
Subtext and Implicative-Pragmatic Meaning in Abdullah Qahhor's "Anor" and Anton Chekhov's "Ward No. 6"

Gofurova Mukhlisa
Master's student,
Uzbekistan State World Languages University

Annotation *This article studies how implicit meaning is built in Abdulla Qahhor's "Anor" and Anton Chekhov's "Ward No. 6." The paper treats subtext, implicature, and presupposition not as optional stylistic decoration but as working mechanisms of literary semantics. The review section shows that literary pragmatics has explained indirect meaning through Gricean inference, speech acts, relevance, and reader participation, yet the connection between those concepts and the deep semantic organization of fiction still needs tighter practical description, especially in work linked to Uzbek material. Methodologically, the article uses close reading and comparative pragmatic analysis of selected passages. The results show that "Anor" produces hidden meaning through culturally loaded dialogue, symbolic pressure around the pomegranate, and silence after conflict, whereas "Ward No. 6" relies on philosophical dialogue, institutional irony, and the prison-like semantics of the ward. Both texts make the reader infer ethical judgment from what the narration withholds.*

Keywords *Literary pragmatics, implicature, subtext, presupposition, implicit meaning, Abdulla Qahhor, Anton Chekhov, comparative analysis*

Abdulla Qahhorning Anor hikoyasi va Anton Chexovning Palata № 6 asarida tagma'no va implikativ- pragmatik mazmun

G'ofurova Muxlisa
Magistratura talabasi,
O'zbekiston davlat jahon tillari universiteti

Annotatsiya *Ushbu maqolada Abdulla Qahhorning "Anor" hikoyasi va Anton Chexovning "Palata № 6" asarida yashirin ma'no qanday qurilishi tahlil qilinadi. Tagma'no, implikatura va presuppozitsiya bu yerda ikkilamchi bezak emas, balki badiiy semantikaning ishlovchi mexanizmlari sifatida talqin qilinadi. Adabiyotlar sharhi shuni ko'rsatadiki, badiiy pragmatika bilvosita ma'noni Grays modeli, nutq aktlari, relevatlik va o'quvchi ishtiroki orqali izohlab kelgan, biroq bu tushunchalarning badiiy matnning chuqur semantik tashkiloti bilan bog'lanishi, ayniqsa o'zbek material bilan ishlashda, yanada aniqroq amaliy tavsifni talab qiladi. Metodologik jihatdan maqola close reading va tanlangan parchalar asosidagi qiyosiy pragmatik tahlilga tayanadi. Natijalar "Anor"da yashirin ma'no madaniy yuklangan dialog, anor timsoli va mojaro ortidan kelgan sukut orqali qurilishini, "Palata № 6" esa falsafiy dialog, muassasa ichidagi ironiya va palataning qamoqxona semantikasi orqali ishlashini ko'rsatadi.*

Kalit so'zlar *Badiiy pragmatika, implikatura, tagma'no, presuppozitsiya, implitsit ma'no, Abdulla Qahhor, Anton Chexov, qiyosiy tahlil*

Подтекст и имплицативно-прагматический смысл в рассказе Абдуллы Каххара «Анор» и повести Антона Чехова «Палата № 6»

Гофурова Мухлиса

Магистрант,
Узбекский государственный университет
мировых языков

- Аннотация** *В статье рассматривается, как скрытый смысл строится в произведениях Абдуллы Каххара «Анор» и Антона Чехова «Палата № 6». Подтекст, импликатура и пресуппозиция понимаются здесь не как побочный орнамент, а как рабочие механизмы литературной семантики. Обзор литературы показывает, что литературная прагматика уже описала косвенное значение через грицевский вывод, речевые акты, релевантность и участие читателя, однако связь этих понятий с глубинной семанической организацией художественного текста всё ещё требует более точного практического описания, особенно в работах, связанных с узбекским материалом. Методологически статья опирается на close reading и сопоставительный прагматический анализ выбранных фрагментов. Анализ показывает, что «Анор» создаёт скрытый смысл через культурно нагруженный диалог, символическое давление граната и молчание после конфликта, тогда как «Палата № 6» опирается на философский диалог, институциональную иронию и тюремную семантику палаты.*
- Ключевые слова** *Литературная прагматика, импликатура, подтекст, пресуппозиция, имплицитный смысл, Абдулла Каххар, Антон Чехов, сопоставительный анализ*

