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Morphological categories of number and case of nouns in the aspect of creating figurativeness in a literary text (Based on the Russian poetry of the 20th century)

Abstract

The article considers aesthetic potential of morphological units in the Russian language. The main aims of the article are identification and systematisation of particular cases of nouns functioning where grammar forms of number and case participate in creating figurativeness of a literary text. The following methods were used in the research: descriptive-analytical, semantic-stylistical, distributive. Poetic texts of the 20th century, included to the Russian National Corpus, were chosen as the material of the research. The analysis revealed several ways of reflecting figurativeness in a text by using grammar forms of substantives: (i) number, particularly plural forms of concrete nouns and *Singularia tantum* nouns, (ii) case, particularly, genitive case (mainly without prepositions), dative and prepositional cases (mainly with prepositions) and ablative case (with or without prepositions).

Keywords: poetic text, figurativeness, morphological category, Russian substantives, number, case, functioning patterns

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Морфологические категории числа и падежа существительных в аспекте создания образности художественного текста (на материале русской поэзии XX века)

Аннотация

В статье рассматривается вопрос об эстетических ресурсах морфологических единиц русского языка. Цель исследования – выявление и систематизация тех случаев функционирования существительных, в которых грамматические формы числа и падежа принимают непосредственное участие в создании образности художественного текста. При проведении исследования в качестве основных были использованы описательно-аналитический, семантико-стилистический, дистрибутивный методы. Материалом для анализа послужили стихотворные произведения XX века, включённые в состав Национального корпуса русского языка. В результате установлены способы отражения образности текста благодаря использованию грамматических форм substantivov: 1) форм числа, а именно, множественного числа конкретных существительных и множественного числа существительных, обычно функционирующих как *Singularia tantum*;

2) падежа, а именно косвенных падежей: родительного (в основном без предлога), дательного и предложного (в основном с предлогом), а также отложительного (как с предлогом, так и без предлога).

Ключевые слова и фразы: стихотворный текст, образность, морфологическая категория, русские субстантивы, число, падеж, особенности функционирования

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1. Introduction

Aesthetic potential of language units has always attracted researchers' attention. However, conventional understanding of the issue in scientific literature hasn't been reached yet. Moreover, not all aspects of aesthetic function of language units were systematically studied in scientific literature. One of the areas that has not been thoroughly investigated yet is the aesthetic potential of morphological categories of number and case in substantive units [Zhang, 2018, p. 182].

1.1. Language unit aesthetics

Before proceeding to the problem, it is necessary to choose theoretical approach to understanding aesthetic features of language units. The choice is a challenge as far as linguists still can not find consensus on the aesthetic potential of language units, therefore, the language means that are capable of causing an aesthetic reaction in a collocutor haven't been properly explored yet. For the Russian language, aesthetic aspect of language units has been explored in the realms of vocabulary, syntax and phonetics.

One of the first attempts to comprehend the phenomenon of language unit aesthetics was presented in the works of A. A. Potebnya. He proposed an original interpretation of the phenomenon through the lens of the three aspects of a word: the external form (word's pronunciation), the meaning objectified by the sound, and the internal form – the closest etymological meaning of a word. Only when all the three aspects are easily distinguishable in a word, it is possible to comprehend it and feel aesthetic pleasure. Potebnya clarified his idea with the following example: “Imagine someone knows the word *báltas* in the Lithuanian language means ‘kind’ (also ‘affectionate’ or ‘lovable’). We have the particular sounds and the meaning of the word, but our comprehension of the word aesthetics is not possible because we do not see why this particular combination of sounds and not any other ones bears the meaning of kindness”. “If the connection between meaning and sound in our mind is lost, then the sound ceases to be external form from the aesthetic point of view of this word”. “To restore our comprehension of beauty, we must know that the meaning of the word *báltas* derives from the word *whiteness*”: the word *báltas* means ‘kind’ because it means ‘white’ [Potebnya, 1976, pp.175–177]. Thus, according to Potebnya, the aesthetics of language units is revealed when we comprehend the connection between the external form of the word and its etymology.

