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COGNITIVE APPROACH TO LITERARY TEXT INTERPRETATION

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КОГНИТИВНЫЙ ПОДХОД К ИНТЕРПРЕТАЦИИ ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННОГО ТЕКСТА

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Abstract. The research is concerned with the cognitive approach to literary text interpretation which presupposes certain models of understanding. It discusses the problems of multidimensional structure of the literary text, the basic linguistic signals put in the position of foregrounding and the role of cultural concepts in decoding authors world picture. Special attention is paid to the principles of foregrounding, linguistic iconicity, redundancy and economy, which are considered to be cognitive principles of information distribution in a literary text and perform conceptually significant functions, highlighting the most essential information. It is substantiated that in the process of literary text interpretation, attention should be paid to the representation of cultural concepts, the processes of conceptualization and distribution of information in a literary text, the distribution of conceptual features according to the field principle.

Аннотация. Исследование посвящено проблеме когнитивной интерпретации художественного текста в рамках определенных модулей понимания. Обсуждаются проблемы структуры художественного текста, лингвистических сигналов в позиции выдвижения, роли культурных концептов в раскрытии индивидуально-авторской картины мира. Отдельное внимание уделяется принципам выдвижения, лингвистической иконичности, избыточности и экономии, которые рассматриваются как когнитивные принципы распределения информации в художественном тексте и выполняет концептуально значимые функции, выдвигая на первый план наиболее существенную информацию. Обосновывается, что при интерпретации художественного текста, следует уделять внимание репрезентации культурных концептов, процессам концептуализации и распределения информации в художественном тексте, распределению концептуальных признаков по полевому принципу.

Keywords: cognitive approach, text interpretation, information, foregrounding, concept, literary text.

Ключевые слова: когнитивный подход, интерпретация текста, информация, выдвижение, концепт, художественный текст.

Text Interpretation is a purposeful cognitive activity aimed to disclose deep conceptual contents of the text. The procedure of interpretation is based on constructing and verifying hypothesis concerning deep-lying conceptual information of the text. Cognitive interpretation of the literary text should be done within the framework of certain modules of understanding:
–using language knowledge;

–constructing and verifying hypothetic interpretations;

–constructing the "model world" of the text;

–reconstructing the author's intention;

–establishing relationships between the "inner world" of the addressee and "model world" of the addresser;

From the linguistic point of view an important stage of interpretation is finding basic linguistic signals marks to be guided by in the process of interpretation. To such signals we refer the language means put in the position of salience, foregrounding, focus.

The notion of foregrounding is defined as a cognitive procedure of selecting the most essential relevant information. It stands out as a stimulus or "key" in the process of text perception and interpretation. The notion of foregrounding was first described in the works of Russian Formal School (B. A. Larin, R. Yakobson) and the Prague Linguistic Circle (B. Gavranek, J. Mukařovský,) as a special device of constructing poetic texts [1–4]. At present this notion is widely used in Cognitive Linguistics and Text Linguistics. Foregrounding is charged with many functions. Putting forward some fragments of the text, foregrounding, on the one hand, segmentates the text into more or less important parts, on the other – establishes hierarchy of these parts, thus promoting coherence and integrity of the text. Besides, foregrounding directs text interpretation, and activises frames, knowledge structures, intentions, attitudes, emotions.

There are different ways of foregrounding information in the text [5]. I. V. Arnold [6] discussing the linguistic mechanism of foregrounding in a fictional text, outlines the following types of foregrounding: 1) the convergence of stylistic devices; 2) coupling (repetition); 3) defeated expectancy. Other linguists indicate strong positions of the text (the beginning and the end), contrast, the title, epigraph, graphical means.

Another no less important cognitive principle of presenting information in the text is the principle of iconicity that is defined as relations of certain similarity between the verbal sign and its denotate. Linguists distinguish three types of iconicity

1. The principle of iconic sequencing. It requires that events described in the text should correspond to those in reality. For instance, a consecutive order of sentences in the text on the whole is supposed to conform to a chronological order of events (he came, he saw, he conquered) [7]. It concerns not only chronological, but also spatial, causative, socially conditioned regularities of the text organization reflecting the real events. Such linguistic phenomena as word order, sequence of tenses, consecutive sentence arrangement in the text are based on the principle of iconic sequence. It should be noted that in the literary text this principle can be deliberately violated. As G. G. Molchanova [8] points out such stylistic phenomena as retrospection, prospection, represented speech, stream of consequences violate the logical sequence of events and, accordingly the sequence of sentences in the text. The violation of traditional word order makes up the basis for such stylistic device as inversion and chiasmus.

2. Iconic proximity means that "things that belongs together of language usage tend to be put together, and things that do not belong together are put at a distance" [9]. This assumption can be illustrated by the following phrases: *A charming poor girl. A dignified rich old man. A successful strong young man. An attractive neat little house.* In these examples it is clearly seen that the attributes denoting inherent are in the denotate features occupy the closest to the nouns position, they are proceeded by the attributes describing objective characteristics and then come attributes expressing subjective emotional evaluation.