Introduction

This article argues that the most stable bridge between pragmatics and literary interpretation lies in the zone where explicit narration stops and inferred meaning begins. I use the term implicative-pragmatic meaning for that zone. It includes conversational implicature, but it is wider. It also covers presupposed knowledge, symbolic pressure, narrative silence, and those structural decisions that make the reader complete what the text does not openly declare.

The argument is tested on two texts that do not belong to the same national tradition but speak to each other with surprising force: Abdulla Qahhor's "Anor" and Anton Chekhov's "Ward No. 6." The pairing is not decorative. The

investigation already showed that both texts rely on understatement, ethical tension, and reader inference, while each of them remains culturally distinct in tone, imagery, and pressure points (Gofurova, 2025; Philipp et al., 2025). In Qahhor, poverty enters the story through household speech, shame, and the symbolic burden of one fruit. In Chekhov, the same deep layer grows out of philosophical dialogue, institutional cruelty, and an irony that becomes visible only when Ragin himself crosses the boundary between observer and victim.

A limitation should be stated early. This is a close-reading article built on two works, not a corpus study. I therefore do not claim statistical representativeness. What I do claim is

narrower and, I think, more defensible: these two texts show with unusual clarity how deep literary meaning is produced through indirectness.

Literature review

Work on literary pragmatics has already made two points difficult to ignore. The first is that literary communication can be studied with pragmatic tools without reducing literature to ordinary talk. The second is that those tools become more convincing when they are tied to textual evidence instead of broad statements about "hidden meaning." Al-Hindawi and Saffah (2019) describe literary pragmatics as a field that connects pragmatic theory with literary analysis and argue that concepts such as implicature, speech acts, politeness, and relevance remain productive once they are adapted to fiction. Locher et al. (2023) push the discussion further by treating fiction itself as a pragmatically structured domain rather than a special exception outside communication.

Grice remains central because implicature gives a disciplined language for talking about what a text suggests without directly saying it (Grice, 1975). Still, literary analysis cannot stop at maxim-flouting. Mey (1999) showed long ago that literary pragmatics becomes persuasive only when it explains how readers are made to cooperate with the text. Black (2006) developed this insight through pragmatic stylistics and demonstrated that irony, narration, and point of view often work as pragmatic cues, not merely as "style." In more recent work, Gofurova (2025) applies this line to short fiction and shows that implicature in literary texts often emerges through elliptical dialogue, evaluative displacement, and readerly inference rather than through direct thematic statement.

A second cluster of studies concerns subtext. Akhmetova and Evtushenko (2024) define subtext not as a mystical remainder but as a structured phenomenon produced through omission, hint, and indirect semantic pressure. Pasopati et al. (2024) make a related

point from the angle of criticism: subtextual analysis matters only when it links implicit meaning to a concrete textual environment. That warning is useful. It prevents the critic from turning every silence into a theory.

There is also a line of work specific to literary structure. D. Ashurova (2020) writes about the literary text as a cognitive and cultural whole, not a pile of expressive details. Kuznetsova (2020) shows that metatextual signals can steer interpretation from inside the fiction itself. Philipp et al. (2025), working on Chekhov, test whether information-theoretical modeling can detect subtextual density in a short story. I do not import their method here, but their result supports one important intuition: Chekhov's prose often appears plain only until one begins to track the unequal distribution of information.

What remains less settled is the link between these theories and the Uzbek material. Hakimov (2013) provides a local pragmatic foundation, and the dissertation material already used this line in order to relate implicature to culturally embedded speech and presupposition. Yet a tight comparative description of how subtext works in Uzbek and Russian prose at the deep semantic level is still not common. This article tries to occupy that narrower space.

