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**SYNTACTIC AND RHYTHMIC PROPERTIES OF  
 REPRESENTING THE CONCEPT OF “LONELINESS”  
 IN K. MANSFIELD’S SHORT STORIES**

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**S. Gasparyan, M. Sargsyan, G. Madoyan. Syntactic and rhythmic properties of representing the concept of “loneliness” in k. mansfield’s short stories.** The present article aims at revealing the potential cognitive function of the syntactic and rhythmic arrangement of a piece of literary text. The focus of our analysis is the study of the representation of the concept of “loneliness” in K. Mansfield’s short stories. It is argued that the rhythm in Mansfield’s short stories can facilitate the reader’s perception of the content of the work, enhance the visual and acoustic effects, perform a figurative function, transferring the physical, emotional, mental states of the characters. Additionally, it is asserted that the syntactic arrangement and the rhythm of a piece of text contribute to the formation and perception of the cognitive meaning of the text.

**Key words:** cognitive function, conceptual sphere, syntactic and rhythmic arrangement.

**С. Гаспарян, М. Саргсян, Г. Мадоян. Синтаксические и ритмические способы презентации концепта “одиночество” в коротких рассказах К. Мэнсфилд.** В данной статье рассматривается когнитивная функция синтаксической и ритмической организации литературного текста. В частности наш анализ ориентирован на выявление особенностей репрезентации концепта “одиночество” в коротких рассказах К. Мэнсфилд. Анализ материала показывает, что определенное ритмическое оформление облегчает восприятие читателем содержания коротких рассказов автора, повышает визуальные и акустические эффекты, выполняет фигуративную функцию, способствуя передаче информации о физическом, эмоциональном и психическом состоянии персонажей. Кроме того, утверждается, что синтаксическая компоновка и ритм текста играют немаловажную роль в формировании и восприятии когнитивного смысла текста.

**Ключевые слова:** когнитивная функция, концепосфера, синтаксическая и ритмическая компоновка.

**С. Гаспарян, М. Саргсян, Г. Мадоян. Синтаксичні і ритмічні способи презентації концепту “самотність” в коротких оповіданнях К. Менсфілд.** У цій статті розглядається когнітивна функція синтаксичної та ритмічної організації літературного тексту. Зокрема, наш аналіз зорієнтовано на виявлення особливостей репрезентації концепту “самотність” в коротких оповіданнях К. Менсфілд. Аналіз матеріалу показує, що певне ритмічне оформлення полегшує сприйняття читачем змісту коротких оповідань автора, підвищує візуальні та акустичні ефекти, виконує фігуративну функцію, сприяючи передачі інформації про фізичний, емоційний та психічний стани персонажів. Крім того, стверджується, що синтаксичне компонування і ритм тексту відіграють важливу роль у формуванні та сприйнятті когнітивного змісту тексту.

**Ключові слова:** когнітивна функція, концепосфера, синтаксичне і ритмічне компонування.

**Introduction**

The present article **aims at** revealing the potential cognitive function of the syntactic and rhythmic arrangement of a piece of literary text. The **topicality** of the research is conditioned by the growing interest toward conceptual analysis of literary texts. **Our objective** is to demonstrate that rhythm in short stories can facilitate the reader's understanding of the content of the work,

enhance his/her visual and acoustic perception, perform a figurative function, transferring the physical, emotional, mental states of the characters.

The present research demonstrates the **cognitive approach** which turns very helpful in revealing the conceptual sphere reflected in the text. The research is conducted in the light of the extensive cognitive turn in language and literature (Stockwell 2002, Stockwell 2009, Semino & Culpeper 2002). More specifically, it aims to address issues on text conceptual sphere, particularly the question on how the syntactic means and the rhythmic pattern of the text can contribute to the task of revealing the conceptual sphere in the text. Our study is based on the assumption that the cognitive structure of the text is a means of the authorial picturing of the world, in which the repetition of not only the key words and images but also syntactic patterns contributes to building thematic networks and ensuring a reliable representation of the authorial concepts.

