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## THE PHENOMENON OF LANGUAGE GAME IN MODERN DIGITAL SPACE (Based on the Materials of Instagram Social Network)

This article examines the phenomenon of language play in the contemporary communicative space based on Kazakh-language content on Instagram. At the present stage of digital communication, language functions not only as a means of transmitting information, but also as a creative tool that produces emotional impact, attracts audience attention, and shapes the author's personal style. In this context, language play is regarded as one of the significant components of internet discourse. The aim of the study is to identify the most common patterns of language play in social media texts, to analyze their structural, semantic, and pragmatic features, and to provide a linguistic description of their functioning in the modern communicative space.

The study includes a theoretical review of domestic and international scholarly works devoted to language play. As empirical material, the authors used Kazakh-language Instagram posts widely circulated in 2025. The linguistic data were analyzed using structural, comparative, and pragmatic methods. The findings show that language play is realized at the lexical, graphic, phonetic, and semantic levels. Its main devices include irony, hyperbole, paradox, pun, and intertextuality. It was also established that the key functions of language play are to create expressiveness, produce a comic effect, express social evaluation, and establish informal communicative closeness with the addressee.

The results demonstrate that language play in internet communication contributes significantly to the dynamic development of language, the formation of new language models, and the interpretation of digital discourse. The findings can be used in research on media linguistics, pragmalinguistics, and sociolinguistics, as well as in university teaching practice.

**Keywords:** language game, digital discourse, internet communication, Instagram, media linguistics, pragmatics, the Kazakh language, linguistic creativity.

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### Қазіргі цифрлық кеңістіктегі тілдік ойын феномені (Instagram әлеуметтік желісіндегі материалдар негізінде)

Мақалада Instagram әлеуметтік желісіндегі қазақтілді контент негізінде қазіргі коммуникативтік кеңістіктегі тілдік ойын феномені қарастырылады. Цифрлық коммуникацияның қазіргі кезеңінде тіл тек ақпарат беру құралы ғана емес, сонымен қатар эмоционалды әсер ететін, аудиторияның назарын аударатын және автордың жеке стилін қалыптастыратын шығармашылық құрал ретінде көрінеді. Осыған байланысты тілдік ойын интернет-дискурстың маңызды компоненттерінің бірі ретінде бағаланады. Зерттеудің мақсаты – әлеуметтік желі мәтіндерінде жиі қолданылатын тілдік ойын үлгілерін анықтау, олардың құрылымдық, семантикалық және прагматикалық ерекшеліктерін талдау, сондай-ақ қазіргі коммуникативтік кеңістіктегі тілдік қызметін лингвистикалық тұрғыдан сипаттау.

Зерттеу барысында тілдік ойын феноменіне қатысты отандық және шетелдік ғылыми еңбектерге теориялық шолу жасалып, эмпирикалық дереккөз ретінде 2025 жылы Instagram желісінде кеңінен таралған қазақ тіліндегі жазбалар алынды. Тілдік материалдар құрылымдық, салыстырмалы және прагматикалық талдау әдістері арқылы зерттелді. Нәтижесінде тілдік ойынның лексикалық, графикалық, фонетикалық және семантикалық деңгейлерде жүзеге асатыны анықталды. Оның негізгі көріністері ирония, гипербола, парадокс, сөз ойнату және

тәсілдер арқылы байқалды. Сондай-ақ тілдік ойынның негізгі қызметтері ретінде экспрессивтік әсер тудыру, комикалық реңк қалыптастыру, әлеуметтік бағалау білдіру және адресатпен бей-ресми коммуникативтік жақындық орнату айқындалды.

Зерттеу нәтижелері интернет-коммуникациядағы тілдік ойынның тілдің динамикалық дамуына, жаңа тілдік модельдердің қалыптасуына және цифрлық дискурс ерекшеліктерін түсіндіруге маңызды үлес қосатынын көрсетеді. Алынған тұжырымдарды медиалингвистика, прагмалингвистика және социалингвистика салаларындағы зерттеулерде, сондай-ақ жоғары оқу орындарының оқу үдерісінде пайдалануға болады.

**Түйін сөздер:** тілдік ойын, цифрлық дискурс, интернет-коммуникация, Instagram, медиалингвистика, прагматика, қазақ тілі, тілдік креативтілік.

