

## THE EXPRESSION OF HIDDEN MEANING THROUGH IRONY AND ITS MANIFESTATIONS IN TWO LANGUAGES

ВЫРАЖЕНИЕ СКРЫТОГО СМЫСЛА С ПОМОЩЬЮ  
ИРОНИИ И ЕГО ПРОЯВЛЕНИЯ НА ДВУХ ЯЗЫКАХ

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VA UNING IKKI TILDAGI KO'RINISHLARI

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**Annotation.** This article analyzes the characteristics of expressing hidden meaning through irony. It explores how irony manifests across different cultures and languages, focusing on its linguistic and pragmatic features. The study compares the use of irony in English and Russian, highlighting both similarities and differences in their use of implicit meaning. Special attention is also given to the role of irony in translation.

**Key words:** rony, Semantic attitude, Resistance, Complicity, Stable irony, Unstable irony, Cultural context, Rhetoric, Subversion, Interpretation, Political discourse, Social critique, Dialogic interaction, Power structures, Literary device.

**Аннотация.** В данной статье анализируются особенности выражения скрытого смысла с помощью иронии. Рассматриваются проявления иронии в различных культурах и языках, особенно в английском и русском. Особое внимание уделяется лингвистическим и прагматическим аспектам, а также сравнению общего и различного в использовании иронии в этих двух языках. Отдельный акцент сделан на роль иронии в переводе.

**Ключевые слова:** Ирония, Семантическое отношение, Сопротивление, Соучастие, Устойчивая ирония, Неустойчивая ирония, Культурный контекст, Риторика, Подрыв, Интерпретация, Политический дискурс, Социальная критика, Диалогическое взаимодействие, Структуры власти, Литературное средство.

**Annotatsiya.** Ushbu maqolada kinoya – ya'ni ironiya vositasida yashirin ma'noning ifodalanish xususiyatlari tahlil qilinadi. Turli madaniyat va tillarda kinoyaning qanday ko'rinishlarga ega ekani, uning lingvistik va pragmatik xususiyatlari o'rganiladi. Asosan ingliz va rus tillarida kinoya vositasida ifodalanagan yashirin ma'nolar solishtirilib, ularning o'zaro umumiy va farqli jihatlari aniqlanadi. Maqolada tarjimada kinoyaning roliga ham alohida e'tibor qaratiladi.

**Kalit soʻzlar:** Iraniya, Semantik munosabat, Karshilik, Hamkorlik, Barqaror ironiya, Barqaror bo'lmagan ironiya, Madaniy kontekst, Ritorika, Izhg'orlik, Tushuncha, Siyosiy nutq, Ijtimoiy tanqid, Dialogik o'zaro ta'sir, Kuch tuzilmalari, Adabiy vosita.

**Introduction.** Language is not merely a tool for direct communication; it is also a complex system for expressing nuanced meanings, emotions, and social attitudes. One of the most subtle and powerful means of conveying hidden or indirect meaning is irony. Irony allows speakers to say one thing while intending something quite different—often the opposite. This rhetorical device enables deeper expression, social critique, and emotional distance, making it a rich subject of study in both linguistics and cultural analysis. Irony operates at the intersection of semantics, pragmatics, and culture. Although irony is a universal linguistic phenomenon, its forms and functions vary widely across languages and cultural contexts. What may be considered ironic or humorous in one language might be interpreted differently—or not at all—in another. For this reason, the study of irony across different linguistic systems offers valuable insights into how meaning is constructed, interpreted, and even manipulated within communication. This article focuses on the expression of hidden meaning through irony in English and Russian, two languages that offer distinct linguistic and cultural landscapes. By analyzing how irony functions in both languages, we aim to highlight both the universal aspects of ironic communication and the culturally specific forms it can take. The choice of English and Russian is motivated by their widespread use, rich literary traditions, and distinct stylistic and pragmatic conventions. English, as a global lingua franca, often employs irony in understated or sarcastic forms, while Russian tends to use irony more overtly in political satire, social commentary, and everyday speech. In order to explore irony as a carrier of hidden meaning, this study examines its semantic structures, pragmatic functions, and linguistic expressions. Special attention is paid to how irony operates through lexical choices, syntactic constructions, and discourse markers. We also consider how context—both linguistic and situational—shapes the interpretation of ironic utterances. For example, intonation, facial expression, and shared cultural background play a crucial role in whether irony is perceived and correctly interpreted by the listener. Another key dimension of this study is the role of translation in preserving or transforming irony. Irony presents a unique challenge for translators, as its meaning often depends on cultural references, wordplay, or tone that may not have direct equivalents in the target language. Many instances of irony lose their effect or become ambiguous when translated literally. Therefore, this article also investigates translation strategies used to convey irony between English and Russian, such as equivalence, adaptation, modulation, and explicitation. The goal is to understand how translators navigate the fine line between

