

On Some Rhetoric Representations of Cultural Frames in Literary Discourse

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Received: July 5, 2014 Accepted: September 15, 2014 Online Published: October 1, 2014

doi:10.5539/ijel.v4n5p100 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v4n5p100>

Abstract

The paper aims to explore some rhetoric representations of cultural frames in the English literary discourse. For this purpose, we analyze hyperbole and meiosis in English literary texts (approximately 500 pages) using Pragglejazz method for identifying metaphorically used word in this course introduced by Pragglejazz group (Pragglejazz, 2007) and further developed by J. Steen (Steen, 2010). Such analyzes can shed a light on the world of thoughts, mythic world of the English speaking people.

Keywords: literary discourse, cultural frame, hyperbole, meiosis

1. Introduction

Frame model expresses psychological model of human memory. According to a Minsky it rests on the perception of the information received from outside (Minsky, 1975) Frames are divided into slots-terminals. The object of terminal, its specific features, the information belonging to the attitudes among objects, condition the usage of frames. The total of frames models a certain field of object and represents an hierarchic structure in itself and on the top of it stands universal frame.

Ch.Fillmore also considered this issue from linguistic perspectives explaining it as a phenomenon the words having separate meanings can establish a group. In all cases, in order to understand the meaning of each member of this group, it is necessary to know the meanings of all the members of the group. Such group of words are mutually motivated and structuralized with constructions of knowledge possessing special rule. Ch.Fillmore names all these as frame. Such frames are special establishment of knowledge. Besides the term frame, he used other terms such as scenery, script, situational model, scheme and others (Fillmore, 1985)

Alongside the term frame, T.Van Dijk suggests a concept the situation model of knowledge. According to him, we perceive a text only when we perceive the situation: this particularly refers to the field of social activity (T.Van Dijk, 1985) Recently T.Van Dijk adds new ideas to this approach in his book ‘A Sociocognitive Approach’ (T.Van Dike, 2014)

This field of discourse epidemics is especially interesting on the one hand because most of human knowledge is acquired and shaped by discourse, and on the other hand because language use, in general, and the production and understanding of discourse, in particular, are impossible without the activation of massive amount of knowledge of the world.

Modeling of frame structure is realized by the help of syntactic constructions. This feature can be observed in free word combinations, idiomatic expressions, in speech stamps, etc. (Eco, 1984)

Cognitive structure is, in a certain degree, different from the frame structure, namely frame is closer to the meaning. In psychology it is mentioned that cognitive structure has possessed general features, whereas frame has possessed national, cultural features. Frames mainly are represented by idiomatic expressions, metaphors, metonymies, hyperboles, meiosis, etc.

U. Eco accepts frame as an empiric notion and considers it within the frame of semiotic theory. (Eco, 1984) He refers to T.Van Dijk’s view in this issue claiming that frame is an informational structure serving the presentation of stereotype situations and it is an important knowledge on “the world” creating possibilities for carrying out main cognitive acts as certain movements associated with perception for people, understanding

some news sent by language and with the use of language (Eco, 1984). In this connection, U. Eco cites T. Van Dijk's the explanation of the frame "supermarket", writing that it comprises the complex of perceptions determining the chronology of certain events or movements and this complex includes certain objects, persons, features, attitudes or facts (Eco, 1984)

2. Study of the Metaphoric System of the Language

Rhetoric representations of some frames are closely connected with the role in the communicative process of the metaphoric system of the language: it includes metaphor, metonymy, hyperbole and meiosis.

2.1 Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a type of metaphor and serves the characterization of speech. When we speak on characterization of the speech we mean the form of understanding of the reality, basing on the position of aesthetic ideal. This is a special form of manifestation of speech. Words in literary discourse join the systems of compound characters and seriously carry out aesthetic function and manifests as the product of author's creativity. A word, having gained the meaning of characterization in a literary discourse, somewhere at a certain measure loses its normative meaning, gains a new expressive colouring, which bears aesthetic-literary essence. The main features of metaphors in a literary discourse lie just in this.

Hyperbole appeared just in the ancient period of the development of the society and has been one of the forms, to express attitudes of human towards nature. Since that time alongside the increase of life practice of human being, his/her way of thinking from the view point of possibilities, enriched as well and in conformity with this, new ways of meanings, expressed in the mental mechanism, have been formed.

As far as the conscious of primitive human beings developed, from the view point of reality and fantastic sense of conception of the people deepened as well, individually-taken heads of tribes with fantastic sense of understanding accepted the ununderstandable energy in powerful, wild existing beings, in natural events and views. Even they accepted the endlessness of their strength, their being extra-ordinary living beings, as reality. This was the consequence of contact of primitive human being with nature and the first hyperbolic thinking was created just in such a situation. So, ancient human beings, birds possessing extreme power, serpents, existing beings created by wonder and having extraordinary appearance and strength by being exaggerated, were distinguished from one another. This feature is observed nowadays as well. From the intercultural perspectives, the hyperbolic approach to wisdom and abilities in different countries is the most relevant.