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### **Феномен языковой игры в современном цифровом пространстве (на материале социальной сети Instagram)**

В статье рассматривается феномен языковой игры в современном коммуникативном пространстве на материале казахскоязычного контента социальной сети Instagram. В условиях цифровой коммуникации язык выступает не только средством передачи информации, но и творческим инструментом, выполняющим функции эмоционального воздействия, привлечения внимания аудитории и формирования индивидуального авторского стиля. В этой связи языковая игра анализируется как один из значимых компонентов интернет-дискурса. Цель исследования – выявить наиболее распространенные модели языковой игры в текстах социальных сетей, проанализировать их структурные, семантические и прагматические особенности, а также дать лингвистическую характеристику их функционирования в современном коммуникативном пространстве.

В ходе исследования был проведен теоретический обзор отечественных и зарубежных научных работ, посвященных феномену языковой игры. В качестве эмпирического материала были использованы посты на казахском языке, широко распространенные в Instagram в 2025 году. Языковой материал исследовался с помощью структурного, сопоставительного и прагматического анализа. В результате установлено, что языковая игра реализуется на лексическом, графическом, фонетическом и семантическом уровнях. Основными средствами ее выражения выступают ирония, гипербола, парадокс, каламбур и интертекстуальный подход. Также выявлено, что основными функциями языковой игры являются создание выразительного эффекта, формирование комического эффекта, выражение социальной оценки и установление неформальной коммуникативной близости с адресатом.

Результаты исследования показывают, что языковая игра в интернет-коммуникации вносит существенный вклад в динамическое развитие языка, формирование новых языковых моделей и осмысление особенностей цифрового дискурса. Полученные выводы могут быть использованы в исследованиях по медиалингвистике, прагмалингвистике и социалингвистике, а также в образовательном процессе высших учебных заведений.

**Ключевые слова:** языковая игра, цифровой дискурс, интернет-коммуникация, Instagram, медиалингвистика, прагматика, казахский язык, языковая креативность.

## **Introduction**

Language is one of the main achievements of mankind. It is known that this is a complex social phenomenon that enables people to communicate with each other, express their thoughts and feelings. Language cannot exist outside of society, since this phenomenon is peculiar only to the human community. The language of each nation is not only a mirror of its history, culture, worldview and national identity, but also a complex system of symbols that

allows people to communicate with each other, express their thoughts, convey their feelings, preserve and disseminate knowledge. Since the nature of language as the main means of cognitive, cultural and social communication of mankind is complex and multifaceted, various scientific conclusions have been developed to explain the function of language. One of them that is of particular importance is the “language game”. This term was first introduced in the middle of the 20th century by the Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein in his work “Philo-

sophical Investigations”. The concept of language game is aimed at explaining the use of language in real life situations, the dependence of meaning on the context and pragmatic aspects of communication.

In human society, language is recognized, used, and functions not only as a means of communication, but also as a cultural phenomenon that reflects thoughts, feelings, and imagination. A person expresses through language his nature, worldview, and the mobility and level of creative thinking. On the one hand, learning language games makes it possible to determine the role of language not only as a means of communication, but also in the development of thinking and aesthetic approach. The concept of “language game” first introduced by L. Wittgenstein to the scientific world has become one of the most frequently used basic concepts in the fields of linguistics, cultural studies, and psycholinguistics nowadays.

According to the scientific opinion of Ludwig Wittgenstein, language is a game mechanism based on certain rules and requirements, in which subject is not fixed, but changes depending on the general goal and communication (Wittgenstein, 2018, p. 134). Developing this concept, J. Huizinga expressed the opinion that “Game is the basis of culture” and compared the type of “playing man” (*homo ludens*) with the main objects of cultural development (Huizinga, 2011, p. 59). Therefore, language game is one of the manifestations of people’s perception of the world and their creative, artistic images.

The study aims to identify the main patterns of language play in Kazakh-language Instagram posts published in 2025, to describe their structural and semantic features, and to determine their pragmatic functions in digital communication. The study covers the classification of language games by types of structural use, the description of language models and the determination of their degree of compliance with the linguistic norm.

The relevance of the study lies in the growing role of social media in shaping new communicative practices and in the need to analyze language play as an active mechanism of digital discourse based on Instagram content widely used in Kazakhstan.

The results of the study contribute to research in the field of media linguistics. The scientific novelty of the research lies in the analysis of language play as a linguistic phenomenon in the modern Instagram communicative space and in the attempt to systematize its types and functions on the basis of specific empirical material. The article reveals the pragmatic

potential and impact of language games in digital discourse on the language development.

The research findings may be applied in theoretical studies of linguistics, in the educational process of higher education institutions, as well as in the practice of analyzing and improving language communication in social networks. In particular, the conclusions obtained are significant in working with media texts, explaining the features of digital discourse, and describing the modern use of the Kazakh language.

