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**SOME SPECIFIC FEATURES OF THE ENGLISH FICTION DISCOURSE**

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*Abstract*

University novel is a component of the English and American fiction discourse and a unique genre, academic environment of which is characterized by a defined setting, protagonists as well as original themes. University novel covers a wide range of topical issues and events that occur outside universities and are drastically discussed by teachers and students alike. Distinctive stereotyped protagonists, a variety of academic traditions and reiterated themes for discussion can be singled out as specific features of the English university novel. Cultural and educational traditions of the academic environment determine ways how to preserve the unity of group, organization, community and nation. The aim of the research consists in revealing and analysing some special features of the English fiction discourse and considering linguistic personality of a lecturer (by way of example of the university novels written by V. Nabokov, D. Lodge and Ph. Roth). Lecture is considered to be as an integral part and an invariable component of the academic environment. Practical value of the research consists in the possibility of applying its results in preparing for lecture courses and seminars on modern British and American literature as well as intercultural communication and stylistics.

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## **1. Introduction**

The research discusses the importance of understanding some specific features of university novels as an integral part of fiction discourse. Academic novels elucidate indicative events and changes as well as the most essential tendencies in the development of society, language, and culture. Absorbing some features of other genres, such as initiation, historical and/or modernist novel as well as romance, this type of genre can be unique in itself. University novel seems to be an inexhaustible source for researchers of fiction discourse, intercultural communication, stylistics, and text linguistics. It possesses singular linguo-stylistic and sociocultural peculiarities.

### **1.1. Themes discussed in university novels**

The representatives of various linguo-cultural communities (teachers, students, and university staff) discuss topical, urgent and pressing up-to-date themes such as methods of teaching, directions of development of university, education, language and society, politics, discrimination, wars and war conflicts, family relations, etc. Moreover, academic fiction covers a wide range of those political events, which occur outside universities, and are drastically discussed by teachers and students alike. At the same time, the protagonists' communication can be characterized by both communicative success and communicative failure. Usually communicative failure happens because of lack of mutual understanding between a professor and a student, representatives of various generations, cultures, ethnic groups, gender, etc.

### **1.2. The practical basis of the research**

The subject of the study is the analysis of some specific features of the university novels and linguistic personality of a lecturer in fiction discourse, academic fiction in particular. The university novels written by V. Nabokov, D. Lodge and Ph. Roth are analyzed in the practical part of the research.

Academic fiction appeared in the USA in the beginning of the fifties. "The Groves of Academe" is a novel by an American writer Mary McCarthy that is considered to be one of the first university novels. It is intended as a satire of academics based on the author's teaching experiences, polemic response to which was the novel by American poet Randall Jarrell. His "Pictures from an Institution" is a satire, focusing on the oddities of academic environment, in particular the interpersonal relationships among the characters and their private lives (Wikipedia, 2018). David Lodge is considered to be one of the outstanding masters of this genre and retains the title of Honorary Professor of Modern English Literature at Birmingham. "His fictional work is 'Changing places' the first part of a brilliantly comic trilogy that included 'Small World' and 'Nice work' (Delaney, 2010, p. 28). These books give a satirical account of the university life, as well as share recurring characters.

Although a Russian immigrant, Nabokov is regarded as one of the finest stylists in the English language. He was one of the most productive and creative writers of his era. His novels, short stories, essays, poems, and memoirs all share his cosmopolitan wit, his love of wordplay, his passion for satire, and his complex social commentary. Nabokov's work appeals to the senses, imagination, intellect, and emotions. His themes are universal: the role of the artist in society; the myth of journey, adventure, and return; and humanity's concepts of memory and time, which he called a tightrope walk across the "watery abyss of the past and the aerial abyss of the future". V. Nabokov created

his novels, such as “Lolita”, “Pnin”, “Dar”, “Bend Sinister” like puzzles, rather than working from beginning to an end. Sometimes he constructed the carefully engineered plots but with a loose, inconsistent presentation of facts.