The conceptual orientation of a certain piece of writing has long been mainly ascribed to the semantic content of the work. The stylistic charge of semantic units has also received due attention. In the long run, the role of syntax has somewhat been overshadowed in the creation of the overall impact of a given piece of literature. In the search of the underlying concepts of a piece of literary work, cognitive linguistics, however, has been quite consistent in its study of the syntactic markers (Менджеричкая 1997). Hence, the **subject matter** of the study is the conceptual sphere of the text, with the **scope** encompassing the description of peculiarities of representing the concept of *loneliness* in K. Mansfield's short stories. Of special importance for us is the consideration of the cognitive function of the rhythmical arrangement of the text which supports the process of formation and perception of cognitive meanings. Moreover, we aim to demonstrate that the syntactic arrangement and the rhythm of a piece of text contribute to the creation and perception of the cognitive meaning of the text.

### **Conceptual Orientation of K. Mansfield's Short Stories**

Katherine Mansfield is one of the feminist writers whose works have received a wide recognition not only among the readers but among linguists as well, since they provide an ample area of research nearly at all levels of language. Master of language techniques, Mansfield was able to play with the whole arsenal, the English language can offer, creating most intricate and impressive images. As a matter of fact, they are literally based upon a bundle of stylistic, semantic, phonetic devices which complement one another turning each story into a kind of web calling for a special insight to maneuver. Diverse as the stories may seem both in content and in the form of narrative, Katherine Mansfield's stories are yet connected with each other with some invisible thread. As a matter of fact, only the careful investigation of some biographical data of the author helps shed light on some of the thematic preferences of the writer. In fact, these data help further explain the preference of the author of some of the devices over the others. Still, the most diverse stylistic devices seem to help create the universal concept for all Mansfieldian stories – "*loneliness*".

Despite the content as well as the developments depicted in her stories, they all might successfully go under the general title of *loneliness*. All the characters Mansfield portrayed, young and old, rich and poor, sad or happy, are victims of loneliness, the physical state the author suffered herself. It is the isolation, fatigue, despair, disappointment, powerlessness and certain feelings and emotions they might entail that come to best describe the personages of her stories. On the semantic level, we should distinguish certain units (e.g. wind, chill, dark, lonely, to tremble, to die, etc.) the study of which helps reconstruct the authorial concept of *loneliness* (Sargsyan, Madoyan 2015).

As stated above, the concept of *loneliness* is created and further enhanced not only due to the overall and abundant use of various stylistic devices, but rather, this feeling of seclusion and

despair Mansfield's stories are drenched with, is quite visible and can be easily traced out when analyzing the syntax and the rhythm of the short stories.

### **Syntactic and Rhythmic Arrangement in the Cognitive Light**

Rhythm is generally understood as a tool which regulates on the one hand the author's emotional, aesthetic and speech activities which are reflected in the text via the hierarchy of periodically distributed units at various language levels, and on the other, the process of text perception by the reader (Антипова 1984).

In the works of the proponents of rhythm we observe that the latter confine the text ideology to the rhythmic and intonation structures of the sentence (Черемисина 1989:169). Meanwhile, some linguists point out that text rhythm can be characterized by its compositional function, which is manifested within a larger portion of the text (Эткинд 1974). The rhythm of a text is a relatively regular alternation of various units observable at various text levels, hence it may perform a number of functions, among which those of structuring, aesthetic and expressive-emotional impact are the most evident ones (Гумовская 2000). However, the combination of all these functions allows us to define the rhythm of the structure as a basic factor of text creation and perception. Consequently we can state that it performs an additional, *cognitive function*.

The cognitive function of the rhythm consists in regulating the process of both text formation and perception of the cognitive meaning resulting in a meaningful structure or a whole text. The cognitive function of the rhythm is manifested also by the activation of one of the segments of the sentence. Hence, in terms of syntactic arrangement, the cognitive function of the rhythm acquires significance when we have to deal with artistically motivated deviation, i.e. foregrounding (Leech and Short 1981: 39-45).

For instance, the usual structure of the English sentence is *subject + predicate + object*, and this is a norm, which we have learnt. However, not infrequently in literature we encounter cases when the author deviates from the well-established norm, which results in intensifying the cognitive function of the segment and accelerating the process of perception on the reader's side.

