

COHESIVE ELEMENTS OF TEXT-INTERPRETATION IN CHARACTER-DRAWING PARAGRAPHS OF J. B. PRIESTLEY'S "ANGEL PAVEMENT"

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In the belles-lettres style a successful text-interpretation can be made only by probing into the tissue of the superlinear units of a text. If the intellectual content of information is based on the linear grammatical and lexical surface structure, then the aesthetical information conveying expressivity, emotional, evaluative, etc. attitude and transmitting the underlying thought is based upon associations and recurrences of contiguous and distanced elements of a macro-context¹. The problem of superlinear meaning of different spans of utterances², however, has not yet received sufficient attention in linguistic literature. Of special interest is here the study of the relationship of different cohesive elements of the text which reveal the author's aesthetic intentions.

From the point of view of combinability of different linguo-stylistic means J. B. Priestley's novel *Angel Pavement* deserves special attention. The slow-motion narrative is lavishly recompensed by a vivid, colourful and savoury delineation of characters. Similar to short stories, the character-drawing paragraphs stand out as semantical and structural wholes displaying idiosyncratic stylistic features. The aim of the present article, therefore, is to examine the arrangement and relationship of stylistic cohesive elements of these paragraphs which fulfill a certain stylistic function³ and help to decode the author's idea.

Being a text⁴, the paragraph is subjected to different levels of linguistic analysis. The discourse level, which constitutes coherent speech, employs different linking elements between the sentences such as prosodical features, pronominal substitution, representation, ellipsis, etc. used to merely join the content elements of the

¹ Гальперин И. Р. Информативность единиц языка. М., 1974, с. 29–31; Гальперин И. Р. Общие проблемы стилистики. — В кн.: Общие проблемы стилистики, вып. 73. М., 1973, с. 32; Арнольд И. В. Интерпретация текста как установление иерархии его частей. — Лингвистика текста. Материалы научной конференции. М., 1974, ч. 1, с. 29–30.

² Пешковский А. М. Русский синтаксис в научном освещении. Изд. 7-е. М., 1956, с. 459; Поспелов Н. С. Сложное синтаксическое целое и особенности его структуры. — В кн.: Доклады и сообщения института русского языка АН СССР, вып. 2. М.—Л., 1948, с. 67; Сильман Т. И. Проблемы синтаксической стилистики. Л., 1967, с. 106–150; Galperin I. R. Stylistics. Moscow, 1971, p. 193–202.

³ The stylistic function is fulfilled by linguistic elements transmitting the aesthetical information, i. e. conveying expressivity, emotionality as well as the attitude of the author/speaker towards the addressee/the object or the situation of the discourse. See Арнольд И. В. Стилистика современного английского языка. Л., 1973, с. 34.

⁴ Donley M. The paragraph in advanced composition: a heuristic approach. — "English Language Teaching Journal", 1976, vol. XXX, No 3, p. 225.

paragraph, whereas the higher composite level⁵ makes use of the cohesive elements which are of a double projection, i. e. by coupling the content parts they express their relationship⁶ and lead to an adequate decoding of the text.

Thus at the composite level the character-drawing paragraphs in *Angel Pavement* are governed by antithesis⁷ which, being the backbone structure, subordinates the cluster of other stylistic devices and expressive means. The use of this figure of speech ranges from the boundaries of a word group to a sentence, it may join several sentences or even paragraphs. Syntactical relations between separate sentences of the paragraph may be the same as those between separate clauses in compound and complex sentences⁸. In *Angel Pavement*, for example, separate sentences of the paragraph are often joined by the adversative conjunctions *but, however, nevertheless, yet*, etc. The two parts of antithesis may be placed distantly, i. e. separated by other sentences, e. g.:

His (Mr. Smeeth's) appearance was deceptive. He looked what he ought to have been, in the opinion of a few thousand hasty and foolish observers of this life, and what he was not — a grey drudge. They could easily see him as a drab ageing fellow for ever toiling away at figures of no importance, as a creature of the little foggy City street, of crusted ink-pots and dusty ledgers and day books, as a typical troglodyte of this dingy and absurd civilisation. Nevertheless, he was not a grey drudge. He did not toil on hopelessly. On the contrary, his days at the office were filled with important and exciting events, all the more important and exciting because they were there in the light, for just beyond them, all round them, was the darkness in which lurked the one great fear... that he might lose his job (p. 32 — 33)⁹.

Set in parallel constructions, the antithesis is developed and actualized¹⁰ by the enumeration of lexico-semantic groups of words¹¹. In this verbal chain the effect

⁵ The two levels of linguistic analysis of the text are discussed in: Почепцов Г. Г. Дискурсивный и композиционный уровни лингвистического анализа текста. — Лингвистика текста. Материалы научной конференции, ч. II. М., 1974, с. 8—14.

