидів комічного. Розглянуто особливості творчого методу Р. Даля, чия поетика характеризується яскраво вираженим чорно-гумористичним компонентом. Зазначено алгоритм виокремлення чорного гумору в прозових творах, що передбачає застосування сукупності трьох груп методів аналізу (лінгвістичних, семасіологічних і комунікативних).

На прикладі англомовного оповідання обґрунтовано доцільність застосування наступних складових лінгвістичних методів, а саме: визначення одиниці вивчення, характеристика контексту, аналіз мовних одиниць. Доведено, що одиницею дослідження чорного гумору є складне синтаксичне ціле, яке в композиційно-тематичному плані містить всі необхідні структурні елементи – зачин, розгортання і кінцівку. Засобами зв'язності виступають повтори лексичних одиниць у межах двох послідовних реплік, анафорична уточнювальна фраза, анафоричний займенник, паралелізм. Важливою рисою граматичної організації є узгодження (у широкому значенні) дієслівних часових форм, що обумовлює створення спільної тимчасової перспективи оповіді. Як засоби вираження суб'єктивної модальності використовуються модальні дієслова, частки, прислівники, особлива інтонація. Типовою рисою питально-відповідного комплексу є наявність еліптичних речень.

Аналіз сукупності мовних одиниць різних рівнів зумовлює акцент на макабричному елементі – смерті, що розглядається в оповіданні трагікомічно. Композиційно-мовленнєвий засіб організації чорного гумору базується на протиставленні, антонімії лексичних одиниць, контрасті. На лексико-семантичному рівні частотним є функціонування гіперболи, вербальної та ситуаційної іронії, парадоксу. Типовими засобами синтаксичного рівня є перепитування та пояснення, засновані на повторі з оцінкою почутого, вираженою розповідними, окличними або питальними реченнями. Графічний акцент, створений за допомогою курсиву, зосереджує увагу на смислах, підкреслених питальними словами, допоміжними та смисловими дієсловами. Паралінгвістичні засоби допомагають розкрити емоції та хід думок головного героя. За перспективу дослідження вбачаємо опис семасіологічних та комунікативних методів як складових алгоритму, що в сукупності з лінгвістичними методами уможливлює більш повне уявлення про експлікацію чорного гумору в художньому прозовому творі.

Ключові слова: чорний гумор, комічне, тема смерті, алгоритм, лінгвістичний метод, складне синтаксичне ціле, контекст, мовна одиниця.

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Introduction. Being a term that has a deep philosophical and literary meaning, the word-combination "black humour" appeared in France in the 30s of the 20th century when the concept of humour was comprehended and theoretically formulated by A. Breton [Breton, 1940], the founder of French surrealism. In the United States, the concept of "black humour" gained its popularity after the publication of an anthology compiled by an American writer and literary critic B.J. Friedman [Friedman, 1965].

In the late 60s and during the 70s of the last century, this concept received a theoretical basis in American criticism. An attempt to characterise this phenomenon as an integral worldview structure was made in the anthology "The World of Black Humor", compiled by D. M. Davis [Davis, 1967]. According to the author of the book, black humour is an Americanised variant of the literature of the absurd, which in turn is one of the essential elements in the intellectual tradition of the entire Western culture, and as a type of worldview became widespread in post-war America due to its adequacy to the cultural and historical environment. Later, American scientists who studied "black humour" (B. J. Friedman [Friedman, 1965], D. M. Davis [Davis, 1967], M. F. Schulz [Schulz, 1973], Th. LeClair [LeClair, 1975] etc.) substantiated it as a purely American phenomenon that emerged as a result of an ideological crisis in US society [Лаврентьев, 2009].

The work of writers, covered in these anthologies, serves as the starting point for the development of the school of "black humourists" (D. Barthelme, J. Barth, J. Hawkes, J. P. Donleavy, Th. Pynchon), which originated in America in the 1950s, and in the 1960s and 1970s it became widespread and popular [Лаврентьев, 2009]. The American school of "black humour" is considered to be the first manifestation of postmodernism. In their works the representatives of this school use plots based on absurdity, anti-humanism, the philosophy of existentialism, the perception of the world as chaos, and the assertion of the absolute aimlessness of existence actively.

"Black humourists" have a general outlook based on the use of a number of techniques, such as: parodies of sacred topics, appeals to "taboos"; burlesque, performance, carnivalisation, desire for outrage and provocation; grotesque, laughter at the terrible and repulsive things; associative perception of the world, a large number of allusions, reference phrases; irony, which is perceived as the main principle of interpretation of everything that happens in the world; eclecticism, mixing of styles; illogicality and surrealism of the plot, a game without rules, based on an irrational and absurd beginning, etc. [Алиева, 2014; Гулиев, 2011; Киреева, 2004; Несмелова, Карасик, 2017].

