

Valery Belyanin (Moscow State University)
psyling@gmail.com

PSYCHIATRIC FOUNDATIONS OF LITERARY TEXT

(Speech at the National Chengchi University, Taipei, Taiwan, March 2000)
Slightly revised and formatted on February 16, 2018

Introduction

1. Psycholinguistics states that "thought is performed in word" (L.Vygotskii). But Emotion is usually what precedes Thought, and Text is the real context for Word. Not only the Thought is performed in Word, but the Emotion is performed in Words that construct Texts.

2. There are different ways of verbalizing emotion on its route from the motive to the concept of the text and the verbal text itself. They are different in regular speech compared with the abnormal one, and the process of the creation of a non-literary text differs from that of a literary one.

Model of speech production act:

Motive	nonverbal	choice of lexical units	readiness of the speech apparatus	exit	control
	program	syntactic programming			

The Role of Biology in Text Production

Biological factors play a very important role.

The abnormal is the ultimate expression of norm. That is why so much attention is paid to aphasias. The language disorders are well studied due to the fact that psycholinguist knows the neurological basis of the abnormal speech. All the destructions which can be observed are not the result of destroyed normal word order, usage of wrong syntactic structures, or mispronunciation, etc. but they are the results of specific functioning of the brain of the speaker.

The ill brain perverts usual ways of world perception that may be seen in ordinary speech. A person with **border-line disorders** not being the master of his brain damaged mood or cognitive processes is not the master of his speech.

An ill brain is the starting point of the picture of the world of mentally ill consciousness. The speech of a **mentally ill person** is not the destroyed normal speech, it is the result of a destroyed picture of the world, and has certain materialistic source.

Imaginary Worlds and Words

A literary text is based on an imaginary world which is connected with, but differs from that known to everyone. Every literary text has its own laws which are logical and non-logical at the same time. The logics here is inner, the non-logics is outer.

Thesaurus of a Literary Texts

Thesaurus is a systematic dictionary of words, it depicts objects and actions and the relations between them. Thesaurus should be full and strict. The relation between words and objects should be shown as direct and rigid.

"Death" 1. We mourn the d. of a friend. 2. The accident resulted in several dd. 3. to put to d.

For a depressive person death is connected with 'hard breath', 'stone' and 'difficultness of life' in general. Another subjective thesaurus is in the language consciousness of a man who has

experienced an existential situation. Still another exists in the language consciousness of a brave soldier (*death* \neq *cowardice*).

Literary texts depict a certain part of reality, from an odious point of view, with words that can not be met in common speech and in the concordance of a very specific type. The ties between concepts are unseen, and can not be easily reconstructed. E.g. the phrase "the slings and arrows of an outrageous fortune" contains a presupposition, that

Imaginary thesauruses are full in a very narrow field of life.

Genres of Fiction and Genres of Consciousness

Genres are fixed aesthetic forms for certain frames. They are not very numerous but they are rather rigid in form and means of expression. Bearing aesthetic character they are only speech forms for mental and emotional content. Emotion is what goes before the genres' forms.

Let us suppose that literary texts contain certain **attitude** to the world, and this very world may be estimated as "light" or "dark", "sad" or "merry", "beautiful" or "ugly", warm or cold, aggressive or friendly, mild or rigid.

"Light" Texts

Ex. "God *loves* you, and He wants you to *live in peace* with Him and to receive *eternal life*. "The gift of God is *eternal life* in Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23). But, like Adam, we often choose to disobey God and go our own *selfish* ways. This side of our *nature* is called *sin*, and it separates us from God. We can receive Jesus Christ when we *believe* in His message and *trust* in Him *to save us*. When you receive Christ, you are born into God's *family* through the supernatural work of the *Holy Spirit*, who indwells every *believer*. This is called regeneration or "new birth". God *bless* you as you begin your wonderful new *life* in Christ".

friend – relative

friend – stranger

friend - enemy

Paranoia

Psychiatry	Language	
Egoism	Personal pronouns	
Suspiciousness	Love	Honest, true friendship, truth, friend, kinship
	Hatred	False friends, traitor, betrayal, enemy, chasing; vicious, vile, greedy, selfish
Believes in high power so called objective idealism)	Passive constructions Clear, light, heart, soul, eyes, enlightenment	
high social activity	History, politics, honesty, faith, duty, destiny, faithfulness	
Obsessiveness (Adherence to certain ideas):	Invention, religion God, Father, Son, soul, eternity	
?	Nature, sun, rays, light, clear, transparent, bright, warmth	

Texts: Detective stories (Agatha Christie).