According to G. G. Shpet, a word as an entity is not an aesthetic object. To find aesthetic elements in its structure, the forms of the entity have to be analysed. Aesthetic elements of a word are the ones that present some aesthetic experience. “The aesthetic, the beautiful requires a particular focus, not sensuous or ideal, but *sui generis*” [Shpet, 1989, pp. 383, 432]. As for the language means of aestheticisation, Shpet pointed that certain acoustic elements possess some aesthetic features. He also mentioned that aesthetic properties

are not only characteristic of vowel sounds. Metric combination of vowels as well as rhythm, periodic repetition of sounds, rhyming and other features may present aesthetic value.

R. O. Jakobson's ideas on language aesthetics became quite popular. In his study of language functions, the researcher singled out the poetic function. The essence of this function is that it projects the principle of equivalence from the selection axis to the combination axis [Jakobson, 1975, pp. 204, 206]. Later he wrote that the aesthetic function of a language is one of the most important ones [Jakobson, 1987, p. 24]. In his works, the researcher paid much attention to the aesthetic potential of morphological units of a language. For example, dividing words into different grammar genders increases the opportunity of personification and becomes the driving force of poetic mythology [Jakobson, 1987, p. 37].

A. I. Efimov saw the key feature distinguishing literary style from other styles as the aesthetic function associated with the idea of beauty [Efimov, 1969, p. 15]. A. I. Efimov stated that euphonious words belong to the category of beauty. Moreover, the words traditionally associated with the poetic themes possess aesthetic properties (a nightingale, a grove, a field, the sky, etc.) (Efimov, 1961, pp. 115–116).

According to B. A. Larin, aesthetic properties define the functioning system of language units in literary style [Larin, 1974, p. 28]. Analysing the word usage from the aesthetics point of view leads the researcher to the conclusion that a language unit has not a separate function, but a tinted one. The word performing the aesthetic function “is not obligatory, even surprising for the realia, but it is irreplaceable as the expression of the modal feature of thought, it is suitable for transmitting mental environment of the given logical content” [Larin, 1974, p. 33].

L. A. Novikov showed that literary texts present a complex structure. He defined the aesthetic speech system as one of the levels of a literary text. The aesthetic speech system presents a system of figurative language means functioning in a literary text, through which ideologic and aesthetic content of a literary text is expressed [Novikov, 1988, pp. 15, 17].

In his studies of the aesthetic function of a language, V. P. Moskvina pointed out the lack of clarity in understanding it. The researcher supposed that language units performing the aesthetic role should correlate with sensory perception as they can bring pleasure. In general, Moskvina's theory is based on the narrow approach of language aesthetics as geared towards the category of beauty [Moskvina, 2007, p. 9].

In this study, Khairutdinova's approach is adopted assuming that “when studying aesthetics of language units it is reasonable to use the wider approach, oriented to the category of the aesthetic” [Khairutdinova, 2013, p. 280]. Aesthetics of language units should be regarded in the context of linguistic pragmatics mainly in connection with the addressee factor. Aesthetic potential of language units is implemented in the art of words. Only those language units possess aesthetic resources that are capable of having aesthetic impact on the addressee. The essence of aesthetic impact of language units in a literary text is satisfaction when an addressee goes through sensual and rational experience, core components of which are aesthetic pleasure, play of spirits, feeling of joy and fullness of existence. Such state is made possible due to the features of language units and the way they are used, such as: novelty, figurativeness, resilience, correlation with the text as an integral aesthetic object, ability to implement author's conceptual and artistic design in the most complete and accurate form [Khairutdinova, 2013, p. 280].

1.2. Imagery formation

In this paper, the focus is made on grammar forms of number and case of nouns, capable of creating figurativeness in a text. The category of figurativeness belongs to the list of important issues of literary speech. It characterises a way of reflecting and transforming

reality in art. “Figurativeness in broad sense of the word as a substinance, ostensiveness and colourfulness of a picture is a necessary feature of any kind of art, a form of comprehending reality from the point of view of an aesthetic ideal, and figurativeness of speech is its particular manifestation” [Golub, 2010, p. 130]. In linguistic literature it is mentioned that figurativeness presents a complex and polysemic category of stylistics that has “different interpretations due to numerous conceptions of the term “figurative” [Kozhina, 2003, p. 255].

