

# CROSS-CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF HUMOR IN LINGUISTIC AND SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXTS

**Oybek Kulmamatov,**

Senior teacher, Nordic International University

**Abstract.** In this article, we explore “latifa”, “anecdote”, and “chiste” as xenomorphic genres, drawing on the analytical hypotheses of various scholars. Our research involved identifying the cultural contexts of anecdotes, examining their structural elements, analyzing their linguistic characteristics, conducting comparative studies, and incorporating personal observations. Additionally, the act of recounting anecdotes provides insight into cognitive processes, the development of human perception, and the formation of emotions. Several researchers have studied these genres from different perspectives, including their xenomorphic nature. We believe that these genres are closely linked to the ways in which human imagination is shaped and the methods used to interpret it.

**Keywords:** Latifa, anecdote, brainstorming, human mind, genre, comic, pun, chiste argo, culture, language.

**Introduction.** Humor is an integral part of any culture, reflecting its values, traditions, and social norms. The way humor is perceived and expressed varies widely across societies, shaped by historical experiences, linguistic peculiarities, and collective psychology. It serves multiple functions: entertainment, social bonding, satire, and even resistance against oppression.

Each culture has its own comedic traditions, with humor often reflecting societal attitudes toward authority, everyday life, and human behavior. For instance:

- **Western humor** often relies on irony, sarcasm, and self-deprecation, with British humor being particularly famous for its dry wit and understatement.
- **Eastern humor**, especially in countries like Japan and China, tends to be more situational and respectful, often incorporating wordplay and exaggerated politeness.
- **Middle Eastern and Central Asian humor**, including Uzbek *latifa* and Persian anecdotes, often contain wisdom, satire, and moral lessons, blending entertainment with ethical reflection.
- **Latin American humor** is expressive and often revolves around physical comedy, wordplay, and social criticism, seen in the popularity of *chistes* and caricatures.

Functions of Humor in Society

Humor plays various roles in culture:

**Social Bonding** – Laughter strengthens social ties and creates a sense of unity within a community.

**Satire and Criticism** – Political and social humor serves as a tool for critique, allowing people to challenge authority in an indirect manner.

**Emotional Relief** – Humor helps people cope with stress, hardships, and difficult situations.

**Identity Formation** – Shared humor fosters a sense of belonging and distinguishes cultural groups.

Linguistic structures shape humor differently across cultures. Some jokes rely on puns and wordplay, while others depend on cultural context or situational absurdity. For instance, what is considered funny in one language may lose its humor in translation due to differences in phonetics, idioms, or cultural references.

Humor is a universal yet culturally specific phenomenon that reflects a society's values, attitudes, and historical experiences. Whether through anecdotes, jokes, or satire, humor remains a vital part of human interaction, fostering social cohesion and offering insight into the cultural mindset of different peoples.

Cognitive development in children has been extensively studied in psychology, with Spanish researchers Hernán Lozano and Rebecca Puche-Novarro experimentally testing linguistic and visual semiotic hypotheses related to paradigmatic and syntagmatic structures. Their findings suggest that these cognitive mechanisms also play a role in the interpretation of humor and comics. In everyday life, people tend to recall joyful and humorous experiences more vividly than routine events. However, this does not mean their lives were filled with more happiness—rather, it reflects the brain's tendency to preserve situations that are emotionally engaging or cognitively stimulating. This characteristic plays a significant role in the development of human thought and behavior.

The inclination toward humor and laughter has likely existed since ancient times, manifesting through various comedic genres that people have used to entertain and engage with their surroundings. One of these genres is the anecdote, which etymologically derives from the Greek word **ἀνέκδοτον** (anékdoton), meaning “unpublished”. Initially, anecdotes served to illustrate historical and literary figures but later evolved into concise, witty stories often featuring wordplay or unexpected twists.

#### *Defining the Anecdote as a Genre*

Literary analysis has struggled to classify anecdotes definitively as an independent genre. Although some short stories by authors such as Chekhov, Boccaccio, and Maupassant contain anecdotal elements, their works are not considered collections of anecdotes. Instead, anecdotes tend to function as rhetorical devices within speeches or dialogues. For example, in *The Pickwick Papers*, Charles Dickens integrates anecdotes through the character Samuel Weller's humorous storytelling.

