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Narratology as a Platform for the Study of Non-Verbal Means of Communication
(Using Fiction as an Example)

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Abstract

The structure and members of the narrative communication are viewed from the position of narratology. The existing viewpoints are summarized. The two main levels, determined by their members are distinguished. The fruitfulness of the model application for the study of non-verbal description means in the fictional text is shown. The study of non-verbal means from the position of the narrative theory reveals the real part a character takes in creating his image.

1. Introduction

In recent decades, there has been increasing interest in the study of nonverbal phenomena. Nonverbal means of communication are the object of study in such sciences as physiognomy, psychology, sociology, and others. However, the study of gestures and facial expressions, non-verbal means of communication, belongs to the field of linguistics, where they are considered in terms of their display in the written language.

Several studies have indicated that the non-verbal means performed by a character are used for their characteristics and help to reveal their personal traits (Gorodnikova, 1980; Nakashidze, 1981). However, the

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researchers did not specify what exactly is included in this characteristic from the character himself, and what is not. Meanwhile, in the description of the character several points of view can be combined and sometimes they oppose each other.

The research showed that the study of the verbal description of non-verbal means of communication, taking into account "splitting" of information will contribute to a more adequate interpretation of the text, as well as discernment of the author's intent. Analysis of the empirical material was done with reference to basic concepts and formulation of the narrative theory or narratology. Literary texts of modern French literature of the XX-XXI centuries were used as the material for the study, with the total number of 2,200 pages. The method of continuous sampling was used to extract text samples, which represent a description of verbal and nonverbal components of speech acts, the total sum of 400 units.

2. Procedures and results

First of all, we need to answer the questions: What is narrative communication? Who are the addresser and the addressee of the text? In other words, we need to establish the structure and members of the narrative communication.

The literature review showed that most authors recognize three levels of the narrative communication structure. They distinguish a three-level model of the narrative communication (Schmid, 2003; Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1980; Genette, 1983).

All authors agree with each other in respect to the number of levels of narrative communication, but the system of its participants is more extensive. So, there are six incarnations of the author (author-writer, author-narrator, the second "I" of the author-narrator, author-character, and the second "I" of the author-character, "the image of the author"), three incarnations of the reader (a general reader, a specific reader, an ideal reader), and three incarnations of the character (the generalized notion of actor, one of the many characters and the second "I" of the character) (Sapojnikova, 2002, p. 13).

Most authors distinguish six major participants at each of the three levels (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1980; Maingueneau, 1990, Schmid 2003; Genette, 1983). The first level – the extra-textual one – is where the real author is represented. The real author communicates with the addressee – the real reader. The second level, the extra-textual as well, is where the abstract author is represented; this is the image of the author, created by the reader upon reading of the text. Abstract author is an ideal phenomenon, his role in the story is mainly ideological (Shmid, 2003; Genette, 1983). He corresponds to his own addressee – the abstract reader, the one on whose language and intellectual level the real author focuses. In addition, there is the third level – the intratextual one – with the author – the narrator and the addressee. Summarizing the data, we would like to represent the narrative communication schematically (Fig. 1):
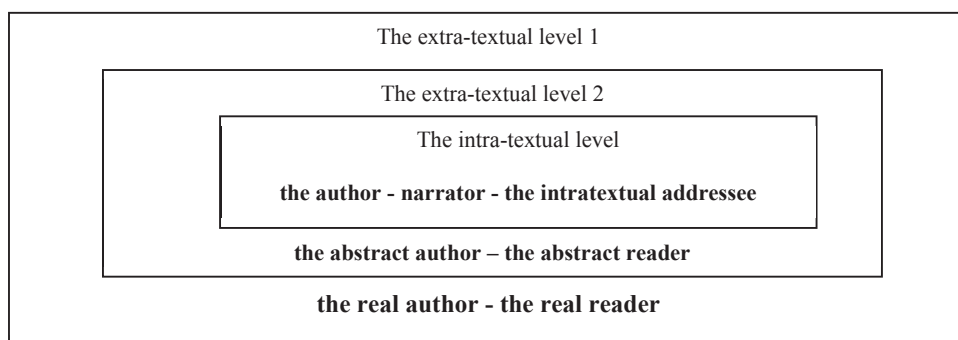

Figure 1. The three-level model of the narrative communication.

At the same time, following some authors (Shmid, 2003; Genette, 1983), we recognize that, from a practical point of view, the selection of two extra-textual levels of communication, that is, the level of the real author / reader and