Materials and Method

The material is limited to two texts: Abdulla Qahhor's "Anor" and Anton Chekhov's "Ward No. 6." I chose them for three reasons. First, both works are unusually dense in indirect meaning. Second, they allow comparison without forcing false symmetry. Third, Chapter III of the dissertation already showed that these texts yield stable results when analyzed through subtext, implicative semantics, implicit knowledge, and presupposition.

Methodologically, I combine literary-pragmatic close reading with comparative analysis. I focus on selected passages where meaning depends on what the characters, narrator, or structure withhold. The analysis is organized around four questions: What is said

directly? What is presupposed? What does the reader have to infer? What larger ethical or social meaning is built through that inferential work? This design is intentionally modest. It does not pretend to replace broader literary history. It tries to make the interpretive chain visible.

Anor: poverty, pressure, and the semantics of one fruit

In "Anor," the first thing that matters is not the fruit itself but the asymmetry around it. The wife's craving would not become tragic if the story existed in a world of ordinary access. Qahhor builds the conflict out of a small domestic wish that should have been simple and lets poverty distort it until the wish turns into shame, accusation, and finally violence. The semantic burden of the pomegranate grows scene by scene. It begins as desire, then becomes proof of inadequacy, then a measure of class difference, and finally an object covered by moral cost. That growth is not explained in theoretical language inside the story. It is inferred from the pressure placed on each repetition.

Dialogue does much of the work. The wife's complaint is not just a complaint. When she asks why she had to crave pomegranate and not something cheap or even worthless, the line carries a presupposition about the material limits of her family and another one about the cultural seriousness of pregnancy craving (Qahhor, 2013). Qahhor does not pause to explain that cultural background. He trusts it. This trust is part of the text's pragmatics. The reader who shares or reconstructs that background reads the sentence differently from the reader who treats it as mere exaggeration.

Turobjon's replies are even more revealing. He does not say, "I am ashamed that I cannot provide." He moves through irony, wounded pride, and rhetorical aggression. That indirection matters. A direct confession would reduce the scene to social statement. Qahhor wants something harsher: a moment where poverty enters speech as distortion. The

husband's language becomes unstable because the social fact behind it is humiliating. His anger, then, is not only private temperament. It is a pragmatically visible symptom of economic pressure.

The story turns darker when the neighbor's taunt and the wife's bitter reply activate the code of male honor. Here the subtext is not abstract. It is audible. The wife's line about the "lover" is literally false, yet pragmatically exact. She is not offering information. She is returning injury through implicative speech. What the sentence really communicates is harder and more painful: if the husband reads her desire as accusation, she will answer in a form that injures the very center of patriarchal self-respect. The line works because both characters know what cannot be said directly. The reader sees the blow before the physical blow arrives.

The final appearance of the pomegranates completes the semantic transformation. They enter the room not as fulfillment but as evidence. Turobjon's pallor and silence make explicit confession unnecessary. Qahhor's choice not to narrate the act by which the fruit was obtained is crucial. That omission forces the reader into ethical reconstruction. One understands enough. More description would flatten the effect. In this sense, the pomegranate becomes the point where desire, class inequality, love, and moral damage are condensed into one object. The story says little. It makes the reader do the rest.

Ward No. 6: philosophical speech and institutional irony

Chekhov begins from a different surface. "Ward No. 6" seems larger in social scope and more argumentative in texture. Yet its strongest meanings also arise through controlled withholding. The ward is described materially, almost coldly, and that coldness is not neutral. It is the narrative equivalent of institutional indifference. The stench, disorder, beating, and neglect are placed before the reader without moral overstatement. This

restraint changes the force of the scene. The reader is not told what to feel. The reader has to infer the ethical position from the mismatch between the function of a hospital and the actual life inside it (Chekhov, 2002).