### Materials and methods

To conduct this research, scholarly works on language play were reviewed in order to identify the main theoretical approaches, the development of the field, and its current state. The most significant materials from the wide range of the resources studied in the scientific space were selected and grouped. Kazakh-language Instagram posts that were widely circulated in 2025 and contained explicit examples of language play were selected as the empirical basis of the study. Using continuous sampling, examples of language play were systematically analyzed at the structural, semantic, and functional levels. The analysis was conducted on the basis of language levels (lexical, grammatical, pragmatic). This type of analysis is aimed at identifying the similarities and differences, scope of use and functions of language game types.

Empirical research of language games based on real linguistic data has shown how this phenomenon is realized in a real communicative environment. Such research is not limited to theoretical definitions of language game but enables to analyze its usage patterns, frequency, forms, communicative function and pragmatic field. Posts from the social network Instagram widely used in the modern communicative space were taken as a primary source of empirical research. It was identified that these materials are genuine linguistic facts demonstrating the emergence of language games in a natural environment through direct interaction with the addressee.

In the course of the study, language game models were selected, systematized and analyzed at the lexical, graphic, phonetic, semantic and pragmatic levels. In particular, the analysis focused on such manifestations of language play as deliberate word distortion, homonymic and paronymic play, graphic variation, and code-switching.

As empirical analysis shows, language games are not a random or spontaneous phenomenon,

but a pragmatic tool aimed at a specific communicative goal (attention, emotional impact, evaluation, formation of own style). Empirical research on language games not only revealed its functional potential, but also made it possible to scientifically substantiate the modern processes of language development, norm change and the formation of new language models.

### Literature review

Language as one of the main values of humanity has long been studied from a structural perspective that is, its phonetic, morphological, syntactic and lexical levels are interconnected. Structural linguistics made it possible to explain the internal structure of language, the hierarchical relationships of units and the interdependence of its elements. However, the structural approach prioritized the static nature of language, placing its functional and social function in second place. For this reason, nowadays new scientific paradigms aimed at studying the communicative, cognitive and pragmatic aspects of the language have gradually emerged. The main function of language is communicativeness, including spoken speech – the naturally established form of oral speech that people use to communicate. Therefore, it is the most lively and flexible form of language. Through speech, a person freely expresses his thoughts, feelings and viewpoints. It should be noted that the study of spoken language is reflected in the following directions: determination of the development and dynamics of speech. After all, spoken language serves as a mirror that can clearly reflect changes in society. By studying the speech norms of people, the patterns of development of the literary language can be comprehended. At the same time, this issue is also the basis of psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic research. Spoken language reflects the entire way of thinking, emotions, and social status of a person. Speech as a linguistic phenomenon, is characterized with its features as naturalness, freedom, occurrence in the form of dialogue, the special role of intonation and stress, the presence of dialects, jargon, argot, dependence on the general context, specific situations and environment.

The areas of studying spoken language can be considered on the basis of linguistic structures as follows:

Sound, intonation, and stress features as objects of phonetics.

The use of colloquial words, simple and informal vocabulary as objects of lexicon.

The structure of sentences, including abbreviated and elliptical forms, as objects of syntax.

The relationship between a speaker and a listener, the types of speech acts as object of pragmatic research.

In the process of communication people use all types of language functions. The phenomenon of language games has a special place among them. For this reason, language game is a linguistic element that reflects a person's thinking ability and creative potential. Language game is often used in everyday speech to make communication more expressive, figurative, and emotional. Therefore, speech realized through language games is considered a form of language existence in the natural environment.

The review of theoretical works devoted to the study of language games demonstrates that language games have become the basis for researching various language forms in written and spoken language. In particular, they are used in mass media, literary works, folklore, and everyday speech.

In her scientific article "Language play in a second language: Social media as context for emerging Sociopragmatic competence", the scholar Anika Lantz-Andersson examines language game from the perspective of sociocultural theory. Most importantly, in this article, the author emphasizes that language game turns communication into a "playground" in the context of social media, which allows participants to develop sociopragmatic competencies, establish socially equal connections, and demonstrate linguistic creativity (Lantz-Andersson, 2018).

Among the thinkers who made innovative contributions to various fields of science, Ludwig Wittgenstein occupies a special place. The author of such terms as "linguistic picture of the world" and "language game", L. Wittgenstein (1889-1951) had a great influence on the development of the humanitarian episteme in the second half of the 20th century and contributed to the emergence of a new view at the methodological and categorical foundations of a number of disciplines, such as philosophy, psychology, linguistics, etc.