In the monograph "Black Humor Fiction of Sixties: A Pluralistic Definition of Man and His World" by the American critic M.F. Schulz [Schulz, 1973] the definition itself is given for the first time, i.e., the clear limits of the use of this term are set. Considering "black humour" as one of the literature types, the content of which is absurd, M. F. Schulz identified the main feature of the American "black humour" of the 60s, namely its pragmatic orientation. The critic considers pluralism, conformism, and a shattered system of values to be the ideological and aesthetic basis of the "black humour" method.

After consolidating the status of a historical and literary phenomenon, the word-combination "black humour" is given special attention in works connected with the study of American literature. Conventionally, they can be divided into two groups. The first group includes studies that consider "black humour" within the comic category as one of the types of humorous literature; the second one comprises studies of the individual creativity of writers belonging to the group of "black humourists" (see, for example, the works by [Bier, 1968], [Blair & Hill, 1978], [Hipkiss, 1984], [LeClair, 1975], [Mazur, 2001], [Weber, 1973]).

American critics, studying the works of "black humourists" in a broad literary context, outline its distinctive features. They are a creative attitude to the world; an obligatory combination of the destructive beginning, denoted by the "absurdity" and "nihilism" words, with constructiveness, a combination of some positive values; the connection between the ratio of constructiveness and destructiveness with the comic beginning [Лаврентьев, 2009, p. 12]. Literary critics consider mainly the realisation of this literary trend in American novel prose of the 50s–80s of the 20th century and do not focus on the possibility of the existence of black humour as a general literary phenomenon in the literary processes of other countries or eras.

Literature Review

A significant scientific contribution to the study of black humour prose works features, of certain creative method aspects and "black humourists" writing technique in the context of the development of modernism and postmodernism was made by such domestic and foreign scientists as A.I. Lavrentev [Лаврентьев, 2009], L.M. Kazakova [Казакова, 2006], O.P. Boichenko [Бойченко, 2011], A.Z. Leskiv [Леськів, 2005] and others.

Research woks affect the mechanisms of realisation of the comic category not only in black-humour prose (mainly novels) [Бойченко, 2011; Казакова, 2006; Леськів, 2005; Лісун, 2012], but also in folklore (the so-called sadistic poems) [Бутенко, 1994, p. 148–153]; in "black" anecdotes [Косинець, 2014, pp. 111–115]; in jokes [Шмелева, 2009, p. 210]; in creolised texts (films, animated sitcoms) [Эпштейн, 2013, p. 129], confirming increased attention to this phenomenon as to both sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic phenomena.

Currently, the works of linguists are aimed at analysing the stylistic features of black humour [Кузебна, Усик, 2021, pp. 184–187]; describing the communicative and linguistic characteristics of the comic category functioning, its black-humour type in particular [Blynova, 2022, pp. 4–8]; considering black humour patterns that emphasise the theme of death [Храбан, 2021, pp. 247–248]; characterising the elements of black humour in the works of postmodernism [Nalini, 2016, pp. 53–56]; studying the cognitive and emotional aspects of the perception of black humour [Willinger et al., 2017, pp. 159–167].

However, the development of an algorithm for identifying black humour in a prose text with simultaneous consideration of the linguistic and extralinguistic (pragmatic characteristics, social and cultural factors, psychological characteristics, cognitive component and paralinguistic features, etc.) components of its actualisation as a kind of comic category is overlooked by linguists, which determines the topicality of this paper.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of the article is to describe the methodology suggested by the author for identifying black humour from the material of a literary prose text. Achieving of the overall goal presupposes the solution of the following objectives, namely: 1) to trace the history of development and the tradition of the "black humour" term theoretical understanding; 2) to provide an interpretation of the specified term based on native and foreign interpretive sources and identify the leading criteria for its differentiation among the varieties of the comic category; 3) consider the peculiarities of R. Dahl's creative method, whose poetics is characterised by a clearly expressed black-humorous component; 4) to specify the algorithm for identifying black humour in prose works, which involves the use of three groups of analysis methods (linguistic, semasiological and communicative); 5) on the example of an English-language story, to prove the expediency of applying the following components of linguistic methods, namely: definition of the unit of study, characterisation of the context, analysis of language units. The following methods and techniques were used to achieve the general aim of the research and to solve specific objectives, such as: observation method, compositional analysis, contextual analysis, and semantic-stylistic analysis.

