

A Lingvo-Psychological Portrait of a Literary Character

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Abstract

The modern state of humanitarian science is featured by two main principles – anthropocentrism and interdisciplinary. The object of any research is broadened because of a constant integration of different sciences such as literature, culture, language, history, etc. The study given also has a complicated object as it embraces language, psychology and literature. There is no established model for interpreting a literary text in the view of its characters' description. Different studies propose their own approach. The present article gives, to our mind, a systematic and a comprehensive one that combines linguistics and psychology. The article is devoted to the deep study of the correlation between speech and psychological features of a literary character. The method of constructing a character's portrait suggested in the article may be used in teaching practical skills of text interpretation and discourse analysis. Thus, the main conclusions and materials can be a part of English stylistics course.

Key words: a literary character, a psychotype, extraversion/introversion, cooperative/conflict type, linguistic means, a lingvo-psychological portrait.

1. Introduction

A wide range of modern studies deal with the interdisciplinary approach to the research. Perhaps, the first step was made by L. Vygotskii (1982) who revealed the importance of the interaction between speech and communication. 20th century analysts of literary texts do actively researches in the discursive field i.e. they connect speech peculiarities with psychological aspect. This aspect may vary from characterological deviations (Bondarenko, 2002, Smirnova, 2011) to personal consciousness of a character. The linguistic aspect may be different as well. Some studies are based on key words (Churilina, 2011, Culpeper, 2002), others – on communicative and cognitive peculiarities (Bucholtz, 2005), another one speculates on the regular occurrence of a particular speech verb to report the direct speech of a particular character, which helps create a fictional personality (Ruano, 2017). One of the recent studies (Rodionova, 2018) reviews on comparison of two Dostoevskii characters, but does not use any definite parameters for characterization, just free description of some features. Another one reveals the main concept of the novel *Demons* by Fyodor Dostoevsky “besovstvo”, which determines the specificity of the plot and is verbalized with key words. The concept “besovstvo” [devildom] became relevant for the writer in the light of the social and moral problems of his time (Bulgakova, 2018). All these authors speculate on some special parameters both psychological and linguistic.

Our work in this area was motivated by a desire to develop a comprehensive and universal method of analyzing the character's speech to build up the lingvo-psychological portrait, which may be considered an applied way of text interpretation.

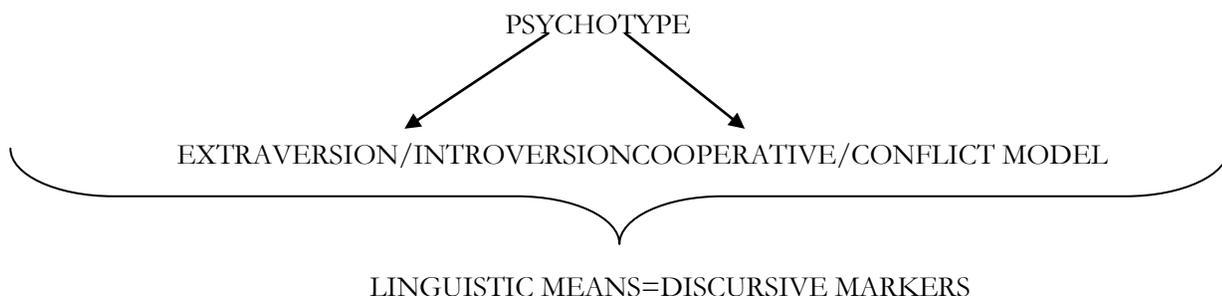
Thus, the object of our research is a sum of linguistic means (discursive markers) used by the author to represent his character(s) in a short story. The last is the material for the research. This kind of a literary text was chosen as it's considered to be the most suitable for describing the character's direct speech in comparison for example with a novel where a lot of attention is devoted to authors' words. So, the objective of the research is to demonstrate the possibility of building the model that combines both linguistic and psychological peculiarities of the character's personality.

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2. Main Part

First of all it's important to note that personality classifications have been known since ancient times, e.g. the four temperaments known as "sanguine", "choleric", "melancholic", and "phlegmatic" developed by Greek physician Hippocrates (c. 460 – c. 370 BC). There are lots of modern theories built on various characteristic features such as extraverts/introverts (Jung, 1971), receptive, exploitative, hoarding, marketing and productive character orientation called by E. Fromm (Fromm, 1947), three roles or ego states, known as the Parent, the Adult, and the Child (Berne, 1964).