Since the 1930s, L. Wittgenstein began to abandon the terminological language of thinking and style peculiar to logical atomism. The philosopher offers an idea that many semantic contexts, "language games" exist. The most complete functional game model of language is presented in the work "Philosophical Investigations" (1953), where, in addition to the idea of language games, such philosophical issues as the relationship between language

and thought; intuitive and rational; action, movement and internal consciousness; personal and subjective; oral and verbal levels of human consciousness are discussed. In this work, the scientist raises the issue of the meaning of linguistic units; the static and dynamic state of language game in the semantic space; the nature of understanding thought; and also, the differences in the consciousness of people. The philosopher considered a language as a certain spatial and temporal phenomenon, revealing the internal connection between thinking in language and the formation of a picture of the world. The concept of “language games” is a system of linguistic communication, organized in accordance with certain linguistic rules. Language games are realized only in the process of action and communication, in fact, this is a way of communicating with reality. The term “language games” emphasizes that speaking in a language is a component of action or a form of life, that is, it is a unity of “thoughts-words-deeds”, where each component is very important and if one component is lost, the whole is destroyed. The ideas analyzed above show that the term “language game,” introduced by L. Wittgenstein, is interpreted in modern philology in two ways: the first is broad, philosophical (later for L. Wittgenstein), the second is narrow, practically linguistic.

The opinion of the distinguished scientist V.Z. Sannikov: “A language game is a certain linguistic error (or peculiarity), most importantly, an error that is understood and intentionally allowed by a speaker (writer). Here the listener (reader) must understand that it is “said so on purpose”, otherwise he will simply evaluate the corresponding expression as an error or inaccuracy” (Sannikov, 2002, p. 23) reveals the nature of language game. In this case, deliberate mistakes do not surprise the listeners. The use of a language game in the speech process serves to reveal the intention of a person that introduced this game, his attitude to the event, the process being discussed.

The key features of language game lie in the unity of language and a certain type of function. It is essential because it shapes a certain meaning of expressions and words.

The study of spoken language opens a way to understanding the natural essence of language, cultural and cognitive features of the people. It not only makes a significant contribution to the development of linguistics, but also the improvement of language culture in society.

Language game is a clear manifestation of the speaker’s intellectual capacity, creative wit and linguistic thinking ability at various levels. Roman

Jakobson is a scientist who considered the issue of “language game” in his works not as a direct separate topic, but at a deep theoretical level within the framework of the functions and poetic activity of language. In his work, he identifies the following main mechanisms of language game:

- sound repetition;
- rhythm, rhyme;
- unexpected word combinations;
- polysemy;
- homonymy and paronomasia.

Roman Jakobson tries to find and study the theoretical core of language game through the principle of equivalence. That is, in poetry, the paradigmatic axis is projected onto the syntagmatic axis (Roman Jakobson, 1987, p. 22-23).

From a scientific point of view, we know that in ordinary, colloquial speech, words are chosen according to their meaning. Now, in the language game format, each word is chosen based on its sound and formal harmony.

One of the well-known scholars who studied language play, David Crystal, noted that language play is a natural, universal, and important aspect of language. According to the scientist, playing with words is a functional form of language that reflects important, deep layers of consciousness and feelings. It is widely used in everyday life, literature, children’s games, and even in professional contexts and is a natural experience of language. The scientist emphasizes in his research that language game is not only characteristic of adolescents and children, but also adults actively address language game. Describing the development stages of language game, its linguistic and metalinguistic awareness impact, he describes its pragmatic function, that is, creating emotions, humor, influence, attracting viewers and readers. Language game can also contribute to cognitive development and creativity. The results of our research indicate that language games on Instagram are consciously manipulated and executed with a pragmatic purpose: the author tries to draw the addressee’s attention and through deliberate techniques, such as altering, shortening, and graphically transforming words to provoke an emotional response. Therefore, the language play patterns used in social networks reflect behavior, mindset, social context, and the communicative tendencies of a particular period. According to the scientist, language game is realised and reflected not in one, but in all layers and levels of the language. The fundamental objective of language game is not to employ language solely in terms of semantics of word. This

language game is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon, manifesting at all levels of the language, including the phonological, morphological, semantic, and pragmatic domains (Crystal, 2001, p. 130).