⁶ On the two types of textual cohesives see Фридман Л. Г. Некоторые особенности элементов внутренней и внешней структуры абзаца в современном немецком языке. — Лингвистика текста. Материалы научной конференции, ч. II. М., 1974, с. 117. For general information concerning explicit/implicit relationships and types of link one could consult Quirk, Greenbaum and Leach. *Sentence connection*. — In: *A Grammar of Contemporary English*. New York—London, Longmans, 1972, ch. 10.

⁷ Antithesis or balanced sentence is a stylistic opposition which arises out of the context through the expansion of objectively contrasting pairs moulded in parallel constructions. Galperin I. R. *Stylistics*. Op. cit., p. 222; Riesel E., Schendels E. *Deutsche Stilistik*. М., 1975, p. 252. The term 'balanced sentence' is used by Millar R. and Currie J. in: *Language in Prose*. London—Edinburgh, Heinemann Educational Books, 1972.

⁸ Фигуровский И. А. От синтаксиса отдельного предложения к синтаксису целого текста. — «Русский язык в школе», 1948, № 3, с. 23; Сильман Т. И. Указ. соч., с. 19.

⁹ As the paragraphs under examination are rather lengthy, we have subjected them to reduction. All examples are taken from the following edition of the novel: Priestley J. B. *Angel Pavement*. Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1974.

¹⁰ The term actualization denotes the stylistic principle of creating expressivity by means of focussing the reader's attention on the relationship of distantly placed formal elements of the text. See: Арнольд И. В. Интерпретация художественного текста: типы выдвижения и проблема экспрессивности. — В кн.: *Экспрессивные средства английского языка*. Л., 1975, с. 14.

¹¹ The term lexico-semantic group of words is used here to denote all semantically connected ideographic, thematic, synonymic, etc. groups of words.

of defeated expectancy¹² is due to the presence of low-predictability elements in the other half of the balanced structure which make the contrast possible. The contrastive opposition leads to grotesque exaggeration which is one of J. B. Priestley's methods of realistic humorous-ironical character presentation (in this case, of a small man, Mr. Smeeth, haunted by threats of economic depression).

The abundant enumeration of details contrasted by the use of antonyms — which are often contextual — endows the description with great charge of emotional contrast¹³ and sets off the features of the character to the best advantage. Thus the apparent and ostensible picture of Mrs. Smeeth (p. 63) who "according to all the literary formulas, should have been a grey and withered suburban drudge, a creature who had long forgotten to care for anything but a few household tasks, the welfare of her children, and the opinion of one or two chapel-going neighbours, a mere husk of womanhood", is opposed to the description of the healthy, jolly and convivial Mrs. Smeeth who, being in her early forties, had "nothing grey and withered about her... She still had a great quantity of untidy brown hair, a bright blue eye, rosy cheeks, and a ripe moist lip... She adored oysters, fish and chips, an occasional bottle of stout or glass of port, cheerful gossip, hospitality, noise, jokes, sales, outings, comic songs, entertainments of any kind...".

I. V. Arnold points out that a thematic group of words, set in gradual opposition of antithesis, reveals the textual semantic ties of the key-word¹⁴ which becomes the logical and semantical point of axis of a span of utterance. The repetition of the key-word always causes some modification of meaning¹⁵.

Several cases of contrastive reiteration of the key-word can be distinguished in the paragraphs under examination:

1. The repetition of the same word-form or word-group. Thus while showing the gap between Mr. Smeeth and his children, the author reiterates the word-group "a younger generation" adding new evaluative connotations to it from which the reader grasps the meaning of their modern but shallow world:

The truth was, of course, that Mr. Smeeth's children were foreigners, not simply because they belonged to a younger generation but because they belonged to a younger generation that existed in a different world.

Further on the contrast is enhanced by the amplification of metonymical periphrases and antitheses:

They were the product of a changing civilisation, creatures of the post-war world. They had grown up to the sound of the Ford car rattling down the street, and that Ford car had gone rattling away, to the communal rubbish heap, ... Their world was at once larger and shallower than that of their parents. They were less English, more cosmopolitan. Mr. Smeeth could not understand George and Edna, but a host of youths and girls in New York, Paris and Berlin would have understood them at a glance (p. 70).

¹² Defeated expectancy as a kind of actualization is described in Riffaterre M. *The Stylistic Function*. See: Прохорова В. И. и Сошальская Е. Г. *Английская стилистика в выдержках и извлечениях*. М., 1971, с. 8.

¹³ For emotional contrast rendered by antonymic juxtaposition see Pikčilingis J. *Lietuvių kalbos stilistika*. Vilnius, 1975, p. 29.

¹⁴ Арнольд И. В. Тематические слова художественного текста. — *Иностранные языки в школе*, 1971, № 2.