Figurativeness of language units and texts is also a topic of numerous scientific works. According to V. V. Vinogradov, in a literary text a word, in which external form coincides with the word in the national language system and takes its meaning, relates not only to the national language but also to the world of literary reality that is created or recreated in a literary work. It is a construction element for the structure and it is interrelated with other elements in a composition. That is why it is two-dimensional and thus figurative. Its structure of meaning expands with those literary and figurative increments of meaning [Vinogradov, 1960, pp. 92–93].

O. I. Blinova considers figurativeness as one of the most significant structural and semantic features of words that influences its semantics, valency, emotional and expressive status, and manifests in its acoustic form [Blinova, 1983, pp. 9–10]. The category of figurativeness contains 3 elements: specificity, ostensiveness and colourfulness. Figurativeness and figurative words have a functional yield in language and speech. Many figurative words perform an aesthetic function as well as an expressive one.

From O. L. Panova’s point of view, language figurativeness is a reflective effect that is manifested in word semantics as aligning two pictures induced by primary and secondary nominations. Figurativeness of speech is a meaning in two dimensions occurring in imaginative and figurative use in a dramatic dialogue of language units of different levels. It is the basis for the communicative and pragmatic meaning of an illocution that stimulates an expected emotional reaction of a collocutor [Panova, 2001, pp. 12–13]. Panova noted the grammar means creating figurativeness of speech, namely indirect use of semantic and stylistic variations of grammar forms in different parts of speech [Panova, 2001, pp. 18–19].

E. A. Yurina understands figurativeness as a category of lexicon and semantics. The essence of the category is that it unites the features of lexical and phraseological level of a language manifested in their ability to signify certain phenomenon of extralinguistic activity in association with each other [Yurina, 2004 a, pp. 19–20]. Studying the category of figurativeness, Yurina pointed out the unity of three aspects: mentality, language system and communication. Figurativeness as a feature of human mentality defines figurativeness of language units. In turn, figurative language units predetermine “figurativeness of texts that is also manifested in the ability to express extralinguistic meaning in a concise sensuous form either directly or based on the means of language and speech that provide the associative connection between concepts” [Yurina, 2004 a, p. 21]. The interpretation of the word *figurativeness* from the point of view of language and speech aesthetics also presents scientific interest. According to Yurina, aesthetic actualisation of a figurative meaning is characteristic of both expressive and neutral figurative lexicon. It is connected with the aesthetic function of speech when an author intentionally uses a figurative word meaning including it into the aesthetic structure of his / her speech act [Yurina, 2004 b, pp. 142–143].

Mechanisms of producing discursive figurativeness were studied by M. V. Bezzubikova who stated that word figurativeness appears in texts due to constructively significant semantic changes, shifting and increments while preserving the systemic meaning of the word [Bezzubikova, 2010, p. 6]. Along with actualising the internal form of a word, discursive comparisons, metaphors, metonymies, etc. present effective stylistic devices for figurative representation of a communicative act. Compared to stereotypical language devices, the choice of discursive means of figurativeness depends on individual creative capacity of the

poetic mentality of an author or a reader, i.e., their ability to artistic imagination and different types of figurative associations [Bezzubikova, 2010, p. 7].

In this paper, Blinova's approach is adopted according to which the category of figurativeness includes specificity, ostensiveness and colourfulness, and that figurativeness and figurative words can serve the aesthetic function in speech.

2. This study

2.1. Aims, materials and methods of research

This study aims to distinguish and systematise functioning of nouns whose grammar forms of number and case participate in creating figurativeness of literary text. Descriptive-analytical method was used to systematize and classify the number and case of nouns as well as to interpret the peculiarities of their use. Semantic-stylistic method was aimed to study the author's the use patterns of number and case. Distributive analysis was mainly used to study the units of phonetic and syntactic levels in poetic works.

Poetic texts of the 20th century included to the Russian National Corpus were chosen as the material for this research (<http://www.ruscorpora.ru/>). The selection comprised 303 examples, among them there were 198 case forms and 105 number forms. The works of more than 45 poets were used in the study including N. Klyuev, S. Cherny, V. Ivanov, M. Tsvetaeva, I. Selvinsky, A. Tvardovsky and V. Bryusov whose excerpts appeared most frequently.