By creating hyperbole in literary discourse, the author doesn't break the vital harmony, rather he/she represents it with hyperbolic way of thinking. By this time, reality, in conformity with author's intuition reaches the level of fantasy. This is closely seen in the picture of ideal heroes in the literary discourse. In this aspect mythological and epic heroes are enough to remember: Heracles with all his might, strength wins over all the existing beings in life, or the good wins all over. As we see, hyperbolic thinking, in the course of development of the mankind, has been adorned up with new notes.

Heroes in literary discourse, while being described, can be represented as good as they are in real life, but the possibilities of the heroes may also be exaggerated. The linguistic expression of the exaggeration factor lies on the object of investigation of the linguistic science. Modern linguistics studies the language of speakers, characters and authors from the sociological-linguistic and psychological views.

For aggrading of the meaning many words exist in English. For example more, most, extremely reflect real word rather have hyperbolic nature. Meanwhile the link between these words and objects and events they refer is broken unreality helps to construct some sorts of exaggeration resulted in hyperbole.

Investigation of language features of stylistic devices is one of the important objectives of stylistics and rhetoric. In this context ideal style, literary discourse and its attitude to the language are in focus. Hyperbole, as a literary overestimation is typical for literary discourse and art. Its usage causes dual attitude to reality.

Y. Lotman writes: "Art demands double impressions (anxiety, excitement) – to forget the assumption of the object (dream) before you, but at the same time, not to forget it" (Lotman 2005). By the way of increase of some features of real degrees (measures) of some objects, or weakening them (in the complete meaning) is the general objective law of literary creation.

Despite the fact that the viewpoints or looks of the people directed to one and the same object are similar, there may be different cases as well. This greatly depends on the speech intentions of the people and on their general knowledge.

Hyperboles, as well as metaphors and metonymies, as a type of abstraction play an active role in our speech. They serve to create exaggeration in figurative form. Hyperboles are widely expressed in order to create an impression about an object in literature. From the linguistic point of view they are expressed in words, word combinations and sentence structures. In the literary discourses there exists meiosis, containing absolute opposition to hyperboles. In the notions of “very, extremely” hyperboles and meiosis overlap each other, but different from hyperbole meiosis base upon extremely diminishing the meaning and consequently, it is possible by diminishing the great, big events, extremely important issues by this rhetoric lessening of the meaning, namely to bring them down into the degree of unimportance. This is conspicuous in the intense activity of characters, on a plot in a literary discourse.

2.2 Meiosis

Meiosis bases upon the lessening (belittling) of the meaning, depending upon the coefficient of lessening the grade of meaning. This feature is not peculiar only in literary discourse but it is also used in political discourses for some special purposes. For example:

The mess this country is in – it's not all because of labour. Of course, they must take some of the blame. All right – they need to take a lot of the blame (D.Cameron's speech to Tory Conference, 2010)

The prime minister of Britain D.Cameron for the aim of purposeful lessening the responsibility of the oppositional labour party in his speech uses the expression “some of the blame”, whereas in order to achieve opposite effect he uses “a lot of the blame” again.

Most probably, in the Rome and Greek rhetoric schools a special attention was paid to this point of the problem, in political-philosophical reports hyperboles and meiosis were used well-enough, especially sophists have given special way in their convincing speeches.

In our daily lives, in order to pay special attention to persuade one another, to pay special importance to the essence of the problem, the more attention we pay to hyperboles, the more attention is paid to meiosis in order to lessen the tension, to create peaceful condition. Namely the mentioned-above frames are closely associated with our psychological and aesthetic state as well. In the literary discourses too, the problem is like this; hyperboles are seriously linked with the inner world, sense of perception, level of knowledge of the characters.

Hyperboles in a certain meaning come closer to metaphors, but hyperbolic logic pushes them back, exaggeration of the meaning gains domination. From the point of meaning the relativity of hyperbolic transition is concrete and it expresses reality in falsehood. Despite the fact that hyperboles are linked with words and word combinations, still more general, abstract, maximal meaning is transferred onto the ordinary meaning and removes it from its real measure. In this meaning, metaphoric and hyperbolic transitions essentially are different, besides, hyperbolic transition possesses quantitative contents, but metaphors are more linked with indications (tocans). Meiosis too, as hyperboles are characterized with quantitative measures.

Investigators are in the opinion that from the historical view point metaphors appeared much later than hyperboles, exactly speaking, they accept hyperboles as the initial stage of perception. Human beings, in order to express their thoughts on this or that object more expressively used hyperboles and meiosis.

Hyperboles, in the inner world of human beings, are the expressions of feelings, even appearance of which is not depending on the will of the person.

It is impossible to find any literary piece, in the language of which, the types of metaphor are not used. Generally, in speech of ordinary life too, as we have mentioned before metaphors, including hyperbole and meiosis are generously used.

