

STYLISTIC DEVICES AS CULTURAL MODELS IN LANGUAGE AND COGNITION

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ABSTRACT

This article explores how stylistic devices function as key instruments for decoding cultural codes in literary discourse. Drawing on linguocultural and cognitive frameworks, it argues that stylistic devices are not only expressive techniques but culturally shaped cognitive models that convey shared knowledge and values. The analysis demonstrates that metaphors, allusions, antonomasia, euphemisms, and litotes activate background cultural information, reveal national worldviews, and structure readers' interpretation of implicit meanings. Particular attention is given to stylistic markers of politeness and to intertextual references that trigger cultural, historical, and religious knowledge. Examples from English literary texts illustrate how stylistic mechanisms project image-schemas, frame cultural models, and facilitate the comprehension of culturally specific concepts.

Keywords: Stylistic devices; cultural codes; linguoculture; cognitive models; literary discourse.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of new linguistic paradigms has led to the re-evaluation of many traditional concepts, including the study of stylistic devices. Classical stylistics treated them primarily as structural and semantic phenomena, whereas contemporary approaches highlight their cognitive and cultural dimensions. A full understanding of stylistic devices therefore requires their interpretation as culturally shaped cognitive tools.

Linguocultural Approach to Stylistic Devices

Within the linguocultural paradigm, stylistic devices are understood not only as expressive means but also as **cultural models** which reflect universal and culture-specific worldviews (Ashurova, Iriskhanova). A cultural model is a conventionalized knowledge structure shared within a community and connected with national values, norms, and collective experience.

The theoretical foundations of cultural models are rooted in Humboldt's view of the interdependence of language, cognition, and culture. Modern interpretations are found in the works of Holland & Quinn, Wierzbicka, Larina, Shore, Levinson, Bulygina & Shmelev. According to Quinn, cultural models are "taken-for-granted models of the world" that enable members of a community to interpret reality and guide their behavior.

The linguocultural approach to the problem of stylistic devices necessitates a fresh understanding of these phenomena as cultural models expressing universal and national culture characteristics [1, 76]. The difficulty of defining the concept of "a cultural model" is posed by this understanding of a stylistic device.

D. Holland and N. Quinn, the authors of the research “Cultural models in language and thought”, argue that cultural knowledge is organized in ‘cultural models’ – “story like chains of prototypical events that unfold in simplified worlds”. They demonstrate that cultural knowledge may take either proposition-schematic or image-schematic form, each enabling the performance of different kinds of cognitive tasks. Metaphor and metonymy are shown to have special roles in the construction of cultural models[4,92].

Cultural models emerge and develop in social groups, but they cannot be easily changed by one member of the society. Some cultural models change in the due course, others newly appear, and both types can coexist, but the currently dominant ones are the most influential in the society.

Cultural models represent artifacts of culture, traditions, everyday behavior and are reflected in the semantics of language units and expressions. B. Shore distinguishes different types of cultural models: explicit and implicit (rituals, games vs. specificity of national world perception); general and special (the model of polite behavior and the model of request); linguistic and non-linguistic (the children’s rhymes and gestures); cultural models for some practical purposes (recipes, order, alms), etc.

A special attention is paid to the structure of cultural models. Some scientists claim that they are formed on the basis of propositions, i.e. a predicative semantic structure. The analysis of the linguistic literature shows that there are two schools of thought. Some scholars claim that cultural models exist without prior metaphorical understanding. In other words, we are equipped with a primary literal understanding of cultural models. Others, however, hold that cultural models, especially those for abstract concepts are inherently metaphorical; that is, they are constituted by metaphor [6, 98].

In the research by N. Quinn the cultural model “**Marriage**” (1987) is represented by a row of propositions: Marriage is Enduring; Marriage is Mutually Beneficial; Marriage is Unknown at the Outset; Marriage is Difficult; etc. The author suggests considering the cultural models in terms of proposition-schemas and image-schemas. Each of them or even both may constitute a cultural model. But, they fulfill different cognitive tasks. Proposition-schemas identify concepts and the relations between them. Image-schemas serve the other function: they may contain some visual or kinesthetic images.

