

CONTEMPORARY JOKES ABOUT STUDENTS: THE BODY OF TEXTS AND THEIR GENETIC RELATIONS

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ABSTRACT

In spite of the fact that so many papers in folklore scholarship have been dedicated to the question of the genesis of the joke as a genre (mainly speculating on its origin from the fairy tale) almost none of them attempts to reach beyond theoretical discussion on the problem. The aim of this article is to broaden the scope of existing research by analysing the genetic relations of contemporary jokes in a sample of Russian-language jokes about students collected from different sources (written, oral, Internet). Jokes about students are compared to jokes from other cycles and other genres with the help of statistical investigation. The types of genetic (and typological) relations between them are elucidated as well as the possible aspects of the origin of jokes.

KEYWORDS: joke • genetic relations • fairy tale • anecdote • statistical methods

The research into jokes has become quite abundant recently. American and European joke scholarship blossomed with the names of Alan Dundes, Arvo Krikmann, Elliott Oring, Christie Davies and many other researchers, while the Russian tradition experienced an outbreak of joke research only at the end of the 20th century, as before (especially starting from the 1930s) not just joke research, but even joke telling was punishable.

Later in the second part of the century it became occasionally possible for Russian scholars to mention jokes in their work. The speculation on jokes was rather theoretical, seldom based on texts, and focused on the position of jokes among the other genres of folklore. Logically enough the joke was associated primarily with the tale (Yudin 1978; 1989; Blazhes 1989; Blazhes, Matveyev 1989; Meletinsky 1989; 1995). In one of his later works Vladimir Propp (1964) did not even make the difference, saying that the joke is not a separate genre, but just a kind of tale. Later several scholars put forward a hypothesis that the folk joke originated from the anecdote: the latter descended from the elite noble culture to the lower folk one (Khimik 2002). Both in the case of the comparison to the tale, and to the anecdote, the studies lack solid evidence and therefore their conclusions are doubtful.

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In spite of the fact that in American and European folkloristics jokes were seldom openly compared to fairy-tales, they were often mentioned within tale indexes (Uther 2004, under numbers 1200–1999). There was even an attempt to compile an index for Shaggy Dog Story jokes modelled after the Aarne-Thompson index (Brunvand 1963). On the other hand, jokes can be related to anecdotes as reports of humorous events (Bronner 1995), or riddles, in the latter case the similarity in form of the two genres led to the compilation of the joke index based on the structural peculiarities of the joke – mainly, its dialogical basis (Abrahams 1964). Another structural index based on the cruel joke cycle was compiled according to the opening of the jokes (Sutton-Smith 1960). Finally, jokes were categorised according to their frequency (Krikmann 2004). Nevertheless, the most wide-spread categorisation is related to the main themes of the jokes (Legman 1975; Banc, Dundes 1986; Arkhipova, Melnichenko 2010), which brings us back to the methods of categorisation invented for fairy tale research, and tale indexes.

Even though the variety of methods of joke research and categorisation is obvious, as I said, they were rarely applied to student joke research. In spite of the fact that some scholars turned to other genres of student lore (Krasikov 2009; 2011; Shumov 2003), student jokes are still ignored for some unknown reason (except for several works, such as Bronner 1995; Shumov 2003).

The goal of this paper is to present an analysis of Russian-language student jokes from the point of view of their genetic relations. By genetic relations I mean their relationship with other genres of folklore. This research will help to prove or refute the hypotheses mentioned earlier concerning the genesis of these jokes as well as give some other results valuable for the research into student subculture. It is important to note that the aim of the paper is to examine the genetic relations, not just the origin, as two jokes (for example, one about a schoolboy, the other about the student) with the same plot are obviously related to each other, although this does not mean that student jokes loaned plots from school jokes, or vice versa. Each case is unique and demands further investigation, and it is virtually impossible to answer which one was first. Nevertheless the repetition of the plot in contemporary jokes and traditional tales will almost certainly mean that the former originated from the latter. As it is not always possible to define which text appeared first, I will refer to the connections between student jokes and other texts as genetic relations rather than referring to their origin.

Since there is still no professional index of student jokes, in order to reach the goal my first task was to collect jokes. I chose three sources for the joke collecting: oral – interviews; written – amateur collections of jokes published for entertainment; and the Internet. As I aimed to analyse Russian-language student jokes, these three resources were also in Russian: the fieldwork was conducted in Belarus and Russia between 2003 and 2012, the books published were in Russian, and the Internet research was also conducted in Russian.

The first difficulty I encountered concerned the question of what a student joke actually is both from the point of view of its form and plot. For example, one and the same plot may be used in different variants of the joke about a student, a pupil, a doctor, etc. Another problem is that student jokes dedicated to student life about professors, lectures, etc., are told not only by students, but also by other subcultures. Naturally, students themselves do not only tell jokes about student life, for example, I have recently noticed the active telling of political jokes that have nothing to do with student subcul-

ture itself. There are some forms that cannot be considered merely jokes: they resemble aphorisms or humorous poems. Finally, there are jokes that may be regarded as belonging to two cycles at the same time: for instance, to which cycle should we attribute the joke about the famous protagonist Chapaev, who according to the plot, studies at university and passes exams.