2.2. Results and discussion

2.2.1. Number forms of nouns to create figurativeness

Studying morphological means to form figurativeness in a text comprises one of important aspects of describing aesthetic potential of category of number in nouns. The results of poetic texts analysis demonstrate that to create figurativeness, the following forms are used: a) plural forms of concrete nouns, b) plural forms of singular tantum nouns.

Plural forms of concrete nouns belonging to descriptive lexicon are often used to create images of nature and scenery. For example, A. Tvardovskiy uses several plural forms to describe the majestic passage of The Volga river:

(1)

V nee smotrelas' pol-Rossii:

Ravniny, gory i lesa,

Sady i parki gorodskie,

I vsya nazemnaya krasa—

Kremlevskikh sten derzhavnyy greben',

Soborov glavy i kresty,

Rakity starykh sel'skikh grebel' («Sem' tysyach rek»).

To create figurativeness, authors sometimes use plural forms of words that mostly function in singular form. In his poem “Molitva”, V. Bryusov exploits a sacred lexeme of Christianity *svet* in plural form:

(2)

V chas, kogda svety pervye kinet

Solntse Tvoe, — Ty menia ozhivi!

Besides implementing lexical and stylistical potential of the given word, we observe how aesthetic resources of its grammar forms manifest themselves: using a substantive in plural form is incorporated into the system of expressive means of a poem, as *svety* is a figurative representation of the sun rays.

In the following excerpt, the use of the plural form of a concrete noun *khrustal*, commonly used in singular form, represents figurative nomination of ice pieces:

(3)

A vo rtu – khrusty sladkoy smolki,

A v ruke – zaychonka kolyschet,

A v glazah – to li blestki s elki,

*To l' sokna **khrustali** ledyshek* (V. Merkur'eva. «Kolyada»).

In the other example a plural form of anthroponim *Esenin* is used:

(4)

Priezzhayut v stolitsu

smirenno i boyko

*molodye **Eseniny***

v krasnykh kovboykakh (Ya. Smelyakov. «Priezzhayut v stolitsu / smirenno i boyko...»).

Proper nouns are known to have peculiarities in semantics and some morphological properties. One of grammar peculiarities of onyms is the lack of correlative forms of number: these words are used either only in singular form or only in plural form [Smirnov, 2013, pp. 84–85]. Personal names and surnames can have plural forms in the following cases: when they name people who have the same names or surnames (*V nashey gruppe pyat **Irin** i tri iz nih **Ivanovy***); when they denote relatives (*Byli v gostyakh u **Petrovykh***); when they name people who have some common feature, characteristic of a historical or cultural figure, a fictional character or a scientist, etc. (*Oblomovy, Manilovy, Pushkiny, Napoleony*) [Panova, 2003, p. 68]. In linguistic literature there are some observations that proper nouns naming celebrities, often undergo appellativisation turning into common names. Moreover, in poetry, this method proves to be relevant [Ionova, 1988, p. 81]. In the above text passage plural form of the precedent name (*Eseniny*) does not only denote gifted and talented poets but also several associations, connected with life and work of the outstanding Russian poet, and this increases figurativeness of the poetic text.

2.2.2. Case forms of nouns to create figurativeness

The results also indicate that another way to create figurativeness is the use of objective cases: genitive case (usually without prepositions), dative and prepositional cases (mostly with prepositions) and ablative case (with or without prepositions).

Forms of genitive case are often used in genitive metaphors where, according to V. P. Moskvin, the prop word is a noun in a genitive case [Moskvin, 2007, p. 193]. O. I. Glazunova presumes that structure of genitive metaphors “necessarily contains main and supplementary subjects. <...> Genitive metaphors by their formal markers correlate with metaphoric apposition and metaphoric predication with a noun in nominative case in position of a predicate. <...> With metaphoric appositions and predicates the author usually gives general characteristics of the object of the message, whereas in genitive metaphoric constructions it is characterized by one or several predicate features” [Glazunova, 2000, p. 155]. We can assume that intentional converging of words to create a genitive metaphor commonly takes place on the basis of several features. In some cases converging of words is due to similarity of denotations in forms:

(5)

Kaktus za dver'u vzdymaetsya tugo,

***Lenta dorogi** sbegaet k krylechku* (Sasha Chernyy. «S detstva lyublyu zakhlostnyye lavki...»);

(6)

*Novaya voyna iz staroy pochvy rodilas',****Serp luny** iskrivlennoy drozhit, serebryas',**I v puchine vselenskogo morya temno* (O. Mandel'shtam. «Svodka»).

