Dicteme and Its Conceptualizing Function in Imaginative Literature

Mark Blokh
English Grammar Department
Moscow State Pedagogical University
blmy2@mail.ru

Zoya Asratyan
Foreign Languages School
Hulunbuir Institute
People's Republic of China
Naberezhnye Chelny State Pedagogical University
Naberezhnye Chelny, Russia
asratyan@mail.ru

Norair Asratyan
the History and Methods of its Teaching Department
Naberezhnye Chelny State Pedagogical University
Naberezhnye Chelny, Russia
norair.asratyan@gmail.com

Abstract—**The article applies the theory of dicteme to the analysis of literary imaginative texts. Its aim is to show the conceptualizing function of the dicteme. The relevance of this study is determined by the necessity to understand the mechanism of meaning formation. This process is schematically represented through a proposition in which a topic is predicated to its interpretation by the author. The research underlines the inseparable connection of the topic of a work of art and its concept. Concept, in its turn, is treated as a binary unit comprising both ideological and aesthetic characteristics or, in other words, conceptual and aesthetic information. The aesthetic information correlates the imaginative text with a certain literary direction, style, genre and the individual style of the author of the work. The ideas advocated by the authors are confirmed by examples from imaginative literature both Russian and foreign. The authors come to the conclusion that in imaginative literature there are no topics without concepts and ways of their representation, including stylistic shaping, at all the levels of text.**

Keywords—concept, dicteme, idea, topic, style, aesthetic information

I. Introduction

The appearance of text linguistics in the middle of the previous century is to a great extent determined by the fact that many language phenomena can be comprehended only at this level. Many researchers argue that we comprehend the world not with the help of words and sentences but with the help of text (M. M. Bakhtin [1], K. H. Al-Amri [2], A. G. Baranov [3] and others).

Nevertheless, a real text is a rather complicated speech and cultural phenomenon, and this factor determines different approaches to its definition and analysis. Taking into account its complexity and versatility, different scholars approached its definition in different ways, highlighting and emphasizing its various properties depending on the goals and tasks that they set for themselves in the research process. As it was rightly noted by A. G. Baranov, the definition of the text would largely depend on the methodological guidelines and research position [3, 64-65].

One of the basic notions of text is its minimum unit. As such there was suggested 'supra-sentential construction' (O. I. Moskalskaya [4], N. I. Serkova [5], S. F. Yakovlev [6] and other), 'complex syntactic integer' (S. N. Pospelov [7], I. A. Figurovskiy [8], L. G. Babenko and Yu. V. Kazarin [9], I. R. Galperin [10], G. A. Zolotova [11], V. A. Kukharenko [12]and many others), as well as many other different definitions.

One of the authors of this article suggested dicteme as an "elementary topical segmental unit" [13]. The aim of the article is to show its main textual functions and how they are incorporated into the functions of the whole text.

II. Materials and Methods

The methodological basis of this investigation is the theory of dicteme, a minimum systematizing constituent of a text [14].

A dicteme is a unit of speech. However, it can be treated as a nominative unit of language if we analyze it as a pattern, a model. Due to this approach a dicteme can be looked upon

within the framework of the semantic triangle, where the dicteme itself represents a symbol, its basic proposition – a concept, and the situation, reflected in the dicteme, will be its referent.

Being an element of the reversible level structure of language, the dicteme fills up the niche between the sentence and the text and "stands out for its clear function, not reducible to the functions of the underlying units (nomination and predication), but incorporating these functions into its own integrative textual goal to express a certain topic" [14].

The topic unites all parts of a text "into information unity" [15]. It represents a basis which forms a text composition. We have already admitted that "the topic 'leads' the text from the conceptual-semantic core to the end of the work. At the same time, connecting parts of the text into a whole, it reveals itself as the conceptual core of the text" [16].

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Many researchers drew their attention to the conceptual component of the topic. Thus, the founder of phenomenology E. Husserl understood by topics the layers of consciousness that become the subject of reflection, the process of which involves a certain position, attention to some experiences and distraction from other ones. Thematization, in his opinion, is a grasp, conceptualization, comprehension of an object [17].

Another point of view within the framework of a philosophical discourse was presented by G. Holton, who studied the problems of history and philosophy of science. Topics, in his opinion, do not arise in the process of scientific knowledge but represent a special kind of invariant structure of consciousness. They are prerequisites that implicitly determine the preferences given by scientists to a particular hypothesis or problem, affecting the research program, problem statement, the scientist's point of view, the way he/she resolves scientific problems, etc. [18]. The topic in a scientific study, according to this author, is connected with the idea or, in other words, with the concept of solving a specific problem.