Language games are widespread at all levels of language and occur in poetry, fiction, folklore, advertising, as well as in everyday speech. Language games are closely related to the linguistic thinking system of a person. In this regard, the scientist T.A. Gridina highlights three features of linguistic thinking:

- working with language units according to the laws of associative convergence, the ability to create new ones based on existing elements of the language and extra-linguistic experience;

- realization of the potential of language in the field of creating and changing language forms and meanings, taking into account the similarity and peculiarity (isomorphism of form and meaning) of the asymmetry of linguistic signs;

- the process of violating the language standard in collective and individual speech activity;

Moreover, this scientist posits that the following factors influence the purposeful implementation of language game:

- the fact of language game is usually accidental, since language game creates means of expressing a certain content or establishes a new content that is recognized universally while preserving or changing the old form. That is, it deviates from usage and norm;

- language game is explicated by its use beyond the established rules or by a special combination of language means;

- the conscious employment of words that cannot be used in this context or in general language;

- speaking with emphasis, taking into account the linguistic competence of listeners (Gridina, 1996, p. 24).

In the context of the modern anthropocentric trend, the phenomenon of language game in linguistics is attracting the attention of the scientific community. The theory of language games is widely employed in the fields of linguistics, philosophy, pedagogy, and psychology. Language game is the process of creating a new, virtual world with the help of language: by playing with words, a person conveys a special, expressive word or thought that is not present in reality. During the language game, the speaker can change and transform language units at will. This can demonstrate the speaker's level of knowledge, linguistic abilities, and the skill to transform various forms in the use of language.

According to S.Zh. Nukhov, language play makes it possible to demonstrate a person's individual speech style (Nukhov, 1997, p. 230). In this case, a listener derives pleasure from the rational use of language games, can experience a good or bad emotional state. The use of language games in speech arises from a specific goal of a speaker.

Analysis of the scope of using language game in spoken language can demonstrate that this concept has deep roots in folk literature. It is evident that the widespread expressions of joking and teasing between a wife and her husband's brother, her husband and her sister, are vivid examples of language game.

In digital communication, language play may also perform an important pragmatic function, since it is not merely a deviation from language norms, but a conscious communicative strategy aimed at establishing and maintaining positive interpersonal relations. From this perspective, language play can soften the impact of speech, reduce communicative distance, and adapt standard etiquette formulas to a particular communicative situation. The use of irony, metaphor, figurative forms of address, and playful variations of greeting and farewell allows a speaker to express respect to the addressee without resorting to overly formal constructions.

Linguistic politeness is generally understood as a complex phenomenon manifested in the unwritten rules of speech behavior and in generally accepted etiquette norms. In different branches of linguistics, politeness has been interpreted as an ethical and pragmatic category, that is, as "a manifestation of respect through linguistically expressed units" (Formanovskaya, 2002, p. 51), and as a means of evaluating a speaker's social status and communicative behavior (Larina, 2003, p. 11). In the present study, the understanding of politeness is correlated with the classical Brown-Levinson theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 68).

At the same time, not all manifestations of language play are directly related to politeness. If an utterance merely conveys information, it cannot automatically be classified as either polite or impolite. However, when language play is used to soften evaluation, mitigate categoricalness, preserve the addressee's social image, or maintain interactional balance, it acquires a clear pragmatic function. In this sense, ironic, euphemistic, and allusive forms of language play may serve as effective means of communicative adaptation in online discourse. Therefore, in the context of this study, the pragmatic aspect of politeness is treated as one of the secondary but relevant functions of language play, whereas

the main analytical focus remains on its expressive, humorous, and socially evaluative manifestations in Kazakh-language Instagram discourse.

### Results and discussion

In this study, language play is regarded as a linguistic phenomenon based on conscious and purposeful manipulation of expressive resources in order to create humorous and evaluative effects. The analyses presented in the paper demonstrate that the rules of language game violate the established “patterns” in all languages. That is, the essence of language game is characterized by the emergence of additional occasional meanings as a result of the intentional use of language units beyond the limits of norms, in accordance with the communicative situation. Such meanings, based on the expressive potential of the language, create a comic effect by influencing the linguistic consciousness of an addressee. In this process, language game reveals the interweaving of the aesthetic and pragmatic functions of language. In this regard, it is appropriate to consider language game as a specific mechanism in the formation of the author’s idiosyncrasy and as a marker that determines the communicative-pragmatic specificity of a particular genre.

According to the researcher B.Y. Norman, language game is an integral part of any natural language. The scientist, describing natural language as a strictly systematic structure, also noted the contradictory nature of its internal organization. The author emphasizes that these contradictions are manifested in the process of language play, revealing the hidden potential and functional capabilities of the language system (Norman, 2020, p. 6).

In the context of the Norman concept, language game is considered not only as a stylistic or expressive means, but also as a universal mechanism that sheds light on the dynamic nature of language. This phenomenon is realized in various spheres of interpersonal communication, in particular, in communicative situations that are not prohibited by society within the framework of certain socio-cultural conventions. Thus, language game is characterized as an important linguistic phenomenon that determines the relationship between language norms and their functional deviations.