My solution was the following: when I had to decide if the text told or published is a student joke, I considered the emic perspective. If the interviewee told the joke when I asked him or her to tell a *student* joke, the editor of the collection of jokes or the website admin published the joke under the rubric *student* jokes, I regarded it as a student joke and included it in my collection. It obviously influenced the material I received, as the texts sometimes cannot be regarded as pure jokes, especially from the academic perspective: they may acquire the form of the poem, or a riddle. However, previous studies (especially joke categorisation) showed that I am not the first researcher who encountered the ambiguous nature of jokes, and that these difficulties do not mean that I have to exclude this material. On the contrary, the emic perspective shows how wide the vernacular understanding of jokes is.

After collecting the material I had to sort and categorise it; this is how I compiled the student joke index (it has not been published yet and exists as part of the PhD thesis that is still in progress) embracing the *corpus I* of material – *student jokes*. However, since the aim of the study is to find the relationships between student jokes and other texts, I also collected texts for the *corpus II* – comparative materials (later incorporated into the index). Further on I will concentrate on the sources and quantity of the material in these two corpora and compare them in order to reveal the genetic relationships between student jokes and other texts.

CORPUS I. STUDENT JOKES

The Sources of the Material

1. Oral interviews

Most often the jokes from oral interviews were recorded from students and teachers in Vitebsk, Belarus (where this research started as a student essay), and later in Saint Petersburg, Moscow, Minsk and other smaller Russian and Belarusian cities. The choice of the territory frame is based on the aim of the research – to analyse Russian-language student jokes. The length of the research (2003–2012) among the students of the two countries allowed me to collect a lot of material.

2. Written sources:

- The collection of jokes by Roman Trachtenberg *333 1/3 anekdotov pro studentov* (333 1/3 Student Jokes) (Trachtenberg 2005);
- The collection of jokes entitled *Studencheskiy yumor* (Student Humor) by Aron Kantorovich (1992);
(These two sources were obviously chosen because of the main theme of their joke collections);
- The *Anekdoty nashikh chitateley* by Irina Repina and Yury Rostovtsev (Jokes of Our

Readers) collection (28 issues). The choice of this source is not random: it includes the jokes sent to the editors of the *Studencheskiy meridian* (Student Meridian) newspaper by its readers, not just copied from the Internet (the collections were published in 1993), meaning that they might have been told orally (Repina, Rostovtsev 1993).

The latter collection also became the source for the comparative research of the genetic relationships – for *Corpus II* about which I will write in detail later.

3. Internet publications

The search for Internet publications was undertaken with the search query *studencheskie anekdoty* (student jokes) in the Google.ru search engine (the first 100 links found were used to collect the material). Moreover, when I got the whole corpus of texts from the oral sources and from sources published in joke collections, I checked jokes from these two sources, searching for punch lines in the same search engine. (Here and hereafter I use *punch line* to mean the conclusion of the joke, which carries the maximum comic effect). The aim of this particular part of the research was to find out whether the Internet may be considered to be an exhaustive and comprehensive source for student joke research; in other words, whether it includes all the jokes that also exist in oral and published materials.

All in all I tried to take into account the three sources (oral, published and Internet jokes) in order to see the actual situation with existing student jokes: we cannot say that today the joke is exclusively an oral genre – its nature changed a lot especially with the advent of the Internet era (Alekseevsky 2010: 5).

The Structure of the Student Joke Corpus: Some Explications

In this part I would like to dwell on the quantity of student jokes, collected from different sources. Table 1 shows the quantity of the collected material.

Table 1. The quantity of student jokes in Corpus I.

Number of types (plots)	Number of versions	Number of variants (texts)
1332	1409	1896

The terms *type*, *version*, and *variant* mentioned in Table 1 are essential for the understanding of this research. *Type* means number of motifs, combined according to certain rules. They may be also called plots. Plots or types are rather ideal scholarly constructions. *Versions* are the variations or subtypes, where, for instance, the characters, circumstances, punch line, one or several motifs of the joke are changed, rearranged or added, while the plot or the type itself is more or less permanent (invariable). Finally, *variants* are practically identical copies of the versions, or the texts that are encountered in more than one source. Previously, we have been able to say that there is no such thing as identical texts of jokes: each variant was supposed to be at least a little bit different from the others, but now, with the development of the Internet and the publishing and republishing of joke collections, identical variants do exist. However, in some cases, variants

are similar texts with a rearranged word order, or, for instance, changes of name (neither of which make the protagonist different or the joke belong to another joke cycle).¹

I will give an example for each of the three columns of the table – the *type* or a *plot*:

II. 5. 5. The eyes are in front of the ears

Represented by the two *versions*:

II. 5. 5A.

The professor holds an exam. He decides to ask one and the same question to everybody:

– What is faster: sound or light?