And though a text of imaginative literature is different from any other texts, scientific ones included, it should also contain a conceptual semantic center combining informational with ideological and moral-ethical aspects around which as around the core a whole work is built.

Yu. N. Lotman believed that the text not only contained certain information, but also generated new meanings that appeared "not only in development, but also to a large extent in the interaction of its structures" [19], which reflected the structures of the real world.

Nevertheless, the structures of the real world are not directly reflected in a work of art. They are refracted through their author's understanding and perception and thus are conceptualized. This process can be schematically represented through a secondary proposition in which a topic 'is predicated to its interpretation by the author [20]. This procedure is carried out at all the levels of text, starting with

its minimum, dictemic one, and ending with the level of the whole text.

The topic and concept of a work of art are inseparable from each other at all the levels of a topic presentation, which means that a topic in imaginary literature is always ideologically determined, conceptualized.

We have already noted that a presentation of a topic and its interpretation in a work of art can be both rational and figurative. Figurativeness, in its turn, may be represented both in an iconic and a metaphorical way [21].

Defining the basic concept as a predication of the topic to its author's interpretation, we distinguish in this interpretation both ideological and aesthetic aspects.

The idea of "dual nature of the artistic worldview" was also underlined by the numerous authors of the article "The Artistic worldview in the context of sociocultural realia", who admitted that this dualism was based "on the integration of philosophical and mindset cognition, on the one hand, and aesthetic perception, on the other hand" [22].

The topic, therefore, is a unity of 'about what' something is being said (topic proper) and 'what' is being said about it (concept proper). However, for a work of art, the way 'how' it is said (style proper) is not less important. This trinity can be represented schematically through a judgment in which somehow (style) something is said (concept) about something (topic). Moreover, it is a work of art where the aspect of 'how' is not less important than 'about what' and 'what' ones.

A dicteme is that minimal unit that incorporates all these three functions: thematization, conceptualizing and styling. Furthermore, all these functions are inseparable from each other – there can be no topic without an idea (concept) and without means of their embodiment (style).

We consider styling of an art work its aesthetic conceptualizing, treating the latter as binary, including both ideological and aesthetic components, or, in other words, conceptual (ideological) and aesthetic information.

Aesthetic information is generated as a result of observing a number of requirements stipulated by the concepts of beauty and aesthetic ideal. These requirements do not remain unchanged throughout the history of mankind, but transform in accordance with the cultural paradigms that characterize a particular epoch. The aesthetic information is represented by language means with the help of various stylistic devices, so we can speak of phonetic, morphological, derivational, lexical and syntactic means of updating the content of a text. It is the aesthetic information that correlates an imaginary text with a certain literary direction, style, genre and the individual style of the author of a literary work.

The topic of a work of art is an inseparable unity of meaning and concept as well as the artistic means of their representation, i.e. style.

The dicteme is a thematic unit, and the topic is a semantic, meaningful structure. The meaning of a text is a unity of information with ideological conceptual goals and artistic emotional ways of expressing them [16, 132].

A text is based on the intention of the author, who relates the topic with his/her own interpretation of it from both ideological and aesthetic positions.

The intentional nature of the topic was also emphasized by A. K. Zholkovsky and Yu. K. Shcheglov. They noted that the topic is "some attitude ..., some intention ..., scientific abstraction", and emphasized that its value "depends on the factor whether it represents a convincing correspondence between it and the real text" [23].

For a work of art, it is styling that to a great extent implements the function of influence and, therefore, presents "evidence" of the topic and concept matching the real text.

It is worth noting that our British colleagues are very reluctant to discuss an ideological component of fiction. Thus, K. Hewitt wrote: "Perhaps the work is so complex that it refuses to yield up the idea which can be plainly expressed. Perhaps there is an overt idea, and then much more significant 'hidden' one. Perhaps the author has an abundance of ideas…" [24]. The same viewpoint was expressed at the last seminar of the Oxford-Russian Fund in Perm by a British writer Jane Rogers, who insisted that there were no ideas in her stories and that it would be more expedient to speak simply about topics of those stories.

