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IRONIC HUMOUR IN FOOTBALL COMMENTARY: A COMPARATIVE ENGLISH–UZBEK PRAGMATIC FRAMEWORK

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Abstract

Football commentary is a time-sensitive form of public discourse in which description, evaluation and entertainment occur alongside a live sporting event. Ironic humour can provide commentators to transfer criticism indirectly by creating a contrast between an utterance and an observable event or shared expectation. Although previous research has examined amusement in British football commentary and aspects of English–Uzbek football language, less attention has been paid to a clearly defined procedure for identifying ironic humour across the two contexts. This article refines an investugatory comparative framework integrating Gricean conversational implicature, Relevance Theory and Attardo's account of verbal humour. It applies the framework to four documented textual extracts: two Uzbek quotations reproduced in a 2019 Stadion.uz article and two English extracts reproduced in Abdulmajeed and Abdulmajeed's (2019) study of British football commentary. The analysis distinguishes ironic humour from hyperbolic criticism and humour without clear irony. One Uzbek quotation is a strong textual candidate for ironic humour; the second is a provisional case of hyperbolic, potentially humorous criticism. The English extracts illustrate metaphorical amusement and pronunciation-based humour, but the available wording does not establish an ironic stance. Because all four items are reported textual extracts rather than independently verified recordings collected for this study, the findings are exploratory. The article's contribution is a transparent analytical procedure and a set of evidential criteria for a future balanced corpus of English and Uzbek broadcasts.

Keywords: English–Uzbek comparison; football commentary; Gricean implicature; ironic humour; pragmatics; Relevance Theory; verbal irony.

1. Introduction

Football commentary is a peculiar form of public discourse because it is produced in real time alongside a sporting event. Commentators identify actions, organize sequences of play into a narrative and evaluate what happens on the pitch. These tasks are shaped by the conditions of live performance: the action changes rapidly, speaking time is limited, and audiences expect both information and an engaging account. Ferguson's (1983) analysis of sports announcer talk identifies register features such as syntactic simplification, inversion, heavy modifiers and formulaic routines. Such features help explain why concise evaluative remarks can carry considerable interpretive weight in football commentary. Ironic humour is one resource through which commentators may evaluate performance indirectly. A commentator might describe a conspicuous failure in language conventionally associated with praise, inviting listeners to infer a judgment different from the literal wording. For example, calling a badly misplaced pass "a wonderful piece of distribution" could be interpreted as criticism if the audience has just seen the ball go directly to an opponent. This is a constructed illustration, not a quotation from a broadcast. Its interpretation depends on the event, the speaker's delivery and assumptions shared with the audience.

The distinction between irony and humour is essential. An ironic utterance may communicate criticism without being amusing, while a humorous remark may rely on wordplay or metaphor without conveying an ironic stance. In this article, ironic humour is treated as a context-dependent effect in which an utterance supports an identifiable ironic or dissociative evaluation and the contrast also contributes a plausible humorous or playful framing. This definition is deliberately narrower than amusement in general.

Previous research provides several foundations for examining this phenomenon. Ferguson (1983) describes the register conditions of sports announcing. Jan Chovanec (2018) examines online sportscasting as situated discourse, while Meier-Vieracker (2021) demonstrates the value of corpus-based analysis for tracing changes in football live-text commentary. Written live-text commentary and spoken broadcasts should not, however, be treated as identical genres: audio commentary additionally provides prosodic resources such as intonation, stress, timing, pauses and laughter.

Abdulmajeed and Abdulmajeed (2019) investigate amusement in selected British football commentaries, drawing on two matches and four commentators. Their analysis considers play-by-play, colour-commentary and action-replay phases and identifies descriptive, dramatic and humorous strategies. Their work demonstrates that amusement can be investigated as part of the pragmatic organization of football commentary. Amusement, however, is broader than ironic humour: an entertaining metaphor or humorous exchange does not necessarily involve an ironic evaluation.

