

ISSN 1392-8295



**UK**  
Uniwersytet  
Jana Kochanowskiego w Kielcach

mokslo darbai      transactions

# RESPECTUS PHILOLOGICUS

2013 Nr. 23 (28)

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### MOKSLINIS TĘSTINIS LEIDINYS

Leidžia Vilniaus universiteto Kauno humanitarinis fakultetas ir Jano Kochanovskio universiteto Humanitarinis fakultetas Kielcuose du kartus per metus (balandžio 25 d. ir spalio 25 d.).

Mokslo kryptis: filologija (04H). Mokslo sritys: gramatika, semantika, semiotika, sintaksė (H 352), bendroji ir lyginamoji literatūra, literatūros kritika, literatūros teorija (H 390).

Pagrindinės kalbos: lietuvių, lenkų, anglų, rusų.

### CZASOPISMO NAUKOWE

Wydawcy: Uniwersytet Wileński – Wydział Humanistyczny w Kownie oraz Uniwersytet Jana Kochanowskiego – Wydział Humanistyczny w Kielcach. Ukazuje się dwa razy w roku: 25 kwietnia i 25 października.

Kierunek naukowy: filologia (04H). Dyscypliny naukowe: gramatyka, semiotyka, semantyka, syntaktyka (H 352), literatura ogólna i porównawcza, krytyka literacka, teoria literatury (H 390).

Podstawowe języki: polski, litewski, angielski i rosyjski.

### ONGOING ACADEMIC PUBLICATION

Published twice a year (April 25, October 25) by Vilnius University Kaunas Faculty of Humanities and The Jan Kochanowski University Faculty of Humanities in Kielce.

Scientific field: philology (04H). Research areas: grammar, semantics, semiotics, syntax (H 352), general and comparative literature, literary criticism, literary theory (H 390).

The journal accepts articles and correspondence written in English, Lithuanian, Polish and Russian.

### DUOMENŲ BAZĖS / BAZY DANYCH / ABSTRACTING AND INDEXING

**Elektronische  
Zeitschriftenbibliothek (2002)  
Arianta (2002)**

Frei zugängliche E-Journals  
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Naukowe i branżowe polskie czasopisma elektroniczne  
Biblioteka Uniwersytetu Śląskiego  
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Index Copernicus International  
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**Lituanistika (2011)  
Linguistic Bibliography Online (2012)  
Ulrichs (2013)**

The database of the humanities and social sciences in Lithuania  
Brill Leiden, Netherlands  
Ulrich's Periodicals

### PATIKRA / WERYFIKACJA / VERIFICATION

### CrossCheck, EPAS

*Redakcijos adresas / Adres redakcji / Address of the editorial board*

Žurnalas „Respectus Philologicus“  
Vilniaus universitetas  
Kauno humanitarinis fakultetas  
Muitinės g. 8, LT-44280 Kaunas, Lietuva  
Tel. +370 37 750 536

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*El. paštas / E-mail respectus@gmail.com*

*Interneto svetainė / Strona internetowa / Homepage http://filologija.vukhf.lt*

*Moksliniai ir kalbos redaktoriai / Redakcja naukowa i językowa / Proof-readers*

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*Pagrindinė redaktorė / Redaktor prowadzący / Publishing editor*

Viktorija Makarova

*Vertimas / Tłumaczenie / Translation*

Živilė Nemickienė, Beata Piasecka

Print ISSN 1392-8295, Online ISSN 2335-2388

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**EMBODIMENT OF THE CONCEPT OF TIME  
IN WILLIAM FAULKNER'S *AS I LAY DYING*  
AND VIRGINIA WOOLF'S *TO THE LIGHTHOUSE***

*This article applies the theory of cognitive semantics as a framework for interpreting the embodiment of the concept of time in two modernist novels written using the stream-of-consciousness technique: William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* (1930) and Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927). Metaphorical projections of time are investigated as: being based on image schemas, structuring bodily experience, and cross-domain conceptual mappings. The motion of time in accordance with the life events and mental states of the characters is analysed as a reflection of cognitive structures containing the concept of time or referring to it metaphorically. We claim that time in *To the Lighthouse* is conceptualised by elaborating concepts of distance, space and water, while in *As I Lay Dying* time is conceptualised in a bidirectional in–out relation with the human body, as a destructive force and as spatial distance. Moreover, as the space of time proposes a model of a continuum in which a certain space may be active only in a certain moment of time, the important notion of being beyond time is discussed. Ultimately, the conclusion is drawn that the conceptualisation of time as distance, noticed in *To the Lighthouse*, is also found in *As I Lay Dying*. Both Woolf and Faulkner respond to elusive and obscure modern temporality and succeed in creating links between the past and the present.*

*KEY WORDS: cognitive semantics, conceptual categories, metaphorical projection, stream of consciousness.*

**Cognitive semantics and literary studies**

The application of cognitive science to literary investigations stems from the early 1980s, with the prominent *Metaphors We Live By* (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) setting forth principles of interdisciplinary relations of cognitive psychology, linguistics and literary analysis. In addition to the main cognitive linguists—George Lakoff, Mark Turner, Leonard Talmy and Gilles

Fauconnier—who analysed the embodiment of cognitive processes in language, Alan Richardson traces “cognitive literary criticism” back to a series of books and essays published in the 1980s by Reuven Tsur, Norman Holland, Robert de Beaugrande and others (2004: 1). The latter group of scholars introduced cognitivist literary criticism as an “overriding interest in the active (and largely unconscious) mental processing that makes behavior (i.e., reading literature) understandable” (ibid.: 1). However,

cognitive literary criticism remains an area of discussion and clashing points of view, as the principles of cognition are considered by some scholars to be too broad and unstable to be applied as a scientific method. Therefore, this article aims to attempt to employ cognitive linguistics as a method of literary analysis of modernist texts, proposing that cognitive linguistics—and cognitive semantics in particular—presents a valid system of literary investigation. Although the analysis of conceptual metaphors in various literary texts has been applied abundantly in various works, the authors of this article believe that the cognitive framework may be employed to investigate complicated modernist texts in order to find structural patterns that enable the continuous creation of new meanings.

Cognitive semantics is a field of linguistic studies which investigates cognitive processes as the basis for linguistic structure. Unlike earlier semantic theories, cognitive semantics emphasizes that linguistic meanings do not form an independent system, but are closely related to other cognitive mechanisms, in particular perception. Terry Regier (1996: 27) expresses the point as follows: “The idea is that since the acquisition and use of language rest on an experiential basis, and since experience of the world is filtered through extralinguistic faculties such as perception and memory, language will of necessity be influenced by such faculties. One of the primary tasks of cognitive linguistics is the ferreting out of links between language and the rest of human cognition.”

Moreover, as cognitive linguist Lakoff states, the bodily basis and usage of imaginative schemas are vital in the human construction of categories employing their experience (Lakoff 1987: xv). Categories

are used daily by people in order to structure their experience and enable communication; they include not only various things, phenomena and processes but also a great variety of abstract concepts. The organisation of concepts is based upon referential relations with the prototypical member, or as the pioneer of categorisation theory Eleanor Rosch holds, prototypes serve as “cognitive reference points” (Rosch 1975: 532) of different categories and provide grounds for making conclusions about the world.

Cognitive analysis of a text is based on the assumption that cognitive models in language are guided by the same categorisation notions as cognition itself. Firstly, projections of bodily experience are based upon image schemas, indicating basic structural relations of the objects experienced by a human being and applied in thinking. Johnson presents image schemas as the “primary means by which we construct or constitute order and are not mere passive receptacles into which experience is poured” (Johnson 1987: 3). Image schemas are seen as imposing systematic relations on perception; language then appears to be a reflection of these relations. The principal image schemas include: *part-whole*, *up-down*, *in-out*, and other structural relationships. The bodily experience is applied in the creation of metaphors elaborating conceptual mappings. Lakoff presents metaphors by stating that “they are general mappings across conceptual domains” (Lakoff 2006: 185). The essence of metaphor construction is seen not in the language itself, but rather in the process of conceptualisation, or describing one mental domain in terms of another. Metaphoric projections enable the bearers of a language to create and understand variations and extensions of

conceptual metaphors, thus providing a space for developing thought in the pattern of existing experience.

Thought processes and different aspects of the human mind, presented elaborating the technique, may be analysed in the terms of cognitive semantics: a continuous flow of thought and the peculiarities of perception form the basis for an investigation of embodied thought and the manifestation of metaphorical projections.

Time in the stream-of-consciousness literature is usually fragmented and has lost its unidirectionality; past and future events intermingle. This aspect of time is essential in the construction of modernist novels, allowing for the processes of the mind to be introduced as a texture of different spaces of time. For the analysis to follow, two prominent works of stream-of-consciousness literature have been chosen: William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* and Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*. The two novels are characterised by common structural features, such as the depiction of the life of a family, the motive of a journey, and most importantly, dealing with problems of human existence.