The first student comes in and answers:

– Sound.

When asked why he answers:

– When I switch on the TV, first I hear a sound, and then the image appears.

– Two;² next one, please!

The second student answers the same question:

– Light: when I switch on the radio, its bulb turns on first, and then the sound comes.

– Two; next one.

The professor meditated: is it that the question is so difficult or the students are so stupid? The third one comes in. The question from the professor is:

– Student, imagine that a cannon shoots on the top of a mountain. Will you see the flash or hear the sound of the shot first?

– Of course, I will see the flash!

– Why?

– Because the eyes are in front of the ears.³

(Anekdoty: studenty, prepody, sessiya; Trachtenberg 2005: 73)

II. 5. 5B.

– Why do we first see the lightning, and then hear the thunder?

– Is it because the eyes are in front of the ears?⁴

(Kantorovich 1992: 23)

As the inscription under the versions show, the joke was found in three sources; it means, that it was represented in the three *variants* (two variants for the first version and one for the second). In this way the following data for this type was recorded in the table: 1 type, 2 versions, 3 variants.

As I mentioned before, the jokes were collected from three sources: oral, written and Internet. The variants (or specifically the collected texts, represented with the number 1896 in the third column of the table) are distributed according to the sources in the following way (this table touches only on the texts, the distribution of the types will be represented in later tables):

Table 2. The distribution of the texts according to source.

Oral source	Internet source	Written source
218	1144	534

It is obvious that most of the texts are from the Internet, although this cannot be representative: as I mentioned, I searched for every punch line of the jokes I had in the oral and written sources on the Internet as well.

The distribution of the types according to the sources is different: it is obvious that the variants of one type may be represented in different sources. The tables 3 and 4 show the types that were found *only* in one source or in several sources.

Table 3. Distribution of types according to source.

Oral+Internet	Oral+Written	Internet+Written	Oral+Internet+Written
62	8	290	58

Table 4. Types represented in only one kind of the source.

Only oral	Only Internet	Only written
73	692	149
5.48%	51.95%	11.19%

Table 4 shows that some jokes were found in only one source. This proves the necessity to take into account different sources for the collection and further analysis of the jokes, as none of them separately is exhaustive.

Accordingly, the third column of Table 4 may be divided in the following way:

Table 5. Types found only in written sources.

Written source			
Only one written source (146)			Two or more written sources
Only Trachtenberg 2005	Only Kantorovich 1992	Only Repina, Rostovtsev 1993	3
22	121	3	

It is important that this table includes the high number of 121 jokes, represented only in the collection *Studencheskiy yumor* and nowhere else. As I mentioned before, the punch lines of all the jokes collected from the written and oral sources were searched for on the Internet. Accordingly, none of 121 (as well as 22 and 3 for the other columns) jokes mentioned in Table 5 was found, even though the search was held with a varying inquiry. The fact that in spite of the purposeful search these jokes were not found on the Internet and were never encountered in oral communication brings us to the idea of fakelore. It is less likely for the first and the third column, as there is the possibility that I simply did not find several jokes, while for the second column it is more likely: too many jokes (121) were not found. There might be the possibility, that those jokes were made up by the editor of the collection or, for instance, translated from a foreign language and incorporated into the collection.

Finally, the student jokes do not often possess several versions within a type. 1269 jokes have only one version, 53 – two versions, 6 – three versions, 4 – four versions.

CORPUS II. THE COMPARATIVE MATERIAL FOR THE ANALYSIS OF THE GENETIC RELATIONS OF STUDENT JOKES

In order to identify the genetic relations of student jokes I had to sort out the corpus of texts related to them. The search for such texts was held in different ways from different sources, on which I will concentrate further. I will also focus on the reason for the choice of these sources.

1. Anecdotes.

As I mentioned at the beginning of the article, there is the opinion that anecdotes descended from the environment of the elite intelligentsia into the lower, folk environment, providing the origin of folk jokes. I decided to test this hypothesis on the example of student jokes. In order to do so, I chose both the classical sources and separate texts about the university or college environment.

- Literary anecdotes from the *Staraya zapisnaya knizhka* (The Notebook) by Petr Vyazemskiy (1883) – the most authoritative source on the anecdotes of the first half of the 19th century.
- Literary anecdotes from the collection *Russkiy literaturnyy anekdot* (The Russian Literary Anecdote) compiled by anecdote researcher Yefim Kurganov and Nikita Okhotin (1990).
- Anecdotes about the university or college environment.
- To be sure that the two phenomena are compared properly I took more than 200 student anecdotes from the first half of the 19th century from biographies, memoirs, and anecdote collections.
- English anecdotes: the search for analogues among the jokes and anecdotes was also conducted in *The Faber Book of Anecdotes* (Fadiman 1985), which contains a large amount of comic stories about well-known people sorted in alphabetical order according to the family names of these people.
- Anecdotes about Nasreddin, Afandi, 'Persian anecdotes', tales and jokes collected by Nikolay Sumtsov (Sumtsov 1899; Permyakov 1972; Kharitonov 1978). These sources are interesting from the point of view of this paper as their authors were among the first to collect and systemise the plots. Moreover the protagonist of most of these plots is a trickster, who is also the main type of hero in the student-joke. On the basis of the same hero the tale types could have been inherited by the student jokes.