Results and Discussion

Let us turn to the interpretation of the term in question in the dictionaries of the English and Ukrainian languages. As a rule, in English-language reference sources, the concept of "black humour" ("grim / gallows / dark humour") is used to mean joking or laughing about sad or difficult situations; serious, dark, and ironic humour in a desperate or hopeless situation concerning the unpleasant aspects of life; humour characterised by the use of usually painful, ironic, grotesque comic episodes, the so-called gallows humour; the one which reveals the object of its fun in the distortion of moral values, causing a gloomy smile. For example, "**gallows humour** – jokes about unpleasant things like death" [Wehmeir, 2023] "**gallows humour** – jokes or humorous remarks that are made about unpleasant or worrying subjects such as death and illness" [McIntosh, 2023]; "**Gallows humor** is humor about very unpleasant, serious, or painful circumstances. Any humor that treats serious matters, such as death, war, disease, and crime, in a light, silly or satirical fashion is considered gallows humor. Gallows humor has been described as a witticism in response to a hopeless situation. It arises from stressful, traumatic, or life-threatening situations, often in circumstances such that death is perceived as impending and unavoidable" [Sanger &

Wales, 2023]; "**black humor** – humor marked by the use of usually morbid, ironic, grotesquely comic episodes" [Stamper, 2023]; "**black humor** – humor that seeks its fun in cruelty, turning moral values topsy-turvy, evoking 'the grin from the grim' " [Shipley, 1979, p. 32].

In the Ukrainian linguistic and literary practice, the term "black humour" belongs to identical interpretations, emphasising the absurdism and grotesqueness of its elements: "black humour (hereinafter the translation is ours. – I. B.) – humour with cynicism, the comic effect of which is to make fun of sad topics (death, illness, physical disabilities)" [Русанівський, 2023]; "black humour is a feature of writing related to absurdism, which is characterised by sharply expressed grotesque forms and a lack of perception of 'false' reality" [Ковалів, 2007, vol. 2, p. 578]. Therefore, black humour considers the suffering of people more absurd than pathetic, or depicts human existence as ironic and senseless, although to some extent comic; jokes about sad or difficult situations; in prose and drama, the combination and juxtaposition of painful and grotesque elements with humour and farce to convey a disturbing effect and reflect the absurdity and cruelty of life.

Taking into account the leading ideas of the specified interpretations, we understand black humour as one of the varieties of a comic category; as humour with an admixture of cynicism, the comic effect of which consists in mocking of 'gloomy', macabre topics; as an ironic-bitter smile of a person about his / her miserable situation in the real world.

As our observations prove, the main communicative purpose of the black-humorous variety of the comic is to make fun of macabre topics, and the effect of the comic is created by making fun of danger, death or any other topic that is strictly prohibited for jokes (by the morals and morality of ordinary humour). At the same time, the nature of laughter is marked as mocking, cynical, sharp, cruel. The emotional character, that is, the addressee's reaction to a certain black-humorous comic text, causes dissatisfaction and combines resentment, anger, hatred, sadness, fear, pessimism, despair. The type of social activity of a person implies aggressiveness. The form of expression of the comic subjective modality according to the emotional and psychic criterion is differentiated as negative; according to communicative and pragmatic criterion it is influential; in compliance with means of expression it is implicit; in relation to the thematic basis, it is the subject of ridicule within the framework of political, social, household, personal topics.

Unlike the other types of comic category (humour, irony, satire, sarcasm), dark humour produces a double reaction. At first, it is laughter caused by the entertaining aspect of the joke told, and later it is horror or even shame from the initial reaction. The dual nature of black humour is also confirmed by the fact that, on the one hand, it is a cynical mockery of human values, and on the other hand, it helps to dull the fear of death, overcome humiliation, discrimination emotionally [Флеонова, 2003, p. 14]. So, the two leading features that distinguish it from similar phenomena qualitatively are the following ones: cruelty as a thematic component and laughter as an emotional component.

Such duality is manifested even in the very phrase "black humour" as a paradox [Эпштейн, 2013, p. 127]. The word "black" appears in the same synonymous line with the words "difficult", "dark", "gloomy", "joyless", "disturbed", "sinister", "ominous", "alarmed" [Караванський, 2000, p. 462], while the word "humour" is associated with fun, a joke, a hilarious mistake. Thus, black humour will always be on the borderline between funny and scary or even disgusting, causing sharp, cruel, caustic laughter, sometimes tears (not those of joy, but of sadness, fear, pessimism), in which fun and despair, comic and tragic are combined. The author of the Boston *Dictionary of World Literary Terms. Forms, Techniques, and Criticism* notes that dark humour evokes laughter where any other way of describing it will only evoke tears or crying: "black humor brings laughter when others turn to tears" [Shipley, 1979, p. 32].