¹⁵ Galperin I. R. *Stylistics*. Op. cit., p. 212.

An illustration of the same case is found in Mr. Dersingham's portrait. Author opposes the vision of a successful and smart City man to the picture of a flabby and none too intelligent Angel Pavement businessman, "one of those men who are haunted by a lost Oxford or Cambridge carrier. These are not the scholars or the brilliant athletes who have been denied their chance of distinction, but simply the fellows who have been robbed of an opportunity of acquiring more striped ties, college blazers, and tobacco jars decorated with college coat-of-arms, in short, the fervent freshmen who never had the freshman nonsense knocked out of them" (p. 40-41).

The pun created by the reverse attributive word-groups (fervent freshmen — freshman nonsense) depreciates the meaning of the repeated word "freshman" adding to it the ironical evaluative connotation of inadequacy and snobbish foolishness of the character¹⁶.

2. Another case of contrastive reiteration concerns the opposition of different morphological forms of the same word¹⁷. The most typical cases of actualization belong here to the opposition of singular and plural forms of nouns, the degrees of adjectival comparison, the juxtaposition of the positive and the negative nominal and verbal forms, etc.

The singular-plural opposition is found, for example, in one of the final sentences of the character sketch of Miss Matfield. Drawing the girl's not-too-bad-looking appearance, the author, however, is concerned with her attitude towards life:

For the rest, her face, her voice, her manner, all pointed to the conclusion that Lilian Matfield nursed some huge, some overwhelming grievance against life, but though she gave tongue to a thousand little grievances every day, she never mentioned the monster (p. 31).

The singular form "grievance", used in comparison with the plural one, is endowed with special expressivity and emphasis rendering a silent but ever-raging plaint of an office girl who lives a dull and solitary life by pounding a type-writer all day and then retiring to a tiny and shabby bed-sitting room in a women's club. In comparison with this grievance all other grievances are reduced to a trifle.

As can be seen from the examples¹⁸, the modification of meaning in the reiterated words is possible only due to the stylistic context¹⁹ which is presented in the novel by the opposition and juxtaposition of the cohesive superlinear elements of the paragraph structure: antithesis + parallel construction + enumeration + the use of antonyms and, in many cases, + the actualization of the key-word. This foregrounded hierarchy of stylistic cohesive elements²⁰ presents a meaningful superlinear stylistic pattern of J. B. Priestley's character-drawing paragraphs. It becomes

¹⁶ For other examples of modification of meaning in contrastive reiterations of lexical units see the character sketches of Mr. Golspie (p. 10), Miss Poppy Sellers (p. 90), etc.

¹⁷ On the stylistic functions of grammatical categories see Jacobs on R. Linguistics and Poetics. — In: Style in Language. N. Y., 1960, p. 375.

¹⁸ For contrastive opposition of other morphological forms see the character sketches of Turgis (p. 28), Mr. Dersingham (p. 41), etc.

¹⁹ This understanding of the stylistic context is taken from Арнольд И. В., Банникова И. А. Лингвистический и стилистический контекст. — В кн.: Стиль и контекст. Л., 1972, с. 10.

²⁰ On the role of the hierarchy of textual elements for text-interpretation see Арнольд И. В. Интерпретация текста как установление иерархии его частей. Op. cit., с. 28-32.

a powerful vehicle in fulfilling the evaluative and expressive stylistic functions and conveying a whole range of emotional attitudes — from merely humorous to ironical and satirical.

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JUNGIAMIEJI TEKSTO INTERPRETACIJOS ELEMENTAI DŽ. B. PRISTLIO ROMANE „ANGELO GATVĖ“

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Reziumė

Straipsnis skiriamas teoriniams bei praktiniams teksto interpretacijos klausimams nagrinėti. Jame tiriama paragrafo makrostrukūros jungiamieji elementai, jų išsidėstymas, tarpusavyje sąveika, reikšmė ir stilistinė funkcija, perteikiant estetinę informaciją. Tekstų analizė leido nustatyti būdingą šių paragrafo makrostrukūros elementų hierarchiją (antitezė + paralelinės konstrukcijos + išvardijimas + antonimų gretinimas + pagrindinio paragrafo žodžio aktualizacija), kuri lemia nagrinėjamų tekstų semantinę ir struktūrinę vientisumą. Kontrastinis įvairių paragrafo elementų priešpastatymas ir sugretinimas nulemia jų vertinamąją-ekspresyvinę stilistinę funkciją romano charakterių portretuose. Be to, straipsnyje nagrinėjami atskirų paragrafo jungiamųjų elementų semantiniai-struktūriniai bruožai, pvz., stilistinio konteksto reikšmė, perteikiant estetinę informaciją įvairių morfologinių žodžio formų sugretinimu.