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THE NATIONAL-CULTURAL COMPONENT OF THE WORD REPRESENTING A SYMBOL IN A FIGURATIVE TEXT

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ABSTRACT:

The article is dedicated to the studying of some natural symbols such as “garden”, “island” and “tree” in the English national picture of the world. The present research focuses on the projection of the national attitude to these nature objects onto the field of meanings belonging to these artistic symbols. The national attitude to the natural symbols is related through the national customs, holidays, rituals and texts which belong to one of the most important forms of culture reflection and transferring. The national peculiarities of symbols can be found not only in fairy-tales, folk songs, proverbs and sayings but also in literature and communication. The complex of national attitude to the analyzed natural objects, their peculiarities and functions in culture combines the national-cultural component of the word meaning. The given research follows the aim of revealing the role of the national-cultural component in an artistic symbol formation. The article is meaningful for the modern scientific society because it analyses the part of the national-cultural component in a word which represents symbol. This word component plays a big role in the symbol formation replacing the denotative meaning of the word.

INTRODUCTION

Artistic symbols appeared in the ancient times of society formation, therefore they represent one of the most important units of culture. Before the language

appeared the symbol existed in a form of the object which fulfilled particular functions (Luuk 2018: 6-7). Due to their ancient origin, these symbols may combine some universal qualities, characteristics and features of the subject. Nature symbols based on the objects of nature often have identical interpretations in many languages because they are considered to be ones of the most ancient objects in people's lives. Nevertheless, every culture is variable (Hellin 2019: 3), so the development of society, culture, languages and nations caused some changes in the symbol meaning. Though symbol is a culture universal it may be typical for every type of culture or vary from one to another and become unique for every nation. Apart from the ideological national meanings of a symbol there can appear occasional individual interpretations reflected in the texts by a concrete author. The artistic symbol is understood as a special figurative construction, conventional objective substantiality containing a set of meanings that are enclosed in one linguistic unit (Losev 1995: 443); tension- filled expressions of social structure ; the form of representation of collective ideals (Belchhofer 2017: 545). It is believed that the symbol has signs of semantic ambiguity which helps them getting new meanings (Fox 2019: URL); iconicity, complexity, archaism, conventionality and it also belongs to the human consciousness having the precise image border, as well as the reflection of the higher reality (Lotman 1998: 240-253). In addition, the artistic symbol is a sign that has both a conventional relationship between the signifier and the signified and the unity of the concrete and abstract (Shelestyuk 1998: 125). Due to the properties of a complex meaning and ambivalence, the symbol represents a special form of information transfer in a literary text. Its use is based on the cultural experience of both the author and the reader. Being nouns representing not only abstract ideas but also having a visual objects, symbols have a great influence on our perception (Shebani 2017: 98) and cause semantic response in ventromedial inferior prefrontal cortex which is responsible for decision making (Neophytou 2018: 15). It is also noticed that symbols are stored in a long term memory (Larue 2018: URL). Cultural values and norms are often reflected in a figurative language which makes words obtain new meanings. They also can be individual and exist in a particular context (Wohlmann 2019: 182) which creates word embedding for a symbol meaning formation (Perkuhn 2018: 56).

Many words are able to express multiple and complex senses of the meaning (Yang Xu 2017: 44). The semantic structure of nominative language units includes not only the identifying kernel (some well-known basic information about it), but also extensive semantic periphery (some diverse extra linguistic information about the word, emotional and evaluative associations connected with the word). Besides the denotative meaning words can have several semantic features or components: connotative (which reflect the description and functions of the word), inferential (reflecting characteristics based on the context), relational (belonging to the word family), transfer (having an object), deictic (having an antonym) and distinctive (Luuk 2018: 45-48). Connotative and inferential features play a very important role in a word representing symbol. New meanings come from storing cultural patterns derived through the semantic expansion which occurs in a new usage of the word. The national-cultural component often exists in a connotative layer but also may be noticed in a denotative meaning in the case of cultural reality (Sapozhnikova 2015: 178).

