THE NARRATIVE TEXT IN THE NOVEL "OTHELLO THE MOOR OF VLORA"[1]

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Abstract:

In the novel "Othello the moor of Vlora", one of the most accomplished works of the Albanian contemporary literature, we have analyzed the narrative technique, which, from the linguistic viewpoint, is also characterized by the kind of discourse used by the author. I. Ways of connecting parts of speech and clauses in direct and indirect speech. These connections might be: 1. Asyndetic Connections 2. Syndetic Connections. II. Structural features of the narrator's speech (first person speaker) a. Speech features of the narrator in this work are: very long and complex where the equality and dependency relations are combined. b. There are also cases when, for stylistic reasons, subordinate clauses function as separate sentences. c. Syntactic structures with homogeneous parts of speech. III. Semantic priorities of these structures depending on the linguistic means which acquire stylistic – emotional values. a. Linguistic means on morphological level b. Linguistic means on syntactic level. IV. Semantically, it is obvious that the analyzed narrative text mainly consists of narrative, descriptive and dialoging sequences.

Key words:

Narrative technique, parts of speech, morphological level, syntactic level, narrative sequences.

Rezumat:

În studiul despre romanul *Othello, maurul din Vlora*, una dintre scrierile cele mai complexe din literatura contemporană albaneză, am analizat tehnica narativă care, din punct de vedere lingvistic, este caracterizată de un anumit tip de discurs pe care autorul îl foloseşte. În ceea ce urmează, vom analiza anumite aspecte lingvistice cum ar fi: I. Modalităţi de a corela părţi de vorbire şi fraze în vorbirea directă şi indirectă (1. Conexiuni asindetice 2. Conexiuni sindetice); II. Caracteristici structurale ale discursului naratorului (narațiunea la persoana întâi); III. Priorităţi semantice ale acestor structuri în funcţie de mijloacele lingvistice care dobândesc valori stilistice – emoţionale (a. Mijloace lingvistice la nivel morfologic; b. Mijloace lingvistice la nivel sintactic). Din punct de vedere semantic, este evident că textul narativ supus analizei constă, în principal, în secvenţe narative, descriptive şi dialogice.

Cuvinte cheie:

Tehnică narativă, părţi de vorbire, nivel morfologic, nivel sintactic, secvenţe narative.

[1] **http://www.toena.com.al** , "Othello, the moor of Vlora", an etude to the love for Vlora and Venice of XIV-th century.

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The novel "Othello the moor of Vlora" written by Ben Blushi, is considered to be one of the most accomplished works of the Albanian contemporary literature. Such assessment is directly connected with the narrative technique, which from the linguistic viewpoint is also characterized by the kind of speech used in this work. Together with the speech syntactic features, it inevitably highlights the stylistic features enabled by it. (Contemporary stylistics pays special importance to the means through which special feature of expression is achieved.)

In it, as in any literary work, we notice that the *intrigue* is the one which enables the compactness of the narrative text. Certainly, the plotting of intrigue means the two closely connected elements: fable and intertwining (interweaving).

In the novel, the fable as a set of events is presented in this structure:

The plot (the arrival of Othello in Vlora)

Episode 1: Othello in Africa; 2: Othello in Venice; 3: Othello in Vlora

Development

Setting: Vlora

Event:

- Othello and Doctor Stefan Gjika; Othello accused of murder; Othello in prison.
- Vlora under the leadership of Balsha II, and later under his wife's leadership, Komita

Complication:

Othello comes back in Venice.

Solution:

The tragic death of Desdemona and Othello.

These components of narrative structure are *interlaced* according to a logical-temporal-causal order chosen by the author. So, through "*Licentia poetica*", the author has created the narrative structure which is simultaneously transmitted in all its components such as: theme, motive, narrator, character and idea. Based on the narrator and linguistic elements, the analysis leads us to the conclusion that the First person speaker appears in direct as well as in reported speech; and because of their interweaving a unique technique of discourse is achieved. It will be analyzed in structural and semantic levels.

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I. Ways of connecting parts of speech and clauses

As with the style of the artistic literature, the narrator seems to be identified with the author, but he remains a creation, and as such, it can be analyzed from the stylistic – syntactic levels as well. From this viewpoint, we are starting our analysis with the way in which parts of speech/clauses are connected.

The main discourse element of this novel is that of the narrator, which, when realized as a complex sentence, is distinguished from a considerable number of clauses creating equality and dependency reports (relations). For example:

"*… when seasons changed (were replacing each other), when the sky got dark, when it was droughty or when the storm chopped the leaves down, the trees changed their colour, then frightened they bent to the ground to protect themselves, or stretched their arms towards another tree to hold on and so they adapted themselves to the world learning to lie, captivate, hate or betray.*" p. 62.