The English–Uzbek comparison introduces an additional methodological challenge. Research on football terminology and translation, including Sokhibov and Do'schonov (2026), is relevant to metaphor, tactical vocabulary and the transfer of football language. Lexical or translational comparison alone cannot show how ironic humour is produced in original-language broadcasts. Humour comprehension is also context-sensitive: listeners may need shared knowledge of a player, team, previous match event or familiar football expectation to recognize an ironic stance (N. Bell, 2007). National language labels should therefore not be treated as explanations in themselves. Apparent differences may also reflect broadcaster conventions, commentator style, match context, genre or source selection.

The research gap addressed here is methodological and comparative. Research on British commentary has examined amusement, while English–Uzbek work has addressed football language and translation. The available literature does not, by itself, provide a transparent procedure for distinguishing ironic humour from other forms of amusement and indirect evaluation in the two languages while also making the evidential status of each example explicit. This article addresses that gap by developing an integrated pragmatic framework and applying it cautiously to a small set of published textual extracts.

The article's contribution is analytic rather than statistical. It specifies an operational definition of ironic humour, proposes a five-layer procedure for examining wording, event, inference, attributed expectation and humorous mechanism, and tests whether the procedure can distinguish stronger candidates from ambiguous cases and humour without clear irony. The study does not estimate frequencies, establish national

preferences or measure audience effects. Instead, it identifies the evidence and controls required for a later study based on original recordings, comparable English and Uzbek samples, contextualized transcripts and independent coding.

1.1 Aim and research questions

The aim of this article is to explain the pragmatic devices through which ironic humour may function in football commentary and to develop a transparent framework for comparing English- and Uzbek-language examples.

The study addresses four research questions:

RQ1. Which pragmatic mechanisms allow football commentators to communicate ironic evaluation through apparently positive, restrained or exaggerated language?

RQ2. How can Gricean implicature, Relevance Theory and Attardo's humour framework be integrated into a single analytical procedure?

RQ3. What can publish English-language research, transcribe English extracts and report Uzbek commentary examples demonstrate, and what remains unverified?

RQ4. Which linguistic, contextual and cultural variables must be controlled in a future empirical English–Uzbek comparison?

1.2 Structure of the article

Section 2 reviews football commentary as a discourse genre, research on amusement in English commentary, English–Uzbek football language and the theoretical perspectives used in the analysis. Section 3 explains the research design, the sources and the analytical procedure. Section 4 presents the findings in four subsections corresponding directly to the research questions. Section 5 discusses the implications and limitations, and Section 6 summarizes the contribution and directions for further research.

2. Literature review and theoretical background

In this section football commentary as a discourse genre, research on English-Uzbek football register and the theoretical perspectives are reviewed which are used in the analysis.

2.1 Football commentary as a register and discourse genre

Ferguson (1983) identifies register features of sports announcer talk, including syntactic simplification, inversion, heavy modifiers, result expressions and formulaic

routines. These features are shaped by the communicative conditions of sportscasting. A commentator has limited time to formulate an utterance and must remain aligned with rapidly changing action. Short evaluative observations may be especially compatible with pauses, replays or moments after a missed opportunity, although this proposition requires testing against recordings. Football commentary also constructs a narrative relationship between events. A single error may become more significant when it repeats a previous mistake or contradicts a player's public reputation. Chovanec (2018) demonstrates the value of treating online sportscasting as situated discourse rather than as isolated sentences. Meier-Vieracker's (2021) corpus-based study highlights how corpus methods can trace changes in football live-text commentary. M. Lewandowski (2012) likewise offers a comparative perspective on the language of online sports commentary. These studies are useful for genre analysis, but written commentary cannot provide all the vocal evidence available in spoken broadcasts.

