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Portrait descriptions in poetry and prose of England of the XVI-XIX centuries: from Shakespeare to Byron (the influence of trends of the past on the present)

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Abstract

The description of the portrait of a literary character plays an important role in creating the overall image of the character. The urgency of the study is due to the anthropocentric direction of linguistic studies since reflection and interpretation of the existing world and descriptions of portraits play an important role in this. In this sense, it is necessary to analyze the use of linguistic units in the description of portraits of characters from English fiction and poetry in the sixteenth-nineteenth centuries and to know the influence of past trends in the present. During the study several general scientific methods were used: analogy, generalization, observation, comparison, experiment, analysis, and the historical method. The study analyzed portrait descriptions in English poetry and prose from the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries and found that writers used a variety of symbols to capture the author’s intentions in characters. Often, the authors used somatic vocabulary to represent the appearance of the characters, the less used lexical units of the general characteristics of the portrayal of the characters and the least to represent the appearance of the characters used the kinetic vocabulary.
Descripciones de retratos en poesía y prosa de Inglaterra de los siglos XVI-XIX: de Shakespeare a Byron (influencia de las tendencias del pasado en el presente)

Resumen

La descripción del retrato de un personaje literario juega un papel importante en la creación de la imagen general del personaje. La urgencia del estudio se debe a la dirección antropocéntrica de los estudios lingüísticos, toda vez que la reflexión y la interpretación del mundo existente y las descripciones de los retratos juegan un papel importante en esto. En este sentido, es necesario analizar el uso de unidades lingüísticas en la descripción de retratos de personajes de la ficción y la poesía inglesas en los siglos XVI-XIX y conocer la influencia de las tendencias pasadas en el presente. Durante el estudio se utilizaron varios métodos científicos generales: analogía, generalización, observación, comparación, experimento, análisis y el método histórico. El estudio analizó descripciones de retratos en poesía y prosa inglesas de los siglos XVI y XIX y descubrió que los escritores usaban una variedad de símbolos para plasmar las intenciones del autor en los personajes. A menudo, los autores utilizaron vocabulario somático para representar la apariencia de los personajes, las unidades léxicas menos utilizadas de las características generales del retrato de los personajes y las menos para representar la apariencia de los personajes utilizaron el vocabulario cinético.

Palabras clave: ficción inglesa; descripción de retratos; vocabulario cinético; vocabulario somático; poesía y prosa.

Introduction

A major paradigm in modern linguistics is the anthropocentric paradigm, which explores man in language and language in man. This fact contributes to the increasing interest in the portrait description of man, the use of which is of great importance for various fields of science and art. Both in literature and in painting, one of the most difficult tasks is the study and transmission of portrait description by artistic means. That is why such a term as “portrait description” is used.

In general, the features of descriptions of the character’s appearance, age, body parts, attire, gestures, physique, actions, and facial expressions,
perceived through visual perception in works of art in poetry and prose of authors of different eras and periods, have repeatedly been the subject of detailed study by linguists. However, the linguistic features of portrait descriptions in poetry and prose of the 16th-19th centuries have not yet been the subject of linguists’ attention. Nevertheless, in the works of William Shakespeare, Edmund Spencer, Christopher Marlowe, George Byron, and in general in the prose works of the 16th-19th centuries, the portrait description is an essential compositional part of the work, to which much attention is paid. Widespread and less common descriptions of the appearance of heroes and their clothing are rich in various linguistic and stylistic means: comparisons, epithets, metaphors, etc.

However, analyzing the use of language units in portrait images, it was found that the existing systematization does not fully reflect the variety of tokens used to depict the appearance of the characters. In addition, the portrait images reflect quite narrowly the picture that the author sought to convey.

Given this fact, it is crucial to interpret the features of the use of portrait descriptions in poetry and prose of England in the 16-19 century and to assess the impact of such descriptions on contemporary literature.

The work aims to analyze portrait descriptions in poetry and prose of the 16th-19th centuries and the influence of tendencies of the past on the present. The subject of the study are social relations, namely social relations, in which portrait descriptions were created in the poetry and prose of England in the 16th-19th centuries and their influence of tendencies of the past on the present.

1. Theoretical Framework or Literature Review

Portrait images in fiction have been studied by domestic scholars, but a comprehensive analysis of portrait images in poetry and prose of the 16th-19th centuries has not been conducted.