Elaine Showalter, a Professor of English literature, famous American literary critic, feminist, and writer on cultural and social issues claims that the university novel is a “microcosm of society”: “The best academic novels experiment and play with the genre of fiction itself, comment on contemporary issues, satirize professorial stereotypes and educational trends, and convey the pain of intellectuals called upon to measure themselves against each other and against their internalized expectations of brilliance” (Showalter, 2017). In university novels the protagonists discuss and criticize topical and urgent up-to-date problems. The university novel is an academic experiment, which touches upon contemporary themes. It is reckoned to be a play with the genre of fiction, with some satire addressed to professorial prejudices and educational traditions, transmitting the worries of intellectuals who are forced to compete with each other and meet the expectations of the representatives of academic environment.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The purpose of the research consists in revealing and analysing some specific features of the English fiction discourse and considering linguistic personality of a lecturer. One of its objectives is connected with the study and analysis of literature on the phenomenon of non-fiction academic or university environment. Thus, the experts in the field assert that: “The university environment is, first of all, a community of the most educated, qualified and authoritative scientists. The higher school is a closed language environment with a given system of internal and external communication, which is characterized as intercultural. The cultural atmosphere of people is a perfect way to adapt to the existing physical and biological surroundings. Cultural traditions make life easier by providing ready problem-solving solutions, establishing models of relationships and determining ways to preserve the unity of nation, group or organization” (Golovanova, 2016, p. 68). University novels reveal certain burning issues existing not only in one particular academic environment but also in other academic environments and in society in general.

## **3. Research Questions**

In the course of the research it is possible to identify some peculiarities of the English and American university novels such as modeling of protagonists on stereotyped images, a description of various educational traditions and recurring themes such as methods of teaching, education, language and society, generation gap, politics, discrimination, wars and war conflicts, etc. One of the objectives of the study aims at examining some particular themes. Many of them are drastically discussed by the protagonists of university novels and are still relevant for the contemporary society.

### **3.1. Lectures and lecturers in institutions of higher education and universities**

One of the research questions is connected with the attitude of the main protagonists (professors, teachers and students) towards lectures and lecturers in institutions of higher education and universities. Talking about the fate of lecture as one of the cultural traditions and an invariable component of the academic environment, teachers

and university professors in V. Nabokov's "Pnin" express different opinions: 'I must protest, Laurence,' said Tom. 'A relaxed discussion in an atmosphere of broad generalizations is a more realistic approach to education than the old-fashioned formal lecture' (Nabokov, 1990, p. 483). Many believe that free discussion of all kinds of topics in university classes is a more effective method than the old-fashioned reading of formal lectures. Others offer to substitute the live lecturing for the phonographic record speech on a variety of subjects, while claiming that the linguistic personality of a lecturer means little or nothing. At the same time, lecture should correspond to the set of social relations, educational traditions and the style of communication, which is adopted in a particular linguo-cultural community and national culture. "Lecture – 1) a long talk given to a group of people on a particular subject, especially as a method of teaching in universities; 2) an act of criticizing someone or warning them about something in a long, serious talk, in a way that they think is unfair or unnecessary" (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 1995, p. 808). It is known that reading lectures requires special professional skills; it is one of the components of the competence of professors and senior lecturers: "A university lecture is a personal scientific and pedagogical creativity of a teacher in a certain field of knowledge. During lectures professors and senior lecturers express their scientific ideas, their attitude to the subject of study, their creative understanding of its essence and prospects along with a systematic presentation of the fundamental basis of science" (Golovanova, 2016, p. 158).

In the middle of the last century the protagonists of the novel tried to make their own predictions in terms of lecture and its future contemplating the methods of teaching and their effectiveness. In V. Nabokov's "Pnin", for example, some of the teachers sound categorical in their judgments and oppose lectures: "You may laugh, but I affirm that the only way to escape from the morass is to lock up the student in a soundproof cell and eliminate the lecture room" (Nabokov, 1990, p. 482).

Nowadays, there exist conflicting points of view in terms of the effectiveness of lecture as a form of education and presentation of material for students in high school. Its relevance is questioned. It will be gradually replaced by the new forms, such as virtual lectures or video blogs, lectures online, teleconferences, webinars and so on. These forms are actively used at conferences, distance learning and advanced training courses.

### **3.2. Linguistic personality of a lecturer**

Another research question which can be traced in V. Nabokov's "Pnin and Ph. Roth's "The Human Stain" directly focuses on disclosing the linguistic personality of a lecturer. According to Yu.N. Karaulov linguistic personality is a combination (and results of implementation) of one's ability to generate and perceive texts that differ in a) degree of structural linguistic complexity, b) depth and accuracy of representation of reality, c) certain target orientation (Karaulov, 1989). Professor Pnin is a passionate, enthusiastic man, full of new ideas and research projects. He is in love with the language, culture and literature of his homeland. In everyday life he is unpretentious, rents apartments, and manages to exist on the minimum earnings. Timofey Pavlovich spends a lot of time in the library 'he was still at the blissful stage of collecting his material' (Nabokov, 1990, p. 423). He planned to write his scientific work ten years ago and it turns out to be a dream, an illusion, an impossible project: "He contemplated writing a Petite Histoire of Russian culture, in which a choice of Russian Curiosities, Customs, Literary Anecdotes, and so forth would be presented in such a way as to reflect in miniature la Grande Histoire – Major Concentrations of Events" (Nabokov, 1990, p. 423).

