LINGVО-POЕTIC ICONICITY IN LITERARY PROSE

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Summary. The paper considers the role of lingvo-poetic iconicity in providing the imagery of literary prose, in particular the symbolic novels by Nathaniel Hawthorne. Given the nature of the phenomenon under study, the cognitive linguistics and poetics principles of analysis, including the existing classification of poetic iconicity, were chosen as the methodological background of the research. The primary iconicity, which consists in the mental association of words with a number of other words that contain a certain phone or phonological unit, is embodied in the text under analysis as the metonymic abbreviation of the initial letter “A”. Iconic phonaesthesia, secondary associative iconicity, which is motivated by the links between forms, each expressing a certain meaning, consists in the co-sensation of a particular color that arises by the letter “A” perception. In the studied text lingvo-poetic iconicity, represented at the phonological and morphological levels, serves as one of the basic mechanisms for providing imagery.

Keywords: lingvo-poetic iconicity, primary iconicity, metonymic abbreviation, secondary iconicity, phonaesthesia.

Modern research in the field of cognitive linguistics has led to the transition of a wide range of phenomena from the field of aesthetics to the linguistic or interdisciplinary field of analysis. This study emphasizes the cognitive meaning of iconicity, often interpreted exclusively as a semiotic and/or aesthetic category, in perceiving reality, and sensory and social experience reflected in language. Defining iconicity as our experience reflection leads to its cognitive-poetic interpretation. The relevance of such a comprehensive study of iconicity is argued by the leading researchers of our time, including R. W. Langacker [14], R. Tsur [19], M. H. Freeman [8-10], M. Nänny [16], H. H. Meir [17] and A. Fischer [7], and O. P. Vorobyova [1, 2].

The term cognitive poetics was first used in 1983 by R. Tsur [19]. Then the term, from the perspective of psychology, neuro-anatomy and theory of literature, was used to denote the theoretical and methodological approach to poetry [10, p. 2]. Over time, the theory of cognitive grammar by R. W. Langacker [14] is being applied to the translation of poetry [10, p. 2]. However, artistic discourse is a much broader field than poetry itself, to which researchers eventually pay attention and introduce a rich interdisciplinary methodological apparatus of cognitive poetics to the literary text. R. Tsur (1992) uses cognitive poetics to analyze the impact of cognitive processes not only on the poetic structure but also on creativity in general [10, p. 2]. And O. P. Vorobyova distinguishes poetics as a science, poetics as a set of dominant
features of the author’s idiosyncrasy, and poetics as a unity of fragments of the artistic picture of the world embodied in the text, which is associated with a certain idea, a certain concept or concept-sphere, a certain artistic detail [2, p. 47].

A significant contribution to the study of poetic iconicity is made by M.H.Freeman [8-10]. In *The Fall of the Wall Between Literary Studies and Linguistics: Cognitive Poetics*, M. H. Freeman defines cognitive poetics as a kind of "bridge" between language processes that play a significant role in the formation and interpretation of the literary text, on the one hand, and the role which language plays in mental activity, on the other hand [10, p. 2]. The author provides one of the most thorough update analyses of this phenomenon and describes the importance of poetic iconicity in the poetic text. The peculiarity of cognitive poetics consists in a new perspective of iconic signs, the transition from the field of semiotics to the realm of cognitive linguistics and defining their cognitive role. The question of the embodiment of iconicity as a lingvo-poetic category in a literary prose text remains open for research.

This work aims at describing the iconic sign from the standpoint of cognitive poetics on the material of N. Hawthorne’s symbolic novels, in particular *The Scarlet Letter* [11-12]. Traditionally, from a stylistic point of view, the *Scarlet Letter* is being interpreted as a key symbol of the cognominal novel. However, the principles of analysis of cognitive poetics enable a more detailed analysis of a stylistic category. In fact, "the meaning of a symbolic expression is not the composite semantic structure alone but is rather the composite structure in relation to all the components out of which it is built" [14, p. 107]. Therefore, considering lingvo-poetic iconicity as one of such components, it is expedient, within the limits of this research, to consider the latter in detail.

Cognitive poetics is based on the fact that artistic consciousness, artistic discourse and individual rhetorical figures are subject to certain general cognitive principles that govern the logic of poetic imagination, the formation and functioning of rhetorical figures and the artistic discourse construction [1, p. 19]. Modern cognitive poetics argues that it’s not just a reader, whose interpretation of the literary text is being involved, but also the author’s creative and cultural-historical experience [10, p. 3]. In artistic language, words are used not discursively - to create meaning, but aesthetically - to capture the categorical essence of experience, which makes the work of art "an icon of felt reality" [9, p. 730]. Such a "semblance of felt life" [8, p. 171] in literature, appearing through the language environment, can incorporate all five types of senses [8, p. 171].