The periphery part of the word meaning contains the national-cultural component which embodies specific features of spiritual culture of a concrete linguistic community. New meanings of the symbol often occur due to the result of interaction between words, so that people feel their connection based on many social, cognitive and linguistic factors (Gibbs 2018: URL). Semantic content of the word is reduced in a figurative language so that a word gets a new meaning that goes beyond its primary one (Wohlgenannt 2017: URL). The definition of the national-cultural component is considered to be a controversial subject because it is understood differently in various theories. The national-cultural component can be defined as an interior form of the language (Losev 1995: 77); as a specific characteristic of the psyche of different nations (Gibbs 2018: 8), as a peculiar categorization of the world with the help of different linguistic means (Shelestyuk 1998: 174), as a concentrated reflection of a cultural context (Vereshchagin 1985: 29), as an accumulation of socio-historic, expressive-emotional and connotative information about the nation (Belchikov 2004: URL); as a means of conservation and representation of cultural values (Komlev 1966: 48). We support the latter theory and understand the national-cultural component of a word meaning as a complex of denotative, connotative and empiric features which make the meaning of a word different from its possible equivalents in other languages (Sternin 1985: 88-89). We presume that the national-cultural component of a word meaning can be found and reflected in folklore (songs, fairy-tales, idioms, proverbs and sayings) and literature (a concrete author's books).

HYPOTHESIS

In this article we would like to deal with such natural symbols as “tree”, “island” and “garden” because these symbols play a very important role not only in British culture but also in the novels by J.R. Fowles. These natural symbols play a very important role in British culture because they denote meaningful nature objects. The national peculiarities of symbols reflect the national attitude to nature objects and their functions in culture which can be found not only in customs, holidays, rituals, but also in fairy-tales, proverbs, sayings and authors' literature. These peculiarities can serve as the base for their occasional use in fiction reflecting the cultural features of the nation. Apart from the national symbol perception, there can also be found some individual interpretations of a symbol.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The descriptive, contrastive-comparative, quantative, componential, distributive and contextual-analysis methods were employed to ensure valid results. The descriptive method allowed finding artistic symbols in the texts, to describe the definitions of the words denoting symbols, to interpret the meanings of the symbol and classify the functions of the nature objects denoting the symbols. The contrastive-comparative method helped to compare the meanings of the symbol in British culture and in the universal understanding. The quantative method was used to count the quantity of the words-symbols used in the texts. The quantity of the idioms with the words denoting the analyzed nature symbols was also counted in order to evaluate the word importance and their functions in communication. The component method allowed us to find out the semes in the structure of the word-symbol. The

distributive method helped us to examine the words used to describe the symbols in the texts. The contextual-analysis method was used to analyze and generalize the word collocations of the symbol. In this article the texts of J. R. Fowles's novels were used as illustrations of the symbol use.

RESULTS

1.1. *The symbol "garden"*

In many cultures "garden" symbolizes an ideal place, a paradise. It is often considered to have the qualities of beauty, fertility, spiritual harmony and bliss. In psychology it is perceived as a shelter and a sign of consciousness (Tressider 1990: URL). The symbol "garden" appears to be an essential part of British culture because gardening is the most popular and widespread leisure activity in contemporary Britain. At the same time it has also occupied the place of prime importance in the poetics and politics of English nationalism. It can be noted that gardening can serve as a way of self-expression, underlining a person's individuality and also being a place for a shelter.

There are 9 idioms about garden in which it has a rather negative interpretation, for instance "(common or) garden variety" means a standard or commonly found thing, the proverb "Everything in the garden is rosy" is often used in negative sense, the idiom "lead someone down the garden path" denotes deception (The Free Dictionary by Farlex: URL).

The symbol "garden" is seldom used in English folktales and folk songs but it is often described as a beautiful place in them:

(1) *"But I will take thee to yon green garden*

Where those pretty flowers grow" (English folk songs: URL).

The linguistic analysis of the word "garden" allows to distinguish the core component of the word structure: "*A piece of ground adjoining a house, in which grass, flowers, and shrubs may be grown*" and such implicated sense as "*laid out for public enjoyment and recreation*". These elements define the character and the functions of the garden.

The symbolization process of the "garden" is realized through the whole narrative of the essay "The Tree". The symbol "garden" in the analyzed essay is contextually surrounded with the following words and collocations: *tiny, minute, safe; unkempt, unmanaged and unmanageable; closed, private*. It is also introduced through various lexical units united with the common sense: garden (33) and orchid (1). Like in many cultures, the symbol "garden" in Fowles's essay has interpretations of a spiritual shelter, paradise, a place full of beauty and fertility:

(2) "Slinking into trees was always slinking into **heaven** <...> it was not anything but his trees and the **sanctuary** they offered . . . in no sense, in that minute garden, a **physical sanctuary**, but a kind of **poetic** one, however banal the surroundings: **a place he could control**, that was different from all around it <...> and this was his answer, his reconciliation to his fate – his platonic ideal of the strictly controlled and safe, his **Garden of Eden**" (Fowles 1980: URL).