His scientific research is fragmented, symbolizing disjointed thoughts and images of the forever abandoned and lost motherland. The hierarchy of meanings and values is clearly manifested in the picture of the world of this

linguistic personality, which allows us to talk about some of the individual features. Thus, lost in time, Professor Pnin recalls his parents, childhood, youth, and his motherland: “In a haze of sunshine – sunshine projecting in vaporous shafts between the white boles of birches, drenching the pendulous foliage, trembling in eyelets upon the bark, dripping on to the long grass, shining and smoking among the ghosts of racemose bird cherries in scumbled bloom – a Russian wildwood enveloped the rambler” (Nabokov, 1990, p. 427). Unforgettable images of a hot sunny afternoon in the spring forest, birches, foliage, and cherry blossoms remind him of Russia. The protagonist removes from his homeland and gradually loses what has always been so close, accessible and understandable.

Sometimes he is willing to lose something, for instance, his cross: “Perhaps I would not mind losing it (the Greek Catholic cross on a golden chainlet), said Pnin. As you well know, I wear it merely from sentimental reasons. And the sentiment is becoming burdensome” (Nabokov, 1990, p. 459). Such episodes in the novel are very similar to those which are typical of the modernist novel. The modernist novel is often non-chronological with experimentation in the representation of time. Instead of plot there is an emphasis on characters’ consciousness, subconsciousness, memory and perception. “The more Pnin rejects Russian conciliarism (sobornost) the more he becomes lonely and estranged” (Kvirikadze, 2017, p. 333). The aging, childless, poor Timofey Pavlovich Pnin is a mockery to his American colleagues who love to parody him, treat him like a child or a poltergeist often not taking him seriously (“he was more of a poltergeist than a lodger”).

“Pnin exists in a strange, foreign (in this case American) environment, Russian in spirit, nature and lifestyle – Russian who did not become an American” (Kvirikadze, 2017, p. 333). Having the symbolic name, the protagonist arouses pity and compassion: “Professor Pnin can be compared to a burnt, charred stump, a dead tree without roots. He abandoned Russian conciliar nature (sobornost), his homeland, the Russian language and consequently became alienated” (Kvirikadze, 2017, p. 337).

**Table 01.** Structure of Linguistic Personality (according to Yu. N. Karaulov)

LEVEL	CONTENT
the verbal-semantic level (zero level)	phonetic, grammatical, lexical, and syntactical means (the degree of proficiency in a language)
the linguo-cognitive (cognitive, thesaurus) level (the first level)	ideas, notions, concepts, value systems, which are current and valid for a native speaker (picture of the world of linguistic personality)
the motivational (pragmatic) level (the second level)	communicative network (aims, motives, interests, attitudes)

Conciliar nature is a constituent part of the motivational (pragmatic) level. It represents the communicative-active demands of a person that provide information about inner attitudes, aims and motives guiding the development and behaviour of linguistic personality. For Professor Pnin, lost, lonely and confused immigrant, the English language will always remain incomprehensible: ‘Our friend’, answered Clements, ‘employs a nomenclature all his own. His verbal vagaries add a new thrill to life. His mispronunciations are mythopeic. His slips of the tongue are oracular. He calls my wife John’ (Nabokov, 1990, p. 485). It is typical for the verbal-semantic level, which is characterized by the personality’s possession of a normal natural language.

### **3.2.1. Communicative failure**

One of the peculiarities of the linguistic personality of a lecturer in academic fiction is connected with communicative failure which can happen because of lack of understanding between a professor and a student, representatives of various generations, cultures, ethnic groups, gender, etc. Communicative failure can be considered within the boundaries of the linguo-cognitive (cognitive, thesaurus) level, which consists of linguistic world image represented by generalized statements, proverbs, sayings, etc.

In “The Human Stain”, the novel by a contemporary American writer Philip Roth, Professor Coleman renounced his Afro-American roots, parents and numerous relatives. As well as Professor Pnin Coleman is passionate, enthusiastic, and full of new ideas, he is adored by his students. The plot is constructed on the only one communicative failure of the main protagonist.

The respected Professor of ancient literature, Dean of the faculty, expert in Greek and Latin languages, he is very particular about preservation of cultural traditions of the university. During one of the lectures Coleman made a huge mistake, pronounced the word that ruined his career: “The class consisted of fourteen students. Coleman had taken attendance at the beginning of the first several lectures so as to learn their names. As there were still two names that failed to elicit a response by the fifth week into the semester, Coleman, in the sixth week, opened the session by asking, ‘Does anyone know these people? Do they exist or are they spooks?’ (Roth, 2017).

