Philology

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VERBALIZATION OF THE WORLD BY DISABLED PEOPLE IN ENGLISH FICTIONAL DISCOURCE

Summary. *The article studies the linguistic means of world verbalization by disabled people in English fictional discourse. It is found that the picture of surrounding reality is formed by patterns of personal bodily movements and represented in speech mainly with the help of verbs. Semantic classes of locative, motion, propulsion, locomotion, and measurement verbs take part in the stated process. Moreover, for the purposes of world verbalization disabled people frequently apply inclusion pattern of vantage construction, using other patterns in a rare manner.*

Key words: *verbalization, semantic classes, vantage construction, dominant vantage, recessive vantage.*

Introduction. The act of verbalization is urged by a basic human need to communicate with other people, sharing personal experience. To understand each other and to transmit information effectively, people must process experiences received in course of interaction with the surrounding world, and choose the appropriate symbolic form for their verbal representation [4]. The stated choice may depend on various factors, including the type of received experience and its source. Having certain sensory impairments, disabled people are likely to attain experience from other channels: *visual, auditory, olfactory, haptic*, etc. Therefore, the way disabled people view objects or entities may

detect correlation between the type of disability and the way a person categorizes the world. ***The topicality*** of the research is determined by the fact that mechanisms of categorization are not sufficiently explored in terms of verbal representation of the surrounding world by disabled people.

The analysis of recent publications. The notion of verbalization and its peculiarities are viewed by contemporary linguists from various perspectives. Relying on interconnection between language and experience, cognitive linguists view verbalization as an act or an instance of expressing thoughts or feelings in words [13] and emphasize the integrity of transformation of perceptual experience into symbolic form [3].

The idea of perception-based nature of verbalization generates many cognitive theories. A number of linguists assert that the world verbalization is conditioned by patterns of speaker's bodily movements, i.e. conclusions about sizes, qualities, and features of surrounding objects are based on their evaluation in terms of human body [1]. The correspondence between functioning of human body and verbalization is studied within Embodiment theory. Embodied experience turns out to be focal when it comes to the study of discourse produced by disabled people. Different performance of human body gives rise to different choice of lexical units for its representation. Thus, **the aim** of this work is to study verbalization of the surrounding world by disabled people in contemporary English fictional discourse. **The material** of the research consists of a historical novel *"All the light we cannot see"* by Anthony Doerr, a fictional novel *"Hannibal"* by Thomas Harris, and an autobiographical novel *"On being a Cripple"* by Nancy Mairs.

Investigation. The cognitive approach to language study presupposes the assumption about personal experience reflected in speaker's speech. Being restrained in their movement due to impairments, disabled people verbalize their experience of world perception with a prominent concentration on verbs of spatial orientation and measurement.

Verbalization of spatial orientation and measurement: Semantic Classes of Verbs. Vantage construction. In current linguistics, the term **verbalization** is regarded not as a simple act of *expressing thoughts or feelings in words*, but as a process of *transformation of perceptual experience into symbolic form* [3, p. 28]. The stated process is not homogeneous and predetermines the movement of speaker's cognition through several stages, including ordering and sorting out of received experiences, connection of the image in the mind to a symbolic form, the choice of a lexical unit appropriate for the verbalized phenomenon [4]. In view of this, handicapped people use verbs denoting spatial orientation, belonging to semantic classes of *locative, motion, propulsion,* and *locomotion* verbs. The measurement of the surrounding world is represented in speech of disabled people by semantic classes of *measure verbs* [2].

However, because several word expressions describing the same objective situation may differ in meaning, depending on the manner of situation construal, there are the discrepancies in speeches produced by disabled and able-bodied speakers. For instance, the act of *descending freely by the force of gravity* may be verbalized not only with the help of the verb *to fall*, but also with other equivalents like *to drop, to tumble, to crash,* which point at peculiarities of speaker's experience of falling.