Another group of linguists (Iriskhanova K.M., Ashurova D.U., Buligina T.V., Larina T.V., etc.) claim that “culture is transferred by cultural models reflected in stylistic devices”. In other words, the role of stylistic devices projecting proposition and image-schemas from one domain into another, is of great significance for the construction of cultural models. Stylistic devices are regarded as cultural models (D.U. Ashurova, O.K. Iriskhanova) and they are organized around a certain concept.

One of the essential cultural categories is the category of politeness. Politeness is a quality of people who have good manners and speak and behave in a way that is socially correct and considerate of other people’s behavior. In speech the principle of politeness was introduced by American scholar G. Leech who elaborated this principle in terms of ethic norms of speech and behavior[8,208]. The principle of politeness is verbalized by means of lexical and syntactical units. At the lexical level politeness is verbalized by:

lexical units: thank you, please, would you mind ..., sorry, my apologies, thanks a lot, excuse me, with all respect, I'll be delighted, it will be appreciated;

softeners: I am afraid that...; I am not sure that...; It's kind of you...; I hope, you don't mind; It would be appreciated, if you did it; I respectfully submit, Mr. Chairman, that the witness be allowed to proceed; I should be delighted if you would so; Can I speak to Mr. Smith, please?; I am afraid, he is not here at the moment; Could you leave a message for him, please?; We might slightly run over budget;

qualifiers: a little, a bit, a little bit, slight, slightly;

At the **syntactical level** politeness is verbalized by:

- unreal conditional sentences: If I were you I could not do that; It would be appreciated if you helped me.

- interrogative sentences instead of affirmative sentences: Would you mind closing the door please? Will you give me a lift?

- the use of affirmative sentences instead of negative ones: I think he is not right – I do not think he is right; I am unhappy with this agreement – I am not entirely happy with this agreement; You do not understand what I am saying – I wish you got what I want to say (polite)

- the use of impersonal sentences: It is demanded... instead of I demand; It is required ... instead of I require

- the use of passive constructions instead of active ones: C.f. You should do it on time – It should be done in time.

It should be stressed that there are also stylistic means of expressing politeness. They are euphemism and litotes. According to I.R. Galperin, euphemism is “a word or phrase used to replace an unpleasant word or expression by a conventionally more acceptable one” [3,173]. Euphemisms are regarded as cultural models because, firstly, they realize the principle of politeness, secondly, the use of euphemistic expressions are conditioned by sociocultural factors.

Another stylistic device expressing politeness is litotes. Litotes is a stylistic device which is based on peculiar use of negative construction. The stylistic function of litotes is to make the utterance less categorical and more ironical. It can be expressed by two negations (not for nothing, not without, not unkind) and negative plus noun or adjective with negative meaning (not bad, no coward): He was not a bad man; It was not an easy task; He was no gentle lamb. Consequently, the cultural specifics of litotes lies in the fact that it reflects the English character and mentality. As for irony and humour, these are also the qualities the English are not deprived of.

So, the above examples prove that stylistic devices can be interpreted in terms of cultural model conveying cultural information and expressing cultural and aesthetic values. It should be mentioned that all stylistic devices are characterized by cultural insight. However, the most relevant to cultural specifics are the following groups of stylistic devices:

- image-bearing stylistic devices (metaphor, metonymy, metaphorical epithet, metaphorical periphrasis, symbol);
- stylistic devices, based on intertextuality, and activating various types of knowledge structures (antonomasia, allusion);

- stylistic devices, manifesting the principle of politeness (euphemism, litotes).

The necessity to investigate correlations of stylistics and cultural linguistics is also confirmed by a number of culture-oriented stylistic devices. Such stylistic devices as antonomasia, allusion, euphemism, symbol are particularly indicative of cultural insight.