2.2 Humour and amusement in English football commentary

Abdulmajeed and Abdulmajeed (2019) analyse two football matches featuring four British commentators: Martin Tyler, Andy Gray, Alan Parry and Gary Neville. They categorize commentary into play-by-play, colour-commentary and action-replay phases and discuss descriptive, dramatic and humorous strategies. Their study shows that amusement is integrated into the pragmatic organization of football broadcasts. It does not, however, isolate ironic humour as a separate category for every example or provide an English–Uzbek comparison. This distinction matters for the present study. A humorous comparison, a pun or an entertaining description should not automatically be coded as irony. An analysis of ironic humour must identify both the inferential contrast and the evidence for a dissociative or indirectly evaluative stance. The two English extracts examined below are therefore reanalysed under a narrower definition than the broad category of amusement used by Abdulmajeed and Abdulmajeed (2019).

2.3 English–Uzbek football language and cultural pragmatics

English–Uzbek research on football language has begun to address translation challenges involving metaphor, tactical terminology and discourse constraints. Sokhibov and Do'schonov (2026), for example, discuss translation strategies including paraphrase

and functional adaptation. This work is relevant to the transfer of pragmatic meaning, but terminology and translation data cannot be treated as direct evidence about the frequency or realization of ironic humour in live commentary. A comparative study must avoid treating English and Uzbek as uniform cultural blocks. Differences in commentary may arise from network conventions, commentator personality, match importance, audience composition, genre or individual style. National or cultural explanations should be considered only after such competing factors have been examined. N. Bell's (2007) work on humour in intercultural interaction supports the broader point that humour comprehension depends on linguistic resources and contextual knowledge.

2.4 Gricean implicature: the gap between wording and evaluation

Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle and conversational maxims provide a starting point for explaining why listeners do not always interpret an utterance literally. When a commentator praises an action that is visibly unsuccessful, the audience may treat the positive evaluation as incompatible with the circumstances and infer an alternative attitude. The inference is not a mechanical reversal of the words; it depends on the event, the commentator's communicative purpose and the assumption that the remark is intended to be relevant.

For football commentary, the maxim of Quality is particularly useful as a diagnostic prompt: does the literal praise appear manifestly at odds with the observable action? A Gricean account should not be reduced to the formula "the speaker says the opposite". Irony can communicate partial criticism, scepticism or distance from an expectation rather than a simple antonym of the literal proposition. Gricean analysis is therefore used here to identify the inferential problem, not to claim that all irony is contradiction.

2.5 Relevance Theory: echo, attitude and contextual assumptions

Relevance Theory emphasizes the audience's inferential work in interpreting utterances. Sperber and Wilson (1995) argue that interpretation involves the interaction of linguistic information and contextual assumptions. Wilson and Sperber (2012) explain verbal irony through the recognition of an attributed thought or utterance toward which the speaker expresses a dissociative attitude. This echoic perspective is useful in sport because commentary may invoke a player's reputation, a team's tactical identity,

a pre-match prediction or a familiar football cliché. Consider a hypothetical remark about a side celebrated for defensive discipline immediately after it concedes a preventable goal: “The famous defensive wall is holding up well.” The audience retrieves the team’s reputation and compares it with the current event. The irony is not carried by the words alone; it emerges through the apparent echo of a shared expectation and the mismatch between that expectation and the match situation. This is an analytical illustration, not an authentic quotation.

2.6 Attardo: incongruity and the structure of humour

Attardo (2000) describes irony in terms of relevant inappropriateness: an utterance may appear inappropriate on a literal reading but become interpretable in its context. Attardo and Raskin’s (1991) General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) provides a framework for describing how verbal humour is organized through script opposition, logical mechanism, situation, target, narrative strategy and language. Attardo’s wider work on the semantics and pragmatics of humour (1994, 2001, 2008) offers further tools for analysing incongruity and implied evaluation. In football commentary, a script of competent professional performance may be placed against an obvious error; exaggerated praise may expose the distance between expected and actual performance.