2. Contemporary jokes from other joke cycles.

As I mentioned at the beginning of the article, the joke (as well as other folklore genres) is not a phenomenon constrained within certain frames: it changes its characters and thematic groups easily; sometimes it may be transformed into a different genre. For this reason I decided to check how many jokes have versions in other joke cycles. I paid attention to oral communication in order to notice such jokes, also during the research of some other joke cycles (for example, political jokes). Moreover the following sources became the backdrop for the investigation:

- The *Anekdoty nashikh chitateley* (Jokes of Our Readers) collection, 28 issues (Repina, Rostovtsev 1993).
- The *100 000 anekdotov* (100 000 Jokes) collection (2009).
- The *Yevreiskoye ostroumiye* (Jewish Wit) collection (Ladman 2006), containing a lot of Jewish jokes.

The first source mentioned was also used for the Corpus I.

3. Tale types from ATU (Uther 2004), and *Sravnitelnyy ukazatel syuzhetov* (Comparative Tale Type Index: The East-Slavic Tale) (Barag et al. 1979). As I studied Russian jokes, I considered it important to take into account this source, especially because some of the included tale types cannot be found in ATU.

4. Student jokes of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century from the periodicals of that time. I have also carried out a search of the 19th century student jokes and cartoons in the entertainment magazines and newspapers in order to make a comparison with contemporary student jokes. These texts might have been called folk texts, but we cannot be sure that they were really popular and were narrated by people as there is also the possibility that they were made up by journalists.

Moreover all the texts (to be precise, their punch lines) were searched for on the Internet using the Google search engine in order to find additional variants from other genres and thematic groups. All the variants of the punch lines were included. This allowed me to discover the facts about the genetic relationships between student jokes and forms or genres in which I had not expected to find them: in literature, speech genres, cartoons.

As a result, I compiled Corpus II to define the genetic relationships between contemporary student jokes. All in all Corpus II may be subdivided into the following groups of texts:

1. Folk jokes (as the division between the following joke cycles is not strict, I will mention the peculiarities of each joke cycle):

- School jokes (jokes about school life without mentioning Vovochka as the hero);
- Jokes about Vovochka (with the hero Vovochka – analogous to Greek Bobos, American Little Johnny, etc.);
- Jewish jokes (jokes mentioned in the collection of Jewish jokes, the main hero of which is a rabbi, or someone with a name typical to Jewish jokes – Moritz, Rabinovich, etc.);⁵
- Medical jokes (about doctors and medicine);
- Family jokes (mentioning the kin relation between husband, wife, children, mother-in-law, etc.);
- Jokes about Chapayev;
- Jokes about the army and military service;
- Political jokes;
- Other jokes (which were not included in the previous groups, as they are without specific themes, or representing the only joke from a certain joke cycle: about Harry Potter, Agent 007, mental hospital, etc.).

2. Anecdotes:

- Russian literary anecdotes not connected with student life;
- Russian literary anecdotes about student life;
- English literary anecdotes;
- Traditional anecdotes and jokes (Persian anecdotes about Nasreddin, Afandi, and from the collection by Sumtsov).

3. Tale types from ATU (Uther 2004), and *Sravnitelnyy ukazatel syuzhetov* (Barag et al. 1979).

4. Minor speech genres:⁶

- Aphorisms, statuses;⁷
- Rhetorical questions;
- Riddles;
- Quotes attributed to famous people;
- Titles, mottoes.

5. Toasts.

6. Cartoons.

The joke index was compiled from the collected material and includes the material of Corpus II – so if the joke type has a version, for instance, in the genre of toasts, the toast is also published in the index.

The Types of Relationship between the Contemporary Student Joke and Jokes from other Joke Cycles/Genres

I inserted the data from Corpus I into the Excel program to compare it with Corpus II and reveal the genetic relationships.

At first sight the results of the calculation should have had the following division: those that have and those that do not have the same plot in another text. However, while working with the data I encountered the following difficulties. Student folklore is not an ideal construction with a definite percentage of plots repeated in the other genres or joke cycles. There are also some other types of relationships and I consider the following division of these types to be reasonable:

1. Plot similarities.

In this case the plots of the student jokes are repeated, for instance, in school jokes or anecdotes: only the protagonists and the circumstances of the story change, although the plots themselves remain stable. Here is the example of plot similarities:

The university invited a well-known lecturer asking him to read three lectures.
A crowd of people came to the first lecture. Lecturer:
– Do you know what I am going to tell you about?
– Yes!
– So why should I tell it to you?
And he leaves.

The second lecture:

– Do you know what I am going to tell you about?

– No!

– So why should I tell it to you if you don't know anything?