3. Iconic principle of quantity is based on the assumption that informativity depends on the amount of verbal signs. It can be formulated as "more form – more meaning – less form – less

meaning" [8]. This principle is connected with the problem of redundancy. It is worth mentioning that many a linguistic phenomenon are based on the iconic principle of quantity: reduplication, all types of repetition, phonetic means (onomatopoeia, alliteration), paronimic attraction, periphrasis, parallel construction). The iconic principle of quantity can be used deliberately in the literary texts and speech acts. It fulfills several functions: a) to attract the reader's/listener's attention; b) to put more stress on the redundant element; c) to realize the principle of politeness; d) to exert emotional impact on the reader; e) to serve as a leit-motif of the literary text.

Another cognitive principle of presenting information in the text is linguistic economy – one of the basic laws of language, its tendency to economize on verbal signs. Linguistic economy is realized at every language level: morphological (shan't, isn't, don't); lexical (prof, lab, ad, USA, INO, CIS); syntactical elliptical sentences, one member sentences. At the level of the literary text there are stylistic devices based on the principle of linguistic economy –antonomasia, allusion, metaphor, metonymy. The cause and effect of linguistic economy in the literary text are accounted for by such distinctive features of this text type as implicitness and ambiguity. Very often the words used in the literary text convey a great amount of implicit information which is conceptually important.

Opposed to linguistic economy is the cognitive principle of linguistic redundancy. The notion of redundancy borrowed from theory of information is an inherent property of textual communication. When used deliberately, linguistic redundancy should not be regarded as an unnecessary surplus and language imperfection. In our opinion, it is one of indispensable conditions of human cognition. As Yu. Lotman noted, language protects itself against misunderstandings and distortions with the help of mechanisms of redundancy [10, p. 34]. The most conspicuous linguistic signal of redundancy are various kinds of repetition, periphrasis, alliteration, symbol, synonymous expressions. One of the main functions of redundant units is to produce an emotional impact on the reader.

One major peculiarity of the literary text is its complex multidimensional, multilayered structure. Most research differentiate the surface layer and the deep layer [11]. The surface layer is a verbal layer, the linguistic form of shaping the content. The verbal layer in its turn falls into phonetic, morphological, lexical and syntactical layers. The deep layer (conceptual) of the text is its conceptual information including the author's purport and pragmatic intentions. The deep layer reflects the author's outlook, his individual world picture, aesthetic views and moral values. The aim of text interpretation is to penetrate into the deep layer, and reveal the conceptual information of the text; therefore special emphasis is to be made on the conceptual cognitive level of the text structure. The cognitive approach focuses on the relationships between language patterns and mental structures, the process of conceptualization and categorization of textual information, knowledge structures, and their verbal representation [7]. The main notions of the conceptual text level are the author's conceptual world picture as a global image of the world reflected in the individual's mind, concept as a unit of conceptual information, a "quantum" of knowledge and the conceptual text structure or conceptoshere reflecting the formation and interaction of literary concepts within the framework of the whole text.

A cognitive turn in the study of language and style has given rise to a new theoretical approach to the problem of metaphor. The most important remark to be made is that metaphor is regarded not only as a stylistic device, but also as a cognitive mechanism which incorporates cognitive processes, empirical experience and language competence. This framework was first proposed by G. Lacoff and M. Johnson in their revolutionary work "Metaphors We Live By", and since then has been developed and elaborated in a number of subsequent researches (Turner, 1991;

Kövecses, 2000; Gibbs, 1994; Reddy, 1979) [cited, 12]. A fundamental tenet of this theory is that metaphor operates at the level of thinking as "our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, and our ordinary conceptual systems, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature" [13, p. 3]. So, conceptual (cognitive) metaphor is attributed to the formation of the personal world model and emotive system and one of the fundamental processes of analogical thinking [13]. In their research, Lacoff and Johnson made a penetrating systematic analysis of the metaphorical concept system drawing clear distinction between conceptual metaphor and metaphorical expressions. They assert that the locus of conceptual metaphor is in the mind, in the way we conceptualize one mental domain in terms of another, for example, understanding Time in terms of Money (e.g. *time is money, I don't have time to give you*). Conceptual domain is understood as "relatively complex knowledge structures which relate to coherent aspects of experience" [13, p. 61], or, in other words, any coherent organization of human experience.

Cognitive interpretation of the literary text presupposes first of all the consideration of cultural concepts as thematic dominants of the text. The following traits of the concept relevant to the literary text and its interpretation can be outlined:

–concept presents knowledge structures about the surrounding world;

–concept is a cultural and nationally specific unit;

–concept is a multifold mental structure consisting of notional, image-bearing and evaluative constituents;

–concept is characterized by a string of emotional, expressive components and associative links.

Proceeding from these peculiarities of the concepts, their analysis aims to reveal and interpret: a) the concept structure and its constituents; b) hierarchical taxonomy of conceptual features inferred in the process of conceptualization; c) distribution of conceptual features according to the "field" principle, i.e. their reference either to the nucleus or periphery of the concept. The conceptual significance of cultural concepts activated is the literary concepts is defined by the fact that they: a) generate new conceptual senses giving rise to various connotations and associations; b) give a deeper insight into the author's intention and evaluative attitude; c) convey cultural and nationally specific values of culture.

In conclusion, it should be stressed that a satisfactory interpretation of any text, particularly the literary text can only be achieved by both communicative and cognitive approaches.

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