2.7 Operational definition of ironic humour

For this study, ironic humour is defined as a context-dependent communicative effect in which an utterance invites an interpretation not exhausted by its literal wording, the context supports an identifiable ironic or dissociative stance, and the contrast contributes a plausible humorous or playful framing. This definition excludes direct criticism without an ironic layer and excludes humorous language whose effect does not depend on irony. It also requires analysts to distinguish evidence of amusement from evidence of irony. Where the available source does not provide sufficient context or prosody, the classification must remain provisional.

3. Methodology

This section explains how the evidence was selected and analyzed. Because the strength of any inference depends on the status of its evidence, the design and source limitations are stated before the analytical procedure.

3.1 Research design and evidential status

The article uses a qualitative, theory-led exploratory design. It combines a focused synthesis of published research with a close reading of four documented textual extracts. The dataset consists of two Uzbek quotations reproduced in a published sports-media article and two English extracts reproduced in a published study of British football commentary. The article does not claim to have independently collected, recorded or transcribed the original broadcasts. The extracts are treated as secondary-source textual evidence, not as a newly assembled corpus of verified audio recordings.

The design is comparative in its analytical orientation but not statistically balanced. The two language samples differ in source type and contextual detail. The purpose is to test the usefulness of the analytical framework and to identify what can responsibly be inferred from the available textual evidence, not to measure the relative frequency of strategies in English and Uzbek commentary.

3.2 Data sources and selection of examples

The Uzbek examples come from Y. Ulug‘xo‘jayev’s (2019) Stadion.uz article, “Yurtimizdagi eng kuchli futbol sharhlovchilari. Top-5 (Stadion.uz versiyasi),” published on 25 January 2019. The article reproduces characteristic expressions attributed to Mirzahakim To‘xtamirzayev and the late Davlat Turdaliyev. It does not provide the original broadcast recordings, match identifiers or timestamps for these two quotations. They are therefore analysed as reported quotations whose wording and attribution are documented in the media article.

The English examples are taken from Abdulmajeed and Abdulmajeed’s (2019) study, “The Pragmatics of Amusement in Selected British Football Commentaries.” The article includes transcript extracts from British football commentary. Two expressions were selected because they illustrate different relationships between amusement and irony: Andy Gray’s “a cup of tea” metaphor and Martin Tyler’s pronunciation-related remark about Rosicky. The source provides transcript context, but the present article does not independently inspect the original broadcast audio. Page references below refer to the printed pagination of the published article. The selection is purposive rather than exhaustive. Examples were included when an identifiable source reproduced the

wording and attributed it to a football commentator. The two disputed Uzbek examples previously considered in the working draft—one attributed to Xayrulla Hamidov and another to Davron Fayziyev—are excluded because their exact wording and original broadcast context could not be established from a sufficiently traceable source. The "yard away from being an inch-perfect pass" quotation is also excluded because the attribution is inconsistent across secondary websites. These items should not be reintroduced unless a primary recording or reliable transcript is obtained.

3.3 Analytical procedure

Each extract was examined through the five layers in Table 1: wording and event, inferential contrast, attributed expectation or attitude, humorous mechanism and audience and cultural knowledge. The analyst first considered the literal meaning and the sporting situation described in the source. The next step was to identify whether a contextual mismatch supported an indirect evaluation. The analysis then considered whether the utterance echoed a shared expectation or expressed a dissociative attitude, and whether its contrast plausibly created a humorous effect.

Each example was assigned one of three cautious analytical statuses: strong textual candidate for ironic humour, where the wording strongly supports an ironic evaluation and a humorous framing; provisional candidate, where indirect criticism or humorous potential is present but the context or prosody is insufficient; or humour without clear irony, where an amusing effect is apparent but an ironic stance is not supported by the available text. These are analytical judgments about the published textual extracts, not definitive classifications of the complete broadcasts.