From the standpoint of traditional semiotics, all direct representations of ideas can be called iconic. In a modern interpretation, iconicity refers to anything that attracts attention, a certain resonance in the mind in response to the experienced reality - iconicity denotes a specific status achieved by an object, image, person, or event in understanding the significance of the universe [9, p. 728-729]. Theoretical principles that are suitable for the study of iconicity are expressed in cognitive linguistics; the notion of iconicity best corresponds to its views since it assumes that certain language structures reflect the structure of the world [15, p. 396]. According to the cognitive principle, a sign is any object or phenomenon that can establish a
certain connection with something that is absent or out of sight. The sign does not contain a meaning - it (meaning) arises only as a result of interpretation [16, p. 174].

M.H.Freeman singles out aesthetic iconicity, as such, which due to its connection with imaginary worlds is not a direct representation of the idea, but only the appearance/illusion of ontological reality and thus differs from the semiotic iconicity [9, p. 729-730]. The researcher also proposes a further classification of iconicity with its division into imagic and diagrammatic [8, p. 171]. Imagic iconicity, in turn, is divided into oral/aural, tactile and visual iconicity. And diagrammatic iconicity is divided into structural (isomorphism and iconicity of motivation) and semantic iconicity (cognitive and grammatical metaphors)[8].

M. Nänny & A. Fischer [7] addressed the issue of iconicity classification in their work *Form miming meaning: iconicity in language and literature* in 1999. M. Nänny proposes the hypothesis of "alphabetical letters as icons in literary texts" [16], which we are also going to address in this study. A. Fischer distinguishes auditory (onomatopoeia), articulatory and associative iconicity [7]. All three types of phonological iconicity are attested in the languages of the world, but the last of them - associative - plays a significant role in creating categories [7, p. 132]. Associative iconicity is diagrammatic: it is motivated not by a single relation "meaning-form", but by connections between the forms, expressing a certain meaning [7, p. 131]. Let's dwell in more detail on the diagrammatic (associative) iconicity. The "diagram", in this case, denotes "the abstraction of the structure of the image, serving to symbolize the mental processes of creating concepts in the mind" [8, p. 172]. The mentioned structure includes phonological, morphological, and syntactic language forms [8, p. 172]. In this study, we will consider morphological and phonological forms.

In general, the notion we refer to nowadays as iconicity, until recently, was limited to the concepts of onomatopoeia, also known as "articulatory mimesis", or sound symbolism [15, p. 394]. T.A.Sebeok, who demonstrates the undeniable importance of cognitive experience on the example of psychophysiological processes, argues that the terms sensory (senses) and iconic (visual image) are equivalent [18, p. 108]. Iconicity provides means of expressing the world of the senses before conceptualization leads us to abstraction [9, p. 729]. In this context, speech sounds should be distinguished as those that mimic acoustic impressions and those that evoke sensory and mental impressions (primary and secondary iconicity, respectively) [17, p. 142]. The peculiarity of this type of psychological co-sensation is the activation of several analyzers during the perception of a certain object of reality, which leads to the perception and formation of a polymodal image [5, p. 2]. If such a perception occurs on a linear basis, it is iconic synaesthesia[5].

From the standpoint of literary theory, synaesthesia is interpreted as a poetic device, a combination in one trope of different, sometimes distant associations [3, p. 625]. The most common kind of synaesthesia is the so-called color hearing, when the sound along with the auditory sensation causes the color one. In fact, color names are directly related to the associative work of the brain. The system of color nominations is created by the people, reflecting their perception of the imaginary world as a mental construct; color sets a certain axiological perspective, influencing the perception of the phenomenon denoted by this color [4, p. 67]. It is established...
that individual sounds can reflect or symbolize the properties of the world, and the 
sounds of language are correlated with objects in real life [7, p. 123]. According to 
this principle, vowel sounds are associated with a certain color [6, p. 184], and the 
most obvious is the correspondence between warm colors (red) and affirmative 
sounds (A)[6, p. 326 - 327].