And [he] leaves again.

Before the third lecture the audience decided that one half will say "no", and the other – "yes". Lecturer:

– Do you know what I am going to tell you about?

The first half of the audience:

– Yes!

The other half:

– No!

The lecturer:

– So those who know must tell it to those who don't know.

And [he] leaves again.⁸

(Anekdoty pro studentov. b)

Sermon

Once, being on the minbar, Afandi addressed the people praying with a question:

– Do you know about what I am going to preach?

– No, we don't know!

– Then there is no reason for me to talk to you.

The parishioners wanted to listen to Afandi very much, and the next Friday he asked them:

– Do you know about what I am going to preach?

They answered all together:

– We know, we know!

– Then, if you know, why should I talk about it.

The next Friday Afandi again asked from the minbar:

– Do you know about what I am going to preach?

Then the parishioners decided to outwit Afandi, and half of them answered "We know", and the other half "No, we don't know".

– Very well, Afandi rejoiced, and added: So those who know tell those who don't know!⁹

(Permyakov 1972: 377)

2. Motif connections.

In cases where the student joke and the other text have motif connections, their similarities are only on the motif level – a minimal element of the plot but not the whole plot. For instance, 14 plots within the collected student jokes may be united around the motif of inversion: the comparison of the professor with an animal, fool, or bad person. All of these jokes correspond more or less to the following form: the professor calls the student a donkey (or other animal), most often implying that the student is stupid, although, due to the wordplay in the process of the dialogue, the student exchanges his status with the professor, and the latter finds himself in the position of the fool. I will give the examples of two student jokes corresponding to this motif:

During an exam the student cannot answer either of the questions. The professor loses his patience and starts crying:

– You are a donkey!

And addressing to one of the assistants:

– Bring the pile of hay to me!

Student:

– And a cup of coffee for me, please!¹⁰

(Trachtenberg 2005: 90)

The student comes into the canteen and there is the only one vacant seat, next to the teacher. Student:

– May I sit next to you to eat?

– The goose is not a friend to the pig.¹¹

Student:

– Ok, then I'll fly away!

After half a year the student takes the same professor's exam.

Professor:

– What would you choose: a million of dollars or intellect?

– And you?

– Intellect.

Student:

– I would choose a million of dollars: everybody chooses what he lacks.

The professor gets angry and writes in the student's index:

– Fool.

The student comes back in five minutes:

– I am sorry, you mentioned your surname, but what is the mark?¹²

(Trachtenberg 2005: 98–99)

On the other hand, the same motif may be also found in a student anecdote of the 19th century:

Once on the embankment of the Fontanka where Krylov¹³ usually walked to the house of Olenin, three students caught up with him. One of them, who probably didn't know Krylov, said loudly:

– Look, there is the black cloud walking.

– And the frogs started to croak, the fabulist answered equally calmly.¹⁴

(Yeryomina 1998: 74)

It is obvious that in spite of the fact that the plots are very different the motif is repeated.

3. Punch line repetition.

I suggest this term for the cases in which the punch line of a joke is used in genres of speech without the main part of the joke, for instance, in an advertising slogan:

During student practical training in the culinary college: "Ready, steady... Stuffing!"¹⁵ (Sluzhba rassylok gorodskogo kota)

Advertising slogan for a meat chopper: "Ready, steady... Stuffing!"¹⁶ (Androsova n.d.)
(The comic effect of the joke and slogan is created through the consonance of the word

'go' (marsh) which was originally in the phrase meaning 'Ready, steady, go' and the word *farsh* meaning 'stuffing'.)

One and the same punch line may also be used for two jokes with different plots.

One joke may have a plot version, for instance, in the tale, as well as motif relations and punch line repetition. A joke may also have several plot similarities, for instance, its plot may be repeated not just in a Jewish joke, but in a toast as well. The same is true for motif relations or punch line repetitions: each type of the connection may be represented in several texts.

As the aim of the paper is to find genetic relationships with contemporary student jokes, I will focus only on the two types of relationship: plot similarities and punch line repetition. The reason is that the motif relationships, due to the fact that the motifs may originate independently in different texts, are rather typological than genetic as they often appear in similar types of situations independently (for example, the motif of poverty may appear both in personal narratives about the war or in student jokes without the motif being loaned from one type to the other (although genetic relationships for motifs are also possible)). Moreover, the study of motif relationships is quite complicated as the existing motif indices are far from perfect, and if there is no good material for the comparison, the comparison may hardly be considered successful. Motif is a too broad category and the search of the motif relationships of the jokes deserves another paper. This is why I am going to dwell on the plot similarities and punch line repetition – shedding light merely on the genetic relationships of jokes.