4. Results

The results are organized according to the four research questions. The first subsection identifies pragmatic mechanisms in the four extracts. The second demonstrates how the three theoretical perspectives can be integrated in a single procedure. The third evaluates what the sources establish and what remains unverified. The fourth identifies the variables that a future empirical comparison should control. The four extracts are reported textual examples, not a balanced sample of original broadcasts.

4.1 Pragmatic mechanisms in the documented extracts

RQ1 asks which pragmatic mechanisms allow commentators to communicate ironic evaluation through apparently positive, restrained or exaggerated language. The four extracts show that positive evaluative framing, hyperbole, metaphor and pronunciation-based humour may contribute to amusement or indirect criticism. They also demonstrate that these devices do not automatically constitute ironic humour.

4.1.1 Uzbek extract 1: ironic praise through evaluative incongruity

Stadion.uz reproduces the following expression attributed to Mirzahakim To‘xtamirzayev:

“Ana xolooos?! Bunday vaziyatdan gol ura olmaslikning o‘zi bir mahorat...”

Functional rendering: “Well, would you look at that?! Failing to score from such a situation is a skill in itself...”

The utterance frames failure to score from a favourable opportunity as though failure itself were an achievement. The phrase “bir mahorat” (“a skill in itself”) creates a positive evaluative frame that conflicts with the expected task of converting a scoring opportunity. A Gricean interpretation treats the literal praise as pragmatically marked in relation to the negative outcome, prompting an inferred criticism. From a Relevance-Theoretic perspective, the audience retrieves the expectation that a professional player should convert such a chance and interprets the praise as dissociative. The humorous mechanism is the incongruity between the script of successful finishing and the script of conspicuous failure. The elongated opening “Ana xolooos?!” may also intensify the expressive effect, although its actual prosodic realization cannot be verified without the recording. This is the strongest textual candidate for ironic humour in the Uzbek sample because the wording itself supports both an indirect negative evaluation and a potentially playful framing. Nevertheless, the classification remains provisional at the level of the full broadcast event: the source does not supply the match context, original audio or audience response. The evidence supports a strong textual interpretation, not a definitive claim about the speaker’s vocal delivery or listeners’ reactions.

4.1.2 Uzbek extract 2: hyperbolic criticism

The same Stadion.uz article attributes the following remark to Davlat Turdaliyev, referring to the attacking limitations of the national team:

“Bizning futbolchilar uchun darvozadan 3 yo 4 metr uzoqlikdagi masofa bo‘lsa, iloji bo‘lsa darvozabon ham bo‘lmasa, ana shundagina xavfli vaziyat hosil qila olishadi.”

Functional rendering: “Our players can create a dangerous situation only from three or four metres away from the goal, and preferably when there is no goalkeeper either.”

The statement exaggerates the conditions supposedly required for the team to create a dangerous situation. The reference to a position only three or four metres from goal and the added preference that the goalkeeper should also be absent intensify the criticism. The implied contrast is between the professional standard expected of national-team players and the unusually favourable conditions that, according to the remark, they would need. The exaggeration creates a potentially humorous image while communicating disappointment.

The extract is best classified as a provisional case of hyperbolic, potentially humorous criticism rather than an unqualified example of ironic humour. Unlike the first Uzbek extract, the literal wording does not clearly reverse a positive evaluation; instead, it intensifies a negative assessment. The full match context and prosody would be needed to determine whether the commentator’s stance is distinctly ironic or primarily critical.

4.1.3 English extract 1: metaphorical amusement

In a transcript discussed by Abdulmajeed and Abdulmajeed (2019), Andy Gray says:

“This is just a cup of tea at the moment, Martin” (p. 489).