Scholars have attempted to develop chronological classifications of anecdotes, but this effort is complicated by the genre's fluid nature. Unlike historical or ethical narratives, anecdotes are not primarily intended to document events or provide moral instruction; their primary function is to elicit laughter. Given their adaptability, it is difficult to impose rigid classification systems on them.

#### *Research Methods and Theoretical Perspectives*

This study employs a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches, drawing upon primary and secondary sources. It also incorporates descriptive and experimental methods to analyze the structural and functional aspects of anecdotes. Despite the lack of comprehensive research on the origins and evolution of anecdotes, A.P. Peltzer's work provides some insights into their historical development. He noted that in ancient times, religious figures used humorous apocryphal texts to attract and engage congregations. Over time, anecdotes have retained their core characteristics while blending with other literary and spoken forms, making it difficult to distinguish them clearly from comedic stories.

Russian scholars such as M.M. Bakhtin, A.D. Shmelov, and Ye.Ya. Shmeleva have recognized anecdotes as a distinct speech genre. However, many researchers argue that anecdotes have transcended the boundaries of a speech genre and now function as cultural phenomena, passed down orally across generations. If anecdotes are indeed a speech genre, then they have always been one, much like toasts and prayers.

#### *Anecdotes as a Xenomorphic Genre*

Due to the anecdote's capacity to merge with and adapt to various forms, a more suitable classification might be that of a **xenomorphic genre**. The term *xenomorph*, originating from Greek (*xénos*—foreign, *morph*—form), was first popularized by the 1979 film *Alien*. In this context, a **xenomorphic genre** is one that retains its core identity while taking on the form of other genres. There are two main ways this process occurs:

1. **Fluid adaptation**, where the anecdote seamlessly fits into another genre like liquid into a container.
2. **Transformational adaptation**, where the anecdote modifies another genre, much like a virus alters its host.

By applying this concept, the anecdote can be understood as a genre that constantly reshapes itself within different cultural and linguistic traditions.

#### *Anecdotes and Their Cultural Equivalents*

The anecdote is a universally recognized form of humor, but its manifestations vary across cultures. In Uzbek folklore, the closest equivalent to the anecdote is the **latifa**—a short, witty narrative with a humorous and often satirical tone. The word

*latifa* originates from Arabic and means “joke” or “humor.” This genre has been prominent in Central Asia since ancient times, often featuring clever and just protagonists. Examples of *latifa* appear in classical works such as **Yusuf Khos Khojib’s** *Kutadgu Bilig* and **Saadi’s** *Gulistan*. Later, Rabguzi’s *Kissasi Rabguzi* and Alisher Navoi’s *Khamasa* incorporated elements of this tradition.

During the Soviet period, European and Russian cultural influences introduced the concept of the anecdote into Uzbek society. Although Uzbek folklorists debate whether *latifa* and anecdotes are distinct genres, no definitive research has established clear differences between them. While some scholars argue that these forms evolved separately, their functions and structures remain remarkably similar.

A comparable phenomenon can be observed in Spanish culture, where the term **chiste** refers to humorous short stories. However, *chiste* is not classified as a formal genre in Spanish literary traditions. This suggests that different cultures develop their own forms of comedic expression, sometimes without formalizing them into distinct literary categories.

**Conclusion.** While anecdote-like storytelling has existed across cultures, the classification of anecdotes as a distinct genre remains debated. The overlap between Uzbek *latifa*, Spanish *chiste*, and Russian anecdotes illustrates how humor adapts to cultural and linguistic contexts. The term **xenomorphnic genre** offers a new perspective on how anecdotes maintain their essence while integrating into other forms. Although anecdotal storytelling has historically been shaped by oral traditions, modern secular cultures tend to generalize comic genres rather than strictly categorize them. Since the distinctions between *latifa*, anecdotes, and similar humorous forms are primarily cultural rather than functional, it may be more appropriate to recognize them as part of a broader **xenomorphnic genre** that evolves and adapts across societies.

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