LINGUISTIC MEANS OF CREATING IMAGES OF CHARACTERS IN R.DAHL’S STORY «GENESIS AND CATASTROPHE»

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Abstract. The article deals with devices used for creating images of literary characters of the story. The images are analyzed taking into account extralinguistic factors, attention is paid to the image of the characters and the speech portrait of each of them.

Keywords: literary character, characterization, stylistic device, speech portrait.

The purpose of the fictional text is to depict a person, his life, actions, feelings, attitude towards the environment. The author tries to show development of person’s relationship with others and with himself and it leads to a dynamic nature of the literary text. Describing a particular period of a character’s life the author at the same expresses his own attitude, thoughts and feelings [1, p. 44].

Characters are imaginary persons that are given human qualities. So being a certain person with his individual peculiarities a literary character is also a generalized image of a man. That is why it is mandatory not only to characterize a personage, to make him think in a certain way but to make the reader become interested in him.

The image of a literary character is composed of many things. They are, for example, person’s temper, appearance, level of education, hobbies and inclinations, social status, and others’ attitude to him. These all contribute to the psychological and social portrait of the character that is revealed to the reader not only by the author’s description but through the person’s own speech, actions and behavior.

The way of character drawing can be direct or indirect. Direct characterization tells the reader what exactly the personality of the character is. Indirect characterization shows things that reveal the personality of a character. The author may show the reader the character in action. A character in fiction is not a static portrait, his movements, gestures, his development during the story inevitably progress.

Character’s speech is a marker of his age, level of education, occupation. Speech portrait of the character created by the author is embodiment of not only the inner world of the personage but also a direct reflection of the intellectual and emotional world of the writer himself. So, the study of linguistic-stylistic ways to create a speech portrait of a character seems relevant in the framework of the general study of linguistic personality, as well as in a more private description of the stylistic features of the speech of the main the characters of the story of R. Dahl.

The object of the analysis of the speech portrait are linguistic means belonging to various levels of language. In this case, it is possible to describe only those levels which are most significant in the speech portrait of an individual personality. In the study, we rely on the lexical and syntactic levels of the language since the character is revealed most vividly there.

E.A. Goncharova is sure that speech portrait of the character can be considered from the point of vocabulary and syntax. She thinks that the lexical composition of the phrase gives an idea of the conceptual sphere of the character and its syntactic organization reflects the features of logical usage of these images and concepts [1, p. 98].

Speaking of a speech portrait, one cannot but mention the linguistic personality. A speech portrait is embodied in speech linguistic personality [2, p. 28]. Thus, the problem of speech portraiture is secondary to linguistic research of personality.

Penetration of the author into the mind of the character can reveal the character’s pri-
vate thoughts and feelings as well as observing him speaking. In fiction the way the character looks like and the way he dresses also shows what a person he is too.

The creation of the image of the character depends on the form of narration chosen by the author. The way the writer presents information affects the reader’s perception of events. The choice of the point of view from which the story is told can be called the most important decision that the novelist has to make as it affects the way readers will emotionally and morally respond to the fictional characters and their actions. Traditionally, two forms of narration are distinguished: third-person and first-person narration.

Personified and non-personalized narrators are distinguished in the second form. The personified narrator is one of the protagonists of the work, he is somehow involved in the action happening in the story. The non-personalized narrator does not have any bright features of a literary character, such as name, appearance, social status, etc.

This exact story is a third-person narration. It means it is told in the grammatical third person. Most of the time a third-person narrator is some disembodied voice or commentary, rather than a fully developed character. And this kind of narrator’s job is to convey the story witnessing the events and describing them to the readers without giving them his own comments.

When creating fictional images R. Dahl resorts to a mixed type of character drawing and to different types of means. These language means have been worked out by public use, understood from the point of view of their functional purpose and recorded in the scientific literature. In this study, we are interested in the means of expressiveness of the lexical and syntactical levels of the language, namely stylistic devices.

The lexical stylistic means of modern English are a variety of expressive means of the language and stylistic devices which are based on the use of semantic, stylistic and other peculiarities of a single word or phraseological unit [3, p. 123].

There are five characters in R. Dahl’s story “Genesis and Catastrophe”. Klara, a woman who has just given birth to a son, Alois, her husband, the doctor and midwife and the baby itself.

In most stories only one character is central. He dominates in the story from the beginning up to the end. He is generally called the protagonist. Klara is the one in the abovementioned story. From the very beginning the reader is in sympathy with the woman, he feels sorry for her. It is so because a question “Is he all right, Doctor?” [6, p. 1] asked by a woman who had just given birth creates sharp tension.

Repetition of the word shows that the woman is under great stress, despair is felt in her voice: I have prayed and prayed that he will live, Doctor [6, p. 1].

There are epithets to be found in description of the woman: The doctor stood beside the bed looking down at the pale exhausted face of the young woman [6, p. 2]; The woman’s face was white and bloodless, and there was a slight bluish-grey tinge around the nostrils and the mouth [6, p. 3]. The epithets «exhausted» and «bloodless» describing the face already create a vivid image but the fact that they are referred to the «face of the young woman» makes the reader wonder how tough this woman’s life is. And the reason of her looking sick was not only the recently carried out childbirth but a dreadful fear of losing this child.

