The article is focused upon the analysis of stylistic means, devices by which Alan Bradley achieves the comic effect in the novel “Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie”. In recent decades, the problem of creation of comic and linguistic means of its expression in works of fiction has been the object of attention of many researchers. However, until now, the linguistic and stylistic devices used by the authors of humorous texts to create a comic effect and express an individual worldview position have not been sufficiently studied, since the researchers focused mainly on the literary aspect, the peculiarities of the comic worldview, the structural and compositional organization of humorous works. Semantics and stylistics remain outside the attention of linguists. As a result, the detailed consideration of linguistic means of expression, used by Alan Bradley in the novel “Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie” to create a humorous effect, is in the scope of this article. The main stylistic devices are represented by simile, hyperbole, metaphor and suspense.

Keywords: comic, humor, linguo-stylistic analysis, literary text, stylistic device, stylistic means, vocabulary.

Linguo-stylistic devices play a significant role in creating a comic effect in a literary text. According to I.R. Halperin’ classification, the frequency of the use while creating a comic effect, stylistic devices can be divided into main and additional ones. The main stylistic devices include: comparison, hyperbole, metaphor, detailing or suspense, mixing the colloquial style of speech with the official and scientific. Additional stylistic devices are represented by onomatopoeia, synecdoche, antithesis,
exclamations and rhetorical questions, oxymoron, litotes and special use of set expressions – quotes [2].

**Comparisons** in the novel by Alan Bradley “Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie” give an evaluative character to the certain events, situations and peculiarities of the discourse. In turn, due to this, a certain ambivalence of truth is created, which leads to the creation of a humorous effect. Here are some examples of using this trope: “Seed biscuits and milk! I hated Mrs. Mullet’s seed biscuits the way Saint Paul hated sin. Perhaps even more so. I wanted to clamber up onto the table, and with a sausage on the end of a fork as my scepter, shout in my best Laurence Olivier voice, “Will no one rid us of this turbulent pastry cook?” [1, p.23].

It can be noticed that the novel mainly uses a monologic form of communication (in general, when characterizing the characters), the excessive, hyperbolized analyticity of which sets the humorous narrative tone: “Inspector Hewitt tapped the tip of his nose with his Biro, as if framing his next question for a parliamentary committee. “Did you see anyone else about?” [1, p.35].

Observing, reflecting on the actions of others and giving a sufficiently critical assessment of the mode of action is an integral part of creating a comic effect: “Miss Mountjoy sat down heavily as if she’d been pole-axed. She stared at me with goggle eyes as if I’d just materialized from another dimension. Also: “She stared at me as if I were Madame Zolanda at the church fête, with a turban, a shawl, and a crystal ball” [1, p.25]. The semantic nature of the comparative conjunction as if only suggests a similarity, creating an image of action, thereby causing a smile.

The conjunctions like and as have somewhat different semantics: they are more categorical and clearly establish an analogy between the two objects which are being compared: “Dr. Darby was the spitting image of John Bull: red face, multiple chins, and a stomach that bellied out like a sail full of wind” [1, p.36].

“Her face was as wrinkled as one of those forgotten apples you sometimes find in the pocket of last year's winter jacket” [1, p.44]. The accuracy and sharpness of such a comparison allows the reader not only to have an idea of the age and general features of this character, but also to construct an associative image that has a somewhat comical coloring, since it is distinguished by a high level of expressiveness.
“You have a very keen eye, Mrs. Mullet,” Inspector Hewitt said, and she puffed up *like* a pouter pigeon in a glow of iridescent pink” [1, p.27]. This sentence demonstrates the phenomenon of “hackneyed simile” widespread in the English language – “banal” comparisons that indicate an analogy between various qualities, states or actions of a person and animals that are carriers of these qualities.

**Hyperbole** sharpens the reader’s logical assessment of what is read and, in its extreme form, leads to illogicality, and sometimes to absurdity, which causes a smile: “I held back a sigh of relief, almost *choking* in the process” [1, p.52].

“The people who read these things must have possessed *superhuman eyesight*, the type was so wretchedly small. Much more of this and I knew I’d have a throbbing headache” [1, p.57]. The main character's principled attitude towards specific events or objects leads to excessive criticality of the assessment of these phenomena.