The above stated phenomenon may be explained in terms of Vantage Theory, which claims that speakers may have diverse viewpoints on the same portion of reality, i.e. construct different vantages [8:16]. In course of categorization, subject takes either broad or constricted point of view on a category appealing to different arrangements of mental coordinates [6:247].

Vantage construction is usually carried out at two levels, with the speaker's cognition subconsciously passing from first to second level. At the first level, the category gets a focus, which is the best representative of the category, having inherently fixed coordinates. Speaker's cognition perceives

stimuli to be similar to the focus until attention to similarity weakens and difference becomes more prominent at level 2, which results into establishment of category margin. An assembly of category coordinates and their arrangement conditions the conceptualization of a category as two vantages. The dominant vantage starts with a particular focus, presupposing stronger attention to similarity at the first level of categorization. The derivation of recessive vantage is connected with the shift *of coordinates:* speaker's cognition emphasizes difference more than similarity [8, p. 25]. Moreover, the proportion of attention paid to similarity and to difference, defines the type of dominant-recessive pattern, which can be of four types: *near-synonymy*, *coextension, inclusion,* being the basic patterns, and *complementation,* being rather a rare exception. In case of *near-synonymy*, the vantages within the category are alike in terms of focus selection, the significant attention to similarity minimizes differences. On the contrary to the latter pattern, *inclusion* predetermines strong concentration of a speaker on difference between vantages, both of which however share fixed coordinates. The case of *coextension* is a rare-spread pattern, which occur when the ranges of the vantages substantially overlap (usually in more than 50%) but the range of one covers the focus of the other. The fourth type of relationship between vantages, *complementation*, arises from the extreme strength of difference; when difference reaches its peak, a category splits and results into two dominant vantages of separate categories.

The study of **vantage construction by disabled people** requires attention to many subjective factors, which may influence the results. While the age of studied speakers marginally influence the research, the type of disability conditions the transmission of information via certain channel, i.e. healthy sensory modality, and determines peculiarities of speaker's world perception. In two studied fictional works, the damages of sensory modalities are acquired as the result of injuries, leading to physical disabilities (**blindness** in the case of Marie-Laure LeBlanc from *All the Light We Cannot See,* **paralysis** in the case of

Mason Verger from *Hannibal*). In the case of Nancy Mairs, *On Being a Cripple,* the damage is acquired because of **multiple sclerosis**, which is a genetic impairment, causing complex physical and mental disabilities.

Thus, analyzing vantage construction by disabled people, the peculiarities of speaker's perception must be taken into account, as the type of disability may influence the degree of attention paid to similarity and to difference in the range of fixed coordinates.

Lexical Means of Verbal Representation by disabled people include an excessive amount of verbs belonging to semantic classes of *locative, motion, propulsion, locomotion, and measure verbs,* which denote spatial orientation and measurement. Moreover, in speeches produced by people with different types of disabilities, the stated lexical units are represented in variant proportions.

Blindness. In this work, we have analyzed the fictional case of speech produced by a blinded person. The author's choice of lexical units to describe the surrounding world of a blinded girl corresponds to data asserted in Estelle Thoreau's research. Marie-Laure LeBlanc, the studied speaker, verbalizes the world with a significant prominence on verbs denoting spatial orientation and measurement: *"They start up the length of the rue Cuvier. A trio of airborne ducks threads toward them, flapping their wings in synchrony, making for Seine, and as the birds rush overhead, she imagines she can feel the light settling over their wings, striking each individual feather"* [p. 41]. Due to her disability, the speaker is mainly concentrated on difference of her orientation in space from the normal manner of movement. For instance, the speaker's speech is permeated with verbs describing difficulties in movement from one place to another: *"Instead she returns to the table at the foot of the bed and kneels beside the model of the city"* [p. 18]. Within one semantic class of locomotion verbs, there prevail lexical units denoting movement by foot (i.e. to crawl, to follow, to thread, to creep). The letter verbs may be arranged in one category with the focus on the verb *to go*. However, the studied speaker is concentrated on

difference of her manner to move and, omitting the verb *to go*, gives preference to more specific verbs, describing problematic locomotion. Thus, according to Vantage theory, the researched category consists of two vantages, where the verb *to go* represents a dominant vantage and any other verb describing movement by foot with invariant difficulties belongs to the recessive vantage with attention paid firstly to difference.