The material of the study is the works of small forms, the authentic story "Pig" in particular, by Roald Dahl (1916–1990), the most prominent representative of the English-language literature of the 20th century. It should be noted that Roald Dahl is one of the best writers of Great Britain, who made a significant contribution to the development of British culture, literature in particular. Being the winner of numerous awards and prizes, the author repeatedly received the Edgar Poe Award for the work presented in this field. Critics describe R. Dahl as a writer who is characterised by a grotesque imagination, the ability to see an anecdotal situation that develops in an unexpected way. His works are famous for their lack of sentimentality, their unexpected endings and the presence of the comic features [Мейлах, 2017, p. 110].

He is a great master of stories with elements of satire, irony, sarcasm, black humour, surrealism, fantasy, eccentricity, paradox, and an unpredictable plot [Викторова, 2011, p. 144–201; Капкова, 2015, p. 105; West, 1990, pp. 115–116]. According to S. G. Serebryakova, R. Dahl's prose is "a constant play with the reader: a play of hidden meanings at the level of the phrase exchange between characters, compositional techniques of text construction, problems of morality, good and evil, a play in the development of events" [Серебрякова, 2009, p. 37].

In his works the author's typical sense of humour, which is sometimes cruel, blends harmoniously with the mystification of characters' images, with the absurdity of situations, as R. Dahl combines fairy tales, mysticism, and humour into unity skilfully and masterfully. Moreover, irony and lambent humour (especially black one) are felt in many phrases of the story, exposing the negative qualities and defects of people, the problems of good and evil. The life of the heroes turns into fantastic, sometimes unpleasant events. R. Dahl is not ashamed to highlight the dark side of people, he fills this darkness with humour, that is, black humour. Such an unusual, even unconventional, combination is probably the secret of the success of his stories.

It should be emphasised that humour in the writer's works is not used for its primary purpose to incite laughter and entertain people. Most probably, humour is unusually combined with dark themes, grotesqueness, and violence, illustrating the strange and sadistic aspects of human behaviour. All these things create a contradictory and whimsical world that draws the reader's attention. As a rule, the meaning of the author's words is unclear and illusory, and even contradicts the moral and social order. The writing style is defined by an ironic tone and a cynical satirical approach and adds new possibilities to the story. On the one hand, it combines horror, shock and absurdity; on the other hand, it involves the technique of building plots with a wonderful ability to spin a fairy tale.

Language in R. Dahl's artistic method is also a means of social criticism. The words in the stories are filled with double meanings that only add to the complexity of the plot characterising. However, his writing style is described by directness and simplicity. The gap between the intensity of the events, which take place, and the ordinariness of the language gives a convincing manner to the narrative.

Therefore, most researchers of R. Dahl's literary work [Jaber, 2016, p. 1170; Klugová, 2007, p. 50; Schober, 2009, p. 30; West, 1990, pp. 115–116] point out such particular features of the writer's poetic style as fantasy, contradiction, irony, double meaning, absurdity, black humour, grotesque. Thus, particularly M.H. Jaber's statements serve as an indisputable confirmation of this fact: "The style that Dahl developed over the years is based on the tension and friction between fantasy and reality, between fact and fiction. Dahl's fictional world is full of contradictions and ironies. It is also full of double meanings where things are not what they appear to be and where meaninglessness and absurdity are prominent components. Dahl's world is also coloured with blackness and grotesqueness; full of comedy that makes you shiver instead of laugh and characters who invite a sneak peek into a different side, a dark side of human nature" [Jaber, 2016, pp. 1170–1181].

The thematic spectrum of English-language black humour, marked by us during the study of the writer's work, is wide. As a result of the analysis of literary works, we note that the theme of death is put forward in the foreground of ridicule. So, notably the analysed story depicts the death of the parents of the main character named Lexington, the killing of animals by meat-eaters, the death (poisoning) of Lexington's aunt, the actual death (murder) of Lexington.

The algorithm for identifying black humour in prose works involves the use of a combination of three groups of analysis methods, which is predetermined by the expansion of the aspect of black humour studying from the dichotomy "language – speech" to the triad "language – speech – communication":

1) linguistic methods;
2) semasiological methods;
3) communicative methods.