Ragin's dialogue with Gromov gives the text its best-known intellectual tension. On the surface, the doctor's speech is philosophical. He speaks the language of detachment, endurance, and rational distance from pain. But the story does not ask the reader to admire that language. It tests it. Gromov's replies matter because they do not merely oppose the doctor's claims; they relocate them. He pushes the conversation from abstract truth to lived suffering. This is where the implicative-semantic level becomes visible. The doctor's words, taken alone, can sound coherent. Within the narrative situation, they implicate moral laziness.

Chekhov also relies on ironic delay. The full meaning of Ragin's earlier remarks becomes clear only after his confinement. Once he is locked inside the ward, his Stoic formulas return as self-refuting echoes. The story does not say, "Ragin was wrong." Instead, the structure arranges an encounter between proposition and experience. That encounter is enough. The ironic verdict is produced by juxtaposition, not explanation.

The ward itself functions as more than setting. It gradually acquires prison semantics. The bars, the closed routines, the violence of Nikita, the bureaucratic ease with which a person can be classified and removed from ordinary social space: all this shifts the ward from medical institution to compressed model of coercive order. Readers do not need a political slogan to see that change. The setting performs it. What begins as background becomes the novella's central argument about power and moral blindness.

A further complication appears in the question of sanity. Chekhov refuses a simple reversal where the patients are sane and the officials are mad. The text is less neat than that. What it does show is that institutional authority

is not a reliable measure of truth. The semantic instability around "sanity" is one reason the novella remains open after the plot is over. It does not close into one allegory. It leaves the reader in a harder place, where the categories themselves have become suspect.

Comparative discussion

The two texts do not generate implicit meaning in identical ways. Qahhor works through compression, household speech, and culturally dense understatement. Chekhov builds longer argumentative movement and lets irony accumulate through narrative reversal. Still, the comparison reveals three common mechanisms.

First, both texts use dialogue as a site where characters say less than the situation demands. This does not weaken meaning. It sharpens it. In "Anor," emotional truth appears through sarcasm and breakage in domestic speech. In "Ward No. 6," ethical truth emerges through a debate that becomes legible only when later experience reframes earlier words.

Second, both works depend on presupposed background. Qahhor expects a reader who can grasp the cultural and social charge of pregnancy craving, household honor, and material insufficiency. Chekhov expects a reader who understands how philosophical detachment can collapse under bodily pain and how institutions can normalize cruelty under neutral routines. In each case, the text is incomplete by design. It becomes whole only in contact with a reader who can reconstruct the missing layer.

Third, both works assign symbolic pressure to concrete objects or spaces. In one text, the pomegranate absorbs desire, lack, and moral cost. In the other, the ward absorbs confinement, passivity, and the failure of humane reason. The symbols do not float above the story. They harden inside it. That is why they carry argumentative force.

The main difference is in direction of emotional movement. Qahhor drives inward, toward a domestic crisis that opens outward into class critique. Chekhov drives outward and

inward at once: institutional critique and psychological ruin develop together. This difference matters because it shows that implicative-pragmatic reading is not one

formula applied to all texts. The same terms must bend to genre, scale, and cultural organization.

Comparative matrix of core implicative-pragmatic mechanisms

Text	Dominant trigger	Typical reader inference	Deep semantic effect
Anor	Sarcasm in domestic dialogue; culturally loaded craving; silence after conflict	The fruit is not only fruit; poverty enters speech and distorts family intimacy	Class inequality becomes emotionally legible through one household scene
Ward No. 6	Philosophical dialogue tested by later confinement; neutral narration of brutality	Abstract detachment hides moral blindness; the ward exceeds medical meaning	Institutional cruelty and ethical collapse are inferred rather than declared
Both texts	Withholding, indirectness, symbolic concentration	The reader must reconstruct judgment from incomplete signals	Deep meaning emerges as an inferential structure, not as direct message

Table 1. Comparative profile of implicative-pragmatic mechanisms in the two analyzed texts

Conclusion

This article set out to examine how subtext and implicative-pragmatic meaning work in "Anor" and "Ward No. 6." The analysis has shown that neither text depends on explicit authorial explanation to produce strong ethical meaning. Qahhor builds that meaning through culturally loaded dialogue, symbolic concentration around the pomegranate, and silence after damage. Chekhov builds it through philosophical speech tested by experience, institutional irony, and the gradual transformation of the ward into a semantic prison.