(3)

There is also another interpretation of this symbol in the meaning of “society” which is actualized in metaphors:

(4) “emblematic **walled garden of civilization**”; “All experience of it through surrogate and replica, through selected image, **gardened world**, through other eyes and minds, betrays or banishes its reality” (Fowles 1980: URL).

(5)

In the essay “The Tree” we can find two different descriptions of the gardens belonging to John Fowles and his father, Robert Fowles. The gardens foreground the owners’ personalities and reveal their individualities. Moreover, their descriptions are opposed to each other presenting two various perspectives and attitudes to the nature:

(6) “The back garden was tiny, less than a tenth of an acre, but my father had crammed one end and a side-fence with grid-iron espaliers and cordons. Even the minute lawn had five orchard apple trees, kept manageable only by constant debranching and pruning <...> I think I truly horrified him [Robert Fowles] only once in my life, which was when, soon after coming into possession, I first took him around my present exceedingly unkempt, unmanaged and unmanageable garden. . . . He thought it madness to take on such a 'jungle', and did not believe me when I said I saw no need to take it on, only to leave it largely alone, in effect to my co-tenants, its wild birds and beasts, its plants and insects” (Fowles 1980: URL).

(7)

Thus, the symbol “garden” reflects national-cultural interpretations of a shelter and the way of the person’s individuality expression but we can also find a new occasional interpretation of the “garden” in the meaning of the society.

1.2. *The symbol “tree”*

The symbol “tree” is traditionally understood as a sign of dynamic growth, development, unity and regeneration. A lot of trees were considered to be sacred, animated or magical and they were also used in cultural customs and rituals. The images of the trees of Life, Death and Knowledge are universal in many cultures (Tressider, URL). The symbol “tree”, as the element of the garden, is one of the most important symbols in the British culture. The image of a world tree is depicted in many cultures but in every culture it is presented by a certain kind of a tree which has national features. The example for the national English tree is oak:

(8) “But the reigning **tree** is the ancient king of all our trees: *Quercus robur*, the Common, or English, Oak” (Fowles 1980: URL).

The most famous oak is an 800-1000 year-old oak in Sherwood Forest which served as a hiding place for Robin Hood. Besides, the Royal Oak also saved King Charles II from the parliamentarians: he hid under the tree and could escape from the enemies.

In some English fairy-tales the tree becomes a place safe from danger as in the fairy-tale “The Old Witch”:

(9) “So she ran to the apple-tree and cried: “**Apple-tree, apple-tree, hide me**, So the old witch can't find me; If she does she'll pick my bones, And bury me under the marble stones.” So **the apple-tree hid her**” (Jacobs 1890: URL). Thus, trees symbolize protection in the British culture.

In 45 English idioms and proverbs about a tree there can be found representations of people and their family (“The tree is known by its fruit”, “The apple doesn't fall / never falls far from the tree”, “As the twig is bent, so is the tree inclined”). It also means a favourable position (“at the top of the tree”, “to live in a tree”) (The Free Dictionary by Farlex: URL).

The linguistic analysis of the word “tree” allows to distinguish the core component of the word structure: “*a very tall plant that has deep roots, a thick stem made of wood, and many branches*”. The symbol “tree” is actualized in Fowles's essay “The Tree” in which it has a linear explication, so the process of its symbolization is formed in different periods of the narrative. The word “tree” is used 86 times in the essay and also used in the heading which accentuates its position. The symbol “tree” in the analyzed essay is contextually surrounded with the following words and collocations: *countless, metaphorical, various, immense, unnatural, happy, evil, reigning, contorted*. In the essay there can be found not only traditional and conventional interpretations of the symbol but also peculiar meanings which underline the author's individuality. For example, the symbol “tree” is traditionally interpreted with the images of family, unity, the source of energy and the object for worship. The connection of the tree with the family is expressed with the help of the following comparison:

(10) “But they were already more than **trees**, their **names** and **habits** and **characters** on an emotional parity with those of **family**” (Fowles 1980: URL). The symbolization of the “tree” is presented with the image of a live tree and a young, immature (‘green’) man living inside every person. It is one of the oldest and widely presented bodies of myth and folklore:

(11) “ the ‘**green man**’ hidden in the **leaves** of his or her unique and once-only being”, “The **green man** in all of us is well aware of this”, “**defoliate** the wicked **green man**, hunt him out of his trees” (Fowles 1980: URL).