Speeches of political leaders (Hitler, Lenin, Stalin, Putin) and some religious texts.

The concept of "Adoring of life" of Albert Schweitzer; works on ecology.

"Dark" Texts

The emotional and cognitive dominant of "dark" texts is: "a simple man should fight against clever and dangerous one".

Ex. «Mighty satanic beings, great evil princes of darkness, huge numbers of wicked spirits... what a formidable foe! How can we, mere human beings, stand up against such deadly and frightening forces? Where can we go to hide from such an enemy? Surely it is best to recognize the opposition? How can we stand against such a power if we are ignorant of its malicious intent and hatred of all that is of God? How can any Christian triumph if he is unaware of the battle going on around him?»

<...>

Ex. «Who do we humans think we are? If we listen to the *mainstream educators* and *scientists* in our society, we hear that we are only highly evolved versions of the *bacteria* that we trample *under foot* every day. These *elite intellectuals* have *dismissed* the once noble idea that men and women are the cherished fulfillment of an intelligent design; instead we are the chance product of *innumerable* mistakes»

The generative model of "dark" texts resembles epileptoid categorizing of the world. Neurological disorder which sometimes may lead to mental retardness and is considered not to produce "high" works of arts seems to be the physiological basis of the cognitive and emotional structure of "dark" texts.

Epileptoidness

Psychiatry	Language	
fits caused by: (auras)	Laughter, bright shining, sparkles, water, repeated melody, low sounds, swinging, burning	
Disphorias (low mood) and euphorias (high spirits -- rarely)	+	
	-	Darkness, gloomy, obscure, unpleasant smell
Absences: losing consciousness	Forget, memory, body, flesh	
fugas (running away)	Run away, escape, flee	
Falling on earth	Falling down, inside, depth, serpent, spider, insect, rat	
Changing of the schemata of the body: micropsias, macropsias	+	Size: Large, huge, big; giant
	-	Small, little, tiny; child-ren,
Impulsiveness	Anguish, disgust, aggression, anger	
Existential states	Doing with ones' own hands, natural, simple	
	Double, zombie	
Lunatism	Moon, moonlight, twilight	

The slightest neurological sensations have their verbal equivalents in them. One can suggest that the aim of the author of such literary text is to reproduce various physical and psychophysical dysfunctions in words' texture.

"Getting smaller and smaller. What a queer feeling", - used to say Alice, Carroll's heroine.

"Alice-in-Wonderland syndrome" is typical for epilepsy.

Thus the emotions and feelings which are characteristic of neurological disorders and epileptoid cognitive structures generate "dark" texts full of physiology.

"Dark" texts:

Albert Camus "L'Etranger", John Steinbeck "Of Mice and Men", "The Grapes of Wrath", Oscar Wilde "The Portrait of Dorian Gray", Francois Rableau, Herbert Wells "The Invisible Man", Theodore Hoffman "The Nutcracker", Ernst Hemingway, William Faulkner "The Sound and

the Fury”, Hermann Melville “Moby Dick”, Lewis Carroll “Alice in Wonderland”, [Franz Kafka](#) “[The Metamorphosis](#)”, “[The Castle](#)”, Jonathan Swift “Gulliver’s Travels” (1726), [David Zeltser](#) “[The Omen](#)”, R. Kipling “[Mowgli](#)”, [Carlos Castaneda](#), Orwell “1984”, M. Shelly “Frankenstein”, E. Hemingway “The Old Man and the Sea”.

Alexey Tolstoy, Anton Chekhov, Fedor Dostoyevsky, Lev Tolstoy.

"Sad" Texts

The author of a "sad" text has a motive to express his understanding of life as 'short', 'sorrowful' and 'heavy'.

The thesaurus of "sad" texts has such dominant concepts:

'happiness'	'sorrow' - 'loneliness'	'death'
-------------	-------------------------	---------

Depicting 'getting poor' and 'wishing for the death' characterizes "sad" texts as based on the depression as a state of low emotions, physical weakness and timidity of a person, inclined to low spirits.