Let us switch to consideration of the following types of sentences frequently occurring in Mansfield's stories.

*Drenched were the cold fuchsias, round pearls of nasturtium leaves.* <...>

*Faint the cry came as they rocked along the fast drying road.* <...>

*Parched, withered, cold, she stretched on the stones like a piece of tossed-up driftwood.*

(*At the Bay*)

*And nervously he tied a bow in front of the mirror.* (*Mr. and Miss Dove*)

*Slower she swung, then took a flying leap;* <...>

*Viciously she stared at the sun shining through the window space.* (*New Dresses*)

*Out of the smudgy little window you could see an immense expanse of sad-looking sky.*

<...>

*Terrible it had been!* (*Miss Brill*)

*Very stiffly she walked into the middle...* (*Her First Ball*)

What can be observed here is the pattern adjective/adverb + noun + predicate – a case of stylistic deviation of the norm which to a great extent helps create the cognitive meaning of the sentence. At first sight the words *nervously, drenched, faint*, etc. in the front position, are words with negative connotation which describe the state of the heroes caused by emotional upheavals in their lives. To demonstrate the case, we will take into consideration the following passage from *Mr. and Miss Dove*.

*Here he was! And nervously he tied a bow in front of the mirror, jammed his hair down with both hands, pulled out the flaps of his jacket pockets. Making between 500 and 600 pounds a year on a fruit farm in – of all places – Rhodesia. No capital. Not a penny coming to him. No chance of his income increasing for at least four years. As for looks and all that sort of thing, he was completely out of the running. He couldn't even boast of top-hole health, for the East Africa business had knocked him out so thoroughly that he'd had to take six months' leave... No, he was dashed if he could think of one blessed thing in his favour, while she ... Ah! ... He stopped dead, folded his arms, and leaned hard against the chest of drawers.(Mr. and Miss Dove)*

The adverb *nervously*, in the first stressed position, dictates a certain rhythmic pattern to the whole passage. The inner conversation that follows the first sentence confirms the nervous and agitated state of the character who evaluates his own chances of a potential candidate for marriage as meagre. The last sentence of the paragraph comes to sum up the thoughts of the young man. Of course, the effect achieved is not only due to the job of one or two stylistic devices, but rather a careful combination of many of them, and alliteration, as always, is not in the last place. But the occurrence of the adverb *nervously* in the front position creates the initial rhythmic pattern of the passage, which the latter would be devoid of in the case of correct word order. Under the influence of foregrounding a net of metric expectations and mental projections is created in the reader's consciousness, which assists in perceiving the whole passage as a form of materialization of the conceptual sphere of the text.

Another feature recurrent in Mansfield's stories is their excessive dependence on exclamatory and interrogative questions (mostly of rhetorical type) along with the heavy commentary on the part of the narrator. The latter, as will be argued below, further enhances the formulation of the conceptual sphere materialized in the text. As a matter of fact, this technique helps engage readers in the developments perhaps more than any other one. As a result, the reader is left with the feeling that the character is jotting down her emotions on the spur of the moment while experiencing the most troublesome feelings. They help further intensify the feeling of confusion and emphasize the hopelessness of the characters, bringing the concept of *loneliness* to the forefront in one way or another.

*But at the last . . . Ma Parker threw the counterpane over the bed. No, she simply couldn't think about it. It was too much – she'd had too much in her life to bear. She'd borne it up till now, she'd kept herself to herself, and never once had she been seen to cry. Never by a living soul. Not even her own children had seen Ma break down. She'd kept a proud face always. But now! Lennie gone – what had she? She had nothing. He was all she'd got from life, and now he was took too. Why must it all have happened to me? She wondered. "What have I done?" said old Ma Parker. "What have I done?" (*The Life of Ma Parker*)*