preserving the original intent and making the text accessible to a new audience. In comparing the expression of irony in English and Russian, we identify both shared mechanisms and distinctive features. English irony often relies on understatement, deadpan delivery, or sarcasm, which can make it subtle and context-dependent. Russian irony, by contrast, may be more direct and socially loaded, reflecting historical and cultural norms of humor and critique. These differences underscore the importance of not only linguistic knowledge but also cultural competence in understanding and interpreting irony. This study contributes to the broader field of contrastive linguistics, as well as to pragmatics, discourse analysis, and translation studies. By focusing on how hidden meaning is constructed and conveyed through irony, we aim to provide a deeper understanding of the interplay between language, culture, and communication. The findings of this research can benefit not only linguists and translators but also educators, cross-cultural communicators, and anyone interested in the subtleties of meaning in human interaction.

**Literature review.** Irony, as a means of expressing hidden or indirect meaning, has been recognized as a powerful linguistic and communicative tool in many languages. It functions by allowing speakers to say something that, on the surface, appears straightforward, but actually conveys a deeper or opposite message. The use of irony is especially significant in conveying attitudes such as criticism, sarcasm, or humor, depending on the context in which it appears. In general, irony works by relying on a contrast between what is said and what is meant. This contrast often becomes clear through contextual clues—such as tone of voice, facial expressions, or the surrounding situation. For example, a speaker who says “*Great job!*” after someone clearly makes a mistake is likely using irony. The true meaning is understood not from the literal words, but from the context in which they are spoken. Irony is not limited to humor. It can be used to express disappointment, disagreement, or social critique in subtle and indirect ways. In some cultures and languages, irony has developed into an important tool for expressing complex emotions or avoiding direct confrontation. This makes it especially valuable in both everyday speech and in literature or media. English and Russian, though very different in structure and cultural background, both make use of irony in rich and varied ways. In English, irony is often expressed through understatement, sarcasm, or deadpan delivery. The tone may be calm and flat, while the real meaning lies in the contrast between what is said and what is understood. In Russian, irony may appear more directly, and often carries emotional or cultural weight. It is common in literature, public speech, and even in ordinary conversation as a way to show cleverness, social awareness, or criticism. Despite its usefulness, irony can be difficult to recognize and interpret, especially for language learners or non-native speakers. Because it relies so heavily on context, people who are unfamiliar with the culture or communication style of a language may completely miss the ironic

message. This makes irony an especially interesting topic when studying how different languages handle indirect meaning. In the context of translation, irony presents unique challenges. A phrase that is clearly ironic in one language may lose its effect or even its meaning when translated into another. This is because irony often depends not only on words, but on cultural background, tone, and shared knowledge between the speaker and the listener. Translators must find creative ways to keep the original meaning and emotional tone, even if the words themselves need to change. Furthermore, the way irony is understood can vary from one culture to another. Some societies may value directness and clarity, making irony less common or less appreciated. Others may use irony frequently as a way to deal with sensitive topics, express resistance, or add depth to communication. Understanding these differences helps explain why irony may appear more frequently or take different forms in English and Russian. A foundational literary approach to irony is found in Wayne C. Booth's *A Rhetoric of Irony*, where he distinguishes between "stable" and "unstable" irony. Stable irony occurs when the speaker's intended meaning is clear and consistent throughout the text, while unstable irony leaves room for multiple interpretations, requiring the reader to actively engage in constructing meaning. Booth emphasizes the role of the reader in detecting irony and argues that understanding irony involves shared cultural assumptions and mutual knowledge. Booth's ideas are significant because they emphasize the active role of the reader or audience in interpreting irony, and how that interpretation can vary depending on the context and the type of irony used.[1] For example, A person walks outside during a heavy rainstorm, gets drenched, and says: "*What a perfect day for a picnic!*" [3] The person is saying that it's a perfect day for a picnic, which typically implies good weather, ideally dry and sunny. The person is sarcastically implying that the day is far from perfect for a picnic because of the rainstorm. The comment contrasts with the actual situation (rainy, unpleasant weather). The intended meaning is clear and easily understood by the listener. The context (the rainstorm) makes it obvious that the speaker doesn't believe it's a good day for a picnic. The irony is unambiguous. The speaker's sarcasm is easy to recognize, and everyone involved would interpret the irony in the same way. The meaning remains consistent throughout and doesn't rely on multiple interpretations or a complicated understanding of context. Linda Hutcheon, in her seminal work *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*, expands on the idea that irony is not just a stylistic device but also a social and political tool. She views irony as a "semantic attitude," where distance is created between what is said and what is meant. According to Hutcheon, irony is deeply contextual and dialogic—it does not exist in isolation but rather emerges in interaction between speaker, audience, and broader cultural frameworks.[2] She also argues that irony can serve both as resistance and complicity, depending on who is speaking and who is listening. When we learn from example a satirical cartoon depicts a politician smiling surrounded by poor