The psychological parameter is based on the personality types of a Georgian school (Uznadze, 1966, Norakidze, 1966). According to it there are three types: harmonic conflict, impulsive. Each one is supposed to be revealed through the character's speech. Besides, every type is featured by extraversion/introversion and cooperative/conflict communicative model. A Russian linguist S.A. Suhih used this theory in his research to reveal speech peculiarities of real people (Suhih, 1998). What concerns our investigation, the model of reconstructing the literary character's lingvo-psychological portrait is viewed in the following way:



The first aim of the current study is to analyze the validity of the chosen classification. The sample of students Consisted of 56 participants (31 male and 25 female studying at the Law Faculty) who were asked to categorize each character (from 20 represented and taken from the known stories) according to 3 parameters: type of personality, extraversion/introversion, communicative model. All the results (Table 1) obtained from the students' papers coincided with ours. In this way the principal objective is achieved – the chosen criteria are valid.

Table 1 The way of disposition the characters according to the psychological type and two submitted parameters of extraversion/introversion, communicative model

	harmonic type	conflict type	impulsive type
Cooperative extraversion	Boisy, Fanny, George, Willson, Isabell, Anna, Pavez, Avril	Maurice, Marcus, Avril, a character from “Frere Jacques”	Rosemary, James, a character from “A Cat in the Rain”
Conflict extraversion		Trudy	
Cooperative introversion			
Conflict introversion		Angela, Lotus, Elen,	MrsRimer

The above results are based on the author's speech that is analyzed to find out which features (according to the chosen theory) the character possesses. Then we try to reveal the linguistic means used in the direct speech of the character. The following example shows the whole procedure.

A short story «Frere Jacques» by John Cheever is built on the dialogue between a man and a woman. As it is seen from the table, the main character (has no name) represents a conflict type with cooperative extraversion. She is eager to get married and have a baby but he doesn't share her wish. The woman's name is not given. The author's speech is dominated by emotionally negative vocabulary.

The majority of all his phrases describe **tense, tiredness, despair**, i.e. inner discomfort of the main heroine: *her voice sounded **tired*** (Cheever, 1980, p. 33), *it was **trembling*** (about her arm), *she was **tired**, her face was **pale** and slightly **drawn**, her voice was **tired**, the **tiredness** and **restlessness** of her features* (p. 34), *she was **crying**, she was **sobbing** like a runner who is **tired** and **short of breath*** (p. 40), *her face was shining with **tears*** (p. 40), *more **finality** and **estrangement*** (p. 41). The same feelings are described in the author's representation of the main hero: *he was **bored** and **irritated*** (p. 36), *he often **tired** of it, he was **tired**... and it was a **strain** for him* (p. 35), *her persistence in talking **irritated** him* (p. 36), *he wished she would stop talking* (p. 38), *how **tired** he was* (p. 39), *he was **sorry** to have **spoken shortly*** (p. 40), *he was **frightened*** (p. 41).

Vocabulary with negative connotation in the characters' description is combined with the same one in nature's description: *the **oppressive** clouds were filling with **dark, grey** light, the lake seemed to have something as **hostile** and **defenseless**...* (p. 36). So, according to author's speech we can suppose the heroine is a conflict type (inner discomfort, rare positive emotions). The peak of her sufferings (a wish to have a baby) reaches a pathological level, which is a feature of a conflict type. She imagines that a laundry bundle is her daughter Heloise: *she was carrying a large bundle of fresh laundry, holding it against her breast as if it were a child* (p. 33). *... daubed at the face of the laundry bundle with it as if she were wiping the ice cream from a child's mouth. Every bundle of salt, sugar, corn meal, flour, or laundry that she had carried, during the two years they had lived together, she had called Heloise, and they had talked lightly and facetiously over it as if it were their child* (p. 35). *She was still holding the laundry bundle* (p. 37). *She hesitated and bent over the bundle* (p. 39). *...she was speaking to the bundle with great confidence* (p. 41).

The author's speech demonstrates extraversion as another psychological feature of the character. It is discursively marked via verbs of communication: *she **whistled** to him. Then she **called** to him through the screen door* (p. 33), *her persistence in **talking*** (p. 36), *he wished she would stop **talking*** (p. 38), *how tired he was of her **talk*** (p. 39), *she **sang*** (p. 39).

The author's speech also proves that the character chooses cooperative model of communication. She is always in touch with her partner: *she held up her left hand to show him* (p. 34), *holding up the bundle for him to see* (p. 35), and speaks in a gentle soft voice: *she said quietly* (p. 37), *she whispered* (p. 39), *in a low voice* (p. 39), *she said quietly* (p. 40).