The main character of N. Hawthorne's novel "The Scarlet Letter", forced to wear 
the letter "A" (adultery), embroidered in scarlet color on her clothes: "red symbol which 
sears her bosom" [12, p. 96]. This kind of iconic phonaesthesia will present the 
cognitive-poetic aspect of the phenomenon under study. It has been found that in 
different cultures, letters are endowed with a symbolic meaning that arises due to 
either their form or the sound they represent [6, p. 182]. In nature we do not find a 
stable equivalent to red, but such a model always exists in sensory experience as an 
associative link between red and the color of blood or fire. However, such an 
extremely bright and rich color can affect a person in different ways, causing 
conflicting feelings [4, p. 67]:"...scarlet letter, which forthwith seemed to scorch into 
Hester's breast, as if it had been red-hot"[12, с. 62].

Iconicity occurs when something in the form of a sign reflects something in a 
word (usually as a result of a mental operation); from the linguistic point of view: 
something in the form of a linguistic sign reflects (through its 
own meaning) something in its referent [15, p. 395]. The described iconic phonaesthesia belongs 
to the primary associative iconicity. When we talk about primary and secondary 
associative iconicity, we distinguish between an association that arises between 
a certain phone or phonological unit and a certain meaning; and, accordingly, the 
process of mental association of words with a number of other words that contain a 
certain phone or phonological unit [7, p. 129].

Linguistic iconicity mainly does not refer to the lexicon, at least to the inventory 
of its roots; it should be sought in the system of grammatical rules of combining such 
roots, in order to express a complex concept [15, p. 395]. Therefore, any study of 
the iconic meaning of letters must be inseparable from the analysis of words [6, p. 
185]. The capital letter "A" in the studied work refers to a number of possible 
lexemes: "It is the great letter A. Thou hast taught it me in the 
horn-book [12, p. 152]". The letter is interpreted not only as Adulteress, but also as Art. The effect of the latter 
is achieved through the author's use of the outdated grammatical form: “Child, what 
art thou?” – cried the mother [12, c. 82]".

By the way, the connotative sequence A-Art-Artist first appears in 
the publication of the novel The Scarlet Letter. Thus, the connotation of A-Art-Artist is 
both art and the author (artist) in his work. Which is completely justified by 
M.Freeman's interpretation of the literary work as "icon of felt reality" [9].

The secondary, here linguistic, iconicity within the artistic discourse under 
study is demonstrated by a number of connotations to which the reader is being 
referred by the initial letter "A". In the text, such connotations are realized by 
"metonymic abbreviation" [13]. Metonymic referent, the capital letter "A", receives 
the following connotations in the novel: Adulteress, Able, Angel, Art, and Arthur 
Dimmesdale. According to M. H. Freeman, poetic iconicity is a means by which the 
writer manipulates the semiotic-iconic features inherent in language, in order to
capture the essence of experience [9, p. 729]. All iconicity is semantically motivated; the very meaning of the text or semantic context determines whether one or another linguistic sign or literary element has iconic potential [16, p. 174]. The letter “A” can be an exclamation, verb, preposition, article or initial letter [6, p. 185]. The point here is not just in the letter or in the sound itself, but the mutual literal-phonetic mental image which is of great importance during the perception. N. Hawthorne attaches special importance to the form of the letter – its visualization: “...on careful examination, assumed the shape of a letter. It was the capital letter A. By an accurate measurement, each limb proved to be precisely three inches and a quarter in lengths”[12, p. 27].

The perception of the imitated form depends on the ability of the reader to notice the connection and to understand the similarity between the meaning of a sign or text and the formal means used to express it [16, p. 174]. The same as meaning, the poetic iconicity is a dynamic process of the reader, which is caused by the author's intention and is explained by the "expressiveness of human feelings" [9, p. 730]: “All the light and graceful foliage of her character had been withered up by this red-hot brand” [12, p. 138]. Thus, the lingvo-poetic iconicity provides the imagery of the literary prose text at the perceptual level. The most striking example of such a phenomenon in this case is the initial letter "A" of a particular color.

Conclusions. The iconic link between the Scarlet Letter as a referent and the ideas to which it refers is constructed through a primary (direct connection of words with a number of other words that contain a certain phone) and a secondary (association between a certain phone or phonological unit and certain meaning) aspects of linguistic and poetic iconicity. The former, linguistic iconicity, is the metonimical connection between the initial letter "A" and a number of its connotations. The latter, iconic phonaesthesia, involves the associative work of the brain and consists in co-sensation that arises on a linear basis: the visual image of the letter - the sound it denotes - associative to this sound color - sensory experience of interaction with the corresponding color from the environment. Both primary and secondary aspects (linguistic iconicity and iconic phonaesthesia, respectively), represented at the phonological and morphological levels, are the basic mechanisms providing the imagery of the literary text. They are equally important, but not the only one of its kind, which determines the prospects for further research, namely, the study of mechanisms providing the imagery of the literary text at the syntactic level.

References:


