Polyfunctionality of literary text

The aim of the present article is to substantiate the polyfunctional character of literary text, to outline different types of functions of pragmatical effects in literary text. Literary text is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon fulfilling a great variety of functions among which such functions as stylistic, pragmatic, cognitive and sociocultural are differentiated. All the functions are aimed to transfer information, evoke emotions, develop reader’s imagination and creative thinking. Many researchers such as Jakobson (1975), Bakhtin (1979), Stepanov (1988), Halliday (2002), Kubryakova (2004), Kolshanskiy (2007), Bolotnova (2009), Boldyrev (2019), have been investigating the specific features of literary texts, their stylistic categories, linguistic creativity, etc.

Jakobson (1975) claimed that poetic function dominates in all literary texts making them aesthetically valuable. According to Bolotnova (2009), the aesthetic function of literary text is supposed to influence the addressee by not only the beauty and appropriateness of literary form, but also by its conceptually significant content. Ashurova (2022) believes that the aesthetic function plays a dominant role in the literary text encompassing all other functions such as stylistic, communicative-pragmatic, cognitive and sociocultural.

The stylistic function of literary text is one of the most important components of its polyfunctionality. The stylistic function is aimed at creating imagery and emotiveness, at expressing subjective evaluation and the author’s modality. Accordingly, the stylistic function is subdivided into imagery, emotive and evaluation functions. It should be stressed that one of the main functions of literary text is to create imagery. The author might speculate the language for not only transferring information but also for emerging images with the help of words. The following stylistic devices are aimed to express imagery: metaphor, metonymy, antonomasia, metaphorical epithet, allusion, symbol, personification.

Text imagery is closely connected with emotive functions, aimed to express various types of emotions: joy, happiness, sorrow, indignation, disappointment. According to Shahovskiy (2008) emotive function of literary text is focused on that emotional level of the text and its emotional components define the whole emotional tone of the text influencing the meaning and emotional addressee’s reaction. From the point of view of Volf (2009), emotive function of literary text is concentrated on emotional impact on the reader. Emotiveness is manifested in the literary text with the help of many expressive means and stylistic devices. The most relevant are such as epithet, hyperbole, oxymoron, repetition, irony, rhetorical question, gradation etc.

One of the most important stylistic functions is the function of evaluation, peculiar to all stylistic devices and poetic details. Many scholars such as Arnold, Labov, Hunt, Brennan showed their interest in evaluative function of literary text. This function is closely connected with the author’s modality expressing the author’s evaluative attitude to the events described either positive or negative.

Thus, it can be concluded that the stylistic function of literary text plays a very important role making it expressive, full of images and emotiveness.

Another function of literary text is its pragmatic function. The pragmatic function of literary text presupposes its impact on the reader and transformation which might happen in his mind, in terms of his feelings and even behavior. This function is aimed to achieve a certain aim, the author’s intentions which might be diverse: to produce emotional or intellectual impact, to express empathy, to establish a contact, etc.

Based on understanding Pragmalinguistics as a science studying language in its relation to human. The pragmatic function can be defined as the function aimed to characterize the human, to produce a certain impact on the human’s mind or behavior. The human factor in the literary text is embodied in the linguistic personality of the author and that of the personage. The linguistic personality of the author is reflected in the whole text, its lexico-syntactical system. However, there are some units and text fragments which are most relevant to the linguistic personality of the author. They are the author’s meditations, poetic details, stylistic devices, title, symbols etc. the linguistic personality of the personage is reflected in the dialogues (monologues, polylogues), inner speech, represented speech etc.

Emotional and intellectual impact is one of the most important pragmatic intentions. Emotional impact is achieved by means of stylistic devices and poetic details. Intellectual impact aims to activate encyclopedic knowledge structures. This function is fulfilled by allusive inclusions, epigraph, mythologims, religiously marked units, quotes and citations.

There is another important function of the literary text which is called cognitive function of the literary text. According to Kubryakova (2004) cognitive function of literary text is expressed by its impact on the reader’s cognitive ability to widen their world picture, reflect the surrounding reality and activate the enhancement of thinking activity.

Humboldt (2000) looked at the language as ‘the organ bearing a thought’ stressing out its role in forming the world picture. Broadening world picture emerges via introduction of discoveries of knowledge spheres and unique points of views. It assists to develop imagination on the base of having read materials; empathy might also be evolved as the reader might be able to feel and understand emotions of the main heroes of literary works.

Sociocultural function of the literary text describes how literary text reflects and shapes social and cultural contexts. Ashurova (2022) stated that the significance of social or sociocultural function of literary text is the reflection of the contained in the text information about social structure of the society, social problems such as social inequality, race and gender discrimination, crimes, corruption and so on. The sociocultural function is oriented to the personage’s characterization from their social status and position in the society; belonging to certain social groups; gender, age, profession and educational level.

There is an example of applying different stylistic devices derived from the short story written by O. Henry, an American short story writer.

"*This town," said he, "is a leech. It drains the blood of the country. Whoever comes to it accepts a challenge to a duel. Abandoning the figure of the leech, it is a juggernaut, a Moloch, a monster to which the innocence, the genius, and the beauty of the land must pay tribute. Hand to hand every newcomer must struggle with the leviathan. You've lost, Billy. It shall never conquer me. I hate it as one hates sin or pestilence or the color work in a ten-cent magazine. I despise its very vastness and power. It has the poorest millionaires, the littlest great men, the lowest skyscrapers, the dolefulest pleasures of any town I ever saw.* "

The image of New York is created by the use of metaphors (leech, monster, duel, to drain blood), allusion (Moloch and leviathan).

These stylistic devices, creating imagery, at the same time express the author’s subjective emotional modality, his sharply negative evaluation of the city. The stylistic effect of this text fragment is strengthened by the convergence of oxymorons, expressing paradoxical, ironical and even sarcastic evaluation. Alongside stylistic function this extract fulfills a very important cognitive function – the function of constructing the concept “New York”.

The pragmatic function of this text fragment is manifested in emotive and intellectual impact on the reader. Emotions are evoked by the abundance of stylistic devices, which are used here to express the personage’s feelings of sarcastic contempt towards the city. The intellectual impact is realized with the help of allusion which represent mythological knowledge structures. So, this example containing the convergence of stylistic devices illustrates cluster functioning of language means and that is an essential feature of the literary text.

In conclusion, it should be stressed that a) literary texts are characterized by polyfunctionality, manifesting itself in a variety of stylistic, pragmatic, cognitive, sociocultural function with the aesthetic function being dominant; b) all functions of literary texts are interconnected and interdepended, producing a joint irradiating pragmatic effect.

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