In her research, Abdulina (2014) paid attention to the portrait as a more important means of forming a holistic image in the work of N. Musin. Thus, the author noted that for the most part, the reader perceives information precisely through the images that arise in his imagination and that are actually formed through verbal transmission.
Alekseev (1960) analyzed English literature in retrospect and noted how under the influence of various historical events, the economic situation in the country, etc. portrait images were formed in the poetry and prose of England.

Moreover, Bashkatova (2003) investigated the linguistic features of portrait descriptions in the intertextual aspect. Thus, the researcher summarized various conceptual areas of the theory of intertextuality, information about the history of studying the portrait from the standpoint of linguistics, and also analyzed the linguistic features of the implementation of the category of intertextuality in the portrait of the character.

Further, Belekhova (2002) analyzed the verbal poetic image in the historical-typological perspective. The author’s work clarified the relationship between the era and the portrait images created in this era.

Additionally, Horishna (2013) analyzed in detail the portrait in the novels by Fitzgerald “Gentle Night” and “The Great Gatsby”. The subject of Ivasheva’s (1974) research was an English realistic novel of the 19th century in its modern sound. Ivasheva (1974) analyzed a large number of works and noted the similarity of images of modern works and poetry of the 19th century. Pavlychko (1989), in his works, analyzed the life and work of Byron, including paying attention to the descriptions in the works of the author. In her work, Selezneva (2001) explained, in more detail, the linguistic means and cognitive models of describing the appearance of characters in English-language fiction, namely, in the materials of works by English authors of the 19th century.

Besides, Grizhak (2014) interpreted the linguistic features of portrait descriptions in English fiction of the 16th century. The author noted that the portrait description of a literary character is an essential component of any work of art, as it plays an influential role in creating its holistic image. After analyzing the linguistic features of descriptions of the appearance of characters in English fiction of the 16th century, the author found that writers used a variety of tokens, embodying the author’s intentions in the presented characters. In particular, the authors of the studied works of art often used somatic vocabulary to depict the appearance of the heroes. Lexical units of the general portrait characteristic of the characters were used a little less. What is more, Vestial group of words ranks third in the number of uses and includes not only descriptions of clothing and its elements, but also accessories and other details of the portrait characteristics. As the author noted, the least number of times to depict the appearance of the characters used kinetic vocabulary.

Guth’s (2012) work became the basis for the study, as the author analyzed the unconnected comparative constructions in Ukrainian and English. Prokopchuk (2000) explored the category of comparison and its
expression in the structure of a simple sentence, but Kukharenko (2004) drew attention to the peculiarities of the interpretation of the text and its interpretation. Zagorodnya (2013) noted the peculiarities of image reproduction and drew attention to the fact that often during translation there is often a problem of correct interpretation of comparisons and comparative structures in Ukrainian. Maletina (2003) in detail the linguistic and stylistic features of the portrait as a genre of artistic discourse. At the same time, Ometsinska (2007) gave definitions of portrait description as a component of artistic discourse and analyzed its structure. With the help of Esin’s (2000) research, it was found out what principles and techniques should be followed when analyzing a literary work. Razuvaeva (2008) explored the types of comparative constructions in the literary text from the standpoint of their perception by the recipient. In this context, the researcher noted that the author’s style and use of language tools play a significant role. Furthermore, Semenchuk (1993) and Yurkina (1998) analyzed the portrait in poetry and prose as a special kind of art and paid much attention to the study of techniques and means of depicting portrait images and descriptions in fiction.

The results of the research will also be useful in teaching literature in educational institutions of different levels of accreditation. Regarding the peculiarities of teaching literature, the works of the following researchers were studied: Halian, I., Halian, O., Gusak, Bokshan, and Popovych (2020), Sheikhzadeh and Bejarzehi (2018).

But despite a large number of works on portrait images, the topic of portrait descriptions in the poetry and prose of England of the 16th-19th centuries and their influence on modern trends remains incompletely studied; in the context of the above requires research on this issue and doctrinal study.

1. Methodology

During the writing of the article, such scientific methods were used as an analogy, generalization, observation, comparison experiment, analysis, and historical method.

Thus, using the method of observation created a general description of portrait descriptions in poetry and prose, an overview of current trends in this area, which further led to conclusions about the influence of portrait images in poetry and prose of England on contemporary works.