In the novels, particular aspects of the concept of time are presented. The motion of time in accordance with the events of life and mental states of the characters is analysed as a reflection of cognitive structures containing the concept of time or referring to it metaphorically.

In their differing ways, Virginia Woolf and William Faulkner, in scholar Peter Nichols's wording, "respond to the Modernist need to reinvent constructive social narratives to occupy the spaces opened up by Modernity" (Nichols 1995: 253). Therefore, in the sense of the historical perception of time, the novels exhibit how

"writing (came) to occupy a space between historical memory and imaginative construction" (ibid.: 253). Virginia Woolf emphasized the self's unstable existence in time "where time is not the time of some objective 'history' but the rhythm of feeling as it is scrutinised and overlooked by the perceiving mind" (ibid.: 264), while the concepts of space and time in Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* come together through a pattern that provides the background upon which the Bundrens journey through a perpetual landscape.

### **Time in *To the Lighthouse*: scattered fragments and unifying flow**

*To the Lighthouse*, published in 1927, portrays a family who stay in the Hebrides on the Isle of Skye on holiday in the 1920s. The novel is in three sections. The first, "The Window," depicts a summer day of the Ramsays and their guests, featuring Mrs. Ramsay as the central character. The novel starts with a scene in which the youngest child, James, wishes to visit the lighthouse but is denied by his father. At night on the same day, a dinner party is held at the Ramsays' summer house. The second section, "Time Passes," is short and bridges a time gap of ten years between the first and the third sections. Mrs. Ramsay's death and the deaths of her two children are briefly reported, and the desolation of the summer house is described. The last section, "The Lighthouse," depicts a visit to the lighthouse by Mr. Ramsay and his two children, which is finally accomplished ten years after James had initially expressed his desire at the age of seven.

*To the Lighthouse* depicts the complexity and subtlety of human relationships by presenting multiple characters' conscious-

nesses. The conceptual category of time is merged with those of space and water. First, time is projected as a place: “if you look from a mountain top down the long wastes of the ages” (Woolf 1996: 56). The mountain top is metaphorically compared to the present, the comparison being based on the *up-down* image schema and bringing the common qualities to evoke recognition. Vast territories are seen from the top of a mountain, in a 360° circle, which may be identified with the moment of the present, from which one may see both numerous events of past and of the future as one blended space around this moment. The metaphor presenting the past as “wastes of ages” suggests a structural comparison of past events and people who lived as temporary objects, finally leaving no trace; time is seen as a broad permanent space. Merging the conceptual domain of time with the geographic, one allows for the physical spatial relationships to be mapped as relationships of categories of mind, confirming the hypothesis of embodied mind.

Another important aspect of the presentation of the concept of time in *To the Lighthouse* is related with the concept of a sea journey and the concept of water in general. First of all, water is presented as a category of the past: “rescued from the pool of time that was fast closing over them now a basin, now a cupboard; fetched up from oblivion all the Waverley novels and a tea-set one morning” (Woolf 1985: 207). This projection of the past as water is based upon the *in-out* image schema; however, the container is not seen as having clear boundaries, but is a category that embraces things and objects according to an individual referential point of view. Moving towards a lifetime, the container includes the experiences of a human being and is

projected to be flooding with water: events (the things flooded respectively) become distant and unseen (the *centre-periphery* image schema), but they may be caught from the pool of water and the memory respectively. Moreover, an individual is presented as being able to mentally place himself in past situations: “as she dipped into the blue paint, she dipped too into the past there” (ibid.: 252). The ability to appear inside the container projects prototypical qualities of diving into a pool of water (the body becomes surrounded by water) as mentally “diving,” or appearing, in the past, surrounded by the situations bygone.

Furthermore, time is structured in relation to a conceptualisation of life as a sea voyage. Mental spaces of past and present, as well as spaces of land and sea, are blended: “she was thinking how all those paths and the lawn, thick and knotted with the lives they had lived there, were gone: were rubbed out; were past; were unreal, and now this was real; the boat and the sail with its patch... the noise of the waves—all this was real” (ibid.: 244–245). The concept of life is identified with that of a path, following the *source-path-goal* image schema discussed above. Paths here are presented as part of the past—distances that have already been traversed. The disappearance of memories is projected as a “rubbing out” of paths in the physical world, suggesting that access to memories, or paths, in the mind may fade over the course of time. Moreover, the sea voyage concept is deconstructed here to emphasize that only the present moment of the voyage may be evaluated as “reality,” whereas the past becomes unreal as a person is unable to experience it directly. Presence may be seen as a centre in the *centre-periphery* image schema because of its instant relation with bodily experience,

and other categories of time are secondary, their importance diminishing as the time flows.