The metaphor “a cup of tea” presents the situation as ordinary, comfortable or relatively straightforward. Its possible humorous effect arises from the contrast between a familiar domestic image and the competitive context of a professional football match. The expression is therefore useful for examining how metaphor can contribute to amusement in live commentary. However, the wording alone does not establish an ironic evaluation. Without fuller co-text and the relevant match event, it is not possible to determine whether Gray is echoing an expectation in a dissociative way or simply offering an entertaining metaphor. The extract is consequently classified as amusement without clearly established irony.

4.1.4 English extract 2: pronunciation-based humour

Abdulmajeed and Abdulmajeed (2019) reproduce the following remark by Martin Tyler:

"I didn't want to be picky about Rosiky, but it is Rosicky" (p. 483).

The remark turns a minor pronunciation or name-correction issue into a humorous moment. The source transcript associates the exchange with laughter, which supports an interpretation of amusement. Nevertheless, the available wording does not show a clear contrast between literal wording and an implied negative evaluation, nor does it clearly echo an expectation toward which the speaker expresses a dissociative attitude. The extract is therefore classified as humour without clear irony. It is analytically important because it demonstrates why amusement and ironic humour must not be treated as interchangeable categories.

4.1.5 Summary of mechanisms and classifications

Extract	Observable textual mechanism	Analytical status
Uzbek example 1: To'xtamirzayev	Positive evaluative framing of a failed scoring opportunity; incongruity.	Strong textual candidate for ironic humor; broadcast-level status remains provisional.
Uzbek example 2: Turdaliyev	Hyperbole and exaggerated conditions for creating a chance.	Provisional case of potentially humorous criticism.
English example 1: Gray	Metaphorical description 'a cup of tea'.	Amusement present or intended in source analysis; irony not established from the extract alone.
English example 2: Tyler	Pronunciation-based self-correction and laughter.	Humour without clear irony.

Taken together, the extracts suggest that ironic praise and hyperbolic criticism are relevant mechanisms to investigate, while metaphor and pronunciation-based humour may produce amusement without irony. The findings answer RQ1 by identifying candidate devices, but they do not show how frequently those devices occur in either language.

4.2 Integrating Grice, Relevance Theory and Attardo

RQ2 asks how Gricean implicature, Relevance Theory and Attardo's humour framework can be integrated into a single analytical procedure. The four extracts demonstrate that the theories are most useful when assigned distinct but connected tasks rather than treated as competing explanations.

First, Gricean analysis identifies the inferential contrast between the literal wording and the evaluation supported by the sporting situation. This step is particularly visible in the To‘xtamirzayev extract: describing failure to score as “a skill in itself” is difficult to interpret as straightforward praise if the situation is a clear scoring opportunity. The Turdaliyev extract also invites an inferred criticism, although its force is primarily hyperbolic rather than a direct reversal of praise.

Second, Relevance Theory directs attention to the assumptions that the audience must retrieve. In the To‘xtamirzayev extract, the relevant expectation is that a professional footballer should convert a favourable chance. In the Turdaliyev extract, the audience must recognize the expected competence of national-team attackers. For the English examples, the available extracts do not provide enough contextual information to establish a comparable echoic or dissociative interpretation. This is not evidence that such an interpretation is impossible; it is a limit of the accessible textual record.

Third, Attardo’s account helps describe how the contrast may become amusing. In the first Uzbek extract, the script of successful finishing is juxtaposed with conspicuous failure, and the positive wording heightens the incongruity. In the second, the exaggerated absence of even a goalkeeper creates an absurdly favourable condition. In Gray’s metaphor, amusement may arise from a domestic image applied to a sporting situation, while Tyler’s remark relies on a small pronunciation correction and the interactional timing of the exchange. These latter mechanisms can create humour without necessarily creating irony. The integrated procedure can therefore be summarized as follows: identify the utterance and event; test whether the literal wording creates an inferential problem; identify the expectation or attributed thought that the audience may retrieve; describe the humorous mechanism; and assess what contextual or cultural knowledge is required. The procedure also makes uncertainty visible. Where the event, co-text or prosody is missing, the analyst should not force a definitive classification.