By analyzing the ways clauses are **connected [reported parts (character's words) and reporting parts (author's words)] we notice that:**

Firstly:

a. The author alternates the syndetic connections with the asyndetic ones**,** giving much versatility to the text. Concretely the following connections are realized:

1. Asyndetic connection (which appears in two syntactic reports (relations), the equality and dependency reports). ("*This distinguishes girls from women, I think. The former offer love without being asked, the latter ask for love even when you do not offer it*". p. 50).

"*Bellini spoke a lot about the magic of picture and at his last gasp, he said to me: Picture is (means) eternity, my son. ...he said to Belini's son: Emilia is not a woman, but she is not a grandmother, either.*" (p. 81)

(In both cases, the syntactic relations between these two clauses are of the dependency type; the subordinate clause is joined with the main clause asyndetically (by means of intonation) and it functions as an object clause.

2. Syndetic connection, when clauses of complex sentences are connected by conjunctions setting equality or dependency relations. *It seems that only because of fear it may be repeated,* ***therefore*** *I came to tell it to you.* p.71. (The reports between these two clauses are expressed by a

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compound clause, that is to say the connection is coordinating but syndetic, using causative - consecutive conjunction *–therefore.) You need to* ***know that the taste of tea does not come alike from the rim of the cup.*** p. 51. *(*The conjunction *that* serves to join two clauses and its dependent part is an object clause.)

b. Since the direct speech comes through the author's words (first person speaker), we need to stress that we do not encounter structures where the verb or reporting part is missing.

Secondly, subordinate clauses in direct speech are complementary:

• **In the case of direct speech**, despite syndetic and asyndetic connections in complex sentences, syntactic relations of dependency are expressed by:

1. Subject clauses (when the subordinate clause plays the role of a subject for the main clause of the sentence).

Two weeks later Komita had received a letter where it was written: ***I am bringing the weapons the day when I will conquer (invade) Vlora.***

2. Object clauses (when the subordinate clause plays the role of an object for the main clause).

By pampering the bones of her own body by hand, he turned towards Emilia and said: As you like Emili. p. 87

When his mother had given the handkerchief, he had looked at her straight into the eyes and had said: ***If I take the handkerchief, you won't love your father any more.*** *p. 10*

Balsha finds it difficult to accept to run his wife's property*, the doctor used to say.*

His sister laughed, while the boy, turning up (furrowing) his nose as if he wanted to take the dust away ***(expel the dust)*** *from there, he said:*

Flutura doesn't move and we don't want it. *p. 28*

How about this woman, *the elder sister asked the younger one. p. 28*

Based on the detailed analysis, we noticed that the object clauses predominate and there are no cases of predicative subordinate clauses. We rarely encounter cases of the complex sentences with relative clauses (when the subordinate clause modifies a noun, pronoun or a phrase which appear in the main clause); e.g. Today I know something about which I had <u>*doubts*</u> before*;* ***black and white people are the same in their soul.*** *p. 142*

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Jago started to laugh as he had done the day when he came back from the cemetery, but he restrained himself when he thought that he might look creasy and spoke calmly by checking each pore of his face which ***had an inborn defect: in no case it looked friendly.***

• In the case of indirect speech, the reporting clause is followed by more than one dependent clauses.

Thus, for example, we encounter complex structures, where subordinate clauses might be more then 10: *But Desdemona explained why there was noise* ***when their feet were heavy (tired) like people****, why the bells rang (toll)* ***when it didn't rain****, why it was still day (light) and the night had not fallen yet* ***when the sun was hiding behind the high buildings****, why people in pictures were not alive, but dead, why the streets were cabled so that* ***the sea and mud would not drive in the house****, why,* ***when you get ill****, it is not enough just to pray to recover (get over), but we should put leeches on the skin, why* ***when some dies****, he is put in a case which flies to get to another place, why* ***as father had said it****, because of the sun's turning, some people are white and some are black, why two people* ***who get married should go to the church to get God's permission to have children****, why the fire could be kept at home without burning it, why glass is invented to join (blend) water with fire,. p.89.* In these examples, the noun clauses represent indirect interrogative clauses which can be expanded with other types of subordinate clauses: relative clauses, adverb clauses of time and cause, which in some cases are compound in between them.

In the case of indirect speech, morphological means are avoided (interjections, particles, subjunctive and imperative moods, first and second person etc.) and their absence dims the emotional connotation. The author compensates this "problem" through the frequent alternation of it with the direct speech, which semantically brings an alternation of the text and referential functions with the poetic one as well.

"*When Othello had asked who those people who laughed, cried, ate fruits or kept long swords were, he had been given the answer* ***that*** ***they were fighters or angels together with their wives. p. 11***

For example; *Both of them were calm, but if Albano Kontarini was like that because of belief, his son was because of disbelief. It has seemed to Emili as if her father had said to look for Desdemona being sure that she would not find her.*" p. 47.