The Degree of Connection Between Student Jokes and Jokes from Other Joke Cycles and Genres

Let me reiterate here that Corpus I, containing the student jokes, includes 1332 joke types. If we imagine the plots of student jokes that are related to other genres or joke cycles, compared to the general quantity of joke types, the result will look as follows:

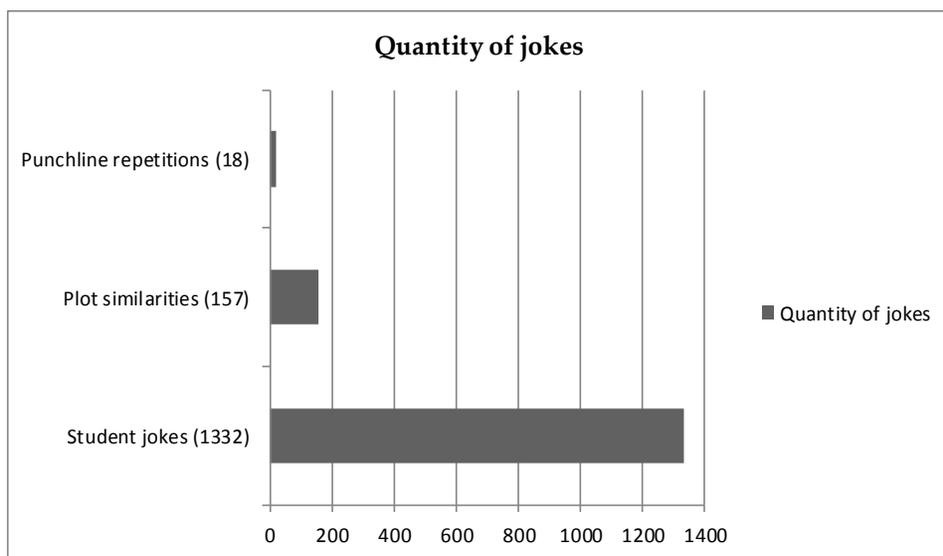


Figure 1. Plot similarities and punchline repetition of student jokes.

When compared to the general quantity of the student joke types I collected, a minimum of 174 types of jokes relate in some way to the jokes from other joke cycles or other genres (each of the 174 jokes having at least one connection – either plot or punch line). I say minimum because in spite of a thorough search of the material forming Corpus II I cannot be absolutely sure that I found everything.

Table 6. The quantity of student joke types with plot similarities and/or punch line repetitions.

	Quantity	%
The quantity of student joke types	1332	100%
Quantity of jokes with plot similarities and/or punch line repetitions	174	13.1%
The quantity of jokes without genetic relationships to other texts	1158	86.9%

If we imagine the division of the relationships of student jokes vertically, it will appear as follows (note that one joke type may have more than one connection in different cycles of jokes and other genres):

Table 7. Plot similarities between student jokes and jokes from the other joke cycles or genres.

		Quantity
Contemporary folk jokes from other joke cycles	School jokes	17
	Jokes about Vovochka	15
	Jewish jokes	16
	Medical jokes	4
	Family jokes	9
	Jokes about Chapayev	6
	Jokes about the army and military service	4
	Political jokes	9
	Jokes from other joke cycles	62
Tale type indices	ATU	4
	Comparative type index. The East-Slavic tale	1
Traditional anecdotes	About Nasreddin	4
	Persian	1
	About Afandi	1
	Jokes from the Sumtsov collection	1
Literary anecdotes	English language	13
	Russian language student anecdotes	1
Toasts		10
Cartoons		3

Table 8. Punch line repetitions in student jokes and jokes from other joke cycles or texts from other genres.

		Quantity
Contemporary folk jokes	Other	1
Minor speech genres	Titles	5
	Aphorisms, statuses	7
	Quotations attributed to famous people	2
	Rhetorical questions	3
	Riddles	2

Tables 7 and 8 show that plot similarities and punch line repetitions usually depend on the genre of the compared texts: while similar plots are mainly found among contemporary folk jokes from other cycles or toasts (less often among anecdotes), punch lines are usually repeated in some minor speech genres: aphorisms or statuses.

The student joke is mainly genetically related to jokes from other cycles, especially to Jewish jokes, school jokes, and jokes about Vovochka. Strangely enough the interrelation with medical jokes is less usual than it may seem (quite many contemporary student jokes themselves are about students studying medicine or practicing it in hospital during their studies).

The tables show that the genetic relations of the tales and jokes (at least in the case of student jokes) suggested by some scholars seems to be exaggerated. It is important that the results of the comparison between tales are quite precise as the calculation was made with the help of the international tale indices containing many tales from various countries, as well as the East-Slavic tale index (Barag et al. 1979).

In addition, the theory of the joke originating from the anecdote seems to be questionable. The connections of contemporary student jokes and anecdotes are very few.

Ten joke types have the same plots as the toasts; usually these toasts have the text of the joke itself included, after which there is a conclusion from the joke in the form of the toast exclamation, "Let's drink to...":

A month before the examination God sends an angel to Earth to see how the students are preparing for their exams. The angel comes back and says:

– I have seen the following: the medical university students study, the pedagogical university students study, but at USURT¹⁷ they drink.

Three days before the exams God sends the angel again; he comes back and reports:

– All the same: the medical university studies, the pedagogical university studies, but USURT drinks.