There are some cases when lexical units combine on the basis of similarity of realia in colours:

(7)

*Ty, kogo sozertsal Leonardo,**Opuskaya zadumchivo kisti,**I, v mechtakh zabyvayas' bessvyaznykh,**Dumal, kak peredat' polotnu**Eto oblako ambry inarda,**Eto rzhavoe **zoloto list'ev,****Prelest' pal'tsev nadmennykh i prazdnykh**I ulybki tvoey tishinu* (V. Ievleva. «Dzhiokonda»);

(8)

*Mne nravitsya, chto na ee muare**Kolyshetsya **dozhdinok srebro,****Chto ya nashel ee na trotuare**I vybroshu v pomoynoe vedro* (G. Ivanov. «Eshhe ya nakhozhu ocharovan'e...»).

Some words and grammar forms are used figuratively by the quantitative feature (feature of size of denotation):

(9)

*Vse konchilos' v ego lukavoy zhizni,**Ostalis' tol'ko volya, i oblich'e,**I neterpen'e, chtoby v **more mraka****V nem pobedil prozrevshiy chelovek* (V. Lugovskoy. «Pervaya svecha»);

(10)

*Smekh skvoz' slezy, smekh karayushchiy,**Iskry schast'ya, **more slez...****Eto vse neumirayushchiy**Fedor Volkov nam prines!* (L. Trefolev. «Na rodine russkogo teatra»).

In example (5), genitive metaphor contains 2 units: genitive case form of the noun *doroga* 'road' ("a line of a ground used for transportation" [Ozhegov & Shvedova, 2007, p. 176; Ozhegov, 2014, p. 273]) functioning as an object of comparison, and the lexeme *lenta* 'ribbon' ("a narrow piece of cloth sealed on the sides with a thin brim" [Ozhegov & Shvedova, 2007, p. 323; Ozhegov, 2014, p. 487]) creating the image for comparison. In example (8), genitive metaphor is created by converging two word forms: genitive case form of a plural noun *dozhdinka* ("a drop of rain" [Ozhegov & Shvedova, 2007, p. 171; Ozhegov, 2014, p. 266]) functioning as an object for comparison, and nominative case form of a singular noun *srebro* ("a precious shining metal of silver-white colour" [Ozhegov & Shvedova, 2007, p. 713; Ozhegov, 2014, pp. 1052–1053]) functioning as an image for comparison.

Ablative case forms often serve as metamorphosis in order to create figurativeness. Comparing metamorphosis with other similar concepts, N. D. Arutyunova points out that "metaphor as a means of characterising an object is always fixed on it. On the contrary, in metamorphosis the main subject disappears and only its "shapeshifter" remains". From the researcher's point of view, "metaphor emphasises essential and constant features of an object, whereas simile and metamorphosis emphasise temporal and episodical "transformation" [Arutyunova, 1990, pp. 29–30]. Grammar form of a noun plays an

important role in structuring metamorphosis as the image for comparison is presented in a form of ablative case. Excerpts (11–14) show some examples of metamorphosis:

(11)

*Zrachok gorel **almazom**,*

I puk volos prilip

K syromu lbu (S. Gorodetskiy. «Prishla i postuchalas'...»);

(12)

Esli b vy molilis' na menya,

*Ya stoyal by **angelom** pred vami,*

O prikhode radostnogo dnya

Govoril by luchshimi slovami (K. Bal'mont. «Mstitel'»);

(13)

...I malye ptitsy na svetlye nimby pokhozhi,

*I taynym **ognem** poutru zagoraetsya zor'ka...* (V. Blazhennyi. «Uzhe ya tak star, chto menya uznayut na kladbishche...»);

(14)

*...i tusklym **izumrudom***

V serebrianoj Neve otrazhena,

Mertsyet peterburgskaya luna (M. Vega. «Peterburg»).