Paralysis. The speech of the person, whose movements are restricted because of paralysis, is characterized by the minimal use of verbs in comparison to other researched cases. The only semantic classes, notably represented in Mason Verger's speech, are motion and locomotion verbs. Lexical units belonging to the latter class are applied mainly to describe other people's movement: *"Do you feel safe when you go to bed?"* [p. 73]. What is more, for the stated aim the speaker chooses verbs belonging to the dominant vantage with attention primarily paid to the similarity to the focus: *"You have to go away"* [p. 73]. The preference for verbs of dominant vantage may be explained by speaker's previous experience of movement, when his body functioned in a normal way. Therefore, speaker understands senses of able-bodied speakers. Besides, the healthy way of movement must be the only one, experienced by the speaker, as after impairment there was no locomotion experience at all.

However, when it comes to semantic class of motion verbs, the situation differs. For instance, *the act of moving the door from a closed position*, defined by dictionaries with the help of the verb *to open*, is replaced in Mason's speech with not a typical variant: *"I answered the door in some leather, you know"* [p. 58]. According to Merriam Webster, the verb *to answer* in the stated context means *the act of response to actions performed by others* [MWD]. Thus, the speaker is not concentrated on his own actions, but pays attention to action-triggers coming from the outer world. With regard to Vantage theory the OPEN category is likely to be constructed of the dominant vantage represented by the

verb *to open*, and the recessive vantage including verbs, which emphasize different manner of act performance, i. e. *to answer the door*.

Multiple sclerosis syndrome. In case of the speaker, disabled in a result of MSS, semantic classes of *motion* and *locomotion* verbs are significantly represented in speech: *"Preoccupied, I flushed, picked up my book bag, took my cane down from the hook, and unlatched the door"* [p. 1]. Moreover, the speaker combines the use of verbs belonging to the dominant vantage with the verbs of the recessive one nearly in an equal proportion: *"I go to Mass every day"* [p. 3] and *"I tramped alone for miles along the bridle paths that webbed the woods behind the house I grew up in"* [p. 2]. The stated use of dominant and recessive verbs confirms the availability of varied movement experience despite the syndrome. However, the peculiarity of the speech produced by a person suffering from MSS is the absence of locative verbs in her narration. The phenomenon may be explained by speaker's inattentiveness caused by the MSS, which prevents the speaker from consideration of object locations and their memorizing.

Conclusion. Verbalization of the surrounding world by disabled people must not be regarded as a simple act of information exchange, but as a complex phenomenon, which combines transformation of perceptual experience into symbolic form with construction of a certain viewpoint on perceived experience, i.e. vantage construction. The analysis of two fictional and one autobiographical books, *"All the light we cannot see"* by Anthony Doerr, *"Hannibal"* by Thomas Harris, and *"On Being a Cripple"* by Nancy Mairs, reveals that world verbalization by disabled people in English literary discourse may be characterized by a general tendency for excessive use of verbs describing spatial orientation and measurements. Handicapped speakers give preference for semantic classes of motion and locomotion verbs, combining them with bodily centered markers of direction, e.g. up, left, at foot, at bottom. Moreover, the choice of verbs is not random, as the studied speakers construct vantages

according to main recessive patterns, which reveal speakers' attitude toward their actions. Thus, the inclusion pattern is found to be frequently applied by disabled speakers, while the other types of dominant-recessive patterns are used in a rare manner. **The prospects for future investigation** are seen in the possibility to analyze world verbalization by disabled people in other types of discourse.

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