2.3 Frame and Hyperbole Relations

As we have already mentioned, hyperboles can be expressed in words, word combinations and by sentences. In this dimension – in the context of hyperbole concept – frame attitudes do not break. For ex.:

And I do not know whether the sun will rot or dry what is left, so I had better eat it all although I am not hungry (Hemingway E, The old Man and The Sea).

Here hyperbole consisting of only by one word “the sun” is verbalized. Or:

All of them had a lingering respect for the doctor (Fitzgerald F.S., Selected Short Stories).

Here word combinations “all of them” acts as the means of expression of hyperbole, besides at the same time with above-mentioned it may also be expressed by microtexts.

2.4 Comparison of Hyperboles and Meiosis

Meiosis, known in literature as litotes extremely serves to create the contents of lessening (belittling). As to the establishment mechanism, though being alike to hyperboles, from the view-point of contents it is in contradiction to it. In this respect, figurativeness as to its grade is much closer to it. In ancient sources belonging to rhetoric, meiosis is also represented as one form of hyperbole, namely, hyperbole is belonged to both, extremely overestimation and lessening (belittling). On the other hand, as we have mentioned meiosis can also be classified as metaphor and simile. From structural point of view some meiosis can also be expressed by phraseological combinations as well. For ex.:

Get here! All three of you! Quick as hell!

In this expression there is a thought of reaching the destination quickly, namely, time and place are expressed associatively.

As we see, in hyperboles the standing point is greatness related to objects or perceptions, whereas in meiosis, this notion is extremely little, but in both of them associations are realized in similar ways, their mechanisms of establishments are just the same.

Let's consider such an example: *It was a sad and sentimental wedding – an end to the fine, glamorous youth of a girl, who was universally admired and loved.* (F.S.Fitzgerald, *Selected Short Stories*)

Expressions “*wedding – an end to the fine, glamorous youth*” by the completion of a period of life, going beyond the measure is subjected to the semantic motivation of meiosis with metaphoric feature. New connotation of life frame appears. Just herein we should mention that the communications of such type, are closely linked with cultural-national features, for ex.: conceptual metaphor “*life is journey*” belongs to American national thinking. (Lakoff, 1993).

So, in the mentioned case, the frame “*wedding*” though being a connotative meaning, showing itself as a separate frame in the discourses, carries out the function of meiosis. As we see, there is a transferred meaning in meiosis too, but this is a neutral meaning, transferred onto an associative meaning and in this meaning it turns to a leading meaning. The cultural frame “*Marriage is journey*” is expressed by the meiosis “*wedding – an end to the fine, glamorous youth*”.

Let's consider another text: *That is the little Perry girl.* (F.S.Fitzgerald, *Selected Short Stories*)

In this text, the meiosis, which is placed in the sentence structure “*little Perry girl*” can be accepted as a micro-text. The thing is that meiosis of such types, bearing stamp, pattern character, exists as a ready-made construction. It is being transferred onto a certain neutral meaning; it turns to something unimportant thing as to the meaning, on the basis of personal interests of the hero of a literary text, depending his/her purpose. In these examples within the concepts of “*little*”, “*girl*” new frame is formed. As we see, meiosis as a concept is not concrete in itself, it is abstract and it is determined by the coefficient of belittling (lessening).

There is coefficient of existence for both hyperbole and meiosis; its being above or below this coefficient in relation to neutral meaning, means violation of that coefficient. In the literary discourse in the language of the both, the author and the characters, usage these types of figurativeness bears semantic function and is closely connected with the sociological state of the society. For example, at the 40-50th of the XX century, famous British political figure W. Churchill was famous not only in his own country, but also all over the world.

In the years, after the war not only in Europe, but also all over the world his political activity was symbolized by exaggeration and he was turned to a political standard. In fact, his political activity for a state as England, is in the level of normal politician. But historical condition, the Second World War, tense political state of Europe at the time, made him still famous and consequently, in the world of policy his “cult” was formulated. On the background of all this stands human thinking, this since the primitive society has been improving and developing. The leaders, more often in the battlefields, emerging victorious from political fights and literary characters in this respect, by this way are being standardized, even such heroes, going beyond the frame of certain culture gain universal value.

3. Conclusion

We have come to the conclusions that certain peculiarities associated with hyperbole indicate at a serious link between the mentioned metaphors: as a mode of thinking they are closely connected each to other.

Standardized characters and personalities exist both in real life and in fiction as separate frames, because the part of the social conscious of the people.

Belittling in the speeches of characters using lexica units in the literary discourse, appear willingly or unwillingly. In the confrontation between human being and nature human being's dominate in relation to the event shows itself. Meiosis, built up on the note of belief to the power of human being, has penetrated into even smallest life events. For example, on the basis of "The little Perry girl" and such type branches out just this way of thinking.

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