One more conceptual aspect of time is time presented as a secluded moment, or an independent structure of a certain memory. An object in the material world evokes a mental structuration of the direct experience: “she nicked the catch of her paint-box... and the nick seemed to surround in a circle forever the paint-box, the lawn, Mr. Bankes, and that wild villain, Cam, dashing past” (ibid.: 83). The circular nick of a paint-box is equated to a circle of time, which secludes the moment from others. The *circle* image schema, inherited from the physical structure of things in the surrounding world, is mapped onto the category of mind, uniting in one mental space the form of a nick and the situation as a finite part of the domain of time.

The concept of time as a whole, embracing all the events of human life, is also noticeable in the novel. *Part-whole* relationships are reflected in the metaphor “life, from being made up of little separate accidents which one lived one by one, became curled and whole like a wave which bore one up with it and threw one down with it” (Woolf 1996: 73). Here the linear structure of events happening is altered; they are presented as a whole, a mental space of time with no boundaries of past, present or future. Time is also characterised by the *force-dynamic* and *up-down* image schemas: time, as the elemental force of the sea, brings people, who are subject to its power, towards positive and negative experiences. The prototypical qualities of a sea wave (part of strong universal motion, powerfulness) are projected as the powers governing human life, which coincides with the conceptual mapping of human life as a sea voyage.

On the whole, time in *To the Lighthouse* is conceptualised through elaborate concepts of distance, space and water. The concept of time is constructed via metaphorical projections of time as a vast territory, a pool of water, and a wave. Time is characterised both as a secluded part of cognitive structures and as a whole, containing fragments from the past, the present and the future.

### **Time in *As I Lay Dying*: individual and universal natural cycles**

*As I Lay Dying* is told in individual sections, so that the narration of the story shifts from one character to another. While most sections are narrated by members of the Bundren family, the few that are told by neighbors and other observers offer a glimpse of the family from an outsider’s perspective. Each narrator—family members and outsiders alike—is believable, but at the same time unreliable, leaving for the reader to decide what is reality and what is not. Faulkner’s modern myth is based on the language of the characters, which is expressed through the stream-of-consciousness technique. The multiplicity of characters reveals subjective points of view, therefore, the reader is to concentrate on the language rather than on the events presented; the ultimate message of the novel is encoded in the language of the characters and not in their actions. Consequently, language becomes of major importance in the novel, while the plot becomes peripheral to the understanding of the essence of the novel.

Time in the novel, in addition to other conceptual categories, is closely related to the rhythms of the human organism and the cycles of nature. One of the most important conceptual comparisons is contained in the following metaphorical expression: “that’s

what they mean by the womb of time: the agony and the despair of spreading bones, the hard girdle in which lie the outraged entrails of events” (Faulkner 1985: 78). Time is structured in parallel with the human body; the function of giving birth, belonging to the womb, is projected as a function of time. Time is seen as a physiological container, in which the “entrails of events” lie, grow and come out into reality. Moreover, the pain of giving birth is also projected as a quality of time, implying that the flow of time is painful because of all the new “births” or events. Religious connotations of life as suffering may be noticed here, implying that suffering is closely connected and inseparable from birth at the spiritual level.

Another important representation of the concept of time is based upon its relationships with decay and the disappearance of things. The destructive quality of time is related with death, or nonexistence: “how do our lives ravel out into the no-wind, no sound;” “if you could just ravel out into time” (ibid.: 139–140). “No-wind, no sound” refers to a state which cannot be comprehended by bodily means, and thus may be seen as a projection of nonexistence. The desired “ravelling out” may be interpreted as a longing for peace, possibly that of an afterlife, which is reached by merging a part (human being) with a whole (eternal flow of time). The process is multilayered: time dissolves people, but on the other hand, being dissolved, they merge with it.