The linguocultural approach to the problem of stylistic devices requires a new apprehension of stylistic devices, which is regarded as:

- a complex aesthetic sign which serves as a means of conveying cultural values to the mind of the reader;
- one of the main means of verbalizing cultural concepts especially their emotive and evaluative components;
- a fragment of the conceptual world picture expressing certain knowledge structures;
- a cultural model manifesting elements of universal and national culture [5, 136].

Antonomasia, for instance, is a stylistic device which uses either a proper name to express a general idea or a notional word instead of a proper noun. From the stylistic point of view antonomasia is an image-bearing stylistic device aimed to express emotional, subjective-evaluative attitude of the author. From the point of view of cognitive processes antonomasia is a verbaliser of certain relevant to culture knowledge structures. Thus, in O'Neil's play "Long day's journey into night" we find the author's remark in the portrait description:

Jamie, the elder, is thirty three, He has his father's broad-shouldered, deep chested physique, is an inch taller and weighs less, but appears shorter and stouter... Combined with his habitual expression of cynicism it gives his countenance a **Mephistophelian** cast (O'Neil, Three American Plays).

Here the antonomasia, expressed by the derivative adjective, is motivated by the proper name "Mephistophel" which contains literary knowledge structures derived from Goethe's "Faust". The image of Mephistophel, symbolising evil, malice, contempt to people, serves to characterise the personage of this play.

Stylistic devices play a key role in representation of cultural concepts. The following example from S. Maugham's "Theatre" illustrates the role of stylistic devices in expressing the cultural concept love. The main character of the novel, Julia, paradoxal though it may seem, lives on the stage and plays in life. The given below dialogue between Julia and her son tells us about the latter's disappointment in his first love affair. Julia is upset. With enthusiasm and affection does she explain to her son what love is:

She gave him a little smile.

"And you really think that was love?"

"Well, it's what most people mean by it, isn't it?"

"No, they don't, they mean pain and anguish, shame, ecstasy, heaven and hell, they mean the sense of living more intensely, and unutterable boredom; they mean freedom and slavery; they mean peace and unrest".

Here the concept LOVE is presented in a condensed aphoristic form. The utterance contains the convergence of stylistic devices (gradation, antithesis, metaphor, epithet and others), which convey a set of conceptual features constituting the frame structure of the concept. It is interesting to note that both positive and negative features are presented in contrast expressed by antithesis: heaven and hell, freedom and slavery, peace and unrest. The combination of the

opposed and incompatible conceptual features and their complex interaction specify a deep-lying cognitive structure of the analysed concept.

The problem of stylistic analysis of the text in terms of culture is also one of the concerns of the stylistic trend within cultural linguistics. It is to be noted that though many linguistic units are culture relevant it is the text which reflects culture in full measure. When viewing texts from this perspective, we should specify them according to the degree of cultural information conveyed. In this respect a special emphasis should be made on the texts describing certain cultural events, phenomena, attitudes, evaluations, and containing culture specific linguistic units and cultural concepts. One of the main tasks of text analysis from the cultural perspective is to analyze culture specific units used in the text. The analysis of culture specific units as non-equivalent lexicon, anthroponyms, mythologemes, phraseological units, paroemia, speech formulas of etiquette, etc. proves the correlations between stylistic and culture specific properties of linguistic units.

Thus, the above-mentioned correlations between stylistic characteristics and national-cultural specifics of the linguistic units prove close relationships between stylistics and cultural linguistics and the necessity to study stylistic aspects of cultural linguistics. The main problems under discussion are the followings:

- stylistic devices as cultural models;
- national-cultural specificity of image-bearing linguistic units;
- national-cultural specificity of stylistic devices;
- stylistic analysis of texts charged with cultural information,

To conclude, the analysis of stylistic devices in the framework of linguocultural studies proves that: a) stylistic devices are culture relevant units conveying cultural information and aesthetic values to the reader; b) stylistic devices as cultural models are presented either in proposition-schematic or image-schematic forms, and manifest elements of universal and national culture; c) most relevant to culture representation are stylistic devices based on imagery, intertextuality, and the principle of politeness.

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