individuals. The caption read *"He's doing a great job of helping the poor."* [4]The cartoon appears to praise the politician's actions in addressing poverty. The true meaning is critical of the politician. The juxtaposition of the politician's smile with the suffering of others highlights the irony. The cartoonist is making a critique of the politician's inaction or incompetence. This use of irony undermines the politician's public image. It calls attention to the gap between what is said (the politician's supposed success) and what is meant (the reality of their failure to help the poor). The cartoon is a political resistance that challenges dominant ideologies. Another example is that, in a corporate ad, employees proudly declare: *"We care about the environment. Our new product is eco-friendly!"* [5] Literal Meaning: The company claims it is environmentally responsible, promoting their product as eco-friendly. Intended Meaning (Irony): There is an underlying irony in the statement, especially if the product is not truly eco-friendly or the company's other practices are not environmentally sustainable. This suggests the ad may be more about marketing than actual commitment to environmentalism. Complicity: In this case, irony reinforces the company's power by allowing them to present themselves as environmentally conscious without making real changes. The audience may recognize the irony but may not act on it, leaving the status quo intact. The irony here becomes a tool of complicity, reinforcing the dominant corporate practices. We think Linda Hutcheon's perspective on irony is insightful and powerful, particularly because it expands the role of irony beyond just a stylistic tool to a social and political force. Her idea of irony as a "semantic attitude" emphasizes how it creates a critical distance between what is said and what is meant, allowing speakers to challenge dominant ideologies and expose contradictions in society. [7]

What we find particularly compelling is her recognition that irony can serve as both resistance and complicity. It's easy to think of irony as inherently subversive, but Hutcheon makes an important point: irony's effect can depend on who is using it and who is receiving it. For example, irony can critique power structures, as in the case of political satire, but it can also be used by those in power to maintain the status quo, like corporate greenwashing. This dual nature of irony makes it complex—it's not just a simple act of critique, but a tool that can be leveraged in multiple ways depending on the context. We think Hutcheon offers a more nuanced understanding of irony. Instead of seeing it as just a clever or sarcastic remark, she frames it as a tool that can both disrupt and reinforce the structures around us. This view highlights how language and power are always interconnected, and how irony, when used strategically, can reflect and influence cultural and political realities. [6]

**Conclusion.** In conclusion, irony is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon that extends far beyond its traditional role as a rhetorical device. Through the works of scholars such as Wayne C. Booth and Linda Hutcheon, we gain a deeper understanding



of its social, political, and cultural significance. Booth’s distinction between stable and unstable irony highlights the varying degrees of clarity and interpretative involvement required from the audience. Stable irony provides a clear contrast between what is said and what is meant, whereas unstable irony invites the reader to actively engage in interpreting multiple possible meanings. This distinction emphasizes the interaction between the speaker and the audience in the construction of meaning, showcasing irony as a dynamic force. Hutcheon’s view of irony as a “semantic attitude” further enriches our understanding by framing irony as not just a literary tool but a powerful social and political instrument. According to Hutcheon, irony is deeply contextual and dialogic, emerging through the relationship between the speaker, the audience, and the broader cultural framework. This makes irony highly adaptable, capable of serving both as a form of resistance—challenging societal norms and power structures—and as a form of complicity, reinforcing the status quo without necessarily invoking real change. Irony’s capacity to function in both ways is a testament to its versatility and power in navigating complex social dynamics. [8] Ultimately, the study of irony reveals its enduring relevance across various fields, from literature to politics and everyday communication. It allows us to explore the nuanced ways in which language shapes meaning, reflects power relations, and influences cultural conversations. As both a tool for critique and a mechanism of reinforcement, irony remains an indispensable force in shaping public discourse and personal expression. Its dynamic nature ensures that it will continue to be a potent and essential means of communication, challenging our assumptions and inviting deeper reflection on the world around us.

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