Applying the method of analysis, an analysis of trends in the development of images in the fiction of England, found that despite the long development of fiction, detailed descriptions of the characters remain relevant, as well as the use of comparison and hyperbole.
Based on the use of types of portrait descriptions, their role in the formation of modern literary art was highlighted. It is also worth noting that the application of such a method as synthesis, at different stages of the study, introduced the general features of the object under study and helped to understand its essence.

The method of comparison was utilized to highlight the features of portrait descriptions in poetry and prose of England in the 16th-19th centuries, which in turn allowed to make generalizations about the influence of English literature’s “past” on the present.

Besides, the method of generalization helped to identify the main modern trends in literature and to draw conclusions on the relationship between portrait images in English literature of the 16th-19th centuries and portrait images in modern literature.

Further, the method of analogy made it potential to establish the relationship of equivalence between the two systems under consideration on some grounds. The literature of the past and the present has become such systems.

In addition, a method such as an experiment was employed. This method allowed us to predict the next stages of change of portrait descriptions, taking into account the current stage of development of social relations and technological progress.

2. Results and Discussion

Before analyzing the features of the influence of portrait descriptions in poetry and prose of England in the 16th-19th centuries on the present, it is necessary to analyze the general provisions on portrait descriptions in fiction.

In general, information about the heroes of a work of art, materialized through verbal transmission, on the one hand, objectifies the conceptual model of the world, on the other, - has an intentional, purposeful nature. Combining these factors is the key to creating the image of the hero.

The term “portrait” is used in both broad and narrow meanings. In foreign literary studies, the concept of a portrait is not separated from the concept of character. This concept is considered more narrowly in domestic stylistics, linguistic stylistics, linguistics of the text.

In the national sense, the portrait in literature is a means of characterization, typification, and individualization of characters. Having as the main subject of the artistic image interaction with the environment, the writers describe the changes in the appearance of the characters in
specific situations, in the relationship between them. Close attention to the portraits of the characters is based on the general pattern, according to which the internal mental states of people are reflected in facial expressions (expressive movements of facial muscles), pantomime (expressive movements of the whole body), speech dynamics (intonation, tempo, timbre), breathing, etc., which helps in the process of communication to better understand each other’s inner world. In addition, a person’s clothing often indicates his aesthetic tastes, traits, property status, occupation. Therefore, writers record both the appearance of the characters and their inner state, trying to interpret the correspondence or discrepancy between their so-called external and internal portraits. The portrait, in contrast to the landscape, determines the social affiliation of the character, and is part of the temporal continuum of the text, because the costume reflects the epoch, the time of year, and the time of day.

Therefore, it can be argued that the portrait description includes:

1. image of appearance: face, hair, physique, etc.
2. description of facial expressions, voice, and dynamics of breathing, pantomime, and manners.
3. clothing and accessories (Asalevich, 2003).

Having analyzed many images in English literature, it is worth noting a large number of comparisons in poetry and prose.

Comparison – partial assimilation of two objects – is one of the language categories. Comparison, in general, is a comparison of two objects that have any common feature for both of them, in order to more vividly and clearly characterize one of them. In the course of this mental operation, hierarchical connections are built between the judgments that are formed, and the information is selected in such a way as to distinguish one object from another, to specify its features.

Comparisons serve as a starting point for the generation of any statements that form a system of figurative means and are embodied in two ways – by pointing to the phenomena of similarity with the involvement of purely lexical means, or by using certain syntactic units.

Comparisons used in portrait images are classified according to some criteria:

1. By authorship: individual-author and traditional (national). The latter gives the speech a great emotional expressiveness that comes from the author. In contrast to the individual, traditional comparisons are included as stable phrases in the vocabulary of the language and actively function in the colloquial speech of the people. Traditional comparisons are those whose image is not re-created, but only reproduced and used in this particular sense by the entire
language team. The specificity of individual-author comparisons is concentrated in a contextually limited fragment of the work, which is ensured by the presence of the author and his characteristic stylistic features. In the future, the author points to a fairly conditional boundary between individual-author and traditional comparison, as often comparisons in the context of the author’s work of art have deep roots in folk.

2. By measure of comparison, there are: incomplete, expanded, expanded. They are determined by the volume of the components of the module and the standard.

