

## LINGUISTIC STRUCTURAL CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF LITERARY NON-FICTION

### Abstract

This paper is an attempt to study the linguistic layer of the memoir-writing genre primarily as an exploration of linguistic mentality of a person (linguistic person, character), through which both the human being and the social environment become recognisable.

This research describes the conceptual framework of the linguistic structure of the literary nonfiction by employing the following two principles: definition of the linguistic complexity of text-writing techniques and presentation of the aesthetic value of these texts.

A number of descriptive, stylistic and structural methods employed in the study show that memoir writing undergoes significant changes and enriches itself through various linguistic forms and internal conceptual frameworks. The author's presence in the text is often manifested through its original word structure primarily expressed in the common stylistic system of the work. References to time and places in texts present non-fiction character in a new light. The writer's primary goal is not enriching the literary language, but ensuring the composition's linguistic authenticity and individuality. The flexibility of the genre is enhanced by intertextual manifestations. Lastly, memoir-writing may have a therapeutic effect on the author.

*Keywords:* literary non-fiction, author and reader, description, memoirs, linguistic study of genre, elicitation of data, therapeutic influence, speech and expressive movements, psycholinguistics.

### Introduction

Writers of the literary nonfiction genre present past events that are important for future generations. Given its intrinsic cognitive significance, this genre substantially expands the cognitive breadth of the human being (the reader). These texts simultaneously reflect the linguistic situation of the given period, the scientific examination of which can be a guide for the identification and study of linguistic foundations of other genres.

Studying the linguistic layer of the memoir-

writing genre is primarily about exploring the linguistic mentality of a person (linguistic person, character), through which both the human being and the social environment in which he lives and engages in an activity become recognisable.

*Research Methods:* Some linguistic methods of investigation of texts written in the literary non-fiction genre have been employed in this work, i.e. descriptive, structural, stylistic, and so on.

*Research findings:* 1. This prominent genre, which also includes memoir-writing, continues

to develop, undergoing significant changes and enriching itself not only through various linguistic forms but also through its internal conceptual frameworks. Some sections of the text are built from linguistic (word definition, etymology, description, etc.) and extra-linguistic (relevant environment, facts, events, etc.) layers. 2. The author's presence in the text is often manifest through its original word structure essentially expressed in the common stylistic system of the work. 3. References to time and places in texts presents the literary non-fiction character in a new light. In this case, the writer's primary goal is not to enrich the literary language, but to ensure the composition's linguistic authenticity and individuality. 4. The flexibility of the genre is enhanced by intertextual manifestations. 5. Memoir-writing may have a therapeutic effect on the author.

*The purpose of this investigation* to describe the conceptual framework of the linguistic structure of the literary nonfiction, employing the following two principles. 1) to define the linguistic complex of text-writing techniques in the literary non-fiction genre; 2) to present as thoroughly as possible the aesthetic value of these texts, treating these as works of historical and cognitive endeavour.

*The applied importance of the article.* This article can be useful for students and postgraduate researchers, who study issues of text stylistics in literary non-fiction in order to discuss it. The result of the article can help them present the images of past events and compose pieces of literary nonfiction diaries.

#### Literature Review

Literary nonfiction is one of the well-established genres in literary composition. Since an-

cient times, travel writing has been a literary device widely used in fiction and particularly folklore. Travel notes have been predominantly written in narrative works and letters. Alexander the Great wrote about his travels in the form of letters.

Over time, the literary nonfiction genre has gradually spawned new templates and forms, the secondary features and the genre differentiation have undergone some change.

Today this prominent genre, which also includes memoir-writing, continues to develop, undergoing significant changes and enriching itself not only through various linguistic forms but also through its internal conceptual frameworks (Galstyan, 2016, p. 21).

Contemporary American stylistics expert Joe Kittan finds that by writing down memoirs one hands his or her life to another person, saying that 'I have gone through all of this from which the reader may learn something.' According to the author, memoirs are written when the memoirist has already attained self-knowledge. He offers memoirists a number of principles for narration. 1. Not to write a comprehensive autobiography, instead present a fragment from your life (chart an outline of one's life or activities and highlight the significant events), 2. Not to narrate memoirs in chronological order – it is acceptable to breach the boundaries of time, 3. When writing memoirs, it is acceptable to use all the senses passing onto the reader what was heard, felt, thought, etc., 4. One should exercise the hand muscles writing down 200-1000 words per day.

While being in agreement with all of this, it is worth noting that human memory is evocative and usually does not lose its visual, auditory, and mental attributes. Having said this, memoir literature is always about the author's self-proclamation – it always contains a discussion of the

author's "I". It should be noted that the literary nonfiction world imparts significant impulses for self-examination and autonomy through the author of the memoir. The author's character also shapes the form of the linguistic expression of the memoir text. The author's character is the force that binds the linguistic devices of the text to the framework of the literary composition. That character forms the internal axis of the literary nonfiction narrative around which the linguistic-stylistic features are woven into a framework. Sometimes the character of the author of literary nonfiction may not be in the foreground and may be hidden in the depths of the narrative's structure and style. However, the author's presence is often manifest through its original word structure primarily expressed in the common stylistic system of the work (Bakhtin & Oliver, 1975, p.455).