In linguistics, the "language – speech" dichotomy, generated by glossematics, having passed through several stages and approaches of comprehension, crystallised into a certain concept of language linguistics, the object of study of which is the rules for constructing coherent speech and its semantic categories expressed according to these rules. Later developments in this field

found application in such different areas of scientific and practical knowledge as text linguistics and discourse analysis. At present, the methodology for distinguishing black humour includes not only aspects of language in the systemic descriptive understanding and transformational grammar, but also elements of the theory of speech acts, functional and communicative grammar. Thus, we consider it necessary to advance the idea of supplementing the dichotomy "language – speech" with a third component, i. e. communication.

The scope of the publication does not allow a detailed description of the three groups of methods, so in this article we will focus on linguistic methods. We will consider the main components of the first group of methods by using the deductive method of research – from the general to the partial, which will let us draw a conclusion about a certain element of the whole (in our case – the main criteria for the black humour explication) based on knowledge of the general properties of the entire unity in the corpus of the literary texts we have studied (including the stories by R. Dahl).

1. Definition of the unit of study.

The unit of research of black humour is a complex syntactic whole (that is indicated like CSW below), which is a structural and semantic unit of the text and can cover one or more paragraphs [Загнітко, 2007, p. 44]. This term was introduced into scientific operation by the linguist M.S. Pospelov. In the linguistic literature, the following concepts are synonymous with CSW, namely: supraphrase unity, prose stanza, microtext, textema, hypersyntaxema, etc. The CSW is a combination of semantically and grammatically connected statements, which is characterised by the unity of the topic, a special syntactic connection of the components [Селіванова, 2006, p. 557] and which expresses the complete development of thought.

On the part of the intonation, the CSW is specified by rhythmic-intonational unity and extended pauses at the boundaries. From the meaning point of view, the unity of thought, statements, and themes is typical of the CSW, which is especially acutely felt in fiction. Close semantic unity corresponds to syntactic unity. The most important syntactic characteristic of the CSW as a syntactic unit is the presence of specific syntactic connections between its components – tatements (chain, parallel, conjunctive, combined ones).

A full description of the CSW consists of its analysis in two ways – compositional-thematic and syntactic. As one of the major structural and semantic units, into which speech is divided, the CSW has a certain composition. Structurally, the CSW usually consists of three components: beginning, development, and ending. Repetitions, anaphoric pronouns, tense forms of verbs, order of words and sentences, parallelism, and intonation can be the means of connection in CSW.

The CSW has a flexible structure, it is not a reproduced unit of a strict structure (only grammatical patterns, models of sentence connection are reproduced) [Сковородников, 2014, p. 484]. The CSW sets the programme, character, scheme of thought development, method of presentation. Specific types of the implementation of these schemes differ both syntactically and compositionally.

As an example of CSW, we are giving a dialogue that takes place between the main characters of R. Dahl's story "Pig" – a six-year-old Lexington and aunt Glosspan, his guardian. Death is the main theme of this story (for example, the death of Lexington's parents, the death of his aunt and Lexington himself). So, the killing of animals by meat-eaters, their food preferences, the way of cooking and eating meat, which is conveyed by the explanations of aunt Glosspan (a vegetarianism supporter), is depicted in a black and humorous tone:

"And the very first thing I should do would be to teach you how to cook."

"I think I would like that, Aunt Glosspan."

"Whether you like it or not, you're going to have to learn some time," she said. "Vegetarians like us don't have nearly so many foods to choose from as ordinary people, and therefore they must learn to be doubly expert with what they have."

"Aunt Glosspan," the boy said, "what *do* ordinary people eat that we don't?"

"Animals," she answered, tossing her head in disgust.

"You mean *live* animals?"

"No," she said. "Dead ones."

The boy considered this for a moment.

"You mean when they die they *eat* them instead of *burying* them?"

"They don't wait for them to die, my pet. They kill them."

"How do they kill them, Aunt Glosspan?"

"They usually slit their throats with a knife."

"But what *kind* of animals?"

"Cows!" the boy cried. "You mean like Daisy and Snowdrop and Lily?"

"Exactly, my dear."

"But *how* do they eat them, Aunt Glosspan?"

"They cut them up into bits and they cook the bits. They like it best when it's all red and bloody and sticking to the bones. They love to eat lumps of cow's flesh with the blood oozing out of it."

"Pigs too?"

"They adore pigs."

"Lumps of bloody pig's meat," the boy said. "Imagine that. What else do they eat, Aunt Glosspan?"