3. According to the logical relations between the concepts connected in contrast, real and imaginary comparisons are distinguished.

4. The central function is to distinguish between objective and subjective comparisons.

5. In the presence or absence of a base of comparison – positive and negative.

Therefore, it can be claimed that the art form has its components (portrait characteristics, description of the landscape, description of psychological states) in the structure of the artistic text, which provides for the emergence of comparisons. Often comparisons are found in the speech of the characters, complementing the speech portrait of the hero.

The analysis of poetry and prose of England of the 16th-19th centuries allowed to allocate depending on the object of comparison of 7 basic groups (Table 1):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Comparison group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>comparisons with celebrities (politicians, actors, artists, etc.);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Comparison with literary, fairy-tale heroes, mythical characters;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>comparisons with animals (zoochemical);</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>comparisons with the plant world - floral comparisons;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>comparison with natural phenomena and elements;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>comparisons which include a group of names of persons by age, profession, nationality, status, and other characteristics;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>comparison with artifacts, household items.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: own elaboration.
Thus, the portrait is one of the means of individualization of the character. In addition to the external physical characteristics of the character, the portrait includes information about the hair, clothes, manners, accessories, that is, what reflects the tastes, passions, habits - the individuality of the hero in their comparison and generalization.

The portrait images used in the poetry and prose of England in the 16th and 19th centuries had a significant influence on further literary works and the development of fiction in general.

In the prose works of the 16th century, the portrait description is an important compositional part of the artistic narrative, to which the authors of the works paid a lot of attention. Common and less common descriptions of the appearance of heroes and their clothing are rich in various linguistic and stylistic means: comparisons, epithets, metaphors, and others. Describing the appearance of the characters, the authors mostly depicted their faces and parts, hair, arms, body. Most attention is paid to the description of the characters’ clothes, jewelry, etc. Kinetic vocabulary, namely the image of facial expressions, poses and gestures, was not often used by the authors in describing the appearance of the characters. The most commonly used language units in this group of words to denote portrait characteristics are the tokens “fair” and “beauty”, which were used in Gascon’s novel, respectively, 8 and 2 times, in Lily’s works 11 and 9 times, and Sydney’s novel “beauty” occurred 17 times, and “fair” - 10.

However, it should be remarked that each writer has his own individual authorial preferences when depicting images and descriptions. In particular, many authors tend to use comparisons that are expressed in a lexical way, as the use of noun comparisons in the form of the instrumental case. For some authors, the individual feature is objective, accurate, dry, naturalistic comparative inversions.

The formation of literary trends is influenced by many different processes, such as socio-cultural vectors, climate change (Pavlova, Polunina, Tkalych, Mankovskyi, & Zubair, 2020), political events .... Will not be left out and the impact of the pandemic caused by the virus Kovid-19. It is seen that the emotional tension (caused by the pandemic) that has engulfed the entire planet is bound to be reflected in modern literary works. Studying the impact of the pandemic on society, we should refer to the works of the following scholars Tkalych, Melnychuk, and Chumak (2021), Kharytonov, Kharytonova, Kolodin, and Tkalych (2020).

**Conclusions**

Portrait description includes images of appearance (face, hair, physique, etc.); description of facial expressions, voice and dynamics of breathing,
pantomime, and manners; clothes and accessories.

Comparison is a powerful means of visual representation of reality in English literature. By selecting linguistic ways of making comparisons, composing comparisons in texts, the authors achieve a certain emotional-expressive effect, express their own point of view on events that occur and are described.

The most productive way of the grammatical design of comparative constructions is in the poetry and prose of England of 16-19 centuries became a syntactic way, and the most used forms: comparative inflection, contracted comparative, a noun in the instrumental case, which is synonymous with the usual comparative inflection. The second place is occupied by the group of comparisons formed by a lexical way (utilizing words with the semantics of comparison: similar, similar, similar, similar, reminds, like, in comparison, etc.).

Methods and ways of depicting portrait descriptions are still used in a modified form. Thus, descriptions of the 16th century with their expressiveness, fullness, and splendor are still found today, but there are also descriptions where the character is reproduced sparingly and incompletely. Regarding further research, it is necessary to examine the features of the image of appearance in the English works of the 16th-19th centuries and highlight the linguistic features of portrait descriptions of the appearance of the characters.

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