Here is a lady suffering from the loss of her dear grandson, the only good thing she had in her life and then she was deprived of this happiness, too. Suffering her great loss in silence was too much for her too bear. The pain becomes evident through the repetition of the negative adverb *never* which becomes more influential in a stressed position in inverted sentences. The overall sadness and the feeling of suffering are even more enhanced through the syntactic constructions. The use of the Past Perfect creates a contrast between the previous and current psychological state of the personage. Moreover, the repetition of certain words, word combinations and syntactic units contributes to the rhythmic arrangement of the passage thereby making the conceptual sphere of the text easier to perceive. From time to time, to conceal the reality and give freedom to her emotions, she has to flee from home and work to find an outpour for the growing pain inside. And the examples provided are only some of the questions she keeps asking herself. In fact, the true power of the pain is not described in plain words or epithets. Rather, it is made obvious through heart-

breaking rhetorical questions the concentration of which at the end of the paragraph intensifies the dynamic pattern of the paragraph and performs a concept-building function. The interchange of stressed positions within the passage and the internal monologue occupying quite a big portion in the paragraph, imparts a specific rhythm which directs the reader's attention on the character's devastated inner state. The rhythm in this case is the tool which regulates and fosters the processes of both the formation and perception of the basic concept of the text.

### **On the Relevance of Syntax and Rhythm in K. Mansfield's Short Stories**

The complex approach to the study of rhythm in a text includes both the analysis of the perception of rhythmic phenomena by the recipient of the text, and the role of rhythm in the transmission and reception of information, since rhythm is a universal law that organizes not only the structure of the story, but also the process of transmitting information. Rhythm, being a repetition of some regular signs, is observed at all levels of text structure, but in this work special attention is paid to rhythmic manifestations at the syntactic level. This is due to the fact that the genre of the story requires the greatest economy of linguistic means and the accentuation of stylistically expressive forms precisely at both lexical and syntactic levels. Using rhythmic techniques at the syntactic level of texts allows authors to stimulate the qualitative increase in cognitive meaning in the process of linear development of the story.

In this respect, another feature of syntactic-rhythmic patterning in Mansfield's stories is to be mentioned. It fosters the creation of the atmosphere of confusion, panic and haste, which to a larger extent contributes to the further elaboration of the conceptual sphere of her stories at the intertextual level: *confusion, uncertainty, disillusionment, despair and undecidedness* are the subconcepts that by and large contribute to the final formation of the concept of *loneliness*.

The materialization of the mentioned subconcepts can be found through a variety of syntactic constructions among which overlapping *gerundial constructions, polysyndeton/asyndeton, and repetition of words denoting motion or bodily movements* can be observed.

Gerundial constructions are generally viewed as one of the most effective tools serving the creation of rhythmical patterns in writing. They help make parts of a sentence and even the succeeding sentences a powerful vocal "choir" and play some specific "melody". This is a technique borrowed by Katherine Mansfield from E. A. Poe whose abundant use of gerundial constructions in his famous *Raven* makes up for the most of the melodic impact it possesses.

*He glanced at the book which the girl read so earnestly, mouthing the words in a way that Rosabel detested, licking her first finger and thumb each time that she turned the page. She could not see very clearly; it was something about a hot, voluptuous night, a band playing, and a girl with lovely, white shoulders.* (The Tiredness of Rosabel)

Besides the evident melody, gerundial constructions in Mansfield's stories also intensify the feelings of loneliness and despair, i.e. contribute to the realization of the conceptual sphere since in almost all cases they are based on gradation demonstrating some intensification of emotions. The frequent use of gerundial constructions also creates frequent pauses, and as a result, the latter force the reader to gasp for breath while reading, thereby contributing to the overall feeling of panic which, then, is masterfully conveyed to the reader thanks to the manipulation of similar syntactic units, as in the under cited sentences:

*While we waited for the car to come up she stood on the step, just as before, twiddling her foot, looking down.* (The Young girl)

*The two women came up to her, keeping close to the hedge and looking in a frightened way towards the House of Boxes.* (How Pearl Button was Kidnapped)

Rhythm at the syntactic level is realized as through the alternation of regular, uniform units of different levels, and with the help of syntactic and stylistic devices, among which, as far as K. Mansfield's stories are concerned, repetition and polysyndeton/asyndeton are to be highlighted.