The authors' motive in creating a "sad" text may be: "Feel pity for me".

Ex. “Maybe you, too, are lonely. For some very lonely people, hell begins here on earth.

Have you ever been surrounded by people, yet felt alone in the crowd? Some of the loneliest people in the world live in the cities with populations reaching into the millions.

A Chicago woman died when she jumped off the 14th floor of her apartment building. The note she left explained she killed herself because she was lonely. A well known clinical psychologist killed himself. In a note left to his staff, the psychologist said: “Tonight I feel tired, alone, and suddenly very old. The full understanding of these feelings will come only when you, too, are tired, alone, and old” Loneliness isn’t merely a psychological matter, it is a spiritual problem. It is caused by our separation from God. Our attempts to hide our lonely feelings are useless because the emptiness always returns. Rejecting God causes isolation and loneliness – forever.”.

Depressiveness

Psychiatry	Language
Low spirits	hard breathing
	quiet, timid, mute
Desire to be young	Beautiful and young
	Short happiness, 'unreached happiness'
Low temperature of the body	Cool, cold, wind, autumn,
Thoughts about death	Death, stone
Feeling lonely	
????	pleasant smell
Syndrome of impoverishment	loss of money, greediness

Sad Literary Texts:

Erich Sigal “Love Store”

Nicolai Gogol

"An Overcoat" “Dead Souls”

Thornton Wilder "Our Town"

Ivan Bunin "An Easy Breathing"

"Merry" Texts

Psychologically antonymous to "sad" emotional picture of the world may be met in "merry" texts. Texts that are "merry" by their emotional and semantic dominant tell us about four friends, a

woman and an animal chasing on high speed and in 'heat' for 'money'. The main idea of such texts is: "We are the winners in all life games". The predominant emotion is 'happiness'. The events depicted in "merry" texts take place in different countries and the main hero is always in 'high spirits' and has 'enormous plans', is very 'strong', 'talkative' and 'friendly'. The main semantic components of "merry" texts are 'together', 'friends', 'luck', 'gangsters', 'traveling', 'sing', 'flight', 'a lot of money', 'erudition', 'physical strength', et al. and reveal the consciousness of a hypermaniac person.

Manic states

Psychiatry	Language
high spirits	together, merry, cheerful, gay, happy,
	Friends, girls
	Spies, criminals, mafia
High verbal activity "fuga idearum"	Being talkative, singing, musical comedies
Physical strength	3 or 4 men & woman & an animal are travelling in search of money, managing to escape from bandits, and to win.
polypragmazia, high activity	quickly, soon after, high speed (movie "Speed")
the feeling of broadening of the chest	flying, climbing, birds, airplanes, balloons
Unstable attention:	different topics, erudition of the main hero

Texts:

Adventurous and detective stories, or comedies ("Someone Likes it Hot" with M.Monroe starring)

Literary fairy tales like "[Baron Munchhausen](#)" ([Rudolph Eric Raspe](#)), "Winnie-the-Pooh" (A.A. Milne), and "[Karlsson on the Roof](#)" ([Astrid Lindgren](#)).

Mixed texts

E.g. "The Fairy Tale of a Fisherman and the Golden Fish", "The Dame of Swords", or "Eugene Onegin" with Byronic hero in the center (Aleksandr Pushkin) can be named "sad-and-merry" by their emotional and semantic dominant and reflect manic-depressive mood disorder.

"Beauteous" texts

Love stories: A rich man falls in love with a poor but lovely girl. They go through passions and interpersonal games and finally the girl gets what she wants - him. Most frequent motives (Propp, 1926) are - 'generous but poor', 'rich but tricky', 'I am despised', 'I am an extraordinary person', and surely, 'the mystery of birth'.

Hysteroidness

Hysteroidness (or demonstrativeness) is the biological basis of such texts. (The heroine here never represses her emotions, even if she does; she demonstrates that she is repressing them).

Texts: David Lawrence's "Lady Chatterley's Lover"

Mark Twain, O'Henry, Main Reed, Francis Bret-Gart, Guy de Maupassant,

Barbara Cartland's numerous novels. operettas and TV soap operas (Mexican, Brazilian).