"Chickens."

"Chickens!"

"Millions of them."

"Feathers and all?"

"No, dear, not the feathers. Now run along outside and get Aunt Glosspan a bunch of chives, will you, my darling" [Dahl, 1960, pp. 10–13].

The aforementioned dialogue demonstrates that the main technique of a comic effect creating is the discrepancy between the protagonist's expected horrified reaction to the information received and the one that is actually depicted, that is the reaction of admiration. Emotional forcing during the conversation is achieved through an atypical interest of the child in death, the process of killing animals as objects of food.

As one can see, in the compositional and thematic substance, the specified CSW contains all the necessary structural elements – the beginning (the aunt's desire to teach the boy how to cook vegetarian dishes), the development (the discussion of the brutal killing of domestic animals by meat-eaters, the way of cooking and eating meat dishes) and the ending (the aunt's request to the boy who is asked to run to the garden for onions).

The means of connection of the CSW are repetitions of lexical units (verbs – *like, kill*; nouns or corresponding pronouns that replace them – *cows, pigs, chickens, feathers, animals, ones*) within two consecutive phrases ("I think I would **like** that, Aunt Glosspan". – "Whether you **like** it or not, you're going to have to learn some time," she said; "**Pigs** too?" – "They adore **pigs**"), anaphoric clarifying phrase "you mean" ("**You mean** *live* animals?"; "**You mean** when they die they *eat* them instead of *burying* them?"); "**You mean** like Daisy and Snowdrop and Lily?"), anaphoric pronoun *they* ("**They** don't wait for them to die, my pet. **They** kill them."; "**They** usually slit their throats with a knife."), parallelism (**They cut them up into bits** and **they cook the bits**. **They like** it best when it's all red and bloody and sticking to the bones. **They love** to eat lumps of cow's flesh with the blood oozing out of it).

An important feature of grammatical organisation is the agreement (in a broad sense) of verb tense forms, which determines the creation of a common temporal perspective of a story or message. Predicates within the analysed CSW have a common tense substance and mood, which contributes to the close connection of sentences. The beginning is characterised by the use of verbs in the Oblique Mood (the very first thing **would be**; I **would like**). The development is characterised by the use of verbs in the Indicative Mood, Present Tense, Non-perfect Correlation (what ***do*** ordinary people **eat** that we **don't**; they usually **slit** their throats with a knife). The ending is characterised by the use of verbs in the Imperative Mood (Now **run** along outside and **get** Aunt Glosspan a bunch of chives, **will** you).

Representing a close semantic-syntactic unity, CSW is a modal unity at the same time. As a rule, sentences have a common subjective-modal colouring, and any change in the modal substance affects its structure. Modal verbs (I **should** do; you'**re going to have to** learn; they **must** learn); particles (**No**, dear, **not** the feathers; "**No**," she said. "Dead ones."); adverbs ("You mean like Daisy and Snowdrop and Lily?" – "**Exactly**, my dear."), a special intonation of surprise

(**Cows!**; **Chickens!**), etc. are used as means of expressing subjective modality (to mark transitions, the beginning, end of thought, etc.)

A typical feature of the question-answer complex is the presence of elliptical sentences ("**Pigs too**?" – "They adore pigs."; "**Feathers and all**?" – "No, dear, not the feathers."; "**Cows and pigs mostly, and sheep**"; "**Millions of them**."), the meaning of which is explicated from the previous or situational context. Direct characters' speech is full of interrogative and exclamatory sentences.

2. Characteristics of the context.

According to I.I. Kovalyk, we understand the context as "a content-complete segment of oral or written speech, sufficient to determine the meaning of a word, phrase or sentence that is a part of it, to establish grammatical word forms, characteristics of syntactic structures, and to clarify stylistic or linguistic functioning of words (word forms) of phrase and statement" (cited after [Кочан, 2008, p. 45]).

The analysis of the combination of linguistic units at different levels, indicated below, determines the emphasis on the macabre element – death, which functions in the dialogue tragicomically, without properly reflecting sadness of the described situation. The contrast (good – bad) is based on the woman's attitude towards vegetarians and meat-eaters, respectively. The exaggeration is expressed due to the way of eating the meat of killed animals, which is excessive cruelty on the part of meat-eaters. It looks as if all meat-eaters are perverted killers who first cut the throats of domestic animals (pigs, chickens, cows, lambs) with a knife, then they cut the meat into pieces and cook it, finally they enjoy eating meat with the blood oozing out.

