

IMAGERY SPACE OF AMERICAN POETRY: A COGNITIVE PERSPECTIVE

The research focuses on revealing the nature of verbal poetic image from a cognitive perspective and aims at building an original typology of images in American poetry. It highlights cognitive mechanisms that lead to the emergence of novel poetic images which cause a possible breakthrough in the conceptualization of the world. In the framework of cognitive linguistics a poetic image is viewed as a textual construal and a cognitive structure which has two planes – conceptual and verbal. The conceptual plane of the image is understood as a unity of the eidetic (holistic) and the logic (discrete). The idea of discreteness has been laid at the basis of conceptual analysis of verbal poetic images within the framework of idealized cognitive models or image-schemas [Lakoff, Johnson 1980; Lakoff 1987]. Conceptual analysis of rich empirical data obtained from contemporary American poetry suggested figuring out two groups of verbal poetic images: the old (archetypes and stereotypes) and new ones (idiotypes and kainotypes).

A poetic image is a verbal embodiment of the configuration of various conceptual schemas (metaphoric, metonymic and oxymoronic). Similar to the types of conceptual metaphors [Lakoff, Johnson 1980] the paper suggests classification of conceptual oxymora. It is proved that the degree of novelty of verbal poetic images is predetermined by the type of conceptual oxymoron that underlies their verbal form. The type of a conceptual oxymoron is defined according to the kind of modality: alethic, deontic, epistemic, axiological [Dolezel 1998, p.113-128] – embodied in the verbal structure of a poetic image. Ontological conceptual oxymora POSSIBLE VS. IMPOSSIBLE, ALLOWANCE VS. NON-ALLOWANCE related to alethic and deontic modality underlie archetypal and stereotypical verbal poetic images like “*sinful pleasures*”, “*awfully beautiful*”, formed on the basis of cognitive operation of overlaying an entity of the source domain onto the opposite entity of target domain. Structural conceptual oxymora KNOWLEDGE VS. IGNORANCE reflecting epistemic modality and orientational oxymora: HERE VS. THERE, HERE/THERE VS. NOWHERE, PRESENT VS. PAST, PAST VS. FUTURE, FUTURE VS. PRESENT which show spatial and time relations, underlie idiotypes and kainotypes: “*Eternity – the Untold story*” (Dickinson), “*Progress is a comfortable disease*” (Cummings), “*The imperfect is our paradise*” (Stevence), “*You are my future of the past*” (Bly), “*leading up the stairs going down*” (Levertov) – formed as a result of clashing or overlapping entities of source and target domains.

Contours of the imagery space in American poetry are revealed via the analysis of conceptual and functional properties that characterize different types of verbal poetic images. The integrative approach to the theory of imagery helped to update the techniques of conceptual analysis of verbal poetic images and to work out the integrative cognitive model of verbal poetic image and imagery space reconstruction.

References

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