According to the definitions given in the dictionaries: “spook n (informal) for ghost” (Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture, 1992, p. 1282). “Ghost n 1 (the spirit of) a dead person who appears again” (Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture, 1992, p. 546). “Spook noun informal 1 a ghost, or frightening spirit 2 a spy” (Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, 2007, p. 1441).

The Professor was very much surprised when he was called to the Dean and was accused of racism against two Afro-American students, whom he had allegedly insulted and humiliated in public: “Later that day he was astonished to be called in by his successor, the new Dean of faculty, to address the charge of racism brought against him by the two missing students, who turned out to be black, and who, though absent, had quickly learned of the locution in which he’d publicly raised the question of their absence” (Roth, 2017).

Unfortunately, American tolerance can sometimes go beyond common sense and be a weapon in the hands of dishonest and unscrupulous people. Professor Coleman’s career came to a devastating end.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the research consists in revealing and analyzing some specific features of the English fiction discourse, to be more precise these are: the language peculiarities, stylistic devices and repetitive themes, which are inherent in academic fiction. Moreover, it also consists in examining linguistic personality of a lecturer, one of the stereotyped images that can be distinguished on three levels (according to Yu. N. Karaulov) as well as making a study of success and failure in communication of the representatives of various linguistic and cultural communities in university novel. In this case communicative failure can be considered within the linguo-cognitive level of linguistic personality.

## 5. Research Methods

In compliance with the purpose of the research, the following methods have been undertaken: the analysis of the literature (fiction and non-fiction) and the publications concerning the studied problem, contextual, descriptive, cultural-historic and comparative analyses and the analysis of the word definitions taken from various dictionaries. Stylistic devices need thorough and deliberate extended analysis and description by means of linguo-cultural interpretation.

## 6. Findings

**6.1.** On the basis of this stage of the research we can claim that in general academic environment can be characterized by the following features: 1) it is a closed intercultural language environment with a given system of internal and external communication, 2) it is a perfect way to adapt to the existing physical and biological surroundings, 3) its cultural and academic traditions make life easier by providing ready problem-solving solutions, determining ways to preserve the unity of a group or organization, society or nation.

**6.2.** We have also considered some specific features of the English and American academic novels such as reiterated themes that are drastically discussed by teachers and students alike. These are methods of teaching, development of education, language and society, generation gap, politics, discrimination, wars and war conflicts, to name but a few. At this stage of the research we focus our attention on the controversial attitude of the main protagonists towards lectures in institutions of higher education and universities. Many believe that the old-fashioned reading of formal lectures should be eradicated. Others offer to substitute it for some other forms, such as the phonographic record speech on a variety of subjects. There are those who are eager to preserve lecture as an integral part of academic and cultural traditions, heritage of higher education, token of social relations and the style of communication, which is adopted in a particular linguo-cultural community and national culture. It is one of the components of the competence of professors and senior lecturers.

**6.3.** The study also aims at examining the research questions connected with introducing and disclosing the concept of the linguistic personality of a lecturer. One can distinguish three levels of linguistic personality: 1) the verbal-semantic level; 2) the linguo-cognitive (cognitive, thesaurus) level; 3) the motivational (pragmatic) level. Communicative failure can be considered with reference to the linguo-cognitive (cognitive, thesaurus) level, whereas conciliar nature is a constituent part of the motivational level of linguistic personality.

## 7. Conclusion

At this stage of the study we have come to the conclusion that university novel is an integral part of fiction discourse. It is a unique genre, academic environment of which is characterized by specific features, such as, for example, distinctive themes for discussion. Lecture is considered to be one of the academic and cultural traditions, the style of communication, which is adopted in a particular linguo-cultural community. It is one of the components of the competence of professors and senior lecturers and can be examined on the three levels of linguistic personality.

The study of linguistic personality of a lecturer reveals manifestation of its individual characteristics; allows us to identify the concepts, ideas and values relevant to native speakers and to the representatives of different linguo-cultural communities. University novels illustrate significant events and changes, as well as essential trends in the development of language and culture. The characters are constructed on stereotyped images that make the reader recognize their teachers, colleagues or students, as well as experience a different range of feelings and emotions.

Thus, the English university novel is an inexhaustible source for researchers of its specific features. It possesses singular linguo-stylistic and sociocultural peculiarities; it is also abundant in various themes, which are open to interpretation and analysis. Practical value of the research consists in the possibility of applying its results in preparing for lecture courses and seminars on modern British and American literature as well as intercultural communication and stylistics. The results of the research are going to be the basis for writing of the articles and the forthcoming monograph connected with this topic.

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