Aunt Glosspan's detailed descriptions of animal deaths in the form of straightforward horrible answers must be shocking to a six-year-old boy. However, the boy's exciting statements with a typical intonation of surprise, graphically highlighted by an exclamation mark, show the opposite effect: "**Lumps of bloody pig's meat**," the boy said. "**Imagine that**"; "**Cows!**"; "**Chickens!**". Both the boy and the reader expect that the meaning of such an important topic as death will be revealed, and the conversation will end with a meaningful explanation or lesson. However, there is an unexpected ending to the conversation, when the aunt accidentally sends the boy to fetch onions from the garden, which enhances the darkly humorous colouring of the presented fragment.

3. Analysis of language units.

The dramatically outlined contrast in the habits of people who eat meat and people who eat only vegetable and dairy food determines the compositional and speech means of organising the presented CSW, which is based on opposition / antonyms of lexical units. Elements of text composition are also the means of expressing contrast.

As a result, we can observe the use of single antonyms (*dead – live*) and synonymous lines of positive and negative gradation (*like – love – adore*; *die – kill – bury*). In addition, the vocabulary of the negative colouring (*blood oozing, bloody, red, cut, stick, die, kill, bury, slit throats with a knife*) contrasts with names expressing endearment while addressing (*(my) dear, my pet, my darling*). At the lexical and semantic level, the functioning of hyperbole (*therefore they must learn to be **doubly expert** with what they have*; ***millions** of them*; ***all** red and bloody*), of verbal irony (Vegetarians like us don't have nearly so many foods to choose from as **ordinary people;** "**Whether you like it or not**, you're going to have to learn some time"), and of paradox ("You mean when they die **they *eat* them instead of *burying* them**?") are frequent. The situational irony is peculiar to the final part, where we find a discrepancy between what is expected when explaining facts and what is declared in reality: No, dear, not the feathers. **Now run along outside and get Aunt Glosspan a bunch of chives, will you, my darling**.

Typical means at the syntactic level are overinterrogations and explanations based on repetition ("**Animals**," she answered, tossing her head in disgust. – "You mean *live* **animals**?"; "**Cows** and pigs mostly, and sheep." – "**Cows!**"; "**Feathers** and all?" – "No, dear, not the **feathers**"; "**Pigs** too?" – "They adore **pigs**.") with an evaluation of what was heard. This evaluation is expressed by declarative, exclamatory or interrogative sentences ("Chickens." – "**Chickens!**"; **Imagine that**; "**You mean** when they die they *eat* them instead of *burying* them?"; "**You mean** like Daisy and Snowdrop and Lily?").

Throughout the dialogue there is a graphic accent created with the help of italics (what *do* ordinary people eat that we don't?; But what *kind* of animals?; You mean when they die they *eat* them instead of *burying* them?; But *how* do they eat them, Aunt Glosspan?), which focuses attention on meanings emphasised by question words (*how,* what *kind*), auxiliary and notional verbs (*do*, *eat*, *burying*). The italicised lexical items emphasise Lexington's desire to find out the food preferences of ordinary people, i.e. meat-eaters.

Paralinguistic means help to reveal the boy's emotions and thoughts and the aunt's disgusting attitude to meat-eaters: "Cows!" the boy **cried**; The boy **considered** this for a moment; "Animals," she answered, **tossing her head in disgust**.

Conclusions

Taking its origins purely in the literary tradition, black humour over the course of a century acquires the status of a historical and literary phenomenon, and subsequently the object of linguistic research, forming a general outlook based on the use of certain means and techniques. Being a type of comic category (among which humour, irony, satire, and sarcasm are distinguished), black humour is the kind of humour with an admixture of cynicism, the comic effect of which consists in mocking of 'gloomy', macabre topics. As a result of R. Dahl's literary works analysis, we note that the author's individual style is characterised by a pronounced black-humorous component, where the theme of death is brought to the forefront of ridicule.

The algorithm for black humour identifying in prose works involves the use of a combination of analysis methods, such as: linguistic, semasiological, and communicative ones. Among the components of linguistic methods are the definition of the unit of study, the characterisation of the context, the analysis of linguistic units. Using the example of the English-language short story "Pig" by R. Dahl, the functioning of language units of a complex syntactic whole in a certain context, which embodies black humour, is considered, which leads to the following conclusions.

The analysed story demonstrates that the main technique of a comic effect creating is the discrepancy between the protagonist's expected horrified reaction to the information received and the one that is actually depicted, that is the reaction of admiration. Emotional forcing during the conversation is achieved through an atypical interest of the child in death, the process of killing animals as objects of food.