So, the author's speech gives us evidence to realize that the main character represents a conflict type with extraversion and a cooperative model of communication.

Now we'll turn to the character's direct speech, that has mostly a negative connotation like the author's one: ***gets me down**, this **bloody** weather* (p. 34), *it makes me feel **lonely*** (p. 38), *I'm so **restless*** (p. 38). *I **hate** moving and I **hate** autumn* (p. 38). *I was **terrified*** (p. 38), *I'm **sick** of this, I'm **sick** to my heart of this* (p. 40), *she feels as if she were **falling*** (p. 41). Repetition of the verbs *hate* and *besick* stresses the depth of the inner discomfort. Repetition of the verbs *want* shows the impracticable desire to have a kid: *but I want one, I want one, I want one!* (p. 40). The character's speech is also marked by interrogative-negative sentences: *isn't that sweet?* (p. 39) *Don't you think?* (p. 39) and verbs in the negative form: *it's not that...* (p. 34), *I don't want to go...* (p. 37), *oh, I don't want it for that* (p. 38), *I don't know why...* (p. 38), *Father doesn't understand us at all* (p. 41) and etc. Her speech is featured with pejoratives (vulgarisms): *and this **bloody** weather* (p. 34), ***to hell** with the doctor* (p. 37) as well.

During the whole story the woman talks to the laundry as if it were her child: *tell Daddy how good the ice cream was* (p. 35), *back to Bank Street for you, Heloise* (p. 36), *Heloise and I are having the time of our lives, aren't we, Heloise* (p. 37), *well, Heloise, maybe...* (p. 38), *Mother is sentimental, Heloise* (p. 40), *Father doesn't understand us at all* (p. 41).

The extraversion of the character is reflected in co-ordinate conjunctions (used in overwhelming amount of quotations), expressive linguistic means such as: *it's surprising how...* (p. 35), *how good the ice cream was* (p. 35), *I do wish...* (p. 36), *it actually exists* (p. 39), *I'm sick to my heart* (p. 40), etc. 1/3 of all the quotations include parenthetic words (*well, oh, I'll bet, etc.*), repeats (*I hate moving and I hate autumn; I want one, I want one, I want one; I'm sick of this, I'm sick to my heart of this*). We can find idioms in the character's speech (*having the time of our lives, just a couple of bugs in a rug* (p. 37)), she likes singing as well (*bye-low, baby bunting, Daddy's gone a-bunting* (p. 39); *Frere Jacques, Frere Jacques* (p. 41)).

The cooperative model is marked in the woman's speech with direct appeals and loving words towards the partner: *open the door, please, Alex* (p. 33), *kiss me* (p. 34), *yes, darling* (p. 36), *no, Alex* (p. 37), *can we have a fire, Alex* (p. 38), *love me, Alex?* (p. 38). The wish to do everything together is expressed by the verb *let*: *let's play, let's do something* (p. 38).

3. Conclusion

The shown analysis demonstrates the way to obtain the relevant speech indicators for psychological features firstly noticed in the author's words. Discursive markers that deal with each feature (psychotype, extraversion/introversion, communicative model) compose the lingvo-psychological portrait of the literary character. The undermentioned table combines all the linguistic means with their relation to characterological features:

Table 2 Interaction of psychological features and their markers

Discursive markers	Conflict type	Extraversion	Cooperative model
vocabulary with negative connotation (bloody weather, lonely , to hate , to be sick of , etc.)	v		
interrogative-negative sentences	v		
verbs in the negative form	v		
pejoratives (vulgarisms)		v	
co-ordinate conjunctions		v	
expressive linguistic means		v	
parenthetical words		v	
repeats		v	
idioms		v	
direct appeals			v
loving words			v
the verb <i>let</i>			v

Thanks to the combination of approaches from different areas of the research such as linguistics and psychology, we have developed the first systematic scheme for classifying literary characters, basing it on personality features marked by linguistic means. The results of the study showed that there is a proper correlation between discursive markers defining each psychotype (harmonic, conflict, impulsive). Furthermore, the 20 characters that were analysed in the study showed a reasonable submission of the two parameters (extraversion/introversion and cooperative/conflict communicative model) to the 'higher' one – personality type. Finally, the analysis of the character's and the author's speech revealed the prospects of identifying the author's strategy to represent the character in the literary text.

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