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II. Structural features of the narrator's speech (first speaker, person)

a. As the narrator's speech is the main element of the narrative structure in this novel, being a simple or complex sentence, it is distinguished for its complex and very long structures; however **the equality and dependency relations are masterfully combined;** e.g.:

"*When seasons changed (were replacing each other), when the sky got dark (black), when it was droughty* ***or*** *when the storm chopped the leaves down, the trees changed their colour, then frightened they bent to the ground to protect themselves,* ***or*** *stretched their arms towards another tree to hold on* ***and*** *so they adapted themselves to the world learning to lie, captivate, hate* ***or*** *betray.*", p. 62.

• There are also cases when for stylistic purposes, subordinate clauses function as independent ones. Actually, parts of compound sentences stand as separate sentences. E.g.:

"*Life was not the one it was and maybe he mustn't be the one he was.* ***But*** *in this gloominess which was rapidly growing, because of the lizard's twist in the ear…p. 86.* ***But*** *the doctor could not become a woman and science was very poor in that direction…p. 137.* ***Therefore,*** *Desdemona was white, Emilia was pale…"p. 90*

In these examples, the second clause is part of the complex sentence. They are introduced by coordinating conjunctions, something that happens only for stylistic reasons, because otherwise it would break the grammatical rules of Albanian language.

c. Structures with homogenous parts

Strings of homogenous parts are to be considered as valuable stylistic creations. Homogenous parts can be expanded with other parts or unexpanded; e.g. *In the morning, the doctor called him. He took out some more letters in which there were* ***figures, words, squares, circles, stones, birds, fish, fruit, plants, vegetables, flowers, hearts,*** *and some other things which Othello did not know. p.163. Smilingly, he slaughtered (butchered) seven pigeons…., sprayed them with* ***burnt sugar, carrot oil, hazelnut powder, eggplant seeds*** *and in the end he added three glasses of green liqueur. p. 164*

III. Semantic priorities of these structures depending on the linguistic means which gain stylistic emotional values

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It is known that there is not any general stylistic norm, but there are stylistic values, which should be seen in connection with the purpose and linguistic expression in every literary work. Therefore, syntactic structures should to be analyzed even for the semantic expressive and emotional values as well.

a. Linguistic means of morphological level

From the linguistic means of the morphological level which gain emotional stylistic values, we would separate **the types of verbs that dominate in the reporting part**. We need to remind that theses verbs have either literal meaning (the verbs speak, say, think, remind, ask etc.) or a figurative meaning (the verbs that show the flow of speech: start, continue, interfere etc.). They may also show emphasis, mitigation or disdain (contempt, disrespect) of the saying, such as: emphasize, beg, mock etc. We can say that in the reporting part (when there is a direct speech) the use of the verb *say* predominates, that is to say a verb with literal meaning while the other verbs with are used less.

"The world is new and there are still many things to be discovered, ***started to speak*** *Stefan Gjika". p. 140*

(The following direct speech lasts for more than two pages, from p. 140 to p.142.)

In the case of indirect speech, the author, in most of the cases, uses verbs with literal meaning, while verbs with figurative meaning are not frequently used. This happens because of the narrative structure; e.g. ***It was said*** *that some days after he got married, Balsha had captured three girls; p. 107*

"*Up until the daughter was born, Balsha* ***complained*** *that his wife was cold, insensitive, and selfish.*

People ***believe*** *that jealousy is a kind of disease.*" *p. 316*

"*What if you don't come back in Venice and don't find the handkerchief,* ***asked*** *the doctor. I forgot it in Albano Kontarini's house*, ***answered*** *Othello*."

Direct speech is also characterized by the use of linguistic means such as interjections, particles, imperative and subjunctive mood, the first and the second person of the verb etc., which have emotional and stylistic values. Linguistic situation, in this case carries stronger poetic function than the case of indirect speech.

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b. Linguistic means of syntactic level

1. The position of reporting part in these structures becomes stylistically and emotionally much more expressive not only in direct but also in indirect speech. Possible positions are: before, after and in the middle of the reported parts; e.g. "***When they arrived at Stefan's house,*** *they laid him on the floor like a dead person.*"

"***If you had brought it the other day***, *I wouldn't have bought it, he said to the boys while paying*". *p. 121*

"***As you want to be alone****, so let it be.*" *p. 87*

"*The scar* ***that Othello had left on his body,*** *would accompany him throughout his life.*

There have always been people ***who have doubted the existence of God. (distrusted in)"*** *p. 130*

"*His grandmother, who was now standing naked somewhere (at some point) in the living room, had spent most of her life opposite that armchair listening to Marko Polo,* ***who used to speak and drink tea telling about the world.***"

2. Frequency of interrogative sentence is one of the other means of syntactic level, which, as structure of the direct speech, brings stylistic and emotional values in this work.