In the domain of literary nonfiction taken as a whole, we are interested in the linguistic-stylistic form of the construction of the characters by the author (including her/her own character), the underlying communication with the reader. By reserving considerable space for autobiographical elements, the author of the memoir determines the linguistic expression, the colours, the fundamental features of the work.

The author of literary nonfiction aims to make the reader not only a sympathetic bystander but also a participant of the action: As the French philosopher and prose writer Jean-Paul Sartre (2011) notes, the author and the reader take upon themselves a great responsibility because "the world stands thanks to the combined efforts of the freedom of these two". The author of a memoir often addresses the reader with intimacy, paying tribute to the importance of the reader's opinion, for example, "... what do you think about this, dear reader?" (Sartre, 2011).

The open dialogue between the author and the reader creates a new world. They interconnect through the elements of the shared living space. Undoubtedly, this living space can not be identical to each. There is a new domain between them, despite the existing shared features. Both the writer's world and the reader's world never lose their originality. In this case, the writer's world can be "exposed only by the reader's examination" (Galstyan, 2013, p. 206).

It is worth noting that in designing the literary nonfiction material, greater importance is ascribed to the descriptive elements of the language. The description is essentially the author's monologue, which is one of the most critical components of rhetorical art.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century European rhetoric was already distinguished by the various templates of descriptive texts: in the form of a full description, description of a part of the whole, description of the locus and the external attributes (material, form), description of the inner core.

Masters of literary nonfiction consider several circumstances when developing the description of the plot. First, the object of description is essential – is it a portrait, landscape, person, or a building? Secondly, is the narration of events or are the memories strung together in a continuous chain? Furthermore, the purpose of the description and the degree of the author's participation are also important. In memoirs, we usually have a full documentary and creative description complete with artistic, aesthetic, emotional elements.

In the description of literary nonfiction texts, the main characteristics of the person described (i.e., a real individual) are highlighted. The authors of memoirs apply the refined observation of a painter to construct the external and internal features of the people they meet, which

can be augmented through accurate and vivid comparisons with psychological layers.

We see, hear, and perceive the presented phenomena since the language norms of society presuppose these particular forms of expression. It can be concluded that we are dealing with the directedness of the speech i.e. at whom is the memoir's message is directed? The expression of literary nonfiction hinges on the expressed (what is expressed) and the "expressor" (the persons or means through which the expression is mediated), in other words, the content and expression plans. In the case of a designated meaning or reference, the third party comes into play i.e. the perceiver of the expression shall be the person who understands the phrase (the person to whom the expression is addressed).

Linguists regard the content and expression plans as manifestations of the material world. The expression plan is the expressive means of the material: speech and expressive movements (gestures, facial expressions, etc.). We model the flow of our sense perceptions through language norms and conventions (Jahukyan, 1974, p. 141).

Psycholinguistics often refers to the fundamental currents of the comprehensive construction of reality. The narrative is a distinctive way of portraying reality. It is a writing style that "tells a story." Narratives are usually constructed in the first or third person. It is a known fact that the process of perception of the world is first of all dependent on the individual factor. The intellectual development of the memoirist depends on his or her particular individual experience. The human mental abilities are vested in the personal sphere, which sometimes imposes clearly defined ways of constructing reality (Brooner, 2006, p. 194).

The narrator may occasionally get ahead of the events at a specific juncture and prepare the

reader for the upcoming events in the form of an announcement. For example, "Happy is the man who fulfils his duty before society and dies such a death.... And he did die. *However, more on that will follow later*" (Zoryan, 1985, p. 166).

It is known that it is often not possible to decouple the idea and its expression in word product (text). Language not only expresses thoughts but also shapes them in the form of a narrative. The latter divides time into segments based on key milestones or events.

Story-telling in literary non-fiction essentially revolves around certain people, their relationships or certain events. At the beginning of a narrative, the general series of story-telling is outlined and then filled in with various details, individuals and place names and the events surrounding those become more clearly defined in the context of the genre paradigm: as a result, the genre under discussion acquires a realistic primacy.

It might be noted that in literary non-fiction speech, as a process, is developed in certain periods of time. American psychologist R. Ricoeur mentions that the time of the story is always interconnected to the person reading it by drawing him or her into the different situations of the memoir. Occasionally, the sequence of events helps to understand the significance of each one of the situations (Ricoeur, 1984, p. 24). In the reverse chronology genre, time flows from the present to the past and also in the opposite direction, from the present to the future. The "disrupted" flow of time is permissible as far as it perforce contributes to the clarification of the situation. In a word, the temporal dimension in literary nonfiction cannot be fully aligned to the historically accurate time. In memoirs, time often flows forth dynamically. In this regard, it is appropriate to quote Bernd Neumann (1970): "A

memoir presents a reality that has been passed through imagination and re-imagined in another, new way” (p. 328).