4.3 What the published sources demonstrate and what remains unverified

RQ3 asks what published English-language research, transcribed English extracts and reported Uzbek examples can demonstrate, and what remains unverified. The sources establish that the

four expressions were reproduced in identifiable publications and attributed to named commentators. Abdulmajeed and Abdulmajeed (2019) provide a published analysis of amusement in selected British football commentaries and reproduce English transcript extracts. Ulug‘xo‘jayev’s (2019) Stadion.uz article reproduces two Uzbek expressions attributed to To‘xtamirzayev and Turdaliyev.

The sources do not provide equivalent evidence. The English extracts appear within an academic study that examines British football commentary and supplies transcript material. The Uzbek quotations appear in a retrospective media article that does not provide the original broadcast audio, match identifiers or timestamps for the expressions. The present article has not independently verified any of the four items against original recordings. Accordingly, all four are treated as secondary-source textual evidence, while the Uzbek extracts carry particularly limited event-level documentation.

The available evidence can support a cautious analysis of wording, possible pragmatic mechanisms and the usefulness of the integrated framework. It cannot establish the exact prosodic realization of the Uzbek quotations, the full interactional context of every extract, the commentators’ private intentions, audience comprehension or audience response. It also cannot support frequency comparisons, claims about national preferences or causal claims about cultural norms. The classifications are therefore interpretations of published textual extracts, not definitive judgments about complete broadcast events.

4.4 Variables to control in a future English–Uzbek comparison

RQ4 asks which linguistic, contextual and cultural variables must be controlled in a future empirical comparison. The present analysis identifies several variables that could otherwise be mistaken for language or cultural differences. At the level of the broadcast setting, a future study should record the broadcaster or network, competition level, match importance, season, broadcast format and recording duration. These variables affect the type of audience addressed and the opportunities available for descriptive, evaluative and humorous commentary. At the level of the event, researchers should code the event type, such as a missed chance, defensive error, disputed decision or tactical failure, and ensure that comparable categories are applied to both languages.

At the level of the speaker, the study should record commentator identity, role, experience and individual style. Where possible, the same commentator should contribute more than one match, and the sample should include more than one commentator in each language group. At the linguistic level, coding should distinguish ironic praise, hyperbole, metaphor, sarcasm, wordplay, mock politeness and direct criticism. Prosodic annotation should include intonation, stress, pause duration, timing, laughter and relevant changes in voice quality. Finally, cultural interpretation should be treated as an empirical question rather than assumed from the language label. Researchers should identify the shared football knowledge needed to interpret a remark, such as a player's reputation, team history, local idiom or prior match event. If claims about audience comprehension are intended, they require a separate audience study rather than inference from the commentator's wording alone. These controls would make it possible to distinguish linguistic choices from differences caused by sampling, event context, broadcaster conventions or individual style.

5. Discussion

This section is about ironic humour and its features which is slightly different from the irony or humour itself.

5.1 Ironic humour as a narrower category than amusement

The findings reinforce the need to distinguish ironic humour from amusement in football commentary. The Tyler extract is humorous in the published transcript, but the wording does not clearly convey an ironic evaluation. Gray's metaphor is also potentially amusing, yet the isolated expression does not establish a dissociative stance. These examples show why a study of amusement cannot be treated automatically as a study of irony. Conversely, the To'xtamirzayev extract provides a strong textual candidate because the positive framing of failure supports an implied negative evaluation and a potentially playful effect.

The Turdaliyev extract occupies a less certain position. Its exaggeration communicates criticism by describing unusually favourable conditions for the team to create danger. It may be humorous, but the source does not supply enough contextual and prosodic evidence to decide whether it should be classified as ironic humour rather

than hyperbolic criticism. Treating this uncertainty as a result, rather than concealing it, improves the transparency of the analysis.