In (11), figurativeness is created by using ablative form of the noun *almazom*. Converging lexemes *zrachok* and *almaz* that function as an object and image for comparison respectively, is possible due to their similarity in shining and glowing (light refraction ability). In (14), converging lexemes *luna* and *izumrud* is based on the similarity of their denotations in colour and ability to refract light.

Analysis of archives demonstrates that in order to increase figurativeness some object cases are being repeated. With prepositions they usually express adverbial space-related meaning. In examples (15–17), dative case forms with preposition *po* are used:

(15)

*On khodil **po gorodam, po selam,***

Po** glukhim proselochnym **dorogam,

Po** lesnym **tropam, po** mshistym **logam,

Golym pashnyam, pashityam veselym (M. Voloshin. «Svyatoy Serafim»);

(16)

A tam –

Po dorogam,

Po rel'sam,

Po rekam

K nam:

Vpripryzhku pyl',

Polzkom tuman (A. Mariengof. «Vetra marsh»);

(17)

Volny kinulis' v pogoniu,

Zablestel ogon' vdali,

Ne s gitaroi, ne s garmon'yu,

A s baianom parni shli, –

Zvonkim tysiachnym bayanom,

Zolotym, obygrannym,

Po ulitsam, po polyanam,

Po zelenym vygonam (P. Vasil'ev. «Rasstavan'e s miloi»).

In examples (18–20), repetition of ablative case forms with preposition *nad* is used:

(18)

*Po nebu Il'ya proedetsya,
Pokropit, gde pusto i golo,
A nad vsemi –*

Nad polyami

I nad lesami,

Nad pokosivshimisia krestami,

Glubzhe rek i prevyshe gor

Siyaet Bol'shaya Medveditsa,

Smotrit za russkoy zemleyu... (V. Lebedev. «Skaz o bol'shoy medveditse»);

(19)

L'etsya pesnya, zvenya, prostaya

nad polyami,

lesami,

vodoy,

chtoby nasha odna shestaya

stala tseloyu, molodoy. (B. Kornilov. «Molodoy den'»);

(20)

Nad polyami, lesami, bolotami,

Nad izvivami severnykh rek

Ty pronosish'sya plavnymi vzletami,

Nebozhitel' – geroy – chelovek. (V. Khodasevich. «Aviatoru»).

There are some cases where prepositional case forms appear with preposition *na* as in examples (21–23):

(21)

I na lestnichkakh, na bar'erchikakh,

Na ustupakh besedki, na kryshakh

Tselye zverintsy koshek

Dymchatykh, chernykh, belykh,

Oranzhevyykh i trekhtsvetnykh. (I. Sel'vinskiy. «Dvorik»);

(22)

Takikh risunkov bylo mnogo soten

Na dereve vorot i podvoroten,

Na stenakh i karnizakh, na zaborakh,

Na tekh domakh, chto vechno na zaporakh,

Na tekh domakh, i net uzhe kotorykh... (L. Martynov. «Severnaya skazka»);

(23)

Zabyvshi khozyaev nedavnykh,

Ves' dom odryahlel i zagloyh,

Na stenakh, na kryshakh, na stavnyakh

Uzhe probivaetsya mokh. (D. Kedrin. «Priroda»).

As we can see, the use of several substantives that belong to descriptive lexicon enables to increase figurativeness of description.

3. Conclusions

As one of important language functions, the aesthetic function whose integral part is figurativeness exploits various language means to express itself. This paper aimed to identify and group instances where grammar forms of number and case participate in creating figurativeness in the Russian poetry of the 20th century represented in the Russian National Corpus.

The results of the Corpus data processing show that, firstly, figurativeness is often created with plural forms of concrete nouns and *singular tantum* nouns. Some of them being a part of descriptive lexicon participate in setting the scene and creating images of the nature, while others are people names (including precedent names) whose use in plural forms highlights common features and creates associations. Secondly, the forms of object cases along with metaphor, simile and metamorphosis contribute into creating figurativeness: genitive case (mainly without prepositions), dative and prepositional cases (mainly with prepositions) and ablative case (with or without prepositions).

The outlook for further research might include studying the aesthetic potential of substantive grammar forms used in poetry to reflect aesthetic categories of the sublime and the comic and to contribute into compositional development of a poetic text.

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