The linguistic domain of literary nonfiction features characters with different mentality and attitudes, whose linguistic mentality is determined by the use of different linguistic devices taken from various sources. In this case, the writer’s primary goal is not to enrich the literary language, but to ensure the composition’s linguistic authenticity and individuality. Moreover, some authors of literary non-fiction specifically differentiate between “documentary language” and “creative language”. In memoirs, these two realities are often intermixed.

Different types of dialogues are used in memoirs - a conversation (with a person, a picture, different creatures or phenomena of nature), a telephone conversation, self-talk, an unanswered dialogue, etc.

Memoirs often feature letters, where the character is shown, with his or her thoughts and actions. Quotations from letters is a new structural invention. Letters supplement and complete the speech flows, flesh out the protagonist’s linguistic mentality and demonstrate the structure of his or her speech. The descriptive and expressive means, which automatically and authentically appear in those letters, make the language of literary nonfiction impressive and poetic.

In textual stylistics, the devices built into the plot are called a text within a text, in which case we need to deal with the links between the plots. In this case, the letter in literary nonfiction has the significance of a self-contained artistic element and as an attribute of linguistic quality, it is perceived together with the linguistic-stylistic characteristics of the plot.

Memoir-portraits feature the concepts of

*memory, meeting, farewell*. Contemporary cognitive linguistics considers the concept as a structural unit of thought that is encoded in the language of the memoir under examination.

### Methodology

The elicitation of data for this research required the use of different techniques: interview and questionnaire. The study was carried out with two target groups: students and memoir writers. The participating twenty-two students were doing their MA degree in the department of Philology at Yerevan State University of Pedagogy. They were assigned to write an essay based on their memories of one year before. The pieces provided by students were compared with those written by memoir writers. The analysis was done based on structural units, style, influence on the writer and so on. After the analysis the students filled in a six-item questionnaire.

The researcher interviewed five memoir writers, who travelled in numerous different countries in the world. The eight questions of the interview were aimed at understanding the structure of travel memoirs, their concepts, style, vocabulary and its influence on the writer.

### Presentations of Data and Discussion

The data elicited from the questionnaires and interviews reiterated out beliefs that irrespective of age, personality, situation and other factors, memoirs have certain characteristics. It is characterised by description, puzzle representation, mentioning of facts and emotional elements.

As mentioned by students and memoir writers, many works of literary nonfiction are woven out of the combination of non-fiction and fiction. The writer introduces real characters into the fic-

tional space and together with the non-fictional elements develops the literary-aesthetic element (we see encounter such devices in W. Saroyan's play "Forward"). For example, Peter Balakian's "Black Dog of Fate" is a novel-memoir, where the author has managed to bridge two worlds together and create a new type of nonfiction through a unique artistic device.

The interviews with memoir writers showed that they agree with French theorist Jean-Marie Schaeffer who is a staunch proponent of maintaining the ambiguity of the genre and the plasticity of the boundaries (Schaeffer, 2010, p. 192). The interviewees note that the boundaries of the literary fiction genre are also breached from time to time. This actually means that these boundaries can be relative and the forms of genre manifestations can be diverse. It is noteworthy that memoir-writing encompasses a rich variety of genre-specific forms. Memoirs make use of structural devices used in letters and diaries used in memoirs (diary entries mixed with memories).

The research showed an interesting characteristic of memoir-writing, which, we believe, may have relevance to our analysis. Specialists note that writing memoirs may have a therapeutic effect. Armenian writer V. Alazan, was advised by psychoanalyst Professor Groy to take up memoir-writing at a critical juncture of his illness, which settled down his nerves and improved the writer's health (Freud, 2010, p. 44). The responses by students also proved that composing past events has a relaxing influence on a person.

The facts elicited from interviews questionnaires coincided with the opinion of American psychologist Jerry Waxler who kept a diary and wrote down his thoughts from a young age (Waxler, 1989). Years later, the psychologist recalls that spilling out the words onto the paper untan-

gled his confused thoughts and calmed him down. The psychologist finds that when one writes from the depths of the soul, one embarks on a road of self-discovery and sees everything with greater clarity. According to him, the memories of prominent people can bring about something akin to a revolution in society. By writing the story of one's life, in essence, one can see the boundaries of human activity, understand his essence and structure of the mind. J. Waxler holds the opinion that confused thoughts in memories are essentially like fragments in a mosaic: "Writing down memories is a form of treatment," concludes the psychologist.

## Conclusion

By way of an overview, the genre of literary nonfiction, being a manifestation of functional style, is a separate type of written speech, which thanks to its intermediate and transitional nature, obtains a new conceptual framework underpinning its linguistic structure, which is anchored in potential associations with other genres.

*Guaranteed for whom:* The article is guaranteed for a special course on literary genres, especially the types of non-fiction writing, diary writing, memoirs, travel writing and essays.

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