Moreover, the conceptualisation of time as distance noticed in *To the Lighthouse* is also found in *As I Lay Dying*. The most important feature upon which the conceptual metaphor (in this case it is in a reversed form, i.e., space conceptualised as time) is based is its irrevocability: “it is as though

the space between us were time: an irrevocable quality” (Faulkner 1985: 96). Time is usually seen as a unidirectional path or flow, where the movements of people and events are unique, not repetitive. The current mapping unites space, which can be crossed, and time, which cannot be crossed; thus, the space of time proposes a model of a continuum in which a certain space may be active only in a certain moment of time. Another important notion, that of being beyond time, may be compared with Woolf’s “being out of an eddy” of life. The state of mental distance is presented as occurring in most frustrating situations, where the flow of time may fasten or, in contrast, become slower: “it is as though time, no longer running straight before us in a diminishing line, now runs parallel between us like a looping string, the distance being the doubling accretion of the thread and not the interval between” (ibid.). Here the stream of consciousness and mental processes are projected as “a looping string” of time, containing them all and constructing the distance as a mental notion. Forms of line and loop distinguish two attitudes towards time: one based on basic chronological order and the other presenting time as a complicated phenomenon, invading other conceptual categories. In this respect, time could be viewed as a superordinate category—containing in itself the others, like that of space—based on metaphorical relations the concept of time imposes.

Categories of time in the system of thought are reflected in the grammatical category of tense and relations of parts of sentences. Moreover, categorical relationships also manifest as structured units of knowledge. For instance, the passage revealing the attitude towards the death of the mother in the structure of time, could

be considered: “I haven’t got ere one [mother]... because I had one, it is *was*. And if it is was, it can’t be *is*” (ibid.: 65). Having a mother is ascribed to direct experience, which is confirmed by the bodily and sensual apparatus of cognition; when it has nothing to experience in reality, the category of mind becomes vague as well. Moreover, a clear distinction between the subcategories of past and present is observed in the quotation, suggesting that the conceptual category of time is organised in chronological order with clear boundaries.

On the whole, time in *As I Lay Dying* is conceptualised in respect to the human body, implicating the idea of earthly suffering, and also characterised as a destructive element and as distance. The category of time is seen as influencing other categories through the conceptual relations of distance, rendering the idea that time sets value to everything.

Ultimately, time in these novels is conceptualised elaborating *in-out*, *up-down* and *centre-periphery* image schemas as a structural foundation upon which metaphorical projections are built. The spatial relationships, experienced physically, are transformed as a metaphorical basis for the development of thought. The embodiment of the concept of time is connected with the particular structure and imagery of each novel: in *To the Lighthouse*, time is conceptualised as a vast space, a circle and a flow, unifying animate and inanimate objects and elements of the past, present and future; in *As I Lay Dying*, time is conceptualised in a bidirectional *in-out* relation with the human body, as a destructive force and as spatial distance. The variety of aspects disclosed in the analysis of metaphorical projections of time in relation to embodied thought reveal that the limited possibilities of bodily

experiences, when projected into a conceptual system, may become a foundation for the perpetual development of thought and creation of new meanings on the basis of the existing ones.

## Conclusion

Both Woolf and Faulkner respond to elusive and obscure modern temporality and succeed in creating links between past and present. The perceptions of time in the novels embrace scattered experiences gained through the senses and develop them into reflections of the unified human cognitive system.

Woolf’s characters develop as an articulation of past and present together takes place. Time in *To the Lighthouse* is presented by merging its conceptual category with categories of space and water. Mental spaces of past and presence, as well as spaces of land and sea, are blended. Merging the conceptual domain of time with the geographic one allows for the physical spatial relationships to be mapped as relationships of categories of mind, confirming the hypothesis of embodied mind.

The concepts of space and time in Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying* come together through a pattern that provides the background upon which the Bundrens journey through a perpetual landscape. The two phenomena merge and dispel into each other in the novel, creating an element that cannot be easily separated, but better understood through a cyclical symbolism. Time and space are structured as categories of mind, derived from the physical categories. The conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY is elaborated as the main structural pattern in both novels, constructed upon the *source-path-goal* image schema. In *As I Lay Dying*,

prototypical aspects of life as a journey are reversed, presenting missed or corrupted goals. *To the Lighthouse* elaborates the concept of life as a sea journey, projecting its prototypical features as events of human life.

Cognitive models in the novels are constructed by elaborating on existing propositional structure: in *As I Lay Dying*, they manifest through elements of the farmer's life and the geographical space of the road,

while in *To the Lighthouse* they are related to family members placed in the space of a house in relation to the broad space of the sea. Objects and elements from this material dimension are projected metaphorically in the processes of mind, including evaluation of existence, human life and perception of time. Mental spaces of the real world, presenting events experienced physically and emotionally, are blended to create broader perspectives and countless new meanings.