In this regard, it would be reasonable to note that despite the fact that both literary studies and linguistics deal with one and the same subject, they study it in different ways. The notion 'idea' in literary criticism correlates with the notion *'concept'* in Russian linguistics though *'concept'* may be not a very happy choice for an English language reader because the words '*notion*'and 'concept' are synonymous in this language. It is not the case with our domestic linguistics where these terms are treated differently. Thus, according to Yu. S. Stepanov's point of view, they are not equal but parallel and belong to different sciences: *'general notion' (ponyatie)* is mainly applied in logic and philosophy, while *'concept' (kontsept)* is the domain of mathematical logic and cultural studies [25]. In addition, as it was rightly noted by Yu. S. Stepanov and S. G. Proskurin, notions are characterized by essential and necessary features, and concepts may include non-essential features as well [26]. In this meaning the term 'concept' has recently been widely used in Russian linguistics.

We define it "as a mental image of an object or phenomenon which reflects individual or national ideas about them, and this image may acquire a verbal form as well as a sensuous one. In imaginative literature concept represents the author's individual picture of the world" [27].

But concepts themselves are not uniform. The difference is conditioned by the divergences of basic meanings employed in them. So we distinguish 'commonemas' for everyday concepts, 'rigoremas' for scientific terms and 'approximemas' for imaginative concepts, that reflect emotional and individual authors' meanings [28]. When a conceps indicate some nationally-excepted ideas then it becomes possible to speak of meanings expressed by 'culturemas'.

And though *'concept'* in linguistics and *'idea'* in literary studies seem to represent the same notions there is some difference between them. The literary encyclopedic dictionary

defines the idea as a generalizing, emotional, imaginative thought that forms the basis of a work of art [29]. This definition can be applied to the concept of a work of art as well. However, the author's claim that "artistic thought ... contains an active ideological orientation" [29,.114] can hardly be extended to the notion of concept.

In art concept contains not "an active ideological orientation" of an artist but his/her idea or thought about the depicted and reflected world. Though it is necessary to admit that there are works, fortunately not the best ones, that are ideologically determined, an 'active' ideological component is not an essential constituent of meaning of a work of art while concept, i.e. an idea about the depicted world, is obligatory for any creation. There can be generated no meanings without conceptualizing the information expressed by an author. As it was truly admitted by many authors (R.P. Musat, V. V. Mineev, O. F. Neskryabina, G. V. Panasenko and others) in a work of art events and "social problems are presented in the light of actual relation between the artist and society and their vision of urgent problems" [22, 353].

As we have already mentioned concepts appear at the level of dictemes which represent minimum units of text or in other words micro-situations. Dictemes form hyperdictemes which in their turn construct macro-situations. The interaction of macro-situations generates topical or basic situations of the whole text.

This hierarchical division of text is reflected in the representation of text topics and concepts which can also be singled out at the level of dictemes, hyperdictemes, macro-situation and at last at the level of the whole text.

At the same time it is necessary to remember that neither topics, nor concepts of a whole work simply sum up the information of the lower levels. The process is more complicated. Topics and their concepts represent elements and structures at the same time, that's why we should avoid one-sided approaches to them, either elementary or holistic. Inside a dicteme there starts taking place a certain elaboration of some aspects of the general topic and concept.

In our previous work we underlined that "the integrity of the text… is determined by its common topic, which integrates multiplicity of dictemes into a single text; and the topic itself is a logical semantic chain uniting even meaningfully separate dictemes into a conceptually uniform structure that gives a text a compositional harmony" [16. 130]. Being inseparable from the topic a concept also fulfils integrating function at all the text levels.

The semantics of a concept depends on many factors, both objective (cultural-historical paradigm, mentality of the epoch in which the given concept is used), and subjective, including the individual author's picture of the world. The combination of objective and subjective moments can be very diverse [20, 16-17].

Despite the fact that texts of fiction, like any other ones, contain concepts of some notions, and they undoubtedly affect the formation of the conceptual space of a text, by conceptual information of a text we understand the basic (or topical)

concept of the whole work, which reflects the author's vision of what the work expresses.

To prove our arguments, we'd like to analyze conceptual information of some literary works. Thus, in a novel "Happiness" by Nadezhda Teffi [30] the topic 'happiness' is predicated to its understanding by the characters of the novel. And the narrator metaphorically compares it with a beast who feeds on warm human flesh. In Kafka's "Metamorphose" [31] a value of a human being is not determined by his personal qualities as it can be expected but by his utility and suitability.