The gradation in the sentences «And she was very sad. She never smiled» [6, p. 2] points out that Klara didn’t only feel bad. She also depressed and everyone noticed that. But she had all the grounds to look and to feel this way as she had lost three children. Three beloved children: «Gustav was a lovely boy», «Ida was two years old ... and she was so beautiful I was never able to take my eyes of her», «my little Otto had also gone» Tenderness and love Klara felt to her babies was directly proportional to grief she felt after their deaths. So young and having endured so much.

The epithet «holy» in the sentence «I used to live in holy terror of something happening to that child» [6, p. 3] yet again emphasizes that after the first child’s death Klara’s life turned into a nightmare. And by this time the reader hopes for the woman to keep at least this newborn.
And the very next character to be mentioned in the story is the woman’s husband. A brutal man, even more brutal when compared to a fragile woman’s figure: The man had a pair of enormous whiskers meticulously groomed after the manner of the Emperor Franz Josef, and he smelled strongly of beer [6, p. 5].

The spouses are total opposition to each other: The husband was a drunkard, the innkeeper’s wife had said, an arrogant, overbearing, bullying little drunkard, but the young woman was gentle and religious [6, p. 2]. And all the epithets: «arrogant, overbearing, bullying» added to a disapproving word «drunkard» lead to the conclusion that he is the worst husband ever imagined for a long-suffering woman.

At first, the reader gets to know him from the inner wife’s words and then Klara herself describes him as a villain: We have just buried our third child and he stands there with a glass of beer in his hand and tells me that he has good news... [6, p. 3]. The emphasis is created by the antithesis. The couple’s child had just died but the husband had «good news». But does it really mean that he was dispassionate and insensitive to what had just happened?

Keeping in mind the way Klara addressed her children Alois’ words seem to be almost cruel: He put his head right into Otto’s cradle as though he were examining a tiny insect and he said, ‘All I am saying is why can’t they be better specimens? That’s all I am saying’ [6, p. 3]. The comparison of a child with an insect not only conveys a vivid picture how small the baby was to the mind. And periphrasis «specimen» shows that Alois even not ready to call his child a «child», contempt in his voice. But the use of such speech constructs at least shows the father’s concern about the child. A person indifferent to something wouldn’t bother to put emotions into his words. He wouldn’t bother to exclain: But so small and weak! [6, p. 6]; This one is even smaller than Otto was! [6, p. 5]

He bent down to take a look at the baby. Then he bent lower. In a series of quick jerky movements, he bent lower and lower until his face was only about twelve inches from the baby’s head; He seemed bewildered and stricken [6, p. 5]. Surprisingly, the words «bewildered» and «stricken» don’t mean that the father of the baby got somehow annoyed after seeing his child. He seemed to get worried. It means that one of the reasons why he was rude most of the time was the fact he was hurt. He also was hurt after all the children’s deaths and he didn’t want the baby to be small because he worried for him a lot.

An important character provoking strong emotions neither from the author nor from the reader is the doctor. A professional in his craft, he is just doing his job.

Everything is normal...; You have a fine son [6, p. 1]: Now lie back and relax. Close your eyes. Go on, close your eyes. That’s right. That’s better [6, p. 1]. Semantically neutral words «normal», «fine» prove this statement. Short one-member sentences are only instructions he has to give.

The twist of the plot makes the reader’s attitude towards the «dynamic» image of a character change. This character is the baby. The fate of the baby had already been determined. His mother actually begged the right for the child to live by appealing to God and ordinary repetition of the word «must»: He must live, Alois. He must, he must... Oh God, be merciful unto him now... [6, p. 6]. Being hoped for to survive at the beginning of a story he can’t be referred to with pity in the end. And that’s because of who he turned out to be. At first the reader finds out Klara’s surname as the doctor addresses her as «Frau Hitler». And right after that the baby’s name is brought to light – Adolfus, Adolf in short. By this time the exclamation «Here is the little beauty!» [6, p. 4] seems to be a cruel irony. What about now? Is there still a burning desire for a baby to survive?

Resorting to various stylistic devices R. Dahl decides for the reader what the latter is going to feel. Having described the peculiarities of characterization of the personages of “Genesis and Catastrophe”, it is possible to conclude that units of both lexical and syntactical language levels are used in creating images. Stylistic devices not only describe the appearance of the characters, but show their temper, manners and behavior. Having analyzed the role of stylistic devices in the story we can conclude that the language means of expression are an essential tool in creating a work of art.
Библиографический список


ЯЗЫКОВЫЕ СРЕДСТВА СОЗДАНИЯ ОБРАЗОВ ПЕРСОНАЖЕЙ В РАССКАЗЕ РОАЛДА ДАЛА «ГЕНЕЗИС И КАТАСТРОФА»

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Аннотация. В статье рассматриваются основные средства и приемы, используемые для создания образов персонажей в литературном произведении. Образы анализируются с учетом экстрапредиангвистических факторов, внимание уделяется изображению внешности героев и речевому портрету каждого персонажа.

Ключевые слова: персонаж, характеристика, стилистический прием, речевой портрет.