In their article “Linguistic Phenomenon: Language Play among Multilingual Communities on Social Media,” Nurul Ilmiasari and Dewa Putu Wijana examine how language play functions in multilingual social media discourse. The authors of the

paper analyze the cognitive and ideological functions of language game and write that it can increase the effectiveness of communication in multilingual societies, strengthen cultural ties, and also have a positive impact on the language learning process (Nurul Ilmiasari, & Dewa Putu Wijana, 2025).

Today, social media around the world can be a vital empirical source for studying linguistic diversity in modern society. In the article “Mapping urban linguistic diversity with social media and population register data”, the scientist T. Väisänen highlighted that social media texts, through geolocation records, made it possible to display the users’ natural linguistic experience, the distribution of languages, and linguistic variability in certain regions on a linguistic map. In his article, he provided exact examples using language maps. The results of studying these maps sought to prove that multilingualism, code switching, informal language forms, and new lexical units are actively used in social networks. This finding clearly indicates that digital communication serves as an indicator of the rapid pace of linguistic change (Väisänen, 2022).

Based on the ideas of the above-mentioned scientists, the nature of language games are analyzed through specific examples from the Instagram network, which is very actively used in our country for digital communication.

Language game is a tool for deliberately “mixing” the literal and figurative meanings of words. “O’SEK AITU UAQYTY KELDI. KIMDI ShA’IMEN ZhY’TSAQ EKEN?” (“It’s time to gossip. Who should we swallow with tea?”) (Instagram). This sentence is a successful language game based on alliteration, metaphor, irony, and everyday cultural code. If we dwell on the elements of language game in the sentence separately, they are:

“Swallowing with tea” is used in a non-literal, figurative sense. In the literal sense, a person cannot be swallowed by another with tea, in this context the expression means who will become the object of discussion, criticism and gossip. Here, the act of “swallowing” is not a physical action characteristic of a living being, but rather “consuming” another person with words, that is, gossiping about or verbally dissecting them. In this language game, the author conveys the act of gossiping not in a literal sense, but in a metaphorical, humorous way. “Swallowing with tea” is an example of a metaphorical language game. As for the literal meaning, drinking tea means swallowing liquid with your mouth, but its figurative meaning is “swallowing” someone with words, that is, gossiping, discussing another

person or people. In this sentence, the language game element consists of the variable use of meanings. The physical act of “swallowing” a living being is used to reveal the meaning of the social act of “gossiping” between people. The primary goal in this instance is to demonstrate and make a reader feel that humor and cunning are intertwined. That is, it doesn’t indicate “let’s gossip”, but rather softens and subtly explains it with humor, saying “whom should we swallow with tea”. This can be interpreted as a euphemistic form of language game, which is realized by hiding the stated rude act (gossip) with a playful cultural tone. Irony serves to convey that gossiping is a “ritual” happening at a certain time, on a regular basis, by referring to a gathering that is appropriate, familiar and close to the people.

Since in Kazakh culture, “tea drinking” is associated not only with drinking tea, but also with the tradition of talking, conversing, discussing solutions to problems together, and sometimes gossiping, here it makes sense to display and use a cultural code. For this reason, the phrase “swallowing with tea” uses it as a game based on a cultural linguistic code, establishing intimacy with the reader by sharing a common, understandable joke. The following pragmatic functions of the language game under analysis can be noted. They are: expressing close, warm relationships between people, and defining social roles (friend, confidant, peer).

The language game “BAIYM BAR, AIFONYM BAR, YIIM BAR, BIR MASHINANYN’ BOLMAI TY’RG’ANY AI” (“I have a husband, I have an iPhone, I have a house, the only thing I don’t have is a car”) (Instagram) is a word play based on rhyme, that is, a sentence related to the type of word play. The first part of the sentence, constructed with the same syntactic template, has a certain rhyme and rhythm: “I have a husband, I have an iPhone, I have a house.” That is, here, by giving the effect of enumerating, the image of a person with a full-fledged, well-off material situation is created before the reader, the phrase “I have everything” strengthens the image of the thought’s author. But the final part used as a conclusion “The only thing I don’t have is a car” shows the culmination of the language game. In fact, the initial list is logically sufficient, as it ironically portrays a life of a person that has everything associated with fashion at, while at the end the element presented as a minor detail (a car) evokes laughter, creating for the reader a contrast. This laughter is conveyed through an anticlimax (unexpected descending effect).

Indeed, there is a very subtle social irony in this sentence. The sequence suggests family status, material comfort, and a modern lifestyle. However, all this still seems insufficient, and the absence of a personal car is presented as almost a tragic situation. Through this language game, the high appreciation of material values in our modern society is demonstrated as an ironic element. The depth of this sentence can show the human nature, psychology, that is, “everything is there, but something is missing.” The use of the conjunction “ai” at the end added an emotional impact, created an intonation of regret and tenderness. Moreover, it turned the sentence into a colloquial, light-humored style. Without this conjunction, the language game would be much drier, “tasteless”, and devoid of context.

In this sentence, the language game is produced through syntactic parallelism, an unexpected logical turn, and irony.

“KYIEUIM QY’TYRG’AN QATYNDAR-MEN ARALASPA DEIDI. QAIDAN BILSIN MENIN’ SOLARDYN’ ATAMANY EKENIMDI” (“My husband tells me to stay away from crazy women. If only he knew I was their leader”) (Instagram). This semantic transformation refers to a type of language game based on humor. The sentence consists of two parts: “My husband tells me to stay away from crazy women” – here the author first creates the impression that she is different from “these crazy women”. But in the second part, “If only he knew I was their leader”, an illogical, but semantically complex, unexpected “turn” creates humor. Using an unexpected semantic contradiction, the speaker seems to criticize the category from the outside and suddenly reveals that she is the “leader” of this group. Here the humor is based on semantic tension and paradox, and the external separation is the antithesis of the internal truth. In the sentence, ambiguous words do not change, but rather evoke laughter through semantic incongruity.

The sentence “AQShA ZhINAIYN DESEM, ZhINAP ZhYRIP O’LIP QALATYN SIYAQTY-MYN. SOL YShIN ZhINAMAI ZhYRMIN” (“If I want to save money, it seems to me as if I might die while saving it. That’s why I am not saving money”) (Instagram) contains an illogical paradox: the concept of “saving money” is actually related to the future, tomorrow, security and preparing for a long and carefree life. But in the sentence the meaning of this important security is destroyed. Since the author connects it with death saying “it seems to me as if I might die while saving it” and it is the main marker of language game. “Dying while saving money” is

not a real death, but exaggerated idea (hyperbole). However, here the shortness of a human life, meaninglessness of the act of “postponing for tomorrow” are conveyed through the fear of losing the present moment. This can be defined as an existential hyperbole. The language game is completely based on irony. The author of the sentence introduces himself not as a person that doesn’t care about the future, but as the one that thinks about it a lot and as a result becomes unable to act. The part “That’s why I am not saving it” is a ridiculous excuse but an emotionally familiar situation for all of us. The elements increasing the impact of the language game are the words “siyaqymyn”, “zhurip” and short simple sentences. However, they deliver the philosophical thought peculiar to a human in an accessible, comprehensible and everyday format. Combination of deep thoughts and simple language results in an effective, successful language game. In summary, “By postponing life it’s possible to miss the life”, that is the internal conflict between saving money and living a life is demonstrated. The language game in this sentence is based on paradox, through hyperbole and irony it doesn’t just make a reader laugh but also conveys a deep philosophical idea with the help of everyday joke.

“BOYaNBAI ShAShYN’ MAI-MAI TYRIN’MEN ShYQQAN KYNI, O’LGENNEN BASQASYNYN’ BA’RIN KO’RESIN’ G’OI” (“The day you go out without makeup, with your hair all greasy, you will meet everyone except the dead”) (Instagram). The basis of this language game is a household detail, a universal meaning. A minor, everyday situation characteristic of every woman (lack of makeup, greasy hair) is considered as an act that has the greatest impact on her feminine identity. Even when your hair is greasy, going out without fear affects just your appearance. In this context, going out and seeing everyone except the deceased person is presented as a challenge, an insult, a surprise that happens in a woman’s life. The deliberate exaggeration of such an issue that doesn’t seem a problem is a key mechanism of language games. The meaning of the phrase “You will meet everyone except the dead” is obviously impossible in literal terms, but it captures in a single expression the discomfort, criticism, and social reaction associated with such an experience. This is a very powerful expressive hyperbole. There is no explicit drama or tragic information in the sentence. On the contrary, the particle at the end “goi” is pronounced with an intonation that conveys irony with light sarcasm and humor. In fact, the men-

tioned situation of the woman is not a tragedy. But this idea emerged from an aspiration to critically illustrate the influence of social pressure, societal norms established by individuals themselves. Even if this general norm is “pure, established”, a slight deviation from it immediately attracts the attention of the public. The element “Hair being greasy” is a sign of deviation. This language game mocks society’s tendency to overreact to such deviations. The method of contrast was used to strengthen the inner desires of a person and the norms of society through contradiction. On the one hand: greasy hair, face without makeup (small details), on the other: death (the ultimate, absolute, true concept). Here, the comparison of the smallest details of everyday life and absolute concepts is a classic language method of language game.

This sentence contains the following idea (subtext) with a hidden meaning: “Society sometimes values external details, not the inner being of a person.” In other words: you just went out, and the environment turns it into a big “event.” In conclusion, this language game model is based on hyperbole and irony, mocks social stereotypes, that is, it attaches great importance to everyday trivial details, skillfully uses colloquialisms.

“SABYR SAQTAP YNDEMEI QALU MEN YShIN KYNA’ G’OI” (“Staying patient and remaining silent is a sin for me”) (Instagram). The essence of the language game in this sentence lies in semantic inversion. According to the established linguistic-cultural logic, “staying patient” is a quality of a good person, and “remaining silent” is a sign of intelligence, restraint and patience. In the religious concept, sin is a negative, moral condemnation. This established system in the sentence under analysis is deliberately inverted. That is, staying patient and remaining silent is a sin. Using a religious term in an everyday context serves to describe the person’s character traits, his internal psychological state. In principle, “sin” is a religious-ethical category inherent in all religions, a word with great moral weight.

Indeed, remaining silent is not a sin. But the author employs his internal pressure, internal dramatization to convey it to the reader through hyperbole. The phrase “for me” in the sentence is very significant. In essence, the narrator does not oppose the general, established moral standard, but only presents his own internal code, principle, understanding: “remaining silent is a sin for me”. This means absolutizing the individual morality inherent in a human being, presenting the individual norm as a “universal law.”

The functional word “g’oi” softens the sentence, but it does not provide an intonation of making an excuse or justification, but of self-recognition. The idea and intention the author wants to convey here to the reader is “this is a controversial opinion, but only mine”. The implicit idea hidden behind this is “If I do not tell the truth, I will go against my inner self”. This is not a person who cannot control his emotions, he simply wants to say that remaining silent is lying, cheating. This language game, based on semantic inversion, is employed to convey a psychological state that may be inherent in a religious person. By combining hyperbole and irony, the sentence clearly reveals an individual’s personality trait.

The researcher E. Ormakhanova, in her article “Media discourse of “Hate speech” in digital communication: cases of social media,” emphasizes the idea that digital communication, unlike traditional media, is interactive, explicit, and dynamic, and therefore each user can act as both a producer and a distributor of information, which indicates that linguistic discourse on social networks has become highly developed. (Ormakhanova, 2024).

### **Conclusion**

The results of the study demonstrate that language game in Internet communication is manifested in the reflection of the linguistic behavior of network users within the framework of the new communicative space and serves as an important means of self-expression, demonstration, as well as entertainment and humor. Language game in the context of Internet communication is realized and manifested in the process of direct, unrestricted communication at all levels of the language system, that is, at the phonetic, lexical, lexical-semantic, morphological and syntactic levels.

Game is a universal phenomenon of human culture that has accompanied communication since early stages of social development. It is located between objective reality and the virtual world created by human being himself. In addition, the features of the Internet communication channel significantly affect the form of language game manifestation: the use of phonetic means is limited, the functional load of graphic means increases. The most productive and richest level of language game in the context of Internet communication is the lexical level. At

this level, language game is formed on the basis of multiplying the components of word meaning, polysemy and homonymy, synonymous and paronymic series, phraseological units, proverbs and sayings, and set expressions.

In the thematic context, the main distinction between language games in Internet communication and language games in other communicative spheres lies in the appeal to the phenomena of the Internet and virtual space. This feature enables to distinguish the semantic and formal aspects of language games and characterize them as a specific linguistic phenomenon of modern communication.

The conducted study makes it possible to formulate the following definition: language play is a set of linguistic means that creates a specific functional space within language and reflects the speaker’s creative and communicative intentions. It has specific functional features in spoken and digital discourse and clearly reflects the speaker’s creative and communicative potential. Language game reflects different levels of evaluative and emotional shades, as well as certain aspects of the social and psychological characteristics of the speaker. It is also considered a dynamic linguistic phenomenon that changes and develops depending on time and space, as a distinctive feature of national culture.

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

### **Author Contributions**

*A.Zh. Baieli and A.R. Ebelekbayeva developed the scientific concept of the article, collected the research materials, and wrote the main text; G.Sh. Akimbekova, G.Zh. Bayaliyeva participated in verifying the results of the analysis, supplementing the theoretical section, and editing the final version of the article.*

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