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LAIKO SAMPRATA WILLIAMO FAULKNERIO ROMANE *KAI AŠ GULĖJAU MIRTIES PATALE* IR VIRGINIA'OS WOOLF ROMANE *Į ŠVYTURĮ*

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## Streszczenie

W artykule podjęto próbę omówienia pojęcia czasu w utworach literatury amerykańskiej, napisanych

George'o Lakoffo kognityvinės semantikos principus, analizuojami XX amžiaus amerikiečių modernizmo klasikų sąmonės srauto romanai: Virginia'os Woolf *I švyturį* (1927, liet. 2011) ir Williamo Faulknerio *Kai aš gulėjau mirties patale* (1930, liet. 1971). Kognityvinė semantika glaudžiai susijusi su percepcija, todėl laiko tėkmė, tiesiogiai veikianti veikėjų dvasines būsenas ir gyvenimo įvykius, interpretuojama kaip kognityvinių struktūrų atspindys, apimantis laiko sampratą, arba / ir yra metaforiškai su juo susijęs.

Apibendrintina, kad, vaizduodami susikertančias laikinumo būsenas ir kurdami sąsajas tarp praeities ir dabaties, tiek V. Woolf, tiek W. Faulkneris savo kūrinuose meistriškai perteikia amneziškus modernizmo principus ir efektus. Laikas V. Woolf romane vaizduojamas sujungiant jį su erdvės ir vandens kategorijomis. Pagrindiniai kūrinio suvokimo aspektai yra metaforiniai žemėlapiai, konceptualieji junginiai ir mentalinės erdvės. Laiko ir erdvės konceptai W. Faulknerio romane perteikiami vienu modeliu. Tai nuolatinis Bandrenų šeimos kelionės kraštovaizdžio fonas. Kognityvinės semantikos principų taikymas leidžia geriau suprasti ir atskleisti tai, kaip veikėjai W. Faulknerio kūrinyje eina, važiuoja, juda per jiems skirtą laiką, kaip vaizduojamas jų vargų ir praradimų, pareigų ir priesaikų, tradicijų ir papročių pasaulis.

**REIKŠMINIAI ŽODŽIAI:** kognityvinė semantika, konceptualiosios kategorijos, metaforinė projekcija, sąmonės srauto technika.

techniką strumienia świadomości. Stosując metodologię semantyki kognitywnej wypracowaną przez George'a Lakoffa, przeanalizowano powieści strumienia świadomości, napisane przez wybitnych klasyków amerykańskiego modernizmu XX wieku – *Do latarni morskiej* (1927, pol. 1962, lit. 2011) Virginii Woolf i *Kiedy umieram* (1930, pol. 1968, lit. 1971) Williama Faulknera. Semantyka kognitywna jest ściśle związana z percepcją lub pojęciem, dlatego bieg czasu, bezpośrednio związany ze stanami duchowymi i wydarzeniami z życia postaci, jest interpretowany jako odzwierciedlenie struktur kognitywnych, obejmujące pojęcie czasu, lub mające wymiar metaforyczny.

Autorki formułują wniosek, że zarówno V. Woolf, jak i W. Faulkner, przedstawiając ulotne stany tymczasowości i budując związki między przeszłością i teraźniejszością, w swoich utworach po mistrzowsku ukazują zasady i efekty modernizmu, dotyczące pamięci. W powieści V. Woolf *Do latarni morskiej* abstrakcyjna kategoria czasu jest przedstawiana w połączeniu z kategoriami przestrzeni i wody. Mapy metaforyczne, połączenia konceptualne i przestrzenie mentalne traktowane są jako główne aspekty percepcji. Koncepty czasu i przestrzeni w modernistycznej powieści W. Faulknera *Kiedy umieram* są przedstawiane w postaci jednego modelu, który tworzy tło dla nieskończonego krajobrazu podczas podróży rodziny Bundrenów. Zastosowanie metodologii semantyki kognitywnej pozwala lepiej zrozumieć, w jaki sposób bohaterowie utworu W. Faulknera idą, jadą, poruszają się w przeznaczonym dla nich czasie, jak przedstawiany jest świat ich niedoli, strat, obowiązków i przysięg, tradycji i obyczajów.

**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:** semantyka kognitywna, kategorie konceptualne, projekcja metaforyczna, technika strumienia świadomości.