The idiom “cannot see the wood for the trees” which has a meaning of “failure to focus on a situation in its entirety due to being preoccupied with minor details” is used in the essay to denote the people's fear of freedom:

(12) “We still have this to learn: the inalienable otherness of each, human and non-human, which may seem the prison of each, but is at heart, **in the deepest of those countless million metaphorical trees for which we cannot see the wood**, both the justification and the redemption” (Fowles 1980: URL).

The symbolization of the “tree” is also realized through the use of the verbs referring to gardening in the person's description:

(13) “**He** had **himself** been severely **pruned** by history and family circumstance <...> In the end what **we** must most **defoliate** and deprive is ourselves” (Fowles 1980: URL).

The author's individuality is expressed through the new interpretation of the symbol which is different from its traditional meaning, the "tree" personifies a man with the help of metaphors and epithets commonly used in relevance to a man:

(14) "Far more than ourselves **they are social creatures** <...> They are all in some sense **sympiotic, being together in a togetherness of beings** <...> But I must confess my own love is far more of **trees**, more exactly of the complex internal landscapes they form when left to themselves. In the colonial organism, the green coral, of the wood or forest, experience, adventure, aesthetic pleasure, I think I could even say truth, all lie for me beyond the canopy and exterior wall of leaves, and beyond **the individual**" (Fowles 1980:URL).

Thus, the lexeme "tree" becomes a symbol with the help of the context which reflects a new interpretation of the "tree" as a man. The narrative of the essay is filled with deep sense and high expressiveness which reveals the author's ideas of deep relationship of nature and a man who become an undividable unity going on under the same laws:

(15) "That I should have differed so much from my father in this seems to me in retrospect not in the least a matter for Oedipal guilt, but a healthy natural process, **just as the branches of a healthy tree do not try to occupy one another's territory**" (Fowles 1980: URL).

1.3. *The symbol "island"*

Most cultures interpret the "island" as a holy place giving some kind of shelter. It is believed to have a spiritual, sometimes mythical power and mysteries. In many cultures the symbol "island" personifies a place for meditation and spiritual isolation. Moreover, it is presented as a bewitched place for sinners and chosen people (Tressider: URL). Being an island state, the British culture has a strong connection with the symbol "island". Besides, the island position made Great Britain detached from Europe and at the same time protected from invasions. In this way the island was perceived as God's geographically blessed place for the chosen people. This image of an island is often depicted in British literature, for example Thomas More's book "Utopia" tells us a story about King Utopos who created an island for ideal society (More 2012: p.103). In Shakespeare's chronic "Richard II" one of the characters, John Gaunt, also described Britain as little world, blessed plot (Shakespeare: URL). Moreover, in British literature islands also emerge as magical places which have particular power and even damnation. Such adventure stories as "Treasure Island" by R. L. Stevenson, "Peter Pan" by J.M. Barrie and "Lord of the Flies" by W. Golding are all set on islands.

Island position made Great Britain a strong independent country with unsophisticated and conservative people. There is also another opinion about the danger of islands as detached places. In 1624 John Donne warned of the dangers of separation in his "Meditation XVII": "No man is an island, entire of itself, every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main" (Donne: URL). The idiom "to maroon someone on an island" means to abandon someone on

something which also gives a negative characteristic of island separation (Farlex: URL) .

The symbol “island” can be found in Fowles’s novel “The Magus” where it is represented by the fictional island called Phraxos. The symbol “island” in the analyzed novel is contextually surrounded with the following words and collocations: *heavenly, damn beautiful, unreal, uninhabited, uncultivated, virgin, isolated, haunted, desert, opulent, asleep*. These collocations describe its character and qualities. The word “island” is used 173 times in the text which makes the symbol one of the main objects in the novel. The linguistic analysis of the word “island” allows us to distinguish the core component of the word structure: “*a piece of land, completely surrounded by water*” and such implicated semes as “*remote, isolated, lonely, outstanding, not influenced*”. These elements define the character and the qualities of the island making it a perfect place for a shelter which can be independent and untouched by the civilization:

(16) “*Nine-tenths of the island was **uninhabited and uncultivated**: nothing but pines, caves, **Silence**, sea. <...> It was the least eerie, the most un-Nordic **solitude** in the world. Fear had never touched the island*” (Fowles, The Magus: URL).