The literature review helped to frame this result, but the examples mattered more. They

showed that literary pragmatics becomes convincing when it stays close to the textual mechanism. A line wounds because of what it implies, not because the critic names it "important." A setting becomes accusatory because it reorganizes how the reader interprets everything inside it. That distinction is worth keeping.

A limitation remains. Two texts cannot represent all literary traditions or all forms of implicative meaning. Still, they do make one point difficult to dismiss: the deep content level of fiction is often constructed through restraint rather than expansion. What literature withholds is not empty space. It is where interpretation begins.

References:

1. Akhmetova, G. A., & Evtushenko, E. A. (2024). The phenomenon of subtext in literary works. *Liberal Arts in Russia*, 13(4), 193–200. <https://doi.org/10.15643/libartrus-2024.4.4>

2. Al-Hindawi, F. H., & Saffah, M. D. (2019). Literary pragmatics. *Arab World English Journal*, 10(2), 394–408. <https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol10no2.30>
3. Ashurova, D. U. (2020). Khudozhestvennyy tekst: Kogni tivnyy i kul'turologicheskiy aspekty [Literary text: Cognitive and cultural aspects]. *O'zbekistonda xorijiy tillar*, 2(31), 126–138.
4. Black, E. (2006). *Pragmatic stylistics*. Edinburgh University Press.
5. Chekhov, A. P. (2002). *Ward No. 6 and other stories, 1892–1895* (R. Wilks, Trans.). Penguin Classics.
6. Gofurova, M. (2025). Literary implicature: A pragmatic approach to meaning in short stories. *The Lingua Spectrum*, 4(1), 42–49. <https://lingvospektr.uz/index.php/Ingsp/article/view/625>
7. Grice, H. P. (1975). Logic and conversation. In P. Cole & J. L. Morgan (Eds.), *Syntax and semantics: Vol. 3. Speech acts* (pp. 41–58). Academic Press.
8. Hakimov, M. (2013). *O'zbek pragmalingvistikasi asoslari*. Akademnashr.
9. Kuznetsova, A. V. (2020). Metatekst v khudozhestvennom tekste: Pragmatika i funktsii [Meta-text in fiction text: Pragmatics and functions]. *Filologicheskie nauki. Voprosy teorii i praktiki*, 13(9), 265–269. <https://doi.org/10.30853/filnauki.2020.9.49>
10. Locher, M. A., Jucker, A. H., Landert, D., & Messerli, T. C. (2023). *Fiction and pragmatics*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009091688>
11. Mey, J. L. (1999). *When voices clash: A study in literary pragmatics*. Mouton de Gruyter.
12. Pasopati, R. U., Wijaya, K., Andharu, D., Fadillah, M. R. I., & Ananta, B. R. (2024). The crucial points of subtextual analysis in contemporary literary criticism. *Journal Corner of Education, Linguistics, and Literature*, 4(2), 211–224. <https://doi.org/10.54012/jcell.v4i2.343>
13. Philipp, J. N., Mueller-Reichau, O., Irmer, M., Richter, M., & Kölbl, M. (2025). *Can information theory unravel the subtext in a Chekhovian short story?* In Proceedings of the 10th Workshop on Slavic Natural Language Processing (Slavic NLP 2025). 84–90. Association for Computational Linguistics. <https://doi.org/10.18653/v1/2025.bsnlp-1.10>
14. Qahhor, A. (2013, November 3). *Anor (hikoya)*. Ziyo.uz. <https://n.ziyouz.com/portal-haqida/xarita/uzbek-nasri/abdulla-qahhor-1907-1968/abdulla-qahhor-anor-hikoya>