



## THE NOTION OF LITERARY CONCEPT

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**ABSTRACT:** *This article explores the notion of the literary concept as a theoretical construct in literary criticism and cognitive linguistics. It examines the historical development of the concept from classical poetics to modern theories, including formalism and structuralism. The study analyzes the structure of literary concepts through conceptual, figurative, and axiological components. Special attention is given to explicit and implicit representation of concepts in literary texts, illustrated by examples from W. Somerset Maugham and O. Henry. The research also highlights the role of stylistic devices, intertextuality, and contextual determinism in shaping literary meaning. The findings demonstrate that literary concepts are complex mental structures that integrate language, cognition, and cultural context, influencing both interpretation and emotional response.*

**KEYWORDS:** *literary concept, cognitive linguistics, imagery, axiology, implicit meaning, explicit meaning, stylistic devices, intertextuality*

### INTRODUCTION

In modern literary studies, the notion of a literary concept plays a crucial role in understanding how meaning is constructed and interpreted in texts. A literary concept can be defined as a mental and theoretical unit that organizes the perception of artistic reality through language, imagery, and value systems [Stockwell, 2002:25]. The relevance of this study lies in its attempt to integrate approaches from literary criticism and cognitive linguistics to provide a deeper understanding of how concepts function in literary discourse.

The aim of this article is to analyze the structure and functioning of literary concepts, as well as their explicit and implicit representation in literary texts. The



novelty of the research lies in combining cognitive linguistic theory with literary analysis.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The foundations of literary conceptualization can be traced back to Aristotle, who defined literature as *mimesis*, or imitation of human action [Aristotle, 2006:203]. This idea established the earliest theoretical framework for understanding literature as a structured representation of reality.

In the 20th century, Roman Jakobson introduced the concept of literariness, emphasizing the importance of formal features such as language and structure [Jakobson, 1960:350]. Later, Roland Barthes expanded this view by interpreting literature as a system of signs within a broader semiotic framework, highlighting the role of interpretation and textual plurality.

Cognitive linguistics further develops the concept as a mental structure consisting of conceptual, figurative, and axiological components [Lakoff, 1980:5]. This perspective is also supported by cognitive stylistics, where meaning arises from the interaction between language and cognition [Semino & Culpeper, 2002:12].

## METHODOLOGY

The research is based on qualitative textual analysis. Literary texts are examined using a cognitive-linguistic approach, focusing on the identification and interpretation of conceptual, figurative, and axiological components [Stockwell, 2002:30]. Comparative analysis is applied to distinguish between explicit and implicit literary concepts. Examples from short stories are used to illustrate theoretical claims.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Structure of Literary Concept

A literary concept consists of three main components:

- conceptual (core meaning),
- figurative (imagery and associations),
- axiological (value and evaluation) [Wierzbicka, 1997:30].



Unlike general concepts, literary concepts emphasize imagery and emotional evaluation, making them more expressive and interpretative.

## **Explicit and Implicit Concepts**

Explicit concepts are directly expressed in the text. For example, in Somerset Maugham's "*The Happy Man*", the concept of happiness is clearly stated but developed through contrast and imagery. The protagonist's transformation reflects the idea that true happiness lies in freedom rather than material success.

Implicit concepts, on the other hand, are hidden and require interpretation. In O. Henry's "*The Gift of the Magi*", the concept of love is not directly named but is revealed through sacrifice and intertextual references to biblical traditions. This implicitness allows multiple interpretations and deeper reader engagement.

## **Stylistic Expression of Literary Concept**

Literary concepts are expressed through stylistically marked units:

- evaluative words (e.g., noble, miserable),
- emotional vocabulary (joy, suffering),
- modality,
- stylistic devices (metaphor, irony, repetition) [Simpson, 2004:40].

These elements help transform abstract ideas into vivid and emotionally rich experiences. Stylistic choices play a crucial role in shaping meaning in fictional texts [Leech & Short, 2007:20].

## **Stylistic Categories**

Four main stylistic categories shape literary concepts:

- imagery,
- emotiveness,
- implicitness,
- expressiveness [Simpson, 2004:45].

These categories work together to create a deeper artistic and emotional impact.



## Contextual Determinism

The meaning of literary concepts depends on context:

- linguistic (within the text),
- extralinguistic (cultural, historical, cognitive) [Vygotsky, 1986:100].

For example, in F. Scott Fitzgerald's "*The Great Gatsby*", the concept of the "American Dream" is expressed through symbolic imagery such as the green light.

Similarly, in William Shakespeare's "*Hamlet*", the concept of madness is interpreted through cultural and psychological context [Shakespeare, 2006:205].

## CONCLUSION

The study demonstrates that literary concepts are complex, multidimensional structures that integrate linguistic, cognitive, and cultural elements. Their meaning is not fixed but dynamically constructed through interaction between text and reader [Vygotsky, 1986:110]. Explicit and implicit forms, stylistic devices, and contextual factors all contribute to the richness of literary interpretation.

Thus, analyzing literary concepts through cognitive linguistics provides an effective framework for understanding how literature shapes human perception, emotion, and thought.

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