Psychological synonyms: beautiful, lovely, naive, romantic, lonely, emotional

Psychiatry	Language
"the lady's room" (Z.Freud)	Premises, furniture, rooms, border

Emotions	+	Passion, lust, desire, emotions
	--	Nervousity, disgust, hatred
Visual modality prevails		Color (red, white)
Plastics		Dress, face, jest, movements, hair, teeth, legs
Desire to be surrounded by luxury	+	Noble, rich, generous, mystery of birth!
	--	Simple, narrow-minded, greedy.
Pyromania?		Fire, fireplace
? Love for freedom ?		Comparison with animals
Talkativeness		Relatives
		Extraordinary, marvelous, strange, new,

The semantic categories typical for different types of texts are common in different languages. What is rather unpredictable - is the subject, the structure of the story. But though the combinations are numerous, the frames are repeatable.

Conclusions

Summing up, we should say, that the way from Emotion to Word is different if we take literary Text, or informative one. When creating informative Text, a person is using others' men's Words to depict the World that is external for him. He wants as if to be dissolved in the objects (and not to manifest his emotions). The Emotion is as if hidden outside the model of Text generation here.

In literary text the way from Emotion to Word may seem rather routine for the person who tries to describe some imaginary world using his own thesaurus. The ties between the elements seem to be too obvious for the speaker (narrator). Usually the literary aspect of the text is considered to correlate with unpredictability. But the unpredictability of a literary text is external. It is very predictable from inside the author's consciousness. And it is also predictable from outside for the person whose cognitive and emotional structures are alike, who resembles the author psychologically (Hennecken 1892; Belyanin 1988).

When creating a literary Text, the writer is reflecting his own view, his inner World with the Words he as if invented for others to understand him better. Emotions are primer and strong, they are creating and overwhelming verbal structures. Literary texts are as if non-verbal, being mostly metaphoric and emotional. And the diversity of Emotions results in the diversity of genres.

P.S. These ideas were laid in the basis of [VAAL](#) - an intellectual informational system based on finding out texts' emotional and semantic dominant and thus putting a diagnosis to the author of the analyzed text.

REFERENCES

Белянин В.П. Основы психолингвистической диагностики: (Модели мира в литературе).– Российская Академия Наук, Институт языкознания. Фонд Чтения имени Н.А. Рубакина. – М.: Тривола, 2000.– 248 с. // Belyanin V. P, (2000) Osnovy psikholingvisticheskoy diagnostiki: Modeli mira v literature. Moskva, 2000, - 248 s. // Bekyanin V.P. Foundations of psycholinguistic diagnostics: (Models of the World in Fiction). Moscow, Trivola. – 248 p. ISBN 5-88415-036-9 (*in Russian*)

Белянин В.П. Психолингвистические аспекты художественного текста.– М.: Изд-во Московского ун-та, 1988.– 123 с. // Belyanin V.P. Psikholingvisticheskie aspekty khudozhestvennogo teksta. Moskva: Izd-vo Moskovskogo univ-ta, 1988.– 123 s. // Belyanin V. Psycholinguistic Aspects of Literary Text. Moscow: Moscow State University Press. 123 p. (*in Russian*)

Белянин В.П. Введение в психиатрическое литературоведение.— Verlag Otto Sagner. / Specimina Philologiae Slavicae. Band 107.— München, 1996.— 298 с. (*in Russian*) // Belyanin Valery. Vvedenije v psyhiatricheskoye literaturovedenije. Verlag Otto Sagner. / Specimina Philologiae Slavicae. Band 107.— München, 1996.— 298 pp. // Belyanin Valery (1996). Introduction to Psychiatric Literary Criticism. Verlag Otto Sagner. / Specimina Philologiae Slavicae. Band 107.— München, 1996.— 298 pp.

Gannushkin P.B. (1946). A Clinisist's View upon Psychotic States, their Statics and Dynamics. Moscow. (*in Russian*)

Hennecken E. (1892). An Experience of Building Scientific Critics - Aestopsychology. Moscow. (*in Russian*)

Propp V.Ya. (1926). The Morphology of a Fairy Tale. Moscow, Academiya. (*in Russian*)
Time Chambers Thesaurus (1991).

Tolstoy, Lev (1930). What is Art? London, Oxford Univ. Press.

Vygotskij L. (1971). The Psychology of Art. Cambr., Mass., M.I.T. Press.

<end>