In this case the implicated semes belonging to the meaning of the word “*island*” – “*uninhabited and uncultivated*” appear to be the substantive lexical units in the context. Besides, the words “*silence*”, “*solitude*” emerge as the metaphors for the island which gives it such qualities as independence, strength and freedom. The detached and isolated position of an island facilitates a person to reflect and think about the life, so the island fulfils a psychological function:

(17) “*I knew that **on the island one was driven back into the past. There was so much space, so much silence, so few meetings that one too easily saw out of the present and then the past seemed ten times closer than it was.** <...> I felt, for the first time on the island, **a small cold shiver of solitary-place fear***” (Fowles, The Magus: URL).

In this example there is a linguistic mechanism of change in a lexical status of the “island” which presents a transformation of the implicated semes into the kernel of the word. Thus, the lexeme *island* not only fulfills the nominative function but also becomes a symbol.

In the novel the island is also represented as the place for the blessed people:

(18) “*Then out of the blue he said quietly, “Are you elect?”*

“Elect?”

“*Do you feel **chosen by anything**?*”

“Chosen?”

“*John Leverrier felt **chosen by God**.*”

“*I don’t believe in God. And I certainly don’t feel chosen.*”

“*I think you may be.*” (Fowles, The Magus: URL).

The island Phraxos is also presented as a magical place full of secrets and puzzles, for example the book of the poems with the underlined lines, Tarot

cards, twin sisters, ancient Greek gods, a former teacher who had killed himself and a variety of mythical figures:

(19) “A dim **figure** stood out in the starlight some fifty or sixty yards away. I had an impression of whiteness. Then from beyond the cottage there was a beam of light; not very strong, as a hand-held torch might give” (Fowles, *The Magus*: URL).

The detached position of the island allows it to become a good site for meditation, self-knowledge and a place of the initiation for the main character, Nicolas Urfe. The situation of the initiation includes the main character, an old man who acts as a teacher and also organizes the events and trials for the main character, a strange girl who tempts the main character and the woman who the main character loved before the initiation. The teacher holds a series of experiments which represent a psychological game with a difficult situation of choice between the new and old romances. The aim of the initiation is getting the self-knowledge, revelation of the character's inner secret abilities and wishes. One of the main characters, Moris Conchis, rejects John Donne's words underlining everyone's individuality, loneliness and personality:

(20) “**No man is an island.**”

(21) “*Pah. Rubbish. Every one of us is an island. If it were not so we should go mad at once. Between these islands are ships, airplanes, telephones, television—what you will. But they remain islands. Islands that can sink or disappear forever. You are an island that has not sunk. You cannot be such a pessimist. It is not possible*” (Fowles, *The Magus*: URL).

The author claimed that every person could be considered an island which had a lot of richness to be offered to another person for their self-knowledge:

(22) “*In terms of consciousness, and self-consciousness, every individual human is an island, in spite of Donne's famous preaching to the contrary. Every island harbours some sort of treasure and it is part of being human for us to yearn for what other 'islands' – and more particularly, other members of the opposite sex – have to offer*” (Acheson: URL).

Thus, the national-cultural interpretations of the symbol “island” find their reflection in the author's occasional usage in the novel, so they can be presented in the meanings of a blessed place for the chosen people, a magical piece of land and a place for isolation. Besides, there is an additional meaning of freedom which includes loneliness, facing the changes, the society rules rejection and getting self-consciousness.

DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to prove that the national-cultural components of the words denoting symbols are reflected in the texts written by authors who represent the nation. This statement was proved and the research also showed that symbols got new meanings in the context created by some author. The national-cultural component of the word was studied in previous scientific works but this article analyzed how that component formed an artistic symbol. The symbol formation is realized in the replacement of the denotative meaning

of the word by the connotative one and its movement from the periphery of the word to its core.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the word use brings forth the following conclusions: the national-cultural peculiarities of the symbols indeed can serve as the base for their occasional use and their new interpretations. In this article such natural symbols as “tree”, “island” and “garden” were examined not only in their traditional cultural understanding but also in their national consciousness which became possible due to different conditions of existence, for example geographical position, historic events, functioning in the people’s life and national specification of fixing these symbols in the language. These national-cultural peculiarities are reflected both in the texts created by people (fairy-tales, proverbs and sayings) and in the writers’ texts. There also were found occasional uses of the analyzed symbols and their new interpretations which reveal the author’s personal, individual world perception and create the system of original imagery. The use of new meanings of the artistic symbols becomes possible due to their qualities of ambivalence, polysemy and their complex character.

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