And we'd also like to examine one story from the contemporary British literature. It is written by the above-mentioned writer J. Roges. The title of the story is *'Lucky'* [32] which contains presuppositions that somebody due to some circumstances happened to be lucky. But a reader is unlikely to imagine that the narrator of the story, an 18-year old girl who fell in love at first sight with her temporary boss, would consider herself lucky because he also loved her. And the girl enumerated various signs of his affection which for a sophisticated reader didn't seem anyhow convincing. The concept of luck represented by this narrator is not simply original, it is unreliable either. Anyhow the girl is happy within her virtual reality though we, readers, may consider her naïve or even stupid. We, readers, may also agree with the narrator that she being happy in spite of the evident absurdity of her assessment of the situation was lucky. But anyhow this topic of 'being lucky' is inseparable of the concept, i.e. the author's vision of what luck might be.

In the story "My Mother and her *Sister*" [33] the concept of happiness is expressed by the two characters: a dead mother of the narrator and the mother's sister Lucy. And while the narrator's mother was optimistic and up to her very death hoped to find real happiness, her sister believed that "you can't have it. That the thing you want – when you get it, it's spoiled" [33, 83]. Thus, in this story there is a multiple concept of happiness or, in other words, different concepts. And they don't appear ready-made out of the blue but are interwoven into the texture of the text. The topic of happiness is predicated to the characters' interpretation of it.

Moreover, for the implementation of any concepts or ideas an author chooses or sometimes even invents language means, stylistic devices that are meant to convey those ideas and thus influence the reader/s.

However, no concept can be singled out before reading the work because it is interwoven into the fabric of text, its dictemic structure. One cannot speculate upon the idea or ideas of a literary work without considering the means that serve to represent those ideas. As well as no topic exists in literature without its interpretation, i.e. conceptualizing.

IV. Conclusion

So, we see that any topic depicted in a literary work is connected with its interpretation by the author. This process can be schematically represented through a proposition in which a topic is predicated to its interpretation by the author. This interpretation can be fulfilled either by a language personality of the narrator or a language personality of   the

characters of a work of fiction. In a poetic work this function can be fulfilled by a language personality of the lyrical hero. And without this interpretation no topic can appear or exist. This interconnection between the topic of the text and its concept originates already at the stage of the intention. The concept itself is characterized by a dual nature: ideological and aesthetic. This interpretation being observed within the framework of a whole text originates at the level of dictemes. Thus, a dicteme incorporates three main textual functions: thematization, conceptualizing and styling.

It is necessary to admit that it is conceptualizing that determines the meaningful and aesthetic content of a literary work thus creating a very special imaginary world. One and the same topic can be quite differently represented in various works due to its conceptual treating by the language personalities of the author and the narrator/s.

Aesthetic concept is reflected in artistic means that are employed by the author. The aesthetic information correlates the imaginative text with a certain literary direction, style, genre and the individual style of the author of the work.

References

[1] M. M. Bakhtin, "Language in Imaginative Literature", "Collected Works" in 7 vol., vol. 5. Moscow: Russkie slovari, 1997, pp. 287-301.

[2] K. H. Al-Amri, "Text-linguistics for students of translation". Informally published manuscript, College of Languages and Translation, King Saud University, Saudi Arabia. 2007. 10 August 2012. URL: faculty.ksu.edu.sa›kamri…text-linguistics.aspx (date of access: 05.02.2020).

[3] A. G. Baranov, "Pragmatics as a methodological perspective of the language". Krasnodar, Prosveschenie-Yug., 2008.

[4] O. I. Moskalskaya, "Text Grammar". M., Vysshaya shkola, 1981.

[5] N. I. "Supra-segmental Level of Text Units in the Main Functional Styles of Written Language: Author's abstract dis... dr. philol. sciences". Moscow: 1982, 31 p.

[6] S. F. "Large Syntactic Units in the Process of Perceiving a Speech Message", Functional semantics of syntactic constructions. Moscow: MPSU, 1986, pp. 54–62.

[7] N. S. Pospelov, "Supra-sentential construction and peculiarities of its structure", Reports and Messages of the Institute of the Russian Language. Moscow: 1948, Issue. 2, pp. 13–68.

[8] I. A. Figurovskiy, "Whole-text Syntax and Students' Written Works'. Moscow: 1961.

[9] L. G. Babenko and Yu. V. Kazarin, "Linguistic Analysis of Literary Text. Theory and Practice: Textbook; Workshop". 3rd ed., Rev. Moscow: Flinta, Nauka, 2005, 496 p.

[10] I. R. Galperin, "Text as an Object of Linguistic Research". Moscow: KomKniga, 2007.