The following examples, demonstrating hyperbole as an artistic means of displaying the comic, are intended to indicate the statute of limitations for the beginning of a certain event and are also overly intensified, leading to absurdism and comicality: “Even though we de Luces had been Catholics *since chariot races were all the rage*, that did not keep us from attending St. Tancred’s, Bishop’s Lacey’s only church and a fortress of the Church of England if ever there was one. Also: “She had been Librarian-in-Chief of the Bishop's Lacey Free Library *when Noah was a sailor*” [1, p.63].

The comic effect created with the help of **metaphor** is found in the following fragment and we see the identification of one object with another: “It was at this very moment that Mrs. Mullet pushed open the door with her ample bottom, and *waddled* into the room with a loaded tray” [1, p.46].

In a similar way, such an overlay or comparison of two objects-images occurs in the following passage: “If she had been wearing an apron, she’d have thrown it over her head and fled, but she didn’t. Instead, she *reeled* in through the open door” [1, p.26].

The following quotation demonstrates an example of a “trite metaphor” or so-called “erased” metaphor, which, despite this, occupies a prominent place in the creation of a comic situation: “Mrs. Mullet had *leaked* the grim news, and there had
been ample time for them to arrange themselves in poses of pretended indifference” [1, p.33].

With the help of such a compositional device as detailization or suspense, the speech of the characters is organized in such a way that less important descriptive details and subordinate parts are accumulated at the very beginning of the sentence, while the main idea is kept until the end of the sentence. This technique concentrates the reader’s attention and interest and prepares for a certain logical conclusion, which in the novel is sometimes obvious and spoken by the character, that creates a comic effect: “I must say that Inspector Hewitt was very good about it. In a flash he was at Father's side, clapping an ear to his chest, loosening his tie, checking with a long finger for airway obstruction. I could see that he had not slept through his St. John Ambulance classes” [1, p.39].

“She pulled a lace handkerchief from her sleeve, knotted it, and jammed it into her mouth, and for a few moments, she sat there, rocking in her chair, gripping the lace between her teeth like an eighteenth-century seaman having his leg amputated below the knee, and at last, she looked up at me with brimming eyes and said in a shaky voice, “Mr. Twining was my mother's brother” [1, p.71]. This example shows Miss Mountjoy’s not entirely adequate reaction to the mention of Mr. Twining’s name in the conversation. The suspense device is embodied with the help of a detailed description of the actions of the librarian Mountjoy, the use of a big number of enumerations, widespread comparisons and epithets, leading to the climactic line of the dialogue between the woman and Flavia, which, in fact, completes one of the chapters of the novel. It should be noted that the comic in this case can be traced not in the main idea placed in the final conclusion, but in the very description of the actions of preparing the expression of this idea.

Excessive detailization and accuracy of the description of household items is superfluous and irrelevant information which is given in order to create a humorous character to the narration: “Against one wall was a chipped wooden table with an ABC Railway Guide (October 1946) shoved under one leg to keep it from teetering” [1, p.49].
The end of the utterance constructed with the help of the stylistic means of suspense is a particularly emphatic part. The unexpectedness and mystery of the conclusion, preserved until the end of the sentence, lead to the concentration of the reader’s attention, which forms the desired effect of the comic: “Once when she was playing a Schumann sonata with an excessively dreamy look on her face, I had remarked loudly to Daffy that I simply adored bandstand music, and Feely flew into a passion – a passion that wasn't helped by my stalking out of the room and returning a few minutes later with a Bakelite ear-trumpet I had found in a closet, a tin cup, and a hand-lettered sign tied round my neck with a string: “Deafened in tragic piano accident. Please take pity” [1, p.75]. In addition, the utterance, which is based on suspense, is partly psychological in nature, since it awakens a sense of anticipation. Therefore, it is framed in one complex sentence with an adjective clause and an adverbial clause of time that does not violate the intonation pattern. The completion of this type of sentence is the climax – a witty phrase.

Mixing the colloquial style of speech, which in the work is most often represented by slang, with the official and scientific, which are most often represented by terms, archaisms and words of high literary style. Such inconsistency and inappropriateness of correlation creates a certain dissonance and contradiction, which leads to the appearance of a humorous effect:

“I’m Inspector Hewitt. Is your father at home?”

“He is,” I said, “but he’s rather indisposed.” It was a word I had borrowed from Ophelia. “I’ll show you to the corpse myself.” Mrs. Mullet’s mouth fell open and her eyes goggled” [1, p.28].