The examinations start; God sends the angel:

– Go, and tell me what the students do.

He goes and then reports:

– The medical university passes the exams, the pedagogical university passes the exams..."

– And what about USURT?

– They pray to God.

– Then we will help them!¹⁸

At the beginning of the semester God addresses one of the angels:

- So how are the students?
- VSU¹⁹ studies, VSTU²⁰ hangs out.

In the middle of the semester the same story is repeated; at the end of the semester:

- Everybody studies, only VSTU plays computer games.

The night before the exams:

- Everybody studies, VSTU prays to God.
- Prays... Ok, we'll help, answered God.

So, let's drink as it possible to pray anytime!²¹

Finally, the punch line repetition is also reflected in the relationship between student jokes and some minor speech genres: rhetorical questions, titles, etc.: the punch line is extracted from the jokes and is used in these texts.

CONCLUSION

After the comparison of Corpus I and Corpus II, in other words, the types of student jokes with other texts, taking into account several approaches to joke research in Russian, European and American scholarship, I came to the following conclusions:

1. Student jokes can be collected from three different sources: the Internet, oral and written sources. None of them is sufficient individually, and all the three sources have to be taken into account in order to research jokes.
2. The intertextual relationships between the student joke and other texts exist on three different levels: on the basis of plot, motif and punch line. A genetic relationship definitely exists on the level of the plot and punch line, while the motif level may include not only genetic, but also typological relationships.
3. Every level of the genetic relationship is characteristic for the connection with certain types of text: plot similarities are found between student jokes and jokes from other joke cycles, as well as toasts, while the punch line is usually repeated in the minor speech genres.
4. In the sample student jokes, the connection between jokes and tales turns out to be exaggerated.
5. The same may be said of the connection between the student joke and the anecdote. The argument that the anecdote descended from elite noble culture to lower folk culture and turned into the joke does not really work, at least with student jokes.
6. Student jokes are mainly related to jokes from other joke cycles. This is especially true of plot similarities. The versions of the student jokes are most often found among school, Jewish jokes, and jokes about Vovochka.
7. Even though a student joke has stable themes (exams, poverty, etc.), it seems that it is a very flexible phenomenon, subject to change. None of the student jokes from the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century I collected from periodicals was found in contemporary folklore. Moreover, the comparison to Goliards' student poetry showed the same results: while the themes are the same the plots and texts have totally changed. Although apart from the conclusion that student jokes are apt

to change with time, there is also the possibility (at least for the student jokes of the end of the 19th and beginning of 20th century) that the comparative material I collected belongs to fakelore as it could have been made up by the editors of the periodicals or translated from foreign languages. The question of which conclusion to choose remains unclear, and needs further elaboration, although it seems to be more likely that the texts indeed change with time as the circumstances of life in general as well as of student life were too versatile and might have influenced the jokes.

8. The student joke is an original and distinctive phenomenon not closely related to other texts. Its main themes are quite unique and independent. They must have mainly originated in the student environment itself, rather than being loaned. This might be caused by the specifics of student subculture, which has traditionally been quite closed and liminal.

NOTES

1 Quite abundant research has been conducted on the topic of types and variants. For instance, in the classical work on fairy tales by Vladimir Propp it is reported that it is often impossible to distinguish between plots and their variants, and generally the whole body of fairy tales has to be considered as a chain of variants. That is why fairy tales have to be studied together, in their unity (Propp 1969). Other researchers made a clearer distinction between the type, version and variant (though underlying that this division is different for different texts). The term *variant* was advised to label two or more acts of performance within a local group (interestingly, there is the term 'synonymous variants' for the cases in which only personal or geographic names are changed), while the term *version* was provided for the texts performed in different localities, with the further marking of the versions as regional, ethnic, national (Chistov 1986). It is the term *invariant*, introduced by Kirill Chistov, that became a key notion for my definition of a type as a certain structure used to define several motifs remaining unchanged in all the texts collected (*ibid.*).

2 The lowest possible mark.

3 Принимает профессор экзамен. Решает всем задавать один и тот же вопрос:

– Что быстрее: звук или свет?

Заходит первый студент и отвечает:

– Звук.

На вопрос «Почему?» отвечает:

– Когда я включаю телевизор, то сначала слышу звук, а потом появляется изображение.

– Двойка, следующий!

Второй студент на тот же вопрос отвечает:

– Свет: когда я включаю радиоприемник, то сначала загорается лампочка, а потом появляется звук.

– Двойка, следующий!

Придумался профессор, то ли вопрос сложный, то ли студенты тупые. Заходит третий. Вопрос профессора:

– Студент, представьте себе, на вершине горы выстреливает пушка. Вы сначала увидите огонь из ствола или услышите звук выстрела?

Студент:

– Конечно, увижу огонь!

– А почему?

– Ну, типа, глаза впереди ушей!

4 – Почему мы сначала видим молнию, а потом слышим гром?

– Потому что глаза находятся впереди ушей?