[11] G. A. Zolotova, "On the Issue of Constitutive Units of Language", Russian Language: Functioning of Grammatical Categories. Text and Context. Moscow: 1984, pp. 162-173.

[12] V. A. Kukharenko, "Interpretation of Text: Textbook. manual for students of pedagogical institutes in the specialty No. 2103 "Foreign language". 2nd ed., rev. Moscow: Prosveschenie, 1988.

[13] M. Ya. Blokh, "A Course in Theoretical English Grammar". 2-d ed. M., Vysshaya shkola, 1994, 381 p. 17.

[14] M. Ya. Blokh, "Dikteme in the Level Structure of the Language". Voprosy yazykoznaniya, 2000, No. 4, 56-63.

[15] M. Ya. Blokh, "Theoretical Foundations of Gramma". 4th ed. Moscow: Vysshaya shkola, 2004, 239 pp. 102-103.

[16] M. Blokh, Z. Asratyan and N. Asratyan, "Topic of the Imaginative Text and Its Philosophical and Linguistic Presentation". Journal of History, Culture and Art Research, 2019, No 8 (2), pp. 128–135. URL: http://kutaksam.karabuk.edu.tr/index.php/ilk/article/view/2150/1533 (date of access 10.03.2020), p. 132.

[17] E. Husserl, "Logical research". Collected Works, vol. 3, II. M., Gnozis, Dom intellektual'noy knigi, 2001, pp. 105-181.

[18] G. Holton, "Sematic Analysis of Science". M.: Progress,1981, p. 384.

[19] M. U. Lotman, "Text within Text", Obrazovatel'nye tekhnologii, 2014, No 1. URL: http://kutaksam.karabuk.edu.tr/index.php/ilk/article/view/2150/1533 (date of access 06.03.2020), p. 35.

[20] Z. D. Asratyan, "Basic Concept of Work of Fiction and its Thematic Role", The World of Scientific Discoveries, Series A. 2013, No 1(1), pp. 13-20, pp. 16-17.

[21] Z. D. Asratyan, "Synergetic Aspects of an Imaginative text". Vestnik Vyatskogo Universiteta. 2016, No. 11, pp. 65-69, p.68.

[22] R. P. Musat, V. V. Mineev, O. F. Neskryabina, G. V. Panasenko, S. V. Maksimov and D. V. Rakhinsky, "The Artistic worldview in the context of sociocultural realia", Amazonia Investiga, 2019, No 8(23), pp. 350–357. URL: https://amazoniainvestiga.info/index.php/amazonia/article/view/878/820 (date of access 06.02.2020), pp. 352-353.

[23] A. K. Zholkovskiy and Yu. K. Scheglov. "Concept of 'Topic' and "Poetic World'". Scientific Papers of Tartu State University. Issue 365. Tartu, 1975, pp. 145–159. URL: www-bcf.usc.edu/~alik/rus/ess/bib14.htm (date of access 9.10. 2019).

[24] K. Hewwitt, "Understanding English Literature". Oxford: Perspective Publications Ltd, 2006, 280, p. 53.

[25] Yu. S. Stepanov, "Constants. Dictionary of Russian Culture". Moscow: Shkola, 1997. 838, p. 40.

[26] Yu. S. Stepanov and S. G. Proskurin S. G. "Introduction". Constants of the World Culture. Moscow: Nauka, 1993, pp. 19–30.

[27] Z. D. Asratyan, "Concepts of Imaginative Literature". Sprache verstehen, verwenden, übersezen. Berlin: Peter Lang, 2018, pp. 181-187.

[28] M. Ya. Blokh, "Concept and World Picture in the Language Philosophy". Space and Time, 2010, No 1, pp. 37-40, p. 39.

[29] G. V. Pospelov, "The Artistic Idea". Literary encyclopedic dictionary. Ed-ed by V. M. Kozhevnikov and P. A. Nikolaev. Moscow: "Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya", 1987, p. 114.

[30] N. Teffi, "Happiness". Collected works. V.2. M.: Terra, Knizhnyi klub, 2011, pp. 112–113.

[31] F. Kafka, "The Metamorphosis". M.: Exmo, 2019.

[32] J. Roges, "Lucky". Hitting Trees with Sticks. Great Britain: Comma Press, 2012, pp. 187–195.

[33] J. Roges, "My Mother and her Sister". Hitting Trees with Sticks. Great Britain: Comma Press, 2012, pp. 79–84.