As the analysis of a wide range of linguistic data shows, polysyndeton and asyndeton also play a significant role in creating the cognitive meaning of Mansfield's texts. Most often polysyndetic and asyndetic patterns are used to change the rhythm of the text, making it faster or slower. In doing so, the writer manages to convey various senses and emotions from gravity tension to excitement, thus giving floor for the concepts to be realized in the text. The segments or sentence clauses in a stressed position enhance the cognitive meaning which the reader perceives unconsciously.

*And a little voice, so warm, so close, it half stifled her – it seemed to be in her breast under her heart – laughed out, and said. (The Life of Ma Parker)*

*But today she passed the baker's by, climbed the stairs, went into the little dark room – her room like a cupboard – and sat down on the red eiderdown (Miss Brill)*

*She closed the door, lit the gas, took off her hat and coat, skirt, blouse, unhooked her old flannel dressing-gown from behind the door, pulled it on, then unlaced her boots – on consideration her stockings were not wet enough to change.<...>*

*Rosabel turned to the mirror and placed it on her brown hair, then faced them.<...>*

*She took off her cloak, dismissed the servant, and went over to the fireplace, and stood peeling off her gloves; the firelight shone on her hair, Harry came across the room and caught her in his arms – "Rosabel, Rosabel, Rosabel. (The Tiredness of Rosabel)*

Further, at the compositional level rhythm can be realized through an alternation of the same type of episodes, actions and also a relatively regular repetition of the semantic components. The feeling of haste and confusion also contributes to the overall picture of disillusionment, despair and undecidedness in Mansfield's stories. The chain of verbs of motion, constantly following one another, creates an image of a flow and brings some sort of dynamism to her works. It is quite usual to come across sentences with several verbs all denoting *motion* or *emotional state of mind*.

*Henry's heart began to thump and beat to the beat of the train. He felt that it was absolutely necessary that she should look up and understand him at least. He leant forward and clasped his hands round his knees. (Something Childish but Natural)*

Verbs denoting physical movement can be counted in numbers. They help make the scene more realistic and visible on the one hand. On the other, the repetition/alternation of the same type of actions creates a specific fragmentary rhythmical pattern which contributes to the realization of the subconcepts *uncertainty, instability, undecidedness*.

*Then she shrugged, and smiled and shook her head, meaning she could not speak against the noise... But she got up and buttoned her coat and put her hands to her hat, swaying a little. (Something childish but very natural)*

*The wind blew close to the ground; it rooted among the tussock grass, slithered along the road, so that the white pumice dust swirled in our faces, settled and sifted over us and was like a dry-skin itching for growth on our bodies. The horses stumbled along, coughing and chuffing. (The woman at the store)*

*The Enthusiast grunted and yawned, shook himself into existence by rattling the money in his trouser pockets. He jabbed the Mole in the ribs.*

*As I watched her thinking of Rembrandt and, for some reason, Anatole France, the Stewardess bustled up, placed a canvas stool at her elbow, spread a newspaper upon it, and banged down a receptacle rather like a baking tin. ... (The Journey to Bruges)*

*Victor sprawled in his chair, patting his little brown dog Bobo and looking, half laughingly, at Max. Suddenly Fuchs looked at Max, raised his eyebrows and nodded across to Victor, who shook his head. From the door Victor watched him plunging through the heavy snow thrust in his pockets—he almost appeared to be running through the heavy snow towards the town. (Blaze)*

The more striving the author is, the more modified and transformed a neutral linear presentation is. Authors use a variety of original rhythmic techniques for organizing episodes in the compositional division of stories. In Mansfield's stories alternation/repetition of episodes is built according to the law of gradation, contrast or opposition.

### Conclusion

Thus, the study of the problem confirms the initial hypothesis that rhythm in the structure of a short story is an effective means by which the semantic, stylistic, aesthetic capacities of the work of art are increased. Rhythm in K. Mansfield's short stories helps the readers achieve not only a better understanding of the content of the work, but also perceive the conceptual value of the visual and acoustic images, which are aimed to transfer the physical, emotional, mental states of the characters. The syntactic-rhythmic arrangement of the text serves as an important unifying factor contributing to the emergence of the overall conceptual field in the text and highlighting the cognitive aspect of it.

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