“We’ve had rather an early start this morning. Do you think you could manage to rustle something up?” So that was it. As at a birth, so at a death. Without so much as a kiss-me-quick-and-mind-the-marmalade, the only female in sight is enlisted to trot off and see that the water is boiled. Rustle something up, indeed! What did he take me for, some kind of cowboy?” [1, p.35]. Explanations of the lexeme “kiss-me-quick-and-mind-the-marmalade” are not recorded by any explanatory dictionary, therefore it is permissible to assume that this polysyllabic word is the author’s neologism, moreover, of a colloquial style. This can be judged by the sum of semantic meanings of all
components of the lexical unit. As it is stated in “The Century Dictionary and Cyclopedia” [3], the lexeme “kiss-me-quick” means a name given to various things of a flirtatious or attractive nature; a fancy thing that was fashionable about the middle of the nineteenth century. In other words, something that requires fastidiousness, careful study, improvement, time and attention. Analyzing the second part of the neologism, it is reasonable to assume that the word “marmalade” has a figurative meaning. According to the “Urban Dictionary” [4], “marmalade” is a lexeme invented to replace the expression “to jam”, which means “to do something together”. So, we can make a hypothetical conclusion that the expression “Without so much as a kiss-me-quick-and-mind-the-marmalade...” is a new slang expression that means “without any ceremony”, “without any apologies”, “without a single kind word.”

In contrast, the substantivized adjective “enlisted” represents the literary layer of the English vocabulary and immediately raises the narrative register. Thus, mixing colloquial and literary vocabulary in one syntactic unit expressing a certain idea has intonational and semantic completeness, causes a smile and leads to the creation of a humorous effect.

A significant role in producing the atmosphere of humor in the novel “Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie” is played by terms related to such a field of science as chemistry: “It was my old friend Ammon. Carb., Ammonium Carbonate, or, as I called it when we were alone together in the laboratory, Sal Volatile, or sometimes just plain Sal. I knew that the “ammon” part of its name came from ammonia, which was named on account of its being first discovered not far from the shrine of the god Ammon in ancient Egypt, where it was found in camel's urine” [1, p.73]. Such an accumulation of specialized terminology often indicates that A. Bradley shows the erudition of the main character, who, despite her deep knowledge in this area, sometimes treats them jokingly and even personifies certain chemical elements. With the help of the stylistic means of personification and word formation through apocope, the term acquires a stylistic function and becomes a sporadic stylistic means. It should be noted that such an association of an ordinary chemical element with a friend of the main character certainly adds wit to the situation described above, and therefore is the basis of humor.
Another, no less vivid example, where humor is the result of a combination of colloquial and scientific vocabulary is the following: “And Miss Ophelia?” he asked, getting round to her at last.

“Miss Ophelia? Well, to tell you the truth, Ned, we're all rather worried about her.” Ned recoiled as if a wasp had gone up his nose.

“Oh? What's the trouble? Nothing serious, I hope.”

“She’s gone all green," I said. "I think it's chlorosis. Dr. Darby thinks so too.”

In his 1811 Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue, Francis Grose called chlorosis “Love’s Fever,” and “The Virgin’s Disease.” I knew that Ned did not have the same ready access to Captain Grose’s book as I did. I hugged myself inwardly” [1, p.38].

The atmosphere of the colloquial style is conveyed by the phrasal verb to get round to, the interjection well, numerous abbreviations such as what’s, we’re, she’s, etc. The scientific vocabulary is represented by the term, the name of the disease chlorosis. It is Flavia’s interpretation of the latter that adds a humorous color to the story.

In the following example we can observe the symbiotic combination of colloquial and literary vocabulary units in order to create a comic effect: “Roger, Miss Pickery’s ginger tomcat, rolled on the front doorstep, exposing his belly for a scratching. I obliged” [1, p.66].

Onomatopoeia is an equally important stylistic means of expression, thanks to which a comic effect is created: “First-rate flipper work,” I’ll say loudly enough to be heard above the music. “Arf! Arf! Arf!” [1, p.71].

“First-rate flipper work” – with such words he comments on Ophelia’s piano playing. Noticing the lack of response from her older sister, Flavia adds sounds produced by herself in order to parody the play: “Arf! Arf! Arf!”