5 There are three cases in which jokes with the same plot as the student ones are told about the Jewish boy Moritz at school. These jokes are counted as both school and Jewish.

6 I do not claim to introduce the new term “minor speech genres”: I just use it to embrace the smaller forms used in oral or quasi-oral speech.

7 A status is quite a novel genre which appeared with the development of social networks on the Internet. It is a short statement reflecting the mood of the person, containing some humorous phrase or aphorism.

8 Институт заказал известного лектора, чтобы тот прочитал три лекции. На первую лекцию собралась толпа народу. Лектор:

– Вы знаете, о чем я вам сейчас расскажу?

– Да!

– Ну, зачем я вам тогда буду рассказывать?

И уходит.

На второй лекции:

– Вы знаете, о чем я вам буду рассказывать?

– Нет!

– Ну, зачем же я вам буду рассказывать, если вы ничего не знаете?

И опять уходит.

На третьей лекции народ уже договорился, что половина зала будет кричать «да», а другая – «нет». Лектор:

– Знаете, о чем я вам сейчас расскажу?

Первая половина:

– Да!

Вторая половина:

– Нет!

– Ну, пусть те, кто знают, расскажут тем, кто не знает, – и опять уходит...

9 Однажды, поднявшись на минбар, Афанди обратился к молящимся с вопросом: «Знаете ли вы, о чем я нынче собираюсь читать проповедь?» – «Нет, не знаем!» – ответили прихожане. «Ну, тогда мне с вами не о чем толковать!» – заявил Афанди.

Прихожанам захотелось послушать Афанди, и, когда в следующую пятницу он спросил их: «Знаете ли вы, о чем я хочу говорить в проповеди?» - они хором ответили: «Знаем, знаем!» – «Ну, если знаете, зачем я буду говорить об этом», – сказал Афанди.

В следующую пятницу Афанди опять спросил с высоты минбара: «Знаете ли вы, о чем я собираюсь сказать вам?» Тогда прихожане решили перехитрить Афанди, и половина верующих ответила: «Знаем!» – а другая половина: «Нет, не знаем!» – «Очень хорошо, – обрадовался Афанди и добавил: – Пусть те, кто знает, расскажут тем, кто не знает!»

10 На экзамене студент не знает ответа на один вопрос. Потерявший терпение профессор начинает орать:

– Да вы же осел!

Обращаясь к одному из ассистентов:

– Принесите мне охапку сена!

Студент:

– А мне чашечку кофе, пожалуйста.

11 The proverb used in the joke is synonymous with the English “Oil and water don’t mix”.

12 Приходит студент в столовую, мест нет, только около преподавателя стул свободный. Студент:

– Можно я с вами поесть присяду?

Профессор:

– Гусь свинье не товарищ!

Студент:

– Ну ладно, я тогда полетел!

Через полгода сдает студент тому же профессору экзамен. Профессор:

– А вы бы выбрали миллион долларов или ум?

– А вы?

– Я – ум.

Студент:

– А я – миллион долларов, ведь каждый выбирает то, чего ему недостает.

Преподаватель злится и пишет в зачетке: «Дебил». Студент возвращается через пять минут:

– Извините, Вы фамилию свою написали, а оценка-то какая?

13 Ivan Andreyevich Krylov (1769–1844) is Russian best known fabulist.

14 Однажды на набережной Фонтанки, по которой он (Крылов) обыкновенно ходил в дом Оленина, его нагнали три студента, из коих один, вероятно не зная Крылова, почти поравнявшись с ним, громко сказал товарищ:

– Смотри, туча идет.

– И лягушки заквакали, – спокойно отвечал баснописец в тот же тон студенту.

15 На практике в кулинарном техникуме:

– На старт! Внимание! Фарш!

16 Рекламный заголовок: Мясорубка: На старт, внимание – фарш!

17 Urals State University of Railway Transport.

18 За месяц до сессии посылает Бог ангела на землю посмотреть, как студенты к экзаменам готовятся. Ангел возвращается и говорит:

– Видел я такое дело: Мед учит, Пед учит, а УЭМИИТ бухает.

За три дня до сессии посылает Бог снова ангела, тот возвращается и говорит:

– Опять то же: Мед учит, Пед учит, а УЭМИИТ бухает.

Ну, началась сессия, Бог посылает ангела:

– Поди посмотри, чего студенты делают.

Тот посмотрел и докладывает:

– Мед сдает, Пед сдает...

– А УЭМИИТ?

– Богу молятся!

– Ну, вот им-то Мы и поможем!

19 Vitebsk State University.

20 Vitebsk State Technological University.

21 – Ну как студенты проживают?

– ВГУ учится, ВГТУ гуляет.

В середине семестра та же история, под конец семестра:

– Все учат, один ВГТУ на компьютерах геймится.

В ночь перед экзаменами все учат, ВГТУ Богу молится.

– Молятся... Значит, поможем, – ответил Бог.

Так выпьем же, а помолиться мы всегда успеем.

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