In the compositional and thematic substance, the complex syntactic whole contains all the necessary structural elements – the beginning, the development, and the ending. The means of connection are repetitions of lexical units within two consecutive phrases, anaphoric clarifying phrase, anaphoric pronoun, parallelism. An important feature of grammatical organisation is the agreement (in a broad sense) of verb tense forms, which results in a common tense perspective of the narrative. Modal verbs, particles, adverbs, and special intonation are used as means of expressing subjective modality. A typical feature of the question-answer complex is the use of elliptical sentences.

An analysis of language units at different levels determines the emphasis on the macabre element – death that is tragicomically highlighted in the story. The compositional and speech means of organising black humour is based on opposition, antonymy of lexical units, contrast. The functioning of hyperbole, verbal and situational irony, and paradox are frequent at the lexical and semantic level. Typical means at the syntactic level are overinterrogations and explanations based on repetitions with an evaluation of what was heard. This evaluation is expressed by such types of sentences according to their purpose of the utterance as declarative, exclamatory or interrogative ones. The graphic emphasis, which is created by means of italics, focuses on the meanings emphasised by interrogative words, auxiliary and notional verbs. Paralinguistic means help to reveal the protagonist's emotions and thoughts.

The perspective of the study presupposes a description of semasiological and communicative methods as components of the algorithm, which, together with linguistic methods, allows a more complete understanding of the explication of black humour in a literary prose work.

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BLACK HUMOUR: ORIGIN DESCRIPTION AND AN ATTEMPT OF IDENTIFICATION

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Key words: black humour, comic category, theme of death, algorithm, linguistic method, complex syntactic whole, context, language unit.

The article deals with the study of such black humour aspects as the history of its appearance and attempt of distinguishing among the other types of the comic category, namely humour, irony, satire, and sarcasm. The material of the study is the works of small forms, the authentic story "Pig" in particular, by Roald Dahl (1916–1990), the most prominent representative of the English-language literature of the 20th century. *The aim* of the article is to describe the methodology suggested by the author for identifying black humour from the material of a literary prose text. Achieving the overall goal presupposes the solution of the following objectives. Thus, the history of development and the tradition of theoretical understanding of the "black humour" term have been traced. An interpretation of the specified term based on native and foreign interpretive sources has been provided and the leading criteria for its differentiation among the varieties of the comic category have been identified. The author considers the peculiarities of R. Dahl's creative method, whose poetics is characterised by a clearly expressed black-humorous component. The article also specifies the algorithm for identifying black humour in prose works, which involves the use of three groups of analysis methods (linguistic, semasiological and communicative).

Using the example of an English-language story, the author proves the expediency of applying the following components of linguistic methods, namely: definition of the unit of study, characterisation of the context, analysis of language units. The following *methods* and techniques were used to achieve the general aim of the research, such as: observation method, compositional analysis, contextual analysis, and semantic-stylistic analysis. We interpret black humour as one of the varieties of a comic category; as humour with an admixture of cynicism, the comic effect of which consists in mocking 'gloomy', macabre topics; as an ironic-bitter smile of a person about his / her miserable situation in the real world.

It is proved that the unit of research of black humour is a complex syntactic whole, which in the compositional and thematic substance contains all the necessary structural elements – the beginning, the development, and the ending. The means of connection are repetitions of lexical units within two consecutive phrases, anaphoric clarifying phrase, anaphoric pronoun, parallelism. An important feature of grammatical organisation is the agreement (in a broad sense) of verb tense forms, which leads to the creation of a common tense perspective of the narrative. Modal verbs, particles, adverbs, and special intonation are used as means of expressing subjective modality. A typical feature of the question-answer complex is the use of elliptical sentences.

An analysis of language units at different levels determines the emphasis on the macabre element – death that is tragicomically considered in the story. The compositional and speech means of organising black humour is based on opposition, antonymy of lexical units, contrast. The functioning of hyperbole, verbal and situational irony, and paradox are frequent at the lexical and semantic level. Typical means at the syntactic level are overinterrogations and explanations based on repetitions with an evaluation of what was heard. This evaluation is expressed by declarative, exclamatory or interrogative sentences. The graphic emphasis, which is created by means of italics, focuses on the meanings emphasised by interrogative words, auxiliary and notional verbs. Paralinguistic means help to reveal the protagonist's emotions and thoughts. The perspective of the study presupposes a description of semasiological and communicative methods as components of the algorithm, which, together with linguistic methods, allows a more complete understanding of the explication of black humour in a literary prose work.

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