“Har-har-har!” I said, with vast irony. Who could care enough?” [1, p. 56] – this is how the main character expresses herself, thinking about which road is better to go to the neighboring village by bicycle. In the end, Flavia comes to the conclusion that the long way is the best choice, since none of her family would worry about her absence from home.
With the help of synecdoche, the image of a certain object or subject in the novel is not completely reproduced, but only according to a characteristic feature. By only hinting at the object, the synecdoche allows the reader to paint the image of the character in his imagination based on logical juxtapositions of his features, lifestyle, character, behavior, etc. This process of "further creation" of a character with the help of imagination creates a comic effect:

“Fat sausages made surprisingly gentle microscopic adjustments to the little silver controls” [1, p.42]. The stylistic device of the metaphor underlying the “fat sausages” synecdoche is a clear embodiment of the associative impressions which refer to the figure of Sergeant Woolmer. You can guess that this is a man who is probably lazy, clumsy, leads a sedentary lifestyle and therefore has curvaceous forms. Such an extraordinary manner of describing a person is quite witty, which makes it possible to judge the presence of the comic in the novel.

Being built on contrast, a sharp opposition of images and concepts, the antithesis in A. Bradley’s novel serves as an exceptionally vivid and demonstrative stylistic means of depicting the characteristics of individuals, objects, and events. Since such a comparison in the work is often exaggerated (due to the age and a critical look at the life of the main character), its sharpness makes the narration comedic:

“I didn't doubt that Father would have gone into positive raptures about the pristine perfection of the things, the enchantment of engraving, the pleasures of perforations, and the glories of glue, but to me they were no more than the sort of thing you'd slap on a letter to dreadful Aunt Felicity in Hampshire, thanking her for her thoughtful Christmas gift of a Neddy the Squirrel Annual” [1, p.48].

Here is another vivid example of antithesis, when this stylistic device is the basis of creating a comic: “Now, glancing over at Feely as she knelt with her eyes closed, her fingertips touching and pointed to Heaven, and her lips shaping soft words of devotion, I had to pinch myself to keep in mind that I was sitting next to the Devil’s Hairball” [1, p.76].

It is also impossible to overestimate the role of exclamations and rhetorical questions in creating humor in the novel “Sweetness at the Bottom of the Pie”: 
“Had I been too cruel to that horror, Miss Mountjoy? Too vindictive? Wasn't she, after all, just a harmless and lonely old spinster? Would a Larry de Luce have been more understanding? "Hell, no!" I shouted into the wind, and I chanted as we flew along:

Oomba-chukka!
Oomba-chukka Oomba-chukka-Boom!” [1, p.59].

Observing the instant change in the psycho-emotional state of the main character does not leave the reader without a smile, and therefore the rhetorical questions and screams are fundamental in creating humor in the novel.

Another illustrative example of the above statement is the following: “I’ve spoken to Dogger,” he said, and I noticed that he kept his eyes on me to gauge my reaction. “Oh, yes?” I said, but my mind was sounding the kind of “Oogah!” warning they have on a submarine preparing to dive. Careful! I thought” [1, p.62]. The significance of the exclamations in creating the humor in this passage is that Flavia creates a situation of threat almost out of nothing and reacts to it with exclamations of warning of danger.

The effect of the comic, built on the basis of an **oxymoron**, is founded on the combination of two words (often an adjective and a noun), contrasting, opposite in content: “Dogger stood there for the longest time, like a *tableau vivant*. I had seen etchings in the library of those ancient entertainments in which the actors were plastered with whitewash and powder before arranging themselves in motionless poses, often of a titillating nature, each supposedly representing a scene from the lives of the gods” [1, p.34]. *Tableau vivant* – is an expression of French origin that means “living statue”, “living picture”. That is, it is meant that the man was overcome with wonder, that is why he stood frozen, as if lifeless.

The comedy created by **litotes** occurs when the reader realizes that this is not a pure negation, but an objection involving the statement:

“I know,” I said. “King George the Sixth is *not a frivolous man.*”

Inspector Hewitt looked at me sadly. He got up from his desk and went to the window where he stood looking out at the gathering clouds, his hands clasped behind his back.
“No,” he said at last, “King George is not a frivolous man” [1, p.81].

Quotations play an important role in creating the comic connotation of the novel. In this case, they are not just a repetition of a phrase or a statement from a book, speech, etc., but a basis for thinking about a certain issue or topic. Thus, Flavia, reflecting on the experiments performed on her older sister Ophelia, does not observe any reactions. Undeterred, the girl continues to fix and record observations of the “object” in her diary: “Friday, 2nd of June 1950, 1:07 p.m. No visible reaction as yet. “Patience is a necessary ingredient of genius.” (Disraeli) [1, p.18].

Summing up, we can note: the linguo-stylistic analysis of the literary text is a difficult and complicated process, and there is a great number of methods and approaches to it. However, it is still one of the most important ways of studying literary texts, and Alan Bradley’s works represent a useful source for such analyses.

References