"*Did she accept (agree with) this condition? Did she say no? ... Why at the beginning and not throughout lifetime? Do you believe more in the handkerchief or in the (juice) flavor of love? Why did he say to his father that he must not love you? Why isn't there any escape?*" *p. 162*

IV. Narrative sequences

After a detailed analysis of the syntactical structure, within the linguistic frame and in order to completely supplement it, it is essential to return to the analysis of narrative text, where the operation undertaken by the author is **the partial change of facts pursuit**: **narration starts from a point of event. Othello appears in the first paragraph of the first chapter and then the author continues with** episode 1: Othello in Africa; episode 2: Othello in Venice and returns to "the starting pint" in chapter 4. (Such operation ensures "an epic way of narration".)

Since the text appears as a semantic macrostructure, the semantic notion of compactness is naturally connected with it, so we can take the component sequences apart.

Leo Apostol states that a text is a sequence of speech acts which can be considered like itself as a unified speech act. Generally based on the French linguistic school, we notice that sentences are component parts of a superior unit, of morphology, which in itself makes a component of the sequence, which is component part of the text.

The sequences of narrative text in most cases are narrative, descriptive, argumentative, explanatory and dialogging sequences. After

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referring to their specific composition, we state that in the above treated narrative text, we distinguish narrative, descriptive and dialogging sequences.

It is exactly this sequential combination that conditions speech peculiarity in this novel. The narration model is of this structure: **narrative (reporting)-descriptive sequence; narrative (reporting)-dialogging sequence.** For example:

"*Othello was crying while the doctor kept on breathing deeply the fresh air of the morning. As I saved you twice, I want from you to do two things for me: firstly, I want you to bury me in the yard of my house and secondly, not to tell anybody that I died of plague. I don't want people remember me as a loser. I am really calm because you are the proof (evidence) of my victory (success) over death and even though no one is going to learn about this, it's enough for me. In Vlora people remember failures much more than victories. But the city is closed up being afraid of the Turkish and if you tell others that the plague has entered our house, it will be destroyed, although the plague passes quicker than any occupation….. Othello was stiff and in tears like a person who learns that someone has wanted to kill him, but who didn't manage. More precisely, like a person who has been killed and was brought back to life at the last minute…*"

There are cases when narration predominates in the narrative (reporting)–descriptive sequences and in some other sequences (which are less frequent), description prevails.

This heterogeneous scheme is characterized by dynamism, as narrative (reporting) sequences are known to be dynamic, as the character is displaced ahead in the plan of the events. Descriptions do not function as appendixes, as such they create some commodity for the readers. In that way, the novel imposes a constant rhythm of reading (there are no sequences that are over passed by the reader "thinking" that they are unimportant – invalid – and it is the plot that they are interested in). Therefore, due to such finesse, this novel has "amazed" and at the same time pleased the reader because of his eagerness to read every page of it with the same intensity.

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http://www.toena.com.al , "Othello, the moor of Vlora", an etude to the love for Vlora and Venice of XIV-th century.

Appendix

The events are set in the years 1300 – 1400 in two well-known urban centers of the Middle Age, in Venice and Vlora, between which the political and commercial relationships were quite intensive for that time. The historic background is real: Vlora of the years before the Turkish invasion and the attempts of its suzerain Balsha II to extend his dominions and to withstand the flow of the Turkish troops to the South of our country; his murder in the battle field and the governing of the Principality by his wife, Komita Muzaka; the alliance with the Serbs through the marriage of her daughter, Rugina, with the Serb prince Mrkzha Zharakov, who was congratulated by the citizens of Vlora, (Kasi); the indifference of Venice and all the other Italian principalities, leaving Vlora and Albania alone to confront the new invaders who were coming from the distant Asia. The Contarini family from Venice, the descendants of Marko Polo from father's side and Vlora from his mother's side, complete the historic background on the other side of the Adriatic Sea, by stirring up our imagination about the real lifestyle of this Mediterranean region that covers a period of more than six hundred years. This seems to be the most favorite topic of the author. The characters of this novel are taken from the well-known tragedy of Shakespeare "Othello, the moor of Venice" and are playing the same role but are set 100 years ago, before the well-known play writer was born. This makes the most original finding and the most unbelievable intrigue of the author. Othello, Desdemona, Emilia, Jago, Kasi etc. are well-known characters of the world literature, but they are found to act not only in Venice, but in Vlora too, interacting with interesting figures created by the auther, such as the famous doctor Stefan Gjika, the fearless man from Vlora, Andrea, the Turkish occupier, Hamit etc.

The narrative style, which is now characteristic for the author, the rich language and deep erudition, place the novel "Othello, the moor of Venice" among the best and most accomplished novels of the Albanian literature.

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