5.2 Theoretical contribution of the integrated framework

The integration of Grice, Relevance Theory and Attardo provides a practical sequence for analysing indirect evaluation. Grice helps identify why a literal interpretation is pragmatically marked; Relevance Theory explains the contextual assumptions and echoed expectations that may guide interpretation; and Attardo's work helps describe how incongruity and verbal mechanisms contribute to amusement. None of these perspectives alone is sufficient for every case. A remark may be pragmatically indirect but not funny, or funny without an ironic stance. The operational definition therefore requires evidence for both components.

The framework also has a methodological advantage: it allows analysts to code a case as provisional when important contextual evidence is missing. This is especially important in cross-linguistic work, where differences in source quality can otherwise be mistaken for differences in language use. The five-layer model should be understood as a coding proposal that requires further testing with a larger, audio-supported dataset.

5.3 Interpreting the English–Uzbek comparison

At a broad pragmatic level, the four extracts show that football commentary can use indirect evaluation, exaggeration and figurative language to turn an event on the pitch into an engaging observation. The Uzbek material includes positive evaluative framing and hyperbolic criticism. The English material includes metaphorical and pronunciation-based amusement. These are useful analytical categories for future research, but the small and uneven dataset does not establish that one language uses a particular strategy more frequently than the other.

Any apparent contrast may arise from the source types, the number of extracts, the availability of context, individual commentator style or the different conventions of the publications from which the examples were taken. The study therefore avoids claims that Uzbek commentators are more sarcastic, that English commentators rely more on metaphor, or that either language has a distinctive national preference. Such claims would require a balanced corpus and a transparent coding process.

5.4 Implications for further research

The principal limitation is the evidential status of the examples. The study relies on four purposively selected textual extracts from secondary sources with unequal levels of documentation. Without original recordings, timestamps and surrounding commentary, the analysis cannot confidently establish prosody, timing, intention or audience response. The source selection is also small and cannot represent the full range of English- or Uzbek-language football commentary.

A subsequent study should construct a balanced corpus from complete match recordings selected through transparent criteria. Transcripts should include timestamps and sufficient co-text, while audio annotation should record intonation, stress, pauses, laughter and other relevant cues. A coding manual should distinguish ironic humour from direct criticism, sarcasm, hyperbole, metaphorical amusement and humour without irony. At least two trained coders should independently classify the data, disagreements should be documented, and an appropriate measure of intercoder agreement should be reported. Audience interpretation should be investigated separately if claims about comprehension or effect are intended.

6. Summary

This article has developed and explored a comparative pragmatic framework for analyzing ironic humour in English and Uzbek football commentary. It integrates Gricean conversational implicature, Relevance Theory and Attardo's account of verbal humour in a five-layer procedure that considers the utterance and event, inferential contrast, attributed expectation or attitude, humorous mechanism, and audience and cultural knowledge. The procedure is designed to distinguish ironic humour from direct criticism and from amusement that does not depend on irony.

The exploratory analysis examined four documented textual extracts: two Uzbek quotations reproduced by Ulug'xo'jayev (2019) and two English extracts reproduced by Abdulmajeed and Abdulmajeed (2019). The To'xtamirzayev quotation is a strong textual candidate for ironic humour because it frames a missed scoring opportunity as an achievement. The Turdaliyev quotation is a provisional case of hyperbolic, potentially humorous criticism. The Gray and Tyler extracts demonstrate metaphorical and

pronunciation-based amusement, but the available wording does not establish a clear ironic stance. These findings show that humour and irony must be analysed as related but distinct phenomena.

The article's contribution is methodological and exploratory rather than statistical. It offers an explicit definition, a replicable analytical sequence and a transparent account of evidential limitations. Because the examples are secondary-source textual extracts rather than independently verified recordings, the study cannot establish frequency, audience response or language-specific preferences. A balanced corpus of original broadcasts, contextualized transcripts, systematic coding and intercoder reliability testing is necessary before broader cross-linguistic claims can be made.

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